Supporting ELLs: Ontario Elementary Teachers' Experiences Using CRRP

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Abstract

The aim of this qualitative research study is to understand how Ontario elementary teachers support English Language Learners through the use of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogical practices (CRRP). Although existing literature on CRRP speaks to what the approach entails, there is little research on how teachers engage in this approach in the classroom and the results they observe for their ELL and non-ELL students. This research project intervenes this gap by highlighting how a small sample of elementary school teachers enact CRRP to support their diverse learners, the challenges they face as a result, and the actions they take to overcome these challenges. This study is guided by the main research question of: How is a sample of elementary school teachers enacting culturally relevant teaching to support their ELL students? Findings from the study suggest that teachers who engage in a CRRP approach create inclusive classrooms that connect instruction to students' interests, incorporate students' culture and L1 through the use of visuals, and allow students' to draw upon their L1 through oral and written engagement. Despite these outcomes, findings suggest that more needs to be done to better prepare teachers to support their diverse learners. As well, ministries of education must allocate more money for funding and training for pre and in-service teachers.

Key Words: English language learners; culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy; diversity education; social justice.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction: Research Context and Problem

"To educate the whole child in a culturally and linguistically diverse context it is necessary to nurture intellect and identity equally in ways that, of necessity, challenge coercive relations of power" (Cummins, 2000, p. 6).

In Canada, English language learners (ELLs) are the fastest growing segment of elementary schools and teachers are becoming increasingly responsible for meeting these students' needs (Webster & Valeo, 2011). As the quote highlighted above suggests, educators too are becoming more accountable for creating inclusive classrooms where students' diversity and identities are recognized and incorporated. This, Cummins (2000b) argues, disrupts the status quo and challenges systems of power and privilege. This recognition, coupled with the growing diverse population, places a great deal of responsibility on educators to set their students up for success. However, with these responsibilities come challenges for teachers and students alike. Many immigrant students entering new schools are not accustomed to the teaching styles of the United States and Canada and factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and urban or rural living vary for each ELL and all impact the student's adaptation process (Garrett & Holcomb, 2005; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008).

To date, research on ELLs and culturally responsive teaching practices have pinpointed a number of concerning factors that impede the possibilities of ELLs successfully integrating into Canadian schooling. There are two major mismatches, 1) the mismatch between the number of culturally diverse students and teachers of related backgrounds and 2) the mismatch between theory and practice. As the student demographic continues to become more culturally diverse, particularly in metropolitan areas, much like Toronto, the teacher population has remained relatively homogeneous, mainly comprising of White middle-class females (Parhar & Sensoy,
2011; Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009; Barnes, 2006). Although the value of racialized and culturally diverse teachers is often praised and recognized as important, the number of these educators is falling behind (Ryan et al., 2009). Campano (2007) argues, “how we respond to diversity is both informed by and informs what we value as knowledge in the classroom” (p. 9). Palmer (2010) extends on this notion to suggest that we teach who we are. Seeing that teachers draw from their lived experiences, it becomes crucial to consider the types of teachers that are hired to teach culturally diverse classrooms, and think about the ways their values reflect, or fail to reflect those of their diverse students. Researchers have highlighted the importance of having culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse teachers as beneficial to the class and school community on a whole (Faez, 2012; Ryan et al., 2009). Due to their personal, and often shared experiences, teachers of backgrounds similar to those of their students bring with them a unique perspective, diverse views, and have been recognized as critical components for the success of diverse students in and out of the classroom (Ryan et al., 2009).

Secondly, the disconnect between theory and practice stems from the lack of social justice initiatives in teacher education programs as well as a curriculum grounded in Eurocentric styles of pedagogy (Faez, 2012; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). Although research has identified the need for more teacher education programs to effectively prepare culturally responsive teachers who are willing and able to advocate for their diverse learners, provide inclusive and equitable education (Cummins, 1996), teacher education programs continue to fail pre-service teachers. In fact, according to Webster and Valeo (2011), teachers graduating from education programs across Canada do not hold the necessary strategies to support their ELLs' academic growth. Further, education programs that prepare teachers to support and teach multicultural classrooms receive inadequate attention. Several of these types of programs are not a mandatory component of many
pre-service education programs in Ontario, leaving many prospective teachers without the tools or knowledge to successfully integrate ELLs into their classrooms (Faez, 2012). Practicing teachers with no training or experience working in multicultural classrooms are also at a disadvantage. Without proper training and understating of their diverse students, teachers hinder students' ability to draw from their learning styles and traditions in order to excel academically. While these inefficiencies with regard to diversity are seen at the teacher education level, so too are they in the school setting. According to Parhar and Sensoy (2011) most students who are not White seldom see themselves, their backgrounds or experiences represented in the curriculum. Students who are White on the other hand, see themselves reflected in all classroom material.

This absence of diversity and voice not only advantages certain kinds of knowledge, but it also works to silence the identities of several students, most of whom make up the majority of the classroom (Webster & Valeo, 2011). The curriculum that schools in Ontario follow is laden with social justice issues of power and privilege. These issues act to limit the ways in which identities are negotiated between students and teachers, and most importantly, constrict the possibilities of a culturally diverse education (Cummins, 2000).

In light of these gaps, several researchers have identified a teaching philosophy that incorporates students' culture and background in the classroom. Termed, culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (CRRP), this approach responds to the growing gap between the cultural diversity of the student population relative to the primarily White teacher population by allowing teachers to use students' experiences, perspectives, and cultural characteristics as a vehicle for student success (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011; Barnes, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Gay, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995). While culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy is the term most frequently used in the educational domain, terms such as culturally responsive teaching, and
equity education, carry similar meaning. Gay (2010) defines CRRP as teaching “to and through students’ personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments” (p. 26). CRRP involves the interactions of ethnic identity and cultural background in order to set the student up for achievement (Gay, 2010). Similarly, Ladson-Billings (1995) defines it as an "effective pedagogical practice that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (p. 469). Both authors highlight the critical role educators play in allowing students to draw upon their cultural traditions and learning styles. This gap in diversity that is evidenced not only amongst the teachers and staff within the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), but also within the curriculum which generally cater to specific, normative, and mainstream learning styles (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), point to the need for addressing the pedagogical knowledge and practices of teachers in Ontario. Beyond this, there is a need for more research on how well-prepared teachers respond to diversity and the pedagogical tools they employ to support ELLs. Therefore, it is of great importance that we understand not only why there exists a gap between theory and practice, but also learn how educators work to fill these gaps through a CRRP approach.

1.2 Purpose of Study

While much of the existing research has focused on the importance of CRRP and what the pedagogical approach entails, it has yet to question how teachers enact CRRP in their practice and the outcomes they observe for their ELL and non-ELL students. My research intervenes this gap. The purpose of this study was to learn how teachers who have a sense of preparedness in
working with diverse students, support ELLs through the use of CRRP.

From a sample of elementary school teachers, my goal was to learn what CRRP meant to them and how they enacted this pedagogical approach in their classrooms. While my primary intention was to inform ELL-inclusive instruction for my teaching practice and the benefit of the broader education community, I also sought to challenge the barriers of power and privilege which culturally diverse students face in Toronto. I achieved this by taking a critical look at the types of Eurocentric knowledge and curricula that pervade the education system in Ontario, as well as the mismatch between the number of culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students and teachers of related backgrounds. This research sheds light on how teachers challenge these issues through the use of a CRRP approach.

1.3 Research Questions

The main question this study sought to answer is: How is a sample of elementary school teachers enacting culturally relevant teaching to support their ELL students? Further, what outcomes do they observe from these learners and the class as a whole? Additional questions include:

- What does culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy mean to these teachers in theory and in their practice supporting ELLs?
- What experiences, factors, and resources have informed these teachers’ interest in and preparedness for supporting ELLs through CRRP?
- What outcomes do these teachers observe as a result of their practices aimed at culturally relevant and inclusive pedagogy for ELLs and non-ELL students?
- What challenges do these teachers encounter in their work and how do they respond to
these challenges?

1.4 Background of the Researcher

The topic of CRRP is of particular interest to me because of my educational experience in the United States. Throughout my time in high school in upstate New York, I was able to see and experience firsthand the Eurocentric styles of pedagogy that drove the curriculum. As a young Afro-Caribbean female, I found it challenging to place myself within this style of teaching as it differed greatly to the education system I grew up with in Trinidad. As a child, I was fortunate enough to attend a school where I saw myself represented in positions of power, have teachers of similar cultural backgrounds exemplify values and traditions that closely tied to mine, and read texts that were rich in diversity written by authors from the Caribbean and worldwide. These aspects were void from my high school experience in the States and really opened my eyes to issues of difference, power, and privilege, and how it separated me from my peers, my culture, and most importantly, my identity.

Rarely was I given the opportunity to draw upon my learning styles or see diversity represented in texts. Becoming more aware of these issues also allowed me to see other culturally diverse students who were at a disadvantage to their mainstream, predominantly White peers. ELLs for example, not only faced challenges navigating a new education system, but also had to do so while learning a new language. Having the opportunity to work in Elementary classrooms in Toronto affirmed these beliefs and made me more aware of the importance in creating inclusive classrooms where diversity is both recognized and included. As a future educator, recognition of diversity entails acknowledging the diversity in a classroom and getting to know my students and their families on a personal level. Discussions of their history, learning
styles and traditions are all important aspects that I must take into consideration to successfully teach the whole child. Inclusions of diversity means incorporating texts of different voices and points of view, including material of students' first language, and giving my students to opportunity to share their learning traditions and draw upon them in a comfortable manner.

While my educational experience was challenging, it has informed me of the several culturally diverse students, in particular ELLs face in the classroom and has sparked my interest and dedication to creating inclusive and equitable classrooms. As a prospective teacher, it is critical that I not only recognize the challenges newcomer students and their families face in navigating the TDSB, but also make a conscious effort to create a classroom where students feel comfortable drawing from their cultural backgrounds and perspectives to enrich their learning experiences, and the experiences of the class as a whole. My research and interest on the topic of diversity has led me to the teaching philosophy of CRRP, and it is my hope, that through employing such an approach, I can effectively support my culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students.

1.5 Overview

To respond to the research questions, I conducted a qualitative research study where I learned how elementary school teachers are supporting ELLs in the classroom through the use of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. In Chapter 2, I review the literature in areas of CRRP and the challenges and outcomes teachers observe through enacting these teaching practices. I also explore topics relating to teacher diversity and its observable benefits. In Chapter 3, I explain the research methodology of the study which includes information about the research design, participants, and limitations involved in the study. Next, in Chapter 4, I report my
research findings and discuss their significance in the existing literature. Lastly, in Chapter 5, I identify implications of the findings for my teacher identity and practice and make recommendations for the educational community. I end by pointing to areas for future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

For the purpose of this paper, there are two interrelated issues that I explore: characteristics of a CRRP approach, and teachers' sense of preparedness in employing this approach in the classroom to support ELLs. In this chapter, I also review the literature in areas related to responsiveness to diversity and teacher diversity. More specifically, I review the several characteristics of CRRP and what this looks like in theory and in practice. I also discuss research on ELLs specifically, highlighting their socio-emotional and academic development as well as the challenges and barriers they face in successfully integrating into the Canadian school system. Next, I discuss how pre-service and practicing teachers respond to the increasing numbers of diverse students as well as the challenges they face in doing so. I then consider the benefits and qualities of diverse teachers in order to articulate how their diverse backgrounds aid in their sense of preparedness to support ELLs. Lastly, I reflect on teachers' sense of preparedness and its importance in a CRRP approach.

2.1.1 Characteristics of a CRRP approach

Within the framework of CRRP are several characteristics and dimensions that capture the essence of what CRRP looks, sounds, and feels like. In one of her characteristics of culturally responsive teaching (CRT), Gay (2001) speaks about CRT as validating. In order to make learning more relevant and effective she argues, CRT uses "cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students" (p.31). In other words, educators who teach through CRT have a good sense of cultural competence and
understand the value in drawing upon each student's learning style. This characteristic is closely related to Ladson-Billings' (1995) idea of cultural competence which she highlights as one of the aims of CRT. In order to achieve cultural competence she argues, teachers must encourage their students to draw upon their own cultural, social, and political knowledge and understand how this aids in their learning process (Barnes 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Another important characteristic highlighted in Gay's (2001) discussion is the idea of CRT as comprehensive. Skills and expectations are not taught as separate units, but rather, integrated and woven together, appearing in all curriculum content (Gay, 2010). Through this understanding, educators are able to develop social, emotional, and intellectual learning for both themselves and their students (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Both authors understand that in order for CRT to be comprehensive, teaching has to go beyond simple celebrations and additions of diversity and be incorporated in all aspects of teaching. In doing so, educators are able to teach more than curriculum content, getting students to explore values and social issues and critically think about them. This idea closely connects with another aim Ladson-Billings highlights as key for CRT. Critical consciousness posits that teachers must help students acquire the critical tools that are essential in challenging dominant systems of power (Ladson-Billings, 1995). When these characteristics and aims are taken into consideration, educators can begin to understand their students' needs, interests, and learning styles. As Barnes (2006) and Ladson-Billings (1995) explain it, it then becomes possible to validate and teach the whole child.

More than an understanding, when CRT is fully enacted in the classroom, teachers are able to transform beliefs and attitudes about diversity, become more culturally competent, and critically think about their actions and interactions with students and the implications they may have (Barnes 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Webster & Valeo, 2011). When culturally diverse
students are taught through their own cultural perspectives and learning styles, they are better equipped to perform academically (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In fact, Gay (2001) argues that through CRT these students have more personally meaningful experiences in the classroom, have higher interest, and learn more easily. CRT also allows culturally diverse students, many of which are newcomers, to feel more comfortable in the classroom, especially in the case where the student recently transitioned. Garret and Holcomb (2005) use the term "cultural load" to speak to this idea. "Cultural load" consists of a range of experiences and knowledge that immigrant students' hold. In the classroom, these types of knowledge that immigrant students hold are often inconsistent with the types of practices carried out in North American classrooms. For example, certain foods such as beans used for an estimation exercise may seem as universal teaching strategy to the teacher, but to an immigrant child, it may seem as a waste of an important resource (Meyer, 2000). By building personal relationships with students and their families, and enabling students to draw from their own knowledge and experiences, teachers begin to value the experiences and knowledge that their immigrant students hold (Garret & Holcomb, 2005; Meyer, 2000).

The characteristics and aims of CRT highlighted by Gay (2001; 2010) and Ladson-Billings (1995) demonstrate a teaching approach that not only values the student's learning style, culture, and practices, but also allows the child to draw on these traditions to succeed academically. CRT goes beyond simple additions and inclusions of diversity to capture the essence of each child, his/her family, and history.

2.1.2 CRRP in theory and practice

Culturally responsive teachers see themselves as agents of change who have a strong sense
of sociocultural consciousness and hold affirming views of their diverse students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Participants from a study conducted by Parhar and Sensoy (2011) highlighted three key considerations when engaging in a CRRP approach. With the importance of building an inclusive classroom culture at the forefront of their approach, these teachers believe in building meaningful interactions with their students, using collaborative teaching and learning strategies to promote meaningful relationships among peers, and constant conversations of the importance of safe and respectful classrooms (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011; Gay, 2001). When relaying examples of what this looks like in practice, teachers described actions such as allowing students to complete questionnaires specifying interests, hoodies, and learning styles. Beyond the classroom, building strong relationships entails advocating for students by attending concerts, dance recitals, and sporting events. Actions such as purposeful grouping among students to these teachers, creates collaboration among peers and the opportunity for students to learn from each other and construct knowledge together (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). By continuously stressing the importance of safe and respectful environments, students feel safe and comfortable to share with their classmates.

Along with the importance of collaborative learning, Villegas and Lucas (2002) also point to bridging the gap between what ELLs already know, and what they need to learn from the topic at hand as a necessary consideration in culturally responsive teaching. This entails teachers facilitating discussions where students can engage in questioning, interpreting, and analyzing information on topics that are of interest to the students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Teachers must also be mindful that their ELL and non-ELL students construct meaning in different ways. When engaging in a CRRP approach, it is crucial that teachers monitor their students’ progress and evolving understanding of new ideas (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Because ELL students learn and
understand differently to their non-ELL peers, Tran (2015) found that in order for teachers to successfully support their ELL students, they must first establish an understanding of the principles of second language acquisition. With this understanding, teachers are equipped with a range of linguistic teaching strategies which accommodate their ELL students. Strategies most frequently utilized by teachers employing this approach include increased wait time, use of visuals, graphic aids, and non-verbal cues, encouraging students to use their first language, and helping students to make connections to prior lived experiences (Tran, 2015).

2.1.3 ELLs: development, challenges, and barriers

Understanding CRRP and its major tenets is equally important as considering how ELLs fair in the school community, and the several challenges and barriers they face in navigating a new school system. Although researchers speak to the importance of nurturing the socio-emotional and academic development of ELLs (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2008), schools are continuing to fall behind. According to Niehaus and Adelson (2014), fostering ELL development is critical in elementary school years as these years provide the foundation for the development of socio-emotional and academic skills. Thus, establishing a positive framework early on, allows students to develop in a positive manner. Factors such as age, immigration, socioeconomic status, family separation, and cultural conflicts between school and home complicate ELLs' smooth and successful transition into the Canadian school system, therefore disrupting their development (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2008; Van Ngo, 2007). Factors such as trauma and conflict experienced by several refugee students further complicate the transitioning process and place these students at an increased risk for negative outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2008).
Van Ngo (2007) speaks to the challenges ELLs with an immigrant background in navigating new school systems in Canada. Along with the aforementioned factors affecting students' transition, several ELLs also face challenges in the school setting. These challenges include stress, confusion regarding cultural identity, and discrimination from peers and staff members (Van Ngo, 2007). The author highlights a broadening incongruence between the complex needs of ELLs and the ELL services that are available to students in Canadian schools. In fact, school boards across Canada have progressively reduced such services (Van Ngo, 2007). Combined, these factors act as barriers towards ELLs socio-emotional and academic development. Moreover, the lack of resources available to ELLs creates even more of a burden for these students and their families. This research not only sheds light on the issues facing ELLs, but it also points to inconsistencies between ELLs and Canadian School Board priorities.

2.2 Responsiveness to Diversity

When it comes to how teachers respond to diversity, there is no uniform approach. Faez (2012) articulates that attention to diversity and English as a second language (ESL) are not required components of most teacher education programs under the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). Further she argues, individual faculties are independent and have the freedom to determine their own approaches to supporting ELLs as well as the programs they offer, resulting in classrooms varying greatly from one another (Faez, 2012). Although there is no one-size-fits-all approach with regard to diversity, allowing faculties in Ontario to autonomously determine what they deem important in supporting ELLs without the proper programming and training to drive this decision is very problematic. Without fully understanding ELLs, the challenges they face, and the factors that hinder their ability to excel academically, these faculties may be
broadening the gaps that exist with regard to diversity. What is worse, when educators are given
the opportunity to learn about how to set their newcomer students up for success, they are
commonly taught to understand diversity in terms of appreciations and celebrations of difference
(Webster & Valeo, 2011). This surface-level approach works to limit the ways students can
negotiate their identities and possibly misrepresent their capabilities (Webster & Valeo, 2011). In
the sections that follow, I highlight the available research on how pre-service and practicing
teachers respond to diversity.

2.2.1 Pre-service teachers

Despite the evident need for teachers to engage in culturally responsive teaching
practices, programs are still struggling to keep up with the growing population of ELL students.
In an analysis of teacher education programs in the United States, Villegas and Lucas (2002)
found that the addition of one or two courses has been the standard response for teacher
education programs with regard to an increasingly diverse student population. The problem lies
in how these courses are delivered and presented. Several of these courses are optional and
introduced independently and in isolation of other core courses (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Yet,
Gay (2001) argues, "there is a place for cultural diversity in every subject taught in schools"
(p.107). Even more problematic, are the recounts of some of the education trainees (Mary and
Linda) interviewed for a study conducted by Webster and Valeo (2011). Mary, who completed
her B.Ed. in Ontario, discussed her experiences in her program with regard to ELL education.
Overall, she took no classes specifically tailored towards ELL instruction. However, when
content on ELLs was introduced, it was done so through another course and in a manner in
which all ELLs' and their needs were the same (Webster & Valeo, 2011). Similarly, Linda
expressed that when these topics were introduced, they were presented in such a superficial manner that she could not recall any of them.

Barnes (2006) outlines three interrelated reasons why programs are failing pre-service teachers. Due to 1) a disconnection between theory and practice, 2) limited cultural knowledge bases of teachers, and 3) curriculum that has historically been grounded in Eurocentric styles of pedagogy, she argues, teachers are unprepared for the changing demographic of learners (Barnes, 2006). In addition to these factors, the negative beliefs or stereotypes that some teachers hold for their students because of their lack of cultural knowledge, negatively impact their academic performance (Barnes, 2006; Delpit 1996). Cummins (2000a) extends on this idea to argue that discourses regarding xenophobia are seen throughout classrooms because of these simplistic beliefs, and act as a means through which power relations are brought about. It acts to limit the ways in which identities are negotiated between students and teachers, and most importantly, constrains the possibilities of a culturally diverse education, which they need. I use the term simplistic here to stress the types of views several teachers hold for their diverse students. What some believe to be diverse, are often superficial or distorted images of these students' cultures perpetuated through mass media and popular culture (Gay, 2001). Simplistic views such as seeing ELLs as less capable than their non-ELL peers may be due to the fact that some teachers do not know enough about other ethnic groups and their important contributions (Gay, 2001). Further, meeting the needs of students who are culturally diverse becomes increasingly challenging when teachers exercise differential treatment among students who do not fit the mould of the "ideal student" (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). The "ideal student" is often one who excels socio-emotionally and academically and fits the standards of the dominant group (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). These problematic beliefs correlate with higher dropout rates of up to 60% of
high school students, and lead students to disengage with learning material (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011; Van Ngo, 2007). On the other hand, teachers who respect the cultural differences of their students are better able to hold the mentality that students from non-dominant groups are capable learners despite the fact that their ways of thinking and knowing differ from that of the dominant group (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

### 2.2.2 Practicing teachers

Practicing teachers too encounter problems with enacting a CRRP approach. Learning ways to create inclusive classrooms for ELLs becomes even more of a challenge when teachers are already in the field due to the lack of Board initiatives (Taylor & Sobel, 2003). The majority of research on supporting ELLs focuses on pre-service teachers and teacher education programs yet fail to shed light on how practicing teachers can better support their diverse learners (Taylor & Sobel, 2003). The question then becomes, what resources are available to educators in the field? According to the Ontario Curriculum English As a Second Language and English Literacy Development Resource Guide (2001), "Responsibility for students’ language development is shared by the classroom teacher, school staff, and, where available, the ESL/ELD teacher" (p.12). Several teachers however, fail to understand this responsibility and lack the necessary training to provide effective support (Cummins, 2000a). The guide outlines several actions a teacher can take when facilitating students’ language learning. Some of these actions include: classroom activities that provide the opportunity to listen and speak, opportunities for gaining new vocabulary, and learning activities that integrate skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing (MOE, 2001).

By acquiring more knowledge about different ethnic groups and their contributions Gay
(2001) suggests, teachers can better understand multicultural education and effectively teach them. As an example, Aujla-Bhullar (2011) conducted a study where teachers in diverse school settings engaged in a professional development day (PD) titled "Deconstructing Diversity." The researcher wanted to understand how teachers who work in a diverse community perceive their engagement in teaching ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse students. After engaging the teachers in activities, discussions, and a questionnaire, results confirmed that teachers felt the need for additional PD initiatives that involve diversity and community knowledge. Further, participants wished to "understand" the lives of their students more (Aujla-Bhullar, 2011).

Although researchers are calling for more PD days that explore topics of CRRP, ELLs, and diversity, there is little research on the availability and frequency with which these workshops occur (Aujla-Bhullar, 2011; Taylor & Sobel, 2003). What is clear is that both pre-service and practicing teachers lack a sense of preparedness in supporting ELLs in the classroom.

2.2.3 Challenges in responding to diversity

In this section, I explore challenges educators face in attempting to be culturally responsive as well as the factors and circumstances that these newcomer students carry with them, making their transition even more of a challenge. To explain the challenges educators face, and the attempts they make to become more culturally responsive, I rely on the work of Delpit (2006).

In an attempt to demonstrate the danger of overcorrecting Ebonics-speaking children's language, Delpit (2006) suggests that teacher's best intentions may actually be hindering the student's ability to learn. Ebonics, or African American English (Delpit, 2006) is an independent language in and itself and I use this discussion as an example of the problems it can cause for students speaking any other language than Standard English. To illustrate this danger, Delpit
(2006) created an "iz" language with classes of pre-service teachers by adding "iz" to the first consonant or consonant cluster, for example, apple becomes iz-ap-piz-le. After the dialect was practiced, teachers were asked to explain to their colleagues, in the new language, why they decided to become teachers. The author found that after attempting the first few words, many pre-service teachers would stop and resort to speaking English, or stop speaking altogether. Post study, all participants spoke of the challenge in applying rules to a new language while simultaneously trying to express a thought. This challenge lends very well to the problems ELLs face in their transition into a new language. When teachers stop to correct their students for making errors, Delpit (2006) argues, students begin to produce language in a manner that is fragmented, causing students to become more aware of their speech. These corrections have also been shown to produce disconnections between teachers and students where the students' attitudes towards their teachers may change.

Through the example provided by Delpit (2006), it becomes clear how easy it is to set a student back, even though the teacher may have the student's best interest at heart. As highlighted above, the Ministry of Education Resource Guide also describes several stages of second language acquisition a newcomer may face. Teachers can read this document to further understand how to best set their newcomer student up for success. In order to set the student up for success, Cummins (2000b) argues that educators must challenge and resist coercive relations of power between themselves and their students and instead, pursue collaborative relations of power. He suggests that through empowerment, educators are able to establish these types of relationships, ultimately setting the student up for success.

Lastly, teachers must also take into consideration the challenges with regard to the students' needs as well as the factors that may affect their transition. For example, factors such as
age, gender, and urban or rural living vary for each ELL and all impact the student's adaptation process (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008). It is crucial that teachers educate themselves on these factors when getting to know their students. The guide put forth by the Ministry of Education- Supporting English Language Learners with Limited Prior Schooling (2008), also urges its readers to be mindful of the fact that some of these students' needs may extend beyond schooling. Students and their families may have suffered extreme difficulties before arriving in Canada. Unresolved asylum claims, financial difficulties, health conditions, and the burden of loss or separation from family are a few examples of the challenges these students and their families face (MOE, 2008). These challenges also point to the need for educators to not only be aware of these factors, but also set up an environment where the student feels supported.

2.3 Teacher Diversity

Research has argued for the inclusion of teachers of diverse backgrounds as necessary for growing diversity of the student population (Faez, 2012; Ryan et al., 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Although this importance is highlighted in research, the teacher population in Canada still comprises of predominantly White middle-class females (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). This section will take a critical look at teacher diversity, qualities of diverse teachers, the benefits of these teachers for ELL success, and the inequitable hiring practices that these teachers face.

2.3.1 Qualities of diverse teachers

It is important to note here that my point is not to devalue the contributions of White educators in Ontario. Rather, for the purpose of this study, my aim is to highlight the qualities ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse teachers carry with them, that ultimately aid in
their sense of preparedness to support other diverse students—several of which are ELLs. Immigrant teacher candidates bring cultural resources such as skills, attitudes, and alternative ways of thinking and knowing (Cho, 2010). These qualities act as a lens through which these candidates can teach, giving students the opportunity to see, hear, and think about voices that have been absent from discussion. Furthermore, when diverse teachers speak the same language as the children's parents, parents are more likely to become involved in and support their children's learning (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). This involvement, coupled with the child feeling a sense of self through the teacher's instruction, contributes significantly to their academic growth (Cummins, 2000b). Referred to as cultural capital, schools tend to value certain cultural resources which reflect the values and interests of the dominant group (Bourdieu, 1977). The values and qualities internationally educated teachers carry with them should be considered valuable cultural capital to have in the classroom, rather, this diversity is viewed as more of an impairment to the IET assimilating into mainstream culture. As Cho (2010) suggests, in order to understand systems such as discrimination and oppression, we must first look at the ways in which these systems intersect and how they disproportionately affect those (IETs and ELLs) who are attempting to find a place within a resistant community.

The TDSB (2007) states, "Our hiring and promotion practices are bias-free, and promote equitable representation of our diversity at all levels of the school system" (p.2). Despite the school board's commitment to equitable practices, the number of culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse teachers compared to students do not add up.

### 2.3.2 Benefits of diverse teachers

In today's diverse classrooms, having teachers of similar linguistic and cultural
backgrounds as their students has been acknowledged as invaluable. Because of their shared backgrounds and possible shared experiences of discrimination or marginalization, these teachers are better equipped to develop positive relationships with their students (Faez, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2004). In an attempt to unveil the inadequacies of teacher diversity in Canada, Ryan, Pollock and Antonelli (2009) retrieved data from educators, the general population, and Stats Canada to get a better idea as to the reality of the situation. The research indicates that the number of elementary teachers of colour is not keeping pace with the growth of the diverse student population (Faez, 2012; Ryan et al., 2009). The authors also propose that teachers of colour are better positioned to form relationships with other ethnically diverse students and these students can also learn from such role models (Ryan et al., 2009).

2.3.3 Inequitable hiring practices in Canada

There seems to be a clear mismatch in the hiring practices in Ontario. The Ontario College of Teachers (2008) reports certifying "record numbers" of internationally educated teachers, however, these record numbers translate to only 7 percent of this population finding fulltime teaching jobs in Ontario, compared to 29 percent of overall graduates. In addition, IET's who successfully complete their B.Ed. programs are over represented in occasional/ supply teacher positions (48%) compared to their Anglo-Canadian peers (OCT, 2005). This underrepresentation of teachers in fulltime positions Faez (2012) and Cho (2010) argue, is due to systemic discrimination that gives access to certain groups of individuals. These individuals are predominantly White, middle-class, able-bodied, and Canadian born. Teacher education programs across Ontario continue to privilege, praise, and perpetuate Eurocentric curricula. In a study highlighting the challenges internationally educated teachers face in navigating teacher
education programs in Ontario, Cho (2010) found that several participants expressed the desire to learn the "Canadian" ways of teaching in order to qualify for a job. It is interesting to see how a person can be so willing to give up his/her identity, background, knowledge, and ways of teaching in order to assimilate. Equally interesting, is the idea of what or rather who an ideal teacher is in Canada. By desiring to learn "Canadian" teaching practices, these IETs are affirming the idea that their culture and identity are a shortfall rather than a strength, and that in order to qualify for this type of job, the ideal candidate must fit certain "Canadian" criteria.

2.4 Sense of Preparedness

When teachers hold a strong sense of efficacy in their ability to work with students from diverse backgrounds, benefits are observed for both teachers and students (Tran, 2015; Webster & Valeo, 2011; Cho, 2010). Tran (2015) found that strong teacher efficacy is related to positive classroom behaviours, student outcomes, and a better perception in their ability to teach. However, the available data suggest that many pre-service teachers do not feel prepared to effectively teach these diverse students (Tran, 2015; Webster & Valeo, 2011). After conducting interviews and administering semi structured questionnaires, Webster and Valeo (2011) found that pre-service teachers reported having no mandatory courses that were based on ELL instruction but rather, diversity topics that were embedded in other mandatory classes. What is more, the issues and topics raised were often very broad, or as one participant called it, "basic and surface-level" (Webster & Valeo, 2011, p.116). These minor additions can do more harm than good. Without fully understanding how to teach CRRP, educators may be teaching about celebrations of diversity rather than equipping pre-service teachers with the tools to meaningfully incorporate diverse perspectives into their classrooms. Not only are these additions absent of
student voice, but they also limit the ways these students can express themselves, their backgrounds, and cultural identities in ways that are meaningful to them.

Although these participants felt unprepared and uneducated in dealing with ELLs, Tran (2015) found that teachers who did obtain English as a Second Language (ESL) pre-service certification felt more prepared to support ELL than teachers who did not have the certification. The certification process allowed for the pre-service teachers to understand how their attitudes and beliefs influence their students. By observing their own views and biases, these teachers were able to better recognize that their views of the world were not the only ones that existed (Tran, 2015). Reflexive practices seem to be at the forefront of many teacher education programs. It is through this practice that teachers begin to realize not only the diversity of their students, but that their diversity matters.

Teachers are truly caught in a crossfire when it comes to preparing themselves for a diverse student population. In Ontario, these teacher education courses are not mandatory, and when topics for ELL instruction are included, they are done so through other mandatory courses and in a very broad manner. Due to these factors, research on teachers’ sense of preparedness in supporting ELLs is few and far between. Now, more than ever, teachers need to better prepare themselves for the continuously changing demographic of learners in Ontario.

2.5 Conclusion

In this literature review I examined research related to CRRP, ELLs, responsiveness to diversity, teacher diversity, and lastly, teachers sense of preparedness in supporting ELLs. This review highlights the extent to which CRRP is able to transform beliefs and attitudes about diversity. It also emphasizes that through this teaching approach, teachers are able to transform
their relationships with students, setting them up for success. It also raises questions about how effectively teachers can enact these teaching strategies without proper training.

Although the findings discussed above all point towards the need for teacher education programming, there exists some limitations with regard to generalizability. For example, the results in the study conducted by Villegas and Lucas (2002) cannot be generalized to the Canadian population at large because the study was conducted in the United States. Similarly, the study conducted by Webster and Valeo (2011) also lacks in generalizability due to the small number of participants in the study. With a wider range of participants, the authors may have been able to gain more perspectives of pre-service teachers, and not just the ones with overall negative experiences.

By focusing on the lack of preparedness teachers feel in supporting ELLs, this finding raises questions about how teachers enact CRT without available teacher education programs or training and points to the need for meaningful teacher education programs that properly prepare teachers for their diverse learners, specifically, ELLs. In light of this, I hope to understand how teachers enact CRRP to support their culturally diverse classrooms and ELLs. This study addresses the actions these teachers take as well as the benefits and challenges they face in achieving this. I ultimately aim to inform ELL-inclusive instruction for my teaching practice and the broader education community.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I outline the research methodology. I begin by describing my research approach and procedure and data collection instruments, followed by a description of the participants of the study and sampling procedures. Within this discussion I identify sampling criteria and my reasoning for these choices. Next, I explain data analysis procedures and highlight the ethical issues that are important to my study. Lastly, I briefly summarize the methodological decisions and limitations of the study, while also highlighting the strengths.

3.1 Research Approach & Procedures

This research study was conducted using a qualitative approach. This involved a literature review of current research on the topic of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy as well as semi-structured interviews with three elementary school teachers. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), qualitative research methods or qualitative stance as they define it, involve processes and phenomena of the world that are described before theorized, and understood before explained. It involves focusing on the everyday, cultural aspects of knowing, understanding, and acting as individuals. Qualitative research methods allow researchers to unpack differing views held by diverse groups of people (Choy, 2014). Unlike the data acquired from surveys, interacting with and gaining perspectives from people offers more diversity and the opportunity to probe for individual beliefs and values (Choy, 2014; Kanis, 2004).

Powers and Knapp (1990) refer to the dichotomy of quantitative vs. qualitative research as a realist vs. an idealist view of the world. Realists, the authors argue, believe that the world can be perceived directly, while idealists believe that perceptions of the world are determined
through a sequence of lenses which distort ideas and messages and can only be understood subjectively. Through these differing lenses, qualitative research allows researchers to understand the meaning people attach to ideas through open-ended inquiry (Choy, 2014; Powers & Knapp, 1990). As my research deals with the types of pedagogical teaching tools educators employ to support diverse learners, it is crucial that I gain a diverse range of perspectives in order to better inform teaching practice.

Although there have been historically negative views towards qualitative research, Carr (1994) suggests that each research design serves its purposes and that neither quantitative nor qualitative research is better than the other. Collingridge and Gantt (2008) argue that the steady increase in popularity of qualitative research is due to the realization that traditional quantitative research limits the ability to capture meanings people attach to different phenomena. Another critique of qualitative research is that its results lack the ability to be generalizable like quantitative results can (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). However, the value of qualitative research lies in its ability to be generalizable in an analytical manner. What Collingridge and Gantt (2008) mean by this is that through an analysis of results gained from a qualitative approach, researchers are able to extract similarities and differences among situations and perspectives and from them, draw upon relevant theoretical frameworks pertinent to the research topic. Given my research purpose and questions, a qualitative approach allowed me to analyze my findings in this manner and gain insight into how teachers make meaning of their lived experiences.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

Qualitative research consists of different forms of interviewing, each of which has its unique purpose (Jackson II, Drummond & Camara, 2007). Jackson II et al., (2007) define
interviewing as a set of techniques for generating data using structured, semi-structured, or unstructured formats. Semi-structured interviews are the most preferred method as they not only allow for flexibility, but they also highlight important and often overlooked aspects of human behaviour (Jackson II et al., 2007; Qu & Dumay, 2011). The semi-structured interview involves prepared questions that highlight themes and ideas consistent with the area of inquiry (Jackson II et al., 2007).

Kale and Brinkmann (2009) refer to interviewing as a social production of knowledge where knowledge is produced in a conversational manner between the interviewer and interviewee. This exchange of knowledge also provides a useful way for researchers to learn about the world and perspectives of others through a different lens (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The authors also point to the potential challenges of interviewing where worldviews may be misjudged or misunderstood. However, when planned and done with care, Qu and Dumay (2011) highlight that the interview approach can provide a meaningful set of data.

For the purpose of this study, the primary instrument for data collection used was a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B) where interview questions were written in advance. The semi-structured nature allowed the participants to guide the conversation in a manner that was not only important to them, but also reflected their values, beliefs, and possible biases as educators. The semi-structured nature allowed for participants to elaborate on aspects of their practice that were most meaningful to them and allowed me to adjust my questions where I saw fit, allowing for more valuable findings.

3.3 Participants

There are many decisions that must be taken into consideration when designing the interview process. Considerations such as whom to interview, how many participants will be
required, and what type of interview will be conducted should all determined in advance (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Below I highlight the sampling criteria I developed for participant recruitment.

### 3.3.1 Sampling criteria

The following criteria applied to teacher participants:

1. Teachers have a minimum 5 years of experience working with students enrolled in ESL programs or who have been identified as ELL.

2. Teachers have demonstrated leadership and/or commitment in the area of supporting ELLs through culturally relevant teaching.

3. Teachers employ culturally responsive teaching practices in the classroom on an everyday basis.

4. Teachers have been working in the Education field for over 5 years.

5. A minimum of one participant has been internationally educated before immigrating to and teaching in Canada.

6. Teacher participants have a range of ethno-cultural identities.

With the aim of answering the main research question, it was crucial that the participants I interviewed have some degree of experience in working with students enrolled in ESL programs or who have been formally identified as ELL. This criteria was set in place because I was particularly interested in this group of diverse learners and the methods teachers use to support their learning. Participants also needed to have demonstrated leadership and/or certification in ELL and/or differentiated instruction as my goal was to learn from teachers who are passionate about and devoted to culturally responsive teaching practices. My aim was to not only learn about the ways teachers support ELLs' learning and academic growth, but also how they achieve
this in a meaningful manner. Teachers who have demonstrated leadership and certification in these areas are better positioned to speak to the challenges and experiences that have informed their sense of preparedness in supporting ELLs.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is at the heart of this research topic. In order to fully grasp how this sample of teachers work to support ELLs, their teaching practices must allow their students to draw upon their learning styles and traditions and feel comfortable doing so every day in the classroom. The teachers who support these learners are faced with the challenge of allowing these students to apply their culturally relevant learning styles and supporting their transition into a mainstream classroom where factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status all impact the students; adaptation process (Garrett & Holcomb, 2005; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008). Due to the complexity of these issues, teachers needed to have a minimum of 5 years experience working in the Education field. With teaching experience under their belt, these teachers would have faced challenges in supporting ELLs are able to speak to the ways in which they have overcome these obstacles to better support their students. The criteria of having one internationally educated teacher was put in place in order to gain a range of perspectives on the ways teachers support diverse learners and to better inform teaching practice. Internationally educated teachers would be able to shed light on the challenges they faced in navigating a new school system and country, similar to many ELL students. Lastly, teacher participants needed to have a range of ethno-cultural identities. My aim here was to gain insight into how teachers enact a CRRP approach and how their respective cultural backgrounds influenced or informed their preparedness in achieving this endeavor.
3.3.2 Sampling procedures/recruitment

Sampling procedures are complex, rigorous processes that require thought, planning, and involve a sample that is representative of a larger population of people (Carr, 1994; Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). There are three broad approaches to selecting a sample which I wish to highlight. The first approach, convenience sampling, is the least arduous of the three techniques and involves selecting participants who are the most accessible to the researcher (Marshall, 1996). Purposeful sampling, which is the most common sampling method, includes participants who serve a particular purpose that connects to the study's main objective (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008; Marshall, 1996). Lastly, theoretical sampling, a theory-driven approach, involves the selection of participants who can give insight into specific theoretical constructs that the researcher is exploring (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008).

Given the methodological parameters and small-scale nature of the study, I applied a convenience sample method. I relied on and drew from the networks I had created during my graduate studies to recruit participants for this study and also asked for recommendations of other individuals who they believed fit the criteria for the purpose of the study. The recruitment process also entailed a degree of purposeful sampling as the participants needed to meet certain sampling criteria as highlighted above. In order to ensure my sample was purposeful, I connected with professors in the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Department who specifically focus on ELL instruction inquiring if they had any possible connections with teachers or school boards. In addition, I contacted a small network of teachers providing them with a description of my research study and asked that they distribute this information along with my contact information to teachers in the school in order to recruit participants.


3.3.3 Participant bios

Aryam

At the time of the research, Aryam was an educator working in the capacity as ESL teacher in the York District School Board. She taught in a school where over one third of the student population identifies as ELLs. She had over 25 years experience as a junior teacher with specializations in ESL and Special Education. Before settling in her role as ESL teacher, Aryam taught special education for 15 years and supported students with socio-emotional and behavioural issues through a program called ASSIST. Before beginning her teaching career, Aryam received her teaching certification at the University of Toronto. An ELL herself, Aryam and her family immigrated to Canada from Italy when she was a young child. Both her lived experience of being an immigrant, combined with her teaching experience in Canada and overseas, offered a unique perspective and shed light on the key tenets of a CRRP approach.

John

John is an internationally educated teacher from England with 20 years of teaching experience. He had specializations in ESL and Physical Education. After 10 years of teaching abroad in London and Kuwait, John and his family immigrated to Canada in 2006. At the time of the research, he was a junior teacher in the Hamilton School Board and was highly involved in Hamilton's ALMA program, a program designed for refugee students or students with limited prior schooling. With 81% of the student population in his school identifying as ELLs, John played a crucial role in the support and development of ELLs. Although John identified as a White, English-speaking male, he was able to provide insight into the challenges immigrants face in navigating a new country and school system.
Indira

Indira identified as Afro-Caribbean female with roots in Barbados and Canada. She had 17 years of teaching experience as a primary/junior teacher. Over the span of her career, she had taught grade 7, English, and Summer school. At the time of the research, she was teaching at a school in the Toronto District School Board. Indira received her teaching certification from York University. Indira's double identity of being Barbadian and Canadian allowed her to teach students through a lens of understanding and empathy. Further, as one of the only women of colour in her teaching profession, Indira consistently advocated for her students. Together, these factors offer critical insight into CRRP and teacher diversity.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a step-by-step process that requires stages of insightful questioning, active observation, a search for answers, and precise recall. It allows researchers to pinpoint pertinent information. Further, it is a process of piecing data together and recognizing important themes and their significance (Morse, 1994). Morse (1994) also highlights four cognitive processes that she suggests, are integral to data analysis in qualitative research methods. These cognitive processes include comprehending, or identifying themes and patterns in text that are consistent and inconsistent with the research purpose, synthesizing, or the merging of stories that create a particular pattern of behaviour, theorizing, finding the best theoretical scheme consistent with the research topic and determining relationships between categories, and recontextualizing which is achieved by forming explanatory or hypothetical statements for a particular phenomena.

Similarly, Collingridge and Gantt (2008) argue that well-constructed studies utilize a data analysis process where interpersonal interviews are taken place with people sharing their
experiences, interview data is transcribed, meaningful statements are located within transcripts, the meaning is obtained through these statements, the statements are then synthesized into themes, and the themes together create a description of what it is like to experience the phenomena of interest. Following a well-defined data analysis procedure such as this, I ensured meaningful statements and themes within transcripts were highlighted while remaining aware of the discrepancies that existed in the findings compared to the research discussed in the literature review. From these discrepancies, I point to possible areas for further research and from the consistent themes, I discuss their significance and connection to my research purpose and questions.

### 3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

The relationship between interviewer and interviewee is one in which knowledge is both produced and shared simultaneously. With the exchange of information, it is important for both parties to feel comfortable and protected. With an emphasis on human rights and protection of personal information, Qu and Dumay (2011) suggest that it is necessary to consider all ethical issues when conducting interviews. These considerations are related to the dignity and privacy of individuals, the prevention of harm, and the assured confidentiality of research findings (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

Along with these considerations, it is of equal importance to be aware of the potential ethical issues that may arise during the study. Although culturally responsive pedagogy is not an overly sensitive topic, some teachers may feel threatened or intimidated by the term and concerned as to whether their practices and teaching methods consistently align with the goals of this form of pedagogy. To eliminate the risk of participants feeling nervous or pressured, thus
raising the risk of vulnerability, a sample of research questions was provided to participants ahead of time. Participants were also made aware of the fact that they are permitted to refrain from any questions that they did not feel comfortable with and withdraw from participation at any time. This reassurance was made continuously throughout the interview and was also made in writing. All information obtained from interviews were transcribed and participants had the opportunity to review and refine any statements made before data analysis was conducted. Lastly, to minimize the risk of participants feeling vulnerable, the interviewee was debriefed after the interview to allow for proper closure of the experience (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

As all participants have the right to privacy and confidentiality (Qu & Dumay, 2011), all participants were assigned a pseudonym and any information alluding to their identity, school, or students will be omitted. Privacy was also assured by keeping all data under lock and key with a password only known to the interviewer and data will be destroyed after five years. Another ethical principle that should be taken into consideration is for the interviewer to impose no harm on the interviewee. To ensure this, research should be conducted under the guidance and support of a particular governing body or research board (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The participants in this study were aware that all interview protocol had been preapproved. Specific information regarding expectations of participants, permission to be interviewed and audiotaped, and ethical implications were also outlined in the interview protocol and consent letter (refer to Appendix A and B).

Lastly, Jackson II et al. (2007) highlight that it is our responsibility as researchers to approach each study objectively, with ethical diligence, and thoroughness. By taking into consideration the various ethical issues highlighted above, and taking the necessary precautions and actions to avoid these dilemmas, I ensured that my participants felt comfortable in sharing
their experiences and protected in knowing that their information was held to a high professional standard.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

Considering the limited number of participants in this study, a limitation is that data is not generalizable to the broader population. Therefore, although findings inform the research topic and purpose, data cannot be translated to all teachers. However, as highlighted above, this methodological approach allows for deeper and more meaningful insight into the meaning people attach to certain phenomena (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). Further, the value of this approach also lies in its analytical ability. From the interviews, I was able to extract similarities and differences among situations and perspectives and from them, draw upon relevant theoretical frameworks pertinent to the research purpose and literature review. This allowed for more of an in-depth analysis and provided a richer set of data than a survey could have allowed for.

Qu and Dumay (2011) emphasize that interviewers must not enter into any form of relationship with the interviewee where the interviewee is befriended or exploited. Carr (1994) takes this further to suggest that a limitation in qualitative methodology is that the relationship between interviewer and interviewee has the potential of misrepresenting findings. As I am currently enrolled in a teacher education program and am not yet a professional in the field, there was a minimized possibility for me to impose my beliefs and values on the participants. However, interview questions were prepared in advance and interviews were a maximum of 60 minutes to reduce this risk. Despite these limitations, this study was able shed light on the outcomes teachers observe for their ELL and non-ELL students through the use of culturally responsive teaching practices and allowed these teachers to reflect on their practices as
professionals.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter consisted of the research methodology. In particular, I began by articulating the research approach and procedures. Within this discussion, I defined qualitative research and described my decision to engage in this approach as it allowed for analyzing my findings and pulling out similarities and differences among situations (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). Next, I moved on to describe the instruments of data collection and identified one-on-one semi-structured interviews as the chosen method for the purpose of the study as it allowed flexibility. I then described the participants, including the sampling criteria I employed, and brief bios for the three chosen participants. This chapter concludes with the methodological limitations and strengths of the study. Next, in Chapter 4, I report my findings.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction

The main goal of this research was to learn how a sample of elementary school teachers enact culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (CRRP) to support their ELL students. Further, my goal was to learn the outcomes they observe from this approach for the ELL and non-ELL learners. With this goal in mind, in this chapter, I highlight and unpack the findings resulting from the data analysis of three interviews with teachers from the Toronto, York, and Peel District School Boards. Findings from this data have been separated into four major themes:

4.1 Participants identify CRRP as a multidisciplinary approach to language instruction that involves student advocacy within an inclusive environment.

4.2 Participants pointed to professional advancement and personal advocacy as factors that have informed their preparedness for and interest in supporting ELLs.

4.3 Participants identified improved personal well-being and increased learning for students through incorporating a CRRP approach.

4.4 Participants pointed to biases, misunderstandings, and conflicting administration priorities as barriers to their CRRP practices.

Within each theme, subthemes are discussed in order to gain a clearer understanding of how these teachers engage in CRRP, why they chose to take this approach, and the outcomes and barriers they faced as a result. Through my discussion, I aim to first make connections among participants' definitions, teaching practices, and experiences with CRRP. Next, I make connections to research in the Literature Review that both converge and diverge with the data found from this study. Lastly, I summarize my findings and point to areas for further research.
4.1 Participants identify CRRP as a multidisciplinary approach to language instruction that involves student advocacy within an inclusive environment.

The participants’ definitions of what CRRP meant to them in theory and in practice go well beyond simple textbook teaching. When defining CRRP, participants spoke to the importance of an approach that is integrated across all subject areas—so much so, that it forms the culture of their classroom. In addition, this approach incorporated student advocacy and an inclusive classroom where students were able to see, as well as draw upon, their first language and culture represented in the classroom. Within this theme, theory and practice are not seen as separate, but intertwined. These definitions are not only beneficial for other educators to gain an understanding of what CRRP means and entails, but they also inform other pertinent themes that will be highlighted.

4.1.1 Participants highlighted the importance of a multidisciplinary approach that integrates social justice and critical thought in defining CRRP.

All three participants highlighted definitions of CRRP that revolve around social justice and critical thought. Throughout the discussion, participants frequently made references to their definition and what this looks like in their practice. Indira defined CRRP as being aware of the students in one’s classroom. This awareness involves knowing where they come from, their lived experiences, and how these factors are brought about in the classroom. Indira indicated she uses this knowledge of her students to make social justice issues more relevant and meaningful to students. She used 9/11 as an example of what a conversation looked like in her classroom. She stated,

I remember on 9/11 when everyone was crying about the Americans and I looked at my students and I was like...well my students may have more of a connection to the place...
where the terrorists may have come from. And they may not see them as terrorists. They may see them as people who are fighting for their families who have been killed. So they had a moment of silence for the Americans and I said we are not standing for Americans, we are standing for everyone who has died unjustly at the hands of others.

By acknowledging her students' backgrounds, and how certain events may affect them differently, Indira is recognizing that a CRRP approach involves seeing world issues through the lens of her students. The approach also involves getting students to critically think about social justice issues and how they affect everyone differently. Aryam indicated she takes a similar approach in her teaching. For example, when there was a factory fire in Bangladesh years ago, Aryam allowed the Bangladeshi students in her class to talk about it, how it affected their families and their country. Aryam then used this as a teaching moment to discuss child labour issues with her students. These conversations that participants have with their students allow the students to critically think about issues. Indira stated,

> At the end of the day, we want our students to come away as critical thinkers and what culturally relevant pedagogy does is enable a teacher, if you’re thinking about it, to use the resources around them, whatever they may be, and infuse it with social justice issues.

Indira indicated that she believes a CRRP approach engages students in critical thought and involves lots of questions and discussions. When speaking about First Nations people and land, for example, she believed it is crucial for teachers to unpack the hidden messages within a topic. In her Social Studies class, it's about asking her students questions such as "Does land actually belong to us just because we have our home on it?" And, "When we are singing the national anthem, are we acknowledging everybody or what was given up for this song?" Teachers who fail to engage students in these types of conversations deny their students the opportunity to
think more critically about issues and leave them without the necessary tools to become critical readers of the world around them.

The incorporation of critical thought and social justice issues in these teachers' definition of CRRP align with Ladson-Billings' (1995) argument that teaching must go beyond simple additions of diversity to get students thinking about and exploring values and social issues and critically think about them. Further, the author urges that teachers must help students acquire the critical tools that are essential in challenging dominant systems of power (Ladson-Billings, 1995). By engaging in rich discussions with their students, and asking critical questions, Aryam and Indira allow their students to explore social justice issues in deep and insightful manner.

4.1.2 Participants also recognized the significance of student advocacy in defining CRRP.

Participants emphasized that student advocacy is at the forefront of their CRRP approach. John spoke about advocacy in terms of setting his students and their families up for success in a new education system. He said,

I just really wanted to help students I guess. I think the best way you can do that is through schools, to make them happy and succeed and work with them and their families to figure out the education system. It’s that they feel like they are part of the system.

Aryam recognized this support and respect for her students as a major theme in her definition of CRRP. John also drew upon the idea of support when he stated, "I think that being culturally relevant is all about being aware of the students in your classroom. And by being aware, I mean supporting them. You know, having their back." All three participants also spoke of the importance of advocacy in terms of knowing where their students came from, their cultural backgrounds, and lived experiences. By gaining these insights into students' lives, along with
encouraging and supporting them, these teachers saw advocacy as an important aspect of their culturally relevant teaching.

According to Gay (2010), culturally responsive pedagogy involves the interactions of ethnic identity and cultural background in order to set the student up for achievement. Ladson-Billings (1995) expands on this idea to suggest that CRRP is "effective pedagogical practice that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity" (p.469). Teachers who therefore advocate for their students enable them to acknowledge their cultural background and draw upon it in the classroom. Through participants' supporting their students, they were able to set their students up for success. Further, student advocacy allowed these teachers to understand their diverse learners and their backgrounds in order for students to affirm their cultural identity.

4.1.3 Participants indicated that a CRRP language instruction classroom should be an inclusive environment which incorporates students' first language and culture.

All participants recognized the importance of incorporating their students' L1 in their instruction. According to Aryam, this incorporation involves the use of visuals such as anchor charts, students speaking in their first language (L1). Incorporation of students' L1 to John means allowing his students to write or label diagrams in their L1 or use Google Translate when necessary. These participants expressed the importance of incorporating students' native language for two reasons. Firstly, students were able to strengthen their L1. Secondly, they believed this reinforcement would help support their development in their second language.

John and Indira also noticed the need to adapt to students' learning styles and cultural backgrounds. John described it as, "factoring in your students' cultural background and adapting your teaching to all learning styles." John explained this incorporation of students' culture further
when he said,

In general Somalis, they love talking. So oral storytelling is big in their community. You know when their communities get together, they are LOUD (laughs)...but in a good way!

They are very tactile people. You know it’s about the teacher adapting to that.

In his teaching, John made an effort to incorporate oral storytelling in academic areas such as Literacy and Social Studies. Indira also indicated that she believes representation and incorporation of her students' culture in her classroom is very important. She explained,

It’s about speaking about my three cultures and explaining to them that like me it’s okay to have one foot in one place and the other foot in another. It's about creating a space for kids to self identify as Canadian being something other than White.

In Indira's teaching, incorporating her students' culture meant creating an inclusive environment where students "put in pieces of themselves in anything from a Math problem that they are constructing using culturally relevant points for them, to a narrative that they’re writing, to a speech that they are giving."

When these teachers incorporate their students’ L1 and culture, and allow their students to do so, they are creating an inclusive learning environment that welcomes all learning styles. Teachers who understand the importance of these actions, Ladson-Billings (1995) suggests, use their students' culture as a vehicle for learning.

4.2 Participants pointed to professional advancement and personal advocacy as factors that have informed their preparedness for and interest in supporting ELLs.

Participants' dedication towards a culturally relevant teaching practice stems from their professional development as well as personal advocacy. Specifically, their professional development throughout their career has allowed these teachers to gain a better understanding of
their diverse learners, while personal advocacy comes from shared lived experiences with their students. As will be discussed below, these experiences have informed these teachers’ practice, and although different, are related in that they all allow the participants to teach with a sense of understanding and empathy. These participants' explanations of their preparedness for and interest in supporting ELLs are vital because they contextualize teachers’ pedagogical philosophies and why this approach is meaningful to them.

4.2.1 Participants acknowledged their advancement throughout their schooling and professional career as factors that have informed their sense of preparedness to support ELLs.

All three participants highlighted that their professional development throughout their teaching career aided in their sense of preparedness to support their diverse learners. As pre-service teachers, Indira and Aryam both received their English as a second language (ESL) certification through their respective post-graduate programs. John, who is an internationally educated teacher (IET), received his certification to teach ELLs in England. Despite the fact that the participants voiced the significance of these certification programs to their level of preparedness to support ELLs, Aryam and Indira also described them as very basic, simple "how to" courses. According to Indira, these courses "needed more depth to them."

Aside from their pre-service certification, John and Aryam also spoke to the value of their continued professional development (PD) throughout their teaching career. Specifically, both teachers were part of program initiatives in their schools that were dedicated to supporting ELLs. John's involvement in the ALMA program, a program for "kids with limited prior schooling", was one that John said, "really prepared me to understand these kids and what they've been through." Aryam on the other hand, was involved in a program called ASSIST, an initiative designed for students who struggle with socio-emotional and behavioural issues. Aryam
frequently made reference to this program, highlighting the connection between the program's goals and the goals of her CRRP approach as "it all relates."

Both John and Aryam made a clear connection between how their involvement in programs facilitated their preparedness for supporting ELLs and engaging in a CRRP approach. For these teachers, many of the factors affecting students' achievement in school, also affected ELLs and their adjustment to a new school system. For example, in the APLHA program, John was frequently in contact with refugee students. He believed the support he offered these students was also suitable for his ELLs as many of them shared similar lived experiences. Although Indira was not involved in any school-wide initiatives, she noted that there were series of PD workshops centered around supporting ELLs which she had attended over the course of her career. From her PD Indira learned strategies such as small grouping techniques for ELL students so they felt more comfortable sharing. Further, Indira took the opportunity to take the resources shared in these workshops to infuse them with social justice issues. Through the discussion of these factors, it became clear that these teachers relied more on their own PD, either through involvement in school initiatives or PD workshops, than their ESL certification, to help better prepare them for their diverse learners. These participants' advancement in, and involvement with supporting these students throughout their professional career has offered them a unique lens through which they can see, understand and support their ELLs, and has also demonstrated the initiative they took to achieve this goal.

Tran (2015) however, found otherwise. Teachers who did obtain English as a Second Language (ESL) certification, felt more prepared to support ELLs than teachers who opted not to certify. Further, this certification process allowed pre-service teachers to self-reflect in order to understand how their beliefs and attitudes impact their students (Tran, 2015). For this reason,
perhaps more research is necessary to look at the efficacy and value of pre-service certification programs compared to initiatives such as school-wide programs or PD workshops aimed at supporting ELLs.

4.2.2 Participants highlighted that personal advocacy was a strong factor in their interest in supporting ELLs.

Personal advocacy was a prominent theme among participants. Whether it be through shared experiences of being an ELL, experience immigrating to Canada, or having a diverse cultural background, these participants all voiced how their positionality within a CRRP framework has affected their interest in and devotion to enacting CRRP.

For Aryam, her experience of immigrating to Canada with her family at the age of five sparked her interest in supporting ELLs. She expressed, "I think that personal experience of being an immigrant child who didn't speak English and seeing what my parents have gone through, I think that makes me really committed to helping newcomers." The lens through which Aryam enacts CRRP instruction is one of understanding. From the discussion, it became clear that she understood some of the barriers ELLs face in navigating a new system and learning a new language, and this made her more dedicated to ensuring these students succeed. Although not an ELL himself, John's interest in supporting ELLs and engaging in CRRP also came from his own experience of immigrating to Canada. He shared,

You know it’s difficult to come to Canada. You know I came as a White, educated, British-speaking, ‘oh, you’re accent is cool’ guy. You know I had a lot of things going my way if you know what I mean. And I found it difficult coming to Canada. And you know I thought if I felt that way coming here, how hard must it be when you are coming from a war-torn country or a refugee camp?
John's experience of navigating a new country and education system allowed him to understand some of the trials these families face when adapting to a new country.

Lastly, Indira's interest in supporting ELLs stems from what she called her "double identity." Indira spoke at depth about her "double identity" as mixed race female with a Barbadian and Canadian background. Her childhood consisted of constantly figuring out how to fit the "Canadian" image when she didn't "look the part." Like Aryam, Indira's approach to CRRP is also taught through lens of understanding, but one that also wants to help her students understand they are just as valuable as any of the other students in the school. She pointed to this idea when she said,

They need to understand that they are glorious and wonderful and beautifully made. I think it’s important to impart upon them my first name is Indira and nobody is allowed to butcher your name, your parents picked it, it’s valuable and it’s beautiful. And their name is, too.

Through their own definition of personal advocacy, it is evident that all participants are devoted to supporting their ELLs. Although research speaks to the benefits of having IETs and educators of colour (Cho, 2010; Cummins, 2000a), research fails to shed light on how personal advocacy affects teachers' interest in supporting ELLs and incorporating a CRRP approach. This highlights a need for more research on teacher advocacy and how this can aid in teachers' sense of preparedness to engage in CRRP.

4.3 Participants identified improved personal well-being and increased learning for students through incorporating a CRRP approach.

With the participants' goals of CRRP in mind, along with their positionality in relation to this pedagogical approach, participants were able to observe beneficial outcomes for the ELL and non-ELL students. For their ELL learners, improved well-being was observed, along with
increased learning from all students. In the subthemes below, learning will be explored in terms of academics as well as students learning from each other. These observed outcomes help the reader to further understand the value of this approach and its benefits for all students. Further, it can act as a catalyst for future educators to engage in culturally relevant teaching practices.

4.3.1 Participants indicated that this approach creates a class environment that promotes students’ well-being.

When speaking about the outcomes of this pedagogical approach, all three participants highlighted the importance of getting to know their students, their interests, and according to John, "what makes them click." Aryam expressed that getting to know her students and their interests “helps them to feel like they can contribute.” These participants often purposefully gained knowledge about their students in order to promote well-being. Aryam expressed this importance of student well-being when she mentioned,

You have to ensure that your classroom is safe in order for them to feel safe and welcomed. So one of the things I do is really getting to know my ELL students. I tap into their background knowledge. So you know before I start a book in guided reading I would ask them what they already know it. I would ask them what they do in their country or culture.

John, who expressed similar sentiments, went further to explain that especially in cases where the student has recently immigrated, it is crucial that teachers acknowledge that child’s background in order for them to feel comfortable enough to engage. Aryam and John both spoke about getting to know their students' interests as a way of promoting student well-being. Aryam believed "it helps them to feel like they can contribute." Through discussing outcomes to their CRRP approach with the participants, it became clear that student well-being was an important goal in their teaching practice.
This increased well-being closely aligns with Garret and Holcomb's (2005) concept of lightening students' "cultural load." According to the authors, "cultural load" consists of a range of experiences and knowledge that immigrant students' hold. This load becomes burdensome when students are forced to adapt to Canadian teaching styles. However, when teachers enable their culturally diverse students to draw from their own knowledge and experiences, this load becomes lightened. Students, in turn, are able to make more meaning of their learning and feel more comfortable in the classroom. The outcomes observed by all participants expand on this literature and highlight the importance and benefits of this pedagogical approach.

4.3.2 Participants indicated that students develop and actualize their self-worth through this pedagogical approach.

Participants found that through practices such as getting to know their students, their interests, and using this knowledge to enrich students' learning, their diverse students were able to develop a sense of esteem and were made to feel like their culture was validated. Indira indicated that she believes, "all anybody wants to feel is validated. So I come from a place where I want my kids to feel valuable. And I see that." When asked about the specific strategies she used to facilitate the development of these feelings, and what this looks like in the classroom, Indira spoke in depth about the importance of bringing her students' cultural background and lived experiences to the forefront of the class when teaching. For example, Indira stated,

I think they are going to remember that there are no boundaries to being Canadian. And it’s about reinforcing that right. So I don’t want to see Becca and Jessie going to Justice clothing, I want to see them going to Mosque, I want to see them going to Temple. I want to see your stories located in your life. I want you to write a letter to your grandmother back home that I know you speak to, and talk about what you talk about.
When Indira invites her students to explore avenues of learning that are meaningful to them, she is also allowing her students the opportunity to validate their cultural identity and what they have to offer the class. Similarly, John took opportunities to validate his students' identities and create a sense of esteem among his diverse learners by drawing upon dual-language resources. For one of his sixth grade Hungarian students, for example, it was about finding bilingual books and allowing him to read in Hungarian to the class or in a small group. John said,

Whatever it is, it’s getting the other students to learn about this child and see that they actually know a lot, whether it be about their own language or culture. If you present their learning styles and languages as a positive, then it really creates esteem.

This positive yet affirming presentation of students' culture which John and Indira relayed presents opportunities for students to build and develop their self-esteem. Culturally relevant teaching becomes validating when we allow students to draw upon their cultural knowledge and prior experience, and it is these types of opportunities that build up students towards academic success from a basis of strength and cultural validation (Gay, 2001). With these beneficial outcomes of ELLs in mind, along with its supporting literature, the possibilities of a CRRP approach become accessible for teachers.

4.3.3 Participants also explained that increased social and academic learning among students occurs as a result of this pedagogical approach.

Within a CRRP framework, participants highlighted increased learning as one of the major outcomes. Learning was seen among students and their understanding of each other, as well as through the students' academics. When discussing the idea of learning in general, all participants noted the need to ensure a safe environment that is conducive to learning. John stated,
I mean there’s all sorts of reasons, and you know research tells us too that you’re not gonna learn if you’re feeling left out or you feel like an outsider. That’s not conducive to having a healthy learning environment. So if you can create an environment, not where they have to leave their traditions at home and become a real Canadian. I think the feeling of knowing who you are is so important, it gives them a sense of belonging. And I see this in my kids, I see this sort of engagement and sense of belonging.

This sense of belonging that John spoke to not only allows students to successfully learn, but it also allows other students to learn about ELL peers and the wealth of knowledge they have to offer the class. This sort of exchange of knowledge and understanding among students, Aryam believed, is beneficial for everyone. She said, "I think everyone benefits from seeing that all cultures and linguistic groups are respected, that they see all types of people reflected in the teaching materials." Teachers who provide these learning opportunities for their students go beyond a superficial inclusion of culture were students backgrounds are merely acknowledged and celebrated. Instead, these teachers allow their students to learn from one another.

John expanded on this notion of learning arguing that diverse students excel academically when they can make meaning of things that hold significance to their lives. He stated,

They don’t need phonics like they do in Kindergarten. That’s another misconception I think, that you know you gotta start with phonics because you can’t read. Sometimes watching rap videos on recycling or looking at pictures of their culture is more important than knowing A B C. Language will follow as they make meaning of these things.

The outcomes of a CRRP approach highlighted by the three participants closely align with Gay's (2001) argument that culturally diverse students are better equipped to perform academically when they are taught through their own cultural perspectives and learning styles. Through the
participants’ inclusion of their students' interests and identity, these teachers provide meaningful learning opportunities for their students where they can learn from each other.

4.4 Participants pointed to biases, misunderstandings, and conflicting administration priorities as barriers to their CRRP practices.

Despite the number of benefits observed from this teaching approach, all participants spoke to a number of challenges and barriers they face that make the effective implementation of CRRP a difficult task. Among these barriers, participants highlighted the burden of other colleagues' biases and misunderstandings of their ELL students, their educational background, and their culture. Participants also voiced conflicting administration priorities as a factor that complicated their vision for their ELL students. In the subthemes below, participants explained these challenges while highlighting how they responded to them. Knowing and understanding these barriers can allow other teachers to be proactive in their CRRP approach and also find ways to minimize the challenges they may face.

4.4.1 Participants indicated that a limited understanding of culture can result in tokenism rather than meaningful inclusion.

Participants indicated that the inclusion of culture must be more than just a superficial addition in classes that are otherwise void of culture, but must acknowledge and address the whole-child. John explained this difference when he expressed that it is something that "is not to be placed in a [themed] month or around celebrations." When addressing the barriers to their CRRP practices, both Indira and John acknowledged the importance of not only respecting and accepting differences, but really celebrating them. Indira described it as the difference between "knowing it not because you've read it, but knowing it because it's your family."
John spoke to the danger in this surface level inclusion of culture when he pointed out that it is more than just "celebrating" differences in food and clothing, but acknowledging more personal life experiences. As he explained,

I think there is a superficial level of celebrating others like, let’s look at what people wear and eat. And you know clothes and food, that’s not life. Some of these kids ate dogs, they ate whatever they could to survive. And they wore whatever they had.

John believed that teachers who have inadequate understanding of their students' culture will be limited in how deeply they can incorporate their students' background in the classroom.

The result of this superficial inclusion aligns with Barnes' (2006) argument that the omission of culture is due to limited cultural knowledge bases of teachers. John and Indira's examples extend this by demonstrating not only the dangers of this type of inclusion, but also what more teachers can do enact CRRP.

4.4.2 Participants face challenges with colleagues’ biases as well as misunderstandings of academic expectations across cultures.

Both John and Indira voiced that their colleagues' biases towards ELLs challenged the effective implementation of a CRRP approach. Specifically, participants found that several teachers held the belief that their ELL students were not as capable as their non-ELL peers. John explained this when he said,

These ELLs are survivors. So when they say these kids can’t do anything, I say they can do more. Some of these kids wake up in the morning before school and buy the family’s groceries, they are buying the family’s phone cards and they are coming back home to call home to their families in Syria, AND then they come to school. I think if you don’t understand what they have to offer, you will run into barriers thinking they can’t do
Indira also expressed variance within expectations held by teachers for their ELL students. Specifically, she noted disparities among expectations for students of certain ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For example, Indira described that some teachers believed that certain ELL students, coming from South Asian and Asian countries for example, "have stereotypes that are working for them." For these students she explained, she saw that teachers perceptions were that they were hard workers and as a result, their expectations for these students were high. Conversely, teachers' perceptions of, and expectations for students from African countries, were not as high. These students Indira expressed, were often not regarded as the "good immigrants" by her colleagues.

These simplistic views that teachers hold for their students are problematic and also work to limit certain students' academic potential.

Along with teachers’ biased views, participants also pointed to misunderstandings of academic expectations across the cultures of students and their families. This misunderstanding Aryam believed was attributed to differences in school systems. She said,

Just from my experience, in China, they have rote learning and then these students come here and you know that can be difficult for them. These rote backgrounds are very different to our school system here.

Teachers who hold a lack of understanding of their students and their respective educational backgrounds, significantly hinder their students' academic potential. John voiced that these misunderstandings not only affected their academics, but it also affected the way teachers interacted with their students. He said, "If you do not understand what they have to offer, you will run into barriers thinking they can't do anything." These biases and misunderstandings
across cultures, Cummins (2000a) argues, limit the ways in which identities are negotiated between students and teachers, and most importantly, constrict the possibilities of a culturally diverse education, which they need.

### 4.4.3 Participants' work with CRRP is hampered by limited funding and training.

Despite the participants' dedication to enacting a CRRP approach, all participants expressed frustration with limited funding and training impeding their ability to successfully support their ELLs. With regard to funding, Aryam shared, "we are strapped for money so the government allocates the best money they can. But you know they need all the support they can get." Aryam responded to this challenge by offering her support to these students during recess and after school.

Indira's frustration stems from two factors that are interrelated. Firstly, the fact that teachers are not sufficiently trained leaves teachers without the necessary tools to support the needs of their diverse students. She expressed this frustration when she argued,

> I think that sometimes the dominant culture can confuse culturally relevant pedagogy with ‘Let me help you because there is something lacking.’ Like come on man, we need proper training...or else our students' education will continue to have holes.

Indira's statement not only speaks to the issue of a lack of funding, but it also points to a lack of understanding held by some teachers. With the absence of training, these teachers employ pedagogical practices they deem important without truly understanding the key tenets of a CRRP approach. Secondly, as one of the few teachers of colour in her school, Indira expressed that teachers often came to her for advice and support with their ELL students. Due to this lack of training, Indira was therefore not only left with the responsibility of educating her students, but
she also hinted towards the idea of having to do the same for her colleagues. When asked to expand upon how she responded to these challenges, Indira explained that it was about finding a way to ask open-ended questions that made teachers critically think about their practices in the classroom. For example, she asked teachers,

What message are we sending if we don’t represent at our recognition assemblies the very children that are in front of us? What message does it send to the kids when we talk about a variety of authors but not author that represents their parents or grandparents?

She moved on to explain, "[I] find that when I start with ‘What message does it send?’, I’m not answering the question nor am I directing it at them." By avoiding being direct, and asking direct questions to her colleagues, Indira is not pointing the finger or blaming teachers for their actions. Rather, she is indirectly demonstrating the dangers of their particular approach. These examples further demonstrate the burden that inadequate funding and training carry with it. Teachers not only take extra time to support their students, but also their colleagues.

These barriers cited by Aryam and Indira were not found to align with any of the research discussed in the Literature Review. What has been identified as a barrier however, is the constraint and limitations of governmentally-mandated curriculum (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). Participants within this study found that curriculum was only adaptable to students' interests and backgrounds if the teacher was willing to take initiative. What is missing from the research therefore, is how a lack of funding and training further complicates teachers' ability to support their students through CRRP.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, participants' experiences with engaging in a CRRP approach were
discussed. The study revealed that teachers who employ a CRRP approach in their classrooms strongly believe in a multidisciplinary approach to education, where personal advocacy and student well-being play a major role. Despite the drawbacks such as biases, misunderstandings of academic expectations, and conflicting priorities, these teachers push to ensure their students' identities and culture are valued. Most of the available research highlight the benefits of having teachers of colour and IETs, but fail to recount how these teachers' shared experiences develop their sense of personal advocacy and affect their ability to support their diverse learners. The findings discussed in this study go beyond existing literature in that teachers were able to recognize how their shared experiences and positionality within the CRRP framework affected their ability to support ELLs. Teachers who have shared experiences with their ELLs of immigrating to a new country, navigating a new system, and having two cultural identities are able to empathize with, and support their students in genuine and meaningful ways.

In addition, although research speaks to various challenges teachers face when engaging in this approach, researchers have failed to address how these teachers deal with these barriers. These findings go beyond existing literature in that they not only explain the barriers to a CRRP practice, but they also highlight how teachers respond to and overcome these challenges. Further, these findings highlight the danger of these barriers in that a lack of training hinders a deep understanding of CRRP and its major tenets. By having meaningful conversations with colleagues about genuine vs. superficial incorporations of culture, identity and voice, and offering extra support and time for ELLs, teachers create a learning community where student well-being is of the utmost importance.

In the chapter that follows, implications for these findings will be discussed, along with recommendations, and possible areas for further research.
Chapter 5: Implications

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the implications of my research study. Particularly, I emphasize the significance of my findings while highlighting pertinent information for both the educational community and myself as a teacher researcher. I move on to make recommendations for the stakeholders in the educational community, specifically, teachers, schools, and faculties of education. Next, I explore possible areas for further research. Lastly, I conclude by summarizing the findings of this study and their significance to the educational community as a whole.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and Their Significance

Findings from the previous chapter highlighted the number of ways teachers supported ELLs through the use of CRRP. Four major themes were identified and expanded upon. Firstly, when defining CRRP, all three participants spoke to the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to language instruction that involved student advocacy and an inclusive classroom environment. Student advocacy involved actions such as setting high expectations for students, supporting, and respecting them within an environment that drew upon students’ cultural backgrounds and first language. Within this approach, participants highlighted the integration of social justice and critical thought as key aspects of their teaching philosophy. Through engaging discussions on world issues such as 9/11 and child labour, students were able to think more critically about these issues, allowing for deeper and more meaningful discussions. These definitions add to existing literature and allow other educators to gain an understanding of what CRRP looks like in theory and in practice.

Secondly, all three participants pointed to professional advancement and personal
advocacy as key factors that informed both their interest in and preparedness for supporting their diverse learners. Through workshops, school-wide support programs, and shared lived experiences of being an ELL, immigrating to Canada, or having a mixture of cultural backgrounds, these participants gained a better understanding of ELLs. These factors not only inform other educators on how best to prepare for their diverse classrooms, but they also conceptualize these teachers' pedagogical approaches and demonstrate why they are important to them.

The next major theme spoke to the observed outcomes participants saw for ELL students as a result of their CRRP approach. Through this approach, all three participants noted improved student well-being and students being able to learn from each other. These outcomes were facilitated by participants ensuring teaching material reflected the students and instruction was tailored to their interests. Students were not only able to make meaning from these learning contexts, but other students were also able to learn more about their culturally and linguistically diverse peers. This exchange of knowledge brought about learning in an academic and social manner. These outcomes can help the educational community to further understand the value of CRRP and the observable benefits that are observed a result of this approach.

The final theme brought about from my data centered around the barriers teachers face when implementing this approach and how these teachers attempt to overcome the barriers. Specifically, all three participants pointed to biases, misunderstandings, and inconsistent administration priorities. These misunderstandings often manifested themselves in stereotypical portrayals of culture or superficial additions of culture such as themed monthly celebrations. Inconsistent administration priorities included a lack of funding and training. Indira spoke to the connection between these barriers by highlighting the fact that due to the absence of funding,
teachers are not properly trained to support their diverse learners. This results in a lack of understanding of what a CRRP approach entails. Despite these barriers, teachers went out of their way to offer support to ELLs by working outside of school hours, finding resources that adequately represent their students, and talking with other colleagues about the implications of their actions on their students' success. By knowing and understanding these barriers, other teachers can be proactive in their CRRP approach in order to reduce the challenges they may face in their profession.

5.2 Implications

In the section that follows, I outline the implications of my research findings for both the educational community as a whole and for myself as an evolving teacher researcher. In this discussion, I highlight findings that I believe the educational community should know, particularly educational professionals, schools, school boards, and faculties of education.

5.2.1 Implications for the educational community

While research has spoken to limitations of governmentally-mandated curriculum (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011), there has been less attention paid to how barriers such as a lack of funding and training impede teachers' ability to support their diverse learners. Results from this study demonstrate how these barriers complicate their teaching practice. Aryam specifically spoke to the barrier of funding when she stated, “we are strapped for money.” In responding to this barrier, she often went beyond the call of their professional duty to offer support to their students, offering support after school and during recess. Aryam's response to this challenge demonstrates the lengths she went to support her ELLs. This issue of funding is further
exacerbated by deficit thinking. Indira highlighted this when she said, “I think that sometimes the dominant culture can confuse culturally relevant pedagogy with ‘Let me help you because there is something lacking.” Indira's statement points to more than a barrier of funding, highlighting how the barrier is tied to a lack of understanding a CRRP approach. In other words, Indira was able to give insight into this barrier while highlighting the harm it causes. Despite the fact that ELLs are the fastest growing segment of elementary schools (Webster & Valeo, 2011), participants expressed displeasure with the lack of funding allocated to support ELLs. Findings from this study demonstrate how a lack of money impedes teachers' ability to engage in CRRP. These findings indicate significant barriers teachers may face when engaging in culturally relevant teaching.

Teacher-led advocacy aided in their sense of preparedness in employing a CRRP approach and significantly impacted their interest in and dedication to supporting ELLs. This advocacy stemmed from shared experiences of being an ELL, experience immigrating to Canada, or having a diverse cultural background. How these participants placed themselves within the discourse of CRRP adds value to existing literature as it goes beyond the stated benefits of having internationally educated teachers (IETs) and educators of colour (Cho, 2010; Cummins, 2000a), to further speak to how teacher advocacy aided in their sense of preparedness to support their diverse learners. By understanding how their lived experiences supported their development in becoming culturally relevant teachers, teachers can better understand how their positionality affects their interest and preparedness in carrying out certain teacher practices. This is not only beneficial for teachers, but the educational community at large.

Lastly, it is essential for the educational community to recognize that teachers relied more upon their professional development throughout their career than their certification to teach
ELLs. Specifically, all three participants expressed that their professional development acted as more of a factor in their sense of preparedness to support ELLs than did their pre-service certification. Tran (2015) found that teachers who did obtain ESL certification felt more prepared and were able to understand how their values and beliefs influence their students. Given this disparity between existing literature and findings from this study, my research pulls into question the value and effectiveness of pre-service certification programs and points to possible areas for further research. Teachers must be critical of the avenues they explore to attain the knowledge and tools necessary to effectively support their diverse learners.

5.2.2 Implications for self: my identity as a teacher researcher

I believe it is crucial to discuss the implications for myself as a teacher researcher not only because of my interest in CRRP, but also as an Afro-Caribbean woman. Indira relayed the challenges of being one of the only teachers of colour in her school. Among these challenges, Indira felt as though it was her responsibility to educate her colleagues due to the lack of training and understanding of CRRP. Further, teachers often came to her for support and advice when supporting their ELLs. Indira also addressed the importance of sharing her double identity as mixed race female with roots from Barbados and Canada with her students, and allowing them to accept and affirm their layered identities as well.

As a teacher, I must be aware of these factors and also cognizant of how my identity as an Afro-Caribbean female impacts my ELL and non-ELL students. Due to the fact that I may be one of the only teachers of colour, I too believe it is important for me to instil within my students the pride of holding multiple identities, cultures, and ways of knowing. My findings have also emphasized the negative stereotypes that work to disadvantage and often oppress culturally and
linguistically diverse students. Therefore, it is of equal importance for me to find texts that are representative of my students, their voices and cultures, and understand that I may have to look beyond my school community for support in these endeavors.

Beyond the aforementioned implications for the educational community with regard to a lack of funding and training, the implications of this barrier on my own teaching is that I must collaborate with other teaching staff who also value and incorporate a culturally relevant teaching approach. As a teacher researcher, professional advancement throughout my career is a very important factor in how I can best support the increasing number of diverse students in my classroom. Aside from ESL certification, implications on my own teaching practice involve researching strategies on how to best support ELLs, searching for PD workshops that span CRRP, supporting ELLs, and inclusive classroom practices. It is imperative that I use the knowledge of my potential barriers to inform other educators, and create new and innovative ways to support my students. Lastly, as an educator of colour who has also immigrated to a new country, I must minimize the challenges ELLs face in and out of the classroom by continuously advocating for them.

5.3 Recommendations

Culturally responsive teaching becomes possible when teachers truly understand and value what their ELLs have to offer. Given the number of barriers teachers are faced with when enacting a CRRP approach, in this section, I explore a number of recommendations for the educational community. I begin small-scale by discussing the actions teachers can take to better support their diverse students. Next, I move on to discuss recommendations for schools in Ontario. I conclude by highlighting what bigger stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education
and faculties of education should do to better support the changing demographic of schools.

5.3.1 Teachers

The findings from this study suggest that teachers need to do more to support their ELLs. Aside from incorporating multicultural texts, teachers must create inclusive classrooms where their students' identities are both recognized and incorporated. Teachers can achieve this by being critical of the texts they choose and ask questions such as, "Does this text accurately depict the lives and lived experiences of my students?" and "Who wrote this text, and who is it intended for?" and "Are there any voices that are absent from this text?" By asking these questions, teachers can begin to understand how their pedagogical decisions impact their classroom and their students. In order to meaningfully incorporate texts, teachers must first learn about their students, their families, culture, and interests. Possible ways of learning about students include interest questionnaires at the beginning of the school year, autobiographical work, journal writing, and talking with family members about the customs and traditions in their respective cultures. In doing so, teachers can better support each student based on their needs and avoid trivializing and tokenizing students. By truly understanding who their students are, teachers can surpass the superficial inclusion model where students cultures are merely celebrated, and work towards a more meaningful incorporation of identity in their classroom.

No matter their demographic or level of comfort with engaging in CRRP practices, teachers should continuously work on their professional development. Just as the demographic of students in Ontario continues to change, so too do teachers' pedagogical philosophies. They must advance their understanding of diverse learners and the challenges they face in school. Along with gaining their ESL certification, this involves teachers collaborating with other like-minded
educators and researching to find available CRRP workshops that help them to better support ELLs.

5.3.2 Schools

Although much of the responsibility to engage in CRRP practices falls on the teacher, schools are also responsible for supporting their students and staff members. In order to reflect the diversity of the student population, schools must hire more teachers of colour. As evidenced by existing research (Faez, 2012; Ryan et al., 2009), as well as the participants of this study, teachers of colour are often better positioned to support ethnically diverse students due to their shared lived experiences, their ability to form relationships with students of similar backgrounds, and as my participants relayed, their capacity to teach through a lens of empathy and understanding.

Aside from schools hiring more diverse teachers, schools and school boards need to allocate more funding for training to support ELLs. Schools need to provide their teaching staff with necessary and sufficient training and professional development to enact culturally relevant teaching practices to support ELLs while promoting its relevance and importance to teaching staff. Schools must go above and beyond the simple monthly celebrations of culture to incorporate school-wide and board-wide initiatives that support culturally diverse students. This involves actions such as stocking libraries with multicultural texts, inviting spokespeople from particular cultures to come in and speak to the school community on a regular basis, and running welcoming events for newcomer families and students. Culturally relevant teaching should be the culture of the school, and a pivotal factor in the success of ELL and non-ELL students.
5.3.3 Faculties of Education

Faculties of education have the important role of guiding pre-service teachers through aspects of teaching that combine both theory and practice. With the growing population of ELLs in Ontario, faculties of education must provide the necessary and relevant courses to prepare pre-service teachers for their diverse classrooms. Thus, it is essential for faculties to create courses based on ELL instruction. These courses should not be optional, nor should they be designed in a way that separates itself from other core teaching courses. Instead, these courses, and the pedagogical practices they promote, should be integrated into all courses. Within these courses, pertinent issues to be explored should include challenges faced by ELLs and their families, issues of race, power, and privilege and how they disproportionately affect certain individuals, culturally responsive teaching practices, and effective strategies to support ELLs. Faculties of education should also provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to connect theory to practice in meaningful ways. Pre-service teachers should regularly engage with diverse learners, and have the chance to employ culturally relevant practices to support them. They should have at least one practicum placement where there are a high number of ELL students in the school.

In addition to the incorporation of these types of courses and pre-service teachers gaining experience in diverse classrooms, faculties of education should also employ a range of educators who can effectively speak to the issues being explored in such courses. Specifically, faculties should consider the expertise of educators of colour or internationally educated professors as these individuals may be able to teach through a lens of understanding, empathy, and experience.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

In this section, I point to possible areas for further research. Given the findings of this
study, and its convergences and divergences with existing literature, my research sheds light on a number of factors that should be explored in more detail. Although existing research highlights certain barriers teachers face, there are two gaps in research. Firstly, there is a lack of research on barriers teachers face with regard to CRRP. Secondly, existing research fails to highlight ways teachers can respond to these challenges. Therefore, more research that looks at CRRP barriers and how teachers respond to them, could further inform pre-service and practicing teachers.

All three participants spoke to the importance of advocacy and shared lived experiences strongly affecting their interest in supporting ELLs. Although my findings meet this gap, I believe more research is needed to look at the factors that influence teachers' interest in supporting ELLs and how this aids in their sense of preparedness to support their diverse learners.

A final area for further research is the efficacy and value of pre-service certification programs compared to initiatives such PD workshops aimed at supporting ELLs. All three participants voiced that their professional development throughout their career aided in their sense of preparedness more so than their pre-service certification courses. For this reason, I believe comparative analyses that look at the effectiveness of pre-service vs. in-service initiatives aimed at supporting ELLs should be done to have a better understanding of which areas need improvement.

5.5 Concluding Comments

The findings from this study shed light on CRRP and how it can be used to effectively support ELLs. CRRP allows teachers to understand their students, their culture, and their lived experiences. It allows students to feel heard, represented, and works to affirm their cultural
identity. From my interviews with Aryam, John, and Indira, I have come to better understand what CRRP looks like in practice, the challenges these teachers face when engaging in this approach, and the actions they take to overcome these challenges. These findings will inform my teaching practice as well as the practices of other educators. What remains clear is that teachers, schools, and faculties of education need to do more to support the changing demographic of their schools. By taking actions such as incorporating multicultural texts, getting to know students, and allocating more funding and training, ELLs can be better supported. These findings, combined with the existing research have solidified in me a deeper and more meaningful understanding of CRRP. It has allowed me to see how culturally responsive teaching practices can be used as a vehicle for student success. Most importantly, it has opened my eyes to the possibility of teaching the whole child.
References


Qu, S. Q., & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management, 8*(3), 238-264


Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interviews

Date: 
Dear _________________________,

My Name is Amara Charles and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on how elementary teachers enact culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy to support English Language Learners (ELLs) in the classroom. I am interested in interviewing teachers with a minimum of 5 years experience working with high numbers of ELLs and who have demonstrated commitment to enacting culturally relevant pedagogy. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide great insight into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded. The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Dr. Angela MacDonald. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question during the interview. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to participation, and I will share a copy of the transcript with you shortly after the interview to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,
Amara Charles
amara.charles@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Instructor’s Name: Dr. Angela Macdonald
Contact Info: angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca
Consent Form
I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Amara Charles and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ________________________________________

Name: (printed) _____________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims to learn how a sample of teachers employs culturally relevant and responsive pedagogical practices to support English Language Learners (ELLs). This interview consists of 17 questions and will last approximately 45-60 minutes. I will ask you a series of questions focused on your background in teaching, your teacher perspectives and beliefs, the teaching practices you utilize, and the challenges you face in supporting your diverse learners. I want to remind you that you may refrain from answering any question, and you have the right to withdraw your participation from the study at any time. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio-recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Background Information**

1) Where and when did you receive your teaching qualification?

2) For how many years have you been teaching?

3) What grades and subject areas have you taught over the span of your career? What grade do you currently teach?

4) Can you tell me more about your school and the students that you teach?

   a. How big is your school?

   b. What are the demographics of your students?

      i. Would you say that your school has a high number of ELLs?

      ii. Newcomer Canadians?

      iii. Approximately how many ELLs have you had in your classroom over the
past 2 years? How many ELLs do you currently have?

iv. What are your observations on the number of ELLs in your classroom? Is there a trend? Do you see the number of these students increasing?

v. What are some of the dominant ethno-cultural identities represented and languages spoken by your ELLs?

c. What are the demographics of the teacher population in your school?

d. What are some of the program priorities in your school?

i. Does your school have any special focus on supporting ELLs or newcomer Canadians?

5) What factors or experiences, if any, inform your commitment to supporting ELLs and to enacting culturally relevant instruction? *listen and then probe re: personal, professional, educational

6) Have you received any training, professional development, or certification either in teachers college or in the form of professional development in the area of supporting ELLs or enacting culturally relevant instruction?

Teacher Perspectives/Beliefs

7) What does culturally relevant teaching mean to you? What does this approach to teaching involve? In your view, what are some of the goals of culturally relevant pedagogy? What are some key considerations that need to be accounted for in order to realize these goals?

8) Why do you believe that culturally relevant teaching is important in schools?

• Who benefits from culturally relevant teaching?

• What benefits have you observed from culturally relevant teaching?

9) In your view, to what extent are the needs of ELLs being met, or not, in schools? What
10) From your perspective, what are some of the key barriers facing ELLs and newcomer students in Canadian schools? What, if any, role do you see culturally relevant teaching playing in response to these barriers?

**Teacher Practices**

11) You’ve told me what culturally relevant teaching means to you. Can you tell me more about what it looks like in your teaching practice? How would I know you were committed to culturally relevant teaching in I were to spend a day in your classroom? What kinds of things would I see and hear?

12) What are some of the ways that you learn about your students’ cultural and linguistic identities?

13) Can you give me a few specific examples of how you have supported ELL students through the enactment of culturally relevant teaching? *listen and probe as necessary re: where students were from and/or what languages they spoke, how they drew on these students cultural and linguistic identities as resources for learning, what outcomes they observed…

16) In what ways, if any, would you say you differentiate your instruction and assessment for ELLs?

14) What resources support you in your commitment to enacting culturally relevant teaching?

15) You have relayed some examples of how you have enacted culturally relevant teaching with specific students and how these students have responded. Can you tell me more about what outcomes, broadly speaking, you have observed from ELLs students as a result of this approach? What outcomes have you observed from non-ELL students?
Challenges and Next Steps

16) Are there any challenges and/or barriers you encounter in effectively supporting ELLs through culturally relevant teaching?

What are these challenges and how do you respond to them?

What do you believe the education system could do to help remedy these challenges?

17) What advice, if any, do you have for beginning teachers like me who are committed to enacting culturally relevant teaching to support ELLs?

Thank you for your participation in this research study.