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The quest for justice in education: capital and funds of knowledge

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This paper explores the funds of knowledge approach to pedagogy and educational research from a social justice perspective. In response to the suggestion made by some authors that the approach should be integrated with a capital perspective, we argue that this would work only if the concept of capital is understood in a certain way. Also, and more generally, we try to show that redistribution in education should not be thought of in terms of capital redistribution, but in terms of counteracting structural barriers to participatory parity which result in status differences among citizens. Finally, we suggest three concrete ways this can be achieved through pedagogies based on funds of knowledge.

KEYWORDS

funds of knowledge (FoK), social justice, redistribution, recognition, cultural capital, social capital, participatory parity

Introduction

During the last few decades, educators from all over the world have acknowledged the need to transform schools in such a way that they can fight against, rather than reproduce, social injustice. A very promising proposal in this vein is the funds of knowledge approach developed by González et al. (2005) which puts teachers to the task of redesigning the curriculum by incorporating in it the lifeworld knowledge used and produced in students' communities. They usually do this through ethnographic research in homes and other everyday interaction contexts (other than the school), although the framework is flexible enough to allow for some departures from this scheme (see, e.g., Zipin, 2009). The basic idea is to carry out activities that are pertinent to the students' social and cultural reality, with a focus on their strengths and interests rather than their limitations and alleged deficits, in such a way that they can engage in both effective and meaningful learning processes around a combination of household and academic knowledge.

This framework has illuminated educational research and practice all over the world during the last two decades. In the United States many of the studies have focused on migrant students (e.g., Hogg and Volman, 2020; Ramos and Márquez, 2021), but its use has been extended to working class students (Kinney, 2015) and rural contexts (MacIntyre et al., 2005). Other experiences have been carried out in Canada and México (Portilla, 2015; Anderson et al., 2017; Subero et al., 2017; Álvarez et al., 2021), in Europe (Thomson and Hall, 2008; Llopart et al., 2017; Esteban-Guitart et al., 2019; Gilde and Volman, 2021; Machancoses, 2021; Subero, 2021), in Oceania (Hedges et al., 2011; Hogg, 2011; Ollerhead, 2019; Zipin et al., 2020), Africa (Kendrick and Kakuru, 2012), and Central and South America (Woodrow and Salazar, 2010; Chacana, 2017; Banegas, 2020; Rodríguez-Arocho, 2020; Woodrow and Newman, 2020; Lamas-Aicón and Thibaut, 2021). Considering the reports produced in all these and other experiences, there is now enough evidence that the funds of knowledge approach can be really helpful to challenge

the deficit view many educators have of students and their families, as well as to consolidate fertile school-family partnerships and generate participatory classroom environments.

An important motivation underlying pedagogies based on funds of knowledge is to tackle two main contemporary challenges of social justice in education, namely, what Fraser (1997) referred to as *redistribution* and *recognition*. The latter encompasses actions oriented to remedy *cultural* injustice, which is "rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication" (p. 14). Examples of this form of injustice are cultural domination, nonrecognition, and disrespect. In the funds of knowledge approach, recognition is pursued under the assumption that "all individuals and communities hold and produce knowledge that is relevant and valuable" (Gonzales, 2015, p. 29). Instead of picturing underprivileged students' communities as lacking in cultural resources, "as places from which children must be saved or rescued," they are seen as places that "contain valuable knowledge and experiences that can foster […] educational development" (Moll and González, 1997, p. 98). This attitude towards the lifeworld knowledge of students and their families is clearly a step forward towards recognition, because it helps to overcome the cultural domination underlying the imposition of the previously defined, class-biased body of knowledge characteristic of the traditional school curriculum (see also Oughton, 2010; Tett, 2019).

Redistribution, in turn, refers to remedies for *socioeconomic* injustice, which is "rooted in the political-economic structure of society" (Fraser, 1997, p. 13). Exploitation, economic marginalization, and deprivation are examples of this form of injustice, which the funds of knowledge approach aims to fight too. According to some of its advocates, teachers can achieve this by using lifeworld knowledge to help disadvantaged students make sense of curriculum units they otherwise would hardly connect with. The basic idea is that although these students have a rich cultural heritage, it does not include some of the academic skills required to access higher education and better economic opportunities in the future—or, as some authors have put it, they lack certain types or amounts of cultural and social *capital* (Zipin, 2009; Lingard and Keddie, 2013). Redistribution, in this view, can be attained if teachers manage to engage underprivileged students in the learning of traditional academic knowledge through the use of culturally resonant knowledge as a sort of bridge.[1]

In this vein, Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) have suggested that, as a theoretical approach, the funds of knowledge framework should be complemented with a capital perspective, especially if one wants to achieve "a better understanding of the educational experiences of under-represented students" (p. 165). Restricting research only to a funds of knowledge approach, they argue, may neglect some of the power issues surrounding education, which in turn may contribute to aggravate inequity. To avoid this, they propose to "explore educational (in)equity from a combined theoretical approach of funds of knowledge with forms of capital" (p. 179)—an integrative endeavour that in their view offers an "enhanced framework to guide educational research" (p. 176).

Zipin et al. (2012) has already pointed out the illusory character of using a capital-based approach to redistribution within a neoliberal social ordering, and suggested the search for an ethos that, drawing from funds of knowledge, can exceed the logic of capital. In this paper, we want to bring up another (although related) problem with Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) proposal. While we totally agree with the spirit of that proposal (i.e., fighting inequity), it seems to us that its letter may lead to serious logical difficulties. Social justice, we argue, is incompatible with *certain* capital-based views of education; consequently, rather than complementing the funds of knowledge framework, a capital perspective might end up destroying its conceptual structure.

We also put forward an alternative way to understand redistribution in education—one that does not involve cultural and social capital transactions. This is important because, as we try to show too, redistribution cannot possibly be achieved through such transactions. In the last section of the paper, we suggest three non-capital based actions through which pedagogies based on funds of knowledge can contribute to redistribution as much as they foster recognition.

Participatory parity and Bourdieu's notion of capital

Drawing on Fraser's (2005) work, we start from the premise that social justice is a matter of *participatory parity*, in the sense that

> it requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life […] Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction […] I have analysed two distinct kinds of obstacles to participatory parity, which correspond to two distinct species of injustice. On the one hand, people can be impeded from full participation by economic structures that deny them the resources they need in order to interact with others as peers; in that case they suffer from distributive injustice or maldistribution. On the other hand, people can also be prevented from interacting on terms of parity by institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value that deny them the requisite standing; in that case they suffer from status inequality or misrecognition. In the first case, the problem is the class structure of society, which corresponds to the economic dimension of justice. In the second case, the problem is the status order, which corresponds to its cultural dimension (pp. 73–74).

Given that participatory parity finds both economic and cultural obstacles, any theoretical framework for understanding and promoting social justice—in education or in any other field—must be concerned with both redistribution and recognition: "neither recognition theory nor distribution theory alone can provide an adequate understanding of justice for capitalist society" (p. 74). This is part of the reason the funds of knowledge approach is so promising as a tool to fight social injustice in education. It offers a way to tackle the economic sources of participatory disparity without neglecting its cultural sources, and *vice-versa*.

1 The bridge metaphor is widely used by the founders of the funds of knowledge framework to stress not only the pedagogical relations that can be established between the learning of local knowledge and the learning of the school curriculum, but also the relations between several other things (see González and Moll, 2002).

Now a crucial ingredient of participatory parity is what theorists have characterized as *relational* parity or equity. This occurs

> when an individual's position within a relation and the specific content of that relation do not depend upon one's social status. For example, when the status of citizen depends upon one's economic standing, or when authority in a relation depends upon gender or race, the principle of relational parity is violated. Relational parity requires that social positions are not imposed on the basis of status, and that religion, gender, race, ethnicity, class and other social markers do not affect someone's status within social interactions (Frega, 2019, pp. 80–81).

The core idea is that "people should relate to one another as equals or should enjoy the same fundamental status (and also perhaps the same rank and power)" (Arneson, 2013; see also Anderson, 1999). Not of course that everybody should be identical or have exactly the same possessions and capacities, which is not only impossible but also undesirable in any genuinely democratic society (in which, accordingly, diversity is respected and valued). The idea is rather that all citizens should have the same social status and the same fundamental rights: "Relational parity is concerned with how patterns of social interaction construe social identity by assigning status, value, and rights to individuals within these relations. What matters most for relational parity, therefore, is not what one has, but how one is treated" (Frega, 2019, p. 81).

On the other hand, it does not follow from this that people's possessions and capacities have nothing to do with relational parity, for societies can be—and contemporary capitalist societies in fact are—structured in such a way that people's status and rights are partially dependent upon the things they own and the knowledge and skills they have acquired. In these social orders, *economic differences become citizenship differences*—and, to use Taylor's (1997, p. 38) words, some people "are systematically handicapped by poverty from making the most of their citizenship rights," being thus "relegated to second-class status."

Another way to put this would be to say that certain possessions and capacities become cultural and social *capital*, in the sense introduced by Bourdieu (1986; see also Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). In *that* sense, capital is that specific form of power that provides certain groups of agents with "social energy" and perpetuates their "social status" (p. 46). It is "a means of acquiring exclusive advantages" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 56), in such a way that its accumulation results in one social class being dominated by another.[2] This happens, in Bourdieu's view, partly because capitalism allows a process of "transubstantiation" of economic capital into social and cultural forms of capital (p. 46), which function as a package of special privileges (which can be used in turn to enlarge one's economic capital). Social capital provides members of the dominant groups "a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (p. 51), i.e., not only to financial credit but also to a special social credibility (which is part of the reason they are entitled to financial credit). Cultural capital, in turn, was at first a theoretical construct Bourdieu developed to explain "the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes" (p. 47). In this use of the concept,

> it refers to high-status cultural resources (including beliefs, knowledge, and practices) that can be employed to gain economic capital and social prestige. Such resources are not inherently better than other cultural resources, but in a hierarchical society they are "worth more" because they are valued by those in positions of power. So those with more cultural capital have greater access to power and privilege than those with less (Lubienski, 2003, p. 33).

Thus, the existence of either social or cultural capital entails a process of generation and preservation of relatively exclusive entitlements that locate people from different classes in a situation of relational disparity. Bourdieu (1986, p. 57) does not use that exact expression, but he does speak of "relational dispositions […] very unequally distributed among the social classes." At any rate, his notion of capital clearly refers to domination power, in the context of an equally clear criticism addressed to a social structure he regarded unjust, insofar as it promotes capital transactions through which economic differences turn into social status differences. Within a society structured this way, relational—and, therefore, participatory—parity among all citizens cannot possibly obtain.

Education "from a capital perspective"

Now Bourdieu's is not the only way the concepts of cultural and social capital have been used. He did introduce them into educational theory (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986), as a fundamental axis of his critical discussion of power accumulation and reproduction in capitalist societies, following the Marxist tradition (see also Smith and Kulynych, 2002; Saha, 2021). Yet there is another theoretical tradition, represented by the work of such authors as Coleman (1990) and Putnam (1993), in which social and cultural (or human)[3] capital is construed neither critically nor with this focus on social class and privilege. These authors would of course acknowledge that capital is a matter of power, but they are happy to accept it as a relatively positive or desirable feature of social life which has to do less with domination and more with getting things done—or, to use a

2 This connection between capital and social domination (and even exploitation) is an essential feature of the Marxist conception of capital: "We know that the means of production and subsistence, while they remain the property of the immediate producer, are not capital. They become capital, only under circumstances in which they serve at the same time as a means of exploitation and subjection of the labourer" (Marx, 1967, p. 767). Bourdieu endorsed this general conception by developing a notion of capital deeply rooted in the idea of social privilege and the pursuit of distinction produced by unequal social orders. Indeed, for him there is no place for cultural capital in equal societies: "in a relatively undifferentiated society, in which access to the means of appropriating the cultural heritage is very equally distributed, embodied culture does not function as cultural capital, i.e., as a means of acquiring exclusive advantages" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 56). Capital is what rules out "that at each moment anyone can become anything" (p. 46).

3 Coleman (1990) talks of *human* rather than *cultural* capital. Like Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, however, Coleman's human capital points to a set of human capacities that are acquired through education or some other sort of learning process, although without any further commitment to a critical view of the social and economic structure. Many educationalists have come to use *cultural capital* in a similar, non-marxist fashion.

fashionable distinction, with *power to* rather than with *power over* (Stone, 1989; Morriss, 2002). This tradition is quite independent from Marxist theoretical developments and far better aligned with (neo) liberal notions of capital, whose origins might be found in the work of Adam Smith—especially in his conception of capital as including not just monetary power but also the set of useful abilities acquired by the participants in the market (see Schultz, 1961).

Beyond the merits and demerits of these two traditions, they both exist and, to that extent, Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) invitation to see education "from a capital perspective," and to integrate such a perspective with the funds of knowledge framework, may mean significantly different things, depending on how much is drawn from each tradition in order to understand the notion of capital. If we stick to Bourdieu's original proposal, it may mean picturing educational institutions as instruments for the reproduction of unequal social structures. On the other extreme, closer to the work of Coleman and Putman, it may point to a commitment to improve student's opportunities to "succeed in life" through education (in the way they would conceive of success in life, of course). Between these two extremes, we may find views feeding from both traditions (and perhaps even others); take, for instance, the idea that education is the main bulwark against poverty, or that it must fight social injustice by redistributing access to certain sorts of knowledge, or that a society's economic development and wellbeing rests heavily upon its citizens being educated. *Any* of these (and other) tenets might perfectly be described as being, or being derived from, "a capital perspective" in education, because the different understandings of the concept of capital leave room for any of them.

Having said that, there are a couple of things all theorists who are ready to see education "from a capital perspective" will tend to agree on. One is that education has an important economic function or dimension—one that justifies the incorporation of a concept as fundamentally economic as *capital* into educational theory. The other is that no matter how the concept of capital happens to be construed, some link between it and the concept of power must be acknowledged—whether it is power to, power over or both. Putting these two points together, i.e., both the economic role of education and its conceptual connection to power, we can assert that to hold a capital perspective in education involves in all cases subscribing to the general idea that education is connected in some fundamental way with certain sorts of economic power games. Regardless of all the significant differences we find among the theorists who have put forward capital-based views of education, all of them would be ready to agree on this core idea. Even Bourdieu and Coleman, with all their fundamental differences, would.

Of course, theorists and researchers in the neoliberal tradition tend to be quite comfortable with these particular sorts of economic games, whereas those who share Marxist concerns are rather critical of them. After all, being a Marxist partially consists in disliking capital-based economic games (the sorts of games capitalist societies are made up of). In contrast, the neoliberal tradition promotes such games, provided that they occur under the right conditions. No wonder, then, the closer educational researchers are to Coleman and Putnam's understanding of capital, the less troubled they are with the economic, power substrate of education; and, conversely, the closer they feel to Bourdieu's conception, the more disapproving they are about the connections between education and economic power entailed in that conception. But beyond these two very different attitudes towards education in capitalist societies, seeing education "from a capital perspective" will always involve acknowledging some economic, power dimension to education.

Unfortunately, Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) are not that clear about how they construe the notion of capital. They do offer a summary of the different ways in which theorists of different traditions have understood social and cultural capital, and even point out some confusions researchers in the field have made, but they say little about their own preferences and, particularly, about how comfortable they are with the power games characteristic of capitalist societies. Hence it is hard to know what they exactly mean by suggesting that the funds of knowledge approach could benefit from "a capital perspective." It has to do, as they put it, with "the examination of processes that convert or transform various funds of knowledge into other more tangible kinds of capital" (p. 167), but it is not clear to us whether they are critical of such processes or they are rather on good terms with them. On the other hand, at least part of what they appear to be pointing to in their proposal is that for all the good things teachers may achieve by incorporating students' lifeworld knowledge into the curriculum, the theoretical framework through which we think about these pedagogical efforts would be enhanced if we included in it certain concepts and hypotheses about the economic power games currently underlying them. The spirit of this proposal, as we take it to be, is to warn educational researchers that if they fail to consider the economic power dynamics underlying education, their theories (and the practices they yield) may end up reinforcing instead of fighting injustice. With this warning we totally agree. However, we believe that counteracting injustice through education does not imply anything like transforming funds of knowledge into forms of capital. Indeed, as we try to show next, the funds of knowledge approach, meant as a pedagogical perspective to meet the challenges of social justice in education, cannot even be combined with a (neo)liberal, capital-based view of education without falling into a really serious conceptual problem. This is a quite important thing to bear in mind, considering that many (perhaps most) educational researchers use concepts of capital grounded on Coleman's proposal (see, e.g., Dika and Singh, 2002). But then, if the argument we put forward here is sound, the capital perspective they work with is logically incompatible with the funds of knowledge framework.

The clash between capital and social justice

At the centre of the conceptual or logical problem to which we want to call attention is the incompatibility between the very existence of capital, on the one hand, and the structural social conditions required for participatory parity, on the other. As we have seen, whenever a person or a group overpowers another person or group, in the sense that some sort of domination is in play, parity among citizens vanishes. Domination is at the antipodes of parity. To advance towards social justice, if we understand it as a matter of participatory or, at least, relational parity, we need to build social structures that favour horizontal relationships among citizens and obstruct the rise of social privilege, oppression, and other forms of domination. But disparity among citizens is the mark of cultural and social capital. For capital, in any of its forms, entails or leads to domination power.

Now the latter is clearly so if one understands capital in the Marxist tradition. But what about the (neo)liberal tradition? Theorists aligned with this way of construing capital may be tempted to reply that even if capital is always a matter of power, very often it is a matter of power to act rather than of domination. In this vein, Stone (1989), for example, has contended that in many contemporary societies "the power struggle concerns, not control and resistance, but gaining and fusing a capacity to act—*power to*, not *power over*" (p. 229). Thus, to acquire cultural and social capital might be construed as developing the ability to get things done, which in principle seems to have nothing to do with social subjugation processes.

This reply is not very solid, though. In order to see this, we need first to consider that even if cultural and social capital are conceived of mainly as a matter of power to (or the ability to get things done), and only under certain circumstances as a matter of power over (or domination), the former necessarily entails at least some degree of the latter. For one thing, capital can be accumulated, and very often the mere fact that a person or a group of people accumulates a set of abilities opens up the possibility for them to dominate those who lack such abilities. Furthermore, even advocates of capital as power to do things have themselves been forced to admit that the distinction between these two alleged kinds of power tends to get blurred very easily. Take, again, the case of Stone (1989). Immediately after contending that contemporary power struggles involve chiefly the capacity to act rather than control and subjection, he went on to clarify that "there is, of course, a point at which the two kinds of power merge, and a superior form of power to form a regime spills over into a kind of domination" (p. 229). No wonder, especially if one considers—as Stone himself has considered—that "what any one group can do depends on what others will also do" (p. 229).

All in all, the distinction between power as domination and power as ability to act is so liquid that one can seriously doubt that there are in fact two different concepts in play here. As Pansardi (2012, p. 74) has recently argued, "the notions of power to and power over should be seen as two aspects of a single, more general concept: that of social power," partly because "the social relations on which power to is necessarily based are specifically relations of power over." Consequently, even those who understand the acquisition of social and cultural capital mainly as a matter of developing the ability to act or to get things done must concede that it is also a matter of supporting or facilitating some people's power over others. Seeing education "from a capital perspective" forces us to see it as taking part, at least to some extent, in some domination game.

Again, one can see education this way either comfortably or in a rather critical mode. (Neo)liberals tend to go for the former, while Marxists tend to stick to the latter. Put differently, although both neoliberals and Marxists would agree that education in contemporary societies has to do with social and cultural capital transactions, the former are ready to accept with approval this social fact, whereas the latter repudiate it and, by deconstructing it, attempt to open up the possibility for thinking of another, non-capitalist form of social organisation. There is nothing surprising about this, considering that Marxists incorporated the concept of capital in their work precisely to show the evils associated with the existence of capital. Their view that social and cultural capital cannot be neglected by educational theories is not then grounded in the idea that education *should* function as capital transactions, but, on the very contrary, in the idea that in order to dismantle the domination games underlying such transactions we must be aware of them. Recall that part of the very point of both Marx's and Bourdieu's uses of the concept of capital was to bring to light the unequal relationships generated by the economic power games of capital transactions. Wherever such relationships did not obtain, they saw no reason to even talk of "capital" (see footnote 1; for some of the consequences of losing sight of this, see Lubienski, 2003).

It seems to us that nowadays most educational researchers locate themselves at some point between these two extremes. Few of them would declare to be a hundred percent neoliberal or a hundred percent Marxist. The thing is that a theoretical integration between the funds of knowledge framework and a capital-based view of education is (logically) possible only for those who side with Marxists on this. This is so because any welcoming attitude towards domination, especially domination through social and cultural capital, is exactly the opposite recognition and redistribution calls for, at least if the latter are conceived of as movements towards social justice and, therefore, to participatory parity. Both recognition and redistribution pursue parity, and parity is precisely what we lose when social and cultural capital are introduced in social processes. Thus, if one takes a (neo)liberal stance, i.e., if one favours capital-based social processes (including educational processes), one contributes to the reproduction of disparate, hierarchical relationships that generate social status differences and, therefore, violate relational parity. As Jones and Vagle (2013) put it, neoliberal discourses "construct a desire for hierarchical understandings of the world, while simultaneously constructing the hierarchies of desire, entitlement, intelligence, and worth as reflected in the stratified winners and losers of materialism and capitalism" (p. 132). Pedagogy, they argue, should disrupt at all levels of schooling the privilege and exploitation these discourses produce—and of course it should if the quest for social justice has something to do with it. Part of what it means to undertake this quest is to reject the capital perspective stemming from the neoliberal tradition, especially its congeniality towards capital-based, disparate relationships among citizens. This is why pedagogies based on funds of knowledge cannot, in logic, be coordinated with such a perspective.

Let us explore this conceptual incompatibility in more detail. Recognition and participatory parity are radically opposed to what Fricker (2007) called *epistemic injustice*. People suffer this particular kind of injustice in its primary form—which Fricker calls *testimonial injustice*—when they are given less credibility than others due to some prejudice; for instance, because they belong to a certain gender, or race, or age group, or social class, etc. This is why the funds of knowledge approach has been explicitly connected to the quest for epistemic justice (see, e.g., Gonzales, 2015). More generally, any pedagogical effort oriented towards recognition must assume that, in principle, all people are capable to hold and even produce valuable knowledge and, to this extent, it is unjust to treat some as more credible than others simply because of their gender or their social class or any other non-epistemic feature.

Now this is exactly the kind of injustice yielded by social capital as Bourdieu (1986) conceived of it. Recall that in his proposal social capital *consists* in the fact that the members of a certain social class are provided with a special kind of credibility. To acquire social capital is to have one's credibility augmented simply because of one's belonging to a certain group. Now this holds to (neo)liberal conceptions of social capital too, for they are also partially built

upon the notions of credit and trustworthiness (see, e.g., Coleman, 1988). Actually, despite all the important differences among the various ways to understand the construct of social capital, part of the very reason it was introduced in education—and is still used by educational researchers—is that it is supposed to offer an explanation of academic success and failure that appeals to trust networks that people can access simply by virtue of their social connections, which (among other things) put them in relatively privileged credibility positions. Members of a certain group will have voice where others will not. This is a prototype case of epistemic, testimonial injustice. Consequently, any welcoming attitude towards social capital is at odds with participatory parity and the funds of knowledge approach (or any other pedagogical approach committed to relational parity).

Regarding cultural capital, consider Freire's (2000) critical analysis of the teacher-student relationship in the context of what he termed *the banking concept of education*; in particular, his denouncing of the passiveness with which students are expected to go through the learning process, in the sense that their "scope of action […] extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" made by the teacher. This is due to an epistemic asymmetry (which on Freire's view must be overcome if proper education is to take place) based on the prejudice that children are intrinsically ignorant people whose minds must be loaded by the ones who know (i.e., teachers): "in the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (p. 72). This testimonial, epistemic injustice is precisely what we get when education is taken to be aimed at providing students with cultural capital. Students are taken to need others to deposit cultural capital in their minds/bodies. They are seen as passive receptors of a curriculum decided by those who know—and know what is worth knowing. Again, participatory parity gets seriously damaged in this scheme. Teachers' practices become an "exercise of domination" which "stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression" (Freire, 2000, p. 78). These same criticisms Freire levelled at the banking concept of education, especially those regarding students' alienation, apply to any neoliberal capital-based view of education. Actually, the latter and the banking concept are quite close to each other, both ideologically and pedagogically. At any rate, it is clear to us that, as Zipin (2009) pointed out, "curriculum based largely on power-elite cultural capital, no matter how skilfully taught, tends to alienate cultural 'others'" (p. 319). Thus, unless one sees the existence of cultural capital from a critical, unsympathetic stance, one cannot possibly integrate a capital perspective with theoretical endeavours motivated by participatory parity, like the funds of knowledge framework.

More generally, capital, in any of its forms, goes hand by hand with relational disparity and, therefore, is detrimental to social justice conceived of as participatory parity. This means that the only way to be in a position to integrate the funds of knowledge approach with a capital perspective is by adopting a Marxist-like, critical notion of capital. Otherwise, a violation of *the coherence condition* for theoretical integration would be produced, which would yield not an integrative theory but a logical disaster (Gaete and Gaete, 2015).

Redistribution in education and the funds of knowledge framework

Now because social justice as participatory parity calls for redistribution, theorists and researchers may find it hard to get rid of the idea that providing underprivileged students with cultural and social capital is a just thing to do. For it is quite tempting to represent the act of delivering knowledge and connections transformable into economic power as a redistributive act—and then to go from here to the conclusion that acts like this are part of what education should ensure in order to advance towards a more just society.

The problem with this line of reasoning is that it neglects the fact that, in the scheme of social justice as participatory parity, redistribution refers always, *by definition*, to a measure intended to foster or restore such parity. This means that no action can qualify as a redistributive measure if one knows in advance that it will result in participatory disparity. But disparity is precisely what we get whenever we provide someone with social and cultural capital, as we have already argued. True, in giving capital to a group of underprivileged students we may be shortening the socioeconomic gap between them and privileged students, but we are at the same time enlarging the gap between the former and other underprivileged students, which is tantamount to producing relational disparity between them. Moreover, we may also be contributing to the reproduction of a fundamentally unjust social structure that is organised around capital transactions. By providing some underprivileged students with social and cultural capital, schools are not necessarily doing anything to destabilise such a structure and in fact they might be helping to maintain it, especially when the curriculum is oriented to adapt students to the existing social order, as Freire (2000) insisted. Redistribution *as a social justice measure*, therefore, does not happen by merely moving the distribution of economic power. That movement must additionally be a step towards a society grounded on participatory parity—and one of the first steps towards parity consists in erasing from the core of society capital-based games resulting in certain groups overpowering others and, ultimately, certain citizens having a higher status than others. Redistribution, as we understand it, does not consist in helping people to climb the social ladder, but in undermining the social structures underlying such climbing practices and, therefore, the very existence of citizenship or social status differences. Maldistribution relies on (our perpetuating of) differences of this kind.

Redistribution, then, insofar as it is oriented against disparity, cannot be used as an argument to charge education with the task of providing underprivileged children with the social and cultural capital others get from privileged environments. This is not to neglect the (undeniable) importance of learning maths, language, biology, art, and all the many other things that happen to count as capital in contemporary societies. What we contend is (a) that regardless of the economic value associated with these things, redistribution will never be achieved in a social order structured upon capital interchanges (for that entails participatory disparity); (b) that schools must teach maths, language, and the like, not *because* of their counting as capital in contemporary societies, but *despite* that; (c) that whether or not the learning of a certain cultural product happens to be *economically* valuable, the main reason we should be concerned with teaching culture at schools is given rather by its *educational* value; and (d) insofar as providing social

status or privileges to some students is socially unjust, it should *never* be an educational aim.

How, then, is redistribution to be pursued by schools? We think this can be done in at least three ways. One is through recognition. Even if we accept, with Fraser (1997, 2005), that redistribution is not reducible to recognition, when schools value students' lifeworld knowledge (by including it into the curriculum, as in the funds of knowledge approach) they contribute to undermine the socialisation process by which people are taught (often tacitly but sometimes also explicitly) that knowledge is valuable only, or especially, to the extent that it is or entails domination power. Socialising people out of this would be a big step towards redistribution, for it would weaken one of the assumptions underlying the trading of privilege and social status capitalist societies are built upon—namely, that the value of culture (and its learning) is given mainly by its involvement in economic, power games. When schools teach students local knowledge produced within their own communities, they also teach them that their own cultural productions are worth being learned, even if they have no use in social climbing. The more people were socialised this way, the more they would be ready to question the capital-based social order and to advance in the construction of a society in which the cultural background of their members can never be an obstacle for participatory parity.

A second way redistribution can be tried at school is well known at least ever since Freire's (2000, 2021) work during the second half of the last century, namely, the inclusion of the development of critical consciousness as a central content in the curriculum—as central as the learning of maths, language, and the like. According to Freire (2021), education can be seen as a process from naïve to critical consciousness, which involves the development of "the critical capacity to make choices and to transform that reality" (p. 4). It is a process of consciousness transformation that makes social transformation possible. Education cannot directly change social structures, but through the development of critical consciousness can and must prepare people to do so (see also Freire and Shor, 1987). In particular, the more students are increasingly more aware of the maldistribution mechanisms operating in contemporary society as well as of the ability they have, and can improve, to counteract such mechanisms, the more we can expect socioeconomic inequities to diminish. Schools and other educational institutions have proven to be powerful socialisation tools: it is our choice as educators whether we conduct the socialisation process towards the reproduction or rather the transformation of unjust societies.

The third form of redistribution we can pursue through education is to directly promote participatory parity in teacher-student and student-student interaction. Unfortunately, schools tend to do just the opposite. Students have to show up at a time others have determined, wearing certain clothes others have established. They have to think about issues others have chosen, in the way and for as long as others decide. Their movements are often confined within very limited areas, which have been demarcated with them having no or little say in it. Few times during the day they are really given the chance to make meaningful decisions. More often than not, they find themselves exposed to the rules and orders of the adults in charge. Plus, when they get to make their own choices, they are likely to get involved in situations of bullying and other forms of peer coercion. Participatory disparity abounds in school life.

By putting students to the task of exercising their agency under conditions of relational equity, teachers can contribute to normalising social parity as well as to developing and training some of the social skills required for interacting on a parity basis. This may have many different desirable effects, one being that it may reduce children and youth's acceptance of disparity, which is by itself a strike against maldistribution. For the more uncomfortable the youngest members of society feel about disparity and the more skilful they get to maintain respectful, horizontal interactions, the less maldistribution structures and practices can persist. Just as what happens with the development of critical consciousness, citizens socialised in the values and competencies related to parity will tend to institutionalise redistribution.

Considering all this, the funds of knowledge approach seems particularly appropriate to enforce all these three varieties of redistributive measures—recognition, the development of critical consciousness, and the direct promotion of participatory parity through exercising students' agency. Its suitability for recognition is quite obvious, considering both its motivations and the practices it usually yields (as we have already pointed out in the introduction). But it may be less evident how it opens up opportunities for students' socialisation in critical consciousness and participatory parity. So let us say something about these two other aspects.

According to Freire (2021), the school's "traditional curriculum, disconnected from life, centered on words emptied of the reality they are meant to represent, lacking in concrete activity, could never develop a critical consciousness" (p. 33). In order to revert this, academic knowledge must be contextualised within the students' cultural background, which is precisely what pedagogies based on funds of knowledge aim to do. To this extent, such pedagogies allow teachers to overcome an important barrier to the development of critical consciousness, by engaging students in the learning of meaningful, culturally pertinent curriculum units clearly related to concrete practices.

An experience reported by Zipin (2020) illustrates this nicely. By implementing a curriculum constructed around problems that are relevant to the school community, teachers working in an underprivileged area of rural Queensland, Australia, carried out a year-long interdisciplinary project starting from family experiences and memories of a devastating flood that had occurred in the region. The flood theme was drawn from staff reflection on a former funds of knowledge project, where students had shared personal experiences on how floods had affected their lives. Activities on this theme, facilitated by adequate adult mediation, allowed to expand on other key issues that affected the community (e.g., racism, gender relationships, and community divisions, among others) and fostered students' recognition of both differences and commonalities among them. In this process, students were able to engage in critical reflection about a variety of situations they were deeply concerned with (because of their being real situations in which the community was or had been involved), including issues concerning justice and the distribution of power, in such a way that it was possible for them to appreciate that "where there is least power—among marginalised communities—is where most justice is due" (p. 114).

This same experience showed the vast potential the use of funds of knowledge has also for the promotion of participatory parity among students. In particular, it contributed to develop key horizontal citizenship abilities such as democratic dialogue (around problems affecting the community and their possible solutions). In this context, it was found that students learned "to recognise themselves as

embodying participatory-democratic agency to contribute, as social citizens, towards more hopeful futures for their own, their families' and their communities' lives" (Zipin, 2020, p. 114). In the light of the funds of knowledge approach, schools can play a crucial role in the redistribution of opportunities for student participation in different levels, from the making of teaching and learning decisions (Zipin et al., 2012, 2020; Johnson and Johnson, 2016) to the leading of initiatives that have a genuine impact on communities (Zipin, 2020).

Conclusion

In this essay we have argued that a theoretical integration between a capital perspective and the funds of knowledge framework—or, more generally, any framework committed to social justice—is (logically) possible only insofar as the concept of capital is construed in a non-liberal, Marxist-like fashion. Social structures built upon the acquisition and trading of the different forms of capital are *by definition* unjust for all those who, like us and many other social researchers, share the intuition that social justice is a matter of parity among citizens. Redistribution is certainly a fundamental endeavour in the search for justice. Still, it should not be conceived of as *capital* redistribution, but rather as an effort to knock down the institutional barriers underlying the maldistribution of citizenship rights and status typical of capitalist contemporary societies. In education this can be done, we have suggested, in at least three ways: through recognition, by developing students' critical consciousness, and by schools allowing them to exercise their agency in the context of parity interactions. For all these three things, pedagogies based on funds of knowledge can be very helpful. Consequently, schools would do well by incorporating them into their pedagogical repertoire, at least if they are genuinely concerned with fighting rather than perpetuating social injustice.

Author contributions

AG wrote the first draft of the manuscript. LL, IS-P, and PG commented on and edited the first draft, adding contributions informed by their respective backgrounds in anthropology and education. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

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