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Immigrants' and refugees' 'funds of knowledge(s)' on the path to intercultural competence

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ABSTRACT

Funds of knowledges are the accumulated intellectual, social, and cultural competencies that all students bring to educational settings. Immigrants and refugees necessarily experience emotional, material, linguistic, cultural, and legal struggles as they transit from home countries to host countries. Their experiences expand the funds of knowledges that they develop. Education must respond to the needs of these students. A profound educational response is the narrative approach called *Círculos de memoria* ('Circles of Memory'), which has been employed to create safe spaces for immigrant or refugee students to share their lived experiences and the funds of knowledge that have resulted from those experiences. This approach also allows host country students to express their own funds of knowledge. In these interactions, participants increase their sense of competence, deepen their understanding of themselves and other people, strengthen peaceful relationships, and contribute to more democratic ways of living. An understanding of societal differences can be accomplished by recognising and valuing the knowledges possessed by students from diverse backgrounds, including marginalised backgrounds. These knowledges can be promoted, celebrated, and amplified through culturally relevant teaching practices.

Introduction

The education, identity, mental health, and overall well-being of immigrants and refugees, including adults and children, are important themes of interdisciplinary, international research (Bartlett and Ghaffar-Kucher 2013). Rather than presenting an empirical research study, this article integrates multiple forms of information. The first section focuses on facts gleaned from official documents and other published materials about the contexts of immigrants and refugees: the circumstances, legalities, and difficulties they face in transit and upon arrival in their host countries. The second section deals with socioemotional issues related to moving from one culture to another as immigrants or refugees. The third section presents theories concerning funds of knowledges. We pluralise the word *knowledge* here to indicate the large accumulation of experiences, as well as intellectual, social, and cultural competencies, that immigrant or refugee students and all other students bring to educational settings. The fourth section offers an anecdote about Abelardo, a teacher who is involved in the *Círculos de memoria* activity, which promotes the sharing of funds of knowledges, increases interpersonal and intercultural understanding and fosters peaceful relationships. The

focus of the fifth section is intercultural competence for academic success and peacebuilding. The conclusion reemphasizes the importance of the funds of knowledges of immigrant and refugee students and calls for viewing these students, along with all other students, as the center of the educational enterprise. The article reveals how pieces of the puzzle – funds of knowledges, intercultural competence, *Círculos de memoria*, and development of peaceful, democratic, egalitarian relationships – come together to create a sense of hope.

The context

To provide context for the struggles and achievements of the groups highlighted in this article, we first define important 'terms of place.' Next, we describe diverse groups of immigrants and refugees, and in doing so, we note issues of law, politics, and sometimes tragedy that affect people in these categories.

Terms of place

We use the following general place-terms from the viewpoint of immigrants and refugees. In this article, the term *home country* refers to the country of origin, i.e. the country that the immigrant or refugee has left. The *destination country* and the *host country* are effectively the same because they both refer to the country an immigrant or refugee wants to enter or has entered.

Categories of people

For ease of communication, we generally employ the umbrella phrase *immigrants and refugees* as a convenient 'shorthand' to refer collectively to six categories: *migrants, vulnerable migrants, immigrants, refugees under international law, asylum seekers,* and *holders of refugee status* in the destination country.

The term *migrant* is not clearly defined under international law. Roughly speaking, *migrants* are people who move away from their countries for a long term or permanently due to needs such as work, education, or reuniting a family. Migrants do not leave their home countries due to a direct threat of persecution there (Edwards 2015). If a migrant wants to return to the home country, it is usually safe to do so. However, certain factors can transform migrants into *vulnerable migrants* (an official term). These factors include crimes against migrants in transit; cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment; and other human rights violations. Among vulnerable migrants, the most imperiled are children, women, and seriously ill or elderly people, because there may be few supports awaiting them if they return to their home countries (Edwards 2015). Vulnerable migrants sometimes need help from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) of the United Nations (2022). Depending on the circumstances, vulnerable migrants might be protected from being removed from the host country and from being returned to the original country.

An *immigrant* is a person living in a country outside of the home country (Bolter 2019). This broad classification does not require any assertion of fear of persecution in the home country. An immigrant might be classified as 'legal' or 'authorised,' i.e. a documented entrant to the host country; or as 'illegal' or 'unauthorised,' i.e. seeking to enter the host country without the needed documents.[1] A legal immigrant, although sometimes facing substantial social prejudice from native residents of the host country or community, is able to stay without deportation. Immigrants who are suspected of being 'illegal' have the right to appeal, but if that fails, they can readily be deported.

Current international law concerning refugees began with the *Refugee Convention* (United Nations 1951), also known as the *Geneva Convention*, and its later *Optional Protocol* (United Nations 1967). A *refugee* under international law is a displaced person who is fleeing, or has fled, to another country due to the threat of armed conflict or persecution (Edwards 2015).[2] According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2018), the threat can be based

on factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.[3] International refugee law protects refugees from being returned to their home countries, from which serious threats had caused them to flee. This body of law also protects international refugees' human rights and their ability to live with dignity and safety with help from the host countries, as long as those countries had signed the 1951 *Convention* and the 1967 *Optional Protocol.* If any host country had failed to sign the *Convention* or the *Protocol*, then the UNHCR might need to intervene in the interest of protecting refugees.

Being a *refugee under international law* is quite different from having the much-desired *refugee status in the host country*. There are many hoops to jump through to obtain official refugee status in the host country. The person who has been until then a refugee under international law must make a formal claim for asylum upon arriving at the host country.[4] If the asylum claim is accepted by the host country[5], the individual waits for a determination of whether refugee status will officially be granted by that country. An *asylum seeker* who receives host-country *refugee status* gains three great privileges: civil rights, access to social services, and the right to work (Edwards 2015). This is why refugee status in the host country is so important and so treasured. A person who does not receive asylum or refugee status from the host country can appeal, but if appeals fail, deportation occurs.

We have provided here a brief sketch of six main categories of people in an intricate system: migrants, vulnerable migrants, immigrants, refugees under international law, asylum seekers, and holders of refugee status in the destination country.[6] The procedures in this system can be complicated, frustrating, and fear-inducing, particularly if there is little access to meaningful legal guidance. Given the stresses involved, it is not surprising that socioemotional factors play a huge role.

Socioemotional factors

Immigrants and refugees experience the stress of uprooting themselves from their home countries and finding a new place that will accept them. Socioemotional factors vary for the six groups of people mentioned above, yet commonalities exist. For instance, studies of refugees' and immigrants' journeys highlight negative experiences in transit and at arrival (Ortega 2021a).

Socioemotional damage

These experiences sometimes create socioemotional damage, which involves a sense of inadequacy, hopelessness, distrust, cynicism, and disengagement, particularly for youth (Szaflarski and Bauldry 2019). Such factors can result in falling behind in school (often due to linguistic and cultural issues, irregular attendance, and poor academic achievement), dropping out of school, making poor choices about work and career, and continuing to struggle (Dryden-Peterson 2016, 2019). The exceedingly difficult lived experiences of immigrants and refugees influence the development of cultural identity and personal self-concept, as negotiated across multiple contexts throughout their lifetime (Tummala-Narra 2019). Trauma, distress, and discrimination have been on the rise in the current global migration crisis, resulting in unprecedented numbers of refugees and immigrants suffering continuous emotional pain and suffering, despite their physical resilience (Marshall et al. 2016; Sangalang et al. 2019). Youth comprise a sizable portion of the total immigrant and refugee population that faces mental health issues during their transition process to the host country (Guruge and Butt 2015; Hameed, Sadiq, and Din 2018).

'Settling in' issues

Once in the host country, immigrants and refugees alike experience the enormous challenges of 'settling in.' They encounter realities that differ from what they had been led to expect, leading to disappointment and feelings of betrayal. These are among the dominant themes in the research

on immigrants' and refugees' journeys to their new countries (Holmkvist, Sullivan, and Westum 2018; Ismail 2019; Kananen 2020). The experiences of many refugees and immigrants have been marked by depression, shame, and other forms of emotional distress (Furukowa and Hunt 2011; Pernice and Brook 1994). Furukowa and Hunt, studying clients in therapy, reported that immigrants and refugees often experience two sources of shame: past traumas and adjustment challenges in the host country.

Historically, immigrants and refugees, while adjusting to their host country, encounter social discrimination that hinders their optimal performance, particularly in the education setting (Baily 1983; Zlobina et al. 2006). Such discrimination exacerbates the difficult emotions already mentioned. Discrimination from the outside often leads to internalised discrimination and trauma (Sodowsky and Carey 1987). See van der Kolk (2015) for a brilliant explanation of trauma and the slow healing that can occur with sensitive, well-informed, long-term psychological or psychiatric help. Unfortunately, such help is not typically available at a low cost or for free.

Socioemotional issues in immigrant and refugee education

Fortunately, in some locations and with certain types of teachers, education has been successful in integrating immigrant and refugee students into classes with host-country natives. In such instances, immigrants' and refugees' negative experiences have been addressed and minimised, though it would be false to claim that the pain from the negative experiences has been uniformly 'resolved.' Resolution of negative experiences depends on an incredible number of factors, e.g. the student's personality, emotion regulation abilities, depth of trauma, and flexibility; parental support (note that parents are struggling to adjust at the same time as their children); the teacher's degree of wisdom, empathy, and compassion; school and community support; adequate nourishment, living circumstances, and educational materials; and (we hope) the presence of at least a few host-country students who are welcoming and interested instead of prejudiced. After arrival in the host country, positive emotional lived experiences and cultural-linguistic growth can be used as resources for healing immigrant and refugee students (Zembylas 2015).

Now we turn to specific descriptions of funds of knowledges and then the *Círculos de memoria* ('Circles of Memory') process, in which funds of knowledges can be useful. Immigrants, refugees, and natives of the host country can all participate.

Funds of knowledges

Despite (or perhaps because of) the difficulties they experience, immigrant and refugee students possess '*funds of (multiple) knowledges*' (in the plural). These funds are accumulated linguistic, cultural, and other skills, understandings, perceptions, and experiences that have helped to shape their identities. The originators and researchers of the concept (Moll et al. 1992; Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti 2006) have traditionally used the singular term *knowledge* in its general meaning, which does not suggest the vast range and diversity inherent in the word *knowledges*. Refugees and immigrants often have unusually large funds of knowledges based on their wide-ranging experiences in multiple places and their encounters with many kinds of people, events, and challenges. However, *all* individuals, including those who are not immigrants or refugees and have never visited another country, have funds of knowledges that help shape and reshape their identities and reflect their languages, cultures, and subcultures.

Sharing funds of knowledges at school

School is an obvious place for funds of knowledges to be shared. For immigrants and refugees, recognising and sharing their own funds of knowledges can foster better adjustment, academic progress, and overall functioning in the new culture, thus strengthening self-esteem and resilience.

Similarly, Ruíz (1984) described the so-called 'resource orientation' – the background of heritage and immigrant languages in the United States – as a politically beneficial asset that deserves cultivation. He controversially stated that the recognition of all languages may serve to settle possible conflicts between linguistic groups and cultural communities, thus widely furthering geopolitical, diplomatic, and economic goals for the host country.

Immigrants and refugees can also learn from other students' funds of knowledges. Such interchange can lead to the forming of supportive, intercultural groups, if the teacher knows how to shape the situation effectively. Funds of knowledges can empower *all* students to learn effectively and enjoyably in the classroom (Moll et al. 1992). Funds of knowledges can directly or indirectly connect to formal classroom learning. Sharing funds of knowledges helps students to honour their own sociocultural backgrounds as strengths rather than seeing them as deficits. Students, even the most marginalised ones, can build strategically on the experiences, resources, and knowledge of their families, including children and adults.

Importance of the teacher and the classroom activity

Students' funds of knowledges can come to the fore when the teacher's interest, love, and creativity are obvious to all students and when the teacher reveals supportive curiosity about the background of each student (see Moll et al. 1992). Immigrants' and refugees' funds of knowledges, if shared under the guidance of such a teacher, can engender interest, respect, and support from non-immigrant and non-refugee students. Interculturally integrating these funds of knowledges into classroom activities creates a richer learning environment for immigrant and refugee students, as well as for all other students. The class bursts with involvement and new friendships form across cultures.

Classes become safe spaces for immigrant and refugee students to celebrate their linguistic diversity. Students are encouraged to use their home languages to assert their identities. This can be done by creating 'identity texts,' i.e. artifacts which students produce and of which they take ownership based on having invested their own identities in them (Cummins and Early 2010). When students share these identity texts with their peers, teachers, parents, grandparents, sister classes, and social media, they are likely to receive positive feedback and affirmation of self in interactions with these audiences (Prasad 2015).

In creating materials, teachers, and professional designers, if any, can incorporate meaningful content, exciting activities, and strategies for learning and communication. Such materials are for all students. Native host-country students can use these materials to learn to understand the lives of immigrant and refugee students, and immigrant and refugee students can learn about the lives of students from the host country. Sharing about their lives unifies students, regardless of their lands of origin. Sharing of funds of knowledges develops intercultural competence, respect, and generosity among all students. A key method to help students share their funds of knowledges and strengthen communication abilities is *Círculos de memoria,* discussed next.

Círculos de memoria: remembering, communicating, and uniting

After 52 years of war between the Colombian government and the far-left guerillas known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a peace accord was signed in 2016. Many people were displaced during the half-century struggle. *Círculos de memoria* (Circles of Memory)[7] processes were strongly promoted by the Museum of Memory in Colombia as a way to engage citizens in overcoming the massive sense of trauma and to help communities from different sides of the conflict to reclaim their collective and individual memory after the peace accord. In the form of workshops, teachers asked students to form circles and share stories of their families, relatives and friends who were displaced during the violent conflict in the country. Students frequently used drawings of their home-country lives and/or experiences of transit and arrival (Ortega

2021a). These processes created a safe space for building mutual relationships, increasing mutual respect, understanding diverse thoughts and ideas, and asserting funds of knowledges.

Just as *Círculos de memoria* processes were employed in Colombia with very positive effects starting in 2016, such processes are also valuable in educational environments that have not been riven by years of overt violence. These processes change what is meant by the terms 'teaching' and 'teacher.' For instance, the processes of *Círculos de memoria* help newcomers, such as refugees and immigrants, to assert and maintain their linguistic and cultural identities even when they are learning to communicate in the language of the host country (Ortega 2021b). Newcomers become 'teachers of culture' by sharing with other students (and with the teacher) who they are, what they know, and what they have experienced. Students who have always lived in the host country share their own experiences and help teach immigrant and refugee students how to acclimate and communicate. Thus, students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds become teachers by sharing their funds of knowledges. Such sharing expands everyone's funds of knowledges; makes the classroom a more intercultural, peaceful, and democratic learning environment; and fosters academic success across the curriculum.

Content and strategies

Círculos de memoria provide content and strategies to teachers and students to celebrate diversity and for immigrants and refugees to feel empowered as they gain a sense of confidence and inclusion in the host country (Gagné et al. 2020). In addition, *Círculos de memoria* helps all students to learn to use language more effectively. Language is important during the process of immigrants' and refugees' integration into the new country and culture. Such learning can provide the skills necessary to promote an understanding of others. Learning everyday pragmatics, idioms, and nonverbal communication, as well as basic vocabulary and grammar, can reduce confusion and conflict in interpersonal, international, and intercultural relationships in the host country (Oxford 2013). Such learnings are also part of peacebuilding in language education (Oxford et al. 2021).

Abelardo and the Círculos de memoria activity

In 2018, Yecid, the first author of this article, was conducting ethnographic research in Colombia as part of his doctoral studies. He worked with English teachers to learn more about their social justice pedagogical approaches to teaching English (Ortega 2021b). During that time, he met a teacher (Abelardo, a pseudonym) at another school who engaged his students in *Círculos de memoria*. In several informal conversations, Abelardo shared with Yecid that his approach to teaching was remarkably similar to a common exercise used by Colombia's memory museum (Gobierno de Colombia, n.d.) in one of their projects to support people who had been displaced during the 52 years of war.

In the *Círculos de memoria* activity, Abelardo asked students from the Colombian conflict and Venezuelan immigrant students to sit in a circle and pose questions to get to know each other better. After working with these circles for several weeks, students asked more intimate questions about each other's personal lives with families, relatives, and neighbors. The Venezuelan students shared their immigration experiences before and during the process of transitioning to Colombia, their new country. The difficulties Venezuelans encountered during immigration were not so different from the experiences the Colombians had during their internal (in-country) displacement. As a teacher, Abelardo felt strongly that engaging his Colombian students with the Venezuelan students would help everyone involved to develop intercultural competence and would foster a range of cognitive, social, and behavioral skills leading to more effective, more peaceful relationships. Some Venezuelan students have made long-time friends among the Colombians. One of the Colombian students raised money and collected second-hand clothes for Venezuelan students who recently arrived at the school.

Abelardo explained that the *Círculos de memoria* methodology was borrowed from a conflict resolution workshop he attended. The workshop was becoming popular in Colombia because it provided a sense of national unity in the process of peace, truth, and reconciliation. Some of his high school students liked this approach because it reminded them of the storytelling that their grandmothers used to do on weekends, especially in rural areas of the country. *Círculos de memoria* became a narrative approach to learning from each other. Students were invited to share memories of childhood experiences involving neighborhood friends. Although the experiences Abelardo mentioned were mainly positive, this exercise also triggered traumatic memories for certain immigrant students. While sharing some of the stories of internal displacement, students cried and commented on how difficult but liberating was to be able to tell their stories. These students found support and understanding from the other students. However, this type of exercise stirred up discomfort and guilt among some privileged students, whose parents had well-paying jobs and could afford to treat their children to tremendous social and material advantages.

The *Círculos de memoria* project had become immensely popular among marginalised Colombian communities and in Bogota's public schools as a way to heighten students' consciousness about the difficulties of other students, especially those with an immigrant background. Abelardo liked *Círculos de memoria* effort because it fostered an understanding of students' diverse backgrounds, created awareness of and respect for 'the Other,' and democratised the classroom. As an educational activity, *Círculos de memoria* follows an approach similar to restorative justice training, which aims to repair harm by giving a chance for individuals who have been injured and those who bear responsibility for the harm to talk about and address their needs in a circle of dialogue (McCluskey et al. 2008; Parker and Bickmore 2021). A restorative circle, as a practice, uses equal sharing and listening to establish and heal relationships. Such restorative circles help people develop the skills they need when conflicts arise because they give every individual the opportunity to speak, be heard, and learn from each other.

In the next section, we explore how the sharing of individuals' funds of knowledges can lead to increases in intercultural competence. We also explain how this intercultural competence promotes academic success and peacebuilding.

Towards intercultural competence for academic success and a more peaceful world

Abelardo's experience with the *Círculos de memoria* activity demonstrates the importance of students' funds of knowledges, which are put in the service of intercultural learning and understanding during the activity and afterward. Interculturality has become an obligatory discourse, especially in settings where sociopolitical conflicts and diverse cultural identifications are abundant (Diez 2004).

Intercultural, not merely multicultural

The adjective *multicultural*[8] can refer to a passive situation, where diverse cultures are not interacting or are only shallowly interacting. Promoting a multicultural society does not necessarily lead to a better understanding of cultural differences and similarities. In a multicultural society, each cultural group might have its own enclave and might not have a reason to interact with any other cultural group. This can be particularly problematic when it exacerbates the differences between minoritized groups and when it positions majority groups as the new minorities when multiculturality is celebrated (May 2008). Therefore, the presence of distinct cultural groups does not guarantee knowledge of any cultural understanding between those groups. Building a multicultural society does not necessarily lead to a better understanding of cultural differences.

In contrast, the adjective *intercultural* describes an active situation, in which people from diverse cultural groups interact with, trade with, and learn from each other. An intercultural situation is far more interesting and empowering than a mere multicultural setting. There is greater hope for peace

in situations in which members of different cultures seek to understand each other while learning the languages and cultures that were not familiar to them (Ortega 2019).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 2015) described interculturality as requiring the presence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures, resulting in dialogue, shared cultural expressions, and mutual respect. From a different perspective, Deardorff (2009) defined intercultural competence as the ability to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes leading to visible behaviour and communication that could be effective for interacting interculturally and learning from others. She posits that gaining such intercultural competence, in the end, is about how ' … we continually search for ways to get along together as human beings sharing this one planet, the need to transcend boundaries, to bridge and transform our differences, to be in relationship with one another, to join in the oneness of our humanity while accepting our differences.' (269).

Critical intercultural approach

In Walsh's (2010, 2019) view, a critical intercultural approach identifies relations of sociopolitical power and dominance that prevent egalitarian intercultural relations. Pinpointing the existing power relations can lead to new educational paradigms, which can be designed to embrace people from marginalised cultures, address systematic inequalities they face, and allow them to build and express their own thoughts, corpus, and praxis. A critical intercultural approach reveals how and why the failure to meet the needs of vulnerable communities perpetuates the marginalisation of those communities.

For Dimitrov et al. (2014), instructors must develop intercultural teaching competence (ITC) to support the learning of students who are different (linguistically, culturally, socially, and in other ways) from the teacher and/or from each other. In the midst of all these differences, interculturally competent teachers facilitate student learning and engagement; foster meaningful relationships with and among students; stimulate students' communicative ability; and support and affirm students' identities (Dimitrov 2012; Dimitrov et al. 2014). Such an approach connects students' cultures, languages, and life experiences as tools for better classroom instruction (Gay 2010). None of this success can occur through merely using 'show and tell' activities or through invoking the old 'food, festival, folklore, and fashion' mantra. Meyer and Rhoades (2006) cautioned that in any authentic, interculturally meaningful instruction, teachers need to take into consideration school protocols, such as how and what students are learning, styles of communication, assessment practices, and activities related to inclusion.

Although migrants face challenges before and after arriving in the host country, they also come with knowledges can nurture not only educational systems but society at large. Students from immigrant and refugee backgrounds, as well as all other students, can benefit from a critical intercultural approach. Ultimately, such an approach becomes a strong foundation for peacebuilding because it emphasises the value of diversity in all forms.

Educational initiatives

Many educational initiatives have already been harnessing the potential of immigrants and refugees while celebrating and affirming their cultural and linguistic identities, i.e. the distinctive qualities or traits that make individuals unique (Clark 2010; Gagné, Schmidt, and Markus 2017, 2020). This is the case in the University of Toronto's 'Me Mapping' project. 'Me Mapping' involves learners creating visualisations of their lives and talking about the experiences that creatively shaped their identities. 'Me Mapping' results in greater empowerment for immigrant and refugee learners – and all learners.

Gagné (2021), a University of Toronto professor, discussed how learners, including refugees and immigrants, can develop oral language through 'Me Mapping,' which also supports teachers and

teacher candidates as they learn about linguistic and cultural diversity. Similar educational initiatives have followed culturally relevant approaches to support immigrants and refugees as they tap into their cultural knowledge and share it in the classroom, thus enriching all students' cultural capital (Harris Garad 2021; Jared and Grace 2019; Tran and Hodgson 2015).[9]

Intersectionality: its link to funds of knowledges

The experiences of the most marginalised should be understood via the lens of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991, 2016; Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015). Intersectionality reveals interdependent, simultaneous social classifications based on factors such as gender, class, race, age, ableism, intelligence, legal status (citizen, refugee/non-refugee, immigrant/non-immigrant), and other factors.[10] Crenshaw (2016) presented a TED Talk called 'The Urgency of Intersectionality,' in which she gave striking examples of how intersections of race and gender operate in different situations: in trying to get a job, in receiving 'everyday violence and humiliation,' and in killings by police. As a curse, intersectionality is used, intentionally or not, as a whip of social oppression. As a blessing, intersectionality (if handled well in education) can provide recognition and celebration of the multifaceted nature of each person's identity and funds of knowledges at any moment in time.

Conclusion: the role of funds of knowledges

Students are the center of the educational enterprise. Each student, whether an immigrant, a refugee, or a host country native, has an array of experiences that intersect with cultural and linguistic identity to create funds of knowledges. The newcomers (immigrants and refugees) can share their funds of knowledges, thus enlarging the worldviews and personal understandings of host country students. By the same token, host country students can share who they themselves are, what they know, and how the immigrants or refugees can best acclimate and find a place in their new surroundings. These remarkable exchanges occur slowly and stumblingly due to differences in linguistic and cultural backgrounds, social values, and cognitions. That is why it often helps to draw pictures to get the meaning across. The sharing of even the slightest information can seem profound because it represents a courageous step leading toward mutual understanding. Whether or not emotions are directly revealed, they are inescapably present when students share their funds of knowledges.

If we view each person's funds of knowledges as gifts, then each individual is 'gifted' in multiple ways. This broadened perspective diminishes the motivation for gaining power over others. This wider view also increases eagerness to work for equality and peace and creates a sense of hope. Wise teachers try to become culturally responsive instructors. They are open to the transformative processes of initiatives such as *Círculos de memoria* and are willing to try out activities like 'Me Mapping' to help learners explore their own identities.

The types of learning, teaching, and sharing discussed in this article are organic ways to expand peace and understanding. These efforts are difficult, inspiring, and deeply rewarding. When we multiply them, these attempts can change the world.

Notes

1. U.S. terminology for immigrants is found in *Law Insider* (2022). Countries have their own terms and laws.
2. Many people are forced to leave their home countries for reasons of adverse effects of climate change, including food insecurity. However, these people are not considered refugees unless their food insecurity or other climate-change plight is related to persecution and armed conflict (Edwards 2012).
3. Disasters (including drought or famine) may be a human rights threat where they are linked to situations of persecution or armed conflict rooted in racial, ethnic, religious, and other factors noted above, or where they disproportionately affect particular groups.

4. It has been asked whether refugees must apply for asylum from the 'first asylum country,' i.e., the first 'safe' country that refugees encounter after fleeing from their home country. The first asylum country can permit refugees to enter its territory to seek temporary asylum, pending eventual repatriation (being sent back to the home country from which they escaped – a very bad idea) or resettlement elsewhere. Since there is no legal mandate to ask for asylum in the first safe country encountered on the way to the host country (Yeo 2019), researchers and lawyers suggest that refugees should avoid doing so. Adult refugees under international law who claim asylum in the first asylum country usually suffer great uncertainty, stress, abuse, and trauma there, and their children's education is severely disrupted (Dryden-Peterson 2019; Triandafyllidou 2018). It appears that moving on to the desired host country is much better than stopping for long in the first asylum country.
5. If the host (destination) country is not a signatory of the 1951 *Convention* or the 1967 *Protocol,* the UNHCR might have to take a role in these decisions.
6. See Sajjad (2018) for the political importance of understanding the categories and terminology.
7. This is not to be confused with Paulo Freire's 'o Círculos de Cultura.'
8. See Bartlett and Ghaffar-Kucher (2013).
9. We caution that students' funds of knowledges should not be used as assets or resources to be frittered away on market-driven curricula or activities related to superficial ideologies of 'neoliberal diversity and inclusion.'
10. Many other discrimination criteria (markers) exist, such as islamophobia, antisemitism, fatphobia, genderism, colorism (referring to skin color), and education level.

Disclosure statement

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