Chapter 1

Building on Immigrant Parents' Repertoires

Scaffolding Online Home-School Communication in New Latin@ Diaspora Contexts

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Parental and family engagement in Latin@ and immigrant communities is often documented by educational researchers from strength and resource-based perspectives, in order to support more equitable home-school relationships for nonmainstream families (Delgado-Gaitán, 1993, 2001; Valdés, 1996; Zentella, 2005). Although research informed by ethnographic methods illuminates the rich home language and literacy practices in immigrant families (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), school and policy initiatives that position "parents as partners" may not sufficiently address the complexities of leveraging home resources in school, thus reproducing deficit discourses and beliefs about immigrants' parental skills (Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernández, 2013).

This deficit approach can be greatly amplified by "digital divide" gaps in technology access in immigrant households. Research on the intersection of parental engagement and technology use remains understudied, given that Latin@ parents' participation is still largely based on print-based practices (e.g., storytelling, family journals). As email and social media become new channels for home-school communication (Mitchell, Foulger, & Wetzel, 2009), it is crucial to document technology initiatives in school spaces for families who may need support in online forums (The Children's Partnership, 2010; Fleming, 2012). This technological support meets a critical need for first-generation, Spanish-dominant immigrants, who are

less likely to engage in online activity than bilingual or English-dominant, native-born Latin@s (López, González-Barrera, & Patten, 2013).

In this chapter, we analyze the online communication practices of immigrant parents in a school-based family digital literacy program. This program took place in the context of an elementary school in a Southeastern U.S. school district within the New Latin@ Diaspora region, that is,

> places that have not traditionally been home to Latinos and where educators must manage language barriers, find ways to support a new population, and work with families and students to fully engage them in schooling. At the same time, precisely because NLD schools typically don't have structures to support such students, educators can be flexible and develop innovative ways to meet the challenges. (Wortham, Clonan-Roy, Link, & Martinez, 2013, n.p.)

In taking up this challenge, we focus on the available digital resources for parents within the district, the experiences and resources parents mobilized in their access to online communication, and the affordances and features of such platforms in relation to immigrant parents' knowledge. The following research questions guide our inquiry:

1. What linguistic resources in their repertoires did the immigrant parents in our study bring to home-school online communication practices?
2. What were the affordances of online platforms as mediational means in home-school communication for Spanish-dominant immigrant parents?

Parental Engagement

Research informed by ethnographic and critical perspectives has focused on disrupting deficit assumptions about family members' capabilities and roles. Baquedano-López et al. (2013) found that parents are positioned as: (a) "problems" and "first teachers," with attention to gaps in school readiness and solutions oriented to replacing home practices with mainstream and normative educational practices; and (b) "learners," who lack educational skills and language proficiency. In "conventional" parent involvement, these tropes materialize in efforts to recruit parent participation, such as

mandatory attendance to school events and communication reduced to memos or newsletters (Delgado-Gaitán, 2012).

In contrast, the *funds of knowledge* paradigm (Moll & Greenberg, 1990) involves the study of practices, skills, strategies, and bodies of information that are historically accumulated and culturally developed and are essential to a household's or community's functioning. The construct of funds of knowledge has often been trivialized to refer to anything that someone knows from outside school. Yet it is a fundamentally Marxist construct that refers more robustly to the ways in which cultural collectives share resources to advance the prospects and potential of their group, typically in a society in which they are positioned as being in deficit to dominant groups.

Moll and colleagues employed the term to account for the manner in which Southwestern Latin@ community members *acted communally to prosper as a group* in a broader culture that emphasized competition between both individuals and groups, for example, whites versus Latin@s, and individual students in school, along with their teachers. The research of Moll and colleagues found that cultural differences in how social groups manage knowledge—for example, through collective collaboration versus through hoarding by individuals—have consequences for how students perform in school, with Latin@ children who are acculturated to collective thinking struggling in schools characterized by individual competition. The notion of funds of knowledge, in contrast to this individualistic conception, views knowledge as a reservoir of resources designed to serve whole communities without benefiting any individuals over others.

A funds-of-knowledge approach has the potential to facilitate culturally responsive parent-school community connections (Delgado-Gaitán, 2012) by placing teachers in an ethnographic role in which they learn how Latin@ households and communities function. This knowledge enables teachers to better align their classroom practices with the ways in which children from immigrant families and communities—whose school failures are belied by the intelligence of the work they undertake at home—solve problems. A digest derived from research by Moll, Greenberg, and colleagues (ERIC Development Team, 1994) reports that many schools assume that "linguistically and culturally diverse working-class students do not emerge from households rich in social and intellectual resources. This inaccurate perception . . . has too often led to lowered academic expectations" (pp. 1–2).

In support of a more respectful and informed perspective on language-minority families and communities, we draw on two additional bodies of work that illuminate parents' alternate roles as actors and cultural critics:

critical ethnography and *activist ethnography* (Hurtig & Dyrness, 2011). Critical ethnographies illuminate relationships of inequality and asymmetry among families, communities, and institutions. Key foundational work has documented language and literacy socialization practices in the home. Similar to Moll and colleagues, Valdés (1996) has found a disjuncture between the values, beliefs, and perspectives of Mexican-origin parents in California and the manner in which they are interpreted in mainstream school settings. Zentella's (2005) edited collection examines the complex decision-making that immigrant parents face in light of cultural transmission, language maintenance, and English-only ideologies, demonstrating the strengths of the most stigmatized individuals in deficit discourses: immigrant Latina homemakers who are perceived at school as being in need of intervention and support to overcome the presumed absence of intellectual resources in their childrearing (Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2014).

Activist ethnographers collaborate with parents and community members in order to critique and transform home-school-community relationships. In their own work with urban parents, Hurtig and Dyrness (2011) became coresearchers by organizing and researching home-school relations among a small group of mothers (Dyrness, 2011) and through "parents as writers" workshops in which stories and publications were presented on family literacy nights (Hurtig, 2005), producing "ethnographies of empowerment" (Delgado-Gaitán, 1993). Parental engagement informed by participatory frameworks allows family members to become "critical partners," welcomed in spaces where they can navigate educational systems in inclusive ways (Olivos, Ochoa, & Jiménez-Castellanos, 2011). However, as Baquedano et al. (2013) argue, such empowerment approaches are mostly mediated by a third-party member such a researcher or facilitator, positioning parents as lacking the initiative and ability for critical inquiry or agency, a problem in much critical theory (Cushman, 1999).

These approaches have illuminated the challenges Latin@ parents and caregivers face in the New Latin@ Diaspora and their need to contest deficit assumptions. Villenas' (2001) critical ethnography documented the counter narratives of Latina mothers who, to resist and refute service professionals' deficit assumptions, asserted their knowledge and home practices as valid and appropriate educational approaches. As Villenas pointed out, these mothers' resilience had implications for understanding the education of a new generation of Latin@s in U.S. schools.

The study we report contributes to the emergent literature on parental engagement in new migration contexts by looking closely at the *affordances of online domains as mediating tools in home-school communication processes*. The present analysis explores the technology needs of immigrant communities in the U.S. Southeast and the online affordances available to school

districts with a growing population of New Latin@ Diaspora parents and caregivers.

Parents' Linguistic Repertoires and Home-School Communication

This study focuses on the texts and means of communication in home-school relationships, with attention to the types and forms of texts exchanged, the content of these communications, and the specialized register of the "language of schooling." Delgado-Gaitán (2012) emphasizes these factors as relevant in efforts to reach and involve parents in the educational system. Like Gallo and Wortham (2012), we see the potential of a repertoire approach to parental engagement, considering how both immigrant parents and teachers in New Latin@ Diaspora contexts can benefit from expanding and building on their existing communicative resources. In Blommaert's (2010) framework of sociolinguistics of mobility, "repertoires" include multiple linguistic resources deployed in various spheres and communicative settings. A focus on repertoires is particularly helpful in *superdiverse* social environments, where cultural identities, practices, and norms shift constantly (Blommaert & Backus, 2013). In New Latin@ Diaspora contexts, immigrants may affiliate with groups and organizations in complex ways, depending on their mobility and networks based on employment, religion, neighborhood/location, and their maintenance of transnational ties with their nation or region of origin.

Superdiversity also results in a condition of *polycentricity* in the norms that shape immigrants' social lives: the condition in which the resources that individuals mobilize are valued, understood, or adequate amid manifold and sometime conflicting norms that are established by multiple centers of authority (Blommaert, 2010). For instance, the Spanish register used in religious literacy practices may not hold the same value in the context of school-based communication about English literacy. In this study, a repertoire framework allows us to examine the particular language varieties, registers, and genres that are present in the "language of schooling" in online home-school communication that involves immigrant parents who are newcomers to digital platforms.

Method

Situational Context and Participants' Backgrounds

This study took place at a charter elementary school in a small city in the southeastern United States. Chavis Elementary (all names are pseudonyms)

was within its first five years of operation when the first author became involved in collaborating with the family engagement specialist in programs for parents. As mentioned earlier, the school had a high enrollment of Latin@ students (67%) during 2012–2013 in comparison to district and state demographics, and primarily served residents of nearby mobile home communities. The opening of the school was itself a response to the changing population in the county, because its location allowed all the children from emerging Latin@ neighborhoods to attend the same institution. The family specialist (a bilingual social worker) at this school played a crucial role in creating programs and opportunities for parents to access information about the schooling system, and to receive the necessary translation services in parent-teacher conferences and other academic events. However, district initiatives to increase technology and social media integration created new challenges for a community that already faced obstacles in language and cultural barriers.

In response to these new demands, the first and second authors, along with a family engagement specialist, teachers, and participating parents, collaboratively designed a technology program to support home-school relationships and to respond to parents' needs in their use of mobile and laptop devices. Although the design of the study is informed by the paradigm and intention of critical and participatory projects in Latin@ parental engagement (e.g., Hurtig & Dyrness, 2011; Olivos et al., 2011), the first author did not engage in a deliberate process of organizing, empowerment, or cultural critique at the onset of this work. The methods build on an ethnographically informed design research process (Mehan, 2008), where we sought to collaborate with practitioners to coconstruct a culturally sustaining (Paris, 2013) parent engagement program.

The 12 parent participants included two mothers (Mireya and Roxanna) with a long presence and established residence in the city and in the district, and who were well-known by teachers and administrators because of their frequent attendance to school events. One of them, Mireya, mentioned that her relatives were some of the first immigrant residents in the county, from a small ranch in Guerrero, Mexico. She had lived in the focal city for 16 years, and as she explained "*de mi rancho, hay más aquí que en mi rancho*" [there are more people from my rancho here, than back there]. The other parents had lived in the U.S. for at least nine years; most had migrated from small towns or *ranchos* in southwestern Mexico, and three mothers were immigrants from Guatemala. Other than two who owned small businesses, the parents did not use a computer for work or education, spending time at home as full-time primary caregivers or as workers in the cottage industry concerned with making and selling crafts. Most

used computers for web searches and social networking, and school-related online resources were new to most of them. As a first-generation Mexican immigrant herself, the first author shared a cultural and linguistic background with the majority of focal parents, and acted as a mediator between the academic literacy demands of school-based parental engagement and Latin@ parents' interests, needs, and concerns.

Data Collection and Analysis

A total of 34 two-hour sessions of technology classes for parents were conducted by the first author, with assistance from the second author, 10 in the fall and 24 in the spring. Hence, in the interaction and instruction reported in the findings, references to "we" include the first author (facilitator/researcher) and the second author (graduate assistant). The third author's role followed this analytic process and primarily concerned assisting with the manuscript preparation. A total of 64 hours of interaction were audio-recorded, along with samples of screen activity and documents. Eight parent participants volunteered for an interview and household visit and for the analysis of the documents they produced in the program.

Field notes, websites, and documents produced by parents were coded to identify main digital practices occurring in the sessions. In this chapter we focus on *home-school communication*. We identified three sessions in which email-related activities were the focus of the class and transcribed the interactions. Our analysis focuses on the *process* of composing the texts and parents' interaction with the platforms mediating online communication. Additional data summarized from the teacher's survey, a parents' survey, and parents' interviews are included in the analysis, in order to show their perspectives about digital resources for communication.

Findings

We analyze three interactions centered on email-related activities. The first two interactions took place in the first sessions in the fall semester, and the third took place toward the end of the spring semester.

Instance 1: Joining the District Listserv

Eleven of the parents reported in an initial survey that their primary means of reaching teachers took place via the school family specialist. A few hoped to learn how to send messages to the teachers or the office, how to

learn about school events via email, and how to translate emails from the school into Spanish. These respondents were already familiar with email and wanted to use it for school purposes.

Per this request, email communication was one of the first activities and required all participants to have a working email account. In our interactions with parents, we learned that some of them received initial support from a family member or an acquaintance to set up an email account on their mobile device—hence, their initial access to email was mediated by assistance from a more experienced person rather than set up independently. Because their log-in information was saved in the device email application, they were not familiar with the sign-in process or typing of their username in a computer browser on their own. This activity was the first time they accessed their email inbox on a laptop computer.

The first email activity involved joining the district and school email listservs. School messages in these listservs were also available to parents via a printed newsletter, translated and designed by the school family specialist, but the listserv provided an additional resource for communication. From a repertoire perspective, listserv sign-up required familiarity with the genre and functionality of online forms, for which parents required support. The following tasks needed to be performed successfully in order to access the form:

1. Opening a web browser
2. Finding the school website in a search engine
3. Finding and clicking on the "Get connected" icon on the school home page
4. Filling out a sign-up form in English, with their name, last name, primary email address, and affiliation with the district
5. Checking off boxes with the name of each school's lists of interest
6. Completing a short antispam task (before submitting the form)

It is relevant to note that a task that is often assumed to be conducted individually by users who are comfortable with online forms, required very explicit scaffolding and collaboration in each step of this process. We particularly focused on explaining the situated meanings of the terms "listserv," "sign up," and "spam" in the context of online communication. These terms

were not part of parents' existing repertoires for communication. We drew from multiple emails that one of the participants received from stores as models, emphasizing that these messages had been sent from an automated system, not directly from a person. We thus relied on the experiences of a few parents in the class to explicitly address the features and functions of automated lists.

During the session parents were unable to draw on their first-language resources, because the form was available only in English, given our difficulties in getting online translators to work in many cases. Support was therefore necessary in the translation of form items. Furthermore, we noticed that a few new email users were not familiar with the "grammar" of email addresses, as evidenced in Rosalinda's questions:

> Rosalinda: *¿Y tengo que poner arroba y esto [gmail.com]?* [Do I have to type the @ sign and this [gmail.com]?]
>
> Silvia: *Sí, siempre tiene que poner arroba.* [Yes, you always have to type the @ sign.]
>
> Rosalinda: *[after submitting the form] Ya me regresó; ¿por qué me salió esto? [Error message]* [It sent me back; why did I get this [error message]?]
>
> Silvia: *Algo no estaba completo [views her screen]. Oh, OK, tiene que ponerlo entero: gmail.com.* [Something was incomplete. Oh, OK, you need to write the whole thing: gmail.com.] *[parent typed "@gma"]*

This online form required the parents to mobilize linguistic and semiotic resources that were not yet part of their repertoires and for them to register their email address using an accurate domain name (e.g., @gmail.com). Their past experiences shaped their access to these resources, so some of them required the scaffolding from peers and instructors in collective activity to successfully complete the task. After receiving explicit guided support in the navigation of online forms, parents were able to investigate and access similar institutional services, such as the Medicaid benefits for their children. Our process of making visible the platforms and messages that are usually accessed for individual purposes allowed all members of the group to understand the nuances of automated email messages.

Instance 2: Composing an Email Message to Teachers

A second form of email communication occurred between Spanish-dominant parents and their children's teachers. Most teachers, on their surveys, enthusiastically approved of how email messages worked to promote communication, although one cautioned that contact via email "can be negative due to an inability to decipher tone." A few parents, however, wanted to learn more about further ways to reach the teachers.

Given our experience with the listserv sign-up, we decided to facilitate an email composition activity in order to provide an authentic opportunity to write a message. We scheduled the email activity during the week of parent-teacher conferences in case any misunderstandings needed to be cleared. We showed the parents how to include the family specialist on their first email (using the c/c email function) and provided support in translating this message, which was simple and short, focusing on basic structures and greetings in English. Last, we provided parents with a printout of the email composition interface in order for them to brainstorm and handwrite their message before typing on the screen. Most parents' email interfaces were set up for Spanish, so they were able to view the commands (such as "Send" or "Compose") *en español* to bridge their correspondence to their familiar language.

In this session, parents brainstormed questions they wanted to ask teachers during the conference, and the first author categorized them on the board, translating and explaining key words in their inquiries, for example, *comportamiento*/behavior, *calificaciones*/grades, *tareas*/homework, and *progreso*/progress. She further provided examples of genre features in email composition and letter writing. However, she noticed that the layout and design of the email interface led to confusion between the *Asunto*/Subject line and the message body, which was clarified by both instructors and parents with more expertise:

> Rosalinda: *Entonces esto que escribí [en Asunto], lo tengo que poner abajo [in message body].* [Then what I wrote here [in subject], I have to put right down there [in message body]
>
> Leonor: *Oh, añadir, ¿soy la mamá de Carlos? ¿En asunto?* [Oh, I have to add, "I'm Carlos' mom?" In subject?]
>
> Mireya: [to Leonor] Pone: *"Hola soy la mamá de Carlos"* y *abajo [in message body] lo que quiere saber.* [You write "Hi I'm Carlos' mom" and down there [in message body] what you want to know.]

Silvia: *Esto no es todo el mensaje, solo cuatro o cinco palabras.* [It's not the whole message, just four or five words.]

Leonor: *Se le podrá poner, por ejemplo: si me interesa la tarea de mi hijo, ¿puedo poner como asunto "Tarea"?* [Could I write, for instance: if I'm interested in my son's homework, could I write "Homework" as a subject?]

Email writing, as this exchange suggests, not only required the conventions of letter writing in print form, but also the understanding of the spatial layout and functions of boxes in the email interface. Parents drafted the content of their messages in Spanish, such as general inquiries about behavior and progress and specific questions about homework. Politeness, proper language use, and tone emerged as themes in these interactions. For Diana, making a good impression via a formal introduction was of utmost importance, requiring that she draw on her knowledge of the formal register in Spanish. She had mentioned in the previous session that she wanted to know how her son was behaving ["*cómo se está portando*"]. As she handwrote her email, she explained:

Diana [to peer]: *Ella no me conoce . . . Le pongo mi apellido, porque se oye mejor, para que me identifique.* [She has not met me yet . . . I write my last name, because it sounds better, so that she knows who I am.]

Silvia: [*reads aloud from Diana's screen*]: "Hola soy Diana Ramírez me gustaría saber cómo se porta mi hijo." ["Hello, I'm Diana Ramírez, I would like to know how my son behaves."]

Diana: *Sí, porque así me conoce más.* [Yes, this way she can get to know me better.]

Diana made visible her concerns about making a good impression and ensuring her son's conduct in class. Her process revealed her use of the formal register and her awareness of the social function of the message. With the exception of Rosalinda—who already had a close relationship with her son's bilingual pre-K teacher—all the other parents received support translating short messages, with suggestions on sentence structure that reflected the level of formality they hoped to convey, for example, the use of modal auxiliaries such as "could" and "would." Although we had discussed the use of online translators, we encouraged parents to collaborate with us,

their ESL teachers, or others when struggling to compose messages. Mireya reported that she recruited the help of her son to translate the message for her that clarified her confusion about a field trip:

> Mireya: *Como por ejemplo yo no me acordaba donde iba a ser el paseo, y le mande un mensaje: "¿Maestra, podría recordarme donde es el paseo?"* [For instance, I did not remember where the field trip was going to be, and I sent [the teacher] a message: "Maestra, could you remind me where the field trip is?"]
>
> Silvia: *¿Y le contestó?* [Did she answer?]
>
> Mireya: *Sí, a la maestra de hace un año.* [Yes, it was last year's teacher.]
>
> Silvia: *Que bueno que le pudo preguntar. ¿Y le preguntó en inglés?* [That is great that you could ask her. Did you ask in English?]
>
> Mireya: *Sí, mi hijo me escribió.* [Yes, my son wrote it.]
>
> Silvia: *¿Lo escribió y su hijo lo copió?* [Did you write it and your son copied it?]
>
> Mireya: *No, yo le iba diciendo y él le iba escribiendo. Y luego me contestó [la maestra].* [No, I was telling him, and he was writing. And she answered right away.]

Overall, a closer look at the email composition activity demonstrates the complex intersection of specialized knowledge (e.g., school register), genres (e.g., letter writing), navigation moves (e.g., across subject and message boxes), and formal/informal registers in two languages. A practice that is assumed to be conducted individually by adults on a daily basis required very explicit and collaborative orchestration of linguistic, multimodal, and social resources for new email users. The features of this format facilitated courteous communication about concerns on academics and behavior. However, these exchanges also suggest that email features may become barriers if messages are composed and sent individually or with minimal support. In this particular interaction, parents and instructors pooled their knowledge about courteous communication, issues to discuss, and anecdotes about ways to compose emails at home, with the support of bilingual family members.

Instance 3: Composing Group Email Invitation to School Staff

This last instance showcases the collaborative writing of an email invitation, drafted in Spanish toward the end of the course when parents were preparing their individual project slide shows. Since the audience of the presentation included school teachers and principals, we needed to compose an email invitation for the last class session. The first author guided the composition of the message in Spanish, prompting parents to contribute ideas:

> Silvia: *Los invitamos a--* [We invite you to--]
>
> Mireya: *¿Nuestra presentación?* [Laughter] [Our presentation?]
>
> Silvia: *Nuestra presentación.* [Our presentation.]
>
> Olga: *De el ultimo día.* [On our last day.]
>
> Silvia: *De el ultimo día de clases. Vamos a mostrar—¿qué es lo que vamos a mostrar?* [On our last day of class. We will show—what will we show?]
>
> Olga: *Lo que hemos aprendido.* [What we have learned.]

As the parents continued to brainstorm, the first author suggested giving examples of the learning they would share, along with a book review project they had worked on. The parents listed a few of the highlights, such as text editing skills, library searching, and their attendance and participation at a children's book author's visit:

> Silvia: *Para explicarles lo que se va a tratar, por ejemplo . . . ¿si tuvieran que escoger una cosa? . . . Una cosa que usted diría, esto aprendí yo. Diana, ¿qué cosa se acuerda [que aprendió]?.* [So we can explain to them what this will be about . . . if you could pick something? . . . Something that you could say, this is what I've learned. Diana, something you remember [learning]?.]
>
> Diana: *Lo de las fotos. . . . Como pegar imágenes. Aprendimos este, lo de las letras, mas grandes, mas pequeñas.* [About the photos. . . . How to paste images. We learned about fonts, larger, smaller.]

Silvia: *Editar texto. Ajá. Olga, ¿que más pondría?* [Editing text. Aha. Olga, what else would you add?]

Olga: *Como leer los libros en línea. O pedirlos en linea. A la biblioteca que esté mas cerca.* [How to read books online. Or how to request them online. From your closest library.]

Silvia: *¿Y Mireya?* [And Mireya?]

Mireya: *Yo mencionaría la visita de la [autora]* [I would mention the visit of [book author].]

In this list, Diana and Olga drew on their new digital repertoires. Although writing the invitation required a summary of the presentation, the drafting of this text mediated parents' brainstorming of content for this event with attention to the audience of the school staff. In the closing of the letter, Diana and Olga contributed lines common in letter writing in Spanish. Diana's line is usually found in invitations to birthday parties or more informal events, while Olga's is more common in the formal communications from institutions such as school:

Silvia: *[types and reads aloud] "Tendremos un pequeno convivio." ¿Algo más que quieran decir?* ["We will have a small gathering." Anything else you'd like to say?]

Diana: *Los esperamos. Que no falten.* [We look forward to seeing you. Make sure you come.]

Olga: *Que confirmen su asistencia.* [Please confirm your attendance.]

[Laughter]

By drawing on their repertoires about formal and informal letter writing, Diana and Olga emphasized their expectation of attendance to their event, balancing a welcoming note with an appropriately formal tone. Through this collective message composition, parents decided which resources to feature, while simultaneously drawing on their knowledge and goals to address school staff. This message then served as a means to establish goals and expectations for the last class presentation and parents' roles as "hosts" of the event. Hence, this email message encapsulated aspects of

parents' experience in the course and reversed the roles by inviting teachers to a meeting featuring parents' voices and knowledge.

Bridging Repertoires in New Geographical and Digital Domains

This chapter investigates the multiple linguistic resources that Spanish-dominant parents, with various levels of experience with technology, were able to mobilize and acquire in a school-based technology program. We found that when a wide range of Spanish, print-based, and digital resources were incorporated in interactions, parents who were newcomers to online communication received the necessary support to engage in these new practices. The affordances and constraints of digital platforms served as mediational means in home-school communication, supported in a collaborative setting for parents for whom individual access to online resources at home would be difficult. Parents with varied technology expertise coconstructed digital texts, with the scaffolding provided by the first author and by those parents with online experience, in order to reposition and extend their involvement and participation in school discourse.

Our findings suggest the importance of engaging in culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) efforts designed to support Latin@ parental engagement via technology, an important literacy practice in the unfolding century. The potential of community and after-school technology programs is evident in *La Clase Mágica* settings in which bilingual Latin@ students engage in interaction with online games and communication with peers and mentors, mediated by their first and second language resources (Bustos Flores, Vásquez, & Riojas-Clarke, 2014; Martínez-Roldán & Smagorinsky, 2011; cf. Cole, 1996, for the Fifth Dimension model on which Vásquez, 2002, based her development of *La Clase Mágica*). Implemented in the U.S. Southwest, this model involves the design of bilingual digital content, and the organization of social arrangements for mentoring and learning activities.

The Texas-based iteration of this model added a family engagement component through participatory *talleres* [workshops] (Machado-Casas, 2012), where parents made decisions about the workshop content aligned with their transnational and family practices. This chapter illuminates the complexities of a related effort within a single Southeastern community and school system, where academic goals and school-produced texts served as mediational means in parents' emergent understanding and sense-making of both digital platforms and the specialized language and content related to school activities. Furthermore, these interactions demonstrate the relevance of the social settings, interactions, and relationships where digital tools are

discussed and examined. Such interactions allowed us to make transparent those processes that are usually conducted in individual or "personal" devices; in these sessions, parents volunteered relevant knowledge and ideas that supported the needs of all members in the group.

In our analysis of this small school-based program, we underscore the critical importance of alliance building and collective action in ethnographic work in new migration settings (Villenas, 2007) such as the New Latin@ Diaspora in which changing configurations of school demographics, neighborhood mobility, and communication practices require collaboration across multiple stakeholders. This explicitly planned and executed joint effort illustrates the funds of knowledge construct in its attention to how Latin@ parents are attuned to collaborative problem-solving and sharing of knowledge and resources to improve their collective circumstances. In contrast, many U.S. institutions and people take a "sink or swim" position on immigrants that assumes that competitive individuals will seek advantages and use them to get ahead of others in pursuit of the American dream. Our study contributes to the body of work that asserts that other forms of this dream, and other means of pursuing it, are available to immigrants more oriented to collectivist thinking.

By both drawing on and expanding parents' repertoires, the workshop provided communicative tools through which parents could adapt to U.S. expectations for family involvement in their children's education. Ideally, these tools will in turn be shared as a community resource in the immigrant families' efforts to help their children persist in school, a challenge given their disproportionate dropout rates and the isolation of Latin@ families in segregated trailer park communities in this city and others in the New Latin@ Diaspora.

Reductionist and deficit discourses remain in place in policies and institutions in relation to Latin@ cultural practices and parenting approaches. Initiatives such as the workshop we report have potential for transforming existing school power dynamics (Baquedano-López et al., 2014), relying on researchers' understanding of the goals and priorities of participants (Mehan, 2008). When individualistic institutions incorporate new populations from collectivist societies, all responsibility for adaptation tends to be placed on the newcomers (Portes & Smagorinsky, 2010), who are often demonized for their difficulties in adapting (Acosta, 2013; Faltis, 2013). In this chapter we have illustrated how a program that uses collaborative methods to introduce parents to the individual responsibilities they are expected to adopt may provide immigrant families with tools through which they may become more independently involved in their children's education. Assuming that they will make such a great adaptation on their

own, in a new language and culture, virtually insures that their children will be denied access to educational opportunities. We offer this study and its relational orientation (Nieto, 2013) as one possible means through which more effective acculturation, grounded in home and community culture, may be undertaken.

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