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# Early Care and Education Testimonios at the Borderlands

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EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION TESTIMONIOS AT THE BORDERLANDS

by

Jennifer A. Torres

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Graduate School

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EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION TESTIMONIOS AT THE BORDERLANDS

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By

Jennifer A. Torres

## DEDICATION

For Sam and Lorraine Torres, my parents, for making a way.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the women who shared with me their stories of professional caregiving, for their generosity, candor, wisdom, and heart; to Ronald Hallett and the members of my committee, for their insight and encouragement, and their refusal of easy answers; to my fellow students at the Benerd School of Education, for ideas that challenged and inspired; to David, Alice, and Soledad, for their patience, for the intensity of their belief in me; and to all the individuals I have relied on to care for my children, who have made possible this and so many other endeavors: Quisiera expresar mi agradecimiento.

## Early Care and Education Testimonios at the Borderlands

### Abstract

By Jennifer A. Torres

University of the Pacific  
2019

Latinas represent a large proportion of the United States early care and education workforce, and thus have the potential to wield significant influence over the growth and development of millions of American children. However, the voices of Latina early childhood professionals often are missing in both research and mass media. Instead, social, political, and academic frames cast Latinas as foreign regardless of nationality, uneducated notwithstanding expertise, and passive despite action and influence. This testimonio analysis draws on Chicana feminist epistemology to re-center the perspectives of Latina child care providers and reveal more authentic insights on how they understand and perform their roles within the broader social contexts that define and delimit Latina identity in the United States. The collective account that emerges from their testimonios is one of straddling multiple borders: between influence and invisibility, between the personal and the professional, and between community and isolation.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	10
LIST OF FIGURES.....	11
CHAPTER	
1. Introduction.....	12
Background.....	12
Description of the Research Problem.....	15
Purpose.....	17
Research Questions.....	17
Significance.....	17
Theoretical Framework.....	18
Researcher Positionality.....	20
Description of the Study.....	22
Summary.....	22
2. Literature Review.....	24
An Overview of the Early Care and Education System.....	24
Child Care and School Readiness.....	26
The Early Childhood Workforce.....	28
Culture and Caregiving.....	31
Latina Early Care and Education Professionals.....	33
Latina Representation in the United States.....	34
A Chicana Feminist Epistemology.....	37



Summary.....	41
3. Methodology and Methods.....	43
Testimonio as Methodology.....	43
Participants.....	45
Methods and Data Collection.....	47
Data Analysis.....	49
Trustworthiness.....	51
Limitations.....	55
Summary.....	56
4. Testimonios.....	57
Participants and Their Testimonios.....	57
Feliz: “I Needed a Purpose”.....	58
Lucila: “I’m at a Plateau”.....	67
Amada: “There’s No Babysitter Here”.....	76
Discussion of Themes.....	85
Summary.....	96
5. Child Care Advertisements.....	97
Advertisement Overview.....	97
Triangulation of Themes.....	102
Summary.....	106
6. Discussion and Conclusions.....	107
The Findings in Context.....	108
Implications for Policy and Practice.....	117

Recommendations for Further Research.....121

Concluding Remarks.....122

REFERENCES.....125

APPENDICES

A. PLÁTICA GUIDE.....139

B. INFORMED CONSENT FORMS.....141

## LIST OF TABLES

## Table

1. Features Described in Latina Child Care Advertisements: Categories.....98

## LIST OF FIGURES

## Figure

1. United States Early Care and Education Workforce Demographics .....	34
2. Suki Lopez: “Nina la Latina” .....	41
3. Features Described in Latina Child Care Advertisements: Frequency .....	100
4. Provider Qualifications .....	101
5. Images .....	102
6. Child Care Interior .....	105

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Accounting for 20 percent of the child care workforce nationwide and nearly 50 percent in California, Latinas are poised to play a significant and growing role in the early care and education of American preschoolers (Park, McHugh, Zong & Batalova, 2015). By providing a critical service to working parents, meanwhile, they also represent an important, though often invisible, buttress to the U.S. economy (Kennedy, 2010). Like other professionals in the early childhood field, Latina child care providers perform low-wage, low-status work that is nonetheless sensitive to social, political, and cultural pressures. And, like other Latinas in the U.S. labor force, they must negotiate their own identities against popular assumptions that tend to cast Latinas as foreign, uneducated, and alternately "spicy" or meekly domestic (Field, 2014; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Reyes & Rios, 2003).

This study explores the ways Latina child care providers understand and perform their roles within the broader social contexts that define and delimit Latina identity in the United States. Chapter One introduces the research problem after a brief overview of the American child care sector and Latinas' experiences within it. Research questions are outlined and the framework that helped guide investigation is described. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study itself.

### Background

The emerging predominance of Latinas in early care and education is concurrent with demographic trends that have seen the country's Latinx population grow to roughly 18 percent of the total population as of 2015, according to U.S. Census Bureau (2016) estimates. Furthermore, it comes at a time when high employment levels among parents make day care and preschool a

necessity for a growing number of American families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The influence of Latina child care professionals could thus be far-reaching as policymakers look to early care and education as a space in which low-income children and children of color can develop the social and academic skills they need to be successful in elementary school (Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2000). As Robert Crosnoe (2007) has argued, “School readiness is a major ingredient in demographic disparities in educational attainment and, as such, should be a major target in eliminating them” (p. 153).

**The U.S. child care landscape.** As the proportion of mothers—who have historically been responsible for the daily caretaking of children—in the U.S. workforce has grown (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012), so too has the percentage of children enrolled in some form of day care. Roughly 1 in 5 American children, ages 4 and younger, spend an average of 30 hours in child care each week (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Absent a nationalized system, early care and education in the United States encompasses a diverse mix of formal and informal, public and private, arrangements (Stipek & Ogawa, 2000).

While about 42 percent of preschool-age children in the United States are cared for by relatives during the day, the rest are enrolled in settings that range from highly regulated institutional systems, such as federally funded Head Start centers, at one extreme, to unregulated and highly informal babysitting arrangements at the other (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Landing closer to the center on the regulatory spectrum are public and private centers, which include both government-licensed facilities as well as private homes in which groups of children are looked after by a licensed caretaker (California Department of Social Services, 2006). For the purposes of this study, child care does not refer to the before- or after-school supervision of elementary-age children.

Over the past two decades, as formal child care has become an increasingly typical part of the American early childhood experience, researchers and policymakers have more closely examined its multiple and sometimes conflicting functions (Shpancer, 2002; Stipek & Ogawa). Historically, much research on child care had been framed in economic terms: as a tool for supporting women's employment. However, a growing body of research has framed child care not solely, or even principally, as labor support, but rather as a means of advancing children's school readiness (Adams & Rohacek, 2002; Douglass, 2011; Sabol & Chase-Lansdale, 2015).

**Experiences and perspective of child care providers.** Research on child care has tended to aim attention on learning and behavioral outcomes for children and the experiences of families, rather than on the experiences of child care providers themselves (Bromer & Henly, 2004; Buchbinder, Longhofer, Barrett, Lawson, & Floersch, 2006; Domínguez & Watkins, 2003). Among the studies that focus their analyses on child care workers, several have identified socioeconomic hardships. Nationally, three-quarters of early care and education professionals earn less than \$22,000 a year (below federal poverty guidelines for a family of four), and fewer than 40 percent have completed a postsecondary degree (Park et al., 2015).

Among the studies that consider the perspectives and lived experiences of early care and education providers, several suggest that child care work can be fraught with tension (Bromer & Henly, 2004; McGrath, 2007; Sanders, Deihl, & Kyler, 2007). Research indicates that the early care and education environment, in general, is perceived as an extension of the home:

“Professionals in these settings need to show a ‘natural’ tendency for caring as high-quality professionals” (Heikkilä & Hellman, 2016, p. 3). Especially for Latinas, who are often viewed as “natural” caretakers, predisposed to the tasks and routines of child rearing, a perspective that frames child care providers as substitute parents and quasi-family, may be at odds with the

economic realities of child care as a job. Instead, child care is perceived as “work” that Latinas perform instinctively (rather than through training and acquired skill) and voluntarily (rather than as a source of income).

Bromer and Henly (2004) interviewed child care providers to examine the kinds of “hidden support” (p. 285) they offered beyond routine caretaking. Providers made allowances when parents were late paying them, for example, or agreed to prepare meals for the whole family, not just the young children in their care. Most of the providers were low-income women who struggled financially themselves. They experienced tension between a sense of moral obligation to help families, and economic constraints that limited their ability to give.

Providers of color encounter still more tension. Here, researchers have found that Black and Latina child care providers often struggle to balance the standards of their profession against conflicting cultural understandings of what it means to properly care and nurture (Durand, 2011; Sanders, Deihl, & Kyler, 2007).

### **Description of the Research Problem**

Despite their significant and growing presence in the field, Latina child care workers have drawn relatively little research attention (Cheruvu, Souto-Manning, Lencl, & Chin-Calubaquib, 2015). In education broadly, and even early education specifically, research tends to discuss Latinx families in terms of problems, deficits, and disparities (Reyes & Rios, 2003; Zarate & Conchas, 2010), resulting in an incomplete and often skewed understanding of Latinx lives and perspective. The labor literature, meanwhile, centers the experiences of Latino (male) agricultural and construction workers and day laborers (Kennedy, 2010). Latinas, whose work in fields including child care can be similarly contingent and vulnerable to exploitation, are often overlooked.



Among the few studies that specifically explore the lives and perspectives of Latinas in a closely related, albeit different, field, Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo's (2007) *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning & Caring in the Shadows of Affluence* described how Latinas find, perform, and experience housecleaning and nanny jobs. Domestic labor, as explored by Hondagneu-Sotelo, represents low-pay, low-status work, and indeed is often not considered "work," at least in a sense that implies an employer-employee relationship, at all (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007). The ambiguity of her relationship to a client family, not to mention the precariousness of her economic situation, make it difficult for a Latina housecleaner or nanny to protest unfair working conditions or to establish herself as a professional.

Theorizing more broadly about Latina perspectives on education, Sofia Villenas (2006) has noted that among the most common representations of Latinas in contemporary media is that of the "natural" mother or childbearer, making invisible the creative and intellectual work Latinas bring to roles as caregivers and educators. Introducing *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology*, she and her co-editors have argued that Latina approaches to care and education draw on cultural values and concepts: educación (education, including moral education), sobrevivir (survival), convivir (living as part of a community), familismo (family connection), and valerse por si misma (self-reliance), among others (2006).

A number of important questions demand further consideration. For example, how do Latina child care providers understand their jobs, and how does that understanding inflect their interaction with children, parents, teachers, and peers? Why do they choose their jobs and how do they prepare for them? How do they resolve any differences in professional versus cultural norms of caregiving? How do they respond to external forces—social and political—that frame

the lives of Latinas in the United States, particularly at a time of factious debate over immigration and national identity? My study, a testimonio analysis, seeks to shed light on these questions by centering the voices and experiences of Latina child care providers, and focusing on the meaning(s) they ascribe to their work.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand how Latina early care and education providers conceptualize and experience their work, and how social and political forces inform their perception and performance of it.

### **Research Questions**

My study proposes to consider two research questions:

- How do Latina early care and education providers understand and experience their professional roles and responsibilities?
- How do social, political, and cultural factors shape the development and enactment of their professional roles?

### **Significance**

Census Bureau projections estimate that by 2060, the country's Latinx population will increase by 115 percent, and that more than one-quarter of all Americans will be Latinx (2015). The demographic shift alone compels a richer understanding of Latinx lives and more authentic representations of Latinx voices. However, this study also offers insights that could improve the quality of early care and education, especially for Latinx children.

According to U.S. Census (2011) estimates, roughly one quarter of all American children are Latinx. By 2035, population forecasts predict that number will be 1 in 3 (National Council of La Raza [NCLR], 2011). Meanwhile, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) has projected

continuing increases in labor force participation among Latinas, suggesting that a growing number of Latinx children will spend time in child care settings. Currently, Latinx children are more likely to live in poverty, more likely to lack health insurance, and less likely to graduate from high school than their White peers (U.S. Census Bureau; NCLR).

Child care and Latina child care providers could play important roles in addressing such disparities. For example, in an analysis of longitudinal data sets, Downer, Goble, Myers, and Pianta (2016) found that Spanish-speaking Latinx children showed larger gains on language and literacy skills when they were taught by Latina preschool teachers. However, preschool enrollment tends to be lower among Latinx families than among their Black and White counterparts (Liang, Fuller, & Singer, 2000). Latina providers could be influential in changing those figures. Examining Head Start datasets, Miller (2016) found that Spanish-speaking Latinx parents were more likely to enroll their children if the center instructor used Spanish in the classroom, and if there were already a high proportion of Spanish-speaking students onsite.

Furthermore, providers in general are, in many ways, well-positioned to support school readiness and child development: They cultivate close and sustained relationships with families, and often maintain useful connections to elementary school systems (Sabol & Chase-Lansdale, 2015). Latina providers, in particular, may also bring valuable cultural and linguistic responsiveness to the work (Buisse, Castro, West, & Skinner, 2005; Cheruvu, Souto-Manning, Lencl, & Chin-Calubaquib, 2015; Park, et al., 2015). However, their influence cannot be fully understood or leveraged without first making clearer sense of their experiences.

### **Theoretical Framework**

If mainstream research approaches have tended to draw flawed and incomplete conclusions about Latinx lives and Latinx culture, new tools and strategies may be necessary to

yield richer and more authentic insights (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Thus, I have positioned my study within the Chicana feminist epistemology for education outlined by Delgado Bernal (1998) and subsequently extended by other researchers. However, in this study, I stretch Delgado Bernal's conceptualization to include all Latinas, not just those of Mexican-American ancestry as "Chicana" implies. Drawing on Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) concepts of mestiza consciousness and borderlands identity, Delgado Bernal develops a framework that pursues inquiry and constructs knowledge directly from the lives, experiences, and analytical participation of Latinas themselves (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012; Delgado Bernal, 1998).

Building from the literal definition of "mestiza," as a woman of mixed racial ancestry—indigenous and Spanish in the case of Latinas—Anzaldúa describes mestiza consciousness as rooted in the embodiment of multiple identities. A mestiza consciousness is constantly in transition and continuously shaped by the assumptions and presumptions of culture, politics, and history. "Borderlands," similarly, has both literal and metaphorical meanings. Here, Anzaldúa refers to the physical border between the United States and Mexico, as well as the psychological and spiritual boundaries Latinas cross and confront as they straddle the borders of culture, race, and language. By situating knowledge within the lives of women who inhabit the borderlands, Chicana feminist epistemology can weave *nuevas teorías*, or new theories, out of concepts such as *convivencia* and other strands and sources of Latina learning, what Delgado Bernal has called "pedagogies of the home" (2006, p. 113). These new theories resist dominant narratives by claiming strength and resilience where previous research has diagnosed defect and deficit (Delgado Bernal, 1998). The framework guiding my study will be explored further in Chapter Two.

## Researcher Positionality

Why does she have to go and try to make “sense” of it all? Every time she makes “sense” of something, she has to “cross over,” kicking a hole out of the boundaries of the old and slipping under or over, dragging the old skin along, stumbling over it (Anzaldúa, p. 71).

My experiences as an American Latina, a working mother, and a child care consumer—as well as a former child care provider—all informed my understanding of this study and the assumptions I carried to it. I did not attempt to divorce my background and experience from this research, believing, as Delgado Bernal (1998) has argued, that I bring a unique and valuable perspective, or “cultural intuition,” to the process of inquiry and analysis. At the same time, I must also acknowledge my position of power and privilege as a light-skinned, middle-class, formally educated, English-fluent, and native-born citizen. Authentically representing the experiences of Latina child care providers has required me to straddle and even interrogate my own multiple identities (Villenas & Foley, 2002) so that I have become an *atravesada*, or “crosser.” I offer personal experience as illustration:

Several years ago, I dropped my daughter off at her day care center to find her caregiver, also a Latina, completing WIC enrollment forms for her infant son. (WIC, for Women, Infants and Children, is a federal food-assistance program for low-income women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, and their children, ages 4 and younger). I have long considered myself someone who actively supports equity and social justice, and it was disturbing to realize that a woman whose fulltime labor enabled me to earn an above-the-median income relied on government assistance to feed her own child. On reflection, I should not have been so surprised. Having worked in child care, both as a nanny/babysitter and more formally as an employee of a licensed center, I knew the work rarely pays more than minimum wage.

However, even when child care work represented my sole source of income, I did not consider it part of my professional identity—nor, thus, as a profession. Rather, child care employment was always a means to pay for the further education that would advance my future “real” career. Perhaps not until I was confronted with the economic implications of this work on the life of my daughter’s caregiver did I truly understand child care as a system and a professional, consumable service.

On the other hand, I have long been conscious of the narratives that frame my experiences as well as those of other American Latinas, including my daughter’s caregiver. Working as a nanny in my early 20s, for example, I was hyper-aware of the stereotype of the young, single Latina mother and worried that anyone who saw my charge and me at the park or on walks would mistake him for my own. Then, years later, in another “crossing,” I often felt I was betraying fundamental obligations of gender and culture by enrolling my young daughters in child care—in effect, shunting my mothering responsibilities so that I could work outside the home.

I consider my stance critical in that I hope my research confronts and challenges these and other stereotypes, structures, and policies that marginalize women and people of color. I believe early care and education work has social, cultural, and economic value; that it demands creativity and expertise; and that those who perform it should be accorded professional respect. I believe that I share a community memory with Latinas in the United States. Nonetheless, I must not overlook the fact that, by relying on paid child care, I actively participate in and benefit personally from, a system in which Latinas are undervalued and underpaid. Finally, while not explicitly partisan, I believe this work is inherently political in that it directly engages contested

issues of language, culture, and national identity at a time when anti-immigrant rhetoric and anti-Latinx sentiment undergird the current presidential administration's domestic policy agenda.

### **Description of the Study**

Similar to narrative analyses, which explore themes, intersections, and relationships that emerge in individuals' retelling of their stories (Creswell, 2013), testimonios are first-person accounts of lived experience, especially of struggle or oppression (Reyes & Curry-Rodríguez, 2012). In fact, Creswell classifies testimonio, alongside life history and autoethnography, as a narrative *type*. However, I distinguish testimonio as a methodological approach that deliberately situates research within a Latinx perspective (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012), and that seeks a collective truth forged of individual experience (Pérez Huber, 2009).

In conducting this research, I used semi-structured, dialogic pláticas, or conversations, to document the testimonios of three Latina child care providers in the metropolitan Los Angeles area. Testimonio has been described as both a product and a *process*, moreover one that is implicitly collaborative (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012). Using dialogic pláticas rather than a more traditionally structured interview form is in keeping with the collaborative nature of testimonio. Pláticas help restore narrative authority to respondents, giving voice to previously unheard experiences, and creating spaces in which knowledge is co-produced as stories and insights are shared (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012; Espino, Muñoz, & Marquez Kiyama, 2010). The contours of the study and its methodology are described in more detail in Chapter Three.

### **Summary**

Latina child care providers are responsible for the welfare and early education of large numbers of American children, and their labor makes possible the employment of millions of

American parents. Yet their voices are seldom heard and their experiences only rarely visible in research or mass media. By documenting the first-person testimonios of Latina child care providers, I sought to add depth and texture to our understanding of experiences that are woven tightly into the national fabric, yet are often perceived as lying outside the warp and weft of American life. Chapter 2 follows with a discussion of the professional, political, and social contexts in which Latina child care providers



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

A study that seeks knowledge within the lives and perspectives of Latinas must first explore the backdrops—professional, political, and social—against which those lives unfold. With this literature review, I attempt to tease out the strands of labor and policy, race and culture that give shape to the mestiza consciousness of Latina child care providers. The chapter begins with an overview of child care in the United States, followed by a discussion of providers' experiences within complex and highly decentralized early care and education systems. I then consider the stereotypes, assumptions, and “hidden messages” (Torres, 2004, p.139) that attempt to impose meanings on—and define the articulation of—Latina identity in the United States. Finally, I introduce Chicana feminist epistemology as a means of re-weaving the strands of politics, race, and culture to bring to light new, “living theories,” grounded in the individual and collective experiences of Latina child care providers (Villenas et al., 2006).

### **An Overview of Early Care and Education in the United States**

Among mothers with young children, roughly 65 percent are in the labor force, according to estimates from the United States Census Bureau (2014). In 1975, that figure was only about 35 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). As women's workforce participation has grown over the past 40 years, so too has the percentage of young children enrolled in some form of non-parental child care (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Currently in the United States, one-third of all children under the age of 5—nearly 7 million—spend at least part of the workweek in a child care center or preschool (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Child care, then, is the setting for what is likely a great deal of growth and development in children's earliest years.

Child care also represents a considerable buttress to the national economy. As described by Warner and Liu (2006), economic development professionals have begun to treat child care as critical infrastructure, akin to transportation and health care systems. Studying California specifically, MacGillvary and Lucia (2011) address three major economic impacts of early care and education: promoting parents' ability to work, spend and pay taxes; increasing productivity and reducing absenteeism; and, in the long term, reducing the need for special education services and other interventions. Their economic model shows the early childhood field supports roughly 200,000 jobs worth an estimated half-billion dollars in state and local taxes. Meanwhile, parents who rely on paid child care represent \$26.4 billion in purchasing power (MacGillvary & Lucia, 2011).

Yet, while child care may be a commonplace fixture in American family and economic life, child care experiences and environments are far from uniform. The early care and education field has been described as "radically decentralized," in that it encompasses a diverse patchwork of programs and services, both public and private, center-based and home-based, and formal and informal (Fuller & Strath, 2001, p. 37). Family, friends and neighbors provide daytime care for an estimated 42 percent of children younger than 5 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The rest are cared for in settings that range from highly regulated centers, such as federally funded Head Start preschools, to home-based child care businesses subject only to basic health and safety requirements (Shpancer, 2002; Stipek & Ogawa, 2000). The Census Bureau (2014) categorizes these nonrelative settings as either "organized care facilities" (day care center, preschool, or Head Start), or "other nonrelative care" (at a child's home or at the provider's home, as in a home-based child care business). Typically, government-subsidized child care is available only to low-income children and families (in the form of welfare-to work benefits), or others deemed

in special need of early intervention and support, for example, students with disabilities or whose parents are migrant workers (Brown, 2010; Stipek & Ogawa, 2000).

### **Child Care and School Readiness**

As parents' dependence on nonrelative care has continued to expand, policymakers have contemplated child care, not just as a workforce issue — a means to help parents, in particular mothers, find and maintain employment — but as an educational issue as well. Research over the past several decades has linked early care and education to improved elementary school achievement, especially among low-income children and children of color (Dearing, McCartney, & Taylor, 2009; Loeb, Fuller, Kagan, & Carrol, 2004; Winsler, Tran, Hartman, Madigan, Manfra, & Bleiker, 2008). Studies have demonstrated, for example, that children who were enrolled in high quality child care centers had higher class ranks and higher grades when they eventually went to high school. (Lowe, Pierce & Burchinal, 2016).

While much research on child care tends to focus on learning and behavioral outcomes for children, parents' experience of child care is also relevant. "School readiness" might be thought of not only in terms of a child's preparation for school, but in parents' readiness to navigate and participate in complex social systems, *and* in the readiness of schools and communities to adequately serve and support diverse families (Brown et al., 2009; Pelletier & Brent, 2002). Child care enrollment has been linked to subsequent parental involvement at school (Crosnoe, Augustine, & Huston, 2013), and for many immigrant parents, represents the first encounter with education in the United States (Crosnoe & Ansari, 2015).

An emerging body of research suggests still another function of child care: For many women, especially in low-income communities, child care serves as a "resource broker," an institution that connects mothers and their families to a wide range of services and opportunities.

In his study of 16 child care centers in New York City, Mario Small (2006) found that child care centers provided workshops, bulletin boards, newsletters and formal referrals that connected mothers to resources for employment, health, housing, and other needs beyond the daytime care of their children. In a study focused specifically on low-income Latina immigrant mothers, meanwhile, Vesely, Ewaida, and Kearney (2013) argued that child care centers facilitate connections which help women access social services, advance their own education, cultivate supportive friendships, and transition their children into kindergarten.

### **The Early Childhood Workforce**

Largely because of the decentralized nature of early care and education systems in the United States, a comprehensive portrait of the early childhood workforce has been difficult to develop (Fuller & Strath, 2001). Over recent decades, researchers have drawn on U.S. Census Bureau and Department of Labor statistics, as well as other sources, to generate estimates of workforce size, demographics, and other key characteristics including education and income. In one of the first such studies, Fuller and Strath (2001) analyzed Census records for households in which at least one member reported working in child care (aggregated to the zip code level). The authors' demographic portrait revealed a number of challenges faced by early care and education providers, several of which have persisted over the years since the study was undertaken.

**Low wages.** Fuller and Strath (2001) found that, on average, preschool teachers earned about \$10,764 a year in 2000 dollars, while family child care home operators earned \$5,006. A little more than a decade later, Whitebrook, Phillips, and Howes (2014) revisited the National Child Care Staffing Study, first released in 1989, and found little salary movement for child care providers. Analyzing data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics as well as nationally representative datasets, they estimated that while wages among preschool teachers had grown by 15 percent

over the past 25 years— up to \$15.11 an hour, on average—wages for child care workers were practically flat, rising only 1 percent to \$10.33 an hour, less than the average wage among animal caretakers. Indeed, the authors placed child care professionals among the lowest-paid workers in the country, falling in the third percentile for hourly earnings.

Whitebrook and colleagues (2014) also added nuance to Fuller and Strath's mostly descriptive findings, administering a survey on economic instability to participating early care and education professionals. Three-quarters of respondents reported feeling worried about their ability to pay monthly bills, while half said they worried about having enough food to feed their families. Similarly, in qualitative interviews with early childhood workers, Boyd (2013) found that home-based providers typically worked more than 55 hours a week, serving parents who worked daytime shifts as well as parents who worked at night. Some even provided overnight care. Few could afford health insurance or even to take time off, having no paid sick leave, vacation, or holiday benefits.

**Low formal education.** Like income, formal educational attainment among child care workers has been persistently low. Fuller and Strath (2001) found that while most center-based providers had at least some postsecondary education, educational attainment among home-based professionals tended to be lower, with most having only a high school diploma (or even less schooling). In an analysis using more recent data, Park, McHugh, Zong, and Batalova (2015) reached similar conclusions—and provided a possible explanation. Their review of Census Bureau data revealed that 63 percent of early care and education workers hold less than an associate's degree. This may owe to the field's low wages. Park and colleagues noted in their work that the average American worker realizes a \$35,000 premium in increased salary for a

bachelor's degree. For a child care worker, that premium is only \$7,200 (2015). Neither does salary level seem to correlate with years of experience as is the case in other fields (Boyd, 2013).

**High turnover.** Another persistent and related feature of the early childhood field is a high level of turnover among teachers and other staff members. In a longitudinal study of early childhood education center teachers and directors, Whitebrook and Sakai (2003) found that 76 percent of teachers had left their jobs over the four-year period of analysis. Similarly, in a study that focused on Head Start teachers, Wells (2015) found that 26 percent of respondents had quit within the first four months of their jobs. Like Whitebrook and Sakai, Wells aimed to identify characteristics that might be predictive of quitting, determining that early childhood teachers who were unhappy, lacked a strong relationship with their supervisor, did not like the work environment, and had previously indicated plans to leave the field were more likely to quit. Whitebrook and Sakai had previously found that teachers with higher salaries were more likely to stay in their jobs, while teachers with higher levels of educational attainment were more likely to leave them—usually to pursue better-paying employment options. Barford and Whelton (2010) concur, blaming low pay for burnout and turnover within the early childhood field. However, they prescribe increased *training* as a solution, attributing poor compensation to providers' lack of education, rather than to structural features of the early care and education system itself.

**Professionalization.** Early care and education traditionally has not been perceived as legitimate work, in part because of the emotional labor it entails and because so many of its routine tasks and responsibilities closely resemble those of parenting (Barford and Whelton, 2010; Boyd, 2013; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007). Nevertheless, despite the field's persistently low pay, policy and market pressures are fueling efforts to professionalize early care and education

careers (QRIS National Learning Network, 2014; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). For example, nearly all states have implemented or are in the process of adopting quality rating and improvement systems for child care (QRIS National Learning Network, 2014). These tiered rating scales are designed to measure, communicate, and elevate the quality of care, in part, by emphasizing both learning and developmental goals for children, as well as the preparation and professional development of providers. Similarly, the federal Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge, announced in 2011 and described as “a cornerstone of the Obama Administration’s vision for early childhood learning,” funneled \$800 million to 20 states that committed to increasing the number of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who have access to high-quality early care and learning programs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). Under this initiative, provider education and training were included as standards of quality.

Ingersoll and Merrill (2011), writing of the movement to professionalize the broader teaching workforce, list the occupational features that distinguish a “profession” from other types of work: “rigorous training and licensing requirements, positive working conditions, an active professional organization or association, substantial workplace authority, relatively high compensation, and high prestige” (p. 186). Against this model, the professional status of early care and education providers is ambiguous at best. Considering training and licensure alone, requirements for child care providers are as variable as child care environments are diverse. In some cases, government regulations define what it means to be a “qualified” early care and education professional. A Head Start teaching assistant, for instance, must have at least an associate’s degree in child development, or be enrolled in a program that will lead to one (U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, 2008). For positions in less-regulated environments,

such as the home-based child care centers in which many Latinas are employed, standards of preparation are more open to individual interpretation. Thus, how a provider responds to pressures to pursue or continue higher education and training could depend in large part on the meaning she ascribes to her work (Boyd, 2013; Simon, 1997). As Swartz, Wiley, Koziol, and Magerko (2016) found, providers with a stronger sense of professional identity were more likely to pursue training opportunities. Some researchers argue that the movement toward professionalization will necessarily result in improved working conditions; in essence, that higher wages and elevated status follow higher levels of education (Morgaine, 1999). But Boyd (2013), whose participants' educational attainment ranged from sixth grade to postgraduate, has cautioned that to focus policy solutions on provider qualifications without explicitly addressing compensation is exploitative and ultimately unlikely to improve earning potential.

### **Culture and Caregiving**

Approaches to parenting and child nurturing are culturally informed (Holloway et al., 1995; Sanders et al., 2007). The beliefs and practices of parents and caregivers, particularly parents and caregivers of color, are not always consonant with the standards codified by professional organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Holloway et al., 1995; Sanders et al., 2007). For example, the child-centered, play-based approach embodied in what professional organizations consider “developmentally appropriate practice” may be at odds with Latinx cultural norms that emphasize communal responsibility (Sanders et al., 2007). When mothering practices are racialized, those of Latinas and other women of color often are cast as derelict or uninformed in comparison with the strategies of their White peers, which are reified as “developmentally appropriate” (Villenas, 2001).



In another example, mothers of color tend to emphasize academic goals for their young children, while professional organizations often stress play and social development (Holloway et al.; Piotrkowski et al., 2000; Sanders et al.). Among Latinx early care and education consumers, immigrants reported the strongest emphasis on academic goals (Pelletier & Brent, 2002), with mothers expressing the expectation, for example, that as part of their preschool experience, children should learn to communicate effectively in English before entering kindergarten (Piotrkowski et al.).

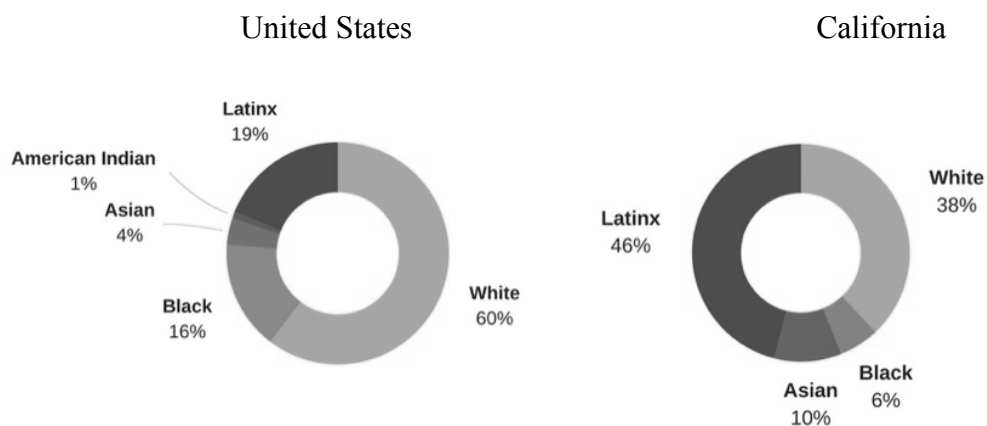
Here, Durand (2011) warns that to attribute parents' priorities to a poor understanding of child development dismisses legitimate concerns about children's educational trajectories. Mothers and caregivers of color may emphasize academic skills in child care because they know their children are heading to under-resourced schools where a strong foundation in early literacy and numeracy, rather than an emphasis on play and social development, might protect against academic failure: "Parents might develop a compensatory strategy that de-emphasizes interest and curiosity and, instead, emphasizes the acquisition of concrete skills to help children adjust quickly and successfully to classroom demands" (Piotrkowski et al., 2000, p. 554).

Just as parents of color bring cultural values to their expectations and preferences about child care, so too do child care providers approach their work in culturally informed ways. In a qualitative study of African-American child care providers serving predominantly Latinx families, Sanders, Deihl, and Kyler (2007) found that participants developed a model of "developmentally appropriate practice" that aligned with their own cultural beliefs and values. To the African-American women in the study, part of providing sensitive and responsive care meant serving as a "community mother," or surrogate grandmother to client families and children. Driven by the tradition of "other-mothering," caregivers of color served as "a source of

information for the parents regarding child rearing. ... Accompanying the theme of community mother is a strong sense of seeing their role and that of the center as a protector of the family and the educational future of the child” (Sanders et al., p. 400). Yet, such a personal involvement may be at odds with norms of professional practice, which tend to imply professional *distance* (Green, Gregory, & Mason, 2006; Hargreaves, 2001).

### **Latina Early Care and Education Professionals**

Latina child care providers, though they make up a growing segment of the field, have received relatively little focused research attention beyond workforce demographic analyses. Studies over the past two decades have documented increasing numbers of Latinas among the ranks of early care and education professionals. In 1990, Fuller and Strath found that Latinas were underrepresented, accounting for just 7 percent of early childhood workers nationwide. A little more than a decade later, the California Early Care and Education Workforce Study found that 34.6 percent of providers in California were Latina (Whitebook, et al., 2006). More recently, as shown in Figure 1, Park and colleagues (2015) estimated that Latinas represent nearly 1 in 5 child care professionals nationwide and 1 in 2 in California. Silent in these and similar studies are the voices of Latina early care and education workers themselves, a gap my study has sought to narrow.



(Park, et al., 2015)

Figure 1: United States Early Care and Education Workforce Demographics

### Latina Representation in the United States

She has this fear that she has no names that she has many names  
 that she doesn't know her names She has this fear that she's an image that  
 comes and goes clearing and darkening the fear that she's the dreamwork  
 inside someone else's skull (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 65).

Latina identity in the United States is subject to multiple definitions, not all of them determined by Latinas themselves (Anzaldúa, 1987). A Latina child care provider's perspective and experience are shaped not only by her own culture and history, and the economic and policy structures of her profession, but also by the framing of Latina lives in American society, a product of "the dreamwork inside someone else's skull." (Field, 2014; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Reyes & Rios, 2003). As Torres (2004) has observed, mainstream American culture tends to define Latina identity in ways that limit Latina opportunity and obscure Latina strength. In images that are reinforced and reproduced by mass media representations, Latinas are cast as foreign regardless of nationality, uneducated notwithstanding expertise, and passive

despite action and influence (Correa, 2010; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Torres, 2004). A native Spanish speaker, for example, is not recognized for competence in her home language, but rather is disparaged for her ignorance of English, whether actual or imagined (Méndez-Morse, 2003; Torres, 2004). In news coverage, frames of self- and family-sacrifice, rather than professional prowess, organize stories about successful Latina leaders (Correa, 2010).

Writing three decades ago, Gloria Anzaldúa described the three spaces to which patriarchal cultures—both White and Latinx—have traditionally consigned Latinas: “to the Church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute, or to the home as a mother” (p. 39). To large extent those types continue to dominate Latina representation across mass media (Merskin, 2007; Reyes & Rios, 2003), their consistent repetition lending them an aura of truth and inevitability. In their content analysis of prime-time television programming, for example, Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2005) found that Latinas tended to be characterized by their accents and provocative dress. They were depicted as unintelligent, lacking social authority, and often hot-tempered and sexually aggressive. Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, and other scholars have also found that, compared to real-world proportions, Latinas are *underrepresented* in mass media and advertising (while White women are overrepresented), giving audiences the impression that they are a smaller demographic force than actual population estimates suggest (Arias & Hellmueller, 2016; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Covert & Dixon, 2008).

More recently, in 2015, the producers Sesame Street announced a new character in the cast of the long-running children’s educational television program. Noting Sesame Street’s “longstanding history of modeling diversity,” press materials described “Nina” as “a young bilingual, Hispanic woman [who] uses her wit, compassion and charisma to help the furry residents of ‘Sesame Street’ to solve their daily dilemmas” (Sesame Workshop, 2015). As

originally introduced, Nina (portrayed by a Latina actress who was at the time completing a degree at New York University) was described in largely stereotypical and maternal terms: a compassionate helper who worked at the laundromat and bike store and as a babysitter to one of the puppet characters. Critics, led by Latina clinical psychologist Angelica Perez-Litwin, questioned why a “young bilingual, Hispanic woman” might not also be assigned loftier educational and professional ambitions:

While we believe babysitting and working in a laundromat are important roles in any community, we strongly believe this is a missed opportunity for Sesame Street to highlight a millennial Latina who is pursuing a college or graduate degree, or who’s running her own business. In a time when Latino high school students are enrolling in college at a higher rate than non-Latino students (Pew Research, 2013); and when there is a Latina Supreme Court justice, and many others who are not only in positions of power, but business owners and accomplished women across the board, it is reasonable that our Latino characters on Sesame Street represent the educated, hard-working group we are. ... Having Nina play the role of an ambitious college or graduate student who also happens to babysit Elmo and works in the community, is a more accurate reflection of today’s millennial Latina. (Perez-Litwin, 2016)

The show later re-characterized Nina as a student, working various jobs in the neighborhood, including babysitting, to pay her way through college (Sesame Workshop, 2016).

Educational research, like mass media, has sometimes reinforced negative stereotypes by describing Latinas in terms of deficits and liabilities rather than strengths and assets (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Pérez Huber, 2009; Villenas, 2001; Zarate & Conchas, 2010). Even methodologies and analytical frameworks that purport to be value-neutral are often based on Eurocentric assumptions and norms against which Latinx individuals may seem deficient. For example, Zarate and Conchas (2010) argue that one reason the literature on parent involvement in schools has consistently found low levels of engagement among Latinx families is that studies often use attendance at parent meetings as a proxy for involvement. If instead, those studies considered *consejos*—the tips and advice on school projects and educational resources Latina

mothers frequently exchange at pick-up and drop-off times—research results might indicate higher levels of engagement among Latinx parents.

### **A Chicana Feminist Epistemology**

Anzaldúa (1987) concluded that the mestiza must grapple with the multiple identities imposed on her—as well as the conflicts, contradictions, and crossings they imply—to eventually arrive at her own more inclusive and ever-shifting borderlands identity. Building on Anzaldúa’s theoretical foundations, Delgado Bernal (1998) constructed a framework within which the church, the streets and the home, instead of sites of relegation, become sites of knowledge. Her Chicana feminist epistemology holds that Latina scholars can pursue inquiry with a “cultural intuition” that informs all stages of the research process, from the formulation of questions to the organization of analysis. Cultural intuition also informs the meanings a Latina scholar applies to her data. A Chicana feminist epistemology can encompass both quantitative and qualitative approaches; what is essential is that the research is grounded in the experiences of Latinx people, and that it seeks to reveal new and more authentic insights on Latinx lives (Delgado Bernal, 1998). To this end, testimonio, to be covered in detail in Chapter 3, is a well-aligned methodology, seeking knowledge from the individual and collective experiences of first-hand witnesses to events and phenomena (Pérez Huber, 2009).

**Sources of cultural intuition.** Delgado Bernal notes that cultural intuition does not come simply by virtue of being Latina, rather it is acquired via four sources: personal experience, the existing literature, professional experience, and the research process.

**Personal experience.** By personal experience, Delgado Bernal refers to the life experiences that shape a researcher’s response to and understanding of facts, events, and actions. She argues that personal experience goes beyond the individual to include the collective memory

and experiences of a people, both laterally across family and peers as well as longitudinally into the past. Thus, a Latina child care provider's "personal" experience of occupational segregation might include not only her own work life, but also that of her mother, her grandmother, and others in her community. Likewise, my personal experience of child care combines my firsthand experiences as a mother and daughter with those of other Latinas who seek and provide care.

***Existing literature.*** Delgado Bernal distinguishes between technical literature—research studies and philosophical essays, for example—and nontechnical literature—biographies, artifacts, and mass media products. Both types, she has argued, lend insight and context that can help Latina researchers frame questions and structure inquiry.

***Professional experience.*** A researcher who is conversant in the minutiae of the field she is studying has a richer knowledge base from which to analyze information and draw conclusions.

***Research process.*** According to Delgado Bernal, scholars also build cultural intuition through the research process itself. They develop a more nuanced understanding as they engage with and make sense of data. They also gain insight through the perspectives of participants who, under an approach guided by Chicana feminist epistemology, are equal partners in analysis and knowledge production.

Since outlined by Delgado Bernal in 1998, Chicana feminist epistemology has been employed across disciplines, but most extensively in education research, to understand the experiences and circumstances of Latinx students and families in new and more just ways (Calderón, et al., 2012). Revisiting Delgado Bernal's work a little more than a decade after it was first introduced, Dolores Calderón and colleagues (2012) considered the studies that have been guided by her framework, as well as the insights those studies have generated. Their

review revealed three overarching themes which, bringing Delgado Bernal's work full circle, align closely with Borderlands concepts theorized by Gloria Anzaldúa:

- **Nepantla** – This concept refers to the idea of living between multiple worlds and belief systems (Calderón, et al., 2012). It addresses the border-straddling spaces that Latinas in general occupy, but also the multiple identities of Latina scholars who participate within a colonizing tradition even as they seek to disrupt it (and even as they have been marginalized by it). Anzaldúa (2002) had defined this position as one of strength and potential, allowing the mestiza access to multiple perspectives and opening her mind to multiple ways of knowing.
- **El Mundo Zurdo** – Research undertaken within a Chicana feminist framework has re-centered voices and identities that dominant paradigms have tended to place at the margins of experience (Calderon, et al., 2012). Translated literally, El Mundo Zurdo means, the left-handed world—the world that is not dominant. “El Muno Zurdo is a location where the odd, different, misfit, and queer bodies exist. It can be seen as a marginalized space, but more importantly, it is a space informed by these bodies and where these bodies begin to heal” (p. 521). By centering previously marginalized voices, Chicana feminist epistemology makes possible alternative insights and explanations.
- **Coyolxauhqui** – In Aztec tradition, Coyolxauhqui was the moon goddess who was killed and dismembered by her brother, the god of war. In telling the story of Coyolxauhqui, Anzaldúa draws an analogy to the way dominant ideologies, with their focus on objective and universal truth, have disempowered Latina ways of knowing (Calderón, et al., 2012). A reclaimed Coyolxauhqui speaks to the social justice



agenda of Chicana feminist research, which “puts us back together” through new methodologies and sources of knowledge (p. 525), and which validates concepts drawn from Latinx lives and belief: *educación* (academic and moral education), *convivir* (living in community), *familismo* (family connection) and *valerse por si misma* (self-reliance).

Returning briefly to Sesame Street, we may consider an example how re-centering the voices and experiences of Latinas changed the narrative surrounding a highly visible character—one whose representation has the potential to influence how millions of viewers understand what it means to be Latina. In a June 2017 post to the social media platform Instagram, Suki Lopez, the actress who portrays Nina, shared an on-set picture of her character reading an engineering textbook. The accompanying caption read:

Proud to be portraying a real millennial Latina on #sesamestreet! Just a girl studying engineering, working odd jobs to make her dreams a reality, who can roll up her sleeves and fix just about anything. #representationmatters #womeninstem #multitaskingmillennial #rockingrollie #newepisode #ninalatina #girlpower (Lopez, 2017).

In the post, reproduced in Figure 2, Lopez acknowledges that her character, Nina, is “the Latina” on Sesame Street *and* voices authority over her representation and its meaning.



(Lopez, 2017)

Figure 2: Suki Lopez: “Nina la Latina”

## Summary

The first part of this review sought to elucidate the contexts in which Latina child care providers live and work. The literature on early care and education seems to place Latinas on the social, economic, and political margins of American life. At the same time, research on Latina representation makes the lives and bodies of Latinas the focus of debate over language, culture, and national identity. Notably absent from the literature, meanwhile, have been the voices of Latina early care and education workers themselves.

The second part of the review considered approaches that re-center and re-claim as authoritative those previously marginalized voices. As outlined by Delgado Bernal (1998), Chicana feminist epistemology disrupts dominant narratives that have often described Latinas

lives in terms of problems requiring intervention. Moreover, the framework makes possible the development of new theories that, in turn, weave new narratives about Latina strength and resilience. To do so, Chicana epistemology requires methodologies which draw knowledge directly from the lives and experiences of Latinas. It is one such methodology, testimonio, that is the focus of Chapter 3.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods**

The purpose of this study was to understand how Latina early care and education providers conceptualize and experience their work, and how social and political forces inform their perception and performance of it. To do so, the study focused on two overarching research questions:

- How do Latina early care and education providers understand and experience their professional roles and responsibilities?
- How do social, political, and cultural factors shape the development and enactment of their professional roles?

In this chapter, I explain the methodological strategy that framed my research: testimonio. Characterized as both process and product, this qualitative approach responds directly to the call issued by Chicana feminist epistemology for methodologies that derive knowledge from the lives of Latinx individuals (Pérez Huber, 2009; Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012). Next, I outline the methods I undertook to address my research questions, and describe the participants from whom I gathered testimony and alongside whom I drew conclusions from it. Finally, I discuss considerations related to the trustworthiness of the data and the limitations of the study.

#### **Testimonio as Methodology**

Arguing that mainstream methodologies have contributed to incomplete representations of Latinx lives, Chicana feminist epistemology, the conceptual framework within which I situated my study, calls for alternate perspectives that center the experiences and validate the voices of Latinas as legitimate sources of knowledge (Calderón, et al., 2012; Delgado Bernal,

1998; Pérez Huber, 2009). Described by Delgado Bernal (1998), a Chicana feminist methodology is one that “encompasses both the position from which distinctively Chicana research questions might be asked and the political and ethical issues involved in the research process” (p. 558-9). Testimonio satisfies both criteria. Drawing data from the first-hand testimony of individuals who have direct experience within inequitable systems, testimonio is well-positioned to pose previously overlooked questions. Further, as a research approach, testimonio attempts to mitigate power imbalances by seeking a reciprocal relationship between scholar and participant, and by foregrounding issues of gender, race, and culture that might otherwise be invisible or overlooked (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012; Zarate & Conchas, 2010).

Pérez Huber (2009), writing of testimonio as a methodological tool for disrupting “apartheid of knowledge,” (in other words, challenging distinctions between what is or is not considered legitimate knowledge), offers the definition of testimonio I use in this study: “a verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal the classed, gendered, and nativist injustices they have suffered as a means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a more humane present and future” (p. 644).

**The verbal journey of a witness.** With roots in Latin American studies and the liberation ideologies of the 1970s, testimonio has been described as “methodological cousin” to oral history and interview (Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012, p. 532). As in those more mainstream qualitative approaches, the substance of testimonio is an account of an event or phenomenon, as recollected and told by someone who has lived through it. However, unlike oral history, memoir, and similar narrative types, testimonio is concerned with collective, not just personal memory (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012; Pérez Huber, 2012). “In

listening to the story of one, we learn about the conditions of many” (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012, p. 368).

**Who speaks to reveal.** Another crucial dimension of testimonio is its concern with the experiences of the marginalized (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012). Testimonio directly engages questions of race, gender, language, culture, and nativity and considers how each—individually and in combination—shape identity (Pérez Huber, 2009).

**A means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy.** A final distinction of testimonio is its intentional pursuit of social justice. While other, similar approaches explore and describe, testimonio also implies a call to action (Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012). It makes visible oppressive systems *in order to* interrogate and ultimately dismantle them.

### **Participants**

My research design employed theoretical selection as described by Creswell (2013). He has argued that to develop new insights about a system or process, researchers must intentionally select participants with direct experience of that system or process. In this research, I engaged in individual pláticas with three Latina child care providers living and working in the Los Angeles, California, region. (A fourth woman, an early childhood educator working for Head Start, also shared her testimonio. Ultimately, however, her testimony was not included in this study so that analysis could focus more narrowly on the experiences of home child care providers who have received limited research attention). With a population that is 48 percent Latinx and roughly 34 percent immigrant, metropolitan Los Angeles is a research context in which the issues of culture and nationality I aimed to explore are particularly salient (Census Bureau, 2015). I recruited participants via formal and informal networks of child care providers, including associations and organizations such as Options for Learning, a child care resource and referral agency, and

through community partners such as elementary school principals. I then selected participants based on the following criteria:

- Self-identification as Latina: Among United States adults of Hispanic/Latinx ancestry, 11 percent do not identify themselves as Hispanic or Latinx, a trend that is especially pronounced among third- and subsequent generation residents (Lopez, Gonzales-Barrera, & López, 2017). Latina identity, and its relationship to the conceptualization and performance of child care work, was a central concern of my study. I therefore asked potential participants how they describe their racial/ethnic identity and selected only those who think of themselves as Latina.
- Self-identification as a child-care provider: Similarly, not all women who care for children think of themselves as child care providers. Since my study sought to understand dimensions of professional identity as it relates to Latina identity, I selected participants who described child care work as their occupation or employment, regardless of how or how much they are paid.
- Experience in the field: I sought to work with women who have more than one year of experience in the early care and education sector. Ensuring at least a minimal level of occupational tenure helped improve the likelihood that a provider's testimony would have a narrative arc with turning points which could become focal points of analysis. It also helped ensure that participants had reflected on their professional identity as child care providers, and on the ways politics and culture influence their lives and careers.
- Willingness and ability to participate: The testimonio process asks for a significant investment of participants' time and mental energy (three interviews/exchanges, to be described in further detail below). Moreover, participants were asked to recall, discuss,

and reflect on personal, and potentially sensitive, experiences and perspectives. Before selecting participants, I described the study in detail to confirm that the women I had recruited were able and inclined to share their testimonies.

### **Methods and Data Collection**

With its interest in narratives of struggle and marginalization, and its focus on culture, gender, politics, and other social forces that shape individual identity, a testimonio analysis is a fitting approach for understanding the experiences of Latina child care providers. In keeping with the collaborative and reciprocal ethos of both Chicana feminist epistemology and testimonio, I drew participant testimony primarily through pláticas, or conversations. These conversations were guided by open-ended prompts (Appendix A) that addressed my research questions rather than by a more rigidly scripted protocol. As a secondary method, a textual analysis of online advertisements posted by Latina child care providers helped me triangulate findings and explore another facet of providers' self-narration: how they package and present themselves to a consumer market.

**Data collection through pláticas.** Whereas formal, structured interviews tend to be unilateral, at least in terms of control of narrative flow and direction, dialogic pláticas allowed insights to emerge in a way that was more consonant with my methodology: through of the give and take of two-way or multilateral discourse (Espino, Muñoz, & Marquez Kiyama, 2010; Godinez, 2006). "In dialogue each discovery of a piece of evidence helps the participants see ... what additional questions might need to be explored. Therefore, a dialogue cannot be prescribed; its very nature requires that the participants go down paths that the dialogue uncovers and defines" (MacInnis & Portelli, 2002, p. 34). Pláticas position participants as authorities. As partners in a reciprocal conversation, they are empowered to determine what parts of their stories



are most significant. They also are invited to comment on the meaning of their testimony as it is delivered (Godinez, 2006).

Over a data collection period of eight weeks, I engaged in a series of pláticas with each participant, each lasting from 20 to 90 minutes: The first conversation focused on introductions and rapport-building. I introduced myself and described my research interest in early care and education. In these first talks, I also collected basic information on each woman's child care business and her experience in the field.

For all participants, our second conversation was the longest, exploring in depth the provider's understanding of her role, her experiences performing that role, and her perceptions of the social, cultural, and political contexts in which she works. Finally, the third plática provided an opportunity for me to share my initial impressions with each participant, to listen to her feedback, and to invite her reflections on our conversations.

Pláticas were digitally audio-recorded and were undertaken in Spanish or English, according to each participant's preference. To the extent possible—taking into consideration caretaking demands as well as potential confidentiality concerns—pláticas occurred in providers' home, the setting of each participant's child care business. Access to the physical spaces in which participants conduct their personal and professional lives gave me a richer understanding of the textures of their everyday experiences. In some cases, it also provided an opportunity observe the people, activities, and interactions that constitute the culture of a provider's home and/or child care workplace, offering another means of triangulation (Creswell, 2013).

**Protecting participants.** In inviting child care providers to participate, I described the study and its purpose in English or Spanish, according to each woman's preference. Likewise, consent forms were made available in both languages (Appendix B). Recognizing potential risks

associated with employment and, possibly, documentation status, I took a number of measures to protect participant confidentiality: First, throughout this study, participants are referred to by pseudonyms. Surnames and street addresses were not recorded. These and other pieces of personally identifiable information (for example, name of business or place of work) were redacted from transcripts, coded, and stored separately in a password-protected file, accessible only by me. Similarly, digitally recorded conversations were downloaded to a password-protected computer drive immediately after recording, and the original file erased from the recording device. All personal, password-protected material, including recordings, will be destroyed after a period of three years. Redacted transcripts (stripped of personally identifiable information) will be maintained indefinitely in print and digital formats.

No data or observations on children were collected or recorded except in very general terms related to participants' child care work. For example, it was helpful to know the number and age-range of children under a participant's care—as well as the caretaking activities she undertakes with and for them. In addition, providers were eager to share examples of children's artwork as well as photos of children playing and learning. In cases where children were present during the pláticas, participants' interactions with and responses to them were observed, however children's names were not recorded and children themselves were not interviewed.

### **Data Analysis**

The role of the researcher in testimonio analysis is not to “re-story” and unilaterally interpret a participant's narrative, but rather to facilitate her bearing witness (Pérez Huber, 2009). As such, I sought to involve participants in all stages of meaning-making. Historically, much research on Latinx communities has imposed meanings on our lives, marginalizing our voices and reinforcing narratives of deficit. (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Pérez Huber, 2009; Villenas, 2001;

Zarate & Conchas, 2010). By centering the voices of my participants, inviting them to steer our conversations (and thus, participate in data-collection), and encouraging them to contribute to analysis and interpretation, we were able to collaboratively construct new, more authentic frameworks for understanding Latina experience. Data analysis occurred in three, somewhat overlapping, but essentially sequential, phases: dialogic, reflective, and collaborative.

**Dialogic.** In this phase, analysis was concurrent with data collection. As part of the process of *platicando*, I used broad, flexible prompts to help encourage participants to share what they believed to be key details of their stories, and to interrupt and redirect discussion. In this way, I hoped to re-focus my analytical attention on each participant's self-narration of her identity, and to avoid steering conversations based solely on the assumptions I brought to them. As MacInnis and Portelli (2002) describe, dialogue in which participants focus their attention—and intention—on a common goal, can facilitate mutual inquiry. Interview can be transformed from an "exchange of existing information," into a collaborative mechanism for sense-making (Way, Zwier, & Tracy, 2015). Through this back-and-forth, give-and-take process of conversation, then, I aimed to build a shared understanding of each participant's story—authentic to each participant's experience—which helped guide subsequent stages of analysis. (Godinez, 2006).

**Reflective.** In the next phase, I transcribed and, in one case translated, audio recordings of *pláticas* in order to perform a deeper analysis that allowed me to consider individual testimonies in relation to one another, as well as in relation to insights previously gleaned through existing literature and my own cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998). After reading through each transcript to re-immense myself in the conversations, I began to more formally render each participant's testimony.

Testimonios were then re-read and coded for themes and patterns that emerged inductively from the narratives themselves, as well as for themes that align with concepts described in theories of Latina pedagogy: educación, convivir, familismo, and valerse por si misma (Villenas, 2006). With regard to narrative structure, I focused in particular on connections and contiguity as described by Maxwell (2013). By studying relationships among events, experiences, and influences as they unfolded over time, I developed a more nuanced understanding of each child care provider's perception of her role, and how that perception formed. Analyzing the data through a Chicana feminist lens also helped reveal some of the underlying structures that have shaped providers' experiences, and allowed me to consider those experiences against broader political, social, and educational landscapes (Delgado Bernal, 1998).

**Collaborative.** Borrowing and slightly adapting a strategy used in the testimonio research of Pérez Huber (2009), the third phase of analysis asked participants to reflect, through further conversation, on our dialogues and on what they believed their stories revealed. By following up with participants in this way, I was compelled to re-engage with their voices and perspective, a central priority of Chicana feminist epistemology. I also had an opportunity to consider each participant's assessments and conclusions with my own, while avoiding many of the pitfalls and potential harms of member-checking (Carlson, 2020; Hallett, 2013).

### **Trustworthiness**

Testimonio is less concerned with historical or empirical veracity than the authenticity of an individual's perspective, and the authenticity with which an individual's account speaks to the experiences of a community (Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012). This position, which tends to challenge the notion of empirical truth, has sometimes fueled criticism of testimonio analysis as a research strategy as well as questions about its rigor (Beverley, 2008; Roman, 2003). John

Clark (2007) takes up the truth-defining prerogative of testimonio analysis in a discussion of one of the most high-profile and controversial testimonios, *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Menchú's testimony, presented as a first-hand account delivered to Venezuelan anthropologist Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, describes the persecution of indigenous Guatemalans at the hands of the country's military. After the testimony was published, another anthropologist, David Stoll, who is based in the United States, reported discrepancies between the historical facts of Menchú's life and her narrative retelling of it. Scholars debated, among other questions, whether departure from historical fact had rendered Menchú's testimony false, or whether her accurate representation of the exploitation of other poor Guatemalans made Mechú's claims true (Clark, 2007).

Even if testimonio has no aspirations toward empirical or universal "truth," I believe that attention to trustworthiness can prevent testimonio's political agenda from veering into propaganda, helping ensure that credible insights may be confidently drawn from the life stories of individual participants (Clark, 2007; Carlson, 2010). In considering the "shape-shifting nature of memory and interpretation," Carlson (2010, p. 1102) notes that trustworthiness in narrative analyses "is gained when researchers show that their data were ethically and mindfully collected, analyzed, and reported" (p. 1110). I aimed to do so through the collaborative nature of the research design, as well as through triangulation.

**Collaboration.** Cho and Trent (2006) have suggested that educational researchers should consider trustworthiness a process rather than a step. They should first identify the purpose of their study—to influence practice or to understand how participants experience a phenomenon, for example—and then determine which strategies will contribute to overall credibility. For research pursued within a critical paradigm, such as mine, collaboration is an appropriate means

of helping establish that a researcher's account authentically represents a participant's experience (Creswell & Miller, 2000). As previously described in this chapter, I worked to meaningfully involve participants in all stages of data collection and analysis to better safeguard against the further misrepresentation and marginalization of a historically silenced group. In particular, the dialogic structure of my pláticas created spaces in which women could direct the telling of their own stories, clarifying misunderstandings and elaborating on key details as they believed necessary (Harvey, 2015; MacInnis & Portelli, 2002).

**Triangulation.** Testimonio analysis can also strive toward conclusions and explanations that are accurate and authentic insofar as they bear a coherent and credible relationship with evidence extracted from the testimony itself, or from other observations (Shenton, 2004). Through triangulation, then, I was not seeking to verify the veracity of a given set of details, but rather to establish a convergence of concepts gathered from multiple sources (Creswell & Miller). For example, it was helpful in establishing trustworthiness to examine and attempt to explain similarities and differences between and among individual testimonios, as well as between and among individual testimonios and the existing literature (Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012). As an additional counterpoint—as well as another angle from which to consider providers' negotiation of their public identities—I relied on a secondary source of information: child care advertisements on Craigslist.

***Textual analysis of Craigslist ads.*** Launched in 1995, Craigslist.org is an online classified advertising platform that draws more than 60 million viewers each month (Craigslist, 2017). In addition to events, housing listings, personals, and items for sale, users advertise their professional services, including child care. The free, public, and open-ended nature of Craigslist (there are few limits on content) make the site a rich source of insights on how individuals

strategically package and present themselves (Peters, Thomas, & Morris, 2013). A Latina child care provider seeking to draw clients via Craigslist must craft a description, or short narrative, of herself and her qualifications that she believes will speak to the demands of the market. As Lair, Sullivan, and Cheney (2005) note, however, she may find herself in a "discursive double-bind" in that her narrative will also be evaluated against culturally defined expectations of Latina femininity.

Textual analysis provides a useful tool for systematically exploring this complex negotiation of "self" as contained within a public advertisement. Employed across fields, and increasingly in the social sciences, close analysis of textual content allows researchers to identify and consider patterns of meaning within it (Elo & Kyngäs, 2001; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Here, my analysis proceeded in three steps: organization, analysis, and reporting:

*Organization.* The first stage requires the researcher to determine her unit of analysis (Bevan, Galvan, Villaseñor, & Henkin, 2015; Elo & Kyngäs). I focused on child care advertisements posted to the Los Angeles section of the Craigslist site over the period of one month, April 2018. As additional filters designed to help focus specifically on ads posted by Latina child care providers, I selected only those ads whose headlines or body text included Spanish and/or a Hispanic surname, as defined in the Census Bureau's Spanish Surname List (1996). After removing duplicate ads, I cataloged content, transcribing written text, describing the ad's primary visual image (if any), and redacting personal information such as names, addresses, and telephone numbers. I then re-read all transcripts to get a sense of the whole before moving on to the analytical stage.

*Analysis.* My analysis of ad transcripts was similar in approach to my analysis of provider testimonies; it was mainly inductive, with the goal of developing a conceptual map where little

theory currently exists (Clawson, Pater, Miller, Mynatt, & Mamykina, 2015; Elo & Kyngäs, 2001; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). However, as successive rounds of coding led to broader, more abstract categories, I also was attentive to themes that aligned with those that emerged in my testimonio analysis, as well as the previously theorized concepts of educación, convivir, familismo, valerse por si misma, and borderlands identity.

*Reporting.* The results of my textual analysis are presented in Chapter 4 as a counterpoint to the primary testimonio research. They allowed me to examine similarities and differences in how Latina child care providers narrate their lives in the context of personal conversation, as opposed to the context of the public marketplace in which they must earn a living. This comparison helped me better understand the dynamic processes at play as Latina child care providers negotiate their identities in response—and in opposition—to social, political, and cultural pressures.

### **Limitations**

My study did not pursue broad generalizability. Chicana feminist epistemology seeks to add dimension and authenticity to the understanding and representation of Latinx lives (Delgado Bernal, 1998). To this end, I have identified three important theoretical limitations of my work. First, by focusing on women with at least one year of experience in early care and education, my analysis likely neglected the perspectives of women who may be recent immigrants, and almost certainly neglected the perspectives of women who are newly entering or navigating the field. Given the concentration of immigrants in early care and education jobs, and high turnover within the sector (Park, et al., 2015; Whitbrook & Sakai, 2003), the omissions are potentially significant. Similarly, by locating my study in Los Angeles I have defined a very specific research context: My participants live and work in a densely populated region where they are in



close proximity to other Latinas and Latinx families. Their experiences as providers and as Latinas are likely different than those of Latina providers living elsewhere in the country, perhaps more isolated from an established Latinx community. Finally, with its focus on Latinas, my study cannot offer insights applicable to men, whose roles as caregivers and professionals are defined by different sets of cultural, political, and social expectations.

### **Summary**

This chapter sought to provide a detailed overview of my research design. It began by aligning testimonio with the objectives and values of Chicana feminist epistemology, and by addressing the suitability of testimonio as a methodological tool for responding to my research questions. I then summarized the methods, strategies, and rationale I used to select participants, and collect and analyze data. Finally, the chapter concluded with a discussion of steps I took to achieve trustworthiness, and the theoretical limits I perceived. Provider testimonios and my analysis of them follow in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Testimonios

The purpose of this study was to understand how Latina early care and education providers conceptualize and experience their work, and how social and cultural forces inform their perception and performance of it. As a means of contributing to a little explored area of research, and potentially improving the education of Latinx children who will soon make up the majority of all U.S. students, I considered how Latina child care providers understand and experience their professional roles and responsibilities and how social, political and cultural factors shape the development and enactment of providers' professional roles.

This chapter presents the three principal findings that emerged in the testimonios of three Latinas who operate child care businesses out of their homes in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. The chapter begins with a brief description of each of the three participants, followed by their child care testimonios, as told to me.

After presenting each woman's testimonio, I discuss the themes that emerged in their stories. Individually and collectively, the testimonios reveal a borderlands experience in which Latina child care providers straddle frontiers of invisibility and influence, the personal and the professional, and community and isolation.

### **Participants and Their Testimonios**

Three child care providers—Feliz, Lucila, and Amada— all running day care businesses out of their homes in the greater Los Angeles region agreed to participate in this study. The women ranged in years of experience from a little more than two to more than fifteen. Two are native United States citizens (one from Florida and one from California), while one is an immigrant from Mexico. Since the voices of Latina child care workers are rarely represented in

research or mass media, I considered it important to present their stories in the full context of our conversations, rather than as disjointed supplements to my own analysis. Presenting extended versions of the testimonios also allowed me to better preserve each woman's individual voice.

Some segments of our pláticas have been reorganized in order to render a clearer and roughly chronological story, and where helpful for understanding, I condensed and summarized details. Vocalized pauses—*um, uh, este*, for example—were largely removed, again for clarity. In the extended testimonios that follow, participants' words are presented in Roman text. My own words, asides, and interruptions are set in italic.

**Feliz: “I Needed a Purpose”**

*Feliz cares for 14 children, from infants to elementary-school students, out of her home in the Gateway Cities region of Southeast Los Angeles County. We talk in English, mainly in the early evening, after five o'clock when parents should already have arrived to pick up their children. Several parents are running late, though, and tired preschoolers are growing cranky. “You never know what you're going to get at this hour,” Feliz apologizes. She is dressed in jeans and a sleeveless top. She has almond-shaped eyes, and has pulled her long, dark hair back in a practical clip. She does not sit down. She tidies and arranges as we talk. Her voice is calm and measured, even when her own daughter cries for a snack and then bickers with another child over a block-stacking toy. Feliz approaches the children, kneels on the hardwood floor in front of them (This used to be a living room), and negotiates a compromise. Then she goes to the kitchen and brings both of them back a cup of water. “She had a hard time adjusting at first, but she does much better now,” Feliz says of her three-year-old daughter. “Despite the fact that it's after six o'clock.”*

*Feliz opened her child care business about two years ago after nearly two decades of work as a medical assistant. The move represented a career change, but also a return to a path she had first embarked on soon after graduating high school:*

I had my daughter when I was 19-years-old and I thought, “Well, I don’t want to leave her,” and I thought I could maybe pursue some sort of child development (career) so I could stay with her in a preschool or work with her in a preschool. ... I was on my own for that period of time. I was kind of a little bit lost. I wasn’t sure which direction I wanted to go.

*She began taking child development and early childhood education courses through the local Regional Occupational Program, a public career- and technical-education program for high school students and young adults.*

It took me about nine months and I completed that, and then I did my internship at a preschool. That’s when I said, “I don’t know if I really want to do this.” I was very young and wasn’t familiar with kids. And I went to the preschool, and I was like, “Oh, my gosh, what is going on here? These kids are nuts!”

*She laughs, then continues:*

So I thought, “Well, I’m just going to go back to school.” I had an interest in medical assisting. I was done in another nine months with that. And, funny thing, I ended up in pediatrics. I worked in pediatrics for years and years and years, and I absolutely loved it.

*Then, a little more than two years ago, the health care organization Feliz was working for went through a merger.*

I really wasn’t too fond of the changes. They were just kind of affecting me emotionally. It was too stressful so I said, “What can I do?”

*By that time, she was married with five children, including, at the time, an infant daughter.*

I didn't want to start somewhere else and leave my daughter in day care again. So I went back to where I started, which was working with kids.

*Feliz researched the process for becoming a licensed family child care home, then turned her living room into a playroom filled with child-sized tables and chairs. Turquoise tubs stacked within white shelves hold carefully organized toys and art supplies. She painted black polka dots on the white walls and hung whimsical black and white curtains over the windows. There is even a class fish.*

I had a passion for child care, early childhood development, so I thought, "Well, this is a good way to get back in it." I was so terrified after leaving a 17-and-a-half-year job.

Going to this? I've never done this before. I've taken care of children, but I've never done this before. It's definitely a big, big change.

*Feliz had spent the earliest years of her childhood in Florida, moving to California when she was about eleven. Her mother, who worked as a hair stylist, coordinated her work schedule so that she could be home when Feliz and her brother were home from school. I ask Feliz whether it was from her mother that she learned to look for career options that would allow her spend more time at home with her children.*

I think so, honestly. I have a big family myself. I have five children, so I didn't really see myself leaving my kids in day care all day long. It was dreadful to me, you know, and so I just didn't want to do it this time. ... My youngest is three-years-old, so with her and my ten-year-old, I thought, "If I open up a day care, I can keep track of everybody. If they need a ride, I can take them. If they have a program at school, I can take them."

*Before opening her child care business, Feliz sought advice from other child care providers in her community.*

I did a lot of research. I did a lot of reading. I tried to network with other providers but they had no interest in me because I was stepping into their territory kind of thing. So, I think that's why they didn't want to help. But for me, I love to share. I can help new providers, you know, start something. It doesn't cost very much. They can start small.

*Feliz met her first client family through a chance encounter at City Hall. She was there to apply for a permit to open a home-based business.*

I was sitting next to this lady, and she was like, "Oh, they're taking forever," and we just started talking, and she goes, "What are you here for?" And I said, "Oh, I'm here just to get a business license for a day care that I'm opening." And she goes, "Oh, you're opening a day care? I know somebody from my church. Let me get your number." And the next day, the mother called me and her son has been here since then.

*I ask her, "So you're a pretty good networker?" She demurs.*

I mean, I don't do so intentionally. It just happens. I don't know how this happened, but I have been full since I opened. I have a waiting list, and I'm so grateful because I hear other providers struggle with, um, having clients. And I don't know what that's like because I've never gone through that. So I'm very grateful for this opportunity because it's been a blessing. It really has.

*When Feliz first opened her home child care, she had outlined only a very basic schedule of arrival, snack, mealtimes, and naptimes — and had not considered any particular curricular or educational programming. Then, after an exhausting and difficult first month in business, she*

*decided she needed to operate her day care more like preschool, with routines and structured learning activities.*

That first month, I was thinking, “Oh, my gosh, what did I do? I left my job and these kids are going crazy.” And so I thought, “This is what I need to do. I need to create different times during the day for them to do different things. They can’t be doing the same thing all day long.” ... And that’s why I made different areas where they can do Play-Doh over there, they can have their writing center over there, they can do dress up over here. Once I did that, it ran so much smoother.

*Her first child arrives each day at 7 a.m.*

I need to be up before then. Sometimes I’m like, “I’ve got to clean the playroom, I’ve got to wipe down the tables.” So, if I don’t clean the playroom at night, then I’m up at 5:30 in the morning getting ready.

*Between 8 and 9 a.m., as families continue to arrive, Feliz serves breakfast. Her husband, an escrow officer at a real estate company, sometimes helps play with the children before he leaves for work. Feliz also relies on a pool of part-time assistants who rotate in to help her throughout the week.*

I do have several assistants just for backup purposes. I have [R.], who is one of the nannies for one of the kids here. She’s very sweet. I don’t know, God must have placed her here because she is the best. ... My mom helps me. Also my older daughter helps me, and I have two others. One was one of my first day care parents. Her little boy is now in first grade, and so she helps out during the day when he’s in school. And the other one is a friend of my daughter’s. ... I have it (that way) so they don’t get burned out. Because Monday through Friday, with two- and three-year-olds is a very, very long

day. And hard. So I thought, well, if I break it up a little bit for them, no one's burned out. Everyone's super excited to come in. Even if they're not. But they are.

*She considers it her responsibility to prepare the children at her day care for kindergarten.*

I do think that's kind of what's driving me. I'm really good with our little ones. We do circle time in the morning. Everybody participates. They're engaged for about 35 or 40 minutes, which is kind of unheard of for a two-year-old. And we make it fun. ... I don't know necessarily that the parents are looking for a preschool program. But I like to offer it because I don't want this to be a place where they just hang out and watch TV. ... I didn't want that. ... I didn't want to have this just as a day care. I wanted to have this—I needed a purpose. And just to take care of kids and watch them through the day? I felt like I needed to structure this program more as a preschool. Because then we're offering them something. It felt empty when I first opened.

*Feliz recently planned a special ceremony to celebrate a child's transition to kindergarten. She recalls it as one of her proudest moments as a child care provider:*

Recently we just had our first little one who's going to be leaving for kindergarten, so we had a graduation ceremony for her, and the kids did so awesome. We practiced for weeks this song we were going to be singing for her. We got her a cap and gown. Her grandparents came, her aunt came, her mom and dad came, and the family was so appreciative and so grateful for everything I taught her. ... The day went beautifully. It was about an hour that they were here. All the kids were on their best behavior. So, yeah, it worked really well. We'll be doing that every time.



*Despite such moments and despite her broader efforts, Feliz says she doesn't believe the general public—or even many of the parents whose children she cares for—respect or value her work.*

I had a parent, when we were both at a school event, introduce me and say, “Oh, this is my babysitter.”

*Feliz didn't say anything to the parent, but thought to herself:*

“Hm. I don't know exactly *what* would be a babysitter. But, not me. It's not me. A babysitter is—I was a babysitter when I was thirteen.” It's just kind of like the perception of it is totally ... They just don't know. They don't know exactly what we put into this. We don't just flip on the TV during the day and the kids just hang out. That's not what we do. We have a very structured program, and our kids do very, very well here. So, I think very highly of everything that we put into it. And we have a lot of good help who put in long days, and if people had a video camera in here, they would watch it and be like, “Oh, my gosh, how do they do it? How do they survive?”

*Feliz adds that one of her client parents recently mentioned that she'd like to open a home child care herself.*

She was like, “You make this look so easy, I'm going to do it.” I was like, “I'm going to tell you right now, it's not easy. You're working 24 hours a day. It is not easy. There is nothing easy about this.”

*In addition to misperceptions about child care, Feliz has also struggled to negotiate the blurred lines between personal and professional time and space.*

It does catch up with me. I feel like I'm working way more than I did when I had a job. But I have a really supportive family. My husband will come in after his long day and

help me in here. And in the morning, the first thing he does is help me in here. I don't even have to ask; he just does it. And so, I think because of that support I'm able to kind of get through it.

*Early on, she encountered a mother who would regularly linger 45 minutes after pick-up time, just wanting to chat.*

I'm all about meeting new people and that kind of thing, but this is my space for my family. After six o'clock, it's my family's time. It's not anyone else's time. And I struggled with figuring out how to say it because I didn't want to come across as rude, but once I was able to get that out and kind of put that boundary out there, it was... it was a lot better. There was a little bit of ... she cried at first because her feelings were so hurt, but after that first week, I was like "OK, let's get back to normal, everything's fine, OK?" So, yeah, I struggled with that at first. I don't have any real employees to be able to, like, deflect, you know?

*At the same time, she admits that she too has become emotionally invested in what some families see as a purely professional relationship. She takes it personally when families leave for alternative child care arrangements.*

I have a hard time with them leaving. I guess I didn't realize that they would be leaving, opening up the day care. After the first one, I think I was depressed for two weeks. I literally cried. I thought, "What did I do? I didn't do a good job." I got so attached and I was like, "I gotta get it together. I cannot be doing this every time somebody leaves." You're part of their lives and you're raising them. With their families you're raising them, so you become very attached. ... That was really difficult for me, but I've learned to deal with it.

*Despite her business success—she has never struggled to find clients—Feliz says she is not a business person.*

I don't like telling people that they have a late fee. I don't like addressing things, you know, in a business way. I don't like paperwork. I just want to play all day. So that I did struggle with, but my husband is very much into business. I've always been very headstrong, even when I worked at my previous job. I kind of very quickly moved up the ladder and, you know, got a supervisor position very quickly because I've been so headstrong and kind of like a leader and that kind of thing. But as far as running my own business, I never thought that was something I would do.

*Despite the struggles, Feliz intends to stay in the child care field. She aspires to expand her business—moving it out of her home and turning it into a larger day care center—and wishes she could similarly expand her education.*

I love it. This honestly doesn't feel like a job. It feels like I'm playing all day long. It's a little stressful at times, but it's not the stress of a corporate job where you're gonna, you know, have anxiety and, you know, that fear of what if you lose your job?

*She and her husband have begun investigating the requirements for opening a licensed child care center. In order to qualify as a center director, one of them would have to go back to school to complete a degree in child development.*

I take classes on the weekend when those are available and I have extra time. And I get a lot of information from them, and I bring that back here, so it's just kind of very exciting to me that I get to learn new things all the time. I also do a lot of research on my own. I don't have a lot of time for going back to school. I wish I did.

*Because she can't leave the child care business to take courses herself, Feliz says it will be her husband who pursues the child development degree and who eventually serves as the center's director—at least on paper. She will oversee its programming and operations just as she does now.*

I'm trying to figure out what the requirements are, what does he need. Because he's the one that's going to be going to school. I don't have time for that. I just ... I wish I did. And I wish I would have done it when I was 19 because I'd be done with it. But you live and learn.

**Lucila: “I’m at a Plateau”**

*Lucila cares for 14 children, from infants to elementary-school students, out of her home in the Gateway Cities region of Southeast Los Angeles County. We talk in English over successive mornings—in 15- to 30-minute increments—while an assistant supervises the children outside and Lucila prepares lunch. Between work and family obligations, it is the only time she can spare for conversation.*

*Lucila opened her child care business 11 years ago after having spent many years as volunteer and teaching assistant in her older children's classrooms. She is light-skinned and describes herself as “güera” or white-passing, but adds that she identifies strongly with her Mexican ancestry and wishes she spoke better Spanish. Her youngest child, a son, is in fourth grade and is counted among the maximum of 14 children her large family child care license allows her to supervise.*

It started with my kids. I have a 20-year-old and a 19-year-old, and when they were little, I wanted to stay home with them. ... Once they were about three or four, they started

preschool, and so I used to volunteer at the preschool, and then I volunteered in their kinder classrooms, and then I was a noon aide.

*From early on in her classroom volunteering, teachers encouraged Lucila to consider teaching or even substitute teaching as a career.*

And, of course, I never went that far to get my bachelor's, so I couldn't do that. But, you know, I just started thinking that maybe there was something to it.

*Lucila began taking child development courses through the local community college. She tells me she enrolled mainly because she believed the classes would help her become a better parent.*

I was volunteering in the classroom, and I decided, you know, "I want to go back to school," and so I started taking child development classes, and it just evolved from there. ...My kids were such a big part of it—I was doing it for the parenting part, you know, the child development classes. But it just kind of went from there. It's been very difficult, between a full-time job, raising three kids, going to school, you know. Unfortunately, I'm on the 20-year plan. I only have my associate's, and I wish I could go further. I'm actually working on my transfer credits right now, but it takes away from my family, you know, and with the fulltime child care, it's just—it's just very hard to juggle all that.

But on the plus side, my daughters are both in college. They see the struggle, and I hope they're learning that they need to get their education done early so that they're not juggling twenty things like Mom. So that's why I haven't quit. Every ounce of me wants to.

*Lucila earned a child development certificate, and she and a friend agreed to open a child care business together out of the other woman's home. The arrangement didn't work out,*

*however, and Lucila decided to open her own home child care. She now has three part-time assistants—her sister-in-law and her daughters—who help her throughout the day.*

They all have different schedules—I have one that helps me in the early morning, one that helps me in the afternoon, and then one that helps me from the morning into the afternoon, so that at any given time, there’s two of us here. And we provide a preschool program for (the children), so we have a preschool curriculum. It’s theme-based, so every month we have a different theme, and it’s really appropriate for two-and-a-half-through five-year-olds. Depending on the child, I sometimes like to start them a little earlier. Even my infants participate in the little art activities or songs or movements. So long as they’ll give me their attention and they seem engaged, we include them.

*Although she has not yet been able to achieve her goal of earning a bachelor’s degree, Lucila has continued to seek out workshops and training programs in child development. As part of one program, offered through the local resource and referral agency (a public agency that helps parents find child care and helps providers access training and business assistance), Lucila earned incentives for completing college-level child development and early childhood education courses.*

My first year, I only had to take three units. My second through fifth year, I had to take six units a year. Then there was an incentive at the end, and usually they gave you—it was like a thousand dollars. They basically gave you back all the expenses for school.

*Another program gave her access to a library of online videos demonstrating child care principles and techniques in real-world settings.*

Like, say, if they were referring to a “warm classroom climate,” they would take you into a classroom setting and show you an example of what that means. . . . So, I had to review

these videos and give a little summary of what I learned. That was really, really helpful because as a family child care provider, I don't have a lot of interaction with other providers, you know. It's really hard to gauge myself, measure myself against others. It was just an eye opener and a reminder. ... They took me into classrooms so I could actually *see* a classroom setup. I could see teachers' interactions, so that was great.

*That program offered incentives in the form of classroom materials that otherwise would have been unaffordable for Lucila.*

I received a lot of materials for the center. ... And it was good. Like, every year at least a thousand dollars' worth of material that I got on top of the training. It was nice. I mean, a lot of the things I have now are things that were on my wish list, like, "Oh, when I can afford this." So, to get the materials was amazing. I still have easels and water tables and smocks and workbooks from that program.

*Still, she regrets that many training opportunities conflict with her work schedule.*

Unfortunately, a lot of workshops are during the day, and I don't have that flexibility, so I just get discouraged. I see what I'm missing out on. Very few classes are offered on weekends and evenings. And then, with my kids, I'm so involved with sports that even if ... It just didn't work out on weekends either for a long time.

*In addition to the many classes she has completed, Lucila credits her mother and especially her grandmother for teaching her how to work with children.*

It was primarily my grandmother who used to take care of me. Both of my parents worked, and so, my grandma, she cared for me.

*Lucila begins to cry. Her grandmother died earlier in the year.*

I still get very emotional. She was like a second mom to me. Growing up, she was always very involved in my life, every aspect of my life. ...

My grandma had a very difficult upbringing herself. She was born during the Depression, and she was adopted because of the Depression. And she was treated very—they were very cold. They weren't very loving. They weren't very affectionate. And she completely turned that around in her own life. ... She doubted herself because she didn't get a lot of education. I think she only went to seventh grade. But even with the little education she had, you know, she taught us what is important in life, and that's to be a good family. To love each other, to trust each other. ... She taught us there's nothing you can't move past, you know, if you love each other. And that—even though I know this is a business and I try to keep it more on the professional level—that love is really important.

One thing that I'm really, really grateful for, when it comes to the business aspect, is that I have had so many families tell me, you know, that there's a special feeling they get when they come in here. There's just a warm feeling. And I attribute that to my upbringing, to how I was taught.

*Lucila's grandmother was also her first assistant at the child care business.*

She actually helped me with the day care until a few months before she passed. She was my very first assistant. Even though she didn't have, you know, the ECE background, and she didn't really know the standards—that's not what she brought to the program. She brought her love. She brought her warm arms. The kids called her "Grandma." She cooked a lot. She cooked about every time she was here. She made lunch and she helped me. She was my extra set of eyes when we were outside.



*Lucila's grandmother had started helping soon after Lucila took on a new client, a four-month-old boy who was challenging to care for.*

He was, you know, a clingy type of child and he got very easily startled by noise, and it was just very difficult for him. And so it was difficult for me. . . . Me and my grandma, we talked every day, so, you know, she would ask, "How is [P.] today?" And sometimes she didn't have to ask because she could hear him in the background.

Finally, one day I told her. I said, "You know, I have to be honest with the mom. If this was my child—and in all fairness to the other children—I just can't do it." And she said, "Well, what if I help you?" And I said, "Well, if you're willing to, but I need your commitment."

Anyway, that's how she started working with me. She started off part time, and then she started full time.

*The boy, [P.], eventually left the child care to go to school, but came back frequently to visit Lucila's grandmother. He also attended her funeral and walked behind the casket with Lucila's grandchildren.*

So that just gives you an idea of what she brought to our facility.

*Lucila says she has learned to be strict when it comes to guarding family time.*

I've had so many providers come to me—and a lot of them have also been Hispanic women—and they don't have a contract. And they're like, "These parents walk all over me. They don't pick up their kids until six or seven, and the mom comes in with her nails done, you know."

And I'm like, "Oh no. That's one thing I'm very strict on." I meet with parents, and I tell them, "You have to understand that, as a provider, I need to regroup. I need my

family time.” I have a lot of commitments outside of day care, so I’m very strict. I have a one-dollar-a-minute late fee.

*It doesn’t always work.*

I had a parent, who lived maybe a block over from me. She was a teacher, and she would come in late and, you know, be in her sweatpants. So, it’s like, I know you’re going home and changing and then coming in late, and that’s not OK with me. That’s my time. I just had to learn to get very strict about that and lay it on the table instead of holding it in. ...

One of my things, when I bring families in, you know—any family’s going to be reluctant when they’re leaving their child somewhere. And I get that. The one thing that I do tell these people is, “You need to understand my perspective. And the way I see it, I’m letting you into my home. It’s not just my business, this is my personal space. It’s my safe haven. This is where my family resides, so I have to be careful too.” I have turned down people on gut feelings. My whole day care business has always revolved around my gut instincts, and if I get a feeling, I will not turn my back on it.

*Still, her own children have sometimes struggled to accept the compromises—of attention and space—Lucila’s job demands.*

It’s a lot of adjustment for my family. My family had a really difficult time. My girls, in the beginning, didn’t want me doing it. “Why do you have to take care of other kids?”

At the time, they were seven and eight and my son was a newborn. This is all he’s known. Now he’s getting a little older—he’s eleven.

*His bedroom is situated between the living room—which Lucila has turned into a classroom space—and the bathroom that the children use.*

So my son, he has to see kids coming in and out of his room, especially during the summer and on his days off. So he struggles with it a little bit, but that's where the communication comes in. I tell him, "I could go to work. I could go back to work, but understand, someone else is going to have to drop you off at school. Someone else is going to pick you up from school. Somebody else. Nobody's going to be home when you get home." ... But for the most part, my family's been so supportive.

*Lucila tells me that, over the past five years, she has noticed increased recognition—among parents as well as the general public—of the importance of early childhood education when it comes to overall growth and development. Nonetheless, she says, that awareness does not always translate into respect for her or her work. She considers it a professional responsibility to correct misperceptions about the child care field.*

It's a pet peeve of mine when I hear a parent say, "my babysitter," but that's the mentality. You don't understand the hard work and the direction we're trying to go in. Well, I don't know if I can change that, but ... I feel it's my job to educate them, and I feel like I've gained a lot of respect with the parents. ...

Most of my kids stay with me through kinder, you know, until they're ready to go into kinder, so it just makes me work extra hard to help those parents that are here with me understand that I do take my job serious. We have a strict schedule and my policies—I have a lot of policies—and I know sometimes it's a little bit hard for parents to understand that, yes, it's my home, but I don't treat it like my home during my working hours. It's a school. It's a business. ...

I think a lot of it is up to us as providers to make the parents aware, to give them information ... on how important things are. To let them know that, when (children) are

playing, they're not just playing; they're learning things. I have a Facebook page, and so what I try to do is—I don't post as often as I wish I would—but I try to post pictures so (parents) can see (the children) actually interacting, see them engaged in activities. I'll put down a description of what they're doing. I'll put down the skill the activity is focusing on, whether it's a science activity, visual arts. Whatever the skill is, I try to put that down so they can see and understand.

*In addition to continuing her education, Lucila would like to expand her business and open a day care center outside her home. She has hesitated to move forward with the plan, in part, because of financial considerations.*

I'm kind of just, you know, I'm at a plateau, and actually I'm looking into—I'm researching opening up a center. I'm not sure where that dream is gonna take me, but that's my next step, and that's my goal. ... There's still so much more I know I can offer if I wasn't, you know, if I had more time. If I had more help.

But, unfortunately, when it comes down to the financial aspect of it, it's hard. Parents think paying \$175 a week is a lot, but when you think about the hours we're giving them, it's coming down to, like, three dollars an hour. And that's not for one person. That's for two, sometimes three people. That works for us because ... I don't have a lot of overhead because it's my house. But one of the things that scares me about branching out is the fact that I want quality teachers. I want quality staff, but I need to be able to pay them. ... Right now, when my numbers get low, it's not such a huge deal. I can adjust. But when I have a lease or a mortgage I'm paying on, and employees, several employees? Right now, it's always been my family that's helped me, and they all understand, hey, when things are slow, they're slow.

*She also worries about jeopardizing the family-like atmosphere she prizes even as she has worked to maintain a professional operation.*

That really was the basis of my ... opening up a day care: that I wanted to provide other people what I would look for as a parent. Because when my daughter—I was working when I had my oldest, and it was very difficult for me to find a place I was comfortable with, and I ended up leaving her with family. ...

When I meet new parents, I tell them, “I was in your shoes. I’ve been on both sides. And so I want to give you what I was looking for, you know, in addition to teaching them.”

**Amada: “There’s No Babysitter Here”**

*Amada runs a small family child care out of her home in the San Gabriel Valley, just east of Los Angeles. She prefers to care for children ages three and younger and considers herself especially skilled at working with infants. “I’ve always worked with infants, the littlest ones, never with school-age children,” she tells me. “Just the little ones. There are big differences.” She currently is caring for seven children, ranging in age from one to three, the most her license allows.*

*We speak in Spanish in the evening, about an hour after the last child has been picked up, but before she has finished cleaning and preparing the playroom for the following morning. Amada has coppery-brown hair, pulled back in a tight ponytail. She speaks rapidly, her stories punctuated by an easy laugh. Though we start the conversation on a sofa in her living room, she soon instructs me to get up and follow her as she leads me through her home, showing off children’s artwork and the classroom spaces she has created. Amada’s husband, who drives a lunch truck, is home but already asleep. He leaves for work before her first child arrives around*

*seven o'clock in the morning. Amada opened her child care business about 15 years ago, not long after the two of them migrated to California from San Luis Potosí in central Mexico:*

I had been working with my husband in the lonchera. Then, my husband went back to Mexico and gave up the truck, and I stayed here. *[He has since returned to California].* I didn't want to go back to Mexico, and if I was going to stay here, I needed to find a job. *Child care was not an avenue she had even considered.*

I think that, see, I didn't think about taking care of children because I didn't have any experience with children. I had a neighbor, a cousin, and she had a day care and took care of kids, and I thought, "Ay, no. Not me." And I wouldn't have done it except for [R.] [R.] is my hairdresser, and she kept telling me, "Go on, open a day care. ... Why don't you open a day care there in your house? You wouldn't have to do hardly anything."

*At first, Amada was hesitant.*

I would say, "Ay, no. Take care of children? I couldn't handle it." That's what I said. But then I thought about it and, finally decided: Yes."

*Another client of the hair stylist had been running a child care business out of her home for the past decade and offered to help Amada through the licensing process.*

I fixed up the house because when you apply for a license, they check out your house, and if anything is wrong you don't get the license. I passed on the first inspection. They came out to inspect me in July, and I started with my first client in October.

*Her first client was the grandson of yet another woman she met at the salon.*

And now I've been doing it for 15 years.

*Around the same time that she opened her child care, Amada began taking child development classes at a local community college. The coursework was not required, but it was*

*training she felt she needed to properly do her job, in part because she does not have children of her own.*

I would finish working at 5:30, and by 6, I was at [the community college]. Then, I didn't get back home until almost 11 o'clock at night. Every day. And I was waking up at four in the morning during this period because I had a little boy who arrived at 4:30.

I also had to work Saturdays because the mother worked Saturdays. Never again. After that boy left, I didn't let that happen again because to work on Saturdays for one child is not worth the trouble. You don't have your life. If I have to go to the bank, to the post office, I can't go during the week because of my work. I have to go on Saturdays. On Sundays, all I do is clean. But I had to learn this.

*She took courses on caring for children who have special needs and on working with parents from diverse races and cultures. She was particularly inspired by an instructor who offered advice on how to create themed learning centers within a classroom space.*

There at the college we had a very good teacher. I don't remember her last name, but she was a very good teacher. She taught us about learning centers—how to create them. . . . And now, in this house, the day care has taken over everything except just one bedroom. That's it. That's all we have, just that room over there.

There are some people who only have an apartment (*for their child care*). See, to be licensed, you only need to fulfill the basic requirements. I think that's wrong—apartments so small they watch the children in just the living room? You can do it this way, but . . . I took over a lot of space when I started because I knew, you know. I didn't want children to be sleeping on the floor on mats. I didn't want to do it that way. No, they each have their own little bed.

*Nevertheless, she says most of her education has come from experience.*

At first, I was afraid with the babies. Because I never had—I don't have children. So when they first brought me a baby? Ay! She was so white, as white as porcelain. And when she was sleeping, she would turn over so that she would be sleeping on her stomach... This is a problem. I had gone to these classes, you know, and learned about SIDS [*Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is more common among babies who sleep on their bellies*], and this was a great fear of mine when I started.

*Now, she says, she can tell by a baby's cry whether he is hungry or scared or needs his diaper changed. She prepares weekly lesson plans and begins each morning with circle time.*

One day, this mother came, and she said to me, "Amada, I have a complaint from [M., *(her son)*]"

And I said, "Ay, what did I do?"

She said, "[M.], tell her."

[M.] said, "It's that you don't know anything."

I said, "What?"

And he said, "Look, Mami, every day she tells me, 'Come on, [M.], sit down, I'm going to ask you the colors. It's circle time.'"

Circle time is all about repetition. ... The colors, the ABCs, the numbers, everything, right? The shapes. And he had told his mom that I don't know anything because I always ask them, "Tell me the colors. What color is this?" He said, "She doesn't know anything, Mami. I have to tell her the colors every single day. Every day she asks us the same thing."



So that's why he thought I wasn't very smart. ...I was just overcome by laughter when his mother came and told me this.

*Amada has never worked with an assistant. She is on her own with the children throughout the day, which means she does not get breaks.*

I'm not licensed for a large center because, see, I always say, "ni más pobre, ni más rico." (*neither too rich nor too poor*). And I have always done this by myself, I've never had anyone helping me here. ... You have to be careful about who you bring into your house ... because it's not just watching the children. It's educating the children, it's feeding them. All of it. So, that's why I've always worked alone.

*She says she relies on routines to maintain order and to promote early learning.*

I have a routine for everything. Later, we'll see the playroom. Everything is in order because the children pick everything up and put it in its place. Because here I teach them, they can play with anything they want during free time, but when free time is done, they pick up. And they learn from the time they are small. ... The hardest, you know, is when they come to me when they're older. One- or two-years-old. That's the hardest because they don't have a routine. They don't have a naptime, a time to eat, a time to play, a time to read. They might have never read a book. They might have done nothing but watch television.

*As a child, Amada was cared for by her grandmother. It was her grandmother who taught her to cook. Now, she provides two home-cooked meals and a snack every day to the children in her care.*

There's a nutrition program where they give you money for the food, or a subsidy for the meals. I've never been in the nutrition program. I don't receive money from the

program. The only thing I ask is, the majority of the parents get WIC (*a federally funded supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children*). So, every month, each one takes a turn bringing juice, milk, and fruit or vegetables, depending. That's how I've done it. But they're not obligated. It's in my contract that, if you want to, you bring it. If you don't, it's not a problem. Your child is still going to eat the same as everyone else. There's no difference.

*One mother, a speech therapist and one of few clients who was not receiving some form of public assistance, did not want her son to eat Amada's food.*

She brought me her Tupperware with food for [J.] when he was starting to eat. I would always return her Tupperware with her food still in it because he didn't want it. I don't...for example, I know, I accept that, OK, [*this mother*] wants him to have the food she made. That's fine. But I don't want to give this child this food, another one this food. No, no. Everyone is going to eat the same. Thankfully, [J.] adapted to the food that everyone else ate.

*Over the years, Amada has cared for several children who have needed support from physical, occupational, and speech therapists. Because the children spend most of their time in her care, these health professionals typically go to Amada's house for appointments, sometimes two or three times per week. She must make time and space to participate in the visits while still caring for the other children.*

I had a little boy who couldn't bend his knees. He would drag his legs. And I told the mom, "You know, I'm not a professional, or a specialist or anything, but with the experience I have..." I had just barely started watching him, but I had taken classes about

special needs. He couldn't bend his knees. He was dragging his legs. So she took him to the doctor, and he got a therapist.

*The therapist visited twice a week. Amada learned the exercises the therapist used so that she could work on them with the child on the other three days.*

On the day of the last appointment, when the therapy was ending, the therapist said, "Here's my card. When you need work, call me."

I told him, "Ay, no." So, it's the little things like that, you know?

*She saved the business card as well as a reference letter from another parent who credited Amada for being "instrumental" in her son's "future success in academics and social development."*

Some people, yes, they recognize you, they thank you. They recognize the work you do for children .... Look I have this letter. I always ask for a letter of recommendation. This is one that tells me my work is worth the effort. It's worth the trouble.

*The letter, written in English and Spanish, notes that Amada helped the family "recognize medical issues that needed attention as well as developmental issues that required intervention from the Regional Center." Often, though, parents disregard her advice, which she finds discouraging.*

There are many mothers, if there's a problem, they don't want to recognize it. They don't want to recognize it. Because of the shame, or because they don't want to take the trouble to take the child to the doctor to be evaluated. And it's bad because, when you have special needs, you can receive help. But often the moms don't listen to what I have to say ... because they don't have time, or because they just don't have the will. So, we don't... we can't order the mom to take the child to the doctor.

*There are the rare exceptions, she says, but in general, few see or treat her as a professional.*

A lot of people say, “Oh, you’re a babysitter?” I say, “No.” I say, “Forgive me, but I’m not a babysitter. There’s no babysitter here, you have the wrong house. I have a day care here, but I’m not a babysitter.”

It’s a slope, a hill (*as in a learning curve*) to not think of yourself as a babysitter. ... When I started, I wasn’t aware of what a day care really was. ... When I started, I didn’t have much. I didn’t have anything. But, thank God, 15 years later, well, little by little, I learned.

People think it’s very easy. “Oh, look, you can start a business without going to college.” But how about this? I say, come to work with me, Señora. Come to work with me and see how it goes. The majority of people have the impression that, oh, it’s so easy, you just put them in front of the television.

*The perception that child care is easy, or that neither Amada nor her expertise are particularly valuable, make it easy for some families to disrespect her time.*

Things happen. I don’t usually charge a late fee because I know things can happen. I give parents ten to fifteen minutes. But after an hour? Of if I can see they have just gone to the salon, or they have gone shopping, I charge. Many people will abuse you.

*She acknowledges, though, that for mothers desperate to find a safe place to leave their children while they work, child care quality is a secondary consideration—at best—to child care availability. Most of her clients are low-income women who receive subsidized child care through California’s welfare-to-work program.*

I don't say all of them. I can't generalize. But you know that many Latina mothers who work leave their children wherever they can. With a babysitter, who is not going to do anything more than turn on the television. Who gives them any kind of food. And I said to myself, "I don't want this." Because if I am going to open up a business, I am going to actually dedicate myself to it. I don't want to say that I'm the only one because there are others, but I think I am one of the only ones who doesn't want to expand her business to 14 (*children*). I don't want to take on more children just to get more money because ... (*it would come*) at the expense of me serving, of me teaching them. Write that down.

*Although she does not want to expand her business, Amada has nonetheless invested thousands of dollars into infant and toddler furniture, art supplies, indoor and outdoor toys, tricycles, and other equipment that she orders through educational suppliers such as Lakeshore Learning. She leads me, first, through her playroom/classroom, and then through an outdoor play area and garden.*

Here's my learning area. It's small, but it has everything, all the different centers. Areas for the little children, areas for children who are bigger. Their music area is here – all their CDs, their instruments, their music player, their puppets. ... And then, look, here's the costume area for dramatic play, dress-up. And here they have their little kitchen.

It all costs me a fortune. The cribs—people don't know. Do you know how much each crib costs?

*I tell her I cannot imagine.*

Each pair costs about eight hundred dollars. That over there, the changing table? Five hundred dollars. But the people—people think all you're doing is bringing in money, but you have to invest in all of this. ... It all came from Lakeshore. Do you know Lakeshore?

*I tell her I have seen the company's catalogs.*

It's all very expensive. People don't think about all this. ... And you have to clean it toy by toy. People don't have any idea. You want to know why I don't have any time? It's because on Saturdays, I'm cleaning. On Sundays, the same. Because on Monday, everything has to be ready again.

### **Discussion of Themes**

Anzaldúa (1987) has described the mestiza identity as a “struggle of borders” in which “Like all people, we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, sometimes opposing messages” (p. 100). The providers whose testimonios I documented give voice to such a struggle. The identities they claim—as entrepreneurs, as experts, as advocates—is often at odds with the version of Latina identity and the “realities” of Latinx experience that mainstream culture continues to communicate. Providers’ work thus becomes both a reflection of and response to dominant social and political narratives. The collective account that emerges from these testimonios is one of straddling multiple borders: between influence and invisibility, between the personal and the professional, and between and community and isolation.

**Influence and invisibility.** A passenger van parked in front of Feliz’s home, a tricycle at the edge of Amada’s driveway, a homemade decoration on Lucila’s front porch: those are the only pieces of outward evidence suggesting that these single-family homes in residential neighborhoods host child care operations, that they are places of work and of business. This sense of invisibility—of unseen potential, ability, and activity—was also manifest in the testimonios of Latina child care providers who exercise considerable influence over young

children and their education, but who are not seen by others, literally or figuratively, the way they see themselves.

Child care represents a space in which Amada, Feliz, and Lucila can exercise a degree of leadership, creativity, and entrepreneurship that might not have been possible in other fields because of limited education, limited English, and/or family obligations. Yet all three women are aware that any influence they do exert is at least somewhat constrained. Each has embraced a professional identity, but at the same time, each is also aware she is not perceived by others, even her own clients, as a professional. Each, in her own way, struggles against that gap in perception.

For Feliz, organizing an elaborate graduation ceremony for a child who was moving on to kindergarten offered a way to make visible the professional accomplishment she perceived in preparing that child for a smooth transition to formal schooling. She described the graduation as one of her proudest moments as a child care provider. As she had told me, parents do not always value the academic elements she has sought to incorporate into her child care services:

I don't know necessarily that the parents are looking for a preschool program. But I like to offer it because I don't want this to be a place where they just hang out and watch TV. ... I didn't want to have this just as a day care. I wanted to have this—I needed a purpose.

Hosting the graduation ceremony compelled parents to *see* their daughter's academic progress while in child care (evoked visually by the symbolism of cap and gown), as well as Feliz's role in facilitating that progress. The event cost Feliz time and money for supplies, but it also provided an opportunity to confirm her otherwise unseen contributions to the child's education. After the graduation, she explained, "The family was so appreciative and so grateful for everything I taught her."

In a similar way, Amada described the validation she felt when a physical therapist complimented her skill in delivering physical therapy assistance. She felt *seen*, her abilities recognized by another professional. She recounted the therapist's words—"Here's my card. When you need work, call me"—interpreting his statement as encouragement to consider work in physical therapy, not as an offer related to child care. She dismissed the idea almost immediately, but has kept the therapist's card as a kind of proof of her skill and his affirmation of it.

Each of the providers I spoke with has elected to pursue more formal education and training than licensing regulations demand. This suggests that they perceive their work as meaningful, as requiring skill, and as having the potential for positive influence in the lives of children and families. Providers' educational ambitions and accomplishments are invisible in the sense that the women are not commensurately compensated for them, as would be expected in many other fields, and moreover in the sense that the women's education and training is largely disregarded. All three described the experience of being referred to as a "babysitter," and of chafing at the undervaluation of their work that the term implies. To them, a "babysitter" is someone who is a teenager, not a grown woman. A babysitter is someone who lacks education and training. A babysitter is someone who, in the words of Feliz, "just flip(s) on the TV." To refer to providers as babysitters is to reinforce a dominant narrative that frames Latinas as uneducated, "natural" caregivers, obscuring their self-constructed identities as professionals and women of influence. The work of Latina child care providers is thus eclipsed by the "real" work and more highly esteemed careers that child care makes possible for client parents.

In response, Lucila believes it is incumbent on her to *show* clients and the wider public that child care is important and challenging work and that the women who perform it should be



acknowledged for their expertise. She maintains a Facebook page for her business and regularly posts images of children's work or of children engaged in learning activities. Accompanying each image is a description of the academic and developmental skill being developed: "spatial awareness" for an art project, "letter/word recognition" for a book activity, and "fine motor" for seed planting. She told me she regrets that she does not have time to post more often. "I think a lot of it is up to us as providers to make the parents aware, to give them information ... on how important things are."

**Personal and professional.** Home child care blurs lines between home and work—between the personal and the professional—in terms of both physical and emotional space. As Anzaldúa (1987) has noted, "In perceiving conflicting information and points of view, [the Latina] is subjected to a swamping of her psychological borders" (p. 79). Such a swamping of borders was physically enacted in the daily lives of the Latina child care providers who shared their testimonios with me. Their homes are also their places of business. The space they have claimed for client children occupies space that previously had been, and in other circumstances would be, space belonging to their families. As Amada noted, her child care business—with its toys and cribs and play structures—has infiltrated all but one of the rooms in the house she shares with her husband: "The day care has taken over everything except just one bedroom," she told me. "That's it. That's all we have, just that room over there." The fixtures of a child care business, when present inside a family home, serve as a constant physical representation of what provider testimonios also bear out: That Latina child care providers must simultaneously enact the roles of both wife/mother *and* businesswoman/professional. Often those roles and identities are at odds with one another. Yet the women I spoke with have adopted strategies for bridging internal conflict, empowering a new kind of professionalism, based on *valerse por si misma*, or

self-reliance: They have come to see being a mother or a mother-like figure as *part* of what makes them a professional, and, conversely, of being able to provide for their families through child care work as *part of* what makes them good mothers/wives.

Both Lucila and Feliz came to the child care field as parents. They were drawn to child care as a profession because the work offered the kind of flexibility they needed to care for and spend time with their own children. As a young mother, Feliz envisioned working in her daughter's preschool class and having her at her side throughout the work day. She recalled thinking, "I don't want to leave her." Years later, as she contemplated a departure from the medical field and considered what to do next, she concluded, "I didn't really see myself leaving my kids in day care all day long. It was dreadful to me." Feliz pursued work in child care, in part, because it was an avenue that would afford her the opportunity to mother in the way she preferred.

Facing a similar personal dilemma, Lucila left the labor force after having children. She volunteered in their classrooms, and gradually, child care became a sort of compromise, or border-straddling choice: between work in education, which had long been personally gratifying to her, and work that would allow her to remain home with her young children.

Yet even though child care has represented the resolution to a personal/professional dilemma for Feliz and Lucila, the work has nonetheless posed conflicts that other working parents may not confront. For example, my own fulltime job demands that I sacrifice time with my children—an experience that is often fraught with guilt and anxiety, and colored by conflicting social and cultural expectations. In contrast, Feliz and Lucila do not have to divide their physical presence between home and work, but they do have to share their *mothering*—their care and attention and nurturing, which, in both of their families, has led to confusion and jealousy among their own children. "My girls, in the beginning, didn't want me doing it," Lucila recalled of her children's

reaction to her starting a home child care business. ““Why do you have to take care of other kids?””

Amada is not a parent, yet the concept of mothering nonetheless informs the way she understands and approaches her work. In fact, early on, she believed her lack of experience as a mother disqualified her entirely from work in child care. “I didn’t think about taking care of children because I didn’t have any experience with children,” she said. Indeed, all three women described practical experience with children—especially as a mother—as a critical source of education, even though all have completed at least some formal schooling in child development. They also draw on the wisdom and know-how of their own mothers to enrich their work. Amada learned to cook from her grandmother and had declined participation in a publicly-funded meal plan because she believes home-cooked lunches and snacks are better. It was Feliz’s mother who demonstrated, by her own career choices, that it is possible to find work that accommodates child-rearing.

Latina providers merge their personal lives with their professional pursuits in yet other ways. For example, being able to rely on close family networks—a system of *familismo*—has been a professional asset for the women with whom I spoke. Through family, or kin-like relationships, they gain access to advice, client referrals, and assistance. Although, as an immigrant, Amada does not have relatives in close proximity, she has a network of *comadres*, or close female friends, from her neighborhood and from neighborhood gathering places such as the church and the hair salon. These *comadres* function as an extended family. They were the ones who encouraged her to consider child care as a career, who provided guidance when she decided to open a licensed child care business, and who gave recommendations and referrals when she finally opened. Exemplifying a form of *convivir*, or living in community, she relies on another

informal network for the meals she serves to children each day: She asks mothers to contribute milk, fruit juice, blocks of cheese, or other staples purchased with their public-assistance vouchers.

Similarly, Lucila described how her grandmother came to help her care for a particularly fussy baby. “She was my very first assistant,” Lucila explained. “Even though she didn’t have, you know, the ECE (early childhood education) background, and she didn’t really know the standards—that’s not what she brought to the program. She brought her love.” Now, all of her current assistants are also female relatives or relations: her mother and her daughters. Like Lucila, Feliz also relies on friends and relatives as assistants.

Their ability to draw on family resources and networks of women has helped these Latina child care providers build and sustain their businesses in many ways. However, I would argue that in other ways, reliance on family has hindered their seeing themselves as fully professional. Feliz and Lucila describe their assistants as “helping” them, rather than as *working for* them. They do not understand or describe themselves as employers or job creators. Likewise, their reliance on family rather than more traditional employees may reinforce parents’ perception of providers as “babysitters.”

Moreover, Anzaldúa has decried the ways in which dominant culture uses Latinas’ strengths against them. “Bearing humility with dignity. The ability to serve ... is our highest virtue” (p. 43). The mass media framing of Latina as mother has warped the personal and domestic facets of child care work in ways that diminish its value and professional status. Feliz, Lucila, and Amada all spoke of working days that, as a matter of course last longer than standard business hours—and that nonetheless routinely stretch even longer when parents choose to pick up their children late. Providers’ ability and willingness “to serve,” in Anzaldúa’s words, is not just

taken for granted, but part of what makes them valuable as caregivers. Yet it is also a violation of both their personal time and their professionalism. Lucila explained that parents are often taken aback to learn that she has formal policies concerning issues such as pickup time. She must explain to them, “Yes, it’s my home, but I don’t treat it like my home during my working hours. It’s a school. It’s a business.”

For Feliz, the confluence of personal and professional roles and expectations led to a particularly delicate quandary: In the early months of her business, she encountered a mother who, at pick-up time, would routinely linger to make small talk, sometimes for as long as 45 minutes. Feliz was conflicted. Clearly, the woman presumed she would be amenable to socializing—and Feliz felt obligated to indulge that expectation. She worried about “[coming] across as rude” should she object. Yet, she also felt strongly that, “After six o’clock, it’s my family’s time. It’s not anyone else’s time.” Few other professionals are expected to be at the disposal of their clients in quite the same way, much less in their own homes.

Indeed, it seems to be expected of Latina child care providers that they not view their work as work at all. So potent is this narrative of natural Latina mothering that providers themselves expressed ambivalence when it came to describing what they do as a job. Feliz told me, “I feel like I’m working way more than I did when I had a job,” as though what she does now is *not* one. She described working harder than she ever has before—“You’re working 24 hours a day. ... There’s nothing easy about this.”—yet professed in the same interview, “This honestly doesn’t feel like a job. It feels like I’m playing all day.” Lucila expressed similar equivocation. When her son complains about the child care business, she warns him, “I could go back to work,” suggesting that the way she currently earns a living is somehow *not* work. Amada, not having children, perhaps does not face the same social and cultural pressure to

describe caregiving as “fun” or “play.” Nonetheless, she admitted, “It’s a slope, a hill (as in a learning curve) to not think of yourself as a babysitter.”

**Community and isolation.** Feliz, Lucila, and Amada consider themselves part of an early childhood education community by virtue of their training and ongoing engagement in their profession. They take pride in their work, and each has taken steps toward her own professional development, including by learning (or attempting to learn) from other caregivers. Yet, here again, their experience speaks to a borderlands identity. Despite their efforts, a range of structural barriers keep Feliz, Lucila, and Amada at a remove from a community of child care providers—as well as from a community of mothers or working Latinas.

A significant obstacle is time. When Feliz first opened her child care business, she eagerly sought advice from other providers in her community. She was rebuffed. She attributed the cool response of other providers to ill will and a misplaced sense of competition. “They had no interest in me because I was stepping into their territory,” she surmised. “I think that’s why they didn’t want to help.” However, it is possible that they, like Feliz herself and the other women I spoke with, simply did not have time to share their experiences. Working from 5:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. (and sometimes later) five days a week makes in-person networking a challenge. Instead, Feliz turns to social media channels, such as Facebook and Pinterest, for ideas on lesson plans, classroom displays, and behavior management. Doing so gives her a sense of collaboration, of having a space in which to trade tips and insights with colleagues who are not also competitors. Now, with ambitions to expand her business and open a child care center, Feliz would like to return to school to earn an early childhood education degree. However, she cannot conceive of higher education being a possibility for her. The amount of time it would take—time away from her business and away from her family—make it infeasible. Instead, she

is researching degree programs that her husband, who works in real estate, can complete. “I’m trying to figure out what the requirements are ... because he’s the one that’s going to be going to school,” she said. “I don’t have time for that. I just ... I wish I did.”

Like Feliz, Lucila regrets that she has not had the opportunity to continue her education. She jokes, with self-deprecation, that she is on the “20-year plan” for completing her degree. She is keen to take advantage of trainings and workshops offered through the local resource and referral agency, but, here again, she meets with obstacles. “A lot of the workshops are during the day, and I don’t have that flexibility, so I just get discouraged,” she said. “I see what I’m missing out on.” What she is missing out on goes beyond training and education; Lucila also misses out on the opportunity to connect and exchange ideas with other providers. Of all the trainings in which she has participated, the one she found most valuable was a program in which she had access to video recordings of other providers at work. “That was really, really helpful because, as a family child care provider, I don’t have a lot of interaction with other providers, you know,” she explained. “It’s really hard to gauge myself, measure myself against others.”

For Amada, taking community college classes alongside other child care providers meant a 19 hour day: Waking at 4 a.m. to prepare for the first drop-off of the day, rushing to class after the last child was picked up at 5:30 p.m., and getting back home at 11, to start all over again five hours later. The schedule was not sustainable. Even without taking night classes, she still finds she has little time to herself, let alone to collaborate with other providers. Not even her weekends are her own. “You want to know why I don’t have any time?” She said. “It’s because on Saturdays, I’m cleaning. On Sundays, the same. Because on Monday, everything has to be ready again.”

Yet, despite disconnection from one another, Latina home child care providers are often connected to their local communities in ways other professionals in education or caregiving might not be. Because they live and spend most of their days in the neighborhoods they serve, they are well-acquainted with local issues, institutions, and families. Each has had to navigate civic bureaucracy to obtain business licenses and permits. Each has had to develop an understanding of elementary school attendance zones, academic calendars, and learning expectations. Each listens as parents lament the various stressors that bear on family life: long commute times, job anxiety, housing costs. Amada, for example, has heard how challenging it can be for parents to find affordable child care. “Many Latina mothers who work leave their children wherever they can,” she noted. She, along with Feliz and Lucila, possesses rich community knowledge that could be a resource to schools and families alike. However, their insights are not recognized as such.

Moreover, the nature of child care work, with its low pay and low status, seems to put the providers at odds with other working women with whom they might otherwise build a sense of community, sharing, as they do in some cases, similar experiences of marginalization and struggle. Lucila recalls very clearly the inner conflict she felt as a parent who worked outside the home:

I was working when I had my oldest, and it was very difficult for me to find a place I was comfortable with, and I ended up leaving her with family. ... When I meet new parents, I tell them, “I was in your shoes. I’ve been on both sides.”

Despite such a meaningful connection, the decentralized structure of the United States child care system places Lucila and the women who employ her on opposite “sides” of issues in which they both have a stake: For example, child care cost and affordability. “Parents think paying \$175 a week is a lot, but when you think about the hours we’re giving them, it’s coming



down to, like, three dollars an hour,” Lucila said. She and the women whose children she cares for are mothers who work to support their families. Yet their individual interests are at cross purposes. They have little opportunity to come together to advocate policy solutions that might alleviate financial strain for both of them.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented the testimonios of Feliz, Lucila, and Amada, Latinas who work as child care providers in the greater Los Angeles region. By recounting their narratives in full, I sought to amplify voices that historically have been muted in research and mass media. I also set out to explore how Latina early care and education providers conceptualize and experience their work and how social and political forces inform their perception and performance of it. The women’s stories, individually and collectively, speak to a borderlands identity, one that does not so much toggle between but rather spans and encompasses the lines separating influence and invisibility, the personal and the professional, and community and isolation.

Chapter 5 follows with an examination and analysis of advertisements promoting child care businesses in the Greater Los Angeles region. Posted to the online classifieds website Craigslist, these advertisements present a cumulative narrative that reinforces and adds dimension to the themes that emerged out of provider testimonios.

## Chapter 5: Child Care Advertisements

Child care advertisements, while primarily a vehicle for attracting new clients, may also be understood as a form of personal narrative. In creating advertisements for their child care businesses, Latina entrepreneurs construct representations of themselves as professionals, drawing attention to what they believe are their most salient qualifications and expertise. Unlike testimonios, however, public advertisements are intended for an audience that is at once broader, but also more specific, than that implied in the research context: working parents actively seeking child care services. Indirectly, then, a child care advertisement might also be seen as a provider's response to parent expectations about child care *and* about the women who provide it.

This chapter presents the findings of a textual analysis of advertisements created by Latina child care providers in the Los Angeles region. The chapter begins with an overview of the advertisements, followed by an analysis of their contents, in particular the services and provider qualifications the ads describe. Finally, as a means of triangulation, I discuss the advertisement contents in relation to the findings described in Chapter 4. The cumulative "story" told by the advertisements both reinforces and adds a public dimension to provider's testimonio accounts of their borderlands experience, especially with regard to the social and cultural factors that bear on their work.

### **Advertisement Overview**

My analysis considered child care advertisements posted to the Los Angeles, California, section of the Craigslist website during the month of April 2018. To focus specifically on ads posted by Latina child care providers, I selected only those whose headlines or body text included or mentioned the Spanish language and/or a Hispanic surname, as described in Chapter

3. This measure likely yielded an *undercount* of advertisements posted by Latina providers; Los Angeles-area Craigslist advertisers, regardless of race or ethnicity, typically post in English and typically do not include their surnames.

After duplicates were removed, 40 advertisements remained for further analysis (of text and, where relevant, images). Ads were transcribed and coded for content. After successive rounds of coding, providers written statements about themselves and/or their child care businesses fell into eight distinct categories, described in further detail in Table 1: Program and Daily Activities; Environment; Cleanliness, and Health and Safety; Structural Features; Affordability; Provider Qualifications; Additional Services; and Food.

Table 1: Features Described in Latina Child Care Advertisements: Categories

Category	Description	Example
<b>Program and Daily Activities</b>	Statements referring to the programming and activities offered at the child care business, for example a preschool curriculum, or art and music.	“Daily schedule consists of curriculum work time, phonetics, sensory, large and small motor skill activities, structured and free playtime, arts and crafts, music, story time, cultural activities, nutrition, good personal hygiene skills and manners, etc.”
<b>Environment</b>	Statements describing emotional climate.	“We care [for] your child in a loving and family Environment.”
<b>Cleanliness and Health and Safety</b>	Statements addressing issues of physical safety and health, including whether staff were background-checked and/or trained in first aid.	“We have cameras for safety.”
<b>Structural Features</b>	Statements addressing details such as hours of operation, ages served, and languages spoken. <sup>1</sup>	“Open 6:30AM to 5:30PM Monday to Friday, full time only ... Se habla español.”
<b>Affordability</b>	Statements addressing cost and the availability of	“Reasonable and affordable rates. NO DEPOSIT FEE”

<sup>1</sup> Conceptually, language might be considered a programmatic feature of a child care business. However, a closer analysis of advertisements that referenced language revealed that the topic tended to be addressed in neutral terms more similar to hours of operation, rather than as a feature of education or a learning opportunity.

	financial assistance, including public subsidies.	
<b>Provider Qualifications</b>	Statements describing the provider’s education, training, years of experience and other qualifications.	“13 years experience raising children.”
<b>Additional Services</b>	Statements listing services beyond child care, such as transportation, tutoring, or toilet training.	“We can also pick-up and drop-off your children to and from school or take him/her to a doctor appointments for you!!”
<b>Food</b>	Statements noting what food is provided to children and at what, if any, cost.	“Lunch and snack provided. (Home cooked).”

**Frequency of topics.** In nearly all cases, individual advertisements contained statements that fell into multiple categories. As might be expected, given that the primary purpose of child care advertising is to attract new clients, all but one of the advertisements considered in this analysis mentioned structural features such as hours of operation or ages of children served. Nearly as frequent (occurring in 32 of the advertisements) were statements regarding cleanliness and health and safety. Statements concerning provider qualifications were fourth-most frequent after Program and Daily Activities, and Additional Services (both occurring in 31 ads). Figure 3 details how often statements falling into each of eight broad categories occurred in child care advertisements posted by Latina providers.

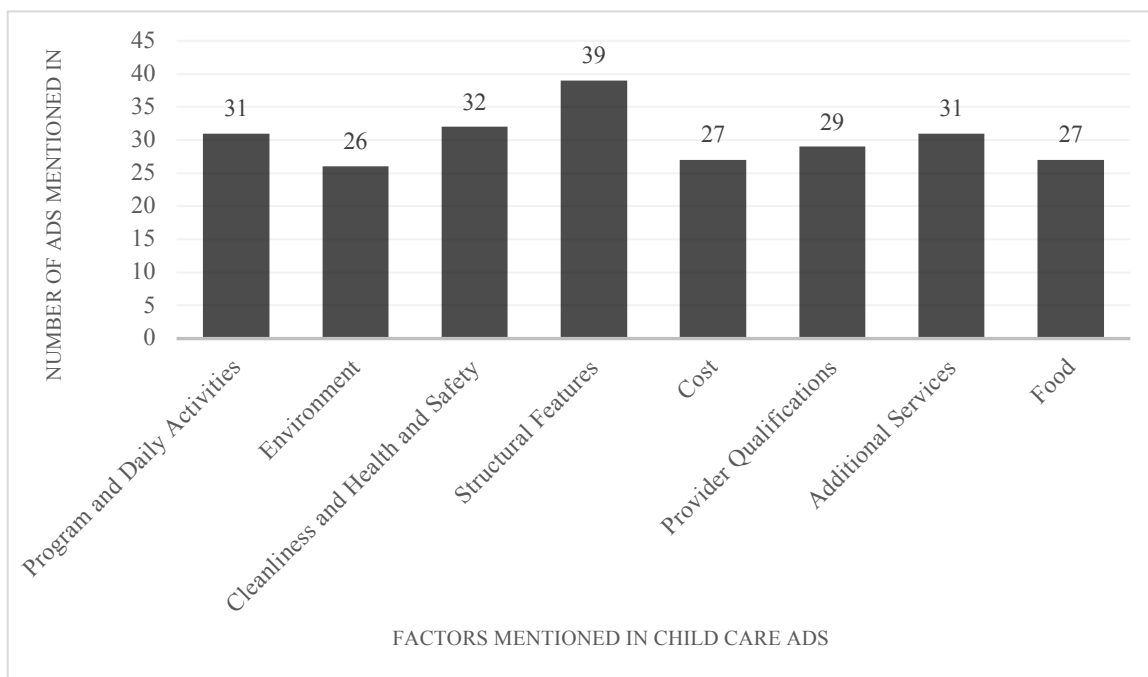


Figure 3: Features Described in Latina Child Care Advertisements: Frequency

**Provider qualifications.** Experience and education were topics that featured prominently in the testimonios of Latina child care providers. They also are concepts tightly linked to professional identity. As such, I undertook a closer analysis of the Provider Qualifications category, identifying nine subcategories within it: Education; Better Business Bureau Accreditation; Availability of References; Years of Experience; Years in Operation<sup>2</sup>; Parenting Experience; Health and Nutrition Training; Legal Right to Work; and, License Status.

<sup>2</sup> Although related, Years of Experience and Years in Operation are best understood as distinct subcategories. Providers classified as experience not just the length of time their child care businesses had been open, but also previous work in preschool settings, K12 education, and other related fields.

Figure 4 details the type and frequency of qualifications mentioned in child care provider advertisements.

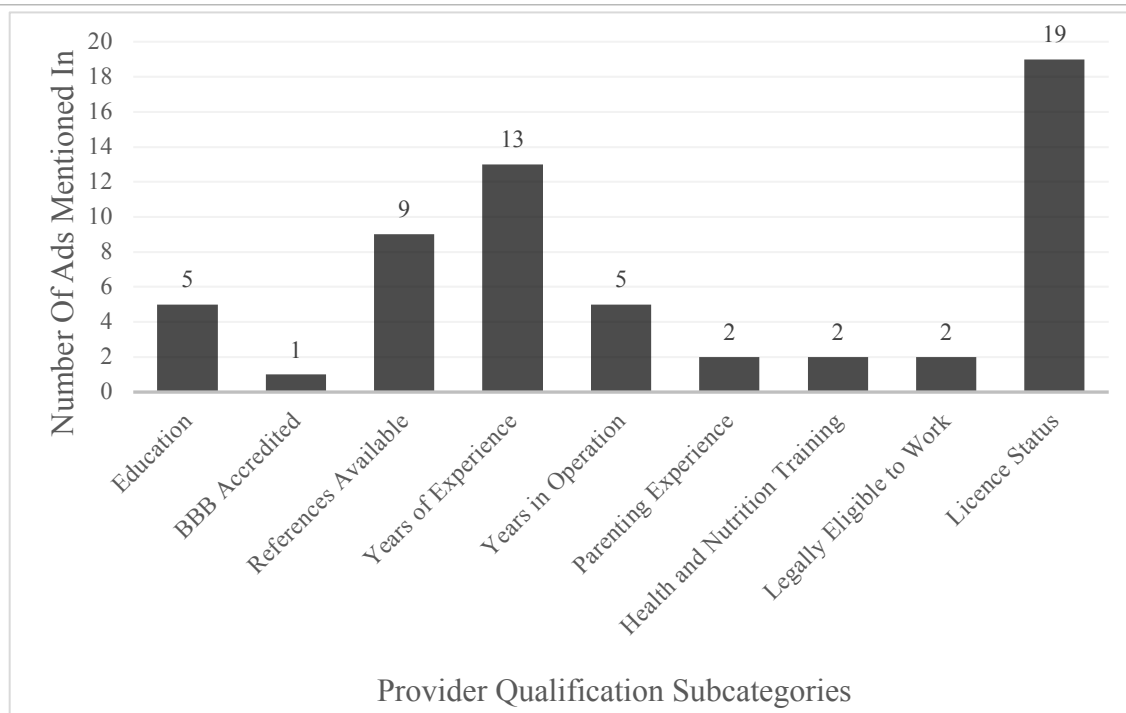


Figure 4: Provider Qualifications

Within the Provider Qualifications category, statements related to the provider's License Status were most frequent by far, with 19 different advertisements mentioning that a provider's business is licensed by the state of California. Next most frequent was the Years of Experience subcategory, occurring in 13 different ads.

**Images.** Of the 40 advertisements reviewed, 24 included one or more images. Among these, the first image displayed in each ad was analyzed, with visual content falling into six broad categories: Images of Children, Images of Caregivers, Images of Toys and Play Equipment, Images of Business Cards, Images of Children's Arts and Crafts, and Images of

Building Exteriors. In most cases, individual images included content that fell into multiple categories (for example, both images of children and images of children's arts and crafts).

Occurring most frequently, in 14 instances each, were images of children and images of toys and play equipment. Least frequent were images of caregivers, appearing in just one photo. Figure 5 details the type and frequency of visual content included in child care provider advertisements.

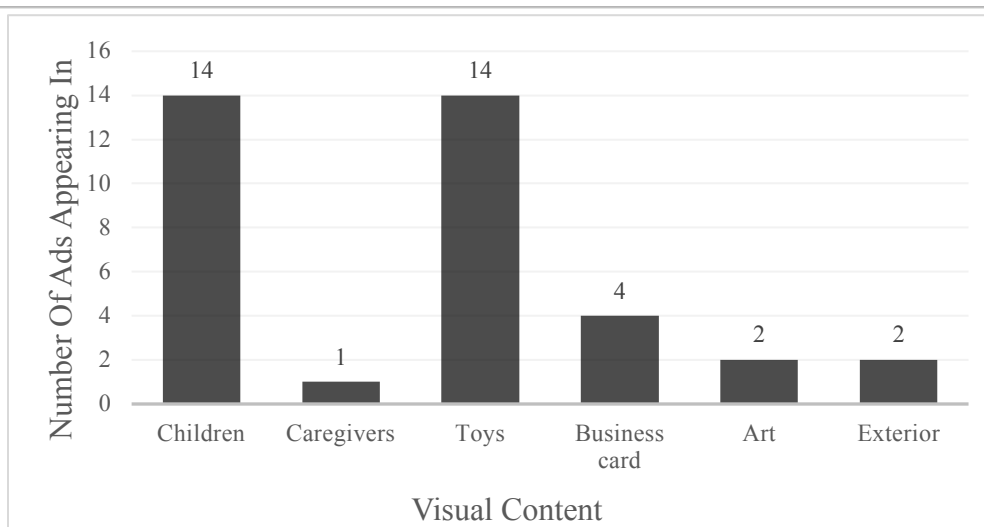


Figure 5: Images

### Triangulation of Themes

A number of themes consistent with those manifest in provider testimonios were also evident in child care advertisements. To formulate a public advertisement requires a Latina child care provider to highlight what she perceives as her own strengths and qualifications, while at the same time addressing the needs and expectations of prospective clients. Those ends might not be compatible, especially when client expectations are informed, at least in part, by stereotyped

framings of Latina identity. Perhaps as a result, child care advertisements, like testimonios, reflect a borderlands consciousness.

**Influence and invisibility.** Like Feliz, whose child care “felt empty” without a preschool program; like Lucila, who plans themed curricular units; and like Amada, who has created learning centers throughout her home, most of the providers whose ads I analyzed described programming or daily activities. “Your child will participate in activities such as circle time, arts and crafts, free play, outdoor play, singing, dancing, instruments and much more!” one ad promised. Only two women described themselves as “babysitters.” Two others even distinguished their child care work from the “occasional babysitting” and “drop-in babysitting” they also offer. Like Feliz, Lucila, and Amada, the Latinas who posted child care ads seemed largely to see themselves as educators with the potential to influence children’s growth and development. Yet they also seemed to recognize that, for many parents, educational opportunity might not be a primary consideration. References to factors related to health, safety, and cleanliness (that child care would be provided in a baby-proof or smoke-free home, for example, or that staff members had been fingerprinted) and structural features (hours of operation and fee structure) were more frequent than references to educational programs and activities.

Furthermore, providers themselves were rarely featured in images accompanying advertisements. Instead, photos tended to depict either rooms filled with books and toys, or children eating, playing, or engaged in crafts. Certainly the absence of providers from advertising images speaks to an experience of isolation; a provider might not appear in pictures if she is the only adult present to take them. However absence from images also renders a provider



and her influence literally invisible. Children appear happy, healthy, and engaged, but not because of her particular intervention or expertise.

**Personal and the professional.** Similarly, child care advertisements evoke the sometimes-uneasy blurring of lines between personal mothering versus professional caregiving. Visually, the ads depict homes/workplaces much like those of Feliz, Lucila, and Amada, with erstwhile personal spaces refashioned with child-size furniture, books, toys, and learning materials. Figure 3 shows a typical configuration of what appears to have been a living room, with wood flooring, a bay window, and wall sconces, transformed into a tidy classroom with small tables, easels, and toys.



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Figure 6: Child Care Interior

Within the text, more than half of ads (26) described a child care’s emotional climate, often in personal, familiar terms. Like Lucila, who prizes the family-like atmosphere she has maintained at her business and who believes it is important to approach her work with love, one advertisement described “a home environment that will make children feel right at home.” Another explained, “Your child will have the opportunity to interact with children in different age groups, which more closely resembles family life.” These expressions of home and family exist alongside subtle assertions of professionalism: Nineteen advertisers noted that their businesses are state-licensed (including one who additionally claimed Better Business Bureau accreditation), while 13 described years of child care experience, and five listed degrees and other educational achievements.

The ambiguity of personal and professional roles and boundaries meant that parents often make what Feliz, Lucila, and Amada considered unprofessional impositions onto personal time and space. Likewise, child care advertisers seemed to take for granted that, in their quasi-familiar roles (and, perhaps, as U.S. Latinas), they would be expected to deliver services beyond daytime caregiving or even education—everything from potty-training to home-cooking to transportation. “We can also pick-up and drop-off your children to and from school or take him/her to a doctor appointments for you!!” one advertiser offered. Another said, “There is no task I can’t do :) light cleaning, cooking, taking the kids to after-school activities.” Most (31) offered extended and/or flexible hours, while nine advertised 24-hour availability.

**Community and isolation.** As discussed previously in this chapter, providers themselves appeared very rarely, just once, in the images that accompanied ads in this analysis. This may be because, like Amada, the women were the only adults present to take a photo, an experience of professional isolation that was voiced even among providers who work with

assistants. Yet concurrent with this sense of isolation was a connection to community. Advertisers discussed their geographical locations with reference to schools, parks, freeway exits and other landmarks, demonstrating an intimacy with and embeddedness within local neighborhoods. Moreover—and consistent with findings that emerged in testimonio accounts—provider advertisements suggested a familiarity with the anxieties that weigh on family life. Most ads (27) addressed cost and affordability, often with the assurance that the provider would accept clients who receive publicly funded child care subsidies. “We WELCOME government programs such as CCRC [Child Care Resource Center], Crystal Stairs, and other government programs,” one provider emphasized.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented an analysis of child care advertisements posted to the Los Angeles section of Craigslist, an online classifieds website, during April of 2018. Measures were taken to filter the ads such that the analysis focused on those posted by Latina providers. Positioned as an alternative form of self-narrative, child care advertisements offered a counterpoint by which to triangulate the findings that emerged out of provider testimonios and which were discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Like the testimonios, advertisements gave voice to a borderlands experience, the implications of which will be considered further in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions

Latinas account for 20 percent of child care workforce in the United States, and represent an even greater share of child care providers in states, such as California, that have a large Latinx population (Park et al., 2015). Yet despite their predominance in the field and their influence over the early learning and development of significant numbers of American preschoolers, the voices of Latina child care providers are rarely heard in research or mass media (Cheruvu et al., 2015). Furthermore, considering the early education literature specifically, what representations of Latina lives and experience do exist often reinforce narratives of deficit and disparity (Méndez-Morse, 2003; Reyes & Rios, 2003; Zarate & Conchas, 2010). As a result, knowledge concerning these women, who play major roles U.S. education and economic systems, is both distorted and incomplete—a considerable gap given that demographers expect more than one-quarter of all Americans will be Latinx by 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The purpose of this testimonio study, then, was to more fully understand how Latina early care and education providers conceptualize and experience their work, and how social and political forces inform their perception and performance of it.

Guided by Delgado Bernal's (1998) Chicana feminist epistemology, which centers Latinas as primary authorities with regard to their own lives and experiences, I used dialogic pláticas to gather the testimonios of three Latina home child care providers in the greater Los Angeles region: Feliz turned to early care and education after leaving behind a long career in the medical field and seeking a way to avoid enrolling her own young children in day care. Lucila regrets that she has not been able to complete the formal education necessary to become a teacher, but nonetheless considers herself an educator. Amada, an immigrant from Mexico, was

encouraged by friends to open a home child care business as a way to earn a stable income without having mastered English or completed a degree. She now considers herself *capaz* (highly capable) of nurturing the development of infants and toddlers. After transcribing the three testimonios, I analyzed them individually and in relation to one another to identify and reflect on the themes evinced.

In Chapter 4, I presented each woman's testimonio at length and in context as a means of helping restore the voices of Latina providers to the research literature. I also presented my own findings, triangulating them in Chapter 5 with the results of a short textual analysis of child care advertisements posted to the online classifieds website, Craigslist. The collective experience that emerged in my analyses, was one of a borderlands consciousness, as described by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987). To be a Latina child care provider is to negotiate the lines separating influence from invisibility, the personal from the professional, and community from isolation.

In this chapter, I consider those themes—as well as the collisions and contradictions they imply—in the context of the existing literature on early care and education in the United States, the child care workforce, and representation of Latinas in research and mass media. The chapter continues with a discussion of the policy and practice implications suggested by my study, and concludes with recommendations for further research.

### **The Findings in Context**

My study sought to answer two research questions: How do Latina early care and education providers understand and experience their professional roles and responsibilities? And, how do social, political, and cultural factors shape the development and enactment of their professional roles? Each of the women with whom I conversed brought an individual perspective to her testimonio. Commonalities across their stories, however, shed new light on

the collective experience of Latina child care providers, reinforcing—and in some cases expanding on—insights offered in the existing research literature.

**How do Latina early care and education providers understand and experience their roles?** Through their work, Latina child care providers contest dominant narratives that cast them as passive and uneducated. They consider themselves educators, responsible not just for children’s physical wellbeing, but also their social, emotional and academic preparedness—or, in terms of Latina pedagogy, *educación*. As such, providers invest considerable resources, including time, money, and nurturing in developing their expertise and planning an enriching program. Through their entrepreneurialism, they *valerse por si misma*, creating means by which to support their families on their own terms and by leveraging their own strengths, which include *familismo* and *convivir*.

Yet providers likewise understand, often with some frustration, that members of the broader community, including the parents they serve, do not view or treat them as professionals. Hence, a provider’s experience is often one of asserting a sense of expertise that is unrecognized and unvalued. This tension is perhaps most clearly manifest in providers’ reaction to being called “babysitter.” To Feliz, Lucila, and Amada, a babysitter is someone, probably a teenage girl, who is paid to look after children, but who does so without any particular training, skill, or intention. A babysitter might allow children to watch television all day and ply them with unhealthy snacks, keeping them safe but not enriching their development. In contrast, providers see it as their role to attend to children’s *educación*—both their formal schooling, as well as their moral and social-emotional learning (Villenas, 2001).

Consistent with the existing child care literature, the Latina providers who participated in my study embrace roles and responsibilities that go beyond the basic supervision of children.

Findings by Small (2006) and Vesely, Ewaida, and Kearney (2013) have characterized child care providers as resource brokers who connect families to a wide range of services, resources, and opportunities, such as housing, health care, or job training. Meanwhile, in their study of African-American providers caring for predominantly Latinx children, Sanders, Deihl, and Kyler (2007) found that participants tended to view themselves as community mothers, responsible for sharing wisdom on children and child-rearing with client families. In like manner, Amada considers it her responsibility to inform parents of potential developmental delays and to link them to appropriate assessment services. Lucila described a degree of empathy toward working parents and offers them reassurance when they have misgivings about leaving their children in day care.

Moreover, all three providers expressed a commitment to supporting the school readiness of children in their care. They plan activities and lessons—expending time, emotional energy, and personal funds—with the explicit goal of nurturing early learning skills and preparing children for kindergarten. The “graduation” celebration Feliz planned for a child moving on to kindergarten served, in large part to memorialize the achievement of an educational undertaking—and Feliz’s role in it.

The early education literature has contemplated the school readiness function of child care for more than a decade. Studies have linked high quality child care to improved achievement in elementary and high school, for example (Dearing, McCartney, & Taylor; Loeb, Fuller, Kagan & Carrol; Winsler et al.; Lowe, Pierce & Burchinal). Other researchers have focused their attention on parents’ experiences, drawing connections between child care participation and subsequent school involvement, among other benefits. Largely absent in the literature, however, have been the voices and perspective of providers, notably Latina providers who represent a significant proportion of the child care workforce. To this end, my study

contributes new understanding with regard to how and, perhaps more importantly, *why*, Latina providers assume responsibility for children's early learning and development as opposed to just their welfare. Child care advertisements posted to Craigslist tended to emphasize health and safety features over a provider's training or teaching ability. This suggests that, in offering an early-learning program, Latina providers are not necessarily responding to market demands. Indeed, Feliz, Lucila, and Amada offer educational enrichment *in spite of* the extra costs they incur, in terms of both time and materials, and parents' lack of understanding and interest. Instead, they seem to draw motivation from self-identification as educators and the sense of professional obligation that flows from it. They see themselves as more than "just babysitters" and pursue a professional enterprise that aligns with their *own* understanding of their capabilities and their *own* assessment of children's needs—not the narrower expectations of the broader public.

Just as a provider's understanding of her role influences the manner in which she performs her work, so too does it bear on the resources she invests into her child care business. Here, my study contributes new dimension to demographic studies that have previously revealed providers' low incomes and low levels of formal education. Analyses such as those by Fuller and Strath (2001), and later, Whitebrook, Phillips, and Howes (2014) describe annual earnings that persistently place child care providers among the lowest-paid workers in the nation. Meanwhile, an analysis of Census Bureau data by Park, McHugh, Zong, and Batalova (2015) found that, among home-based child care providers, completion of formal education beyond a high school diploma is rare. To these descriptive findings, testimonio data adds complexity and nuance. Feliz, Lucila, and Amada invest a portion of their already low incomes on classroom materials and equipment. Amada can name the price and provenance of every toy and piece of



furniture in her well-equipped classroom, suggesting an expense considerable enough to have left an impression. Lucila is interested in expanding her business into a child care center, but worries she will not be able to afford rent and an expanded payroll given that parents already balk at her low weekly rates. Feliz would like to pursue a bachelor's degree in early education, but cannot afford the time away from work. She, like the other Latina providers who spoke with me, has completed more training and education than state licensing regulations require, supporting—but also complicating—Swartz, Wiley, Koziol, and Magerko's (2016) finding that providers with a stronger sense of professional identity were more likely to pursue training opportunities. Time and expense, not an underdeveloped professional identity, have kept Feliz, Lucila, and Amada from pursuing their educations even further. As important to research and policy as the bare *facts* of providers' low wages and low levels of formal education are their *experiences* of them, details my study begins to illuminate.

Finally, as an extension of their self-defined roles as educators, Latina providers also hold themselves responsible for improving public understanding of their work and its value. All three were eager that the stories they shared with me be told to others, Amada imploring me at intervals to “write that down,” when she wanted to emphasize a point. When Lucila sends photos to parents to show them what their children are doing during the day, she also describes the early learning purpose of each activity, whether counting, pattern recognition or some other basic skill. As she told me, “It's a pet peeve of mine when I hear a parent say ‘my babysitter,’ but that's the mentality. ... Well, I don't know if I can change that, but ... I feel it's my job to educate them.” This advocacy role does not seem to be widely discussed in early childhood research or policy, and runs counter to mass media representations that have historically depicted Latinas as passive and lacking leadership. As Correa (2010) found in her study of news

coverage of Latina leaders, stories were presented within frames of self-sacrifice rather than professional ability—what women gave up to get where they are, rather than the skills and capacities that fueled their ascent. By emphasizing sacrifice and duty over purpose and ability, it is possible that dominant narratives enable parents and policymakers to benefit from providers' skill without according them commensurate status or compensation; to acknowledge the babysitter but not the professional. Arguably, the strands of advocacy within providers' experience could only be teased out by means of a framework, such as Chicana feminist epistemology, that centers Latina perspective and looks to expose underlying inequities in systems and institutions..

**How do social, political, and cultural factors shape the development and enactment of providers' professional roles?** Latina child care providers may reject, implicitly and explicitly, the deficit framing that often defines Latina identity in the United States. Nonetheless, they work in a public marketplace and are subject to biases and expectations established by dominant narratives on Latina lives: For example, that Latinas are natural mothers for whom child care requires no particular education or skill, or that child care itself is not real work. Social, political, and cultural factors, by reinforcing a perception of Latina child care providers that contrasts sharply with their own perceptions of themselves contributes to a borderlands identity, characterized by collision and contradiction.

***Collision and contradiction.*** As Anzaldúa (1987) has argued, “The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes un choque, a culture collision” (p. 100). For the Latina provider, the incompatibility of the frame of reference through which she perceives herself with that from which she is perceived by a broader public is not resolved. Rather, her identity is one of crossing and re-crossing multiple borders, or perhaps

more properly, of inhabiting both sides simultaneously. To be a Latina child care provider is to be *both* influential and invisible, to intertwine the personal *with* the professional, and to live and work in community *and* in isolation .

These contradictions exact tolls of emotional as well as physical energy for Feliz, Lucila, and Amada. Yet, in negotiating them, the women also find a source of strength. As Anzaldúa (1987) continues: “Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else” (p. 101). Drawing on the cultural values of familismo, convivir, and valerse por si misma, Latina providers marshal their multiple identities as wives/mothers, community members, entrepreneurs, and educators toward a new and self-defined professionalism.

*Influence and invisibility.* Latina providers believe themselves to be influential in the growth and development of children and in the wellbeing of families. As Feliz told me, “You’re raising them. You’re a part of their lives and you’re raising them. With their families, you’re raising them.” Providers’ perceptions of their individual influence reinforce and add texture to previous findings about their collective influence. An analysis by Park and colleagues (2015), for example, showed that Latinas account for nearly 1 in 5 child care professionals across the country, suggesting influence over the wellbeing of potentially millions of American children. However, providers’ experiences also substantiate another finding in the existing literature—that the time and domestic work of Latinas is not valued as highly as the “real” work of the parents who hire them (Barford and Whelton, 2010; Boyd, 2013; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007). A Latina child care provider’s work is thus made invisible in at least two ways: taken for granted as instinctive within longstanding cultural narratives that cast Latinas as natural caregivers, and eclipsed by the higher-status (and higher-paid) employment it supports.

*Personal and professional.* Previous studies have described the tension providers experience in reconciling the personal and professional aspects of their work. Like the providers in Bromer and Henly's (2004) study, Feliz, Lucila, and Amada provide "hidden support" to families. Often, this is in the form of compelled overtime as parents arrive late to pick up their children after trips to the grocery store or salon. Feliz recalled a particularly delicate situation with a mother who seemed to expect the hidden support of a social outlet, lingering for 45 minutes every evening to chat before taking her child home. Amada, meanwhile, once agreed to a six-day workweek to accommodate a mother's schedule. Similarly, Craigslist advertisements detail a range of services providers offer beyond paid caregiving, from toilet training to transportation to housekeeping. Such support seems to be expected based, in part, on persistent depictions of Latinas as "natural" domestics and the quasi-familiar nature of the child care relationship. However, hidden support causes frustration and anxiety among providers for whom the extra labor comes at the cost of time and energy for themselves and their families.

With its focus on home-based providers, who have received little research attention, my study adds new consideration of the ways providers negotiate personal and professional spaces. For the providers who participated in my research, operating a business within a family home served, in part, to further obscure their professional identities. "Sometimes it's a little bit hard for parents to understand that, yes, it's my home, but I don't treat it like my home during my working hours," Lucila explained. "It's a school. It's a business." The arrangement also fosters the intrusion of business into providers' personal lives. "In this house, the day care has taken over everything except just one bedroom. That's it," Amada said. As noted earlier in this chapter, previous studies of child care and child care providers have described tension between the personal and the professional. However, the testimonio evidence in my study renders those

earlier findings more complex. While the blurred lines between home and work can be sources of struggle and frustration, they are also sources of strength. The providers in my study do not so much switch between personal and professional roles. Instead, they embody both at once, and—*valerse por si mismas*, or relying on themselves—aspire to a professionalism in which their identities as wives/mothers empower them as capable entrepreneurs, and conversely, their professional pursuits enable them to be successful wives/mothers.

*Community and isolation.* My study contributes nuance and provider voice to previous quantitative surveys that describe the child care system in the United States as “radically decentralized” (Fuller & Strath, 2001, p. 37). The country’s young children are cared for in such a wide range of settings and arrangements—public and private, formal and informal—that researchers have been challenged to develop a comprehensive portrait of the early childhood workforce. My study suggests that, at the individual level, this fragmentation contributes to a sense of isolation, especially for providers who work out of their homes. Somewhat like the domestic workers in Hondagneu-Sotelo’s (2007) study who organized to form a Domestic Workers Association, the women I spoke with want connection and collegiality with other child care providers. But with few systems or agencies to connect them (and facing considerable time constraints) they are kept at a distance from one another. Instead, Lucila spoke of a training opportunity in which she had access to videos of other providers at work. “That was really, really helpful because, as a family child care provider, I don’t have a lot of interaction with other providers,” she said. Feliz looks to social media channels, including Facebook and Pinterest, to trade ideas and experiences with other professionals. All spoke of informal, and somewhat fragile, networks of information exchange among providers. A veteran provider guided Amada through the state-licensing process; Lucila exhorts other Latina providers to require formal

contracts with parents; Feliz has made herself available as a mentor to women just entering the field and has sought, unsuccessfully, such mentorship herself.

While previous reports describe fragmentation within the child care field, other research describes child care providers as connected to their communities, if not one another, findings my study corroborates. The child care centers in Mario Small's (2006) study can function as research brokers because of their familiarity with family needs and neighborhood resources. Similarly, the providers in my study are well-acquainted with the various challenges faced by client families, as well as with local bureaucracies and institutions. However the reach of providers' community knowledge and its potential to improve family well-being has so far been limited to individual interactions—perhaps because, as Latinas and as child care professionals, they are not recognized as experts, another form of isolation.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

By amplifying the voices of three Latina child care providers—who represent a group of individuals responsible for the daytime care of many American children—my study yielded insights that may help improve policy and practice in early education as well as mass media. Specifically, the testimonios of Feliz, Lucila, and Amada may inform discussions surrounding the school readiness function of child care, the professionalization of the early childhood field, and mass media representation of the Latinx community.

**Child care and school readiness.** In recent decades, as increasing numbers of preschool-age children have been enrolled in some form of nonrelative day care, researchers and policymakers have considered child care in terms of early education rather than just as labor support for working parents (Adams & Rohacek, 2002; Douglass, 2011; Sabol & Chase-Lansdale, 2015). Scholars including Dearing, McCartney, and Taylor (2009), Loeb, Fuller,

Kagan, and Carrol (2004), and Winsler and colleagues (2008), have drawn connections between high quality early care and education and improved achievement in elementary school and beyond. The knowledge and expertise of Latina child care providers are underleveraged resources in advancing those ends. School leaders might consider formalizing relationships with child care providers in the neighborhoods they serve. Early childhood professionals such as Feliz, Lucila, and Amada are well-positioned to help connect children and families to their future elementary schools. If administrators fostered effective communications channels, child care providers could help parents understand what to expect as they prepare their children for kindergarten. Conversely, providers could share with schools their understanding of family strengths and challenges, as well as of neighborhood dynamics and institutions. Of particular value to schools may be the language resources and the culturally informed pedagogical approaches Latina child care providers bring to their work. As U.S. Census Bureau (2011) estimates indicate, about 1 in every 4 children in the country is Latinx.

**Professionalization of early care and education.** Related to growing policy interest in child care as a tool for supporting early education are efforts to professionalize the child care field. These efforts would be made more effective—and more just—if they took into account the perspective and experiences of Latina providers. Most states have implemented or are in the process of implementing quality rating and improvement systems for child care (QRIS National Learning Network, 2014). These rating systems, similar to star-ratings for hotels and restaurants, are meant to offer a quick and clear assessment of child care quality based on factors that typically include a provider's level of education. In instituting quality rating systems, more attention should be paid to providers' access to educational opportunities. The providers in my study lacked neither motivation nor interest when it came to advancing their professional

development. Instead, what kept them from pursuing further education was time. Workshops were frequently held on weekdays when they had caregiving responsibilities. Nighttime college courses, while available, meant unsustainably long days. Resource and referral agencies could consider alternative forms of professional development, such as coaching, that could take place in a provider's home. Policymakers could also facilitate the provision of substitute or backup care so that providers might take time off for training, education, and networking.

Crucially, policy solutions that seek to improve provider education must also address provider compensation (Boyd 2013). Despite the argument put forth by Morgaine (1999), for child care providers, higher salaries have not followed higher levels of educational attainment. Unlike workers in other fields, child care providers do not realize a substantial salary premium upon earning a postsecondary degree (Park et al., 2015). Their hourly wages rank among the lowest in the country and have remained practically flat over the past 25 years (Whitebrook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). To remedy this disparity, policymakers could consider tax benefits for providers who undertake additional training or education. In addition, government-subsidized child care programs in California, could offer higher reimbursement rates to providers who have completed certificate and degree programs beyond what licensing regulations require. Such is already the case in several other states.

Going further, provider testimonios also suggest that policymakers reframe what is considered valid education and experience in the field. While the women in my study valued their formal education, they also credited their own life and work experience as key components of their professional ability. Currently, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is revising its position statement on "Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators" (NAEYC, 2018). The document seeks to present



“the essential body of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practice required of all early childhood educators working with children from birth through age eight, across all early learning settings” (p. 6). Once adopted, it will guide the design of child care preparation programs, accreditation standards, evaluation systems, and other organizing features of the profession. In draft form, the position statement has identified six professional standards, including “Content Knowledge in Early Childhood Curriculum” and “Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Teaching Strategies.” It also singles out higher education as the “core pathway for individuals to be prepared in the competencies” (p. 33). Importantly, the report acknowledges that additional policies are needed to mitigate the effects of racism and other barriers to equitable access to higher education. However, its authors should also consider adding alternative certification programs as a viable pathway through which Latina and other marginalized providers could demonstrate competency and receive recognition for their valuable work and life experience and language ability. Furthermore, although the workgroup that drafted the position statement included several Latinx educators and scholars—and while early childhood professionals were encouraged to provide feedback via a digital survey—it is not clear whether the perspective of Latina providers was more proactively sought. In preparing similar position statements, professional organizations should ensure that the voices and values of Latina providers, who account for a significant segment of the workforce, are represented.

**Representation of Latinas and Latina child care providers.** Turning to communications and mass media, there is much practitioners might do to help bridge the gap between providers’ understanding of their work and public perception of it. For example, in 2014, First 5 California, the tobacco-tax funded agency that supports programs and services for children ages 5 and younger, launched a statewide media campaign encouraging parents to talk,

read, and sing with their infants and toddlers to promote cognitive development and emotional well-being (First 5 California, 2014). The ongoing campaign includes television, radio, and social media advertisements; billboards; and a digital app for parents, among other components. In the future, such campaigns might also feature representations of Latina child care providers that reinforce their identities as educators and professionals, and that depict child care centers as places of learning, not just “babysitting.”

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

My study did not seek broad generalizability and only begins to contribute to a more complete and authentic understanding of the perspective and lived experience of Latina child care providers. The need for further research, both quantitative and qualitative, remains great. Future studies might focus, for example, on developing a clearer demographic portrait (including educational background, cultural and linguistic heritage, years in the field, annual earnings, etc.) of home-based providers who work at the margins of an already marginalized field, and whose experiences vary greatly from those of child care providers who work in other settings, such as centers or preschools (Park et al., 2015). Likewise, narrative or testimonio studies of Latina providers in other parts of the country, or of other caregivers of color would add much-needed dimension to overall understanding of child care in the United States; research has tended to focus on the experiences of children and families rather than those of providers. Also valuable would be communications research that sought to understand how mass media representations of child care relate to public perception of the field. However, among the many potential avenues for further research, two stand out to me as particularly urgent, the first being a study of the economic impact of Latina child care providers.

The work of Latina providers enables parents to work outside the home, which in turn facilitates the purchase of goods and services and the generation of tax revenue. However, this economic support seems hidden; not even the providers I spoke with addressed it directly. Existing studies, including analyses by Warner and Liu (2006) and MacGillvary and Lucia (2011), measure the economic impact of the early childhood education industry as a whole, but do not capture the specific role of Latina providers in the broader economy. Understanding the full economic impact of the child care work performed by U.S. Latinas could better inform policy discussions and, furthermore, could potentially help elevate providers' professional status.

Second, I propose that scholars undertake a review of research on Latinas across early care and education, reconsidering findings from a perspective that centers Latinas as leaders and experts. Méndez-Morse (2003) has argued that Chicana feminist thought makes possible a more inclusive and equitable reconceptualization of educational leadership. In the same way, a critical review of the early childhood literature could facilitate the development of new theories of early educational leadership that encompass Latinx values and perspectives. Such alternate theories and frameworks are crucial at a time when efforts to professionalize the field have gained momentum (they might help us consider and reconsider, for example, what it means to be an early childhood *professional*), and when demographic trends show the country's Latinx population continuing to grow. Early childhood perspectives should also be brought into emerging models of Latina educational leadership such as those articulated by Murakami and colleagues (2015) in their work on Latinx school principals, and by Rodríguez, Martínez, and Valle (2015) in their review of Latinx leadership across the educational pipeline.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Conspicuously missing from the literature on early care and education in the United States have been the voices of Latina providers who represent a considerable portion of the nation's child care workforce. By drawing attention to the testimonios of three Latina child care providers in the greater Los Angeles region, my study begins to fill that gap with a deeper understanding of how Latinas conceptualize and perform their roles in opposition to prevailing social, political, and cultural frames. In so doing, it challenges dominant narratives—reinforced in research and mass media—that have constructed Latinas as alien, uneducated, and passive (Correa, 2010; Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Torres, 2004). One key conclusion of my research then, is a confirmation of the abiding—and urgent—importance of Chicana feminist approaches to research in education and mass communications.

Drawing on theoretical foundations laid by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Dolores Delgado Bernal's (1998) Chicana feminist epistemology grounds knowledge about Latinx people in the lives of Latinx people. By centering Latinx perspective at all stages of the research process—from the formulation of questions, to the selection of methodology, to the analysis of data—scholars can develop more authentic and equitable insights into Latinx experience and identity (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Over the past 20 years, researchers across disciplines, and especially in education, have used Chicana feminist epistemology to unsettle representations of Latinx deficit: Students who underperform, parents who are unengaged (Calderón, et al., 2012). Demographers predict that by 2060, 1 in 4 Americans will be Latinx (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). For policymakers and practitioners to serve Latinx children and their families effectively and justly requires an ongoing and critical reconsideration of long-entrenched conclusions, which Chicana feminist approaches can help facilitate.

With regard to child care specifically, purportedly neutral research strategies have told an often-incomplete story: of Latina providers who are poor and uneducated. Meanwhile, mass media have persistently defined Latinas as natural mothers for whom early care and education is not a skill and profession, but rather an instinct and obligation. However, in embracing a Chicana feminist epistemology, “We ask different questions” (Méndez-Morse, 2003, p. 166). Providers’ conceptualizations of themselves and their work stands in sharp contrast to dominant representations of Latina identity. A Chicana feminist lens helps reveal them more authentically as women who bring purpose, intention, and skill to work they consider meaningful and far-reaching.

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## APPENDIX A: PLÁTICA GUIDE

**Participant:**

**Date of interview:**

**Time:**

**Place:**

**Brief description of participant's child care business or workplace** (demographics and number of children served, type of child care, years of experience, etc.):

1. Tell me about your own childhood – Who took care of you? What did you love to do as a child?  
Cuéntame de su niñez —quién le cuidaba a usted? ¿Qué le gustaba hacer cuando era niña?
2. What sorts of things are you good at, do you enjoy doing now? What do you dislike doing or feel like you aren't very good at?  
¿Cuáles son sus talentos? ¿Qué le gusta hacer? ¿Qué actividades no le gustan?
3. Please tell me about how you started your career in child care. Do you remember how you made the decision – what gave you the idea, who you talked to, what advice you received?  
¿Cómo comenzó su carrera en la primera infancia? ¿Recuerda cómo lo decidió? ¿De donde salió la idea? ¿recibió consejos?
4. Why do you think so many child care providers are Latina?  
Muchas proveedoras de niños son Latinas. ¿Por qué? ¿Qué cree?
5. How did you learn to care for children? Did you have any mentors – would you tell me about them?  
Cómo aprendió a cuidarles a los niños? ¿Tiene mentores? Por favor, cuéntame de ellos.

6. Please walk me through what you did yesterday—at home with your family and at work with the children. What were the best and most difficult parts of the day?  
Por favor, describe lo que hizo ayer – en la casa con la familia y también en trabajo con los niños. Cuáles fueron las mejores partes de su día? Las más difíciles?
7. Please tell me about your own family. Can you recall a time when you have had to balance caring for your own family/children with caring for other people’s children?  
Por favor, cuéntame sobre la familia suya. ¿Ha habido un momento cuando tuvo que equilibrar el cuidado de su familiar con el cuidado de niños de otras familias?
8. Tell me about a time when you felt very proud of your work.  
Háblame de un momento en que ha tenido orgullo en el trabajo.
9. And what about a time when you felt frustrated?  
¿Y un momento en que sintió frustrada?
10. What do you imagine other people think about your job? About Latinas?  
¿Qué cree que otras personas creen sobre su trabajo? ¿Y sobre mujeres Latinas?
11. Can you tell me about the last news story you read or heard about immigration? What went through your mind after reading or hearing it?  
Hábleme de una noticia que leyó u oyó sobre la inmigración. ¿Qué pensó?
12. Tell me about your relationships with the parents. Can you recall a time when you felt you had a very good conversation with a parent? What about a time when you felt the parent wasn’t listening or the two of you weren’t communicating?  
Háblame de las relaciones con los padres (de los niños que cuida). ¿Qué esperan de ti - qué piensa? ¿Recuerda una vez cuando tuvo una buena conversación con un mamá o papa? ¿Cuando ustedes no se llevaban bien?
13. What do you hope for yourself and your work in the future? (prompt as necessary – e.g., do you hope to get more education, earn more, have things stay mostly the same).  
¿Con respecto a su carrera y la vida en general, qué espera para el futuro? (más educación, gane más dinero...)
14. What advice would you give to another woman considering this type of work?  
¿Qué consejo tiene para una mujer que esta pensando en este trabajo?

**APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS****CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO****EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION TESTIMONIOS AT THE BORDERS OF CULTURE,  
POLITICS, MASS MEDIA, AND GENDER**

Le pide a participar en una investigación sobre las experiencias de cuidadoras infantiles Latinas. Mi nombre es Jennifer Torres, y soy estudiante de University of the Pacific, Benerd School of Education. Usted está invitado a participar en esta investigación porque usted es cuidadora Latina y vive en la región de Los Angeles.

El objetivo de la investigación es conocer las experiencias de cuidadoras infantiles en los Estados Unidos. Si está de acuerdo en participar, le pediré que hable conmigo sobre su trabajo en la primera infancia. Su participación incluirá tres pláticas de 60-90 minutos.

La participación puede tener riesgos, por ejemplo de empleo. Cualquier riesgos se reducirán al mínimo con medidas de confidencialidad y privacidad. Su información será mantenida confidencial—no voy a revelar la información sin su permiso. Además, no voy a usar su nombre real, ni el nombre de su empleo. Información personal será mantenida en un archivo protegido con contraseña. Voy a borrar la información después de tres años.

Por otro lado, la investigación puede aportar beneficios: Latinas son responsables del cuidado y la educación de millones de niños en los EEUU. Conocer los testimonios de cuidadoras infantiles puede mejorar educación y bienestar en la primera infancia.

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre la investigación, favor de llamarme: (909) 239-9669. También puede ponerse en contacto con Dr. Ronald Hallett: (209) 946-2265. Si tiene preguntas sobre los derechos de los participantes de una investigación, póngase en contacto con la Oficina de Research & Graduate Studies de University of the Pacific: (209) 946-7716. Si experimenta lesiones a causa de esta investigación, póngase en contacto con nosotros, y también con su médico y su seguro de salud.

Su participación es completamente voluntaria. Si usted decide que no participar, no será penalizado ni perder beneficios a los que tiene derecho de otro modo. Si participa, puede dejar de participar en cualquier momento, sin penalización ni pérdida de beneficios a los que tiene derecho de otro modo.

Su firma indica que ha leído y comprendido la información de este formulario, que está de acuerdo en participar, que puede dejar de participar en cualquier momento sin penalización ni pérdida de beneficios a los que tiene derecho de otro modo, que recibirá una copia de este formulario, y que no renunciará a ningún derecho o remedio legal.

Firma

Fecha

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## INFORMED CONSENT

### EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION TESTIMONIOS AT THE BORDERS OF CULTURE, POLITICS, MASS MEDIA, AND GENDER

I invite you to participate in a research study on the lives and experiences of Latina child care providers. My name is Jennifer Torres, and I am a student at the University of the Pacific's Benerd School of Education. I selected you as a possible participant for this study because of your experience as a Latina child care provider in the Los Angeles area. The purpose of this research is to understand how Latina early care and education providers understand and experience their work. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to talk with me about your experiences in early care and education. Your participation in this study will include three conversations, each lasting about an hour.

It is possible that participating in this study could come with risk, for example, to your employment. I hope to minimize any potential risk through efforts to ensure privacy. Information I obtain in connection with this study *and* that can be identified with you will remain confidential—I will not disclose it without your permission. I will not use your true name, nor that of your place of work. I will keep all information in a safe, password-protected computer file, and will destroy it three years after the study is completed.

There are also potential benefits to this research; Latinas are responsible for the early care and education of millions of young children in the United States. Listening to the voices of Latina child care providers may help improve the quality of early care and education. If you have any questions about the research at any time, please call me at (909) 239-9669, or my advisor, Dr. Ronald Hallett, at (209) 946-2265. If you have any questions about your rights as a



participant in a research project please call the Research & Graduate Studies Office, University of the Pacific (209) 946-7716. In the event of a research-related injury, please advise us, and then contact your regular medical provider and bill through your normal insurance carrier.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time with out penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

Signature

Date

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