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## “La lucha todavía no ha terminado”/The struggle has not yet ended Teaching Immigration Through Testimonio and Difficult Funds of Knowledge

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## **“La lucha todavía no ha terminado”/The struggle has not yet ended Teaching Immigration Through Testimonio and Difficult Funds of Knowledge**

### **Abstract**

POLITICAL SCIENTISTS HAVE DESCRIBED the eruption of recent political tensions as a post-WWII divide between Americans feeling a loss of economic security that requires more authoritarian responses and Americans who continue to prioritize equality, freedom, and democratic participation (Inglehart, 2018). The consequence of this fissure is augmented through recent alt-right marches on college campuses and in cities, enraged and misleading posting on social media, and hostile political elections. Emboldened by political discourses that are “openly racist, sexist, authoritarian and xenophobic” (Inglehart, 2018, p. 25), Orwellian tools of misinformation have emerged that serve to disrupt the civil and trustworthy deliberations inherent to liberal democracies. For social studies educators, the current “post-truth” era that encompasses hatred towards Black, Latinx, queer, Muslim, Jewish, and immigrant communities should prompt decisive action. Unfortunately, in many elementary classrooms, the topic of immigration is rarely addressed beyond Ellis Island, and that curriculum typically avoids conversations about exclusionary, xenophobic, and racist laws that barred and severely restricted the entry of multiple ethnic and racial groups for over a century and continue into the present (Graff, 2010; Rodríguez, 2015).

### **Disciplines**

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# “La lucha todavía no ha terminado”/The struggle has not yet ended

## Teaching Immigration Through *Testimonio* and Difficult Funds of Knowledge

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**P**OLITICAL SCIENTISTS HAVE DESCRIBED the eruption of recent political tensions as a post-WWII divide between Americans feeling a loss of economic security that requires more authoritarian responses and Americans who continue to prioritize equality, freedom, and democratic participation (Inglehart, 2018). The consequence of this fissure is augmented through recent alt-right marches on college campuses and in cities, enraged and misleading posting on social media, and hostile political elections. Emboldened by political discourses that are “openly racist, sexist, authoritarian and xenophobic” (Inglehart, 2018, p. 25), Orwellian tools of misinformation have emerged that serve to disrupt the civil and trustworthy deliberations inherent to liberal democracies. For social studies educators, the current “post-truth” era that encompasses hatred towards Black, Latinx, queer, Muslim, Jewish, and immigrant communities should prompt decisive action. Unfortunately, in many elementary classrooms, the topic of immigration is rarely addressed beyond Ellis Island, and that curriculum typically avoids conversations about exclusionary, xenophobic, and racist laws that barred and severely restricted the entry of multiple ethnic and racial groups for over a century and continue into the present (Graff, 2010; Rodríguez, 2015).

As contemporary immigration receives minimal attention in classroom settings, the number of immigrant children in U.S. public schools is at a near historic level (López & Bialik, 2017). While scholars have long called for increased attention to the needs of immigrant children (Goodwin, 2002; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009), scant progress has occurred in teacher education settings that often address diversity generally without attending to the experiences of immigrant families in schools and the issues they face (Goodwin, 2016; Subedi, 2019). Such inattention demonstrates a willful ignorance toward the fears faced by marginalized communities before and during the Trump presidency. For example, in the midst of the 2016 U.S. Presidential

election, over 2,000 K-12 educators participated in a survey in which over two-thirds of teachers described that students (immigrants, children of immigrants, and Muslims in particular) were afraid of what might happen to them and their families after the election (Costello, 2016). Although adults often dismiss political discourse as beyond the comprehension of young children, the survey revealed that children make sense of what they observe in meaningful ways.

This study examines how a group of bilingual elementary preservice teachers in the Southwestern United States drew from the increasingly hostile national conversation around immigration in the spring of 2017 to create spaces for *testimonio* with their young students and designed social studies lessons that directly connected with their students’ difficult funds of knowledge. The preservice teachers’ engagement with *testimonio* as a means to reveal difficult funds of knowledge resulted in their development of critical pedagogical practices in the teaching of immigration, illuminating how intimate understandings of biculturalism, bilingualism, and Latinx immigration can provide powerful instructional opportunities. We contend that *testimonio* serves as more than a sharing of experiences, but as the creation of a counter-narrative deserving of legitimate status in official school curriculum. Given the scarce attention paid to immigration broadly, and to immigration-related current events in particular, the preservice teachers’ work illustrates the importance of *testimonio* and difficult funds of knowledge as counter-narratives that center the lived experiences of marginalized students in elementary social studies curriculum. Learning from such *testimonios* is especially important for the white, native-born, monolingual preservice teachers who comprise the majority of enrollment in traditional teacher preparation programs (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2013).

### Difficult Funds of Knowledge

This paper examines the use of “difficult” funds of knowledge in the teaching of immigration, weaving together scholarship on funds of knowledge (González et al., 1995), dark funds of knowledge (Zipin, 2009), and difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998). González et al. (1995) first presented the term “funds of knowledge” to describe “those historically developed and accumulated strategies (skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household’s functioning and well-being” (pp. 446-447). Funds of knowledge were a means to re-evaluate how educators might identify and validate the social and cultural capital held by historically marginalized students and their families. González and Moll (2002) assert that, when students share their funds of knowledge, they become producers of knowledge rather than just consumers of knowledge, an approach that fosters community and family involvement.

Zipin (2009) argued that, in practice, the funds of knowledge most often sought out by teachers were limited to positive, or “light,” knowledge. However, students may also be familiar with what he termed “dark” topics, such as violence, abuse, and mental health problems, which should also be viewed as learning assets. As terms like “dark” have historically alluded, both implicitly and explicitly, to anti-Blackness and/or Communities of Color, to avoid perpetuating the negative and pathologizing educational and political discourse around Black and Brown students and their bodies (Dumas, 2016)<sup>1</sup>, we draw from Britzman’s (1998) definition of difficult knowledge. Britzman (1998) described difficult knowledge as the study of “experiences and the traumatic residuals of genocide, ethnic hatred, aggression, and forms of state-sanctioned—and hence legal—social violence” (p. 117). In Britzman’s (1998) view, such pedagogical approaches necessitate a confrontation of “difficulties of learning from another’s painful encounter with

victimization, aggression, and the desire to live on one’s own terms” and risk “approaching the internal conflicts which the learner brings to the learning” (p. 117). Therefore, we draw from Zipin’s (2009) focus on traumatic and violent funds of knowledge while reframing his term through the work of Britzman. In this study, elementary students’ difficult funds of knowledge included personal experiences with deportation and the fear and separation that surround it, as both a lived reality and an impending possibility. *Testimonio*, explained in the section that follows, was the means through which difficult funds of knowledge were made accessible, as students were provided with opportunities to speak their traumatic truths related to immigration.

### ***Testimonio* as Theory and Method**

Critical research recognizes the conflict and oppression inherent in society and seeks change rather than accepting the *status quo*, focusing on power dynamics in the hope of bringing about a more just society. In the 1970s and 1980s, legal scholars including Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Kimberlé Crenshaw felt limited by the separation of critical theory from discussions about race and racism, as they understood racism to be a normal, not aberrant, part of U.S. society (Delgado, 2013). These and other critical race scholars were particularly interested in the legal manifestations of white supremacy and the subordination of People of Color (Wing, 2003). Although critical race theory (CRT) began with the embeddedness of racism in the law, it recognizes that racial inequality permeates every aspect of social life, including schools.

CRT expanded to address distinctive community needs, complex histories, and multiple contexts (Yosso & Solórzano, 2001). Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit) is a CRT outgrowth that recognizes the roles that immigration status, ethnicity, language, and access to citizenship play alongside race in the Latinx experience (Haney López, 1997). In this study, the LatCrit practice of *testimonio*, or personal narrative, centers alternative sites of knowledge, which may expose brutality while transcending silence and building solidarity (Anzaldúa, 1990; Latina Feminist Group, 2001). In education, *testimonio* is increasingly used as a pedagogical and methodological approach (El Ashmawi, Sanchez, & Carmona, 2018; Huber, 2009; Pour-Khorshid, 2016; Vasquez, 2018) that transgresses traditional academic paradigms, challenging objectivity “by situating the individual in communion with a collective experience marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance” (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012, p. 363). As *testimonio* compels the *testimonialista* (the participant who shares stories and engages in *testimonio*) as well as the reader/listener to action, voices that are generally oppressed demand to be heard in an act of political resistance (Anzaldúa, 1990; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Prieto & Villenas, 2012).

LatCrit and *testimonio* frame this study in several ways. First, LatCrit centers the experiences of the preservice teachers, all bilingual women of Color, who participated in this study. In teacher education, the overwhelming presence of Whiteness persists in the curriculum, student body, and professoriate as the number of non-white students in public schools grows (NCES, 2013, 2015a, 2015b; Picower, 2009; Sleeter, 2001). However, the preservice teachers of Color in this study were enrolled in a bilingual elementary teacher preparation program focused on Spanish/English bilingualism and biculturalism with an emphasis on the Mexican American educational experience. Prior to the social studies methods course in which this study took place, the preservice teachers had read Anzaldúa (1990), learned about legislation for and against bilingual education, and comfortably used terms such as funds of knowledge. Many knew the immigration system firsthand, with no need to translate or explain terms like *la migra* (immigration

enforcement officers) or *coyote* (individuals paid to help immigrants cross the Mexican border into the U.S.), creating a distinctly Latinx-centered teacher-preparation context for the course. *Testimonio* as an epistemological site has been increasingly used in contexts similar to this teacher preparation program (El Ashmawi et al., 2018; Sosa-Provencio, Sheahan, Fuentes, Muñiz, & Vivas, 2017) and by teacher educators (Prieto & Villenas, 2012; Vasquez, 2018) and educators of Color (Pour-Khorshid, 2016).

Second, the study took place in a Southwestern state along the U.S./Mexico border during the first five months of Trump’s presidency. On January 25, before the second session of class, President Trump signed two executive orders related to immigration. The first, “Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States” (Exec. Order No. 13768, 82 C.F.R. 8799), stripped federal monies from so-called sanctuary cities (including the city in which our university is located) and emphasized the supposed criminal threat posed by undocumented immigrants<sup>2</sup> by promoting the illegal detention and apprehension of these individuals. The second executive order (Exec. Order No. 13767, 82 C.F.R. 8793), “Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements,” directed federal funding to the building of a wall on the U.S./Mexico border, an increase in Border Patrol agents, expedited deportations, and more detention facilities for undocumented immigrants. As future bilingual educators, immigrants, children of immigrants, and individuals living in a sanctuary city and state with a shared history and border with Mexico, these executive orders demanded the preservice teachers’ attention. LatCrit forefronts the complex history of immigration as well as the precariousness of citizenship and belonging faced by Latinx communities in the past and present (Tirado, 2019).

Third, LatCrit draws from histories of racist nativism to explain “racialized constructions of non-nativeness in the U.S.” (Huber, 2016, p. 220), no matter the actual origin of People of Color. Racist nativism results in Latinx and other groups falsely perceived as situated outside of the realm of who is/can be American and citizen, identities historically tied to Whiteness (Haney López, 1996). While anti-immigrant, and specifically anti-Latinx immigrant, rhetoric has long been wielded for political purposes, the racist nativism of the current political moment also has discursive functions that shape the educational trajectories of Latinx students (Huber, 2016). As this paper will demonstrate, Trump’s xenophobic executive orders in the initial weeks of his presidency struck fear in the hearts of even the youngest members of immigrant communities.

### Study Context & Participants

This instrumental, qualitative case study took place in the American Southwest during the spring of 2017. Stake (1995) defines a case as a specific, unique, bounded system, which can be a person, people, or a program. Instrumental case studies can provide insight into an issue (Stake, 2005). In this study, the case consisted of six undergraduate students enrolled in a bilingual elementary social studies methods course. This required course was part of a bilingual teacher preparation program that placed preservice teachers in Spanish/English dual language elementary field placements. The six preservice teachers selected for this study shared a common focus on immigration and President Donald Trump in two major projects they completed for the course. This study asks how *testimonio* and difficult funds of knowledge serve as critical, pedagogical practices that may provide insight into the instructional opportunities provided through personal understandings of biculturalism, bilingualism, and Latinx immigration. Additionally, this study examines how *testimonio* functions as an epistemological lens that centers counter-narratives that



alter the majoritarian tales common to the teaching of immigration (Salinas, Naseem Rodríguez, & Ayala Lewis, 2015).

### Study Participants

The six students in this study represented an array of bilingual and bicultural identities. Four students, Larissa, Sofia, Luisa, and Isela, identified as Mexican or Mexican American, Celeste was Afro-Latina (Cuban), and Ruth was biracial (Black/white). Sofia and Larissa spoke Spanish as their first language, while Luisa was a heritage speaker who grew up with Spanish-speaking parents but was not fluent in Spanish until she attended college. Several students grew up along the U.S./Mexico border and learned Spanish in their K-12 schooling, demonstrating varying levels of Spanish fluency by the time they arrived in the social studies methods course their junior year. Only Sofia identified as an immigrant, with the remaining students born in the Southwestern U.S. state where they attended university.

### Researcher Positionality

Noreen is Asian American, was the instructor of the social studies methods course described in this study, and is a former bilingual elementary educator. Cinthia is a Chicana teacher educator who designed and supervised the bilingual social studies methods course. They were both born and raised bi-/multilingually in the state where the study took place and worked with Latinx immigrant students throughout their K-12 teaching careers.

### Data Sources

Data sources from the six students focused on two related course projects, *What are They Thinking* (WATT) and a lesson plan, and included transcriptions of WATT podcasts, integrated lesson plans, lesson plan reflections, and post-class reflections. WATT asked preservice teachers to investigate students’ views on a topic related to social studies (see Swalwell, 2015) in a recorded interview and to present their findings in a podcast. WATT asked preservice teachers to listen carefully to their students’ responses, to avoid making assumptions about what students do or do not know, and served as a starting point for preservice teachers to develop curriculum that expands on students’ actual (not assumed) (mis)understandings (Swalwell, 2015). The students who participated in WATT interviews were in second, third, and fourth grades and were enrolled in Spanish/English dual language classrooms following the Gomez and Gomez model (Gomez, Freeman, & Freeman, 2005) in predominantly Latinx, Title I campuses within the same large, urban school district. Two campuses were located in neighborhoods targeted by ICE in February 2017. WATT interviews were conducted and recorded in January and February 2017; the preservice teachers’ WATT podcasts included student audio from the interview as well as their own recorded reflections. Due to Institutional Review Board constraints, child recordings were excluded; therefore, elementary students’ words are not directly cited, but the authors consider the podcast recordings to be an initial set of *testimonios* that guided the preservice teachers’ respective *testimonios* that followed, which are analyzed here.

The lesson plan was based on students’ WATT interviews. The lesson was approved by the classroom teacher who supervised the preservice teacher and by the instructor and then was taught either to a small group or the whole class. After teaching their lessons, the pre-service teachers completed a reflection that examined their teaching, students’ learning, and the lesson’s social studies content. Due to the bilingual nature of the teacher education program, preservice teachers completed their work in English, Spanish, or a combination of the two; their Spanish reflects a range of linguistic repertoires (Hornberger, 2003), from academic Spanish language to colloquial and translanguaging approaches (García, 2009) typical of bi-/multilinguals. Honoring the role of voice in *testimonio*, quotes are presented in the original language in which they were uttered/written; translations into English were done by Noreen and are in brackets. Data sources were analyzed through descriptive and axial coding (Saldaña, 2009) to arrive at emergent patterns and themes.

## Findings

The analysis of preservice teacher social studies methods coursework revealed three themes. First, the preservice teachers recognized the topic of immigration in general, and President Trump’s negative attitude toward Mexican immigrants in particular, as subjects very familiar to their students and about which students possessed substantial knowledge. Second, in contrast to mainstream pre- and in-service educators, the bilingual preservice teachers recognized that their students did not consider immigration to be a controversial topic worthy of fear and/or discomfort, but a simple fact of their lived experience. Third, the teachers emphasized historical connections to provide context to the current immigration events mentioned in WATT.

### Immigration as Familiar Subject

Although researchers in social studies education have argued for more inclusive, student-centered approaches that connect social studies content to students’ lives and experiences (Choi, 2013; Dong, 2017), the marginalized nature of elementary social studies provides few opportunities for this to actually occur (Heafner & Fitchett, 2012). During conversations in their respective elementary field placements, all six preservice teachers recognized young students’ familiarity with the topic of immigration as they articulated understandings of family migration and reasons for leaving one country for another. Moreover, the difficulties of the immigrant experience were also part of their funds of knowledge.

In her WATT podcast, Sofia reflected, “*Estos niños están expuestos al maltrato de inmigrantes y viven en temor que sus familias sean separadas y nunca jamás vuelvan a ver. Esto es algo deshumanizante y realmente triste*” [These students are exposed to the mistreatment of immigrants and live in fear that their families will be separated and will never see (each other) again. This is something dehumanizing and truly sad.]. One child detailed the fear felt by her family after ICE raided her neighborhood, recounting to Sofia how she tried to soothe her younger sister. The father of this child in Sofia’s field placement had already been deported, and his loss was deeply felt by the family; the younger sister was terrified that other family members would be forced to leave as well. Sofia contemplated her role as a teacher in the face of such adversity: “*Estos niños como mi estudiante tienen preocupaciones más grandes. Al ver la cara de temor de*



*mi estudiante me ayuda a ver la diferencia que podemos tener en nuestros estudiantes”* [These children, like my student, have bigger problems (than other kids). Upon seeing my student’s frightened face, it helps me see the difference we can make in our students.]. Sofia understood that some children experience excruciating amounts of stress in their daily lives and may spend school hours preoccupied with the safety of family members rather than the lesson at hand. As a teacher, she wanted her students to “*resaltar...y tener éxito*” [overcome...and be successful] and viewed funds of knowledge as a vital access point for lesson design.

One of the students Larissa interviewed also expressed fears of a family member being deported. She summarized their conversation as follows:

*(La estudiante) mencionó que no quiere que se lleven a su mamá. Y creo que eso fue algo que me impactó mucho y quería hacer una lección basada en las injusticias y que es lo que puede hacer, entonces empecé de pensar en que puedo hacer para sentirse un poquito mejor, aunque sea un poco, de lo que está sucediendo* [(The student) mentioned that she didn’t want them to take her mother. And I think that is something that really had a big impact on me, and I wanted to make a lesson based on injustices and what she can do. So I started to think about what could I do to make her feel a little better, even if it’s just a little, about what is happening.].

Like Sofia, Larissa considered the experiences shared by her students to be a starting point for her lesson. Moreover, she wanted to provide her students with agency and voice. She decided to focus her lesson on the story of Emma Tenayuca, a young Latina activist who fought to improve labor conditions in the early 1900s, through the picture book *That’s Not Fair!;/No es justo!* (Tafolla, 2008). In her post-lesson reflection, Larissa wrote, “We talked about the things we can do during hardships and unfair situations. I think they see issues like that every day, and now they can respond in ways that might help change the situation.” While addressing required state standards in language arts, Larissa used her lesson to highlight a Mexican American activist and to discuss ways to initiate change in one’s community. This emphasis on agency reflects the potential of *testimonio* to explore students’ own lived experiences and ultimately foster solidarity in the struggle for social justice (Anzaldúa, 1990; El Ashmawi et al., 2018).

Ruth also used a picture book to explore undocumented immigration. The student conversations during her read-aloud of *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* (Tonatiuh, 2013) led to a realization that her students, although familiar with immigration issues, understood it only within the context of Mexico to the U.S. “*Me di cuenta que (el estudiante) sólo pensó de la inmigración de México... ellos sólo tienen un poco más entendimiento de la inmigración de una perspectiva*” [I realized that (the student) only thought of Mexican immigration...they only have a little more understanding of immigration from one perspective.]. Ruth felt it was clear that the lesson “*fue relacionada a muchas vidas de mis estudiantes*” [was related to many of my students’ lives] and understood that exploring immigrant experiences beyond those with which her students were already familiar would be a natural instructional progression. While her students’ *testimonios* revealed their rich knowledge of immigration from Mexico to the United States, Ruth recognized the need to include the *testimonios* of other immigrants to nurture and introduce a more nuanced understanding of similarities and differences in the immigrant experience.

## Immigration as Not Controversial

In spite of supposed programmatic shifts toward culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum, teacher education researchers have paid scant attention to immigrant students (Goodwin, 2016), suggesting an ongoing lack of focus on immigration in teacher preparation. Moreover, many educators view immigration not as an essential part of the American fabric but as a controversial issue to be avoided (Graff, 2010). Luisa and Isela both admitted to feeling nervous prior to teaching their lessons, which included discussions about Donald Trump followed by students writing him persuasive letters. Luisa explained, “*Todas las respuestas que me ofrecieron fueron increíbles y respetuosos. Aunque sentí un poco nerviosa para preguntarles acerca del Presidente, sus respuestas no fueron lo que esperé. No eran positivas, pero no eran groseros o inapropiados*” [All the responses they offered were incredible and respectful. Although I felt a little nervous about asking questions about the president, their answers were not what I expected. They were not positive, but they were not rude or inappropriate.]. Additionally, Luisa described being impressed by her students’ enthusiasm and participation.

Isela was also surprised that the discussion during her lesson was much more respectful than what she recorded during the WATT interview, when several students called Trump a racist. “*No tenía algún incidencia [sic] con mis estudiantes particularmente porque eran muy respetuosos del tema... Les dije que tenemos que mantener respeto para nuestro presidente incluso si no le gustamos*” [I didn’t have any incidents with my students particularly because they were very respectful of the topic.... I told them that we have to maintain respect for our president even if he doesn’t like us.]. Notably, Isela included herself, alongside her students, as part of the community targeted by the president’s hostile, xenophobic rhetoric. However, rather than disparage the president on a personal level, Isela’s students composed letters to President Trump about how he could improve the country, with statements like “*los inmigrantes hacen este país mejor*” [immigrants make this country better]. Despite her initial hesitation to teach this topic, Isela realized, “*Esto es algo que es muy relevante en sus vidas. No es algo controversial para ellos*” [This is something very relevant in their lives. It is not something controversial for them.]. The quotidian nature of immigration *and* discrimination was a part of her students’ world, regardless of the preservice teachers’ own levels of (dis)comfort with these issues.

In their post-lesson reflections, both Luisa and Isela described a contrast between their personal fears and anxieties in discussing the president—which initially struck them as a controversial issue—and the pride of discovering their students’ comfort, openness, and respect in the same lessons. The pre-service teachers attributed their students’ interest and engagement in the lessons to the deep relevance of immigration to the children’s lives and realized that something so personal to their students was not controversial, but rather a fact of their daily lives. In direct response to the difficult funds of knowledge revealed in students’ WATT *testimonios*, the preservice teachers’ lessons recognized students as producers of knowledge and centered agency through the act of writing letters to President Trump, drawing from students’ lived experiences as immigrants and children of immigrants who felt threatened by the new president.

## Immigration in the Past and Present

The Southwestern state where this study was conducted was part of Mexico before it was ceded to the United States as part of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The last two decades have

witnessed a shift from mostly Mexican immigration, now on the decline, to more Central American immigration (Goodwin, 2016); nonetheless, in a state with a longstanding Mexican American political and social history, a broader understanding of its immigrant history is indispensable but largely absent in school curriculum. As the preservice teachers used their WATT interviews to inform the creation of their integrated lesson plans, several of them decided to juxtapose their students’ contemporary preoccupations with immigration issues with historical examples.

Before WATT, Celeste taught a traditional lesson on the civil rights movement. For her WATT follow-up lesson, she decided to “*utilizar el conocimiento previo del movimiento para los derechos civiles de los afroamericanos para que mis estudiantes hagan conexiones con ese movimiento y los esfuerzos de los mexicano americanos para los mismos derechos*” [use the prior knowledge of the African American civil rights movement so that my students make connections to that movement and the efforts of Mexican Americans for the same rights]. However, her students struggled to understand how different groups experienced segregation and discrimination. “*Los niños leyeron informes acerca de la huelga nacional en febrero, ‘Un día sin inmigrantes.’ Mis estudiantes son muy conscientes de ese momento, pero nunca lo habían conectado con el movimiento*” [The children read news articles about the ‘A Day without Immigrants’ national strike in February. My students are very conscious of that moment, but they had never connected it with the (civil rights) movement.]. Celeste attributed this disconnect to the fact that curriculum tends to treat the civil rights movement as something resolved in the 1970s, but she was determined to push students to look more deeply at the ongoing struggle: “*Sin embargo, esto niega a todas las injusticias que han sufrido los mexicano americanos después de eso. La lucha todavía no ha terminado, y quería que mis estudiantes fueran más pensativos en eso [sic]*” [However, this negates all the injustices that Mexican Americans have suffered after that. The struggle has not yet ended, and I wanted my students to be more thoughtful about that.]. Celeste recognized the limitations of social studies curriculum and sought to expose her students to modern-day racism and discrimination across ethnoracial groups; in particular, her pedagogical shift from the Black/white binary to contemporary struggles for immigrant rights signaled her efforts to teach multiple oppressions across different groups and over time to build solidarity.

Historians (Lomawaima, 2013; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998), activists (Espinoza, Cotera, & Blackwell, 2018), and social studies scholars (Halagao, 2004; Rodríguez, 2015, 2018; Salinas, Fránquiz, & Naseem Rodríguez, 2016) have also troubled the binary by stressing the importance of broader inclusion of racial and immigrant histories. Ultimately, a more inclusive narrative is more complex, robust, and conscious of the exclusionary nature of traditional K-12 social studies curriculum. By connecting contemporary xenophobia to past civil rights struggles, the preservice teachers attempted to illustrate what Hall (2005) calls “the long civil rights movement.” Such an approach disrupts the neatly resolved narrative of the fight for civil rights as contained in the 1950s and 1960s by Black actors who overcame injustice and expands the struggle to include the Chicano Movement, longstanding Mexican American activism, and ongoing societal inequities across racial and other identity groups. A longer view of immigration-related struggles can support learners in understanding that all newcomers to the United States must negotiate, to varying degrees, some level of discrimination, hardship, and/or acculturation.

## Conclusion

The preservice teachers in this study used the difficult funds of knowledge revealed in the *testimonios* of their bilingual students as both witness and curriculum (Bryson, 2017) to inspire

lessons about immigration and the Trump presidency grounded in their students’ identities, histories, and resilience. Their work illustrates how, with support, preservice teachers of Color can acquire critically humanizing pedagogies for their future classrooms (Brown, 2014; Sosa-Provencio et al., 2017), as demonstrated by their inclusion of Latinx and immigrant activists (e.g., Emma Tenayuca; A Day Without Immigrants strike) and centering of undocumented immigrants in the classroom (*Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote*). Importantly, the teachers drew from students’ WATT *testimonios* to engage in transformative pedagogies that welcomed students’ experiences and supported student agency, utilizing *testimonio* as both method and pedagogy.

Efforts to increase inclusion and embrace cultural and linguistic diversity in teacher education often rely on superficial approaches to multiculturalism that appease the white majority and continue to alienate preservice teachers of Color. Immigration is a topic essential to the United States’ past and present, yet many teachers consider it too controversial to teach beyond traditional master narratives of the Pilgrims, Ellis Island, and idyllic stories of people seeking opportunity (Vasquez, 2018). This study demonstrates how bilingual preservice teachers of Color used course assignments to explore young students’ existing understandings of immigration and applied those insights to lesson design and implementation. Students’ *testimonios* exposed difficult funds of knowledge that included intimacies with deportation and the attendant fear of such traumatic events happening in their families, generating new starting points for the preservice teachers who recognized the depth of their existing knowledge.

Since Trump’s election and the xenophobic and Islamophobic executive orders that followed his inauguration, teachers must consider how immigrant and other marginalized students’ difficult funds of knowledge impact their ability to learn and thrive. The preservice teachers’ use of *testimonio* demonstrates how students’ lived experiences are informative and vital to improving the teacher-student relationship and overall learning environment. When teachers solicit students’ *testimonios* about complex, deeply personal topics such as immigration, they validate alternative epistemologies rarely addressed in the curriculum. Undoubtedly, teachers must create safe spaces for students to share *testimonios*, since such revelations may include traumatic and violent details and can potentially endanger families if privacy is violated. Additionally, offering opportunities for students to express themselves in languages other than English and through illustration or movement make *testimonio* accessible to our youngest learners, emergent bilinguals, and children who communicate best through multiple modalities.

We assert that the mandated school curriculum offers historical narratives that situate students of Color as outsiders; students of Color often know these narratives but don’t believe them. Concurrently, through the (hi)stories shared by their Communities of Color, they may believe in counter-narratives but may not fully know those narratives as they are omitted in schools (Wertsch, 2000). *Testimonios* draw from the deep histories and funds of knowledge of marginalized communities and can create noteworthy epistemological shifts and counter-narratives that disrupt exclusionary mainstream narratives. Informed and student-centered pedagogical approaches, such as those described above, are essential to recognizing the multiple truths of students’ lived experiences and to fostering solidarity with marginalized communities in the Trump era. Given recent calls for teacher education to more deliberately create equitable classrooms for the growing population of Latinx youth (Bondy & Braunstein, 2017), *testimonio* and difficult funds of knowledge offer important pedagogical possibilities worthy of further exploration and classroom implementation in the ongoing struggle toward justice for all.

## Notes

1. Thank you to the faculty fellows and editorial board of the 2018 *Curriculum Inquiry* Writers Workshop for their critique of dark funds of knowledge.
2. In spite of allegations by Trump and others regarding the criminal nature of undocumented immigrants (Mexicans in particular) to the U.S., data overwhelmingly repudiates these claims (Dixon & Williams, 2015).

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