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Cultural and academic adjustment of refugee youth: Introduction to the special issue



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ABSTRACT

In this introduction to the IJIR special issue on refugee youth in academic settings, the editors sought manuscripts that examined both challenges and effective practices in countries of temporary and permanent refugee resettlement. We welcomed diverse methodological approaches and empirical work at all levels and types of education (formal, non-formal, and informal).

Our final selections do not fully represent the field of refugee education, as eight of the nine are studies in third countries of permanent resettlement, a designation received by only about one percent of the total refugee population. Perspectives came from the social sciences: psychology, sociology, anthropology, and sociolinguistic disciplines. Themes of the articles fall into two broad categories: 1) educational challenges due to trauma, acculturation stressors, and educational issues; and 2) educational practices intended to address some of these challenges.

Although the resettlement category is the smallest of the UNHCR's "durable solutions," the authors present important findings to support refugee students' success. These have to do with collaborative processes, issues of identity, the use of social media, and teacher training in multicultural and language support. In considering future work in this field, we conclude that dimensions of justice need to be more fully examined in other refugee solutions (such as repatriation and local integration in the first country of refuge). We recommend that more research be conducted on the current European "migrant crisis." We also call for scholars to be public intellectuals in venues that can reframe the characterization of refugees in opposition to "fake news" fanning public fears.

The articles in this special issue of the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* address the cultural and academic adjustment of refugee youth in educational settings. Recent decades have seen massive and unprecedented movements of people within and across national borders. Some have been voluntary but others have not. Figures released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicate that in 2015 more than 65 million people worldwide had been forcibly displaced. If these people constituted a single nation, then that nation would be the twenty-first most populous in the world (UNHCR, 2016). The

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