

The Latino Public Sphere in Minnesota: Enacting Cultural Citizenship Through Media

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Dedication

This is dedicated to Latino activists who are working hard to belong in Minnesota.

Abstract

This study follows the use of social media in political organizing around the Dreamer and driver's license campaigns from June 2012 to June 2013. The research examines a segment of the Latino public sphere in Minnesota to examine how Latinos engaged in public deliberation online. Using citizenship and public sphere theory, the research shows how Latinos in the Twin Cities formed enclave and counter publics that aimed to transform dominant national narratives about immigration. The study examines how federal and state public policy defines undocumented immigrants as second-class non-citizens, thereby shaping Latinos' participation in the virtual public sphere. The two political campaigns also demonstrate how Latinos have used social media to push back against exclusion, to fight for civil rights, and to enact cultural citizenship. I argue for the need to increase media trainings that help Latinos participate in democratic processes regardless of official documentation status.

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Introduction

In the late 2000s a group of undocumented Latinos in Minnesota formed an organization to help young Latinos access educational opportunities. The group, Navigate MN, would become one of the leading advocates for the MN Prosperity Act (the state version of the Dream Act), which allowed young undocumented immigrants to apply for financial aid and in-state tuition without a Social Security number. Leading up to the passage of the bill, Navigate MN had spent a year organizing and preparing its members to tell their stories online and at the legislature. They had been aided by the federal promulgation of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in June 2012, which granted young Latinos work permits and the promise of deferred deportation for several years. At the time of DACA's enactment, Navigate MN was using Facebook to post information and resources for young Latinos in Minnesota, or the "Dreamers." The month that DACA passed, a sequence of Facebook posts on Navigate MN's page read as follows: "Here's a little video explaining Pres. Obama's Deferred Action that will benefit so many of us—watch, learn, and be careful!" Then, "Minneapolis is the first city in the nation to endorse, support Pres. Obama's Deferred Action Policy!" Then, "Workshop! Learn about Deferred Action Policy." Then, "Get ready for the DACA workshop!" Then, "We are in dire need for chairs for tomorrow's event for undocumented students. Anyone know of where we can borrow between 50-80 chairs?" Then, "Wow! So many people here! So exciting!" And finally, a picture of a crowd of young Latinos standing behind an American flag with their fists raised in the air, with the text, "We are the present and

future of America.”¹ The Dreamers and their families had come to the DACA workshop to learn more about how DACA would affect them, their educational opportunities, and their ability to work in the United States. They knew at the time that DACA would ease Dreamers’ immediate fears of deportation. But it is likely that they did not anticipate how DACA would also embolden young Latinos to speak out on Facebook, talk to legislators at the capitol, share their stories with reporters, and produce media—all of which ultimately helped pass the Minnesota Prosperity Act in May 2013.²

Another piece of legislation that could impact Latinos in Minnesota was also up for debate in the spring of 2013. This one, which would grant Minnesota driver’s licenses to undocumented residents, was the pet cause of a coalition of Latino organizations and individuals called Mesa Latina. They created a Facebook Group, MN Agenda Latina, where individuals posted photos of organizing meetings, YouTube videos of Latinos telling stories about the fear of driving without a license, and calls to action. One sequence in the MN Agenda Latina Facebook group during the spring of 2013 started with photos of people crowded around Representative Karen Clark’s desk at the State capitol. Individuals followed up by posting photo after photo of Latinos in hearing rooms, with legislators, on the capitol steps, in the dome. Then a man posted asking for more information: “*Quisiera saber donde y cuando van a ser las siguientes reuniones y donde me puedo apuntar para asistir.*” (“I want to know where and when the next meetings will be and where I can sign up to help”). The man would eventually do so, along with hundreds of Latinos from across many organizations. Their efforts, however, were to be

¹ “Navigate MN’s *Facebook* page,” accessed March 20, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/NAVIGATE.MN>.

² Meza, Juventino, “What the passage of the Minnesota Prosperity (Dream) Act means,” *MinnPost*, July 03, 2013, <https://www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2013/07/what-passage-minnesota-prosperity-dream-act-means>.

ignored by mainstream media, and the bill failed to pass that year and the next. It is currently up for debate again in the Minnesota Legislature, this time with more mainstream media attention in part because it has garnered some Republican support. However, as in the previous legislative session, it is unlikely that the legislature will prioritize the bill to vote on it before the session ends.³ Only time will tell whether the campaign succeeds in getting enough political support to crown with success an effort years in the making.

This study follows the use of social media in political organizing around the Dreamer and driver's license campaigns from June 2012 to June 2013. The research examines a segment of the Latino public sphere in Minnesota and asks: How did Latinos in Minneapolis engage in public deliberation online? How did they build consensus on strategies for immigration reform? How did they use media to gain political power? How did they relate to groups within and outside the Latino public sphere?

The goals of the research were twofold. First, I hoped that an analysis of Latina/os' social media and civic practices could shed light on how best to strengthen access to and participation in democratic processes and media systems. Second, a thorough examination of Latinos' media activism should inform my own professional work bridging digital divides in the Twin Cities. To answer these questions I use public sphere theory to show how Latinos in the Twin Cities formed enclave and counter publics, which aimed to transform dominant national narratives about immigration. I explore how social media introduced a new model of organizing Latinos online around

³ Mila Koumpilova, "Drive for Immigrant Licenses Picks up in Minnesota," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 12, 2015, <http://www.startribune.com/push-for-immigrant-driver-s-licenses-picks-up-in-minnesota/296006481/>.

immigration reform, a model that seems to be promoting civic engagement more successfully than the traditional Latino press. Finally I show how public policy defining undocumented immigrants as second-class non-citizens shaped the nature of online and offline civic participation among Latinos, especially with regards to DACA. These federal and state policies not only prevent undocumented Latinos from enjoying the same rights and privileges as “full citizens”; they also exclude them from participating in the dominant public sphere. The two policy campaigns studied here show how Latinos have used media to push back against this exclusion and to enact cultural citizenship. I argue for the need to increase media trainings that encourage Latinos’ participation in democratic processes regardless of documentation status.

Chapter 1 provides a literature review exploring democratic processes, cultural citizenship, and public sphere theory. I additionally review research on digital inclusion and media literacy. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the methodological approaches that have informed my research, including feminist ethnography, communications activism, and participatory journalism. Chapter 3 examines Facebook use among the participants in media literacy workshops that I conducted with groups of Latinas in South Minneapolis and explores the implications of their Facebook use for civic participation. Chapter 4 compares and contrasts the driver’s license bill and the Dreamers’ campaign for the MN Prosperity Act through the lens of marginal public spheres. Chapter 5 includes my own conclusions on Latino media use as a practice of cultural citizenship, my reflections on my role as a researcher, and policy suggestions.

Chapter 1: Cultural Citizenship, the Public Sphere, and Digital Inclusion

Latinos across the country are pushing back against policies that exclude them from membership to American society. Though undocumented Latinos are excluded from political processes such as voting, they are slowly shifting politics through their activism. As one writer noted, “[Latinos’] role as political actors for the most part remains subterranean—like their lives, hidden from public view—but they are emerging from the shadows as new subjects with their own claims for rights.”¹

At times these struggles are taking place in physical and online spaces set apart from the dominant publics. At others times they occur across many communities and with allies, including from dominant groups. In Minnesota, Latino publics vary in their perceptions of, and alliances with, dominant publics. However, one brief snippet from a Facebook post on the Navigate MN exemplifies how many Latinos view the situation: “This week's quote does not come from a great white Minnesotan; it comes from one of our own, an undocumented student, a Mexica, a woman, a mother, a sister, a daughter, a fighter, someone inspirational.” A different writer testifies that, “In NAVIGATE, I learned to embrace my migration story and speak up. Through leadership development,

¹ William Flores, "New Citizens, New Rights: Undocumented Immigrants and Latino Cultural Citizenship," *Latin American Perspectives* 30, no. 2 (2003): 97.

my hope came back, and so did the dreams. That's how important NAVIGATE is for many of us; it is safe space; it is a motivational space."²

This is only one excerpt from online media produced by Latinos in 2012–13; similar scripts could be found on Latino radio stations, other Facebook pages, and in the traditional Latino press. Taken collectively these media can be viewed as a site of struggle between civil society and the nation. As Latinos use media in their struggle to claim rights, they are broadening their own sense of belonging and of agency in American democracy. Through media they are shaping and shifting dominant narratives about immigration and immigration reform.

This chapter provides a framework for viewing the Minnesota Latino public sphere as a space where Latinos enact citizenship regardless of their legal citizenship status. It begins with a discussion of how individuals and groups enact cultural citizenship even when dominant exclusionary tactics seek to prevent them from doing so. An examination of public sphere theory then follows, with particular attention how marginal publics engage in public debate and deliberation. I conclude with a discussion of digital inclusion and media literacy practices that could lead to a stronger virtual public sphere, particularly in traditionally marginalized communities.

Towards a cultural citizenship

The current debate over how and whether to grant a minority of the country “full citizenship” is not the first such debate, and if American history tells us anything, it will not be the last. Indeed, the United States as a modern democracy has always given some

² Navigate MN’s *Facebook* page, accessed February 16, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/NAVIGATE.MN>.

of its residents full access to political decision-making, starting with white property-holding European immigrant men, while excluding others, among them the American Indians who preceded them.³ American democracy has a track record of changing what defines a citizen as popular notions of labor, immigration, race, gender, and sexuality evolve. Rogers Smith asserts that America's civic identity has not been entirely based on liberal ideals of democracy, as Huntington argued,⁴ but also on notions of white male supremacy that gained prominence again in the late 1990s.⁵ At times, successful social movements have gathered enough steam to effect changes in public participation. Indeed it was with much struggle that abolitionists, suffragettes, and civil rights activists all managed to change legal structures and public perceptions about what it means to have equal and full participation in society.⁶ At other times conservative forces have successfully complicated or restricted full participation in public life. In the twentieth century alone Jim Crow laws restricted civic participation for African Americans, mass incarceration policies denied it to large numbers (especially people of color),⁷ and anti-immigration laws implemented after World War I and in the early 1970s and late 1990s profoundly impacted immigrants' access to full citizenship.⁸ Through history, laws codified a variety of changing requirements for full citizenship, including place of birth, ethnicity, time spent in the country, special skills (like English language competency,

³ Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1981).

⁵ Rogers M. Smith, "The American Creed and American Identity: The Limits of Liberal Citizenship in the United States," *The Western Political Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1997): 225.

⁶ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁷ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2011).

⁸ Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

literacy, political knowledge, professional or educational stature), and swearing allegiance to the United States and renouncing allegiance to one's native country.⁹

At any given time, American public awareness of definitions of citizenship has reflected the driving normative concerns of the period. At times we care very much about who should and should not be considered a citizen, and at others this falls from public debate. Derek Heater has suggested that a series of historical and geographical trends over the last thirty years is crucial to understanding the current, and complex, nature of how nations determine citizenship.¹⁰ The first was the rise of conservative doctrines in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States and the UK, which called into question the social welfare state. At the same time unprecedented global migration led to heightened emphasis on ethnic difference within nation states. This emphasis on cultural, ethnic, and political subcultures has fractured weak nation states and challenged strong ones to work hard at social and political cohesion. At the same time the transition from communist regimes in parts of the world, and autocratic regimes or military dictatorships in others, to democracy has challenged the way countries define public life and their citizens' right to legal and political participation in it. And while the true promise of democracy lies in a nation giving its citizens equal access to public life, millions of residents of democratic states are still excluded from full social, economic, and political participation. The United States, then, is not alone in its often-murky handling of citizenship, or in its ramped-up public debate about access to that citizenship.

⁹ Cohen, Elizabeth F. 2013. "Citizenship and the Law of Time in the United States," *Duke Journal of Constitutional Law & Public Policy* 8, nos. 2–3 (1999): 83.

¹⁰ Derek B. Heater, *What Is Citizenship?* (Malden, Mass: Polity Press, 1999), 9–11.

Theories of rights, civil society, and the state: Liberal and Marxist views

As notions of democratic nation states have evolved so too has citizenship theory. Citizenship scholarship has extended beyond legal and political science realms into, among many others, communications. Any discussion of citizenship must begin with a brief discussion of rights. In Western society, the idea of enshrining rights in law rather than in religion grew out of the Enlightenment.¹¹ As we shall see in a later discussion of the public sphere, Enlightenment thinkers proposed that individuals possess rights that could be granted to them by the nation state.¹² In this context citizens of a nation had as many rights as granted to them in the law, which were codified in part to protect individuals against the sorts of arbitrary abuse that characterized monarchical regimes. As democracy progressed, so did ideas of basic rights—civil, political, social, and, in more recent decades, human rights. Then there is the matter of civil society, defined as private and public spaces separate from the nation state.

It is here—in the relationship between civil society and the nation state—that we see two major theoretical traditions of citizenship (among others): the liberal and the Marxist. In putting forth her own call for a new global theory of citizenship, Agnes Ku has provided a useful explication of these two traditions. According to Ku, the liberal

¹¹ Habermas, Jürgen, “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society” (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 11–12. Habermas explained how the nation state and civil society replaced the church as the space for discussion about individuals’ rights. He wrote “The status of the Church changed as a result of the Reformation; the anchoring in divine authority that it represented—that is, religion—became a private matter... The Church itself continued to exist as one corporate body among others under public law.”

¹² Robert Massie, “Catherine and the Enlightenment,” in *Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman*. 2012, New York: Random House. 330–342. Massie described the tension “Enlightened” European monarchs faced when implementing Enlightenment practices that enshrined rights in law rather than through religion. Catherine, for instance, tried to implement the *Nakaz*, or modern law code, which she had hoped might challenge the legitimacy of serfdom across Russian. However, in order to hold on to noble support she ultimately failed in this effort and fell back on the Russian Orthodox Church, which did not threaten current notions of serfs’ rights, thus delaying the codification of men’s rights in law. However, her correspondences with Voltaire and other philosophers directly impacted her notions of the Church and her subjects’ rights in an imperial state.

tradition sees civil society as outside the state—rather than as an arm of the state. Two main strains within the liberal tradition view civil society as in direct opposition to the state, or as buffering or strengthening the state. In the oppositional model, people normatively practice citizenship outside legal parameters or institutions of the state, and the state is viewed as coercive. In essence this view dismisses the state and instead proposes that we strengthen civil society in order to enhance citizenship practices and rights. This thesis has its merits; in fact, the civil rights struggle and the current immigration debate both illustrate the frequently oppositional relationship between the state and civil society. However, Ku is correct in her criticism that this oppositional view ignores positive processes in which civil society has worked *with* the state to enact stronger rights or expand the meaning of citizenship.¹³ Later, liberal scholars softened the oppositional model and put forth a more republican notion that viewed civil society and the state in legal and political terms. Here the relationship between state and civil society is more relational than oppositional, as seen in legal and political realms. In this light, legal codes gradually granted political rights to individuals who had fought for these rights through civil society. Republican liberalism has stressed the importance of building a strong civil society, which can act as a buffer from the state, as Toqueville suggested, or strengthen democratic processes through the institutionalization of participatory practices, as Putnam asserts¹⁴). Ku argues that the relational perspective “tends to take a static view as a set of institutional rights safeguarded by the state.”¹⁵

¹³ Agnes S. Ku, “Beyond the Paradoxical Conception of ‘Civil Society without Citizenship,’” *International Sociology* 17, no. 4 (2002): 536.

¹⁴ Putnam, Robert D, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000). Putnam quantifies civic participation through membership in institutions such as Rotary and Lion Clubs, and is therefore sometimes criticized, including by Ku, for ignoring other forms of civic participation, especially in less white, male-dominated institutions.

¹⁵ Ku, “Beyond Citizenship,” 533.

For Marxists, the state and civil society are not oppositionally related; rather, they are so close as to be alarming. For instance, Gramsci built on Hegel to develop a hegemonic view of the state's enactment and enforcement of citizenship. His class-based analyses argued that ideology and economic structures of modern capitalist societies led citizenship to be structured so as to favor the dominant class and marginalize all other classes.¹⁶ Some Gramscian scholars subsequently put forth a model of citizenship in which citizenship laws (and culture within civil society) excluded political, social, and civil rights supposedly accorded to all members of a democracy.¹⁷ Even further, radical Marxists like Louis Althusser argued that the welfare state, education, and health institutions were merely ideological arms of the state. Similarly, communication scholars often viewed media's role as a cultural hegemonic tool to subordinate lower classes or second-class citizens.¹⁸ More recently, neo-Gramscian scholars have reframed the language of citizenship. For instance, Ramantahan, a linguist, offers a definition of citizenship that simply means "being able to participate fully." She further suggests we might focus instead on "(dis)citizenship," or the concept that broader policies, including those regarding borders, language, and pedagogy in schools, exclude some people from being able to participate fully in society.¹⁹ Gramscian models of citizenship have been rightly criticized for overstating the role of ideology in hegemony and for overemphasizing class superstructures over other inequalities. Yet, aspects of the Marxist tradition are still germane because they locate civil society as a place of struggle where

¹⁶ Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2015), 153–54.

¹⁷ Michael Mann, *Ruling Class Strategies and Citizenship* (Durham: British Sociological Association, 1987).

¹⁸ Abercrombie et. al., *The Dominant Ideology Thesis*, 153.

¹⁹ Vaidehi Ramanathan, *Language Policies and (Dis)citizenship: Rights, Access, Pedagogies* (Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2013).

individuals and groups fight for rights against a hegemonic state more interested in exclusion than inclusion.

Before moving on to a discussion of cultural citizenship, it bears mentioning that no thesis on the current American immigration debate can go without acknowledging, however briefly, T.H. Marshall and the expansion of social rights in the twentieth century. As is well known in citizenship studies, Marshall's essays on social citizenship have been particularly influential in the latter half of the twentieth century in Britain and the United States.²⁰ Looking back at seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain, Marshall showed how the nation had evolved in the rights it granted its citizens, due largely to the efforts of those struggling for civil rights and political rights. Marshall proposed that Britain had evolved since the eighteenth century to create a nation state that guaranteed, first, legal/civil rights such as freedom of speech, and then political rights such as voting, to its citizens.²¹ In the post WWII era, Marshall suggested that Britain continue its evolution to further guarantee the "social rights of its citizens." He argued that granting subjects legal and political rights did not address issues of social inequality, and that only by extending the nation's role as a grantor of social rights (education, health care) could Britain bring true equality, most particularly to its poor citizens. His writing "drew attention to the contradiction between the formations of capitalism and class, and the principle of equality enshrined within the granting of basic rights."²² Later feminist critiques of Marshall's theories of citizenship have pointed out that the United States and Britain had never evolved in their legal and political inclusion of women and had yet to

²⁰ T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1950).

²¹ Brian S. Turner, "Outline of a Theory of Citizenship," *Sociology* 24, no. 2 (May 1990): 189–217.

²² Nick Stevenson, "Cultural Citizenship in the 'Cultural' Society: A Cosmopolitan Approach," *Citizenship Studies* 7, no. 3 (2003): 332.

resolve this. Fraser has critiqued Marshall's notion of social citizenship for being overly Pollyannaish and dismissing the reality of women. Marshallian theories of the evolution of rights, Fraser and other feminists argue, completely ignore how women have been marginalized and were excluded from civil and political citizenship in the United States, and how they continue to be marginalized.²³ On the other hand, as Heater notes, conservative scholars pushed back against the notion that the state necessarily owed its citizens social rights. Instead they suggested that creating a "welfare state," in which the state provided its lower-class citizens economic and social opportunities, would only encourage laziness among the poor.²⁴

Citizenship and cultural studies

While flawed, Marshall's call for the nation-state to enact social rights and access for even its most disadvantaged citizens has greatly influenced notions of citizenship. Situated in this context, critical cultural studies coming out of Britain in the 1980s and early 1990s also began to reframe citizenship in a revised neoGramscian light. The idea that culture could extend to social citizenship had for decades been used to criticize Marshall's original thoughts on citizenship and the evolution of rights,²⁵ but Hall and Held fleshed this out through their writing on cultural citizenship. They argued that membership in a society does not happen only through legal means, but also through the formation of a cultural collective and personal identity; that is, individuals and groups feel they belong to a society because they participate in its culture. Conversely, people

²³ Nancy Fraser and L. Gordon, "Contract Versus Charity: Why Is There No Social Citizenship in the United States?" *Socialist Review* (San Francisco) 22, no. 3 (1993): 45.

²⁴ Martha T. McCluskey, "Efficiency and Social Citizenship: Challenging the Neoliberal Attack on the Welfare State," *Indiana Law Journal* 78, no. 2 (2003): 783.

²⁵ Turner, "Theory of Citizenship."

can, and do, decide others do or do not belong to a society. While this happens on a daily basis, dominant media narratives perpetuate ideas of who belongs and who does not, while often-subversive media narratives challenge notions of cultural belonging.

In the context of the American immigration debate, dominant media narratives have evolved over the last decade to provide very different ideas about “the good citizen” and which undocumented immigrants are worthy of citizenship. For example, two newspaper stories—one about a sixty-year-old Mexican migrant, and the other about a fifteen-year-old—might present very different narratives about which one merits citizenship. According to Stevenson, “all citizens make judgments between those who are deserving of exclusion from the public right to speak and who is worth hearing.”²⁶ Hall’s famous theory of encoding and decoding shows how messages like these—one person merits citizenship and another does not—are coded into dominant media narratives of citizenship, belonging, inclusion, and exclusion. Cultural studies scholars have spent considerably energy deconstructing messages of cultural hegemony to show how they often perpetuate the status quo. Hall and Held thus argued that citizenship revolves around maintaining the status quo of inclusion and exclusion.²⁷

Kathleen Coll extends this further to explore the connection between citizenship and “personhood,” suggesting that the nation state’s emphasis on rights is misplaced because it takes attention away from exclusionary tactics and systemic practices. While we focus on what kinds of rights citizens should have full access to—political, civic, social—we continue to think in legal terms. Coll shows how the undocumented Latinas in her study legally were excluded daily from citizenship, but managed effectively to enact

²⁶ Stevenson, “Cultural Citizenship,” 333.

²⁷ Klaus B. Jensen and W. Russell Neuman, *Evolving Paradigms of Communication Research* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Annenberg Center for Communication, 2013).

citizenship practices through media discourse, citizenship classes, activism, and even motherhood. Coll argues that, as Hall and Held have maintained, undocumented Latinas have found ways to belong in American democracy without legally belonging.²⁸ Another example comes from McKinnon,²⁹ who points to the effect of American immigration laws on excluding immigrant populations in civic life. The undocumented immigrants in his study also found subversive ways of participating in politics despite their supposed exclusion for the democratic process.³⁰ In order truly to understand citizenship and what individuals see as their rights, Coll urges a shift away from a language of citizenship to a language of personhood. She asks, how much of a person is a person without rights to civic and social participation?

To instill that sense of personhood, Stevenson argues we must institutionalize acts of democracy among residents of a nation, regardless of legal access to citizenship. Predictably, issues of cultural citizenship have led educational policy makers to examine how to promulgate inclusiveness. Building on Hall and Held, Stevenson argues for a cultural approach to “cosmopolitan citizenship,” steeped in multicultural inclusion. He argues we must work toward a communicative civil society in which we institutionalize the everyday practice of democratic communication,³¹ and points out that in the past, citizenship education has focused on what it means to be a “good citizen.” Instead, he proposes a focus on cultural citizenship processes: “Cultural citizenship is above all is the attempt to foster dialogue, complexity and communication in place of silence and

²⁸ Kathleen M. Coll, *Remaking Citizenship: Latina Immigrants and New American Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

²⁹ Sara McKinnon, “(In)Hospitable Publics,” in *Public Modalities: Rhetoric, Culture, Media, and the Shape of Public Life*, ed. Daniel C. Brouwer and Robert Aspen (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 131–53.

³⁰ McKinnon, “(In)Hospitable Publics,” 146.

³¹ Stevenson, “Cultural Citizenship,” 335.

homogeneity.”³² Educational sociologists,³³ concerned to implement such policies, have elaborated on the difficult challenge of how best to institutionalize citizenship education to build a more inclusive national identity and social cohesion, while also promoting a multicultural approach and combating racism and other *isms*.³⁴ Later we shall see what media literacy practitioners and theoreticians add to the thorny discussion of how best to institutionalize citizenship practices in media spaces.

Robert Asen, on the other hand, suggests that we instead examine democratic acts that occur in de-institutionalized, even unconventional, arenas. For Asen, “Rather than asking what counts as citizenship, we should ask: how do people enact citizenship? Reorienting our framework from a question of what to a question of how usefully redirects our attention from acts to action. Inquiring into the how of citizenship recognizes citizenship as a process.”³⁵ Asen reflects on John Dewey’s essay, “Creative Democracy— the Task Before Us,” in which Dewey “held that ‘democracy is a personal way of individual life ... it signifies the possession and continual use of certain attitudes, forming personal character and determining desire and purpose in all the relations of life.’³⁶ The radical quality of this perspective on democracy lies in its non-institutional, anti-essential orientation: Democracy is not confined to a set of institutions or specific acts, but appears as a guiding spirit that informs human interaction. Democracy asks not

³² Stevenson, "Cultural Citizenship," 346.

³³ Jack Demaine, editor, *Citizenship and Political Education Today* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

³⁴ Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey, “Citizenship Education and Cultural Diversity in France and England,” in *Citizenship and Political Education Today*, ed, Jack Demaine (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 10.

³⁵ Robert Asen, "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 2 (2004): 189–211.

³⁶ John Dewey, *Creative Democracy the Task Before Us* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons 1940), 26.

for people's unlimited energy and knowledge, but for their creative participation."³⁷ This notion of creative participation in democracy turns our attention towards the public sphere and the way that individuals, regardless of official citizenship status, might participate in civil society to affect policy.

Habermas and the public sphere

Though one could approach these questions from various angles, Habermas's notion of the public sphere is a useful lens through which to view Latinos' use of media. Discussion of the public sphere has been shaped by Habermas who, in *Transformations of the Public Sphere*,³⁸ contends that democratic societies need to have a public space for debate in order to build consensus. Habermas builds on Kantian ideas about rational thought in deliberation and governance to explain the trajectory and transformation of the public sphere, from its feudal inception through the Enlightenment and into modern era.³⁹ He concludes that capitalism, commercialism, and nationalism led to a transformation of the public sphere in which the bourgeois elite debated and deliberated on important ideas. Using the European bourgeoisie, especially since the age of the Enlightenment, he shows how public opinion formed in bourgeois spaces like courts, salons, and even cafes. Importantly, Habermas's model of opinion formation posits that the public gathers in public spaces to deliberate on social problems and potential solutions, and through this discussion forms public opinion to influence political decisions.

³⁷ Robert Asen, "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship," 196.

³⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

³⁹ Craig J. Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992).

Later critiques of the public sphere criticized Habermas as myopic and idealistic. This camp argues that public sphere theory ignores spaces for debate among members of the non-elite, and therefore overemphasizes the exclusivity of the public sphere.⁴⁰ Critics assert that Habermas ignored the simultaneous emergence of public debate in plebian circles, thereby overemphasizing and idealizing the importance of the bourgeoisie; that his rationalist formation model does not allow for the conception of “pluralistic” public spheres, where there is urgent need for compromise among groups with opposing interests; and that it overemphasizes communication concentrated on consensus.⁴¹ Feminist scholars argue that women had little place in Habermas’s conception of the public sphere, but since *Transformations* was published many feminist critiques have showed how women participate in the public sphere. In particular, Fraser called for conceptualizing the public sphere not simply as one monolithic, literary, patrician space where the elite debate and decide matters of the state. Rather, these critics⁴² contend that multiple publics—or groups of people coalescing around certain issue areas or identities—form a messier picture of public life than Habermas painted.⁴³ Groups that did not participate in civil society (through civic associations, networks, membership organizations) or in the salons and coffee houses of a masculine elite formed their own groups, or “counter publics.” Warner has shown how these counter publics⁴⁴ are key factors in social movements of mass society within modern democratic societies.

⁴⁰ Nancy Fraser, *Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy* (Milwaukee: Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Center for Twentieth Century Studies, 1990).

⁴¹ Nicholas Garnhan, “The Media and the Public Sphere,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig J. Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 360.

⁴² Mary P. Ryan, “Gender and Public Access: Women’s Politics in Nineteenth-Century America,” in Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 259–88.

⁴³ Fraser, *Rethinking the Public Sphere*.

⁴⁴ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).

Through her discussion of the African American public sphere Squires proposes an alternate vocabulary for describing multiple public spheres. Using the example of a heterogeneous African American public spheres, she warns against the tendency to define marginal publics based solely on group identity. Instead, Squires builds on Fraser's and others' notions of subaltern public spheres—or what Squires refers to as marginal publics—to suggest three types of marginal publics: *enclave*, *counterpublic*, and *satellite*. Both enclaves and counterpublics are worth examining in the Latino context in Minnesota. (Satellite publics, such as the Nation of Islam, are closed, separate spaces intentionally formed away from dominant spheres with no intention of integration into dominant spheres, and therefore less relevant to this study). Squires suggests that enclave publics are organized for internal audiences and produce public discourse in safe spaces. Enclave publics, such as African Americans in the Jim Crow South, do not often intersect with dominant publics, and instead provide a safe space for marginal groups to debate and deliberate. Enclave publics are “[h]idden and used or produced solely by group members; have few material, political, legal or media resources; their goals are to preserve culture, foster resistance, and create strategies for the future; they may be sanctioned by the state or dominant publics through violence and disrespect.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, enclaved publics may produce narratives, or “transcripts” for internal dialogue, but stick to more scripted “public transcripts” when they interact with dominant public spheres. Secondly, Squires uses the Civil Rights movement from 1955 to 1970 to illustrate characteristics of counterpublics, which engage in debate for internal audiences, but also push into the dominant public sphere to test ideas or try to shift dominant

⁴⁵ Catherine R. Squires, "Rethinking the Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres," *Communication Theory* 12, no. 4 (2002): 458.

ideologies. She maintains that counterpublics “[u]se protest rhetoric, persuasion, and interpublic interaction with the state; occupation and reclamation of dominant and state-controlled public spaces, and strategically use enclave spaces.” These counterpublics have increased resources, with “more distribution of materials and media resources, some gains in legal and political resources; and have high levels of organization among public.” Their goals are to “foster resistance; test arguments and strategies in wider publics; create alliances; persuade outsiders to change views, perform public resistance to oppressive laws and social codes, and gain allies.” They also “reveal more hidden transcripts or narratives used within enclave publics, refuse to stick strictly to more ‘public’ transcripts, and demand self-determination and respect.” Finally they may “face state sanctioned violence, disrespect, dismissal from dominant spaces, or the co-optation of counterpublicity.”⁴⁶

What can Latinos’ media advocacy efforts, legislative initiatives, and use of social media in 2012 and 2013 tell us about public sphere theory? What it might teach might us about how to build a stronger American democracy with room for change shaped by individuals? In looking at counterpublics, Calhoun suggests that we look not at thematic content only, but at how publics are internally organized, how they maintain cohesion in relation to the larger public sphere, and how they express a need to counteract dominant ideologies.⁴⁷ Calhoun’s framework for examining counterpublics and Squires’s characterization of marginal publics have guided my own examination of Latino’s use of social media and online civic participation.

⁴⁶ Squires, "Rethinking the Black Public Sphere," 460.

⁴⁷ Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 38.

Finally, recent critiques of public sphere theory go further. They call for a replacement of the *sphere* metaphor, and call on scholars instead to think about which public *modalities* foster public debate, consensus, and formations of self and society. Most notably, Brouwer and Asen point out that public sphere theory relies on metaphors such as networks, public versus publics, publicity, and the sphere itself.⁴⁸ Arguing for a rhetorical reframing, they question the public sphere metaphor not only because Habermas's original article was mistranslated, but also because the metaphor is predicated on inclusion and exclusion. That is, it conceptualizes one space that people may step into or out of.

Because these metaphors elicit certain ideas of the public life, they may not reflect reality. If there is one public sphere, then scholars, policy makers, practitioners, and politicians begin to talk about it as such and can even decide who is in this sphere and who is not. A *sphere* ties us to time, locale, even nationhood, and does not reflect the multifaceted ways in which people successfully participate in public life. In contrast, referring to public modalities allows us to examine a wide variety of publics (various groups of people rather than one monolithic public) and their attempts to engage in civic discourse and action.

I do not reject the metaphor of the public sphere or publics—these terms have their glitches but they are useful building blocks to define and refine the way we think of consensus building, public debate and deliberation, and how people try to shape and belong to a particular society. However, public modality scholarship has provided valuable insight into the ways structural forces, including governments, define how

⁴⁸ *Public Modalities: Rhetoric, Culture, Media, and the Shape of Public Life*, ed. Daniel Brouwer and Robert Asen (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 3.

people participate in public life. There is, it seems to me, much validity in the notion that multiple forces can decide who does and does not participate in public deliberation—and that, despite this, people learn to participate in civic discourse in ways we have difficulty quantifying or even recognizing. For instance, Putnam theorized that television has given rise to a decrease in social capital, including social trust, interpersonal networks, and civic engagement.⁴⁹ Though often criticized for his conclusion that a decline in civic life resulted from television, Putnam still provides a valuable study of civic engagement over the last several decades. However, a more rhetorical approach to civic participation questions Putnam's methods for quantifying civic participation and publics' membership in groups like the Rotary Club and the Shriners, church groups related to civic action, and political parties. This has the potential to ignore marginalized communities' civic participation—which could exist in less institutionalized groups. Moreover, a rhetorical view of the public sphere would not only ask *how much* people participate in civic institutions, but *how* and *to what end*. Asen suggests that a “discourse theory conceives of citizenship as a mode of public engagement. In drawing attention to citizenship as a process, a discourse theory recognizes the fluid, multimodal, and quotidian enactments of citizenship in a multiple public sphere.”⁵⁰

The virtual public sphere

A couple of decades ago researchers and policy makers began to question how public deliberation fundamentally works online. Would the Internet be a panacea? Would it ensure that people otherwise excluded from a bourgeois sphere of political debate could

⁴⁹ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

⁵⁰ Asen, "Discourse Theory of Citizenship," 191.

suddenly find themselves part of a broad national discussion? Would online public deliberation somehow subvert commercial interests and allow social movements to challenge hegemonic forces? Would chat rooms, comments on online news sources, and interactive political websites—among other digital political tools—revolutionize civic participation?

The reviews, as one might imagine, are mixed. Broadly speaking, cyber optimists have argued for the potential of the Internet to level the playing field of civic and political engagement. For instance the popular Thomas Friedman touts the “World Is Flat” perspective in which the Internet levels the playing field and equalizes the potential for democratic participation (as well as economic strength). Social media enthusiast Clay Shirkey asserts that social media have become tools for democratic social change, and that indeed, “Social media have become coordinating tools for nearly all the world’s political movements” and are even seen by the United States government as tools to bolster civil society abroad.⁵¹ According to Shirkey, the power of social media lies in their ability to bring together loosely connected publics, especially in the context of political social movements. Case study after case study offer examples, including in the Zapatistas’ savvy use of myth in media,⁵² the successful online organizing of the anti-sweatshop movement,⁵³ and the role of social media in the Arab Spring.⁵⁴

So-called “cyber pessimists,” on the other hand, have argued that digital

⁵¹ Clay Shirkey, “The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change,” January/February 2011 issue, *Foreign Affairs Magazine*, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2010-12-20/political-power-social-media>.

⁵² Adrienne Russell, “Myth and the Zapatista Movement: Exploring a Network Identity,” *New Media and Society* 7, no. 4 (2005): 559–77.

⁵³ Michelle Micheletti and Dietlind Stolle, “Fashioning Social Justice through Political Consumerism, Capitalism, and the Internet,” *Cultural Studies* 22, no. 5 (2008): 749–69.

⁵⁴ Saba Bebawi and Diana Bossio, *Social Media and the Politics of Reportage: The 'Arab Spring'* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

technologies actually exacerbate preexisting social inequalities. According to this group of scholars, gaps in socioeconomic status, Internet access, and literacy levels trump the promise of a more leveled virtual public sphere. These cyber pessimists point to the huge and persistent gap between people who are already civically engaged and those who are not, rich and poor, active and disengaged, elite and struggling. Norris notes that, “in this perspective, despite the potential from technological innovations, traditional interests and established authorities have the capacity to reassert their authority in the political sphere, just as traditional multinational corporations have the ability to reestablish their predominance in the world of e-commerce.”⁵⁵ In more recent years “cybermoderates” have argued a sort of middle road; in reality, they say, circumstances vary widely in access and use of digital information.

Early research about the public sphere tried to define the virtual public sphere, asked how online communities organize themselves internally, how they mirror or bend real-world organizations and networks, and how they subvert or reinforce dominant ideologies. In the mid-1990s McChesney saw the potential of the Internet in to transform politics but concluded that the commercial nature of the Internet, where advertisement reigns, would ensure that special interests would be replicated online.⁵⁶ There may be new private and public on the Internet, but that would not prevent politics as usual and we should conflate public spaces with a public sphere where true deliberation takes place. Papacharissi built on McChesney in order to lay the groundwork for subsequent virtual public sphere research. Writing in the early 2000s, she noted that the Internet had not

⁵⁵ Pippa Norris, *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 13.

⁵⁶ Robert McChesney, “The Internet and US Communication Policy-Making in Historical and Critical Perspective,” *Journal of Communication*, 46, vol. 1 (1995), 98–124.

ushered in a romantic virtual sphere where people deliberate to form rational public opinion. Far from it, people gathered in fragmented and like-minded groups in order to hear their opinions echoed back to them.

This fragmentation, egged on by advertisers who profited from it, mirrored Fraser's notion of overlapping rather than intersecting counterpublics and raised concerns about democratic processes. Does it really help democracy to have people share opinions online if it does nothing to form consensus and better public policy? Still, Paparchissi noted that we should not throw up our hands and abandon the ideal of a virtual public sphere. In its youth the Internet had created a virtual, commercially driven space where people could share already formed opinions. In its adolescence, she argued, better public policy and a little elbow grease on the part of media activists could steer us from the Internet as a public space to the Internet as a virtual public sphere.

In the decade since Paparchissi first explored the virtual public sphere, much has changed. The Latinos in this study use an interactive web and access the Internet through mobile phones; complex and valuable algorithms determine what they see on Google and their Facebook pages; regional mainstream newspapers today are shells of their former selves while a select few national newspapers have succeed online; and traditional immigrant newspapers are becoming extinct or in the process of drastic reorganization. In this media landscape scholars have had to revisit and refine Paparchissi's and others' notions of a virtual public sphere. Mercea *et al.* have provided a helpful meta-analysis of virtual public sphere theory which shows how over the last decade research on the topic has fallen more or less into three camps that look at access and inclusion, locality, and fragmentation and power dynamics. Of course all three of these are central to the case of

Latino public and political participation in the United States, but Latinos face an additional hurdle towards civic participation online because many fear deportation for expressing political views online. One need only remember Habermas's writing on freedom of speech, which "captured the idea that each citizen should feel free to speak his or her mind about public issues without fear of retribution or ostracism, and thus, to participate in society-wide deliberations defining the common good. The hope for such an ideal condition of communication has been rekindled by the rapid diffusion of a near universal and (mostly) unfiltered Internet. In principle, online citizens are as free to speak as to listen, and to continue their conversation regardless of physical space and time."⁵⁷

Although in principle the Internet is unfiltered, are Latinos actually free to speak and listen online if they are not citizens? If not, it seems pressing to examine how media systems can encourage participation in the virtual public sphere without fear of retribution or deportation. One helpful framework for this is Ball-Rokeach *et al.*'s notion of Communications Integrative Theory, in part because it addresses the psychological component of individuals' participation in media. Ball-Rokeach and her colleagues write about communication practices within the context of civic engagement on the neighborhood level, which can be applied to Latino political campaigns and civic participation online. Through Communications Integrative Theory (CIT)⁵⁸ Ball-Rokeach *et al.* show how neighborhood organizations use storytelling and media to advance their own agendas.⁵⁹ The theory explains how the context of media ecosystems can positively or negatively storytelling. A strong media and interpersonal storytelling system helps

⁵⁷ Jensen and Neuman, *Evolving Paradigms*, 232.

⁵⁸ Yong-Chan Kim and Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach, "Civic Engagement From a Communication Infrastructure Perspective," *Communication Theory* 16, no. 2 (2006): 173–97.

⁵⁹ Sandra Ball-Rokeach, Yong-Chan Kim, and Sorin Matei, "Storytelling Neighborhood: Paths to Belonging in Diverse Urban Environments," *Violence and Abuse Abstracts* 9, no. 3 (2003).

communities identify problems and propose solutions. Wilkin, Katz and Ball-Rokeach additionally argue that a strong media ecosystem encourages storytelling at the macro, meso, and micro levels. *Macrolevel* storytelling includes communications systems that focus on telling the story of a whole city, state, or nation, or the entire world, for larger audiences. *Mesolevel* storytellers, which focus on community storytelling, include community newspapers, ethnic press, radio stations, and newsletters. *Microlevel* storytellers are individuals who share stories in their own personal networks.⁶⁰ However, in order for stories to sift up to the macro level, storytellers at the micro level must feel comfortable speaking out, organizing, participating in media, and telling their own stories in person and online. A strong media ecosystem might, for instance, include institutions that encourage enclave publics to use media to tell their stories across various publics (if doing so would not jeopardize their own safety).

The second component of the CIT, the *communications action context*, sketches out strong and weak communications ecosystems on a continuum. An open context “encourages communication among people,” whereas a “closed context discourages communication.”⁶¹ According to Wilkin et al. these contexts are influenced by physical, psychological, sociocultural, economic and technological features. CIT is just beginning to fully address virtual spaces, so we might here apply Papacharissi’s notion of online public spaces (e.g., social media, online news, chat rooms, forums, comment spaces) to Ball Rokeach et al.’s notions of physical space (e.g., neighborhoods, organizations, media institutions, community centers) where people gather to share stories. This theory is most helpful in its acknowledgement that psychological factors contribute to the structures of

⁶⁰ Holley Wilkin, Vikki S. Katz, and Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach, "The Role of Family Interaction in New Immigrant Latinos' Civic Engagement," *Journal of Communication* 59, no. 2 (2009): 389.

⁶¹ Wilkin *et al.*, “Role of Family Interaction,” 389.

media systems and to individuals' willingness to share their stories. Matei and Ball-Rokeach argue that psychological features "include the conditions that enable people to feel free to engage in conversations with those around them, for example the feelings of fear or comfort."⁶² Other research has found that feelings of belonging offline, in the "real" world, are mimicked online across ethnic groups. That is, people who feel a strong sense of belonging in communities offline are more likely to make connections and share information online.⁶³ These psychological factors can determine people's desire and ability to share stories as much as their access to technology.

Digital inclusion, civic participation, and political knowledge

Questions about digital inclusion play into public participation in online political processes. It is hard, however, to delve into the virtual public sphere without touching first on what the digital inclusion debate is about, its central arguments over the last decade, and how notions of the digital divide and digital inclusion have shifted as the digital technology becomes more central to everyday people's lives. The body of research about information inequality uses varied conceptual frameworks and terminology, such as information divide, digital divide, digital inclusion, and knowledge gap.⁶⁴ This study uses the term digital inclusion to examine issues of information inequality, in part because professionals in the field currently seem to use it most commonly, but also because it gets at broader questions of differentiated use of ICTs.

⁶² Wilkin *et al.*, 389.

⁶³ Sorin Matai and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, "Belonging across Geographic and Internet Spaces: Ethnic Area Variations," in *The Internet in Everyday Life*, ed. Barry Wellman and Caroline A. Haythornthwaite (Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell, 2002), 404–27.

⁶⁴ Liangzhi Yu, "The Divided Views of the Information and Digital Divides: A Call for Integrative Theories of Information Inequality," *Journal of Information Science* 37, no. 6 (2011): 660–79.

Early notions of digital inclusion concerned themselves with access to the Internet and tended to define the digital divide in terms of the “haves” and “have-nots” of the Internet and computers.⁶⁵ Policy makers and researchers were most concerned with who had access to the Internet and what steps needed to be taken in order to get universal access at home and abroad. Many scholars highlighted the digital divide as paramount to new debates about equality, poverty, and democracy. Others argued that the warnings about the potential dangers of digital divide were overblown. Notably, Copain used diffusion of innovations theory to describe a digital delay, rather than a digital divide.⁶⁶ He argued that even though there are discrepancies in access to technology between people of low and high economic statuses, the digital divide would disappear on its own as technology becomes simpler and easier to use. Ngyuen compellingly demonstrated that Copain’s argument completely ignored how broader opportunity and knowledge gaps contribute to digital information inequities.⁶⁷ It seems relevant now more than ever to revisit the Copain-Ngyuen debate as we enter a new era of mobile connectivity in which surely we will see resurgence in arguments that mobile technology erases access issues.

As the Internet has evolved and access has become more widely spread, new debates form around a more nuanced discussion of digital inclusion. By the end of the 2000s researchers and professionals concerned with the digital divide shifted in focus from quantity of use (how much access a person has to the Internet) to quality of use of

⁶⁵ Esther Hargittai, “Second-Level Digital Divide,” *First Monday* 7, April 4, 2002, <http://firstmonday.org/article/view/942/864>.

⁶⁶ Benjamin M. Compaine, *The Digital Divide: Facing a Crisis or Creating a Myth?* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001. <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10229594>.

⁶⁷ An Nguyen, "The Digital Divide Versus the 'Digital Delay': Implications From a Forecasting Model of Online News Adoption and Use," *International Journal Of Media & Cultural Politics* 8, no. 2/3 (2012): 251–68.

new technologies.⁶⁸ People began to ask, “Among the increasing number of Internet users, how do such factors as gender, race, and socioeconomic status shape inequality in ease, effectiveness, and quality of use?”⁶⁹ In particular, Di Maggio *et al.* suggested that digital inequities play out on two levels and proposed that we think instead of a “first-level” and “second-level” digital divide.⁷⁰ The first level concerns access to the Internet, while the second concerns differentiated use of technology. Regarding use of the Internet for civic engagement Di Maggio *et al.* questioned not only whether people had access to the Internet, but whether they could use it to read quality hard news, engage or advocate in politics, participate in social movements, and volunteer in a civic institution. The issue here is not access, but the second-level skills needed to take full advantage of the access.

This is particularly important when it comes to news consumption and production with an interactive Web. Digital inclusion work often centers on whether access and use of ICTs will permit people of low economic status to participate in the workforce, and therefore improve their lot in life. This study, however, focuses partly on how people of low socioeconomic status might use and leverage an interactive web for knowledge, information sharing, news consumption, and political power. If access itself is no longer the most pressing concern of digital equity, then the current concern is how well people use new media, whether they use them for information or entertainment, and how the use of information might increase political civic engagement and influence political agendas. In this light it is crucial to know what effect new media have on people’s political

⁶⁸ Jan A.G.M. vanDijk, “Digital Divide Research, Achievements and Shortcomings,” *Elsevier*, 2006, <http://purl.utwente.nl/publications/59788>.

⁶⁹ Paul DiMaggio, *et al.*, “From Unequal Access to Differentiated Use: A Literature Review and Agenda for Research on Digital Inequality,” in *Social Inequality*, ed. Kathryn Neckerman (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), 355–400.

⁷⁰ DiMaggio *et al.*, “From Unequal Access to Differentiated Use,” 356.

knowledge. In their examination of how people's Internet use affects their acquisition of political knowledge, Wei and Hindman argue that, "people's political knowledge is a critical social resource associated with power and inclusion."⁷¹

Studies of traditional media show that political knowledge gaps can depend on whether people use media for entertainment or for news consumption.⁷² Of course, selective exposure contributes to whether or not a traditional media consumer is well informed; for instance, people of lower socioeconomic status tend to read the sports pages in print newspapers, while people of higher status tend to read hard news and opinion pieces.⁷³ Additionally, traditional media had more control over which headlines people read, the order in which they received news, and whether they received a dose of hard news with their entertainment.⁷⁴ Perhaps not surprisingly, further studies found that, contrary to cyber optimists' early predictions about the Internet as a leveler in political knowledge (and therefore a vehicle for shifts in power dynamics), the Internet actually exacerbates differences in use of media for informational purposes among low and highly educated users.⁷⁵ In fact, these studies have found that socioeconomic status is *more* strongly related to informational use of the Internet than to informational use of traditional media such as television and newspapers.⁷⁶ Particularly troubling to the notion of a public sphere is the role of selective exposure in creating these knowledge gaps. In

⁷¹ Lu Wei and Douglas Blanks Hindman, "Does the Digital Divide Matter More? Comparing the Effects of New Media and Old Media Use on the Education-Based Knowledge Gap," *Mass Communication & Society* 14, no. 2 (2011): 216.

⁷² W. P. Eveland, Jr. and D. A. Scheufele, "Connecting News Media Use with Gaps in Knowledge and Participation," *Communication Abstracts* 24, no. 2 (2001): 155–296.

⁷³ P. J. Tichenor. "Mass Media Flow and Differential Growth in Knowledge," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1970): 159–70.

⁷⁴ Eveland and Scheufele, "Connecting News Media Use with Gaps in Knowledge."

⁷⁵ Suk Jae Hur and Yong Kwon Hyeok, "The Internet and Inequality in Democratic Engagements: Panel Evidence from South Korea," *International Journal of Communication* 8 (2014): 1174–94.

⁷⁶ Wei and Hindman, "Does the Digital Divide Matter More?" 216.

particular, social media allow people to seek information that reinforces their own opinions, and discard information that does not.⁷⁷ So not only do we see increased knowledge gaps in new media landscape, we see further and further fragmentation. This has caused media activists, among them Dan Gillmor, to suggest that the knowledge gap must be combated with heightened media literacy programming in high schools and in community based settings.⁷⁸ Similarly, Jenkins has suggested that a participatory culture of media calls for a national media literacy movement to take place in schools and after-school programs,⁷⁹ and Rheingold suggests instating online civic engagement into curricula.⁸⁰

Observations

The great promise of digital democracy and social media for marginalized communities lies in the potential for opinion leaders to shape political agendas both within and outside their own networks. As noted earlier, public opinion formation is central to Habermas's ideas on the role of a healthy public sphere and its potential to shape policy. This study examines how Latino communities in Minnesota formed their own real-world and online networks, or publics, and established public opinion leaders within these networks, and how these opinion leaders began to shift they way journalists wrote about immigration debates. New media have the potential to transform consumers

⁷⁷ Steven M. Smith, Leandre R. Fabrigar, and Meghan E. Norris, "Reflecting on Six Decades of Selective Exposure Research: Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 2, no. 1 (2008): 464–93.

⁷⁸ Dan Gillmor, *Mediactive: A User's Guide to Finding, Following, and Creating the News* (Farnham: O'Reilly, 2010).

⁷⁹ Henry Jenkins, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

⁸⁰ Howard Rheingold, *Using Participatory Media and Public Voice to Encourage Civic Engagement* (2008), <http://www.issuelab.org/permalink/resource/881>.

into producers—not only of media but ultimately of agendas. We know that the American public, especially the elite, need voices of the poor to guide better public policy.⁸¹ Yet these voices are often less present and less salient in media than other voices, and therefore less likely to have set policy agendas. How, then, are these voices to guide public policy and help inform Americans what and how to think about immigration?

The framing of political issues—in this case immigration reform—is still immensely relevant today, but in the age of media interactivity it is no longer enough to solely examine framing effects on the media consumer. A new media landscape forces us to go beyond questioning how marginalized communities consume media to how they *produce* media, and what the implications are of a significant gap in media production. We must also ask how public opinion forms online and who have become political opinion leaders in a segmented media culture. As Web 2.0 allows more people to contribute to online content, Schradie asks “who are these digital voices and whose voice is missing?”⁸² The question, it seems to me, is central to the discussion of a virtual public sphere, and indeed, the promise of a healthy deliberative democracy in the 21st century.

⁸¹ James N. Druckman and Kjersten R. Nelson, "Framing and Deliberation: How Citizens' Conversations Limit Elite Influence," *American Journal of Political Science* 47, no 4 (2003): 729–45.

⁸² Jen Schradie, "The Digital Production Gap: The Digital Divide and Web 2.0 Collide," *Poetics* 39, no. 2 (2011): 145–68.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Auto-ethnography and the role of the researcher

The research presented here leans heavily on the tradition of feminist ethnographies espoused by the likes Ruth Behar, who, among others, argued ethnographers need to be more reflective about their own relationships with their research and their roles as researcher.¹ Some recent feminist media ethnographers argue that it is not enough simply to reflect on power dynamics between researchers and participant, but insist that researchers should make their participants partners in the research, or find avenues to contribute to their participants' lives. This activist approach to ethnography is notable in the work of Poonjan Rangan² and Vikki Mayer,³ whose research touches on media activism with child laborers and Mexican youth respectively.

In particular, Mayer's ethnographic study of Mexican American youths' perceptions of television brought a multicultural feminist perspective to media ethnography. Drawing on other feminist scholars, Mayer suggested there is a place for academic research combined with activism or advocacy. Too often, she argued, academics are cut off from the communities they study, set apart by both race and class. She delineates this further: "[F]eminist media inquiry is at a difficult crossroads: how to

¹ Ruth Behar, *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

² Pooja Rangan, "Immaterial Child Labor: Media Advocacy, Autoethnography, and the Case of Born into Brothels," *Camera Obscura* 25, no. 75 (2010): 142–177.

³ Vicki Mayer, "When the Camera Won't Focus: Tensions in Media Ethnography," *Feminist Media Studies* 1, no.3 (2001), 331–49.

become more multicultural and class-conscious when most media studies are white and middle class?”⁴ It is not enough simply to reflect on this relationship as previous feminist media ethnographers have done, but to prioritize and legitimize an activist approach to scholarship in multicultural communities. This allows ethnographers to build bridges between multicultural field sites and the academy, and hopefully then to the creation of social change. Ultimately, Mayer concludes that while tensions arise from the closeness the researcher may develop with her participants, this approach complements feminist theories which “interrogate power dynamics in shaping identities and advocate research that allows marginalized people to confront those dynamics.”⁵ It allows the researcher to ask, how might my research directly benefit the community studied? How might my research help inform theory and practice in the field of media studies, while also directly informing multicultural and multiclass communities?

Communications activism

While feminist ethnography asks the researcher to question and reflect on her own position of power as researcher, other scholars have provided a framework for an activist approach—one that asks the researcher to question his or her role in research but also requires the researcher have a direct impact on participants of the study. Notably, James Frey and Kevin Carragee have provided methodological and research models in their seminal compilations of scholarly works that promote “research as an empowering act, as a way of uniting people working for social change, disrupting restrictive ways of

⁴ Mayer, “When the Camera Won’t Focus,” 308.

⁴ Thomas R. Lindlof and Bryan C. Taylor, *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (London: SAGE Publications, 2011), 133–69.

⁵ Mayer, “When the Camera Won’t Focus,” 308.

thinking, and transforming the social world.”⁶ Frey and Carragee examine such scholarly traditions as feminist ethnography, critical ethnography, action research (collaborative/community/participatory), and performance ethnography.

Their case studies examine communications activism that promotes a) public dialogue, debate, and discussion, and b) communications consulting for social change.⁷ In an essay on communications activism theory and the anti-domestic violence movement in Rhode Island, Ryan and Jeffries outline the trajectory of participatory communications activism models built on Paolo Freire’s and other liberation theologians’ approach to individual and societal transformation.⁸ These “participatory communications models employ community dialogue to link individual transformation with broader social changes.”⁹ They involve a three-step process of first identifying areas of media misrepresentation, especially of communities of color, then mapping inequalities in communications systems, and finally working with those communities to develop better communications strategies.¹⁰ This dialogue in turn strengthens local communities and challenges power dynamics. Still, as others have pointed out,¹¹ participatory activism has yet to be fully defined by communications scholars interested in providing methodological unity to disparate models.

⁶ Lawrence R. Frey and Kevin M. Carragee, *Communication Activism: Struggling for Social Justice Amidst Difference*, Vol. 3 (Dallas: Hampton Press, 2011), 9.

⁷ Frey and Caragee, *Communication Activism*, 11.

⁸ H. L. Steves, “Liberation, Feminism, and Development Communication,” *Communication Theory*, 11 (2011), 397–414.

⁹ Charlotte Ryan and Karen Jeffreys, “Challenging Domestic Violence: Trickle-Up Theorizing about Participation and Power in Communications Activism,” in Frey and Caragee, *Communications Activism*, Vol. 3, 189.

¹⁰ Ryan and Jeffreys, “Challenging Domestic Violence,” 189.

¹¹ Karin Gwinn Wilkins, *Redeveloping Communication for Social Change: Theory, Practice, and Power* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

Bearing this in mind, Kidd *et al.* contend that communications activism complements scholarship examining the threat posed to the public sphere by privatization, conglomeration, and commercialization of media. They worry that the bulk of communications research examines these systems from the standpoint of regulation but does not look at the lives of those affected by new media systems. Kidd *et al.* describe these actors as the counter public sphere, which, “as Fraser has described it, is that space in society where emerging or marginalized groups coalesce and work to form new collective identities, to mobilize into constituencies, and to articulate problems for redress. As the source of many new ideas, practices and policies – indeed as the engine of social change—the importance of this sphere to a healthy democracy cannot be ignored.” Their experiments in participatory democracy and communications can provide a critical source of analysis and practical models for strengthening democracy.¹²

Though communications activism may not garner big research dollars at universities across the nation, we are seeing some traction towards media activism-scholarship.¹³ This could represent another shift in communications research as digital media, globalization, and informational technology systems come of age and leave grant-making institutions looking for new analyses and models that strengthen democracy. One such example comes from the Ford Foundation, which in 2004 put forth a grant-making strategy “to address public access, freedom of expression, media diversity, and

¹² Dorothy Kidd, Bernadette Barker-Plummer, and Clemencia Rodriguez, “Media Democracy from the Ground Up: Mapping Communication Practices in the Counter Public Sphere,” 1, retrieved from <http://katrinaresearchhub.ssrc.org/media-democracy-from-the-ground-up-mapping-communication-practices-in-the-counter-public-sphere/attachment>.

¹³ Alfonso Gumucio Dagron and Thomas Tufte, *Communication for Social Change Anthology: Historical and Contemporary Readings* (South Orange, NJ: Communication for Social Change Consortium, 2006).

accountability in decision making.”¹⁴ They drew in the Social Sciences Research Council (SSRC) in order to promote scholarly-activist partnerships that would engage communities working on these issues and draw in scholars who might eventually inform communications information policy debates through their research. However, as Napoli and Aslama point out in a collection of essays about the resulting Ford-SSRC partnership, scholarly work about social movements and activists rarely reaches people outside academia. The useful collection of essays about the resulting grantee projects describes experimental scholar-activist projects ranging from using social media to build online civic spaces in North Dakota¹⁵ to using mobile phones to strengthen immigrant voices in Los Angeles.¹⁶ Ultimately, the collection stresses the mutual benefits of communications activist-scholar partnerships. Napoli and Aslama argue such partnerships help advocacy organizations contextualize their work better and researchers to become more engaged and rooted in reality, bolstering the work of both. Locally, the Bush Foundation has poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into bolstering virtual spaces for civic debate by granting money to the Citizens League, the *Twin Cities Daily Planet*, *The Uptake*, United Way and others. However, none of these projects have garnered much attention or generated many research partnerships either locally or nationally.

¹⁴ Becky Lentz, “Foreword,” in *Communications Research in Action: Scholar-Activist Collaborations for a Democratic Public Sphere*, eds. Philip M. Napoli, and Minna Aslama (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), xi.

¹⁵ Lana F. Rakow and Julia Nastasia, “Community Connect: A Network of Civic Spaces for Public Communication in North Dakota,” in *Communications Research in Action: Scholar-Activist Collaborations for a Democratic Public Sphere*, ed. Philip M. Napoli and Minna Aslama (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 197–221.

¹⁶ VozMob Project, “Mobile Voices: Projecting the Voices of Immigrant Workers by Appropriating Mobile Phones for Popular Communication,” in Napoli and Aslama, eds., *Communications Research in Action*, 177-96. The website for the project is <http://www.vozmob.net>.

Literary journalism

This study is primarily influenced by feminist ethnography, yet it is not untouched by the writing of literary journalists who have delighted their audiences and provide models for engaging storytelling. Feminist ethnography asks the researcher to consider her own relationship as researcher with her participants, something journalists have also been toying with in their field over the past several decades. Indeed, ethnographers employ similar tactics in their observations and interviews as journalists in their reporting, and thus it is not surprising that this study is tangentially influenced by narrative journalism. Scholarly research obviously differs from the journalistic approach to narrative non-fiction, especially in more modern forms of participatory journalism. This study does not in any way pose as a work of literary non-fiction; however, as writers like Rob Boynton suggest, academics can learn from journalistic methods of what he calls the “New New Journalism.” Boynton contends that “Contrary to the New Journalists, this new generation experiments more with the *way* one gets the story. To that end they’ve developed innovative immersion strategies and extended the time they’ve spent reporting...their most significant innovations have involved experiments with reporting, rather than the language or forms they used to tell their stories.”¹⁷ For instance, Leon Dash’s *Rosa Lee*,¹⁸ Adrian LeBlanc’s *Random Family*,¹⁹ and Ted Conover’s *Newjack* all lean on immersion journalism and required years to report. Ira Glass commends new participatory journalists for how they have integrated their own reporting into their narratives. Bill Buford’s *Among the Thugs*, an account of super macho world of the

¹⁷ Robert S. Boynton, *The New New Journalism: Conversations with America's Best Nonfiction Writers on Their Craft* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005).

¹⁸ Leon Dash, *Rosa Lee: A Mother and Her Family in Urban America* (New York: BasicBooks, 1996).

¹⁹ Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, *Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble, and Coming of Age in the Bronx* (New York: Scribner, 2003).

Manchester United soccer culture, places Buford at the center of his narrative, which is gripping because, in the words of Glass, “Buford is so honest about what happens between him and his interviewees, especially the awkwardness he feels as an outsider in the midst of this tribe of drunk, violent men. They hate him, and they don’t trust him, and he doesn’t pretend otherwise. There’s a transparency to the reporting.”²⁰

There are hundreds of exemplary works of narrative nonfiction reminding us that, as Glass suggests, we are in a “golden age” of the genre. Some of these explicitly treat the Latino experience, both abroad and in the United States, through a participatory lens. These participatory narratives vary greatly in how the authors have grappled with their involvement with their interview subjects and in how they present their stories. For instance, in his narrative of crossing the U.S. Mexican border with Mexican immigrants,²¹ Ted Conover returns again and again to his role as a privileged journalist who, unlike his fellow travelers, would not face deportation or jail if caught. Other journalists, like Sonia Nazario²², have documented Central Americans children’s perilous journeys to the United States. Nazario’s account is deceptively simple, free from musings on her role within the text, but also powerful in its presentation of her protagonist’s voice. Others, notably Judith Adler in *Mexican Lives*²³, have woven historical and policy narratives together with the voices of Mexicans struggling to survive in a weak and inequitable economy. And still others acknowledge their role as journalist/teachers but have taken themselves out of the narrative entirely to present the voices of new immigrants, leaving the reader to interpret, cull, and analyze the implications of the

²⁰ Ira Glass, *The New Kings of Nonfiction* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2007).

²¹ Ted Conover, *Coyotes: A Journey through the Secret World of America's Illegal Aliens* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987).

²² Sonia Nazario, *Enrique's Journey* (New York: Random House, 2006).

²³ Judith Adler Hellman, *Mexican Lives* (New York: New Press, 1994).

stories for themselves.²⁴ These narratives differ in scope and success, but at their best they remind the scholar of the power of individuals' stories and their ability to engage, illuminate, and amplify the voices of others. Collectively, these authors show us a way forward for well-researched and well-reported narratives that lean on participatory study.

The literary journalist, the feminist ethnographer, and the communications activist represent a wide range of roles and approaches to research. Although they stem from different disciplines, traditions, and schools of thought, they are cut from a similar cloth and share some unifying characteristics crucial to this study. For one, they ask the narrator to be transparent about her place in the narrative, and they hold the writer to high standards in the gathering of reporting of data. These traditions also ask the narrator to immerse herself in the subject and put stock in the richness that comes from such deep immersion—all in some ways nods to Geertz's notion of thick description.

It would be impossible to include the voices of all the people interviewed for this project, but the aforementioned traditions of scholarship and reporting point a way forward for creating change in society through scholarship. Collectively they also provide models for how to honor the voices of those who have agreed, if even for a brief moment, to share their experiences of using social media for social change.

Data collection

Qualitative methods in communications research range widely within the social sciences and the humanities. However, Christians and Carey suggest a unifying framework that includes four crucial stages in the qualitative process: naturalistic

²⁴ Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan, *Crossing the Blvd: Strangers, Neighbors, Aliens in a New America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003).

observation, contextualization, maximizing comparisons, and establishing sensitized concepts.²⁵ This process of inductive analysis is in keeping with other scholars who have advocated a grounded theory approach to qualitative research.²⁶ Still, some qualitative scholars sought to formalize the process that Christians and Carey espoused in order, first, to legitimize their efforts within the field of mass communication and, second, to provide a practical guide for researchers engaged in qualitative research. Perhaps few qualitative researchers have done this in such detail as Miles and Huberman in their useful step-by-step guide to data collection and coding.²⁷

With these frameworks and tools in mind, this study uses a multicultural feminist approach to media ethnography in order to explore media activism among Twin Cities Latinos and what we might glean from it. Other methods employed here include participant observation (both in person and online), interviews, content analysis of news coverage, and the coding of data. Lindlof and Taylor's guidelines for participant observations²⁸ and Geertz's notion of thick description²⁹ particularly informed my field notes and observations throughout the research process. The observations and reflections from the media workshops I conducted centered on participants' media use and their commentary about technology and social media, local mainstream media, and Spanish

²⁵ Clifford G. Christians and James Carey, "The Logic and Aims of Qualitative Research," in *Research Methods in Mass Communication*, ed. Guido Stempel III and Bruce H. Westley (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989), 354.

²⁶ Nicholas Jankowski and Fred Wester, "The Qualitative Tradition in Social Science Inquiry: Contributions to Mass Communication Research," in *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research*, edited by Klaus Bruhn Jensen and Nicholas W. Jankowski (London: Routledge, 1991), 67.

²⁷ Michael Huberman & Matthew Miles, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994).

²⁸ Thomas R. Lindlof and Bryan C. Taylor, *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (London: Sage Publications, 2011), 133–69.

²⁹ Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretations of Culture*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3–30.

language media. I also informed participants in the workshops that I might contact them to do an in-person interview.

These observations informed the interviews I conducted with the participants in this study. I relied heavily on ethnographic interviews with Latinos involved in grassroots media initiatives, including, participants in media trainings, activists, and programmatic leaders. These in-depth interviews, developed in accordance with Fontana and Frey's guidelines,³⁰ were both structured and semi-structured and averaged about an hour. I conducted ten structured interviews with participants in my media training sessions, and used these interviews to snowball sample. I then did fourteen structured and semi-structured interviews with people involved in KFAI, Latino-specific media outlets, Latino nonprofit or community organizations, and reporters in the local English speaking press.

The study also relied on participant observations of public Facebook pages and groups. Some researchers have asked, "How do we undertake ethnography in the 21st century?"³¹ As virtual ethnography becomes more central to communications research, ethical questions rightly arise about the researchers' roles in online social networks, privacy, the role of technologies in mediating research/subject relationships, and transparency.³² I always used my real name in online interactions and confined my participant observation to public online spaces. I was invited to join a Facebook group with fifteen participants in the media trainings I conducted, as well as the MN Agenda Facebook group. From there I followed some Latino organizations pages on Facebook, as

³⁰ Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey, "The Interview: From Neutral Stance to Political Involvement," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed., ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonnas S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. 2005), 701–02.

³¹ John Farnsworth and Terry Austrin, "The Ethnography of New Media Worlds? Following the Case of Global Poker," *New Media and Society* 12, (2010): 1120.

³² Christine Hine, *Virtual Ethnography* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2000), 41–63.

well as some public figures in the Latino community such as DJs, public leaders, and elected officials involved in both campaigns.

Additionally, I did a general content analysis, presented in Chapter 4, of the Facebook groups and the items posted, with attention to how many people actively participated and how often they did so. This content analysis broadly informed the questions I asked in the second stage of my interviews. In general, I treated much of the online content on Facebook as a traditional ethnographer would, as cultural artifacts and spaces of social interaction worthy of analysis.³³ However, I also used active Facebook groups to find a couple of interviewees for the project.

I collected ethnographic observations from the media trainings; interviews with participants, activists, and reporters; and public Facebook groups and pages. I then analyzed them for recurring themes using Miles and Huberman's guidelines for emergent marginal coding.³⁴ Feminist media ethnography also requires ethnographers to recognize power differentials and to situate themselves in the context of their research;³⁵ therefore in the concluding chapter I discuss my own relationships with the participants in this study. I also transcribed the interviews (mostly in Spanish) and then did emergent coding so that I could identify important issues to address in the second round of interviews with nonprofit leaders, activists, and media producers. On the second reading I used descriptive and interpretive codes to determine prevalent and outlier themes.³⁶ Finally, all of the names used in this study are pseudonyms, which I've used in order to protect the identity of undocumented interview subjects.

³³ Jankowski and Wester, "The Qualitative Tradition in Social Science Inquiry," 53.

³⁴ Huberman and Miles, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 235.

³⁵ Jankowski and Wester, "The Qualitative Tradition in Social Science Inquiry," 57.

³⁶ Huberman and Miles, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 235.

Chapter 3: Facebook Use among Latinas in Media Literacy Trainings

Watching the local TV news¹, one can hear the echoes of drums and the shakes of the Aztec Dancers' anklets bouncing against the domed atrium of the Minnesota state capitol, but it would be easy to miss the sign that says, "Governor, Vote Yes on Driver's Licenses." It is May 15th, 2013, the Legislature is seven days away from closing out its session, and a coalition of Latino organizers are worried that their legislative agenda is getting pushed aside. They are happy that a bill granting in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants (colloquially known as the Dream Act) will pass,² but their effort to pressure legislators to make undocumented immigrants eligible for driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants is meeting with a collective shoulder shrug of sorts. The Democratic leadership, it seems, has little political will to pass the bill after having thrown most of its political capital into legalizing same-sex marriage.³

These are hours of frustration and desperation, the waning hours of a bill that the Twin Cities Latino community has fought for with tenacity. The KARE-11 TV news report features one of the principal organizers of the movement, Jimena, a 28-year-old

¹ Jon Croman, "Immigrants Stage Hunger Strike over Driver's License Issue," *KARE 11 News*, May 15, 2013, <http://www.kare11.com/news/article/1025802/396/Immigrants-stage-hunger-strike-over-drivers-license-issue>.

² Mark Brunswick, "Minnesota Senate Boosts Undocumented Students' College Dreams," May 1, 2013, <http://www.startribune.com/politics/205638851.html?refer=y>.

³ Paul Totso, "Minn. Senate Approves Same-Sex Marriage; Sends to Dayton," Minnesota Public Radio, May 14, 2013, <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2013/05/13/politics/minn-senate-approves-samesex-marriage>.

mother of two from Mexico. A community organizer at Waite House, a social services nonprofit in South Minneapolis, she is one of the driving forces behind the initiative. Feisty, dogged, outspoken (she once told a room packed with 200 media professionals that “they had all the power to help change things but don’t use it”), Jimena has spent the last six months organizing support for the driver’s license bill. Record numbers of Latinos attended strategy meetings and rallies with state representatives and senators. At the end of long days, after the community center had closed its doors to the hungry attracted by the food shelf and the job seekers by computer training, Jimena invited Latinos to Waite House to organize. They came—first 30, then 60, then 200, and then a steady 300. They first found out through friends, then through Facebook, and they came.

Jimena knew this might not be enough. She hoped the cause would also be helped by social media and the media trainings she had championed at Waite House. She hoped “La Voz del Pueblo,” the radio show that she had helped start at the community radio station KFAI, would make a difference. She hoped that the bill might maintain momentum with the steady stream of press releases and news she had posted on Facebook, news that began with phrases like: “Dear friends:” !Noticiassss, Noticiassss! La hora luego!,” “Una Victoria Massss,” “Gracias a toda la gente hermosa que asistió en el capitolio!”⁴ But in the last week of the legislative session, it is clear to Jimena that the months of organizing meetings, the Facebook posts, the press releases, and the community radio show may not be enough. And so, she and a group of 30 organizers stage a hunger strike at the capitol to pressure political leadership and gain media attention for the driver’s license bill, a traditional “media-ready” protest tactic.

⁴ “News! News! Breaking news! One More Victory! Thank you to all the beautiful people who came to the capitol.”

The first local television station to cover the hunger strike posts its story online, which unleashes a stream of vitriol in the comments section—not uncommon for immigration-related articles in the mainstream American press.⁵ In the first hours after the story is posted the comments, rerouted from Facebook, roll out one after another, a cascade of unabashed and unapologetic anti-immigration opinions. Eric: “If they get licenses, will they still be called ‘undocumented?’ or will we need to find a different politically correct term?” Kevin: “No...they will then be Welfare....Tax payer....Blood suckers!!!!” Michael: “Let them starve;” Helen: “If I ever get in an accident w/one of these schmucks I’ll be held responsible...DEPORT THESE PEOPLE NOW.” Monica, the apparent lone Latina commenter: “It is so sad to read the comments of hate against a community.” Brad finishes the first round of comments with: “Rule #1 on the Internet: don't read the comments on 'mainstream' news sites! :)” Then a daylong silence.⁶

Meanwhile, connected through cyberspace and Monica’s comment thread, another discussion ensues, this time in Spanish on the Facebook group for MN Agenda Latina, the coalition of Latino community members and organizations responsible for creating and backing the two legislative efforts. Monica’s comment kicks off a discussion in which Veronica responds: “Those people don’t understand that we aren’t here for fun but because we only came to find a better future for our families.” Emilia chimes in: “One time the editor of S. Prairie Blog commented on how well organized these groups are on social media. The tea party and anti-immigrant groups have volunteers who are

⁵ Arthur D. Santana, “Virtuous or Vitriolic: The Effect of Anonymity on Civility in Online Newspaper Reader Comment Boards,” *Journalism Practice* 8, no. 1 (2014), 18.

⁶ Jay Kolls, “Proposed Bill Would Allow Illegal Immigrants to get MN Driver's Licenses,” KSTP, March 20, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10151528035043162&set=vb.313623491951&type=3&permPage=1>.

dedicated to that specifically, don't be discouraged, really, look at them and don't be discouraged.”

And so they comment, a miniature handful of the roughly 60,000 Hispanics in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area,⁷ clacking out their opinions on cell phones and computers.⁸ With a punch to the “enter” or “send” key, they contribute to the public, but segregated, debate about how immigrants should integrate into American society. They come from nearly every Latin American country, a Pan-American rainbow, with Mexico's and Ecuador's colors shining strongest.⁹ In this group is the school outreach worker, the local DJ star, the limousine driver, the cleaning lady, the lawyer. In this group is the mother, “beaten by her husband but not by life.”¹⁰ Here, too, is the good husband, the owner of the bakery who just learned how to make a Facebook page for the business. Here is the city administrator, the school outreach worker, the GED student who somehow slipped through the cracks.

I know many of these people, and I watch in fascination as the events unfold through the Facebook group of 344 members.¹¹ I have been invited in to join a few months ago after I taught a class on using Flip cameras and YouTube. However, my involvement in the Latino community in Minneapolis started earlier through my work as a community engagement coordinator for the Twin Cities Daily Planet, an online, hyper-

⁷ Minnesota Compass of Wilder Research, “Population Trends: Foreign Born Population by Sending Country to Twin Cities 7-County Region, 2008–2010,” accessed April 25, 2013, <http://www.mncompass.org/immigration/key-measures.php?km=populationtrends#7-5589-g>.

⁸ Figures for immigrants by country of birth in the Twin Cities Metro vary widely and have a large margin of error. However, throughout this study I use Wilder Research's MN Compass when it comes to metro-wide or statewide figures on Latinos. City statistics will rely on other sources.

⁹ Minnesota Compass of Wilder Research, “Population Trends.”

¹⁰ Interview with Rebeca, participant in Driver's License campaign, January 30, 2013. All interviews in this chapter were conducted in confidentiality; pseudonyms are used here, and real names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.

¹¹ MN-Agenda's Facebook group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/130562163772531/>.

local citizen journalism newspaper published by the Twin Cities Media Alliance, whose mission is to “bring together media professionals and engaged citizens to improve the quality, accountability and diversity of the local media, and giving the public the tools they need to become more active participants in the emerging media environment.”¹² The Executive Director of Waite House asked us to do a media training for a group of people there, including Jimena. This was 2008, when mobile Internet barely existed, the City of Minneapolis was just trying to devise plans for configuring citywide wireless, and the digital divide was a popular term and topic among media activists. My editor and I showed up to a community center room carpeted from wall to wall with old, donated, slow-running computers with patchy Internet connection.

By the time Waite House contacted me again in 2012 to do some media trainings with low literate populations, the technological landscape had changed and, additionally, political winds were shifting favorably for Latinos in the United States and in Minnesota. Still, discrepancies in access to technology were obvious. The Minneapolis Inclusion Fund conducted a survey in 2012 that found only 57 percent of residents in Philips and Near North, two of the poorest neighborhoods in Minneapolis, had computers with Internet access. Further, the survey found that across income groups, “the Internet is not being used often by residents to find community resources, engage in civic activities or communicate with government.”¹³

Yet, Latinos in Philips were starting to get online when, in 2011–12, I conducted ten media training sessions at Waite House, as well as six social media trainings with

¹² Twin Cities Media Alliance, “Twin Cities Media Alliance, Bringing Together Media Professionals with Engaged Citizens,” accessed July 19, 2012, <http://www.tcmiaalliance.org>.

¹³ City of Minneapolis, “2012 Community Technology Survey,” accessed January 30, 2012, <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/it/inclusion/WCMS1P-092357>.

various Latino nonprofits throughout the Twin Cities. These were relatively small trainings with anywhere between six and ten graduates of a women's leadership program. Between 2009 and 2012 Waite House had organized dozens of women's empowerment groups and community organizing coalitions. During the program and after their graduation from it, the women of the empowerment groups built community gardens, mobilized Latinos to show up to labor protests and marches, and successfully worked on redistricting political wards to maximize Latino influence at City Hall. Additionally, the graduates of the women's empowerment groups conceptualized and launched a citywide initiative to grant Latinos municipal IDs. Although the municipal ID campaign failed, it eventually turned into a statewide campaign to make undocumented immigrants eligible to apply for driver's licenses.

As budding community organizers, the women asked for and received trainings to help improve life for Latinos in Minnesota. First came the women's empowerment group, then the media and technology trainings. Then they asked for and created a radio show on the local community radio station, KFAI. And finally, they requested more nuanced computer, radio, publishing, and social media trainings. As they did so, they also began to ask how they could better inform Latinos through media, especially when few of the women had email accounts or had ever used a computer. Most also lacked strong writing skills, many had only a marginal grasp of English at best, some had never gone to school, and a significant minority were not literate even in Spanish. None of the women were on Facebook, none knew how to put together a flyer or a newspaper, many struggled with clicking and dragging a mouse, and most had never heard of cutting and pasting in a Word document. They wanted to organize Latinos and garner support for the driver's

license bill at the legislature, but they felt they lacked the tools to do so. Remarkably, this did not stop them. Instead they asked, how will we learn these skills? How can we use media to share our stories, inform our community about resources, and highlight the positive contributions of Latinos? It was their first big step towards learning how to use media to bring about legislative change.

Drawing on participant observation in the media workshops and on subsequent interviews with the women, this chapter offers vignettes from the women's journey towards media literacy, including ways they applied their newly acquired knowledge and skills to the driver's license campaign.

Learning to use Facebook

Mercedes snatched the flip cam away from her 11-year-old daughter Fiona and giggled, then moved her daughter under the poster that read, "Driver's Licenses: Process and Strategy." Video camera in hand, she tugged her daughter's hand and guided her to the door leading to the food shelf, then to a point under the paintings of two Mexican-American children decked in red, white and blue overalls. She sat Fiona down in a chair in the Waite House lobby and let the camera roll. Together, mother and daughter giggled, then focused again on the task at hand—practicing interviewing other Latinos on flip cams about the driver's license campaign as part of the workshop, "From Flip Cam to Facebook." Mercedes told Fiona to sit still and let her mom practice her interview questions. She asked her daughter, with a mock journalistic air: "Why do you want a driver's license?"

When her mother began recording, Fiona took a breath and got serious. “I want a driver’s license for my mom so that she can drive with confidence, so she doesn’t wonder whether the police are coming or not, and so we don’t get separated, like what’s happened to other families.” There it was, hidden under a playful moment in which a mother and daughter fiddled with a flip cam: The fear of deportation that marks many Latino immigrants’ experiences in the United States and determines myriad decisions—among them whether to drive a car without a license and what to post or not post on a Facebook account. Surprised, Mercedes showed the video to the other six women in the workshop before they all squeezed into a computer lab to learn how to upload the video to YouTube and then Facebook. Fiona sat at a computer next to her mother and began playing an online video game, which she eventually abandoned because, it seemed, she could not stand the sight of her mother struggling with how to log onto YouTube. Fiona coached her mother to edit here, touch the screen there, cut and paste like this, and sign in like that. Although it had felt like an onerous task, by the end of the hour Mercedes had uploaded her video onto YouTube.

“No, Mami! Here,” Fiona pointed at the screen and then sighed. “Here!”

“Let me do it!” her mother snapped at her.

“Fine!” Fiona said crossing her arms. She abandoned her mother’s computer, went back to her own and un-paused her video game. “But when you get to the Facebook group, don’t ask me to help you!” she told her mother under her breath.¹⁴

Many might take for granted the skills and sense of security needed to video-record a politically motivated interview and then upload it to social media platforms. Additionally, many do not question their right to engage in civic discourse online, or

¹⁴ Media training workshop, January 25, 2013.

wonder whether their doing so might generate life-altering repercussions. This is in stark contrast to the reality of undocumented Latinos, like Mercedes, who must consider carefully before participating in even the most benign political discourse online, such as commenting on a news article, “liking” a political organization on Facebook, or using social media to organize a political rally. As is the case with many low-income minority groups, working class and low-literate Latinos face many barriers to participating in public and civic discourse online.¹⁵ This has not, however, stopped Latino groups from using the Internet to mobilize politically.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, participants in the Waite House workshops faced many obstacles to civic participation online stemming from various factors. The interviews and ethnographic work in this study demonstrate how participants’ online civic discourse could be hindered by: a) low-literacy skills, b) a lack of access to computers and the Internet in the home, c) a generalized fear of technology, and d) a fear that their information will be used against them by the US Government.

Participants in media workshops at Waite House are starting to use social media despite these obstacles. They are not alone: Between 2009 and 2012 the share of Latino adults who said they went online occasionally increased by 14 percentage points, from 64% to 78%.¹⁷ Likewise, unprecedented numbers of Latinos across the United States are using social media, though such use varies greatly by age, educational levels, and

¹⁵ Karen Mossberger, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Michele Gilbert, "Race, Place, and Information Technology," *Urban Affairs Review* 41, no. 5 (May 2006): 583.

¹⁶ Corinna Reyes, "Bloggeros, MySpace y El World Wide Web: The Political Implications of Latinos on the Internet," Conference Papers Presented at the Midwestern Political Science Association at the Palmer Hilton Hotel, Chicago, IL, November 29, 2014. Reyes states that, "Contrary to initial data indicating that Latinos would remain on the losing side of the digital divide and therefore not enjoy the civic benefits of modern technology, evidence first began to emerge in early 2006 that Latinos are recognizing the utility of the world wide web, social networking sites, and the blogosphere to cheaply and efficiently distribute political information and promote political participation." However, as Reyes suggests, there is a lack of scholarship addressing Latinos use of online technology in civic participation.

¹⁷ Pew Hispanic Research Center, "Closing the Digital Divide: Latinos and Technology Adoption," March 7, 2013, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/03/07/closing-the-digital-divide-latinos-and-technology-adoption>, 5.

whether they are foreign-born or native.¹⁸ The explosion of mobile Internet for low-income Americans has great implications for online participation in civic affairs. As the Pew Research center notes, “A majority of the public now owns a smart phone, and mobile devices are playing an increasingly central role in the way that Americans access online services and information. For many, such as younger adults or lower-income Americans, cell phones are often a primary device for accessing online content—a development that has particular relevance to companies and organizations seeking to reach these groups.”¹⁹

The ethnographic work in this study demonstrates that Latina women in Minneapolis were going online and using social media largely due to three factors. First, mobile technology allows large numbers of low-income and low-media-literate Latinos cheap and easy Internet access for the first time. Second, Latino parents see computers and the Internet as increasingly integral to daily life, the success of their children, and strengthening of the Latino community. Third, a perceived improvement in the political climate for immigrants during the Obama era mitigated some participants’ fears of participating in political, social, and commercial activity online.

“Kids these days know everything about computers. We’ve got to catch up.”

The participants in the media workshops I conducted were active mothers who often volunteered in their children’s classrooms, brought their children with them when they participated in political organizing or marches, and even took them to media literacy trainings. Motherhood is so essential to these women’s identities that when they

¹⁸ Pew Hispanic Research Center, “Closing the Digital Divide,” 27.

¹⁹ Pew Research Center, “Cell Internet Use 2013,” September 16, 2013, <http://www.pewInternet.org/Reports/2013/Cell-Internet.aspx>.

introduced themselves they all began by saying, “my name is X, mother of Y children.” An examination of these first-generation Latinos mothers and their second-generation children can increase our understanding of Latino parents’ online practices, in large part because of the way second-generation children help teach their parents how to use technology. In her examination of the role of Latino parents in regulating their children’s access to the Internet, Lisa Tripp concluded that parents’ anxieties about the Internet often limited their children’s access to it, and consequently their educational and social networking opportunities.²⁰ Tripp interviewed Latino families (first-generation, Spanish-speaking parents and second-generation children) and used participant observation and informal interviews with teens at school. Her interviews and observations led Tripp to reinforce Buckingham’s assertion that media education initiatives must not be limited to schools, but rather must reach out to (in this case) low-income, Latino parents.²¹ It was therefore crucial to examine the participants’ attitudes toward technology and how their use of technology affects their interactions with their children.

There has been a large shift in the Waite House participants’ use of technology in the last two or three years. Most impressively, changes in mobile technology have given these women access to the Internet, including Facebook and other newsgathering tools. In their interviews the participants discussed the need to learn about computers, the Internet, Facebook, and other new technology in order to keep up with their children; at the same time, they expressed a desire to protect their children from dangers that exist in the online world. In their study of ICTs, Valentine and Holloway provided insight into ways

²⁰ Lisa Tripp, “The Computer is Not for You to be Looking Around, It is for Schoolwork: Challenges for Digital Inclusion as Latino Immigrant Families Negotiate Children’s Access to the Internet,” *New Media Society*, 13 (2011): 522.

²¹ David Buckingham, *After the Death of Childhood: Growing Up in the Age of Electronic Media* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000); Tripp, “The Computer is Not for You to be Looking Around,” 565.

parents' concerns about the Internet differ from those about other media such as television.²² They argue that fears about the Internet echo fears historically associated with public outdoor space, that is, the idea that children are vulnerable to dangerous strangers and in need of protection from the adult world. From this perspective, the Internet-connected computer is viewed in some households as a "gateway to harm," in which the "innocent" child must be protected from danger, and the "dangerous" child from getting into trouble.²³

The views expressed in the interviews closely mirror Valentine and Holloway's notion of the Internet as a gateway to harm.²⁴ Most of the participants characterized Facebook as something that could be good unless "put to bad use." They described how people gossip, put provocative photos on Facebook, and could even kidnap children by luring them through Facebook. Sofia, a community organizer within the Latino community, runs a women's empowerment group at a neighborhood council. In 2009 she set up an email account, which she never used until 2012. She then realized she had to start using email and Facebook for professional purposes, and within one year she went from having a defunct email account (with 3,000 unread emails) to using email daily, operating a Facebook account for her organization, and uploading pictures from a newly purchased iPad.

Still, Sofia talked about the journey she had gone through in order to become comfortable using Facebook and technology, especially when it came to her children. "When Facebook started there was lots of talk about how they can steal your identity,

²² Gill Valentine and Sarah Holloway, "On-Line Dangers? Geographies of Parents' Fears for Children's Safety in Cyberspace," *Professional Geographer* 53, no. 1 (2001): 71–83.

²³ Valentine and Holloway, "On-Line Dangers?" 74.

²⁴ Gill Valentine. *Public Space and the Culture of Childhood* (Aldershot, Hants, UK: Ashgate, 2004).

your information, your photographs; they can even kidnap kids who chat [online] with people they don't know."²⁵ Sofía still believes that children face danger on Facebook, but only when Facebook is "put to bad use." She credits a workshop through another organization with helping her get over the fear of Facebook for her children. At that workshop she learned tools for monitoring her son's use of Facebook and now interacts with him online. "My son helps me with everything computer-related, even if his work isn't paid! [Laughing.] I tell him, 'put these photos up, send them to me, save them here.' And he does it, so now I'm indebted to him. And now that I'm on Facebook I see all his friends. He has a lot of friends his age, but I've learned that he shouldn't have friends much older or younger than he."²⁶

The participants in the media trainings were eager to learn about Facebook, in part to monitor and protect their children, but also because they wanted access to the technology skills their children were learning in school. The only university-educated woman in the group, Lani, discussed the importance of being on a par with her children: "Technology is getting bigger all the time. We're the 'chip' generation, as they say. I didn't get computers in my studies because it was still the age of typewriters. But in '98, more or less, I started learning the computer when I was in the university. But very little. These days, it's so easy for children, so we are getting left behind."²⁷ Indeed, the women

²⁵ Interview with Sofía, community organizer, February 1, 2013. "Cuando empezó lo del Facebook había mucho hablar... que te roban la identidad, tu información, tus fotografías, hasta que te pueden raptar a niños que se ponen a chatear con gente que no conoces."

²⁶ Sofía interview. "Ay sí, [mi hijo] me ayuda con todo de computación, aunque su trabajo no está pagado! (Laughs) Le digo, ponme estas fotos, o mándemelos, y guárdenlos aquí. Y él me las pone y ahorita estoy en deuda con él. [Laughs.] ...[Ahora que estoy en Facebook] veo a sus amigos. Tiene muchos amigos de su edad. Y también aprendo que no debe de tener amigos mas grandes, o mas chiquitos."

²⁷ Interview with Lani, stay-at-home mother, January 30, 2013. "Como la tecnología esta cada vez más, entonces nosotros somos la 'Generación de Chip,' como dicen, y no me tocó mucho la computación en mis estudios porque todavía era la edad de maquinas. En el año '98 más a menos empecé con la computadora,

often leaned on their children to learn about technology, but also had different notions about the value of computers. Generally the women saw computers as useful primarily for the Internet, whereas their children saw them as multipurpose machines, valued for the Internet but also for playing video games, typing homework assignments, and sending emails.

An interaction between Mercedes, a recent divorcée in her 30s and a victim of domestic abuse, and her daughter exemplifies this sharp intergenerational digital divide. Mercedes works at a drycleaner's and does not have Internet access at home, though she frequently checks Facebook on her cell phone. She also uses email on her phone to communicate (exclusively) with her immigration lawyer and a social worker. I interviewed her in a cramped office at Waite House while her twelve-year-old daughter searched the web at a nearby computer. (A community organizer had asked the daughter to find graphics for possible use on a flyer.) Mercedes had participated in the YouTube workshop, had used a flip camera to interview community members and legislators about the campaign to grant driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants, and had uploaded these videos to YouTube and Facebook. She struggled with typing, but her daughter was constantly hanging around and would swoop in to help her mother out when she got stuck.

Mercedes told me, "I didn't have a computer, and my bosses at work gave me one. I don't use it because it's a desktop and it doesn't have Internet. And it's like, well, since it doesn't have Internet, it doesn't have...it doesn't have... it doesn't have..." [She

cuando estaba en la universidad. Pero poquito. Ya ahorita es muy fácil para los niños, entonces nosotros nos hemos estado quedando atrás."

shrugged as she struggled to find the right words, and finally laughed.] “Well, there’s no use for it!”

Her daughter looked up from her computer and shouted across the room.

Daughter: “Yes there is! Yes! It has “Word!”

Mercedes: “But you don’t use it!”

Daughter: “Yes, I do! I do!”

They stared each other down; then both started laughing.²⁸

This was typical of interactions between parents and children. Mercedes saw value in the computer not, for instance, as a word processor, or for creating spreadsheets or accessing music. On the other hand the participants in the media trainings are becoming more adept at using the Internet on their cell phones and computers—they are connected via Facebook and more aware of what their children have access to through the Internet. They see value in it. In short, they are ever so slowly “catching up” with their children. However, their children still act as teachers and coaches who check and correct their parents’ knowledge.

“Of course I was afraid of technology”

These parents’ attitudes towards computers reflect broader trends that have been found among many low-income adult Latino immigrants, in which computers and the Internet are perceived as useful—and something they wanted to learn—but also “technically difficult, mysterious, or intimidating”²⁹. The participants in this group often

²⁸ Interview with Mercedes, drycleaner employee, April 4, 2013.

²⁹ Paul M. Leonardi, “Problematizing ‘New Media’: Culturally Based Perceptions of Cell Phones, Computers, and the Internet Among United States Latinos,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 20, no. 2 (2003): 160.

expressed trepidation; as one participant put it, “Of course I was afraid of technology!”³⁰ But most of the women felt a strong desire to learn more, in part because they had previously participated in the general women’s empowerment program run through Waite House. Participants in that program had learned to set up a new email account and use Facebook and had set up privacy settings there. “Then we were done with the courses,” Jimena, a community organizer at Waite House said. “But we said, no! We want more!”³¹

When asked about their motivations for learning more about computers and the Internet, participants explained that they felt compelled to catch up with their children; communicate with relatives in their home countries through Facebook, Skype, or online chat (only one participant used email); communicate with non-Latino professionals; and stay current with friends and “the world.” As one woman put it, “You have to know about the Internet because that’s where everything gets done these days.”³² Another woman, Leticia, a housewife and mother of two children, described how being offline meant not participating in the world. She described how she felt isolated as a housewife and immigrant in a foreign country and had relied heavily on the telephone to stay connected to others: “But now the telephone is also becoming secondary. Now, the person who isn’t on Facebook or on the Internet is out of communication. It’s now so easy since we have our “smart” phones on us and always connected to WiFi. In any moment, you’re in a park, at home, you have a break....and you’re looking at your phone. I used to talk on the phone; now it’s all through Facebook.”³³

³⁰ Interview with Suelita, nanny, April 19, 2013. “Por su puesto, tenía miedo de la tecnología.”

³¹ Interview with Jimena, community organizer, January 16, 2013. “Ya habíamos terminado los cursos, pero dijimos, No! Queremos más!”

³² Interview with Mari, domestic servant, February 13, 2013. “Tienes que saber sobre el Internet porque es ahí que se mueve todo.”

³³ Interview with Leticia, stay-at-home mother, February 1, 2013. “Como que el teléfono esta quedando como en segundo termino también. Ya, él que no esta en Facebook o en el Internet esta fuera de la

By far the biggest motivation that the women cited for learning new media skills was a desire to help inform other Latinos. Time and again Latina mothers expressed the belief that learning new media skills would assist them in strengthening the Latino community. Here are some examples:

Leticia

We were doing all these things [with the women’s empowerment groups], and then we wondered, “What do we have to do help the community know about the things we were doing—to communicate with them?” Well, it’s about the radio, flyers, a newspaper. So we would need a journalism course in order to learn to ask questions, take photos, make videos, put them on Facebook. That was the point, no?³⁴

Kiara

[The women in the women’s empowerment group] wanted to communicate with people from the community. They knew that maybe they could communicate with many people through the radio...people weren’t really on Facebook yet. Now we realize how much you can communicate through Facebook.³⁵

Leticia

I’d like them to open up the media trainings to more women who are in the home and don’t know anything. We’re here in the house cooking, caring for our families. But the truth is we need to inform ourselves more.³⁶

Sofía

Thousands and thousands of people really use [Facebook] for unimportant things. And we could use it for more important things: to inform the community, find out the community’s problems, and listen to important things, no?³⁷

comunicación. Como es tan fácil ya traernos los celulares, y estar conectado con el ‘wifi’ con el teléfono inteligente ‘el este, smart pone,’ ya en cualquier momento estás en el parque, en el hogar y tienes un descanso, estás viendo –yo lo que hacía era hablar por teléfono pero ahora ya todo es por el Facebook.”

³⁴ Leticia interview. “Estábamos haciendo mucho, entonces nos preguntamos, ‘¿Qué tenemos que hacer para ayudar a nuestra comunidad a saber de lo que estamos haciendo? ¿Cómo comunicarnos?’ Es la radio, es un folleto. Para aprender tendremos que agarrar un curso que sería el periodismo. Aprender como hacer preguntas, como sacar fotografías, como sacar un video, como ponerlo un video y pasarlo en Facebook, ...Entonces, eso fue el punto, no?”

³⁵ Interview with Kiara, factory worker, February 2, 2013. “Querrían comunicarse con las personas...de la comunidad. Sabían que tal vez con la radio podían comunicarse con muchas personas... la gente todavía no estaba tanto en Facebook.”

³⁶ Interview with Kiara. “Me gustaría que sigan abriendo esta información de medios de comunicación a más mujeres que estamos en casa y no sabemos nada. Estamos aquí en casita cocinando, cuidando a la familia, pero la verdad es que nos tenemos que informarnos más.”

³⁷ Sofía interview. “Miles y miles de gentes realmente lo usan [Facebook] para cosas que no vienen a caso. Y realmente podríamos usarlo mejor para cosas muy importantes, para informar a la comunidad y ver cuáles problemas tiene y escuchar cosas importantes ¿no?”

This was in fact the reason I had gone to Waite House in the first place. However, the Latinas in this study faced many barriers to using Facebook and other media to inform better their community, including, for many, low literacy, digital literacy, and/or English language skills.

In one of the more in-depth focus group studies of Hispanics' attitudes toward and uses of the Internet, Anthony Wilhelm outlined the various hurdles Hispanics face to participating online. Though his study dates from more than a decade ago, Wilhelm's findings parallel those of other research,³⁸ namely that Hispanic parents saw computers and the Internet as crucial for their children's progress and upward mobility, but that their access to the Internet could be hindered by low media literacy, cost, and wanting to protect children from the Internet.³⁹ These were certainly some of the primary barriers to Internet use by participants in this study.

It is important, however, to note that social media, and the Internet generally, are not out of reach for undocumented immigrants. Various studies detail how undocumented Hispanic immigrants use them to strengthen transnational connections and form transnational virtual communities.⁴⁰

³⁸ Tripp, "The Computer Is Not for You to be Looking Around," 522.

³⁹ Anthony Wilhelm, "Buying into the Computer Age: A Look at Hispanic Families," in *Proceedings of the Families, Technology, and Education Conference*, Chicago, October 28–November 1, 1997 (1998), <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED425009.pdf>.

⁴⁰ José Luis Benítez, "Transnational Dimensions of the Digital Divide Among Salvadoran Immigrants in the Washington DC Metropolitan Area," *Global Networks*, 6, no 2 (2006): 183.

Computer use and “*La Migra*”

In addition to all the other barriers that have dampened use of communication technology by the Latinas in this study, those who were undocumented had further reason for caution. Especially as we discussed Facebook, “*La Migra*” (the common nickname for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE) repeatedly entered the conversation. Fear of apprehension was sufficient to keep a few participants entirely off the Internet; to delay the date of the plunge for far more; and even for many among the majority who ultimately became regular participants in social media, to moderate or temper use.

In my work with the Latino community I witnessed a sea change in Facebook use from 2011 to 2012. One Latino community organizer told me in late 2011 that Latinos would “never use Facebook” because they feared deportation so much. Around the same time I taught a Facebook workshop at a Latino neighborhood organization in South Minneapolis. Workshop participants—all of them Latino parents—had stated that they did not want to set up Facebook accounts because they feared that their online activities and presence may get them deported or hurt their applications for legal residence or citizenship. The undocumented Latinos in these workshops perceived potential legal repercussions, even deportation, if they were to engage in such activities as setting up email accounts, using search engines, buying online, or becoming involved in social media. Such concerns were compounded when it came to civic activities such as signing an online petition, engaging in political debate on Facebook, commenting on a newspaper article, posting news items on their Facebook accounts or in an online newspaper, or even

receiving online newsletters from a civic institution. Such concerns varied among the women, depending on what Brabeck and Xu call their “degree of legal vulnerability.”⁴¹

Although participants in this study a year or two later still shared these concerns, a stark change had occurred in the intervening time. Almost all were now using Facebook despite the knowledge that the American government might be able to access their information and use it against them. (Nearly all did report, however, that they had delayed their accession to it in part due to concerns about *La Migra*.) One interaction with Mercedes, the mother who works at the drycleaner’s, demonstrates the additional issues undocumented Latinos face when using Facebook. She is more active in the driver’s license campaign than most Latinos in the Twin Cities and has met with legislators, attended marches, cooked for community organizers, and participated in social services programming at Waite House for years. Yet she began posting pictures online only after considerable rumination about how her Facebook profile could affect her documentation status.

Mercedes

I didn’t really think about it before, but now, yeah I *am* thinking about it because I’m undocumented and I’m in that process [of getting papers]. I started wondering, And what if Immigration checks out my....Facebook account? I started worrying about all the photos that were there, because I have a lot of photos at the capitol, and at marches, and all that. And supposedly when you’re getting your papers together you can’t go to marches or do anything political. That’s what they tell you, you can’t be involved with anything political....So I’m thinking now that I’m going to get information.⁴²

⁴¹ Kalina Brabeck and Xu Qingwen, "The Impact of Detention and Deportation on Latino Immigrant Children and Families: A Quantitative Exploration," *Hispanic Journal Of Behavioral Sciences* 32, no. 3 (August 2010): 346.

⁴² Mercedes interview. “Mmmm, eso no lo pensé, pero eso si lo estoy pensando ahora, porque no tengo documentos y estoy en ese proceso. Entonces me puse a pensar...Pero y ¿qué tal si Inmigración se mete a...todo lo que es Facebook? Y me empecé a preocupar de todas las fotos que tengo allí, de todo eso. Porque tengo fotos en el capitolio, tengo fotos de marchas y todo eso. Y supuestamente tú, cuando estás arreglando tus papeles, supuestamente tú no puedes estar en marchas ni nada de la política. Eso es lo que te

Other participants overcame their trepidations about *La Migra* because of Facebook's lure as a business tool. Consider a scene at a Facebook training for a women's empowerment group at a neighborhood council in South Minneapolis. The one-time training was meant to address the fears that the women might have about Facebook, teach privacy settings, and discuss "appropriate" online conduct. At one point the participants, two of them with babies on their laps, gathered around the table to view each other's profiles. Only two of the eight women, who ranged widely in age, were not on Facebook: a 65-year-old grandmother and a young beautician who said she didn't have an account because she was undocumented.

One woman, a young housewife with a small side business selling hairpieces and beauty trinkets, showed the other women her Facebook profile, as well as scores of photos of the products she sold to members of the Latino community here. "The goods get off a boat from China, and my brother buys them at a factory in northern Mexico and brings them to a brother in Texas who brings them here," she told the group. She showed us a cascade of photos: headbands with feathers, barrettes barely glued together with bows, plump hair ties with glossy balls. But as she showed the other women her profile she noted that she didn't post any personal information on her Facebook page, only business photos.

"Still, and what if *La Migra* uses that to get you?" asked the young beautician.

"I don't have an option," the entrepreneur responded. Then she reconsidered. "I guess, I'll get them back."

dicen, no puedes estar involucrada con lo que es la política. Entonces estoy pensando que ahora voy a sacar información."

The women mostly laughed, including a community organizer, who then caught herself and said, “No, don’t joke.”

“No,” the entrepreneur said as she turned to the beautician and became serious. “I just don’t post anything personal, they can’t get you.”

The beautician seemed sold. Another woman in the group, a dermatologist with her own business, helped her open a Facebook account after the session. The beautician, who seemed a shrewd businesswoman, took a flip phone out of her purse and opened it. “Okay, now, I have 700 contacts in here,” she said pointing at her phone. “How do I put them on Facebook?”⁴³

Political organizing: “Everything’s changed because of Facebook”

If Facebook had become ubiquitous for business purposes among Latinos in the Twin Cities, so too had it become crucial for political organizing. Every participant in this study acknowledged and discussed the burgeoning importance of Facebook in the Latino legislative campaigns of 2012–2013. Rather than interview excerpts from several participants, the issue is perhaps best discussed through the case of Garbina, a 28-year-old Mexican immigrant who in 1997 had migrated to New York, where she lived for several years before coming to Minnesota with her mother. Although Garbina never graduated from college, she was enrolled fulltime in English and GED classes, was among the most literate of the participants, and was certainly the strongest critical thinker in the group. Her mother, Suelita, on the other hand, had never attended school and was the least literate, although the most active on Facebook. Garbina was very tech-savvy but was not on Facebook because of a “bad situation” with an ex-boyfriend. She was also a

⁴³ Beautician, participant in media literacy workshop, Corcoran Neighborhood Organization, July 20, 2012.

technician at the community radio program at KFAI, where her mother co-hosted the program. Garbina had been very involved in the driver's license campaign and was aware of the need for social media to promote the radio show and the campaign. She often attended events with her mother; they networked in tandem and later connected with people through Suelita's Facebook account.

One day near the middle of the drivers' license campaign, the prominence and usefulness of Facebook hit her. "Starting about a year ago, people stopped communicating by phone. First it was texts; then it was a phone call. Now they tell me, "Or, do you have Facebook?" And I tell them, "No, I've got texting." And they tell me, "Don't even bother sending me a text, just find me on Facebook and send me a message." And I say, "Wow! Now it's all about Facebook, you find everyone there and you send them a message."⁴⁴

One of our workshops permitted me to glimpse Garbina and her mother in action as they networked using Facebook. I was teaching about using YouTube and Facebook, and the women had chosen to interview undocumented immigrants about the fear of driving without a license. The women—Garbina, her mother, and a few others—used flip cameras to interview people at a political organizing meeting. That evening more than two hundred Latino immigrants trickled into Waite House, where they dropped off their children in a chaotic room staffed by volunteers, then filed into a gymnasium to hear a community organizer give pep talks and discuss legislative strategy. Throughout the evening the crowd swelled as the audience waited for several state legislators to arrive.

⁴⁴ Interview with Garbina, GED student, April 19, 2013. "Ya hace un año... todos ya no se comunican por una llamada. Antes era primero el texto, y después era una llamada.. Ahora me dicen, 'O ¿tienes Facebook?' y yo les digo, 'No... pues es que tengo texto,' y me dicen 'ni me llames, ni me mandes un texto, nada más si me encuentras allí en Facbook y me mandas un mensaje.' Y yo digo, 'Wow, ahora es el Facebook... a todos les encuentras allí y les dejas un mensaje allí.'"

Outside the gymnasium, in a claustrophobic broom closet cleared for our workshop participants, Garbina captured fellow Latino immigrants' stories on flip cams.

Throughout the evening, Suelita networked, approached strangers, got to know them, brought them in for Garbina to interview. Often I heard Garbina thank her interview subjects and *despedirlos* (say goodbye to them) with the promise, "My mother will find you on Facebook." At the end an exhausted Garbina, who had been filming in the broom closet and networking with people in the hallway all evening, peeked into the gymnasium. She was shocked to see how many people had shown up. I happened to be nearby and asked her why she was shaking her head. She replied, "It's just that everything has changed because of Facebook. In 2010 we were knocking on doors to try to get people to come out to these meetings, and nothing! Now you put something up on Facebook and wham, 200 people show up! It's amazing."⁴⁵

I had noticed this too. The political organizing coalition for the driver's license Campaign, MN Agenda Latina, had formed a Facebook group of 344 members, a couple dozen of whom were very active—no small feat for a community that seemed to have gotten online overnight and whose members perceived they could face deportation for engaging in political activity online. Later I asked Garbina about it. She said, "I think that more than anything, Latinos lost their fear. Because the youth could always get online without being afraid, but now even the undocumented—even my mom! *Myyyyyy Mom!*—even my mom has Facebook! They lost their fear."⁴⁶ I pushed Garbina on the subject: What had happened? What fear? How had they lost it? She could not elaborate,

⁴⁵ Garbina, comment in media literacy workshop, Waite House, March 8, 2013. (Spoken in English.)

⁴⁶ Garbina interview. "Yo creo que mas que nada, los Latinos perdieron el miedo, porque los adolescentes podrían hacerlo todo, pero ahora los adultos, aun los indocumentados—hasta mi mama! *Mi Mamá!*— [laughing; still laughing] mi mama tiene Facebook. Perdieron el miedo."

but at another workshop Pati, a student at a local community college, suggested one theory. She noticed that the Latino community in Minnesota had become more politically mobilized and empowered through the driver's license bill and Minnesota Prosperity Act.

⁴⁷ Pati tied this to politics and the election of President Obama:

Pati

I think that from the first time Obama was elected that's when everything changed, like, that he's a different color—his mom is white and his father is black. And that's a change, like, saying, "If he could get to there, one of us could get to the presidency." So now Latinos feel like we're "with him." Just different, I don't know. And since his father is from another country, his father is also an immigrant, so I know he supports us a lot. So, for the second election we Latinos got out there! We all got out there, and even though I couldn't vote I was helping those who could to reelect him, to go out and vote for those of us who still can't. Now I'm less afraid. I used to be afraid of going to the capitol, going to marches, signing up political emails, getting online, driving, anything. I was afraid of putting stuff up on Facebook. Now, [Obama is] supporting the Dreamers, and he's trying to change things to give us working permits, or some papers for us. So I'm less afraid. That's what I think happened to Latinos. ⁴⁸

Other participants also spoke about their role in the Obama era. One woman said that while she acknowledged that things might change, the election of Obama didn't affect her at all and wouldn't affect what she put up online. However, when later in the same interview she spoke about her Facebook account, she also joked that soon it

⁴⁷ Juventino Meza, "What the Passage of the Minnesota Prosperity (Dream) Act Means," *MinnPost*, July 3, 2013, <https://www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2013/07/what-passage-minnesota-prosperity-dream-act-means>.

⁴⁸ Interview with Pati, community college student, April 16, 2013. "Yo creo desde que la primera vez que fue elegido presidente Obama, allí cambio todo, como diciendo que él es diferente color—su mamá es blanca, su papa negro. Y eso es un cambio... como diciendo que si él pudo llegar, uno de nosotros puede llegar a la presidencia. Y ahora los latinos nos sentimos, como, "con él". Como diferente. No sé. Como su papa es de otro país, también su papa es un inmigrante todo, yo sé que él nos apoya mucho a nosotros. Y entonces, nosotros también la segunda reelección nosotros, los hispanos, salimos, salimos! Salimos todos, aunque yo no puedo votar, pero estuve ayudando a los que puedan votar, puedan reelegirlo otra vez, por nosotros, por los que no podemos todavía. Bueno, ahora tengo un poco menos miedo—antes tenía miedo de acercarme al capitolio, las marchas, firmar las peticiones por email, ponerme en el Internet, manejar... todo. Pero él quiere poner esta ley para los Dreamers, él está dando. como ahorita él esta dando un cambio de darnos un permiso de trabajo o unos papeles para nosotros. Entonces ahora tengo menos miedo. Eso es también lo que les paso a los Latinos."

wouldn't matter what she put on her Facebook account because she believed President Obama would pass immigration reform. This comment, along with those of Pati and Garbina about Latinos gradually losing their fear of participating in civic affairs online, are echoed in the following chapter, which compares the use of social media by the driver's license campaign versus the Dreamers' campaign. Meanwhile, it bears reiterating how much the participant observations and interviews reported in this chapter demonstrate the palpable fear of deportation among these women, and how much it crept into the women's decisions on how to use Facebook and other media.

Conclusion

Why did undocumented Latinos who were once afraid to put up private online information now find themselves posting private information online (that could be used against them by immigration officials)? More importantly, what does this group of Latinas' use of social media tell us about the digital divide, the virtual public sphere, and the Internet's current and potential use for civic engagement? Without question, mobile technology has democratized Facebook to a certain extent: Second generation Latino children have learned enough about Internet use in American schools to teach their parents; and the Latinos in this study used Facebook because it had become a main mode of communication with peers and family members in the community. But was this a complete explanation? Many undocumented Latinos continuously risk deportation by participating in daily life in the United States. Driving without a license, picking up a paycheck, taking part in political marches, even going to work could send them back to their countries. Why add to or ignore the risk by participating in civic activities online?

Two things come to mind based on the interviews and workshops conducted at Waite House. First, Facebook has become as essential to public life in the Latino community as something like driving. It is a necessity, not a luxury—an indispensable tool if one wants to network for business, friendship, social services, and political organizing. Second, political winds had shifted by 2013 enough to reduce undocumented Latinos’ fear of participating online, a trend that has continued to strengthen Latinos’ democratic participation online. This year, for instance, the driver’s license campaign has grown more sophisticated in its Facebook presence and its page has garnered 4,000 “likes” (mostly by Latinos).⁴⁹ If the Obama administration manages to pass any part of its Executive Action on immigration later this year,⁵⁰ I would imagine that Latinos would sharply increase their civic participation online as they continue to lose the fear of using social media for political organizing.

⁴⁹ MN Licencia’s Para Todos’s *Facebook* page, <https://www.facebook.com/MnLicenciasParaTodos?fref=ts>.

⁵⁰ Alan Yuhas, “Obama’s Executive Action on Immigration Stalled by Homeland Security,” *The Guardian*, February 17, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/feb/17/judge-blocks-obama-immigration-executive-action-court-texas>.

Chapter 4: Two Marginal Publics: The Driver's License Campaign and the Dreamers

When President Obama came to power in 2008 Latinos across the country were hopeful that he would bring about immediate immigration reform in his first term. Though this did not happen as quickly as they had hoped, 2012 was a year of positive transition for Latinos living in the United States, and it was reflected in media. In 2011 and 2012 media outlets had begun to abandon the term “illegal immigrants” in favor of the more neutral term “undocumented immigrants.”¹ By the end of 2012 the *New York Times*, which had been among dwindling number of holdouts, finally changed its reporting guidelines to encourage the use of the term “undocumented immigrants.” Two thousand twelve was also the year that *TIME* magazine asked the question, “Should undocumented immigrants be named *TIME*’s person of the year?”² The question had had to do with the Dreamers, the children of undocumented immigrants who had come to the United States at an early age with their parents. Although some driver’s license campaigns simultaneously cropped up around the country, the national spotlight focused mostly on the Dreamers. In June of 2012 José Antonio Vargas, the *Washington Post*

¹ Roque Planas, “‘Illegal Immigrant’ Debate: Univision takes on the New York Times,” *Huffington Post*, October 8, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/08/illegal-immigrant-debate-_n_1948904.html.

² Howard Chua-Eoan, “Who Should be *TIME*’s Person of the Year?” *TIME*, November 26, 2012, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2128881_2128882_2129191,00.html.

reporter who, in an influential *New York Times* essay,³ had revealed himself to be an undocumented journalist, wrote the *TIME* cover article, “Not Legal, Not Leaving,” in which he highlighted his own story and called for immigration reform. Shortly after the article President Obama announced Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which promised not to deport Dreamers for several years and to grant them work permits.

This was the national climate as Latinos in Minnesota organized locally in 2012–2013. The two agendas that gained the most traction among them were the driver’s license campaign and the state version of the Dream Act, the Minnesota Prosperity Act (sometimes referred to in interviews by that name and at other times as the Dream Act). This chapter explores the similarities and differences between the two overlapping campaigns, which each constitute their own publics. Indeed, the two publics were unified in their aim to change policy for Latinos, but differed in their makeup, goals, and strategies. As we have seen, the driver’s license campaign was characterized by coalitions of often less educated, adult Latino immigrants who discussed the campaign in Spanish. Although the campaign for the Dream Act enjoyed support from those same adult Latinos, it drew more involvement as well from their English-speaking children and from mainstream, predominantly white advocacy groups. Though the two campaigns were united in their goals to bring about change for Latinos in Minnesota, differences in language, generation, access, and legislative priorities meant that they intersected less than one might imagine.

³ Jose Antonio Vargas, “My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant,” *New York Times Magazine*, June 22, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/26/magazine/my-life-as-an-undocumented-immigrant.html?_r=1.

This chapter leans on interviews with media professionals in the English-speaking mainstream and alternative presses, members of local Spanish-speaking media, and leading activists in the driver's license and Minnesota Prosperity Act campaigns. The interviews and analysis of social media shed light on some of the questions Squires asked concerning the black public sphere. In her analysis Squires suggested that Black sphere studies should ask, "1. Who makes up the different collectives from which public spheres emerge? 2. What is the range of opinions and interests among these publics? 3. How much overlap is there between these publics in terms of interests and opinions? 4. Are many of these publics currently working in concert, or are they pursuing separate strategies to define and address their interests? 5. How does each public interact with other public spheres and the state?"⁴ Specific to this case study I also asked, How did Latino activists use Latino press, alternative and community press, mainstream press, and social media in their attempts to pass both the Minnesota Prosperity Act and the driver's license bill?

The social media analysis and interviews show how Latinos used media to advance their political agenda with varying degrees of success, depending in part on national and state political will. Perhaps most importantly, the interviews also show how undocumented Latinos' fears of deportation played a major role in their participation in media, civic affairs, and the virtual public sphere. In particular, the positive effects of DACA on young Latinos' civic participation and use of social media shined through the interviews with reporters, editors, and activists alike.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first discusses the Latino media landscape and use of social media, as well as the context of internal communications

⁴ Squires, 456.

structure for Latino publics. The second shows how the driver's license public acted as an enclave public through an analysis of its Facebook group and its "hidden transcripts," as well as interviews with media professionals. The third analyzes the Facebook page of Navigate MN—the principal organization working on the Prosperity Act—and uses interviews to show how the Dreamers acted as a counter public to successfully influence the dominant public sphere and pass the MN Prosperity Act.

Internal communications within Latino media

Many media-related questions faced the Latino activists as they planned for the legislative session of 2013. What kind of stories would they choose to tell online, at the capitol, and to reporters? How could they get the mainstream press in Minnesota to frame stories the way activists desired? Where would they post their stories online and how would they use the Internet to organize? Would they be afraid to tell their stories? How would they assess the risk of speaking out in public or participating in politics? Would they make a distinction between telling their story online versus in the "real world"?

Then there was the question of how Latino activists would mobilize support among Latinos. By 2012 traditional Latino media in the Twin Cities were in a state of flux, in part because the traditional Spanish-language print newspapers had dwindled significantly as the Internet expanded. Long-established business models for ethnic print and online media across the country were crumbling in a new media climate, and the Latino print newspapers in the twin Cities were no exception. On the other hand, Latino organizers still had five radio stations to choose from in order to reach about 60,000 Latinos in the metro area: three Mexican-format radio stations, an Ecuadorian station, and

a “tropical”-format station. Depending on the station, they could target primarily the western suburbs or the central cities. Or they could forgo all five Spanish-language commercial radio stations and instead promote their cause on the one-hour Spanish information radio show on local nonprofit community radio station KFAI, with its limited audience.⁵ The majority of popular Latino radio shows were entertainment-focused, so the activists would have to find DJs sympathetic to their cause and willing to interrupt their colorful gossip shows to inject a sobering dose of legislative affairs. Finding a sympathetic DJ could be hard; the right DJ with the biggest reach would be harder still. Some activists used Facebook to determine where to target their efforts, starting with the DJs with the largest Facebook following (a DJ with 5,000 followers would do nicely).

The activists’ emphasis on radio and social media does not imply that they could ignore Latino print media; much less that Latino print media had vanished entirely. Although hard news reporting in the Latino print and online press had indeed diminished drastically, Latino activists still placed ads or editorials with the only two remaining Spanish print newspapers in the Twin Cities. One, *La Voz Latina*, serves the West Side of Saint Paul and reaches primarily a narrow audience of Latino immigrants who have been in Minnesota much longer on the whole than the newcomers. The other, *La Prensa*, is an amalgamation of two former Spanish language newspapers that merged in the mid 2000s. The informational newspaper is now a small insert in a monthly entertainment newspaper, *Vida y Sabor*, sort of a local Spanish language version of the *Village Voice*. Though Latino activists interviewed for this project cited radio stations and social media

⁵ All interviews in this chapter were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement. An interview with the owner of a Latino news company, November 14, 2013, helped me sort out the varied Latinos news and entertainment publications.

as the two most important venues for communicating about civic affairs, they did not discount the two newspapers and still went to them with story ideas and coverage.

A cursory look at Facebook pages of Latino media organizations and Latino nonprofits provides an overview of Latino participation in social media. Though the number of “likes” an organization or media outlet receives on Facebook is not tantamount to “circulation,” it nevertheless hints at the relative number of people each organization could reach online. As in the case of the general public, Latinos tended to “like” entertainment-oriented media more than informational media, as noted repeatedly in interviews. The number of “likes” for *La Prensa*, the traditional newspaper, and KFAI’s community radio show, “La Voz del Pueblo,” is also noteworthy. Although they have the smallest number of Facebook “likes,” at the time of my research “La Voz del Pueblo” had only had a Facebook page for several months, whereas *La Prensa* had been around for decades and had had a Facebook page for many years. In part, this indicates the struggle the traditional Latino outlets face as new media emerge, a theme highlighted later in this chapter by the interviews with Latino media business owners.

TABLE 1: Latino Media Use of Facebook (November 25, 2013)

Media Outlet	Medium	Type	“Likes,” FB
Impacto Local ⁶ (Univisión)	Television	Entertainment, News and Information	4,161
La Mera Buena ⁷	Radio	Entertainment	3,198
Radio Rey ⁸	Radio	Entertainment	3,029
Vida Y Sabor ⁹	Print Newspaper	Entertainment	1,699
La Raza (Invasora) ¹⁰	Radio	Entertainment	N/A
La Picoso ¹¹	Radio	Entertainment	533
La Prensa de Minnesota ¹²	Print Newspaper (Delivered inside Vida Y Sabor)	News and Information	285
La Voz del Pueblo ¹³	Radio	News and Information	241
La Voz ¹⁴	Print Newspaper.	News and Information	None

TABLE 2: Latino Civic Groups’ Use of Facebook (November 25, 2013)

Latino-Heavy Organization Name (Non-Media)	Type	Social Media Type	Members or “Likes”	Approximate % Latino surnames
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha ¹⁵	Nonprofit/Labor Union	Facebook Page	1,548	61%
Navigate MN ¹⁶	Informal coalition supporting Prosperity Act (became nonprofit later)	Facebook Page	847	94%
Immigrant Law Center ¹⁷	Nonprofit Agency	Facebook Page	840	28%
Asamblea de Derechos Civiles ¹⁸	Religious coalition and civil rights group	Facebook “Person”	429	89%
MN Agenda Latina ¹⁹	Social services-based civil rights group	Facebook Group	372	97%

⁶ “Univision Minnesota Primer Impactos’ Facebook page,” accessed November 20, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Univision-Minnesota/444397685578512?fref=ts>.

⁷ “La Mera Buena’s Facebook page,” accessed November 20, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/lamera.buena.1>.

⁸ “Radio Rey’s Facebook page,” accessed November 20, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/radiorey630?fref=ts>.

⁹ “Vida y Sabor’s Facebook page,” accessed November 201, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/vidaysabor?fref=ts>.

¹⁰ In November 2013 La Invasora’s Facebook page was shut down because the radio station was changing owners.

¹¹ “La Picoso’s Facebook page,” accessed November 20, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/lapicoso1530AM?fref=ts>.

¹² “La Prensa de Minnesota’s Facebook page,” accessed November 20, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/LaPrensadeMN?fref=ts>.

¹³ “La Voz del Pueblo’s Facebook page,” accessed November 20, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/LaVozDelPueblkfai?fref=ts>.

¹⁴ La Voz is a print newspaper whose owner has repeatedly decided not to put up

¹⁵ “CTUL’s Facebook page,” accessed November 24, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/CTULucha>.

¹⁶ “Navigate MN Facebook page,” accessed November 24, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/NAVIGATE.MN?fref=ts>.

¹⁷ “Immigrant Law Center Facebook page,” accessed 24, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/immigrantlawcenterMN?fref=ts>.

¹⁸ “Asamblea de Derechos Civiles’ Facebook page,” accessed 24, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/asamblea.dederechosciviles?fref=ts>.

The charts above put Latino’s social media use into perspective. Even though the participants in both campaigns (Dream Act and driver’s license) heavily used social media, the numbers suggest that Latino organizations reached, through social media, only a minority of the 60,000 Latinos living in the Twin Cities. The small numbers of Latino Facebook participants, however, probably understates their importance. Compared with the Latino population as a whole, it seems almost certain that those who did participate online were more tech-savvy (and perhaps more educated) than other Latinos, more politically engaged, and more likely to be opinion leaders within the community.

Finally, the second chart presents an overview of some of the key organizations in Latino political organizing and their Facebook membership. In this chapter I have focused on two of these organizations—Navigate MN and MN Agenda Latina—because they were the driving forces behind legislative advocacy. However, it bears mentioning that other peripheral organizations existed alongside, and occasionally overlapped with, both legislative campaigns, as we shall see in the next two sections. In particular, to pass the Dream Act, Navigate MN partnered with the Immigrant Law Center, whose Facebook Page is predominantly liked by whites (followed in numbers by Latinos, and finally by people with non-Latino surnames, most likely immigrants from other countries). The driver’s license campaign also worked strategically with the Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha (CTUL), a labor rights organization whose Facebook membership is majority white, perhaps because of its association with the Democratic Farmer Labor party. MN Agenda Latina also relied on its association with Asamblea de Derechos

¹⁹ “MN Agenda Latina’s *Facebook* page,” accessed November 24, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/asamblea.dederechosviviiles?fref=ts>.

Civiles, a coalition of religious organizations (primarily Catholic) dedicated to promoting human and civil rights through religious organizing.

Lastly, I did not count the growth of Facebook “likes” over 2012 and 2013 for each one of these groups, an oversight I regretted after I had conducted the interviews in the late summer and fall of 2013. When initially conducting research I had not anticipated the importance that the DACA legislation would play in young Dreamer’s use of media. During a subsequent interview, an organizer with Navigate MN shared analytics showing that the organization had nearly doubled its Facebook “likes” in the several months after DACA was passed in the summer of 2012. The causes of the spike in Navigate MN’s social media membership are uncertain, however. It might reflect the gradual adoption of Facebook by Latinos generally, young Latinos’ desire to access more information about DACA, lessened fear after the implementation of DACA, or (most likely) some combination of all these.

Traditionally the organizations mentioned above could rely on Latino print newspapers and radio to mobilize communities and show positive stories about the community’s successes. Two thousand twelve was no different, except that social media’s importance surpassed that of the print/online newspapers. The excerpts below from my interviews with two Latino media professionals demonstrate how Latino publics organize themselves internally within this new media climate, as well as the perceived tensions between commercial and public interests. The first quote is from the owner of the Latino media company that operates a radio show, the two Minneapolis Latino print newspapers (entertainment- and news-focused), and a growing public relations operation.

The second is from a CUTL media activist who helped set up KFAI's Spanish-language news show, "La Voz del Pueblo," and who sees the media landscape differently.

Media owner: Latino newspapers, radio station, PR Company

We've had lots of politicians or political campaigns want to reach Latinos, and you know Latino media is in real trouble because the funding's not there (that's why we're moving towards PR). Still, we have a lot of Latino media around with all these radio stations and social media and they're changing hands all the time. Just imagine people who want to reach the Latino community and are so confused they don't know where to start. So we say, we're not even going to worry about explaining it. Just give us your budget and we'll make it seamless. So we put a proposal together and we have a relationship with the radio stations, and print, and we have a ton of social media, and we take the politicians to the Latinos.

As far as politics goes, I'm not going to even pretend *not* to be biased. Yeah, we'll promote the driver's license campaign, the Dream Act, and now Comprehensive Immigration Reform! Like on one radio show, we got a little carried away with being too edgy, but we figured. "Let's give people what they want, and kind of slip in the good stuff." So, yeah, we inserted all kinds of messages. For instance, on *La Invasora* we had a show and it was total gossip, and it was *offensive* [laughing] and it was a very openly gay show. So people got offended but they loved it! And we knew how to slip in anti-gang, anti-alcohol campaigns.

And then, yeah, we'd slip in the Prosperity Act, or even announcements for the political campaigns and get people out to events. I'd make sure to invite people onto my own show. We did tons of promotion to get people out to the last immigration march and to the capitol. And we did it on the radio. We did it in print. And now we do it on Facebook. And we did all that for free because we want people to be involved.²⁰

CTUL media activist: Host, "La Voz del Pueblo"

The Latino radio stations are all gossip, pure entertainment. Imagine how much more we could get done if Latino media actually informed the community about resources and what is going on. That's why it was good timing that we started our own radio show and started our own Facebook page. And it's good because DJs from La Picoso came in to help train us, because you know [laughing], we were a little boring, we didn't know what we were doing. They taught us how to spice things up so that more people would listen to us.

Still, I think without our Facebook presence no one would listen to us on KFAI, that's how people find us. Not through the radio. Facebook helped us get the word out on our radio station about the driver's license campaign, the Dream Act, and now the

²⁰ Interview with media owner of Latino newspaper/radio station/public relations company, November 14, 2013.

immigration marches. We need more of this kind of media—news, information, not just entertainment—to inform the Latino community.²¹

These quotes illustrate the diversity of Latino media within the Twin Cities, both in type and in attitudes concerning quality and purpose. The reduction in substantive reporting within the Latino press is clearly troublesome to Latino media professionals. Univisión’s local hard news show, “Impacto Local,” provided more hard news reporting on both campaigns than the print newspapers, though coverage of neither was abundant. But at the same time Latinos are using other traditional forms of media, such as community radio, as well as new media tools such as mobile phones, Facebook, and YouTube, to help inform the community. While these new media have not adequately replaced substantive reporting from the traditional Latino press, they certainly offer new venues for Latino publics to interact and inform their communities. Moreover, as we saw in the previous chapter, new media provided a sense of empowerment to Latinos involved in political organizing. This would prove crucial to the Prosperity Act and driver’s License campaigns alike.

The driver’s license campaign: An enclave public

The MN Agenda Latina Facebook group began on January 4th, 2013, with a post in Spanish from Francisco Segovia, director of the Waite House in South Minneapolis. It states: “This is a space for building a Latino agenda and to fight for the reclamation of our human rights. We are a coalition of Latino individuals and organizations working in areas that impact the social and economic life of the Latino community. This effort is

²¹ Interview with CTUL media activist and host, “La Voz del Pueblo,” December 1, 2013.

open to all Latino people.”²² For the next six months the Facebook group was used by community organizers and activists as an internal bulletin board of sorts. As indicated by the founder, the posts were written in Spanish by Latino organizers, activists, and individuals from across the Twin Cities. Most posts related to the driver’s license campaign organizing meetings and efforts at the state capitol; however, Dreamer activists also posted information about their cause on MN Agenda Latina. (The reverse was not true; the driver’s license campaign rarely appeared on the Dreamer’s communications.) As reported in the first chart above, the Facebook group was 97 percent Latino, and of its handful of white or non-Latino members only a few were elected officials and none were reporters from the mainstream press (a stark contrast to the Navigate MN page). The chart below shows media sources and organizations linked to the MN Agenda Facebook group and provides a glimpse into its internal organization. Most importantly, it shows how the group was almost entirely inward-focused and interacted little with non-Latino informational sources or organizations.

²² “MN Agenda Latina’s *Facebook* page,” accessed November 24, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/asamblea.dederechosociviles?fref=ts>.

TABLE 3: MN-Agenda Latina Facebook Groups

Sources linked to, January 4, 2013-June 8 2013					
National Policy or activist organizations	National or international mainstream press	Local Mainstream	Local Community Media	Latino Press	Government Info
-Rebelión (Colombia) -La Prensa (El Salvador) -Pew Hispanic Research (report on number of eligible Latinos voters in MN) ²³	-None	- Star Tribune (Pro OpEd) -Kare 11 (Coverage of hunger strike)	-TC Daily Planet (3 of my articles, 6 by the women in our media classes) -KFAI non-Latino	-Home Videos posted on YouTube by Latino Activists (6) - Univisión Impacto Local -La Voz Del Pueblo (3)	-MN Senate Media Services (1)

TABLE 4: MN-Agenda Latina Facebook Page

Institutional connections mentioned in posts about joint events January 4, 2013-June 8		
Dominant Public Sphere	Hybrid (some Latino membership, some white membership)	Mostly Latino-led or Latino-focused member organizations
-City of Minneapolis -Non-Latino Minneapolis City Council members (3) -State Legislator (Latino)	-CTUL	-NavigateMN 18 (Posts by Dreamer Activists about Dreamer issues) -Tamales y Bicicletas -Waite House -Chicano Latino Affairs Council (2) -Asamblea de Derechos Civiles

This documentation of the group’s network illuminates the campaign’s relatively few media resources and legal connections, as well as its internal focus and use of social media primarily as an internal organizing tool. This falls in line with Squires’ characterization of enclave publics, which provide a safe space for deliberation set apart from the dominant sphere. In addition, the content of the Facebook page shows the drastic difference between the internal, or “hidden transcripts,” and the “public transcripts,” or narratives.²⁴ As discussed in chapter one, hidden transcripts are internal

²³ Pew Research Center, “Latinos in the 2012 Election, MN,” accessed March 30, 2015, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2012/10/MN-election-factsheet.pdf>.

²⁴ Squires, “Rethinking the Black Public Sphere,” 460.

narratives within enclave publics that differ from the dominant narratives used when interacting with the dominant public sphere. The MN Agenda Latina Facebook group shows the stark differences between the public argument for driver's licenses, often presented in English, and the internal arguments for the driver's licenses, often presented in Spanish through personal storytelling in organizing meetings and through home videos on YouTube.

Take for instance a flyer—among the only postings on the Facebook group in English—advertising a hearing at the state legislature and asking for support. It reads: “MN Driver’s Licenses for All: Safer Roads. Police Supported. Insured Drivers. Boost the Economy: Fees, gas, insurance, car purchases, mechanics, etc.” Instead of framing the issue as a human or civil rights issue, organizers of the campaign worked with Democratic legislators to frame it as a public safety issue. Through such framing, organizers hoped to appeal to Republican legislators less inclined to empathize with a human rights argument. This public safety argument was the dominant script that the driver’s license campaign provided to those outside the Latino community, especially legislators and media. Here it is codified in an opinion piece from the editorial board of the *Star Tribune*²⁵:

Immigrants here illegally have accounted for a few high-profile fatal Minnesota accidents over the years, and the risk remains high, because they haven’t been trained, tested or licensed for driving by the state. A legislative effort to curb this problem deserves wide support.

Only a few months ago, the Minnesota State Patrol shared this sobering statistic: Unlicensed drivers are twice as likely to be involved in fatal accidents as drivers with valid licenses. Measures under consideration in the state House and Senate would allow

²⁵ Star Tribune Editorial Board, “Allow all Immigrants to Drive Legally, Safely: Denying Driver’s Licenses to Those Here Illegally Erodes Public Safety,” *Star Tribune*, April 6, 2013, <http://www.startribune.com/allow-all-immigrants-to-drive-legally-safely/201534311/>.

immigrants in the country illegally an opportunity to obtain licenses if they meet the training and testing requirements of other state drivers.

Regulating these drivers is sure to make roadways safer. In addition, licenses will make it easier for them to obtain automobile insurance, providing a potential cost benefit to other Minnesota drivers. Although tragedies rightly make headlines, this legislation is needed to address the daily reality that Minnesota roadways are shared with too many unskilled drivers.

The arguments in this editorial contrast drastically with the stories and arguments posted internally on the MN Agenda Facebook page and in organizing meetings. The latter fall more in line with the stories discussed in the previous chapter, which often highlighted the psychological effects of driving without a license and frame it as a human rights issue. Dozens of examples of these types of hidden transcripts are posted in the MN Agenda Facebook group, perhaps none so striking as an audio slideshow posted to the Facebook group by a Latino activist a couple of months before the *Star Tribune* editorial.²⁶ The show featured pictures of organizing meetings at Waite House, while a popular Latin American folk song from the 1970s, *Obrero acepta mi mano* (“Worker, Take My Hand”), played in the background.²⁷ A poem/call to action narrated the pictures as they panned across the faces of Latino individuals and white legislators. On the next page is the translated poem with a brief description of the pictures.

²⁶ “1-25-13-licencias,” YouTube video, posted by Francisco Segovia, January 27, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYIGGiQiSZ0&feature=youtu.be>.

²⁷ “Obrero acepta mi mano,” from the album, *Los Guaraguao*, Vol. 4, posted by “#LosGuaraguao,” December 24, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPHRNZsxpAI>.

[Pictures pan across faces of Latinos at organizing meetings]

Mobility is a human right.
Humanity has walked this world since the beginning of time.
We all have something in common.
We've been displaced for
economic and political reasons.
I left my country because I didn't earn much
and because of lack of opportunity
to have a dignified life.

Minneapolis-MN is my home. We raise
our children here. We contribute here.
But I can't reach my potential as a human being
without a driver's license, and without documents
my life is insecure.

I'm afraid of the police stopping me. I work
cleaning houses, in construction, in restaurants, etc.
I came because my mother wouldn't forgive me
if I didn't act in solidarity with my brothers.

History shows us that
organizing and struggle are tools
to build a better future.

[Pictures pan across faces of white legislators supporting the bill]

So we speak with our allies
asking solidarity!
They hear our voices.
We hear their words.
And they committed to fight with us.

[Pictures pan across faces of white legislators standing alongside Latino organizers]

Our worlds are interrelated.
Together, we liberate ourselves here.
This is my story and yours.

And so we write one more piece of history. It is not the end
nor the beginning. Just one more step in the building
of our future. Get involved and *adelante!*

The coalition of Latinos in the Mesa Latina also published a manifesto of sorts that further solidified the group's identity as one outside the powerful elite. The coalition had met in the fall of 2012 to decide its legislative priorities and strategies, and in the spring of 2013 it published the results of its strategizing meetings on Facebook. After listing the priorities in the manifesto, the group wrote (in Spanish):

Even gaining [driver's licenses] and documentation would not ensure a good future for us so long as we remain poor. If we do not believe this, we should look at poverty levels in other communities of color, including documented Latinos. Such observations led a group of Latino activists to propose a civic/social organization led by "The Affected." Clear goals such as scholarships, degree completion, and immigration reform are necessary but not sufficient. The Mesa Latina can present these challenges, but only the ingenuity and vision of its members can convert this movement into a voice of the Latino community in Minnesota capable of impacting those in power. Poverty and lack of access to such resources as medical care and fringe benefits do not affect Latinos alone. Thus, we must unite with other communities of color around a common vision and seek solidarity with white allies committed to building an inclusive Minnesota. Inaction will condemn our community to poverty even while we live in the midst of the First World, thus repeating the history that we have already lived within our Third World countries as poor masses with little electoral impact. You must decide!²⁸

Compare this manifesto and the poem above to the opinion piece in the Star Tribune. The poem and manifesto identify the group as workers, borrows concepts from Latin American social movements and liberation theology, uses leftist language to identify class struggle and labor rights as central to the driver's license campaign, and identifies mobility as a human right. Additionally, it alludes not to a near future where Latinos can drive with a license, but to a distant future where Latinos and other communities of color are not poor. The narrative identifies the group (we are not white, we are like other people of color in America) and places all of them in opposition to "those in power." However, even though the group states its aim to unite with other communities of color and white allies, its own public presence online does not achieve this, as noted earlier.

So what, then, did this enclave public achieve through its political organizing online and offline, and through its media production on the radio and Facebook? I turned

²⁸ MN-Agenda Latina's *Facebook* page, "Revised Agenda February 14, 2013," posted February 24, 2013.

to media professionals and activists to get a sense of how they felt the campaign used media and to what end. Of the responses, four were noteworthy for their views on the accomplishments of the campaign and its use of media. However, it bears mentioning that none of the reporters from mainstream regional newspapers had very insightful comments on the driver's license campaign and instead focused on the Dreamers, another indicator of the failure of the driver's license campaign to garner much notice in the mainstream press. That being said, the perspectives of the four people below underscore the political and media maturation of this group of Latinos.

Editor: Citizen journalism online newspaper

The driver's license bill was important, I think, because it was chosen by the community as an important issue, and by a specific group in the community as a specific focus, and they followed through. They got practice going to the capitol, going on social media, going on the radio, constructing a campaign. So it's like cutting your political teeth. I don't think that it had a lot of focus at the legislature, but it was an important experience in learning to use the media, and that learning experience was more important than the legislative success in this particular instance.²⁹

Reporter: Spanish-language newspaper

You know, yeah, I'm not going to say [The driver's license campaign] made huge difference, like we've really turned a corner. But I've heard people being more hopeful about immigration reform, and more willing to talk to reporters. People are getting more engaged, they are getting the hope that, well, their situation could change, and that if they join forces—like they did on the driver's license bill—then they could change something. I think people are more willing to talk to me as a reporter, like some of the fear has left because of the campaign. That being said, there have been so many deportations under Obama and I've still heard a lot of fear.³⁰

Dreamer activist

The driver's license movement was really so exciting! Even the politicians told me, "We've never seen so many Latinos at the capitol." So we did that, we made that happen. The Dreamers won, and the driver's license may not have passed, but we made the politicians notice us, and surely we will win it soon in the future, God

²⁹ Interview with editor of citizen journalism newspaper, December 14, 2013.

³⁰ Interview with reporter at Spanish language newspaper, January 10, 2014.

willing. This year we made the politicians notice us. Next year we'll make the media notice us.³¹

Media owner of Latino newspaper/radio station/PR company

The driver's license thing was a turning point. The legislature has never seen that many Latinos. I remember going to one of the legislative committee meetings and the entire room was completely packed with Latinos, and lines going out the room! Packed! And I just remember the Republicans looking at each other and making comments, and you could tell they were kind of holding back, they didn't want to say the wrong thing [laughing]. I mean it didn't pass, but I think the Latino community keeps on reaching different levels of maturity and that was one of those turning points. The key is how to get the outside world to notice that.³²

A view of the internal organizations reflected and transcripts on the MN Agenda Latina group, coupled with comments from media professionals, paints a picture of an enclave public that used media to effectively organize members of its own community, but whose reach to dominant groups was limited. A brief examination of MN Agenda Latina's Facebook group shows that the organization's media savvy and organizing tactics were still in a nascent stage (much less sophisticated than the Dreamers') with little interaction with the dominant public sphere. In contrast, the Dreamers used social media both to organize internally and to build bridges between Latinos and outside supporters.

The Dreamers: An effective counter public

Amelia, 33, was a recent mother and an activist in the Dreamer movement in Minnesota. She immersed her in the movement several years ago until she eventually became the head of a small organization dedicated to helping young undocumented Latinos go to college. Amelia became involved in the Dreamer movement despite being

³¹ Interview with Dreamer activist, January 8, 2014.

³² Interview with media owner of Latino newspaper/radio station/public relations company, November 14, 2013.

undocumented, despite being afraid of deportation, despite knowing she would be slightly too old³³ to be affected by the Dream Act. “I had thought that by the time I became a mother someone would have passed immigration reform,” she said. “But they didn’t. I need to see this happening before my daughter goes to college, I had to get involved.” She was afraid of speaking in public, afraid of marching or testifying at the capitol, afraid of posting to her Facebook wall about the Dream Act. “There was a lot of fear, but that fear also makes you act,” she said.

Stories like Amelia’s cropped up in huge numbers in the mainstream press around this time. In fact there was a cascade of positive stories about the Prosperity Act in the early winter and spring of 2013. The biggest local media outlets—the *Star Tribune*, Minnesota Public Radio, the *Pioneer Press*, and KARE 11—generally painted undocumented Latino students seeking in-state tuition as “Dreamers, not criminals.”³⁴ For the Dreamers, as one news outlet stated, the Prosperity Act came “at a time of shifting attitudes in Minnesota and nationally toward the 11 million illegal immigrants already here.”³⁵ The stories in the mainstream press overwhelmingly featured Dreamers and used young undocumented Latinos as sources,³⁶ rather than focusing on scholarly and expert opinions only. The fact that mainstream outlets covered the Prosperity Act at all was a real coup for Dreamer Activists, and one coveted by proponents of the drivers’

³³ Pew Hispanic Research Center, “Up to 1.7 Million Unauthorized Immigrant Youth May Benefit from New Deportation Rules,” August 14, 2012.

<http://consulmex.sre.gob.mx/boise/images/stories/2012/medios12/phunauthorized-immigrant-deportation.pdf>

³⁴ Ruben Rosario, “Give Students a Chance to Step Out of the Shadows,” *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 4, 2013. http://www.twincities.com/ci_22930133/rub-n-rosario-give-students-chance-step-out

³⁵ Ali Shah, “Young Undocumented Dreamers Find Doors Opening in Minnesota,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 1, 2013, <http://www.startribune.com/local/200818131.html>.

³⁶ John Croman, “Bill Moves Forward in Minn. Senate,” KSTP, April 3, 2013, http://archive.kare11.com/news/news_article.aspx?odyssey=topicpage&storyid=1019701.

license bill, who failed to garner significant coverage in the mainstream or alternative press.

Framing studies on immigration and the Dream Act help contextualize Amelia's story and her subsequent efforts to place Dreamers' stories in the mainstream press. The progressive think tank, Opportunity Agenda, conducted a framing study of immigration coverage between September 2012 and February 2013.³⁷ The report—a content analysis of 53 major national and regional daily newspapers and eight national broadcast and cable television networks—found that this period brought a “more positive public discourse on immigration policy reform than any time in recent memory.” Coverage in the preceding five years had focused primarily on state anti-immigration laws and featured anti-immigration proponents as sources. However the period after Obama's second election saw a shift in tone, as well as an increased inclusion of young immigrant sources. (Whereas the young “Dreamers” were often featured in stories related to the Dream Act, DACA, or in-state tuition, older immigrants were rarely featured in stories about immigration policy.)

The tone of the coverage also shifted so that Dreamers “were mostly portrayed as eager to complete their education and officially become part of the system as contributing members of American society, and as *not* at fault for their immigration status.” Notably, coverage continued to use descriptors to identify documentation status for general immigration policy, but left out legal status of Dreamers, rarely referring to young immigrants as “illegal” or “undocumented.” Most germane to this study are the authors' findings that:

³⁷ Opportunity Agenda, “The State of Media Coverage of Immigration 2012–2013,” April, 2013, http://opportunityagenda.org/files/field_file/2013_imm_media_scan.pdf

The DREAM Act, both as a public policy proposal and a rallying point, has had a significant effect on the media discourse around immigrants and immigration. Coverage of issues concerning young undocumented immigrants was driven by President Obama’s memorandum on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA) in August 2012... Coverage of these issues also shifted the representation of immigrants in the media to a predominantly positive one... with virtual unanimity in op-eds and other newspaper commentary in support of immigration policy reform.”³⁸

Latinos’ efforts to pass the Prosperity Act in Minnesota fell in line with

OpportunityAgenda’s findings and shaped how effectively Dreamers were able to use the mainstream press. All of the media professionals and activists interviewed for this study acknowledged that the success of the Dreamers in getting positive local media coverage was tied to national immigration coverage. The table below shows how much more Dreamers in Minnesota relied on national and local mainstream press in their messaging and political organizing than the driver’s license campaign did.

TABLE 5: Navigate MN Facebook Page

Sources linked to, May 15, 2012-December 31, 2013					
National Policy or activist organizations	National or int’l mainstream press	Local Mainstream	Local Community Media	Latino Press	Gov’t Info
-Migrationpolicy.org (2) -Dreamactivist.org -Peninsula Press -Immigrationpolicy.org -Media.collegeboard.com -Reformimmigrationof-america.org -Actiondreamactivist.org -Futureofmediagroup.org -UnitedWeDream.org -Artinfo.com -Colorlines -Asianangryman.com -Libertyhill.org -Dailycaller.com -Notomoredeportations.com	-CBS Local -Time (2) -MSNBC -Huffington Post (9) -PBS -The Guardian -Univisión -(Latino) Fox News -NY Times (4) -ABC News (2)	-MPR (5) -Star Tribune (4) -CBS Local -City Pages -KSTP -Minn Post	-The Uptake -TC Daily Planet (8) -MN Daily (2)	-Primer Impacto -La Prensa (2) -La Voz del Pubelo (KFAI) -La Picoso	-Whitehouse (4) -DACA Webinar -Arkansas -USICS.gov -Social security.gov -DPS.mn.gov -GPO.gov

³⁸ Opportunity Agenda. “The State of Media Coverage of Immigration,” Pages 12.

TABLE 6: Navigate MN Facebook Page

Institutional connections mentioned in posts about joint events or pro-Dreamer events, May 1, 2012-December 31, 2013		
Dominant Public Sphere	Hybrid (some Latino membership, some white or mixed/dominant membership)	Mostly Latino-led or Latino-focused member organizations
-University of Minnesota -MCTC -MN International Center -MN Chamber of Commerce -MN Business Coalition -Interfaith Coalition -Immigrant Law Center -Normandale Community College -Hennepin Technical College -Open Arms of Minnesota -TC Daily Planet -Citizens League -MN Minority Education Partnership	-MIRAC (Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee) -SEIU (Labor Union) -MN Immigrant Freedom Network	-Centro Campesino -Mexican Consulate -Guatemalan Consulate -MN Network of Latinos in Higher Education -Church of the Risen Savior

Certainly it is noteworthy that Navigate MN’s Facebook page linked to abundant national and international media coverage. But the charts also demonstrate the extent to which Navigate MN was integrated with a wide variety of publics. Unlike MN Agenda Latina, Navigate MN enjoyed a balanced mix of institutional support from dominant publics, hybrid publics, and Latino publics. It also posted stories from national activist networks whose own networks included a similar mix of publics. This meant that a news story from Navigate MN featuring a Minnesota Dreamer could be posted by an immigrant rights organization in Arkansas and garner attention within multiple publics nationwide, and vice versa. Finally, the chart shows how much more coverage the Dreamers received from mainstream media coverage. Even KSTP, a more conservative local news outlet that had painted the driver’s license campaign in a negative light in a news segment, covered the Dreamers and did so in a positive light.

What the chart does not show is how Navigate MN often primed its members to tell their stories to members of the mainstream media, how it effectively produced its own YouTube videos, how its members often appeared in testimonials at the capitol and in news stories, and how their stories mimicked the mainstream narrative about Dreamers. Many members of the media with whom I spoke asserted that the Dreamer stories were an “easy sell” to reporters. Two quotes, the first from the editor of a local Citizen journalism online newspaper, the second from a Dreamer activist, indicate how effectively activists capitalized on the shifting tone of immigration coverage.

Editor: Citizen journalism online newspaper

Oh absolutely it was an “easily sell.” But don’t forget that easy sell built over ten years. The Dream Act had been an organizing flash point for Latino communities, here in Minnesota and nationally, every year since 2003 and maybe before. So it wasn’t that Latinos suddenly got the attention of the media in 2013. No. They worked their butts off to get that attention of the media for years, and to get the attention of the president. And finally they succeeded in getting both.³⁹

Dreamer activist

The national narrative has put us in the loop lately and we have been quick to jump on the wagon. We have done work on how to tell our stories, but we now have supporters in the highest political offices. So it was important to get that validity, and then the media simply followed...I mean, 2013 was the year where every reporter in the mainstream media—every reporter—wanted to write about, you know, the 4.0 GPA undocumented student at the University of Minnesota, and all the leaders of the community that were defying the odds, redefining what undocumented mean. They wanted to talk to us and they wanted to write about that.⁴⁰

The Dreamers felt the support of media in their political organizing. In contrast, the activists involved directly in the drivers’ license bill were not able to articulate what went wrong with their media messaging, but other media professionals suggested that the driver’s license bill was less successful at getting coverage outside the Latino media

³⁹ Interview with editor of citizen journalism newspaper, December 14, 2013.

⁴⁰ Interview with Dreamer Activist, January 8, 2014.

outlets because reporters correctly intimated the bill was a doomed piece of legislation, and because the narrative was not already written for reporters, as in the case of the Dream Act. Take for instance comments from these two media professionals:

Media owner of Latino newspaper/radio station/PR company

The Dream Act ended up being more effective, because you had *grassroots* and *grasstops* on it. And who can be against the Dream Act? They're kids right? But Governor Dayton really struggled with the driver's license bill.⁴¹

Editor: Mainstream regional newspaper

I think the Dream Act and the Prosperity Act are an instance of using the media with great effectiveness. And I think that has informed the people who participated in that campaign and who are now working on the immigration reform movement. I think the driver's license campaign was also effective in training people, but I don't think it got a lot of good press. And that may be as it may be. It's hard during the legislative session to get coverage because everyone wants *their* bill to get coverage.⁴²

Such comments about the Dreamers' ability to get positive coverage came through in many of the interviews and in the framing studies mentioned above. Perhaps more important, my interviews with media professionals and Dreamers hint at a direct link between the passing of DACA and Dreamers' political and online civic engagement. In particular DACA helped many Dreamers lose the fear of using social media for political purposes, a trend that has serious implication for marginal publics who engage in virtual debate and deliberation. To date I have found no studies that directly document or even discuss the link between this piece of public policy and online civic engagement. For this reason it seems worthwhile examining DACA and the anecdotal evidence presented in the interviews, which links DACA to an increased use of social media among Dreamers.

⁴¹ Interview with owner of Latino media company, November 14, 2013.

⁴² Interview with editor of mainstream regional newspaper, March 6, 2014.

In the summer of 2012, just months before his second-term election, President Obama announced the administrative program for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA. The directive specifically allows the Department of Homeland Security to “exercise prosecutorial discretion as appropriate to ensure that enforcement resources are not expended on low priority cases, such as individuals who came to the United States as children and meet other key guidelines.”⁴³ In essence the program allows young undocumented immigrants deferred deportation for up to two years, as well as semi-legal benefits, such as access to driver’s licenses.⁴⁴ DACA proved significant for young Latinos in the United States. By the end of the first year of DACA more than 573,000 people had applied and more than 430,000 people had received deferred action, though the path to citizenship for immigrants is still elusive.⁴⁵

Some wondered why more undocumented immigrants were not applying for DACA and postulated that many could not afford the application fees or did not trust the government.⁴⁶ Still, the administration was fully convinced that DACA would positively affect young Latinos in the short term, even though many were unsure exactly what those effects would be.⁴⁷ Research studies on the effects of DACA are scarce and tend to focus more on its economic implications than its implications for civic engagement. However

⁴³ “Official Website of the Department of Homeland Security: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals,” last modified July 2, 2013, accessed, January 12, 2014, <https://www.dhs.gov/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals>.

⁴⁴ “Official Website of the Department of Homeland Security.”

⁴⁵ Center for American Progress, “Undocumented No More: A Nationwide Analysis of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA,” September 20, 2013, accessed January 7, 2014, <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/report/2013/09/20/74599/undocumented-no-more/>.

⁴⁶ Nancy Lopez, “Why aren’t more youth applying for DAC?,” Reprinted from *South Kern Sol*, Sep 30, 2013, in *New America Media*, accessed January 12, 2014, <http://newamericamedia.org/2013/09/why-arent-more-youth-applying-for-daca.php>.

⁴⁷ Julia Preston and John Cushman, “Obama to Permit Young Migrants to Remain in U.S.,” *New York Times*, June 15, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/16/us/us-to-stop-deporting-some-illegal-immigrants.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

the National UnDACAmented Research Project conducted a mixed methods study to find out how DACA had affected the lives of young Latinos in the United States a year after its proclamation.⁴⁸ The study found that “although DACA opens up some economic opportunities for young aspiring Americans, it does not address the constant threat of deportation still facing those closest to them, including mothers, fathers, and siblings.”⁴⁹ This may not be that surprising when one considers that nearly two-thirds of the respondents in the national survey personally knew someone who had been deported. Overall, however, it was clear that younger undocumented immigrants were applying for more jobs and educational opportunities and integrating further into the American social fabric because of DACA.

Missing from the study is a more textured understanding of how a gradual easing of fear among Dreamers, rather than a total abandonment of fear, began to affect Dreamers’ integration into American civic life, sense of belonging, and public visibility in media. The statements below highlight the perceived effects of DACA on the Minnesota Dreamers’ use of media. I highlighted these statements in particular because they indicate similar understandings about DACA but represent perspectives from a wide range of groups, including Latino activists, Latino media, community media, and mainstream press.

Editor: Citizen journalism online newspaper

I think that there has been some concerted effort to get more Latino organizations online. But I think that DACA made a big difference because some of the young people who are the right age to be doing social media maybe have been afraid to use

⁴⁸ Roberto G. Gonzales and Veronica Terriquez, “How DACA is Impacting the Lives of Those Who Are now DACAmented: Preliminary Findings from the National UnDACAmented Research Project,” Immigration Policy Center, August 2013, accessed February 2, 2014.
http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/daca_final_ipc_csii_1.pdf

⁴⁹ Roberto G. Gonzales and Veronica Terriquez. “How DACA Is Impacting Lives,”DACAmented,” 1.

social media before DACA. But now that they have status at least waiting for permanent residency I think they are less afraid and more organized. I think they are more determined not only to maintain their own legal status but also to get legal status for their parents, grandparents, children etc.⁵⁰

Male Dreamer activist

When we were organizing for the MN Dream Act, DACA had already passed, so a lot of students were already under a work permit and immigration relief, so there wasn't fear of getting deported because you spoke out. So we were preparing good testimonies, like really good Minnesota testimonies of children who were raised in Austin, Marshall, the Twin Cities, to talk to media and really bring those back home.⁵¹

Female Dreamer activist

Facebook made media accessible. We didn't have to go home and do anything, we could pull out our phones and take a snapshot, and it could inspire students everywhere, being that we are a young audience, so we knew we had to be on Facebook and we were very persuasive. That was a huge part of our success.

Being unafraid though social media is as important as being unafraid in public. Coming out and sharing our students' faces and our community's faces, those faces that were part of testimonies in the capitol—and knowing that that would be shared everywhere, that that will follow you, that you will be on the digital webs for the rest of their lives—makes a huge difference.

I don't know which comes first, if you become unafraid in public first, and then on social media. Or if you become unafraid on social media first, because you're behind a computer, and then you become unafraid in public. Really, I don't know which comes first.⁵²

Reporter: Spanish-language newspaper

We are getting louder in our opinions, there are a couple protests and people have shown up, but it's a long road from there to giving too much information [as a source in an article] that you think might cause you problems. This is especially true when I try to get people to speak as sources. I don't know, I think it's 50/50. Like, for one person who is not willing to speak out, there's one person that is willing to give an opinion, if not a name. It's like a tide, so yes, we're not afraid any more, then you hear about a deportation, and we go back to being afraid. The younger people seem to be losing some of their fear, though.⁵³

Reporter: Mainstream regional newspaper

There were more subtle or “within-the-system” attempts to change minds. Instead of mass marches, there were more attempts to visit elected officials, hold lobbying rallies,

⁵⁰ Interview with editor of citizen journalism newspaper, December 14, 2013.

⁵¹ Interview with male Dreamer Activist, January 10, 2014.

⁵² Interview with female Dreamer activist, January 8, 2014.

⁵³ Interview with reporter for Spanish language newspaper, January 10, 2014.

and use more social media (Facebook, etc.) to spread awareness and reach the younger population.

Locally, press releases were sent announcing in advance of visits to the office of local congressmen on the DREAMER issue. In that same vein, I did a column when scores of undocumented high school kids visited the state capitol and fanned out throughout the State Office Building to meet with elected officials and discuss the issue, whether they had an appointment with them or not. Many Dreamers helped their own cause, perhaps emboldened by Obama's deferred status directive, by identifying themselves and speaking publicly about their plight. It was that step that attracted more mainstream media coverage.

There is still quite naturally a reluctance to ID oneself, given the fear of deportation. But that is now mostly true with adults. There is also a reluctance [on the part of Latino adults] not only to call the cops, but also to talk to the media because of this.⁵⁴

The interview excerpts above suggest that DACA helped spur young Dreamers' civic participation at the state capitol and on social media. Moreover they point to a real relationship between young Dreamers' sense of belonging and their willingness to participate in civic affairs online. As the reporter for the mainstream regional newspaper suggested in his comments above, the Dreamers began to see the state capitol as a safe space. More importantly for the study of public spheres and open media systems, the Dreamers began to trust reporters, legislators, and online spaces. This provides a stark contrast to the adult Latinos of the driver's license campaign who shared their stories on Facebook within their own community but still distrusted reporters and felt ambivalent about how much political information to share online, as also discussed in the previous chapter. It is certainly possible that many Dreamers would have shared their stories on Facebook and with reporters even before the passing of DACA. However, these interviews suggest that DACA contributed highly to the Dreamers' psychological sense of safety, which in turn positively impacted their use of media.

⁵⁴ Interview with reporter for mainstream regional newspaper, March 6, 2014.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Reflections on My Role as a Researcher

The success of the Dream Act media coverage on the one hand, and the failure of the driver's license bill coverage on the other hand, calls to mind Sandra Ball-Rokeach's research on storytelling, discussed in Chapter One. In specific, Ball-Rokeach wrote about communication practices on the neighborhood level to show how an open communications systems can foster effective storytelling at the micro, meso, and macro level. The driver's license campaign participants successfully told their stories on the micro and meso levels, but failed to reach macro-level storytelling as the Dreamers did. Because the Dreamers used media effectively on all three levels, and of course because of national political factors, the Dreamers shifted public policy to make higher education more affordable for hundreds of young Latinos in Minnesota. The driver's license campaign did not succeed in attracting much media attention, or in passing legislation, but they "got the politicians to notice" them.

Additionally Kim and Ball-Rokeach helped contextualize the impact of DACA and the psychological component of Latinos' online participation in civic affairs. She argued that many factors, including psychology as well as access to technology and transportation, coalesce to determine the success of a particular community's ability to use media to effect social change. The success of a group depends on a strong local storytelling network, including individuals sharing information within their personal

networks; local media, nonprofits, and community media organizations working together to tell these stories; and media outlets that amplify the stories and contextualize them within larger city, state, or national affairs. Specifically, Kim and Ball-Rokeach argued that, “the strength of the storytelling network is related to collective efficacy, civic participation and community belonging.”

It could be easy to underestimate the importance of community belonging as a factor in effective use of media, as I did when I set out on this project. Over the course of this research, however, I began to understand how both campaigns, one acting as an enclave public and the other as a counter public, used media to increase their sense of belonging and stake claim to greater rights. For one, Latinos very much saw themselves as set aside from white publics, and identified white allies in both campaigns, asserting that they, too, belonged in Minnesota alongside whites. Secondly, I was struck by the sense of empowerment and pride people, especially the lower literate Latinas, felt when they spoke about learning to use media to advance political campaigns. In her book about Latinas and citizenship, Katherine Coll wrote about how Latinas’ civic participation contributed directly to their self-esteem, or *autoestima*. This was evident to me when working with the Latina women: Producing their own media directly impacted their self-esteem and sense of empowerment, which ultimately contributed to their sense of belonging, online and off. Third, Latinos’ participation in media, from posting on Facebook to hosting a radio show, decidedly required constant risk evaluation and a conscious rejection of the limits placed on undocumented Latinos. “Losing the fear” seemed to be the first step towards civic participation, online and off. Fourth, both campaigns showed how remarkably Latino publics are overcoming barriers of education,

language, access, and fear to practice cultural citizenship offline and online. As Latinos used media in their struggle for rights currently only granted to legal citizens, they also practiced the process of citizenship, thereby increasing their sense of belonging in Minnesota. As one reporter told me,¹ Who could not be impressed by the pictures on Facebook of hundreds of Latinos packed into the State capitol, pictures that implied, “we belong here”? Throughout the interviews I was struck by the consensus about how both campaigns demonstrated the maturation of Latino communities in the Twin Cities as they practiced going to the capitol and developing media strategies.

These are the democratic processes that Dewey, Asen, Hall, and Stevenson all alluded to in their writings about media, democracy, and belonging. Dewey stated that Democracy asks for people’s “creative participation”² and Asen later built on this notion when he asked researchers to focus on how people enact citizenship, especially in unusual, deinstitutionalized settings.³ Hall and Held suggested that media can reflect how people find ways of culturally belonging to a society even when they are legally or culturally excluded from dominant membership. Stevenson extended Hall and Held’s notions of cultural citizenship to suggest that citizenship education should focus not on what it means to be a “good citizen” but instead on inclusive policies that teach democratic processes. Cultural citizenship, he stated, “is above all is the attempt to foster dialogue, complexity and communication in place of silence and homogeneity.” This was evident in the Latina women’s desire to use computers in order to understand what their children were learning at school, as well as to learn how to create a radio show and use

¹ Interview with reporter with mainstream regional newspaper, March 6, 2014.

² John Dewey, *Creative Democracy the Task before Us* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), 26.

³ Robert Asen, "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship". *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 90, no. 2 (2004): 189–211.

Facebook for political organizing. It was also evident in the Facebook pages of both political campaigns; in their photos of Latinos at the capitol, standing next to American flags, in their efforts to reach out to mainstream reporters; and in their use of video and Youtube for storytelling. A statement by Flores in his essay about Latino cultural citizenship seemed to encapsulate the Latinos' use of media in Minnesota. "Citizenship," he wrote, "is an active process of claiming rights rather than the passive acquisition of an arbitrary and limited set of rights."⁴

In his book about the "Latino threat" Chavez noted that Latinos face an additional barrier to citizenship, worsened by their labels as illegal aliens, "a social identity marker laden with illegitimacy and criminality that renders immigrants as undeserving of social benefits including citizenship."⁵ One of the most striking aspects of the two campaigns was how much more adult Latinos had to struggle to be seen in media and at the legislature as meriting benefits than their younger counterparts. Mainstream media portrayed the Dreamers as deserving of some rights because "they were not at fault," while largely ignoring adult Latino's struggle for driver's licenses. Moreover, adult Latinos were portrayed not as deserving driver's licenses but as needing them in order to reduce the safety threat they represented to citizens with licenses. This narrative starkly contrasted Latino's own "hidden transcripts" about why they deserved driver's licenses. Here both state and media played a large role in validating the rights of one group, the Dreamers, while rejecting the rights of another, adult Latinos. This led me to reflect on

⁴ William Flores, "New Citizens, New Rights: Undocumented Immigrants and Latino Cultural Citizenship," *Latin American Perspectives* 30, no. 2 (2004): 295.

⁵ Guillermina Gina Núñez-Mchiri, "The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation by Leo R. Chavez," *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 35, no. 1 (2012): 146.

the role local media can and should play to transform narratives about which Latinos should or should not belong in Minnesota.

Directions for media literacy and my role as a researcher

If we can empower people to use technology for political organizing, job searching, consumer interactions, and communicating with each other, then we can build stronger communities—even do our part to shrink the employment and achievement gaps. Through nonprofits or through community-run workshops at their children’s schools, the women highlighted in Chapter 3 had picked up skills that helped them overcome the fear of technology. It was striking how much computer training the women had participated in, mostly run by Latino-led social service organizations. To me it suggested that civil sector groups working to bridge the digital divide are achieving some measure of success. However, as Di Maggio and Hargittai have pointed out repeatedly, chipping away at the digital divide does not solely mean granting people access to the technology but assessing how communities use it to address inequality at a more nuanced level.⁶

In order to address information inequality we must understand how individuals, communities, and nations perceive technology and how the quality of use varies. In a study in the D.C. area Benítez found that Salvadoran immigrants used the Internet but did not fully understand its uses and capabilities.⁷ Benítez quoted Wilhelm, arguing that “Media literacy and critical thinking skills are required to navigate the Internet... It takes

⁶ Paul DiMaggio *et al.*, “From Unequal Access to Differentiated Use: A Literature Review and Agenda for Research on Digital Inequality,” in *Social Inequality*, ed. Kathryn Neckerman (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004): 355–400.

⁷ Benítez, Jose Luis, “Transnational Dimensions of the Digital Divide Among Salvadoran Immigrants in the Washington DC Metropolitan Area,” *Global Networks* 6, no. 2, 2006: 181-199.

media literacy, background knowledge, and critical thinking skills to navigate the loads of information that the Internet can provide. Along with the ‘nuts and bolts’ classes, adults need to learn to navigate the Internet—a sort of driver’s-ed course—so as to best help themselves and their children learn.”⁸ The Latina women profiled in Chapter 3 were of similar class and education to those in Benítez’s study, and yet it is obvious how the perception of the Internet has changed since a more participatory Web has come into its own. When Benítez conducted his study in 2006, Salvadoran immigrants viewed the Internet as a metaphoric “librarian” who answered questions when one posed them online. While the participants in this study learned to master social media, navigate multiple Internet accounts, and use new video and blogging technologies, their understanding of the Internet was still limited, and low literacy skills often hindered their fluent use of online tools. However, they saw the Internet’s potential to inform Latinos, as a tool for social change, and to build community. Moreover, although the participants used social media for social, business and newsgathering purposes, they also used social media to inform and legislative campaigns in the state legislature. This is perhaps testament to Clay Shirkey’s notion that social media have become tools for democratic social change and that, “Social media have become coordinating tools for nearly all the world’s political movements.”⁹ The power of social media, he stated, lies in their ability to bring together loosely connected publics.

The Latinos in this study overlapped to a certain extent, but it became obvious that there was a wide gap in media savvy and digital skills between younger and older

⁸ Anthony Wilhelm, “Buying into the Computer Age: A Look at Hispanic Families,” *Proceedings of the Families, Technology, and Education Conference*, Chicago, October 28–November 1 (1998), <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED425009.pdf>, 146.

⁹ Clay Shirkey, “The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change,” January/February 2011 issue, *Foreign Affairs Magazine*, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2010-12-20/political-power-social-media>.

Latinos. I believe it showed the real need for increased media literacy training within the Latino community, focusing on two levels. First we need to continue funding social service organizations to train Latino parents in basic computer skills. We need to tie this kind of programming to schools rather than waiting for adult Latinos to walk through the doors of social service organizations. Second, we need to provide more second-level digital skills trainings that aid democratic processes and political organizing. From my experience working in digital inclusion and local media for the past decade, funders are currently less inclined to do this. For instance, I sit on a committee on at local foundation that has set aside funds for Latino initiatives. The committee members focus almost solely on funding initiatives tied to federal or statewide legislation that impacts Latinos. They are much less inclined to fund work that is political and grassroots in nature, and that does not promise a positive legislative outcome in the very near future. Moreover, they are more inclined to fund social services than media initiatives. However, this study shows how a vibrant media ecosystem can help Latinos gain more rights. We should pay special attention to bolstering an open media ecosystem that contributes to Latinos' sense of belonging.

Digital inclusion literature does a very good job of examining the link between education, race, and income on the one hand and technological sophistication on the other. But this study adds to digital inclusion literature by articulating the link between hegemonic structures and policies, such as immigration policy, and the adoption of technology by Latinos. Cost, media literacy, fear of what the Internet could do to children, and fear of technology all seem to impede Latinos who wanted to participate in political organizing online. However, these are hard barriers that can be chipped away at

with time. They are nameable barriers, easy to articulate, as Hagartti did in her writings on first and second level digital divides. Over the course of this research, however, it became clear that Latinos faced an additional soft barrier due to being undocumented—it was something that lurked in the background, prevented people from posting personal information on Facebook, or even made participants think twice about what they put up online. Of course all people think twice about what they post of Facebook because of worries about professionalism, self-concept, peer approval, and the like. Evidence of this emerged among the Latinos in this study as well, especially during the participant observations when women were teaching each other about the Internet. But while the fear of “la migra” is not the only barrier to Latinos’ political organizing online, it is certainly a salient one. This fact poses an additional challenge, and requires additional problem solving, for professionals working to promote an open media system and media literacy training among Latinos. I believe we cannot afford to wait for federal legislation to grant Latinos greater rights; we need to fund and support media literacy efforts that responsibly train Latinos to use social media for political organizing despite many Latinos’ undocumented status. In part, this means we must fund efforts that integrate media literacy training into political organizing, instead of solely on funding media literacy training in apolitical institutions, such as adult basic education centers. It also means we must train media literacy professionals to better understand the legal risks and realities that Latinos’ face when posting political information online.

I wondered about this, especially about my role promoting Facebook and media literacy training, when I conducted the workshop with the women entrepreneurs described in Chapter 3, in which the beautician got over her fear of *La Migra* to open a

Facebook account. It wasn't until several months after the workshop that I interviewed a Latino newspaper owner and asked him about this particular situation. I told him that I had observed many Latinos, like the beautician, stay away from social media because of the fear of *La Migra*, only to finally dismiss the potential consequences. Was this a true perception? Were Latinos in Minneapolis really losing their fear of participating online?

“Online?!” He almost shouted. “Forget it! I think Latinos are losing their fear online and offline!” He paused to reflect after this outburst, then continued. “After the marches of 2006 there were many raids, and many Latinos had the perception that they were being deported because of the raids. Now, that perception is really waning and Latinos are less afraid under Obama, even though he's deporting even more than Bush! Take the last immigration march.¹⁰ People were organizing on Facebook; there's no way we would have gotten out so many people to the march without that. But it's gotten to the point where we have to say, ‘No! Hey, no, remember you could get deported for this or that.’ I mean, we are seeing people participating in civil disobedience at the marches, and they're saying they'll risk it. And we're saying, ‘*okaaa-aaaaay*, but you're gonna get deported. And there's gonna be an online trail of everything you did.’”

It was something I did not pay enough attention to as a feminist researcher/communications activist, and I hope to bring more attention to this in future media literacy work. When looking at the driver's license campaign Facebook pages, I was struck by how much of the content there came from my articles in the citizenship journalism newspaper and from the women in the media literacy workshops I conducted. On the one hand it revealed the importance of the work we were doing together because it

¹⁰ Julia Preston, “Thousands Rally Nationwide in Support of an Immigration Overhaul,” *New York Times*, October 6, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/06/us/rallies-nationwide-in-support-of-immigration-overhaul.html?_r=0

was bringing media coverage—any media coverage—to an issues largely ignored by the mainstream press. However, it also made me reflect on the remarks above. Was I helping create an online “trail of everything” these women did, and could that that have potential risks for them in the future? It made me return to the women months after I had interviewed them and discuss the risks with them personally. I also recently spoke with an ICE official, Mark Cagemi, who now trains Latinos in how to assess risk and “stay clean” in case comprehensive immigration reform ever provides them with a path to citizenship. His journey from law enforcer to law educator began when his high-school-aged daughter dated an undocumented Latino, as documented by Minnesota Public Radio.¹¹ The ICE officer became friends with his daughter’s boyfriend, and as he did so began to grasp firsthand the psychological effects of being undocumented. Now his workshops include advice for Latinos on how to stay away from high-risk behaviors that might lead them to deportation. His lecture included helpful suggestions on what kinds of personal and political information Latinos could potentially share online, in part because it makes transparent the real risks of political organizing online. This would be hugely helpful both to Latinos and to media trainers, who may not fully grasp the risks undocumented Latinos face by participating in virtual public sphere. DACA helped young Dreamers get online, but it could be years before comprehensive immigration reform does the same for adult Latinos. This is not meant to overstate the importance of being undocumented as a barrier to Internet use; however, it is something that requires more attention and awareness among media literacy practitioners. I should have done a

¹¹ Annie Baxter, “Mark Cangemi, 9/11 Investigator, Adopts Immigrant Teen's Cause,” Minnesota Public Radio, April 20, 2012, <http://www.mprnews.org/story/2012/04/20/mark-cangemi-immigration>.

better job of informing myself on the risks (real and perceived) that Latinos face by participating in politically motivated media production.

The more informed Latinos are about their rights and risks, the more effective they can be in political organizing and media production. More media literacy trainings that focus specifically on the perceived and real risks of participating in social media could, for instance, help shift the driver's license campaign from an enclave public towards a more inclusive, wide-reaching counter public. As the Dreamer activist stated in Chapter 4, "I don't know which comes first, if you become unafraid in public first, and then on social media. Or if you become unafraid on social media first, because you're behind a computer, and then you become unafraid in public."

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