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# Trauma-Informed Teaching of Literature to Multilingual Learner Refugees: In Search for Balance between Cultural Responsiveness and Curriculum Sensitivity


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### Cover Page Footnote

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# Trauma Informed Teaching of Literature to Multilingual Learner Refugees: In Search for Balance between Cultural Responsiveness and Curriculum Sensitivity

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The unprecedented refugee crisis since the onset of the pandemic changed the demographics of the student population and recontextualized culturally responsive literacy education. Many Multilingual Learner refugee students entering our classrooms bring with them experiences of mass exodus that have direct implications for teaching and learning. It is imperative to identify culturally responsive pedagogies that balance cultural representation with sensitivity toward multifaceted trauma endured by Multilingual Learner refugees. Using an ecological perspective as a theoretical framework, we examine tensions and critical considerations in choosing culturally responsive children's and young adult literature as they apply to the context of three contemporary groups of Multilingual Learner refugees in American classrooms (i.e., unaccompanied minors crossing the U.S.-Mexican border, Afghan evacuees, and the Ukrainian refugees). The article calls for research in developing a critical and coherent understanding of trauma-informed, culturally responsive approaches in the selection and integration of refugee literature within classrooms and instruction. Pedagogical implications and considerations are discussed for all classrooms in building equity and access for Multilingual Learner refugees.

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**Keywords:** multilingual learners, refugees, trauma, literature, curriculum

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The United States education system is facing a challenge that is moving too quickly for educators to keep up with the demand (González, 2021): the population of Multilingual Learners (MLs) continues to rapidly grow in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). In fact, compared to other student groups, MLs are the fastest-growing segment of the student population (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008). Asylum seekers and refugees are coming to the United

States from a diversity of geographical regions and countries, driven by various causes for migration. In 2021, the majority of people granted asylum in the United States were from Venezuela, China, and El Salvador, whereas most refugees came from Congo, Syria, and Afghanistan (Baugh, 2022). Most recently, the United States has experienced yet another influx of newcomer MLs whose experiences of mass exodus have direct implications for teaching and learning. These experiences include the traumatogenic migration stages endured by unaccompanied minors crossing the border, Afghan evacuees, and Ukrainian nationals escaping from the war in Europe. The trauma caused by the pandemic has only been exacerbated by the contemporary forced migrations to the United States as a result of geopolitical warfare, economic oppression, and life-threatening political conflict.

The implications of such an unprecedented refugee crisis for U.S. schools, educators, and ML programs that receive students who have experienced the trauma of forced migration are profound. We argue that to avoid the danger of triggering traumatic stress in the refugee student population, instructional decisions surrounding choosing literature and facilitating book discussions must be made cautiously and intentionally. In this article, we emphasize the critical need for trauma-informed practices, decision-making, and research as it relates to the selection of childhood and adolescent literature within the context of culturally responsive teaching, social-emotional learning, and critical pedagogies.

### **Who Are ML Refugees?**

For the purposes of this article, it is important that we provide an operationalization of the essential terms “Multilingual Learners” and “refugees.”

Multilingual Learners (MLs) is a term that has been increasingly gaining traction in the research literature (e.g., Cummins, 2021; Rajendram, 2021). The term MLs also represents a shift from a deficit classification to one based on assets. For example, it represents a departure from English-centric notions within terms such as English Language Learners (ELLs) to one that acknowledges the student’s entire linguistic repertoire. Before MLs and ELLs, students were classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP; Colombo et al., 2019), giving a negative connotation that students learning English were limited. Instead, the term MLs shifts the language, and therefore the mindset, to one that acknowledges the funds of knowledge present as well as the benefits of knowing and learning multiple languages.

However, the term ELL is used by the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) within the New York State Education Department (NYSED; 2015–2023b) and where it is distinguished from MLs. The OBEWL website states, “Our mission is to ensure that all New York State English Language Learners (ELLs) attain the highest level of academic success and that all Multilingual Learners (MLs) . . . achieve the highest level of language proficiency in English and in one or more other languages” (NYSED, 2015–2023b). It is important to note that NYSED refers to students who are developing English proficiency as ELLs as it relates to a protected group of students that are eligible for mandated services and supplemental support and funding through Title III (NYSED, 2015–2023a). This understanding is also reflected in the research literature. MLs include all students who speak a language other than English at

home, which accounts for about 1 in 5 children in the United States (Thompson & Kieffer, 2018). Among MLs, one subgroup is ELLs, who are not yet proficient in English. About 1 in 10 students in the United States is classified as an ELL (Thompson & Kieffer, 2018). Therefore, an important distinction here is that all ELLs are MLs, but not all MLs are ELLs (González, 2021). For the purpose of this study, we use the term MLs to include both refugee students who are developing English proficiency (i.e., ELLs) and students who are multilingual, speak a language other than English at home but who are also proficient in English and would not otherwise be eligible for Title III services. An example of this includes potential refugee students from Ukraine, as these students typically engage in English study in their home country starting in elementary school.

Operationalizing the term “refugee” in the context of the student population is also challenging. Refugee youth entering public schools in the United States are experientially diverse. As a result of the rapid expansion of critical understanding and deeper interpretation of factors leading to forced displacement, the very definition of the term “refugee” is currently under scrutiny (Weerasinghe, 2020). The 1951 Refugee Convention, amended by its 1967 protocol, places individuals who are being persecuted based on race, religion, nationality, or political opinion under international protection by granting them refugee status. However, other factors compelling human displacement, such as humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters and climate change, food and water shortages, human rights violations involving human trafficking, child labor, recruitment of children as soldiers, inability to start or continue schooling due to war, etc., warrant a broader definition of refugees (i.e., individuals who applied for protection outside of the host country) and asylees (i.e., migrants asking for protection at the border or within the host country) entitled to protection under regional and international law (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2022).

To emphasize the complexity of refugee experiences and the uniqueness of circumstances surrounding refugee flight and resettlement, we broadly define refugee students as family members of individuals who have “refugee,” “asylum,” or “parole” status currently undergoing the trauma of forced displacement, as well as unaccompanied youth with no legal status unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin who also experience traumatic stress resulting from displacement. ML refugees coming to the nation’s classrooms this academic year reflect a diverse group of youth speaking with a range of proficiencies in two or more languages, complex traumatic experiences, and various circumstances surrounding migration and resettlement.

## **Contemporary ML Refugee Groups**

### ***Unaccompanied Minors Crossing the Border***

Global conflicts have prompted an influx of ML refugees within U.S. schools. Each year, thousands of unaccompanied children cross the United States–Mexican border (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2022), with a recent increase in unaccompanied minors (Montoya-Galvez, 2022a). Those crossing include many from countries with some of the highest rates of poverty and violence across the globe (Cheatham & Roy, 2022; O’Neil, 2015). The children crossing the border may be traveling by themselves,

are separated from family at the border, or are left behind by human traffickers. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (2022) reports that encounters of unaccompanied children increased by 18% from February 2022 to March 2022. The average number of unaccompanied children in U.S. Customs and Border Protection custody in March 2022 was 582 per day. It is suspected that the average number of minors crossing the border is higher than the reported value, as it does not include those minors crossing the border that were not encountered by the border patrol officials. However, these numbers do not tell the story of the actual and traumatic experiences of minors crossing the border.

A case study on an unaccompanied minor who crossed the border gives voice to this experience (St. Andrews, 2013). The voice is of a 17-year-old from El Salvador who crossed the border to find his mother, who had left to find work in the United States and send remittances to her two sons. However, he reported that the money was mismanaged by his uncle, and gang violence prevented him and his brother from attending school. Both witnessed the murder of peers as a result of gang violence. The adolescent decided to migrate to the United States by himself. While crossing the border, he paid *coyotes* (persons who smuggle immigrants across the Mexico-U.S. border) to cross the border and, at gunpoint, was held hostage by the same coyotes he paid to cross. They communicated to his family in the United States to pay for his release, or else he would be killed. Once the coyotes were paid and he was freed, he continued to travel across the border and walked through the hot desert, where immigration officials encountered him and held him within a juvenile detention center. He was then released to his mother and began attending high school in New Jersey. He aspires to get a job to earn enough money to bring his younger brother to the United States. This case study provides critical information for educators to understand the experiences of minors who have crossed the United States–Mexican border, inform their practices and decision-making, build empathy, and be more responsive to both their academic and social-emotional needs within the classroom.

### ***Afghan Evacuees***

In addition to mass migration through the U.S.-Mexican border, the United States has received refugees via aircraft. In August 2021, U.S. and NATO forces withdrew from Afghanistan, marking the closure of the 20-year-long war with the signing of the Doha Agreement, which was executed by the Trump administration and the Taliban in February 2020 (Capaccio, 2022). As a result of this treaty, large-scale evacuations of foreign citizens and vulnerable Afghan citizens took place via airlift. Afghans who supported U.S. and NATO troops, shared contrasting political views from the Taliban, or had other socioeconomic motivations were now identified as evacuees. The United States evacuated about 82,300 people, including Afghan refugees and foreign nationals, from the Hamid Karzai International Airport, the last remaining non-Taliban-controlled route out of the country after the fall of Kabul on August 15, 2021 (Jake & Schmitt, 2021). It was reported in September 2021 that, as a result of the Afghan evacuation, the Biden administration planned to resettle 55,600 Afghan evacuees from the U.S. military bases (Alvarez, 2021). Since then, the number of evacuees has significantly increased, as it was later reported that 35,128 Afghan evacuees out of the estimated 67,000 have been processed in the United States as of February 2022 (Montoya-Galvez, 2022b). In

New York, Governor Hochul dedicated an additional two million dollars in state funding to help evacuees resettle in the state (New York State, 2021). The increase in Afghan students and families prompted the New York State Education Department to prepare translations in Farsi and Dari for the English Language Learner Identification Process for Afghan families as they matriculate into New York schools. The translations provided a level of access to key information on the services, rights, and programs afforded to ML students and their families, a practice for which we should strive for all forced migrants and students.

### ***The Ukrainian Refugee Crisis***

Recent geopolitical wars have also impacted the influx of ML refugees within U.S. classrooms. On Thursday, February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine when Putin announced a “special military operation” for the “demilitarization and denazification” of Ukraine, prompting refugees to flee the country (Troianovski, 2022). Since then, it has been reported that the estimate of refugees fleeing Ukraine is 6,801,987 (U.N. Refugee Agency, 2022). The United States has stated its willingness to accept up to 100,000 Ukrainian refugees, including those with expiring visas and others who are flying to Mexico and crossing the border (Ronayne, 2022). In April 2022, it was reported that about 150 Ukrainians a day have been crossing the Mexican border and were being allowed to enter the United States on a humanitarian basis (CBS News, 2022).

This type of recent entry based on humanitarian considerations sets a precedent for considering other forced migratory groups who are displaced as a result of similar situations. For this reason, the humanitarian entry through the Mexican border for Ukrainians was short-lived. One month later, it was reported that camps stationed in Tijuana of about 500 Ukrainian refugees, where about 100 are children, are awaiting a response from the “Uniting for Ukraine” program (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2022) in order to pass through the U.S.-Mexican border. This program includes an application process to be completed in Europe or in other countries like Mexico to be allowed to enter the United States (Guardian, 2022). Qualifications include having been in Ukraine as of February 11, 2022, having a sponsor in the United States (which could be family or an organization), meeting vaccination and other public health requirements, and passing a background check. Eligible applicants are granted a two-year parole status, which allows them to stay in the United States for that period. However, it was reported that many children and families were camping at the border with Mexico or awaiting the results of Uniting for Ukraine in European countries (Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, 2022). Importantly, the formal education of school-aged children in this group is negatively impacted. In the next section, we discuss the special needs of ML refugee students, where trauma-informed practices are a priority.

## Effects of Trauma on Youth and Learning

The amount of traumatic stress experienced by our ML refugees is immeasurable and varies by groups, contexts, and individuals. The experiences of the three contemporary forced migration contexts reviewed above—unaccompanied minors crossing the border, Afghan refugees, and Ukrainian refugees—have a traumatogenic potential that can be catastrophic, especially for the developing brains of children. Across the three contexts, the trauma equation (SAMHSA, 2012, as cited in St. Andrews, 2013, slide 7) unifies the potential traumatic stress that refugees may have experienced. The trauma equation is where trauma is the sum of events, experiences, and effects. Events or circumstances may include the actual or extreme threat of physical or psychological harm, including the severe withholding of resources for healthy development. Because every individual has different reactions, an event may be experienced as traumatic by one person and not another. The experience may be influenced by cultural beliefs and the developmental stage of the individual. Likewise, adverse effects may occur immediately or over time. Effects may include physical, mental, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, social, and spiritual challenges.

Trauma experienced through forced migration can also be understood through an analysis of the migration stages with traumatogenic potential. Foster (2001) identified three such stages for immigrants, including pre-migration, trauma during transit, and resettlement. Pre-migration trauma includes events, experiences, and/or effects that occurred prior to the travel. Examples include the missile warfare in Ukraine and the gang violence in El Salvador. The transit stage includes trauma experienced en route. Potential examples include being held at gunpoint by coyotes while crossing the border, camping on the streets in an unfamiliar country, or having to leave behind one's home abruptly. The resettlement stage includes the stress that families and children experience as they try to make a new life for themselves. They may also experience acculturation stress (navigating between their new culture and their culture of origin) as well as isolation stress (experience as minorities in a new country) during the resettlement stage and beyond. Once the children and families arrive in the United States and begin to resettle, they also must navigate a foreign school system, including the matriculation process.

As discussed, many of the refugee students entering U.S. schools come to classrooms with complex trauma. Students experience a great deal of stress and anxiety in the classrooms, which is further amplified when they feel marginalized or unsupported because of their race, gender, or language (Hammond, 2015). In addition to learning a new language, culture, and schooling system, our ML refugees are also navigating the adverse effects of the trauma they may have experienced.

We all have defense mechanisms in our brain and body that let us know when we are under threat and mobilize us to fight, flight, or freeze (Pappamihiel et al., 2022). However, when youth experience continuous trauma, the brain and body are put into a chronic state of fear, which activates the survival portions of our brain located in the limbic system (mid/lower areas of the brain). This causes the development of an overactive alarm system in children's developing brains. As a result, children who are in a triggered state may not be able to access higher functions of the prefrontal cortex, the



learning portion of the brain (St. Andrews, 2013). It can lead to diminished concentration, memory, and language abilities children need to succeed in schools.

A multitude of triggers present within the school environment, which resonate with the various elements of the trauma equation (including events, experiences, and effects), or correspond to the stages of migration carrying traumatogenic potential (pre-migration, transit, and resettlement), have the capacity to induce activation within the limbic region of the brains of immigrant children who have experienced trauma. These include sudden changes of transition, loss of control, sensory overload, confrontation, rejection, vulnerability, and intimacy, just to name a few (De Deckker, 2018). Many of these triggers may occur in classrooms, positioning schools to appear like a battleground that reflects the traumatic experiences the students have undergone. Therefore, the school setting can appear reminiscent of the contexts where the trauma occurred, activating the survival portions of the brain for fight, flight, or freeze. In addition, educators may misinterpret the child's behavioral response to traumatic events, which can lead to lost learning time and strained relationships.

Students who respond in “fight” are often mislabeled as aggressive and violent. Those who respond in flight are mislabeled as unmotivated and unfocused. Refugees who experience freeze are mislabeled as passive and disengaged. Learning about the impacts of trauma can help keep educators from misunderstanding the reasons underlying some children's difficulties with learning, behavior, and relationships. With training, educators may be better able to recognize and respond to our ML refugees experiencing traumatic stress with informed interventions.

Importantly, intervention is critical, as these adverse effects of childhood and adolescent trauma can lead to life-threatening experiences. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has conceptualized a framework that illustrates the progression and mechanism by which exposure to childhood adversity influences health and well-being over one's lifespan. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which include the traumatic experiences of refugee children, lay the foundation for the progression of social, emotional, and cognitive impairment, which can lead to the adoption of health-risk behaviors leading to disease, disability, and social problems, and ultimately leading to early death (Felitti et al., 1998). When educators engage in trauma-informed practices and decision-making, it can be life-saving.

### **The Role of Literature in Addressing Traumatic Stress**

Since 2022, the influx of Ukrainian refugees, unaccompanied minors crossing the border, and Afghan evacuees has impacted classrooms in the United States. The circumstances surrounding the forced displacement of the three target groups that we described above reflect the reality of today's classroom, where refugee students are to be recognized by their teachers as individuals who carry diverse cultural, traumatogenic, and lived experiences that impact teaching and learning. Dismantling the narrative of a uniform refugee experience requires a more critical and informed, culturally responsive approach in classrooms.

In this article, we discuss a thematic synthesis of the scholarly literature that examines the role of children's and adolescent literature in cultivating a safe and welcoming learning environment for students, particularly for MLs who are

experiencing traumatic stress. The invaluable potential of children’s literature and other diverse texts to engage students in a larger world and shed light on human experiences that are otherwise difficult to discuss is well-known and widely utilized by educators (Crawforde et al., 2019). Inclusion of children and adolescent literature about refugees is necessary to ensure cultural representation of newly arrived students and reflect socio- and geopolitical changes in the global community that directly impact teaching and learning. However, the benefits of using children’s and young adult literature as a medium for refugee experiences are often counteracted by the absence of critical framing that provides opportunities for putting emphasis on refugees’ resilience, resourcefulness, and cultural richness.

With the United States on the brink of the new wave of MLs that is about to substantially impact the demographic, cultural, and linguistic composition of today’s classrooms, it is imperative to identify culturally responsive pedagogies that balance cultural representation with sensitivity toward specific social-emotional needs of refugee students. In the field of literacy and language, it is also critical to capture the effects of these unprecedented demographic changes on the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum and to analyze the experiences of teachers who engage in literacy practices that involve the use of texts with the purpose of providing “mirrors” and “windows” opportunities into refugee experiences (Bishop, 1990). This article provides a thematic synthesis of existing research on the role of children’s and adolescent literature in trauma-informed teaching of ML refugees; the authors call for future research in addressing these questions, particularly in the context of the three target refugee groups discussed above. When examining current scholarly literature, we were guided by the following research questions:

1. How do refugee students perceive, engage, and interact with literature that reflects their experiences when this text is afforded to them?
2. How do teachers create reading experiences involving refugee literature that students perceive as safe and useful?

To set the stage for this synthesis we highlight the key theories that frame our thematic exploration. Then we review important themes that emerged from the scholarly literature related to teaching using childhood and adolescent refugee literature within K-12 classrooms. A practical application of the synthesized themes is offered to illustrate the integration of social-emotional learning and trauma-informed pedagogy to a culturally responsive literacy curriculum. After concluding remarks, we make a call for further qualitative research grounded in the ecological perspective on literacy practices. In our estimation, this research can utilize refugee literature with students who have experienced forced migration and traumatic stress in order to inform trauma-informed and culturally responsive pedagogical practices.

### **Theoretical Framework: The Ecological Perspective**

The ecological perspective stems from Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory (SCT) (1978) and includes the ecological-semiotic frameworks based on Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1993) bioecological model and Gibson’s (1979) notion of affordance referring to the reciprocal relationship between an organism and a particular feature of its environment. From an ecological perspective, the learner is immersed in an

environment full of potential meanings, and these meanings become available gradually as the learner acts and interacts within and with the environment. Therefore, to search for learning, we must look at the active learners within their environments and not just the contents in their brains (van Lier, 2000). This theoretical lens will provide insights as to the interactions between refugee literature and students within classroom environments.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1993) bioecological model displays hierarchically nested ecosystems that reflect the contextual factors that affect learners' development. In the bioecological model, the individual is nested within a set of subsystems, including the most immediate settings to the macro-level social and cultural contexts. This suggests that even learners who are in the same classroom may perceive instruction differently, engage in different activities, be exposed to different learning resources outside the classroom, and achieve different outcomes based on what their environment has afforded them. This also reflects how events, experiences, and effects have differential traumatic outcomes based on the individual student.

From an ecological perspective, affordance is a particular property of the environment that, for good or for ill, is perceived by an active organism in that environment (Gibson, 1979). What becomes an affordance within the environment depends on what the organism does, what the organism wants, and what is useful for the organism. Van Lier (2000) provides an illustrative metaphor for affordance, where a leaf within a forest can offer different affordances to different organisms. It can serve as food for caterpillars, shade for spiders, cutting for ants, medicines for shamans, etc. In each case, the leaf is the same, and the properties do not change; however, in each case the leaf itself remains unchanged, exhibiting consistent properties. The divergence lies in the perceptions and subsequent actions of the organisms inhabiting the ecosystem, as they respond to the distinct attributes inherent to the leaf. In the context of refugees, if the learner is active and engaged, the learner will perceive the literacy opportunities afforded by one's environment and actively use them based on how useful the learner perceives them to be.

This theoretical lens also provides insights about how the students' ecosystem can also contribute to a damaging or safeguarding learning environment. Just as with the leaf metaphor, childhood and adolescent literature can serve as an affordance only when the student perceives it as valuable and interacts with it. Depending on the experiences and identities of the student, refugee literature may be avoided in order to circumvent any potential triggers for traumatic stress or embraced for shared experiences. For others, refugee literature may provide opportunities to expand one's worldview and build connections with and develop a better understanding of human experiences. The presence of refugee literature will provide opportunities for mirrors and windows, where students can see themselves and their experiences (mirrors) represented in the classroom, and others to see into the experiences of others (windows). However, educators must be critical in both the selection of refugee literature and in considering the students' presence in the classroom and how they perceive and interact with the texts. Our challenge as trauma-informed culturally responsive educators is knowing how to create an environment that the brain perceives

as safe and nurturing, so it can be relieved of stress and focus on learning (Hammond, 2015).

## **Theme 1: Tensions and Critical Considerations in Choosing Culturally Responsive Content**

### **What Is Culturally Responsive Teaching for ML Refugees?**

Culturally responsive teaching emphasizes that students' experiential and cultural backgrounds uniquely contribute to the learning process (Ladson-Billings, 2021). The richness of refugee students' experiences requires active validation and integration into the culturally responsive curricula because of the elevated risk of refugee students' stories being silenced by the effects of trauma and emergent skills in language and literacy (Foster, 2001). In *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, Zaretta Hammond (2015) discusses that all new information must be coupled with existing funds of knowledge in order to be learned because our limbic portion of the brain creates a schema that operates as background knowledge in order to make sense of our external experiences.

However, for ML refugee students who have experienced complex trauma, this can also act as a trigger for negative classroom experiences. Over a decade ago, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her "Danger of a Single Story" TEDx Talk (2009), conceptualized a "single story" as a powerful and harmful implicit bias dominating many narratives, such as reporting across media platforms, workplace discourse, teaching, and children's literature. Superficial frames of diversity and lack of depth in representing refugee students' social and cultural experiences and beliefs are particularly alarming trends in much of children's literature that define refugees by the single act of being forced to leave everything behind (Johnson & Gasiewicz, 2017; Strelakova-Hughes, 2019). By using children's literature with refugee protagonists indiscriminately and teaching from a position of privilege, teachers risk creating and reinforcing stereotypes that flatten and dehumanize refugee students' experiences.

One key consideration in applying the cultural responsiveness framework to teaching children's literature is that it creates the opportunity to establish classroom communities that emphasize students' agency and empowerment (Gay, 2013). Teachers, being enabling adults who mediate students' meaning-making and emotional response to literature (La Marca, 2004), have the power to facilitate their students' quest to understand the complexity of social, historical, and political issues surrounding the multifaceted nature of refugee experiences. Engaging students in a discussion about multiple stories surrounding every experience of life, displacement, and resettlement has the potential to disrupt the common narrative of the "happy ending" at the host country's border and dismantle the perspective of privilege in interpreting children's literature (Braden & Rodríguez, 2016). Through a skillful discussion, teachers can divert focus from trauma endured by refugee students to the diversity of cultural backgrounds and experiences that these students bring to the classroom—for example, their family values, perseverance, and resilience (Strelakova-Hughes, 2017)—and thus make the reading experience empowering, humanly enriching, culturally responsive, and engaging.

## **Social and Emotional Learning within Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classrooms**

Another integral consideration in applying culturally responsive teaching to the study of literary characters enduring displacement is the compatibility and complementarity of this pedagogy with the Framework for Systematic Social and Emotional Learning (i.e., SEL) (Collaborative for Academic, Social, Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2019a). Freeing learning spaces of cultural oppression and fostering an inclusive environment, where all students' life experiences, talents, and interests are valued, is at the heart of the Transformative SEL approach to educational equity (Jagers, et al., 2019). Social awareness is one of the five competencies outlined in the framework that relates to the ability to understand the perspective and develop empathy for others with diverse backgrounds and cultures. It requires a focused effort to embrace life experiences that are often vastly different from those of the teachers and most other students (Singh et al., 2013). Doing so through a careful examination of culturally responsive children's literature about refugees and building deep connections between diverse life stories have the potential to lead to a greater understanding of humanity and an increased sense of belonging and relatedness with others for both typical students and ML refugee students in the classroom. It will also contribute to a global perspective while building equity for all students.

### **Theme 2: Trauma-Informed Assumptions, Principles, and Approaches**

To engage in systematic trauma-informed approaches within teaching and learning, we recommend that the development of pedagogical practices and strategies be aligned with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s (2014) trauma-informed assumptions and principles. SAMHSA (2014) developed a framework to support systems to communicate with each other and understand better the connections between trauma and behavioral health issues and to guide systems to develop more trauma-informed approaches. The assumptions and principles are informed by three significant threads of work, including trauma-focused research, practice-generated knowledge about trauma interventions, and the lesson articulated by survivors of traumatic experiences. SAMHSA's (2014) four key assumptions include realization, recognition, response, and resistance to re-traumatization. All people at all levels within a system have a basic "realization" about trauma and understand its effects, "recognize" the signs and symptoms of trauma, "respond" appropriately, and seek to actively "resist re-traumatization." Trauma-informed approaches are grounded in these four assumptions and are guided by six key principles described in Table 1.

**Table 1***6 Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach AMHSA (2014)*

<b>Key Principles</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
Safety	Feeling physically and psychologically safe Physical setting is safe Interpersonal interactions promote a sense of safety Understanding safety as defined by those served
Trustworthiness and Transparency	Transparency in work and decision making Building and maintaining trust across those involved in the system
Peer Support	Peers are “trauma survivors” Provide support and mutual self-help for establishing safety and hope, building trust, enhancing collaboration, and utilizing their stories and lived experiences to promote recovery and healing
Collaboration and Mutuality	Healing happens in relationship building Meaningful sharing of power and decision-making Everyone in a system has a role and need not be a therapist to be therapeutic
Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues	Recognize that the system is reflective of biases Provide gender and culturally responsive services Leverage the healing value of cultural connections Incorporate policies, protocols, and processes that are responsive to the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of individuals served. Recognize and respond to historical trauma

### **Trauma-Informed and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

Sherwood and Colleagues (2021) integrated critical elements of trauma-informed approaches and culturally responsive teaching into a development of the pedagogical model of Trauma-Informed and Culturally Responsive (TICR) Pedagogy. TICR Pedagogy emerged when this group of faculty members from a graduate clinical social work program adapted their teaching for online learning during COVID-19 to address the trauma from the pandemic and concomitant social and economic

devastation, subsequent police brutality, racial injustice, and environment disasters that disproportionately affected historically marginalized communities. To address these challenges, the authors aligned pedagogical approaches with SAMHSA's (2014) trauma-informed principles, with a particular emphasis on being culturally responsive. The authors defined culturally responsive pedagogy as an approach to teaching that empowers students to challenge social injustices, in addition to being responsive to intersecting social and culture identities (i.e. age, ability status, gender, immigration status, language, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc.). TCR Pedagogy expands and reframes the sixth principle by removing deficit-based concepts of social identities, cultures, and histories as "issues" and reframing the principle through a lens of resiliency while recognizing the persistence of structural oppression.

### **Avoiding Damaging Instructional Discourses**

One of many challenges experienced by educators who work with ML refugees is detecting and disrupting intentional and unintentional adherence to cultural favoritism in existing literature and book discussions (Suh & Hodges, 2020). An example of cultural favoritism is an implication, commonly found in children's literature, that refugees' stories receive a happy ending at a host country's border. In fact, in the analysis of 45 books with refugee-background characters, Ward and Warren (2020) identified only nine books that explored the theme of resettlement, often in overly simplified terms. The authors note that even the books that scratch the surface of the complexity of the resettlement experience often imply that one must leave one's entire past behind to make a successful adjustment and start a happy new life. Such inclinations to dismiss trauma associated with resettlement and MLs' effort to sustain and further develop their cultural identities undermine the sense of belonging emphasized in SEL. It also contradicts the principles of trauma-informed, asset-based pedagogies (i.e., transparency, mutuality, collaboration, empowerment, voice, choice, and cultural responsiveness; Sherwood et al., 2021).

Other examples of cultural favoritism include the epistemic division of West versus East, peace and stability in "safe" countries versus war, and uncertain futures in students' "broken" homelands. A limited documentation of mishandling of text discussions involving refugee and immigrant students indicates that teachers' best intentions to represent foreign-born youth in their classroom may reinforce negative stereotypes and colonialist views. Strelakova-Hughes and Peterman (2020) described a teacher's attempt to use a picture book about a young refugee from Afghanistan to engage a student in her classroom who had a real-life experience of enduring a forced displacement from Afghanistan. Contrary to the teacher's intent to support the refugee student by making her instruction culturally responsive, the book discussion had an adverse effect on the entire learning environment. Instead of sparking interest in the refugee student's culture and experiences, the read-aloud spurred his classmates to pity him and make uncomfortable comments about the absence of running water or spacious living accommodations and other modern conveniences taken for granted in Western culture.

Cui (2019) documented a more deliberate and thus more detrimental text discussion in a sixth-grade social studies class. During the discussion, the teacher

reinforced a biased and outdated representation of China despite the attempts of one of the students in the class, born in China, to paint a more complex and authentic picture of contemporary China by relaying her lived experience. Again, in the lesson there was an implicit message of Western world hegemony given by the teacher through the poor choice of text and the missed opportunity of encouraging the student to share her cultural capital. In turn, this reinforced the historically biased Western discourse with respect to “Eastern” civilization as being inferior (Said, 2012) and inadvertently passed that colonialist mindset to the other students in the classroom.

Discussions of refugee experiences that support the ideological narrative of superior “us” versus inferior “them” (Van Dijk & Atienza, 2011) lead to construction of a marginalizing classroom environment. In the critical discussion of texts portraying other cultures, Shinabe (2018) points out that even lauding cultural practices in diverse literature may imply assumed superiority of the “Western” way of life. The author points out that this may happen because such praises highlight other countries’ similarity to universalized values of the United States and Western European countries. Such reductive and limited approaches to viewing refugee experiences are documented in the analysis of 45 narrative picture books featuring a refugee protagonist (Strekalova-Hughes, 2019). Agency and power assumptions abound in children’s literature with refugee characters and deprive refugees of the ownership over their life choices, victimizing them instead. Strekalova-Hughes (2019) pointed out the striking similarity of refugee experiences across all the stories, portraying them as victims of war and violence with a unified story of flight, regardless of the characters’ country of origin, gender, cultural traditions, age, and other defining characteristics. In fact, more often than not, refugees are represented as pure victims with a universal refugee experience even if they come from a European country that does not fit into the mold of countries historically prone to violence, such as Bosnia and Serbia in the 1990s (Mosselson, 2009). The recent invasion of Ukraine by Russian military forces indicates that the binary view of regions being either inherently safe or inherently broken is misleading and reinforces the uniqueness and complexity of circumstances surrounding the refugee experiences. Critically framed book discussions have the power to disrupt damaging discourses and recontextualize refugee experiences.

### **Theme 3: Applying a Critical Lens to ML Refugee Literacy Practices**

Subjecting refugee students to instructional contexts that reinforce the representation of refugees as victims in a passive unidirectional transformation into citizens of “safe” countries takes away refugee students’ agency and adds to the multifaceted trauma they are processing (Mosselson, 2009). Moreover, it contradicts culturally responsive and social and emotional learning pedagogies. We argue that purposefully applying the critical pedagogy lens to literature that portrays refugee populations is necessary to effectively resist the hidden curriculum that implicitly promotes the dominant culture discourse and thus suppresses the agency of forcefully displaced people (Baykut et al., 2022). Planning a culturally responsive lesson using literature with refugee characters entails evaluating the text for power relations, curricular justice, and cultural depth (Cui, 2019; Strekalova-Hughes & Peterson, 2020).



Following the principles of critical pedagogy outlined by Freire (2004), finding a way for refugee students to make their voices heard and cultural capital validated is a pedagogical task of paramount importance. Interviews with refugee students indicate that they feel invisible when teachers neglect the opportunity to include them in a discussion and tap into their experiential diversity (Mosselson, 2009). In addition, intentionality in selecting literature and critical framing of literacy discussions are life-saving. Planning a lesson using a critical lens includes the identification of potential triggers that may cause traumatic stress to occur in classrooms and possible mitigators of those triggers.

Principles of culturally responsive teaching and social-emotional learning (Sherwood, et al., 2021) necessitate a conscious effort to move away from predetermined narratives and embrace the complexity of the refugee experience. Dismantling the common narrative of leaving behind home countries as a lost cause perpetuated in numerous works of literature is one such example. Reality disproves any attempt to turn any human experience into one uniform story, forced displacement being no exception. The statistics published in *The Economist* (2022) on May 31st suggest that hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees are returning home from their exile in neighboring countries to restore and rebuild their homeland. In literature, Salva Dut, the main character in the novel *A Long Walk to Water*, by Linda Sue Park (2010), capitalizes on his unique life experience to establish a foundation for providing drinking wells in his native South Sudan. Salva's refugee story did not end at the U.S. border. By investing in the future of his home country, Salva dismantles the common narrative that all refugees leave their home countries behind as places of violence unworthy of pride and hope. The challenge is determining the balance between leveraging ML refugees' experiences and backgrounds without causing the student to experience traumatic stress in the classroom. This brings us to the next section on bringing more balance to the curriculum.

### **Practicing Curriculum Sensitivity**

The effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching is not only dependent on teacher expertise in recognizing cultural multiplicity in the classroom but also on sensitivity toward potential trauma that can stem from either including or avoiding literature that leads to difficult conversations. The reality of cognitive and affective damage caused by a culturally insensitive curriculum (Charles, 2019; Strekalova, 2013) cautions educators against relying exclusively on good intentions when planning book discussions in a classroom with ML refugees. Critical questioning of curricular choices to minimize the risk of curriculum violence—i.e., traumatizing education that compromises students' social, emotional, and intellectual well-being (Wiseman et al., 2019) and actively promoting curriculum sensitivity—is a necessary part of trauma-informed teaching.

There is a fine line between choosing stories that misrepresent the lived experiences of ML refugees from the Americas, Afghanistan, and Ukraine and selecting literature that may lead to retraumatizing the students. The affordances of critical pedagogy applied with sensitivity toward refugee students can enable instructional approaches that resist stereotyping the actual stories of refugee flight (e.g., leaving

behind an impoverished country prone to conflict) and misrepresent the sociopolitical reality of resettlement in the complex cultural environment of a host country (e.g., all forces of oppression cease at the United States border) while providing the opportunity to make cultural connections (Waddell & Clariza, 2018). Frank (2019), in her discussion of the misrepresentation of the history of African American slavery or the reinforcement of collective trauma in popular children's literature, recommends looking for literature that presents fully developed characters with their culture, individualism, and agency and contextualizing book discussions in historical truth free from distortions but with sensitivity to students' culture and age.

Learning from the research on African American enslaved characters in children's and young adult literature, Strekalova-Hughes (2017) calls for criticality in selecting and discussing children's literature about refugee experiences. She proposes moving the discourse away from generalizations about individual countries and groups of people to contextualizing forced displacement as a global humanitarian crisis and a collective responsibility. Accordingly, she advocates for creating equitable literacy environments where the past and present of every student's cultural background are comprehensively visible.

#### **Theme 4: Promising Practices in Using Culturally Responsive Children's Literature**

##### **Trauma-Informed, Culturally Responsive (TICR), and SEL Classroom Practices**

We expand on Sherwood's et al.'s (2021) TICR pedagogical model to include SEL practices and incorporate Transforming Education's (2020) concept of trauma-informed SEL to accomplish this. They define trauma-informed SEL as an approach to fostering social-emotional development with practices that support all students but are particularly inclusive and responsive to the needs of children and youth who have experienced trauma. Transforming Education (2020) identifies five key trauma-informed SEL practices: creating predictable routines, building strong and supportive relationships, empowering students' agency, supporting the development of self-regulation skills, and providing opportunities to explore individual and community identities. Table 2 provides examples of strategies for each of the five key trauma-informed SEL practices from Transforming Education (2020).

**Table 2**

*5 Key Trauma-Informed SEL Practices and Sample Strategies (Transforming Education 2020).*

<b>Trauma-Informed SEL Practices</b>	<b>Sample Strategies</b>
Create Predictable Routines	Be transparent with students about any changes to an established schedule. Model your own self-regulation skills as you flexibly adapt to any changes in the day.
Build Strong and Supportive Relationships	Spend time every day to get to know a student. Invite other colleagues in the school to get to know and connect with students in your classroom.
Empower Students' Agency	Collaborate with your students to help them problem-solve through challenges in the classroom.
Support the Development of Self-Regulation Skills	Help students develop emotional awareness and monitoring by using a mood meter.
Provide Opportunities to Explore Individual and Community Identities	Help students strengthen and explore their own identities and the perspectives of others through various activities that promote agency and civic engagement.

Trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and SEL teaching practices should not be juxtaposed in such a way that they are viewed as being dichotomous with academic content. Integrated instruction includes alignment of teaching practices with Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA, 2014) 6 Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach, the emphasis of culturally responsive teaching as conceptualized within Sherwood's et al.'s (2021) TCR Pedagogy, and trauma-informed SEL practices (Transforming Education, 2020). It is often cited that educators feel they are faced with a choice of focusing on SEL or academic content due to the high pressure of standardized testing (Dresser, 2013); however, academic achievement and SEL should be framed as integrated objectives (McTigue & Rimm-Kaufman, 2011). We make the same argument for trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and SEL pedagogy. For students experiencing traumatic stress, schools must address their social and emotional needs in order for them to be able to succeed academically (Arseneaux & Remington, 2019). One cannot address the tasks for the mind without addressing the matters of the heart. We propose that schools and practitioners take a trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and SEL approach to ensure that the needs of all students are met.

In *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, Hammond (2015) charges educators to create the right conditions and cultivate an environment that is optimal for learning by understanding how the brain responds to threats, real or perceived. The

goal is to create a classroom environment where culturally and linguistically diverse students can easily reach a state of relaxed alertness, that combination of excitement and anticipation we call engagement, every single day. For explicit examples of how to achieve this through integrated SEL practices, CASEL (2019b) has developed the SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook, a free resource that is downloadable from the Internet. It can help integrate SEL practices into any classroom, meeting, or youth-serving agency to promote community-building and deeper engagement. It is a comprehensive resource that supports resiliency and builds social and emotional skills, including self- and social awareness, self-regulation, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills within three types of instructional activities: (1) welcoming rituals and inclusion activities; (2) engaging strategies, brain breaks, and transitions; and (3) optimistic closures. The document provides descriptions of the activities (time length, objectives, assessment, etc.), including lesson plans with a scope and sequence. It also provides templates to systematically capture SEL practices that have been found effective in one classroom to disseminate amongst colleagues. Many of the practices in this resource are also reflected in the trauma-informed SEL practices toolkit described in St. Andrews (2013), such as developing rituals and routines.

St. Andrews (2013) identifies five trauma-informed practices for educators to consider. The first is recognizing that the student is going into survival mode and responding kindly and compassionately. We have to be cognizant of how we react and describe our students who are experiencing traumatic stress; instead of asking, "What's wrong with this child?" we should ask, "What's happening here?," as language matters.

Secondly, educators should create calm and predictable transitions so that students know what the transition is going to look like, what they're supposed to be doing, and what is next. For our ML refugees, having a poster with the sequence of the transitions, with English and home language text with corresponding visuals, can increase comprehension while mitigating triggers within the brain's limbic system due to unpredictability, sudden changes of transition, or abrupt transitions.

The third practice is to praise publicly and criticize privately, where we capture those moments to acknowledge students doing well and point it out to build their self-worth. At the same time, when redirecting behavior, do so privately and in as calm a voice as possible to avoid triggers such as vulnerability, intimidation/confrontation, or feelings of being confronted.

Fourth, use mindfulness activities such as brain breaks, standing and stretching, and meditation. Then have students focus on items external to the body so as to not trigger physically painful memories.

Lastly, educators must engage in self-care in order to prevent compassion fatigue and burnout. To be effective in the classroom, educators must give themselves permission to take time every day for themselves and engage in regular routines that nourish their physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual well-being.

The lack of formal training in trauma-informed pedagogy for pre-service and in-service educators has left many feeling unprepared to engage students experiencing traumatic stress, including MLs (Zacarian et al., 2017). In order for educators to build a coherent understanding of trauma-informed pedagogies, especially as it relates to MLs

and refugees, Table 3 provides a list of suggested articles and resources for K-12 practitioners, with brief summaries to provide an insightful introduction on the topic.

**Table 3**

*Suggested Articles for Educators on Trauma-Informed Pedagogy for ML Refugees*

Article	Author(s)	Summary
Social and Emotional Support for Refugee Families: A School Psychology Perspective	Robyn Hess (2017)	The author discusses important lessons learned from her work with refugees (i.e., Somali families), including considerations in addressing questions about mental health, working with cultural liaisons in the community to connect with families, and culturally responsive support for families.
Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators	National Child Traumatic Stress Network Schools Committee (2008)	The toolkit provides an overview of the facts on trauma for educators and the psychological and behavioral impacts of trauma on children in prekindergarten through high school. It also provides suggestions for self-care for educators and guidance for parents.

It is important to note that trauma-informed practices are not universal in addressing the complexity and diversity of the ML refugee experiences, traumatic stress, and differential responses (flight, fight, or freeze) discussed above. We must systematically and intentionally design and employ practices based on who the students are and their individual responses to the trauma-informed pedagogies implemented to gauge its effectiveness. This includes the selection and incorporation of refugee literature within instruction.

### **Application of Synthesized Themes**

#### **Purposeful Selection of Literature and Meaningful Discussions**

Applying social-emotional learning and trauma-informed pedagogy to a culturally responsive literacy curriculum is a challenge, further exacerbated by a limited amount of literature with culturally rich portrayals of characters enduring displacement. When looking for books to serve as windows and mirrors into refugee experiences, it is important to critically evaluate texts for cultural favoritism and traumatogenic potential while practicing curriculum sensitivity in prioritizing books that depict relevant details from characters' past and future and emphasize their culture, values, and aspirations. There are several resources that provide educators with an excellent starting point for purposeful selection of literature with refugee characters, including the analysis and classification of books suitable for elementary-age students (e.g., Strekalova-Hughes, 2019; Ward & Warren, 2020) and summaries of

early chapter books and novels for adolescent readers (e.g., ¡*Colorín Colorado!*, 2022; Sung et al., 2017).

Not all the books in the compilations referenced above fully meet the criteria for a culturally responsive and sensitive curriculum because of the author's positionality, lack of cultural depth in depicting some aspects of refugee experiences, or simply the brevity of format (e.g., picture books). Given the invaluable power of children's and young adult literature to ignite a discussion, educators can unlock the potential of any story to induce relevant connections, approach the complexity of refugee flight and resettlement from a critical lens, and promote individual choice in instructional activities related to the text.

Below, we use a picture book, *The Memory Coat* (Woodruff & Dooling, 1998), to contextualize applying culturally responsive and trauma-informed teaching to studying refugee characters. Through the discussion, we suggest ways to instruct using promising practices in culturally responsive and trauma-informed teaching to create a learning environment for ML refugee students.

This is a story of immigration that is responsive to the experiences of ML refugees. It features a family with children immigrating to the United States in the early 1900s to avoid persecution based on religion. However, the story in many ways is also a counternarrative of the common representation of refugees as passive recipients of privileges bestowed on them by a "safe" country. The refugee protagonists take agency over their own destiny through ingenuity, strong family values, and resourcefulness, which they manifest in response to the indifference and hostility they encounter in the host country. When considering refugee literature that reflects Foster's (2001) migration stages with traumatogenic potential, the focus of the narrative is not on the pre-migration trauma of war (i.e., victimizing refugees) but on engaging inner strength and family support to overcome the trauma of resettlement. See Table 4 for additional counter narrative examples in children's and young adult literature.

**Table 4***Examples of Refugee Experience Counternarratives*

<b>Title/Author</b>	<b>Intended Audience</b>	<b>Traumatogenic Stage</b>	<b>Elements of Counter Narrative</b>
<i>How I Learned Geography/</i> Uri Shulevitz	Ages 6–9	Resettlement	Resilience and inspiration come to the main character from within, with a little help from an old map.
<i>Inside Out and Back Again/</i> Thanhha Lai	Age 9–14	Resettlement	Hà wishes to leave peaceful Alabama to be by her papaya tree in war-torn Vietnam.
<i>A Time of Miracles/</i> Anne-Laure Bondoux	Age 14–18	Transit	Only when Kamil comes back to Georgia as a French citizen does he realize that it was a family secret that drove him and Gloria across Europe all those years ago.

*Note.* For summaries, see *The Refugee Experience: Books for Children* (¡Colorin Colorado!, 2022).

*The Memory Coat* invites a discussion of the diversity of religious practices and the importance of the right to religious freedom as it relates not only to other countries and time periods, but also to religious conflicts here in the United States. As a human-interest story, the book provides multiple opportunities to discuss relatable experiences, such as friendship between cousins, family, and cultural traditions, and experiences of communication barriers. Making such connections is an important step in increasing multilingual and monolingual students' understanding of humanity. Students receive a greater sense of belonging in their immediate environment and relatedness to the global community.

Teachers can expand the reading experience by eliciting multimodal responses to make further connections with the text. They can model, choosing between writing about a symbol from their culture that is important to them (e.g., making a connection to the symbolic meaning of Grisha's coat in the book) or describing any object that symbolically reflects their identity. Creating activities that provide choice is a useful strategy to avoid traumatizing learning experiences. Likewise, we recommend avoiding leading questions, whether during a book discussion or in the form of a writing prompt, to empower the students, give them voice, and foster an inclusive environment where ML refugees' choices regarding their background and cultural identity are respected.

## Conclusion

Today, educators are facing the tremendous challenge of not only responding to the COVID-19 pandemic but also in shifting their pedagogical practices to address the unprecedented changes in student demographics. The three migrant contexts of ML refugee students discussed in this article reflect the diversity and complexity of lived experiences, trauma, and cultural backgrounds that educators must critically consider and account for in the curriculum and within asset-based, student-centered pedagogies.

Although the literature has an immeasurable potential to include and represent, in the absence of intentionality and criticality, it presents a real danger of essentializing refugee experiences and contributing to traumatic stress. Researchers should examine the balance between cultural representation and inducing traumatic stress, both of which are centered in the limbic portion of the brain that can promote or inhibit learning. In order to account for the diversity and richness of the migrant groups and instructional contexts, we call for the field to engage in qualitative research of ML refugees and the affordances (or lack thereof) of refugee literature to capture the tensions in seeking this balance.

## Call for Further Research

This article reviewed the diversity of ML Refugee experiences to solidify the notion that these students are not a monolithic group. The diversity includes the languages, cultures, and countries of origin and the complexity of traumatic stress these students may be experiencing within our classrooms. Our call for research is to address the unprecedented diversity of refugees in terms of trauma, educational backgrounds, and language proficiencies. Specifically, we call for the systematic study of the intentional and trauma-informed selection of refugee literature and literacy practices in order to build culturally and linguistically responsive and restorative experiences, social-emotional learning, and critical literacy development in tandem.

Because each learning environment with ML Refugee students is unique, we call for qualitative approaches to capture and document the data and the analysis. Using the Ecological Perspective's metaphor of the leaf, refugee literature selection and provision would be considered an affordance based on how the learners interact with the text. How do the refugee students perceive and interact with these texts? Do students see the value of the presence of these texts in their classrooms? Do they actively want to read it or avoid it? Do these texts mitigate or trigger traumatic stress? The use of case studies on the groups reviewed above (unaccompanied minors crossing the border, Afghan evacuees, and Ukrainian refugees) and the use of refugee literature will provide insights into these questions. The case studies will also provide for the creation of vignettes from these forced migration groups to help inform educators.

It is also critical for educators to understand how students with refugee backgrounds and their families envision trauma-informed discussions on fundamental issues related to refugee flight and resettlement (e.g., impact of war on civilians). The scarce research in the field of language and literacy on this topic yields mixed findings. While there are calls for caution and family involvement in making decisions regarding conversations in response to books that deal with difficult issues (e.g., Strekalova-



Hughes & Peterman, 2020), other studies present evidence of traumatic experiences stemming from not being given the opportunity to share their lived experiences (e.g., Mosselson, 2009). How do the students and their families interpret the affordances and limitations of such discussions in a classroom?

These are empirical questions for the field to engage with the three groups reviewed in this paper. The research will assist in developing a coherent understanding of how to approach the selection and integration of refugee texts within classrooms and instruction in order to better support and guide practitioners. These prospective insights can lead to creating a rubric to help support educators in selecting refugee literature to incorporate into their instruction and classroom libraries. Findings can also provide critical guidance for educators on which practices to utilize and which to avoid, based on who their students are. Findings will also inform teacher preparation programs to integrate trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and SEL pedagogy within content area instruction.

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