

# “Diles la verdad”: *Deportation Policies, Politicized Funds of Knowledge, and Schooling in Middle Childhood*

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*In this article, Sarah Gallo and Holly Link draw on a five-year ethnographic study of Latina/o immigrant children and their elementary schooling to examine the complexities of how children, teachers, and families in a Pennsylvania town navigate learning within a context of unprecedented deportations. Gallo and Link focus on the experiences and perspectives of one student, his teachers, and his parents to explore how his father's detainment and potential deportation affected his life and learning across educational contexts such as home, school, and alternative educational spaces. In attending to the ways that this student effectively developed and deployed his knowledge of immigration outside of his classroom spaces, the authors explore the possibilities and tensions of creating safe spaces for students to draw on immigration experiences for learning in school. Rather than maintaining silence around issues of difference like immigration, they call for educational practices and policies that will better prepare educators to recognize and respond to students' politicized funds of knowledge, the experiences, knowledges, and skills young people deploy and develop across learning contexts that are often not incorporated into classroom settings.*

On a Tuesday evening in early spring, nine-year-old Ben played on his front porch with his family. Suddenly six vehicles pulled up in front of their house and police officers stormed their porch, the lasers from their guns illuminating red circles on the foreheads of Ben's father and twelve-year-old brother. The officers turned to Ben's thirteen-year-old sister to translate and told her to “tell the truth,” to disclose if

they were undocumented. Terrified and unsure of how to respond, his sister answered “yes” through her tears. Ben fainted as his father was handcuffed and taken away. The police officers would not provide a reason for the arrest and informed Ben’s mother, Julia, that she would receive a phone call the next day. Julia called that evening and asked us to tell Ben’s teacher that he would not be in school. When asked what information she wanted to be relayed to his teachers, she replied, “*diles la verdad*” [tell them the truth].

—Field notes, March 20, 2012

This field note illustrates the vulnerabilities and possibilities of sharing *la verdad*, or “the truth” about documentation status across community, home, and school contexts in an era of strong anti-immigrant sentiment (Dick, 2011; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). Unlike silences that often accompany the experiences of undocumented families in schools and communities (e.g., Gallo, 2014; Jefferies, 2014; Jefferies & Dabach, 2014), Julia has sought to bring attention to the familial and educational effects of deportation-based immigration practices in their Pennsylvania town.<sup>1</sup> For example, during the years Julia fought her husband’s deportation, she has regularly spoken with educators at her children’s schools about the difficult changes in the family members’ lives, shared the family’s story with Spanish and English news outlets to raise awareness regarding deportation practices that targeted Latino immigrant men for minor infractions, and emphasized the importance of telling her children *la verdad* because they deserved and needed to know the truth.

Through these experiences, Ben was actively developing intricate community-based sociocultural resources, or funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). Yet for Ben and many of his classmates at Grant Elementary School, these *politicized funds of knowledge*—which they developed from crossing the border, navigating what it meant to have “papers,” or serving as intermediaries between police officers and their parents—were rarely talked about or built on in their classrooms. Teachers either were unaware of local deportation-based practices or, despite their intentions to support students, were unsure of how to broach topics related to documentation status (Gallo & Link, in press). Yet children were searching for spaces to talk and write about these powerful experiences with caring adults.

Drawing on a long-term ethnographic study with Mexican immigrant students in elementary school, we examine in this article the experiences and perspectives of Ben, his parents, and his teachers to explore how his father’s potential deportation affected Ben’s life and learning across educational contexts. We focus on middle childhood in particular, an age group that has received little attention in the research literature (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011), and conducted our research in a Pennsylvania town where increases in arrests under programs such as Secure Communities has shaped many immigrant children’s educational lives.<sup>2</sup> Our findings highlight the possibilities and tensions of creating safe spaces for students to

draw on their politicized funds of knowledge for learning in school. Rather than maintain silence around issues of difference like immigration status, we call for educational practices and policies that would better prepare educators to recognize and respond to the politicized funds of knowledge around Latina/o students' immigration experiences for increased learning and engagement in school.

In this article we ask two questions: How do deportation-based immigration policies affect young students, parents, and teachers? And how can we create classrooms in which politicized funds of knowledge can be safely shared and leveraged as pedagogical resources? In the following section we provide a brief overview of the research on immigration status and schooling, asset-based pedagogies, and politicized funds of knowledge. We then describe the town of Marshall, our study participants and study design, and our findings. We conclude with pedagogical and policy implications of the research.

### Immigration and Schooling

National debates about immigration tend to focus on adults, yet families and children are also deeply affected by immigration policies and practices (Chaudry et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Yoshikawa & Kholoptseva, 2013). There are approximately 5.5 million children in the United States who live in families with undocumented immigrants, and 75 percent of those children are US citizens (Chaudry et al., 2010). As many scholars emphasize, actual and potential deportations affect entire families (Brabeck, Lykes, & Hershberg, 2011; Yoshikawa & Kholoptseva, 2013; Yoshikawa & Suárez-Orozco, 2012). Much of the research that exists in the area of documentation status and schooling is interview based and centers on DREAMers—promising young people who would benefit from the federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (e.g., Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011). The majority of this important research examines pathways to higher education (e.g., Abrego, 2006), the significant life changes that adolescents undergo as they “learn to be illegal” when discovering their documentation status (Gonzales, 2011), and the surprising ways that DREAMers are civically engaged despite limited pathways to US residency (e.g., Perez, 2009). While rare, ethnographic portraits of the ways students engage with the topic of documentation in their classrooms (e.g., Dabach, 2015) have also been presented in existing research. Although recent work has started to explore how citizenship status shapes daily practices for adolescents and children from mixed-status families at home (Mangual Figueroa, 2011), little is known regarding the daily realities of how documentation status or parental deportations affect younger children and their schooling (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Yoshikawa & Kholoptseva, 2013).

In addition, little is known about how educators understand the immigration practices shaping students' lives or how this impacts their teaching (see

Dabach, 2015). In our own work, we look closely at moments when young children's experiences with immigration become relevant at school and at how to better support educators in safely recognizing these experiences. Previously, we have documented the ways that teachers at Grant Elementary understood and responded to increasing deportation-based immigration practices affecting their students' lives and how educators themselves fell along a continuum regarding their desire and success in pushing beyond their comfort zones to create spaces in which they learned from, and built on, students' immigration experiences, highlighting the limited supports educators were given in doing this (see Gallo & Link, in press). In this article, we build on that work through an asset-based pedagogy framework to examine the knowledge and perspectives of a young student, his parents, and his teachers. Through attention to the dynamic ways that this student deployed and developed his politicized funds of knowledge across a range of educational spaces, we seek to contribute to contemporary work on how teachers can foster classroom spaces that better support students from undocumented families across grade levels.

### Politicized Funds of Knowledge

Drawing on Freire (1970) and critical race scholars, we understand schools as political spaces and perceive all teaching, even when it is not positioned as "political," as constituting political acts (Yosso, 2006). We believe that to be neutral is to take a (subconscious) stance of being in support of the status quo (Bartolomé, 1994). Like other proponents of humanizing pedagogies, we argue for schooling that "builds upon the sociocultural realities of students' lives, examines sociohistorical and political dimensions of education, and casts students as critically engaged, active participants in the co-construction of knowledge" (Salazar, 2013, p. 128). We aim to highlight the types of knowledge and experiences that are often positioned as inappropriate or dangerous in our schools and believe that we must proactively question these assumptions. We seek to enact asset-based pedagogies that account for the full range of children's practices and knowledges, which may be complex and challenging (Bartolomé, 1994; Lee, 2007; Martínez & Morales, 2014; Orellana & Reynolds, 2008; Paris & Alim, 2014). Thus, by evoking the term *politicized funds of knowledge*, we aim to raise awareness regarding the polemic nature of what counts as knowledge in schools and teacher education.

To conceptualize how educators might engage in asset-based pedagogies, we draw on the groundbreaking work by Moll et al. (1992) on funds of knowledge, or "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household and individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). Moll and colleagues challenge the notion that valuable knowledge was only created and learned within mainstream schooling. In contrast, they pushed educators to step outside of their classrooms—into students' homes and communities—to take on the role of ethnographers who learn from stu-

dents in order to design and implement classroom curricula based on the cultural, community, and family-based resources that students of color bring to their schools. The original aims of funds-of-knowledge research emphasized moving away from a special events approach to multicultural education, such as surface learning about typical holidays or foods from given cultures, to instead include “the actual lived experiences of our students rather than a traditional or stereotyped version” (Amanti, 2005, p. 132). This approach aimed to transform teachers’ knowledge of their students, and their own agency as educators, through the use of ethnographic methods to question the status quo and reframe their teaching (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

This important work on funds of knowledge helps illuminate new pedagogical possibilities for Latina/o students but—in practice today—has left limited space to engage with current pressing themes for many children from undocumented families, such as how documentation status shapes their lives and learning. Although students’ experiences as members of undocumented families falls within the original intent of these approaches, those drawing on funds-of-knowledge research and pedagogies have tended toward less controversial topics, such as auto mechanics, carpentry, farming, and mining (compare with Gonzalez et al., 2005). Paris and Alim (2014) highlight the “unfortunate simplification of asset pedagogies as being solely about considering the heritage or traditional practices of students of color in teaching while simultaneously ignoring the shifting and evolving practices of their communities” (p. 90). In solidarity with Paris and Alim’s call for culturally sustaining pedagogies that focus on the heterogeneous and dynamic experiences that young people bring to school, we imagine the possibilities of creating more equitable schooling for immigrant students by proposing an emphasis on funds of knowledge related to students’ and families’ experiences with immigration and immigration practices. This focus grew from the significance such knowledges had for many immigrant children’s educational lives outside of school and how young children could benefit from sharing and building on these experiences with caring adults in their classrooms.

We propose politicized funds of knowledge as a form of funds of knowledge that falls within the original intent of this work, yet one that explicitly reengages critical examinations of what counts as knowledge. We define *politicized funds of knowledge* as the real-world experiences, knowledges, and skills that young people deploy and develop across contexts of learning that are often positioned as taboo or unsafe to incorporate into classroom learning. These funds of knowledge are developed by students from a range of backgrounds. For Latina/o immigrant students from documented and undocumented immigrant families, these real-world experiences may include the knowledges they learn through navigating citizenship status (Mangual Figueroa, 2011), invoking the harsh realities of *narcocorridos* about drug violence on the border (De la Piedra & Araujo, 2012), engaging in transgressive language play (Martínez & Morales, 2014), writing poetry about border crossing, or enacting

narratives of resistance about police officers coming to their doors in search of “Mexican-looking criminals” (Gallo, in press). By explicitly naming these politicized funds of knowledge, we hope to bring attention to a range of experiences that are often excluded from schooling and to unpack the challenges and potential of recognizing and incorporating them within students’ classrooms.

By tracing children’s experiences across school, home, and community contexts, we examine immigrant children’s active participation in these practices to explore how they carefully “negotiate, contest, and assert” (García-Sánchez, 2013, p. 492) their versions of *la verdad* across institutional contexts. We follow Lee’s (2007) work on cultural modeling with primarily African American students to focus our gaze on the ways that immigrant children themselves actively deploy and develop these politicized funds of knowledge. Like other scholars who argue that learning is enhanced by building on students’ strengths and family-based resources (González et al., 2005; Lee, 2007; Paris & Alim, 2014), we believe students could be more academically successful if educators built from the experiences that students brought to school. This kind of teaching entails adopting curriculum and pedagogies that recognize these children’s knowledges as well as creating a classroom context in which this knowledge can be safely shared (Lee, 2007). In this article we focus on Ben, a student from an undocumented family who deployed and developed his politicized funds-of-knowledge in careful ways across contexts of learning as his father faced potential deportation. We present this case to explore a politicized funds of knowledge framework for students from a range of backgrounds (e.g., immigrant, nonrecent immigrant, documented, undocumented, mixed-status) whose lived resources are often positioned as unfit for learning.

## Research Background

### *Marshall, Pennsylvania*

The data in this article come from a five-year ethnography on the elementary school experiences of one cohort of children from Mexican immigrant families that we conducted between 2008 and 2013 in the town of Marshall, together with a year of follow-up interviews with focal students during their first year of middle school. Marshall is a New Latino Diaspora location (Wortham, Murillo, & Hamman, 2002), a suburb of approximately 35,000 people that has become home to thousands of Latina/o immigrants over the past two decades (over 80 percent of them Mexican). From 1990 to 2010 the Latina/o population increased from 3 percent to 28 percent, or more than a 900 percent increase (US Census Bureau, 2010). Most immigrant families from this study lived alongside African American neighbors in the economically depressed downtown area that offered inexpensive housing in rundown row homes. This housing surrounded what was referred to by some as Mexican Main Street, a thoroughfare with predominantly Mexican small businesses such as restaurants, small markets, and variety stores. The streets in this part

of town were usually lively, filled with people from the local neighborhood running errands, kids playing in side streets, or people talking with friends as they sat on their front stoops. Racial tension existed among many of the Mexican immigrant and African American adult residents, although these tensions were less apparent in the early grades of schooling, in which interethnic friendships were common.

School district enrollments showed similar demographic changes: from 1987 to 2011 the Latina/o student enrollment increased from 2 percent to 25 percent, with a large concentration of Latina/o students in the elementary grades (personal communication, English as a second language coordinator, 2011). The focal school for this study, Grant Elementary, is located in Marshall's economically depressed downtown. A Title I school, with approximately 95 percent of its students receiving free or reduced lunch, Grant served more than four hundred students in grades K–4 with relatively equal numbers of African American and Latina/o students.

Our focal families came from the cohort of students who began kindergarten in 2008. Most of the Latina/o students were born in the United States to Mexican immigrant parents or arrived from Mexico prior to kindergarten. The majority lived in mixed-status families in which younger family members had US documentation. Similar to current profiles of teachers outside of urban areas, teachers at Grant were almost entirely white middle-class women who had grown up in, and still lived in, neighboring middle-class suburbs (Feistritz, 2011). Teachers were generally welcoming to newcomer students and their families (Gallo et al., 2014). They viewed children's use of Spanish as an important resource in the classroom, especially in the early grades, and invited children to speak in Spanish to help each other with learning tasks and routines. Moreover, teachers spoke positively about Latino families' involvement in their children's schoolwork, such as Ben's second-grade teacher who emphasized that “our Latino families on the whole are intact, caring, working, [have a good] work ethic, [and] care about education” (interview, June 20, 2011). In this way, children and families felt a sense of belonging at Grant Elementary. However, although most teachers wanted to learn about and build on students' immigration experiences, especially in the later grades, as they became aware of parental deportations, they were unsure of how to do so (Gallo & Link, in press).

### *Immigration Practices and Schooling in Marshall*

Compared with more hostile reactions in other areas of Pennsylvania (Dick, 2011), Marshall was a relatively welcoming place for the growing Latino immigrant population until 2011, during the focal students' second-grade year, when authorities adopted harsher enforcement practices. Local police became more involved with programs such as Secure Communities and appeared to work collaboratively with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). This intensified involvement led to increased deportations of nonviolent offenders.

Some arrests were for serious crimes, yet all of the arrests described to us by our focal families were for minor infractions or without cause. For example, in 2011 the father of Princess, one of our focal students, was stopped by police officers outside his home for dropping a soda can on the street. He was sent to ICE officials and subsequently deported to Mexico. Others, like Ben's father, Evaristo, were arrested through "mistaken identity." Although the arrest was a mistake and no charges were filed, Evaristo's deportation processes have continued, because during his arrest ICE officials verified that he did not have US documentation. Other students, such as Abi, who translated high-stakes interactions between her father and police officers, did not have a deported parent but still navigated the everyday possibility of family separation due to deportation-based immigration practices. Most students from our study had direct or indirect experiences with these enforcement practices, and the actual or imagined deportations strongly influenced their experience of schooling. Our focus in this article is on the experiences of one of these students, Ben.

## Methods

As non-Latina, English-Spanish bilinguals, we have spent our careers working as educators or conducting research with teachers and Latina/o immigrant students, and our research is also shaped by our own roles, relationships, and subjectivities. Sarah first met families in Marshall in 2006 when she began volunteering as an interpreter at Grant Elementary and at a bilingual service agency. Holly met families in the study in 2008 and currently volunteers as director of educational programming at a local community center serving Latino families. Although we shared many linguistic resources in Spanish, we differed from most family members in terms of ethnicity, social class, levels of formal education, nationality, and documentation status. Through spending time and working with the same families from 2008 to 2013, we were able to get to know our participants across our many levels of difference. Our long-term presence in children's homes and at Grant Elementary led to trusting relationships with families, children, and their teachers, which facilitated discussions regarding deportation-based immigration practices.

During our five-year ethnography, we followed a cohort of students from Mexican immigrant families in both home and school contexts from kindergarten through fourth grade. This study included weekly participant observation, video recording of routine activities, and interviews at home and school. It also involved close interaction with dozens of families and educators. We did not recruit participants based on family documentation status, but most students faced challenges due to shifting immigration enforcement. Between 2011 and 2013, six of the twelve focal children had a parent who had been deported or was fighting deportation. Although two-thirds of these students were US citizens, each had at least one undocumented parent. During the increased vigilance in 2011, when students were in second grade, we did not

discuss deportations with teachers because most families and students did not share these experiences with school personnel. Over time, however, as more families from Grant experienced separations due to deportations, parents, such as Julia in the opening vignette, felt that educators needed to learn about what they saw as unfair targeting of immigrant men. Based on these circumstances, we decided to interview teachers to learn how they made sense of these changes in their students' lives and learning. During these interviews we only discussed specific cases in instances when teachers already knew about a family's immigration experiences (such as Ben and his family). During the students' last two years at Grant Elementary and first year in middle school, Holly also met regularly with students at the public library. During this time, children explored and represented their social worlds through storytelling and participated in individual, group, and peer interviews on various student-selected topics.

Ethnographic research is particularly well suited to illuminate how shifting immigration practices affect teaching and learning, as it offers a window into the complexities of real-world situations and highlights experiences, perspectives, and truths that are often silenced. In this inductive approach, focal topics are narrowed as, over the course of data collection, major events emerge that greatly influence people's lived realities (Blommaert & Jie, 2010). For example, although documentation status always played a role in focal students' lives, shifting immigration practices began to deeply shape their lives and created new contexts for teaching and learning that were rarely broached in schools. This article grew out of our desire to better understand not only students' and families' experiences but also those of teachers who were grappling with resulting pedagogical challenges.

In our ethnographic analyses, we followed the model of Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), iteratively drawing patterns from the hundreds of field notes, video logs, and transcribed interviews. After we completed annual data collection, our analysis included open coding using the qualitative data software program ATLAS.Ti. The data in this article come from a subset of categories that emerged around immigration and schooling, such as “documentation,” “immigration,” “police,” and “separation.” In our analysis we focused on the subtle and overt ways that immigration practices were shaping students' lives and learning and how adults across contexts recognized and engaged with the effects of these practices. Our analysis led to new questions, which we asked students and teachers in follow-up interviews during students' fourth- and fifth-grade years.

In this article we focus on Ben's familial immigration experiences and how they were addressed by his parents and his teachers.<sup>3</sup> Ben's mother was one of the first parents who openly approached the school about how deportation practices affected their lives and the only parent from our study who engaged directly with media outlets to raise awareness regarding these issues. Yet Ben's teachers, who wanted to support him and his learning, were unsure

of how to engage in the topic of immigration experiences with Ben personally, or in their classrooms overall. In addition, Ben proactively deployed and developed a wide range of politicized funds of knowledge within home, community, and afterschool spaces, yet he decided not to share these knowledges within his classrooms. Due to the breadth and depth of the ethnographic data collected with Ben during the years we observed him across home and school (see table 1), we wanted to better understand how he “read” (Freire, 1970) these contexts in terms of the safety of sharing these experiences. Participants’ perspectives and experiences illustrate the dexterous ways that children actively develop and deploy their politicized funds of knowledge and additionally reveal the challenges—as well as promise—teachers face in creating safe spaces where these knowledges can be shared. We believe a nuanced understanding of Ben’s sharing of these politicized funds of knowledge with peers at recess, in the library meetings, and in community contexts could provide insights about educational spaces that invite immigration experiences as learning resources.

## Findings

### *The Initial Effects of Evaristo’s Arrest*

When Ben was in third grade, his father’s mistaken arrest and potential deportation by ICE officials dramatically shaped his childhood. The morning after his father’s arrest, Ben attended school to complete standardized testing; however, his teachers reported that he could not stop crying, and when he asked to go home at lunch time, he was picked up by his mother (field notes, March 21, 2012). That afternoon, Holly accompanied Ben, his mother, and his older brother to his siblings’ middle school to inform educators about these major events. On the long walk there, Ben picked up a broken antenna from the sidewalk, wielding it as a sword, fantasizing that it was his father’s sword that he could use to defend himself, and talking about how he wanted to kill God (field notes, March 21, 2012). After his father’s arrest, Ben became quiet and less participatory in school, his usual loquacious demeanor greatly subdued. In the following weeks, he spoke very little about what had happened. He also developed a fear of the police. For instance, one afternoon, when sirens wailed in the distance as he walked out of the library with a group of classmates and Holly, Ben grabbed Holly’s arm, yelling, “It’s the police!” and ducked behind her until the sounds subsided (field notes, April 12, 2012). He also began losing his hair, which doctors surmised was stress related. Ben’s parents sought a psychologist to help him and his siblings navigate the trauma they had experienced.

Since 2012, Ben’s family has spent upward of \$10,000 in legal fees fighting Evaristo’s deportation case, causing great financial stress (Yoshikawa & Kho-loptseva, 2013). Yet unlike other families we worked with who were separated from a parent for months or years due to their detainment, overcrowding

TABLE 1 *Number of ethnographic interviews and observations conducted with Ben*

Grade	Ben interview	Family interview	Teacher interview	Classroom observations (4 hrs. each)	Home observations (2–8 hrs. each)	Library meeting observations (3 hrs. each)
K	0	2	2	15	15	0
1st	1	5	2	37	20	0
2nd	2	3	2	35	16	0
3rd*	1	0*	2	32	8	9
4th	2	0*	3	25	12	36
5th	1	0*	0	0	2	8
Total	7	10	11	144	73	53

\*Due to the stress of navigating Evaristo’s potential deportation during Ben’s third- through fifth-grade years, we did not conduct formal interviews with Ben or with his family. Instead we conducted unrecorded, informal interviews in which Evaristo’s potential deportation was the central topic of conversation. We documented these informal interviews in field notes.

and the minor nature of his infraction (simply being undocumented) meant that Evaristo was released from the immigration holding facility with a *grillete* (“shackle,” or electronic anklet) to track his whereabouts. For numerous court dates from 2012 to 2015, his family has been continually prepared for potential family separation across borders. Like many immigrant families without documentation, they have lived with the heavy uncertainty of how deportation-based immigration policies will shape the future trajectories of their lives and learning in Mexico or the United States.

*Julia’s Civic Engagement*

Ben’s mother, Julia, responded to Evaristo’s mistaken arrest with action. In the days that followed the arrest, she spoke to contacts within a bilingual service agency to find an effective immigration lawyer, visited her children’s schools to talk with administrators regarding the traumatic experience in the hope that educators would be understanding of changes in her children’s behaviors, and secured copies of her children’s school records, an important procedure for enrolling in Mexican schools, in case they had to return to Mexico on short notice. She also visited the police station to request a copy of her husband’s arrest report with the intention of pressing charges against police officials for Evaristo’s mistaken arrest. But because she had no US identification, she was told, the report could not be handed over to her.

The next day when Holly met her at the attorney’s office located in a nearby city, she said things were going well because *“me estoy moviendo”* and *“me muevo, me muevo”*—“I’m moving” and “I’m on the move, I’m on the move.” (field notes, March 22, 2012). She emphasized that she was “not afraid” for people

to know that she and her family did not have papers. They were good, hard-working people. They had come to the States to find a better life (field notes, March 22, 2012). During the following months, Julia took multiple trips to the city, both with and without her husband, to meet with and bring documents to his attorney, obtain paperwork from the Mexican consulate, and accompany Evaristo on his monthly check in with ICE. Amid the challenges and uncertainties of navigating her husband's potential deportation, she often commented that "everything happens for a reason," that this was "a test of God." (field notes, March 22, 2012). Like other times when her family had faced hardship, she reasoned that "God tightens his grip on us, but does not choke us" (field notes, August 29, 2011) and remained resolute that "everything was going to be ok." (field notes, April 5, 2012).

During this time Julia also became involved in an activist movement supported by a nonprofit from a neighboring city. Along with twenty-four other Latina/o immigrants in Marshall, she shared her family's story, without using pseudonyms, in a set of white papers published by the nonprofit that was meant to break the silence regarding local immigration practices that appeared to be targeting Latino immigrant men. In addition, she became involved in what she called a *protesta*, a peaceful community-based media event in which five families, including Julia's, provided *testimonios* of their experiences to raise awareness regarding local deportation practices. At the *protesta*, Ben and his siblings welcomed attendees at the door and passed out fliers in Spanish regarding immigrant rights before community members shared their *testimonios* (field notes, September 19, 2012). In this way, they developed their politicized funds of knowledge through active participation in the *protesta* and by bearing witness to their mother's and others' stories. Julia also decided to speak with two local news outlets—one in Spanish and one in English—to share her family's story in order to break the silence regarding the ways that Latino immigrant men were being treated by police enforcement. She emphasized to her children the importance of sharing *la verdad* and that they did not have anything to hide.

This media event highlighted the vulnerabilities and promise of speaking *la verdad*, about immigration experiences, and how what counts as the truth is highly politicized and contested. For example, the protest event was termed The Truth Commission by the nonprofit that sought to bring attention to the ways Latinos in Marshall had been mistreated. At the end of the meeting, the city manager cautioned the audience that these were simply allegations that had to be proven in a court of law, to which the nonprofit director reiterated that these were the "truths of the community." (field notes, September 19, 2012). Julia and Evaristo did not shelter Ben and his siblings from these activities; rather, they developed their children's politicized funds of knowledge as they modeled and engaged them in courageous acts of speaking up, civic engagement, and advocacy. Yet, as we show, these practices did not easily flow

into Ben's classrooms, where voicing knowledge and experiences as an undocumented immigrant were perceived as risky endeavors.

### *Ben's Schooling and Teachers*

#### — Limited Spaces for Politicized Funds of Knowledge

Although Ben's mother communicated with school administrators and teachers about what had happened, Ben shied away from this topic in his classrooms. He explained that he chose not to talk about his father's pending deportation with teachers because he "just didn't want to get embarrassed" and because "the teacher won't do nothing [to help]." (field notes, June 12, 2013). He later emphasized that he didn't want to talk to teachers about it because they would "say something bad about him [Evaristo]." (field notes, March 14, 2014). As scholars have shown, immigration policies and racializing ideologies have created an association between "Mexican" and "illegal alien," and "illegality" is framed as a problem inherent in immigrants themselves—who are breaking the law by being in the United States without documentation—rather than a problem of immigration policy (Dick, 2011; Perez, 2009). Children are often attuned to this framing, and it can inhibit their communication about issues of immigration and deportation that deeply affect their lives and learning. While Ben did speak to teachers about other personal challenges, he did not broach the topic of immigration practices, perhaps because he recognized the stigma attached to documentation status.

From conversations with Julia, Ben's third- and fourth-grade teachers knew about Evaristo's pending deportation and grappled with ways to support Ben and other immigrant students facing similar life changes. Reflective of the younger and still predominantly white teaching force across US schools today (Feistritzer, 2011), both teachers identified as monolingual English-speaking white women in their mid to late twenties, and both were in their fourth year of teaching. They emphasized school as a safe space and one in which students knew teachers were there as supports. Mrs. Ryan taught Ben in third grade, when his father was detained. When we interviewed Mrs. Ryan almost a year later, she remembered how "emotional" Ben had been. She went on to say, "I just want to make sure that they know it's safe . . . I just wanted to let him know, 'I'm here if you want to talk to me. Everyone's here. You know the school will help you out.'" (interview, January 30, 2013). She noted how Ben was particularly emotional because "he was there, witnessed it. So, I think it was embedded in his head. He couldn't come to school and not think about that . . . He really wouldn't talk about it, but you could tell it was on his mind." (interview, January 30, 2013). As Mrs. Ryan explained, children were often dealing with threats of immigration practices in their lives but were not talking about it: "I think it impacts them. I think they have a sense, maybe they're scared or they're worried it's going to happen to them or their family members . . . I think they kind of keep a lot inside." (interview, January

30, 2013). In talking about Ben's classmate whose mother had been deported, Mrs. Ryan shared, "I think the hardest part for me was I didn't want to dig too deep. I didn't want to ask too many questions and have her feel like I was overstepping my place." (interview, January 30, 2013). Although she wanted to create outlets for Ben and other students' politicized funds of knowledge, she felt unsure of how to pursue personal conversations regarding these experiences and ill equipped to create classroom activities that would broach this topic.

Ms. Klein, Ben's fourth-grade teacher, also explained how little students spoke directly about the immigration practices shaping their lives. She revealed, "I really haven't heard much about it, I hear from other teachers but I don't hear much from the kids talking." (interview, February 6, 2013). Ms. Klein also expressed uncertainty about how far to push into these conversations with Ben: "I don't know if he doesn't want to talk about it, or if he wants someone to approach him. But I don't want to go there if he doesn't feel comfortable." (interview, February 6, 2013). She also emphasized that although there were two Latina immigrant administrators who engaged with some families and students directly regarding their immigration experiences, this information was never passed on to her; and as a classroom teacher without close relationships with families, she felt unsure of how to enter these conversations (interview, June 7, 2012).

Although Ben's teachers tried to send subtle messages that they were available for private conversations regarding immigration experiences, within most official classroom spaces there were limited curricular opportunities for students to contribute such experiences. Over the course of the five years we spent at Grant, teachers were increasingly restricted by semiscripted curricula and accountability-driven pedagogies. The arrival of a new superintendent in 2009 and a new principal in 2010 led to closely monitored, packaged literacy and math programs and testing-oriented instruction. In interviews, teachers expressed frustration at having so little time to do anything other than follow these programs and prepare children for testing. For example, Mrs. Ryan shared that although her students were most engaged in project-based learning through science and social studies, "we have had to put this on the back burner because of the State Standardized Tests." (interview, February 29, 2012). Due to this pressure, teachers could rarely develop curricula from the ground up, which was often more feasible in the 1990s when the original funds-of-knowledge work was developed.

As the experiences of many students from our study highlighted, creating classroom spaces for politicized funds of knowledge also requires creating a classroom environment in which these knowledges can be safely shared. For example, there was one clear instance when a student directly incorporated his politicized knowledges in a poem about crossing the border, which was awarded a prize and recited by this student in front of the whole fourth grade. It read:

*Coming to the U.S.*

Cameras watching night and  
day. climbing mountains  
crossing angry rivers  
My skin is hot as the sun  
with my family behind  
Footprints of police  
ICE sounds of walkietalkies  
Hurry! Finally! the American  
flag we made it

There was no open discussion about the poem or its significance, even though students in our study shared that the visibility of this poem was meaningful for them (interview, June 7, 2013; March 21, 2014). In a conversation with Ben and his peers about this poem the following year, one of his friends mentioned that she had liked and respected the poem very much because it explained what a lot of kids felt when they crossed the border into the United States (interview, March 21, 2014). She further emphasized, "*Yo no hablo de esto a las maestras. Todavía no les tengo demasiada confianza para contarles algo* [I don't talk about this with teachers. I still don't trust them enough to tell them something]." (interview, June 5, 2013). As many young people emphasized, without the creation of a classroom learning context built on mutual trust, they would be unlikely to draw on their politicized immigration experiences for learning.

Ben's teachers emphasized their desire to support students' immigration experiences but felt unprepared and uncertain about how to broach these politicized funds of knowledge without overstepping perceived boundaries. As their colleague Ms. Vega emphasized about her teacher education experience, "You talk about cultures, you don't talk about immigration." (interview, February 13, 2013). Ms. Vega, like many other teachers at Grant, felt that as someone working in a public school her "hands, legs, feet, and mouth are tied," and she tried to avoid talking about personal topics, including immigration experiences, with her students because "we're always told in our courses, 'you find something out that's not legal in a public school, then you have to report it.'" (interview, February 13, 2013). She reasoned that learning about a family's "illegal" status was parallel to learning about other illegal behavior, such as child abuse, which she would have to report. Given that the decision in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) protects undocumented students' right to public education, Pennsylvania teachers are not legally required to report undocumented students to immigration enforcement. However, Ms. Vega's confusion about immigration status and mandated reporting is understandable. Even though almost half of Grant's students were from immigrant families, no professional development had been offered to support teachers in navigating immigration status and schooling, leaving teachers to their own devices.

The positioning of families and students as potentially “illegal” silenced both teachers and students. The experiences of teachers in our study illustrate the incredible challenges of engaging in politicized topics within classrooms due to the silencing of themes related to undocumented immigration in their teacher training and schools. Rarely were trusting relationships established among teachers and students to elicit these difficult conversations.

— Politicized Funds of Knowledge in Schooling

Outside of classroom-sanctioned practices, there were school spaces in which students shared knowledges on undocumented immigration. For example, two days after Evaristo’s arrest, Ben and two close friends, one from a nonimmigrant family, approached Holly at recess. One child asked if the researcher knew about Ben’s dad, and Ben began describing the grillete Evaristo now had attached to his leg, wondering aloud how his father could pull up his socks and asking Holly for specifics on how his father got home from the detention center (field notes March 23, 2012). Several months later Ben again approached Holly at recess, as she had accompanied his parents to Evaristo’s check-in with ICE that morning; in Spanish, within clear earshot of many Spanish-speaking students, he asked if ICE was going to deport his father—“*si lo van a deportar?*” (field notes, May 24, 2012). On the playground and in front of his peers, Ben felt comfortable engaging in this topic. These were spaces removed from formal classroom instruction; outside of the classroom and out of earshot of teachers, Ben could express his concerns and share information about his father’s situation with those he trusted. We argue that such trust-based communication between Ben and his peers, and between Ben and Holly, allowed Ben to develop more understanding of his father’s situation and to teach others about details surrounding deportation.

Within official classroom spaces at Grant Elementary, there was also one teacher who established trusting relationships and created a safe learning context that supported select students to share their politicized funds of knowledge in small group settings. Ms. Costanzo was a third- and fourth-grade teacher who regularly pushed beyond her own comfort zone to learn about students’ lives and create learning contexts that built on their personal experiences. Several of her students did talk and write about immigration practices, such as Princess and Joselyn, whose fathers had been deported. Although Ben was not in Ms. Costanzo’s class, she learned of his situation and went out of her way to check in with him regularly. She created outlets for students to deal with the challenges of parental deportations, such as creating small support groups where students could discuss separation from a parent, accessing counseling services for children who were navigating major life changes, and encouraging students to keep a journal about and write letters to family members separated across political borders.

Yet, Ms. Costanzo also struggled with the challenges of creating the safe spaces for undocumented students: “What’s really hard is that I don’t have

just these students . . . I don't want those kids to feel like outcasts, or God only knows, but the other kid goes home and tells someone.” (interview, January 16, 2013). In spite of this challenge, through the personal relationships she developed with her students, she was able to find ways to support them and engage with them around issues related to undocumented immigration. For example, Ben's friend Joselyn openly discussed her father's deportation with Ms. Costanzo. Through these conversations, Ms. Costanzo learned about how, on the weekends, Joselyn and her mother walked door-to-door talking to their neighbors about “*abusos policiales*” (police abuse) toward immigrants. When Joselyn's father returned to Marshall, Ms. Costanzo celebrated with Joselyn, watching an iPod video of his homecoming reunion (field notes, December 12, 2012).

We imagine that from a politicized funds-of-knowledge approach, Ms. Costanzo could further leverage Joselyn's knowledges for learning. For example, she could draw on Joselyn's canvassing skills when she publicized the fourth-grade school newspaper, proactively tie immigrant rights to other civil rights issues that regularly emerged in their social studies curriculum, and create opportunities for coalition building among her diverse student body regarding the modern-day civil rights issues that were part of their daily lives. Although Ms. Costanzo was not Latina, from a recent immigrant background, or a Spanish speaker, her willingness to address topics that were often positioned as taboo at school and to build deep relationships of trust with her students illustrate the possibilities for fostering a context of learning in which immigrant students could draw on their politicized funds of knowledge for school-based learning.

### *Ben's Out-of-School Learning*

In this final section we share an alternative educational space, an afterschool group run by Holly at the public library, where Ben created opportunities to deploy his politicized funds of knowledge with his peers. Holly started the group to provide a space for our study's focal students to explore issues of interest and concern, since the heavily scripted and testing-focused curricula allowed little time for them to do so at school. Students helped plan each session, which typically consisted of sharing personal news, eating a snack and hanging out, exploring student-chosen topics through group discussion and drama, and developing stories through the use of student photos and video clips. This group comprised ten of Ben's fourth-grade classmates who came from documented and undocumented Mexican immigrant families and non-immigrant African American families.

In the fall of 2012, approximately a month before the presidential election, when media outlets were saturated with debates regarding the candidates' intended immigration policy, Ben chose to engage in the national debate through discussion of his family's experience. In recent weeks, a series of news articles on his father's wrongful arrest and potential deportation had been

published in both Spanish and English, and he proudly brought two copies of the article from the Spanish-language paper to share with his peers. Before the session began, he sat with his friend Gregorio during snack time and discussed the pending elections, mentioning rumors that if Mitt Romney were elected, he would send people back to their hometowns. Ben discussed how members of his family and their friends were planning to get fake identification cards to vote to ensure that Romney was not elected. Although it is unlikely that his family members actually did this, it is interesting to note how their intended use of false identification was to gain access to a civil right such as voting.

Students then came together, as they did each week, to share personal news or stories—what the students had come to refer to as “telling my story.” Based on Ben’s request for Holly to share one of “her stories,” she began talking about her childhood separation from her father when her parents divorced and how hard it was not to see him for much of her adolescence. With encouragement from Holly, Ben then shared the newspaper article about his family, and when he became somewhat nervous, he asked Holly to assist in his explanation of what had happened to his father. In the subsequent discussion, Ben warned that if Romney were elected, officials would come knocking on the doors of all of the houses of Marshall to send families back if they were not “born here.” Unlike other sessions in which students were distracted by side conversations or fought for the floor, every student sat quiet and still, intently listening to Ben’s story. Once the telling was complete, a lively dialogue ensued. For example, Gregorio, who was born in Marshall to undocumented Mexican immigrant parents, asked:

*Gregorio:* If you were born here would you get sent back?

*Ben:* No, you’re okay.

*Gregorio:* If Romney gets elected, are they gonna come knocking on all of the doors to all of the houses?

*Ben:* Yeah, they take you away if you not born here. They are gonna go on every street in Marshall looking for people.

Chantel, an African American student, talked about how women in her church were helping folks get their photo identification and distributing booklets on voters’ rights. In this way, she connected discussions of disenfranchisement for undocumented immigrants with proposed voter identification laws that would likely disproportionately affect people of color in Pennsylvania. Ben continued in this coalition building by reminding the group that if Romney were elected, all of the people who were “not born here” would have to leave. When Chantel admitted that she was born across the state border in Maryland (not “here” in Marshall), he warned that Romney would send her back too (field notes, September 28, 2012).

The following week, students continued to deploy and develop their politicized funds of knowledge during their library meetings. As a co-constructed

learning space in which the students helped determine the curriculum based on their experiences and interests, students brainstormed topics for thematic skits. Topics included bullying, a new baby, and the fairy tale Rapunzel. Drawing on his politicized funds of knowledge, Ben suggested the topic of Mexico and how it was too dangerous to live there, as this was the legal case they were building to combat his father's deportation. Two other students, Princess (whose father had recently been deported) and Bea (who had a traumatic border-crossing experience) formed a group with Ben to talk about Mexico. In their small group, Ben and Princess told Bea about their fathers' arrests. Ben described in great detail the cops pulling up to his house, jumping out of their cars, and running over with guns pointed, including the specifics of how he fainted when he saw the gun's laser beam on his brother's face. The students decided they wanted to act this out, and Ben chose to play the role of the police. When the three performed their skit in front of the entire group, students began to ask questions about Ben's story, and Ben became increasingly excited as he told the details. The group of ten students—from immigrant and nonimmigrant backgrounds—spent the last fifteen minutes of the meeting repeatedly acting out the arrest scene (field notes, October 5, 2012). While this type of play was not atypical, as children enjoyed dramatizing scenes based on stories they made up and on issues of social concern like bullying or fights among friends, these tended to be fictional dramatizations. This was the first instance in which the group dramatized a personal account of a traumatic experience, and it served as a way for the group to collectively explore what had happened to Ben and his family. At the same time, it taught them about the realities of undocumented or mixed-status families in Marshall and the daily risks they faced, thus developing their politicized funds of knowledge.

We argue that these educational interactions, like Ben's sharing of immigration experiences during recess and the ways that Ms. Costanzo was beginning to tap into students' real-world immigration experiences, highlight the possibilities of creating spaces for politicized funds of knowledge in children's classrooms. What is striking is that the students present in this interaction were the same students who were in Ben's classes at his elementary school just a quarter of a mile away, yet these types of interactions did not unfold within their classroom spaces. The library group was a space reflective of the cultural modeling proposed by Lee (2007) in which students' real-world knowledges and experiences were the foundational components from which their learning was built. In this space Holly was able to develop personal relationships with children that allowed for vulnerability and trust, and could engage in the reciprocal sharing of lives with students (Camarrota & Romero, 2006). Perhaps most remarkable is the way that students from a range of racial and immigrant backgrounds built coalitions through their sharing of politicized knowledges. Rather than remaining silent on such topics, they engaged in questioning and critique of political topics that held great importance in their personal lives. They risked asking questions and served as experts, even when

their understandings of borders, or being “born here” were still in formation. Rather than holding their questions and concerns inside, as Ben and many other children from undocumented families often did in school, they created a space in which they could be explored.

Furthermore, unlike many equality movements in the United States in which communities of color such as African Americans and Latina/o immigrants remain separate, students like Ben and Chantel were united in their concerns and learned from one another. As Enciso (2011) has shown, storytelling among immigrant and nonimmigrant students at the middle-school level can create opportunities for engagement in coalition building. By focusing on the ways that children develop these knowledges with one another, it is clear that taboo topics can be safely shared under certain conditions. Trust was a central condition for the sharing of politicized funds of knowledge in this instance. Students had the lived experience during these library meetings that their real-world knowledges—as young people of color—could be shared and not used against them by other students. As Lee (2007) emphasizes, “Complex learning is risky business” (p. 25), and over time these students saw that these risks were possible in this space. Ben and his peers also encountered an educational space in which their experiences and perspectives were the starting point for learning, not off-task contributions relegated to the margins of the classroom. And they engaged in educational conversations in which they deeply listened to and engaged with their peers, rather than teacher-fronted learning in which contributions were provided for a teacher and her evaluations. This interaction illustrates that elementary school students can be civically engaged activists in ways that are rarely recognized in their schools and can serve as resources for one another in welcoming and developing their politicized funds of knowledge.

## Discussion

Within a context of unprecedented deportations in recent years (Preston, 2012), young children are navigating difficult realities related to family documentation, separations, and schooling. In this article we draw on a funds-of-knowledge framework for a student from an undocumented family navigating his father’s potential deportation to explore the tensions, needs, and possibilities of emphasizing the current lived realities in some students’ lives. Through the case of Ben, his parents, and his teachers, we illustrate the ways that he selectively drew on politicized funds of knowledge. Although politicized funds of knowledge fall within the original intent of funds-of-knowledge scholarship, we seek to highlight this particular subset of students’ knowledges that is rarely allowed to emerge in students’ schooling yet plays a central role in their lives and learning across other educational spaces. Students’ knowledges will vary across individual contexts, and a politicized funds-of-knowledge framework is meant to bring attention to the possibilities of incorporating the funds that stu-

dents of color—from immigrant, nonimmigrant, and a range of documentation statuses—bring to their learning that are often positioned as unwelcome.

### *Pedagogical Implications*

#### — Addressing the Politicized Nature of Teaching

We have shown the challenges that Ben’s well-meaning teachers had in navigating immigration experiences in their classrooms and their tentativeness in engaging with politicized aspects of education. As Bartolomé (2004) emphasizes, as teacher educators we need to prepare teachers to be aware of political and ideological issues in working with students across all forms of difference, including documentation status. To do so, teachers need time, space, and guidance in examining their own beliefs about the political and economic hierarchies existing in the United States, including how these relate to power and privilege. Rather than accepting the status quo of silence around issues of difference like immigration, teacher educators need to foster dialogue and exploration to prepare educators for the realities they will face in classrooms. This would require critical examination of the discourses circulating about Mexican immigrant “illegals,” which are often presupposed in the media and taken up in ways that silence talk about immigration at school. Such examination is a vital part of humanizing pedagogy, in which educators raise their students’ and their own critical consciousness to push back against the damaging xenophobic messages that distort students’ learning.

The current educational climate of high-stakes testing makes humanizing pedagogies difficult to enact (Huerta, 2011; Salazar, 2013) at schools like Grant, where teachers must follow highly scripted curricula and are pressured to ensure their students are prepared for testing. However, our findings suggest that such pedagogies are exactly what are needed in schools. Along with teachers’ trepidation about broaching the topic of immigration practices with students, we surmise that the scripted and fast-paced curriculum due to a schoolwide emphasis on standardized testing and performance provided little time or space for teachers to develop curricula from the bottom up or to discuss politicized knowledges during moments when there were potential openings. Like Paris and Alim’s (2014) call for heterogeneous, culturally sustaining pedagogies, we believe that humanizing approaches are “increasingly necessary given the explicit assimilationist and antidemocratic monolingual/ monocultural educational policies emerging across the nation” (p. 88). We call for a shift toward humanizing pedagogies in which value is placed on students’ ranges of funds of knowledge. This includes a subset of these knowledges that rarely emerge in classrooms—their politicized resources, such as their immigration experiences. For Latina/o immigrant students, this is not only important for adolescents and DREAMers, the students who are often at the forefront of the research literature and media, but also for younger students like Ben.

— Pedagogy That Centers on Caring Relationships

As Ben and his peers illustrated in their selective sharing of their immigration knowledges in class, teachers' attempts to talk with them about personal or family matters will not work without the foundation of *confianza*-based [deeply trusting] relationships. Students, such as Ben's classmate Abi, emphasized that children would more likely talk about immigration and deportation with their teachers if teachers raised "*el tema preciso*," the topic of immigration itself, and developed more trusting relationships with students (interview, March 21, 2014). Ben had this relationship with Holly and regularly approached her across contexts of learning to share and develop his politicized funds of knowledge. He engaged in dialogue with her and peers regarding many of the complexities and stresses of family documentation status that he largely kept inside during classroom instruction. Other children formed similar relationships with Ms. Costanzo, who selectively incorporated these experiences into student learning. Like the older immigrant students described by Dabach (2015), both documented and undocumented students could benefit from teachers broaching documentation status in careful, respectful ways. This could provide a platform to question prevailing stereotypes and learn about a topic that is often silenced.

— Learning Begins with Students' Knowledges

Central to this work is a belief that children of color, immigrant and nonimmigrant, deserve safe spaces for learning. This includes spaces that are physically safe from violence but also spaces where they are not punished for taking risks, can bring their real-world knowledges to their learning, and can entrust their teachers to leverage those knowledges for academic purposes (Lee, 2007; Paris & Alim, 2014; Yosso, 2006). Through her work with African American high school students, Lee (2007) proposes designing classrooms around generative "cultural data sets," such as R&B music lyrics, rap videos, and signifying dialogues (p. 58). Through Ben's experiences, we can begin to envision pointed cultural data sets that would provide fruitful opportunities for Grant Elementary students' literacy learning. For example, newspaper articles, such as the ones published about Ben's family, and creative writing, such as a border-crossing poem by his classmate, proved to be data sets that elicited honest reflections, critiques, and sharing of lives among Ben and his peers. Other possibilities include children's literature that seeks to create spaces to reflect on immigration experiences in general (e.g., Tan, 2007), border-crossing experiences and family separation (e.g., Tonatiuh, 2013), and possibilities for coalition building across communities of color (e.g., Tonatiuh, 2014). Similarly, music, such as the *narcocorridos* discussed by De la Piedra and Araujo (2012), which speak to realities students may have experienced in relation to Mexico's drug violence, offers other possibilities.

Further, beginning with students' own experiential knowledges presents the opportunity to leverage their politicized funds of knowledge. For teach-

ers to build on students' politicized knowledges entails proactively searching for openings within the curricula. Although this would not be easy, it is possible. For example, through the Read 180 curriculum, when Ben's third-grade class read aloud a nonfiction text entitled *Coming to America*, about a Mexican immigrant family who attained documentation to come to the United States, neither Ben nor his peers from immigrant backgrounds spoke up about their immigration experiences (Ms. Ryan, personal communication, January 30, 2013). The inclusion of immigrant experiences that did not resonate with students' personal realities (e.g., as many students in the class who were immigrants were members of mixed-status families in which their entire family attaining documentation was rare) closed down the conversation.

In contrast, from a politicized funds-of-knowledge approach, a teacher might try to facilitate small group discussions with an intentional student grouping that would increase the safety of sharing immigration experiences. Rather than asking students to personally relate to the narrow range of immigration experiences presented in the story, she could also ask students to describe the immigration experiences of people they know. Through the framing of “people they know,” students could create a safe distance from their personal experiences if they choose. Like the high school civics teacher in Dabach (2015), a teacher could also consider openly sharing a personal narrative of experiences working with students from undocumented families that makes the topic approachable. Alternatively, a teacher could position herself as a learner who knows little about immigration experiences and position students as experts who can teach about the topic. Discussions about the story *Coming to America* could also be extended to writing projects, such as having students craft a personal narrative of how they would navigate the life changes if they were to move to a new country. Through careful prompts and attention to how students' writing is only shared with others when the authors deem it appropriate, this could open up opportunities for students to draw on their own politicized experiences, if they so choose, while also supporting students from nonimmigrant backgrounds to develop an awareness of what these changes may feel like.

As Enciso's (2011) work on storytelling among immigrant and nonimmigrant students has shown, a key “challenge for critical educators will be addressing the deeply held fear among colleagues, parents and students that, when multiple cultural values are present in a group, one of these must supersede all others” (p. 39). At Grant Elementary school we certainly recognized these fears and vulnerabilities, but we also noted how students such as Ben and his peers found safe ways to share and learn from one another across their own differences. Our call to both teacher educators and teachers to intentionally create spaces for students' politicized funds of knowledge does not mean that teachers should force children to talk about immigration experiences; certainly, some children will not choose to divulge this personal information, no matter the classroom context or interpersonal relationship. Yet, support-

ing teachers to create learning opportunities that begin with students' real-world concerns and experiences would promote classrooms where a larger range of resources and experiences are welcome, safe, and valued for learning across axes of (in)equities, if and when children would like to address them at school.

As new immigration policies emerge, such as president's Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (Obama, 2014), which would provide relief to many undocumented families, including Ben's, issues surrounding immigration and schooling will become more visible and thus increasingly necessary to address. Preparing educators to engage with such issues through humanizing pedagogies centered on students' politicized funds of knowledge will allow them new forums in which to build on such knowledges. In these forums, students like Ben could use their politicized funds of knowledge not only to develop the kinds of critical thinking and literacy skills deemed necessary for school success, but also to collaborate around issues of social inequity that many young people face.

## Notes

1. All names are pseudonyms.
2. Programs such as Secure Communities and 287g are data-sharing programs in which local police submit a person's information to ICE when he or she is stopped or jailed for any infraction. If the individual does not have documentation of US residency, he or she can be apprehended by ICE and deported.
3. In Ben's family, his mother took on vocal roles in terms of speaking with her children, educators, and community members regarding documentation status. In other families we worked with, both parents, or fathers in particular, often took on these roles. See Gallo (in press) for a close analysis of how fathers engaged in these educational practices.

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