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Raising California Together:
Race, Gender and the Cultural Politics of Childcare in Los Angeles

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ABSTRACT: *Raising California Together,* an ethnography of licensed family child care homes, contributes significant theoretical and empirical knowledge to our understanding of workfare, immigration and education institutions that shape the lives of the youngest subject-citizens – and of those who care for them. I draw from more than three years of participant observation and semi-structured interviews with childcare providers who provide welfare-to-work subsidized care to children, ostensibly in order for parents to participate in the low-wage labor force. I followed providers' multi-year efforts to unionize and also informally interviewed parents, organizers and agency officials. The professionalization of licensed family childcare reveals the ways in which interlocking public and private organizations constitutes an intimate infrastructure that disciplines kin and non-kin caregivers and conscripts women of color to shape future "productive" citizens. U.S. childcare workers find their value and labor measured vis-à-vis anxieties about global capitalist competition and "demographic shifts" whereby non-white U.S. youth – as early as infancy - are represented as both the economic safety net for, and existential cultural threat to aging white aging populations in California. My dissertation contributes emerging knowledge on state and market-driven constructions of race, childhood, citizenship, and motherhood as key conceptual markers that circumscribe culture debates and social policy in the U.S. With the increasing scientific management of education and workfare, "culture" is deployed by U.S. state institutions and corporations to discipline and extract value from racialized and gendered bodies. To that end, cultural determination and intimate practices serve as a critical ideological terrain for Black women and Latinas to organize a labor movement that contests racial and gendered structural violence and produces new narratives of a changing U.S.

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Raymundo Javier Valles “Junior”
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Rosie Kennedy
Eddie Reed Jr.

“Mama exhorted her children at every opportunity to 'jump at the sun.' We might not land on the sun, but at least we would get off the ground. ”

Zora Neale Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road*

“Ah! This enchanting city, Los Angeles!
My dear friends, never forget this mission which you so decidedly possess.
My treasured friends, there is no question that your multi-racial nation, America, represents humanity's future.
[…]
Your land holds secret stores of unbounded possibility, transforming the energy of different cultures into the unity of construction, the flames of conflict into the light of solidarity, the eroding rivulets of mistrust into a great broad flow of confidence. On what can we ground our efforts to open the horizons of such a renaissance?
[…]
As each group seeks their separate roots and origins, society fractures along a thousand fissure lines. When neighbors distance themselves from neighbors, continue your uncompromising quest for you truer roots in the deepest regions of your lives. Seek out the primordial "roots" of humankind. Then you will without fail discover the stately expanse of Jiyu unfolding n the depths of your life. Here is the home, the dwelling place to which humankind traces its original existence - beyond all borders, beyond all differences of gender and race. Here is a world offering true proof of our humanity.”
Daisaku Ikeda, Jan 27, 1993

Raising California Together:

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Table of Contents:

Introduction: Proveedoras Unidas! 11

Chapter 1: Raising the Infrastructure of Intervention 39

Chapter 2: Producing Precarious Household Entrepreneurs: 68

Chapter 3: Chill Pills, Play and Panic 107

Chapter 4: Toying with Gender and Race 142

Chapter 5: The Intimacy of Intervention 165

Conclusion: Twenty-first century childcare: Initial thoughts on the Century of Women 206

References 218

Introduction: Proveedoras Unidas!

“When I first heard that kids as little as five years old were already starting school below grade level, I knew in my heart that I had to do something,” eight-year-old Celeste Elena Umana told a crowd of family childcare providers, union organizers, parents, and community groups assembled under the banner of “Raising California Together” (RCT) on the North Lawn of the California State Capitol building in Sacramento.

“Yes, it's true that I'm only eight years old and still not allowed to stay up later than 9:00 p.m. at night,” she exclaimed. “But it's also true that I know in my heart that every kid—it doesn't matter if they're rich or poor; if they're brown, black, or white; if they speak English, Spanish, or any language. All children should have the opportunity to go to a childcare, daycare, or preschool and have a chance to succeed. Do you agree?”

The crowd cheered in affirmation of Celeste, who hails from the “majority-minority,” working-class port city of Long Beach (adjacent to Los Angeles), and who had just declared herself #KidGovernor of California. Celeste’s carefully scripted campaign speech demanded increased funding and the passage of legislation allowing California’s more than 30,000 licensed family childcare workers to collectively bargain with the state (cf. Child Care Aware of America 2017). Her proud single mother fought back tears from the audience.

The #KidGovernor’s inauguration speech was the coda to RCT’s three-day, six-city bus tour that began in San Diego and arced through Celeste’s hometown of Long Beach. There the bus also stopped at the childcare home of Ramona Duran. With video cameras from English- and

Spanish-language media rolling, in a two-car garage packed with invited government officials, union staff, and other providers, Ramona described how, for more than 19 years, she opened her business as early as 5:00 a.m. to serve local working parents. Like most family childcare providers in California, the majority of Ramona's parent-clients are welfare-to-work recipients for which Ramona receive "subsidies" through different nonprofit agencies subcontracted by the state. A parent who had utilized Ramona's services since their inception credited the family childcare home for nurturing her children and assuring their success in college, as musicians, and in the military, and for giving her the ability to attend night school. The California State Superintendent thanked Ramona for her service in Spanish, in a poignant moment that made it into several local and statewide newspapers.

From Long Beach, the bus brought providers through Los Angeles, the iconic Central and Silicon Valleys, San Francisco's East Bay, and Sacramento. The Raising California Together Coalition, which helmed the tour, brought together service sector unions and early education activists with the goals of increasing resources for and promoting the unionization of workfare-funded family childcare providers in the state. Home-based providers have been critical to supplying care in the US, vastly outnumbering center-based care, at a time when childcare costs in many places outpaces rent and the need for access to childcare seems to draw bipartisan agreement like few other policy areas (Paschall and Tout 2018; Peterson 2018).

Celeste's reference to kindergarteners already starting below grade level referenced the fact that family childcare providers, the RCT coalition argues, are at the forefront of closing the "educational achievement gap" in California among black and Latinx infants and toddlers and their white peers. This gap, the National Education Association notes, has only garnered more attention with overall gains in student achievement statistics, the push for new standards and increasing test-based assessments of students, and the diversification of classroom settings (2007). As a play on the 1980s Hollywood blockbuster film franchise *Ghostbusters*, RCT's organizers coined the bus tour #gapbusters to raise awareness of the plight of family childcare providers and of the risks of educational inequality to the state's future. RCT's media documented the tour with the #gapbusters across social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, in addition to local media.

Images of black and Latinx children like Celeste featured prominently in RCT's brilliantly-choreographed public media blitz, which escalated a decades-long campaign to unionize family childcare providers in California. Throughout the bus tour, Celeste, an aspiring actress, dressed in business attire to perform her role as a satirical political challenger to the "adult" Governor Brown. The #KidGovernor even carried a stuffed puppy doll, mocking Jerry Brown's popular Corgi named Sutter who had become a fixture in Sacramento. Providers pointed out to me that Celeste rarely went off script, posing and gesturing on cue, as the audience hung off her meticulously-crafted words. An entourage of infants and toddlers accompanied the #KidGovernor dressed in fire, police, and doctor costumes, drawing cheers from gawking adults as they sang subversively pro-union nursery rhymes. Commenting on the public appeal of the campaign, one union public relations expert proudly noted to me that RCT's messaging about young children practically "sells itself."

RCT's overall message echoed the chorus of childcare experts, state legislators, and others who point to measurable results and statistics, such as comparisons of the number of words learned by white and non-white children, to contend that the "achievement gap starts early" (e.g. Miller 2014). These policies and discourses also align with the work of economists like University of Chicago's James Heckman who claim "the highest rate of return" in investment in education starts with infancy, can determine children's future earnings, criminal records, and higher education paths, and can even lead to reducing national deficits (2013: 1).

The school-to-prison pipeline, as such, figured prominently in the RCT coalition's messaging. Numerous speakers, including Silicon Valley businesspeople, clergy people, and educators, compared the "back end" cost of a lifetime of incarceration to the less expensive "front end" cost of early education. Activists spoke of high-need "zip codes," indexing where high rates of intergenerational poverty and incarceration and a dearth of early education services align at the neighborhood level. In lobby visits, parents and providers offered a flyer that showed that for every $1 invested in early education led to $7 in future "benefit:" .24 cents in welfare, .50 cents in special education savings, .72 cents in increased taxes, $1.03 in "justice system," and $4.67 in "crime impact" savings.

Even after what seemed like an unassailable campaign of picture-perfect moments and a mounting wall of evidence of the costs of disinvestment (or never-investing) in childcare, not-so-kid Governor Brown vetoed the Raising Child Care Quality Act (State Senate Bill 548 2015) when it landed on his desk. The bill would have established mandatory orientations and further tracking of family childcare providers by state licensing agencies, but most importantly it would have allowed providers to raise their issues concerning care provision collectively to the state as the "employer of record" (i.e., in the form of a union). However, the governor did approve a wide range of other laws affecting providers that year, including bills mandating the use of Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) evaluations to assess childcare sites, banning smoking at childcare sites, implementing regulations of providers' electronic records, and enacting requirements that the Department of Public Health post childcare home inspection information for the public.

The policies that did pass reflect expert and state agency suspicion and scrutiny of family childcare questioning their professional capability as early educators and even their ability to serve as "role models" given that many share working-poor backgrounds and "habits" with the families they serve (Tovar et al. 2017). They reflect anxieties regarding providers' home-based care on behalf of welfare-to-work, as much as the coalition's message reflects fears about what the "browning of America" will mean for the state and nation's future.

Guiding Questions and Theoretical Stakes

This dissertation centers upon the cultural, political, and economic significance of the campaign to unionize the workers who care for often-poor black and Latinx California children as family childcare comes under increasing techno-scientific public and private management. The struggles of childcare workers and their allies raise critical questions: How do educational and welfare institutions shape the everyday lives of black and Latinx youth at their earliest ages (0 to 5) and the lives of family childcare providers tasked with caregiving through these institutions? How do providers respond to and reshape these institutional forces in everyday practice and through collective mobilization?

Answering these questions offers insight into the broader cultural and political-economic dynamics informing the childcare debates in California. While scholars have studied family childcare as a subset of care work more generally, with many giving particular attention to providers' roles as entrepreneurs and small businesswomen, my research locates providers vis-à-vis the project of early intervention (cf. Osgood 2004; Reese 2010; Tuominen 2003; Uttal and Tuominen 1999). This project is being enacted at a key political and demographic juncture: in California in 2017, nearly 40% of the population identified as Latinx, 15% as Asian/Pacific Islander and 7% as Black (ACS 2017). In the Los Angeles region, the shift to "majority-minority" status is even more stark, with 73% of Los Angeles' residents Latinx, Asian or black, and Latinxs predicted to become the demographic majority in 2020 (PERE 2016). These shifts are driven by transnational migration, but also by generation. In Los Angeles, 83% of youth under 18 and nearly the same percent under 5 are nonwhite (Ibid.). These populations bear the brunt of inequality in Los Angeles County: Nearly a quarter of children live in food-insecure households and those below the food poverty line (kidsfact.org).

Focusing on childcare as a cultural practice, as it becomes increasingly commodified and central to state welfare and education institutions, allows a view into the racialized and gendered political and economic shifts—mapped onto the bodies of Latinx and black families—that foreshadow the making of a majority-minority future in California and, ultimately, the United States. Foregrounding early intervention allows us to see where childcare policies intersect with other projects to form racialized and gendered citizen-subjects and workers—such as the punitive immigration system and the turn to workfare (Collins and Mayer 2010; Goode and Maskovsky 2001; Kretsedemas and Aparicio 2004; Marchevsky and Theoharis 2006). Centering the lens from the perspective of family child care providers gives insight into how institutional assemblages (which we can see as infrastructures, as I discuss later in this chapter) are in fact enacted and embodied by those who perform this labor. Within the context of Los Angeles, providers' role in the welfare-educational nexus of "early intervention" must be understood as fundamentally linked to neoliberal market processes, transnational migrations, and projects of governmentality that operate across a multiplicity of scales of power.

This dissertation captures a key juncture in which experts, policymakers, and activists are calling to professionalize early childcare through state and private sector institutionalization. Technoscientific methods and instruments such as rating scales, rubrics, testing, and greater scrutiny—like the QRIS—are the mechanisms by which state intermediaries measure abstract concepts like quality care and school readiness. They reflect the turn to neoliberal "audit cultures" by which private and public workplace managers assess workers, organizations through a range of calculative practices (Shore and Wright 2015; Vannier 2010). With neoliberal professionalization comes standardization of practices and surveillance that clash with family childcare providers who rely on their own material and cultural resources. Calls for greater public control of childcare, in part, derive from concerns regarding the educational (and subsequent employment and social) outcomes of youth and from evidence that early intervention can lessen the achievement gap among white and non-white youth (Bouffard 2017; Chaudhry et al. 2017).

Looming large across policymaker, expert, and private sector clamor for early intervention are measures that demonstrate US students lag behind their peers from other nations, especially in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields and particularly in comparison to ostensible "competitors" in China, India, and Europe (Cooper et al. 2012; Pierce 2012). At stake in early interventions is the prerogative to stimulate a work ethic among black and brown infants and toddlers in order for them to become future productive workers (Darling-Hammond 2015; Karoly et al. 2006). While most providers involved in RCT welcomed the raising of standards in their field, they pointed to their under-resourced conditions and to unionization as a vehicle for their input as credible practitioners to policymakers and state welfare and education institutions. In other words, they were not hoping to *be professionalized* as much as to be valued *as professionals*. Family childcare providers' per-child subsidy pay had been anchored by Regional Market Rate (RMR) formulas, set by state-level welfare-to-work programs, which had barely improved since the 1990s and often added up to less than minimum wage (County of Los Angeles Child Care Planning Committee 2017). More than half of the providers in Los Angeles and San Bernardino made less than $25,000 a year (CCRP 2017). This is not to mention a significant lack of investment in opportunities for training and access to funds for supplies, equipment, and especially food to provide to children in care.

Providers reflect the population they are asked to serve: according to California Childcare Research Partnership (CCRP) survey data I obtained on Los Angeles and adjacent San

Bernardino County providers, almost all providers are women, and they are 40% Latinx, 27% black and 22% white (2017). 62% were non-English speakers, 80% of whom spoke Spanish as their first language (Ibid.) They are primarily between 30 to 54 years of age. At almost every meeting I attended, the meeting was held in Spanish or had Spanish translation. [1] Given the language responses to the CCRP survey, a large percentage of the white-identified providers were likely Armenian.

Family childcare, in sum, exposes the ways in which policymaker, elite, and expert calls for early intervention are situated in shifting racial and gendered dynamics across California and the US, which influence the kinds of solutions proposed and who is asked to enact such proposals. Put another way, providers and children's experiences in the home-based care environment speak to hidden cultural and economic projects and politics centered on majority-minority youth and families in California.

As the televised Spanish-language exchange between Ramona and the State Superintendent signal, the experiences of providers and talk of the next generation—and, in fact, the operation of the welfare-to-work system itself—are inseparable from questions of migration (cf. Kretsedemas and Aparicio 2004; Marchsevky and Theodaris 2006). The debates regarding the state's future remind us that immigration debates and policy in the US have often, and have increasingly, focused not only on individuals but on entire families (Chavez 2013; Fujwara 2008; Phelan 2010). Media portrayals of migration have varied widely – and centered on questions of children, family and the burdening of US educational and welfare institutions (Kretsedemas and Aparicio 2004; Chock 1996, 1999). Images of Central American adolescents escaping violence at home and attempting to reunite with loved ones in the US dominated media accounts of migration (Chishti and Hipsman 2015). Mainstream media and liberal policymakers were far more generous in their treatment of the so-called DREAMers, youth who migrated with their parents and grew up mostly in the US and who were granted national temporary status through former President Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program (Carrasco and Seif 2014, Patler and Gonzales 2015).

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[1] In Northern California, providers surveyed by CCRP were 17% Latinx, 19% black, 52% white and 13% other (likely Asian). "White," given my own experience organizing in the region and the language data, includes predominantly Russian immigrants and Arabic-speaking and Farsi-speaking immigrants from across Southwest and Central Asia.

In other words, questions about the ways in which education and welfare organizations raise the next generation are centrally tied to how migrant lives are constructed in the public imaginary and policed in the US. In fact, family detention centers are regulated to house children by the same licensing agency that regulates childcare centers and family childcare homes. In 2015, providers—many of whom were migrant women themselves—became involved in the debate regarding the "surge" of Central American children at the border by organizing to host and even provide foster care for the young migrants.

The connections among migration, welfare, and education run deep into the history of Los Angeles and California, as documented in recently-resurfaced examples of early-20th Century forced sterilization of Mexican, black, and Native women in Los Angeles (detailed in Chapter 1 and in the 2015 documentary *No Más Bebés*). Throughout this dissertation, I focus on what intersecting welfare, educational, and immigration politics and policies mean for the less glamorous and headline-grabbing problem of how parents access—and providers offer—quality early education for children. No analysis of these politics in Los Angeles would be complete without understanding the role of labor unions, which have dramatically reshaped the trajectory of welfare, education, and immigration regionally and statewide and which have become a leading voice for access to quality childcare.

More broadly, in taking on the stakes of early education, this dissertation engages with fundamental anthropological questions regarding how we understand human development, the ways in which culture is reproduced and is fundamental to economic life, and the ways political institutions materialize or “take place.” Collier and Ong divide the kinds of reflexive practices to evaluate and constitute individual and collective life—which are, at the core, anthropological problems—into three categories: technoscientific, political (i.e., regarding the legal-juridical state), and ethical (i.e., questions of “how one should live”) (2005). The case of childcare, as I seek to outline in this dissertation, suggests that the three realms are deeply interconnected when it comes to understanding raising future subject-citizens. With the rise of neoliberal forms of governmentality and the increasing commodification of everyday life, the tensions among how we should live, what institutions should hold power over life, and how we should form knowledge about life are deeply entwined. In this case, these questions have come to center on human beings in their earliest years, in the 0 to 5 age group, and on those who are charged with raising them. Providers’ work to enact particular forms of knowledge, politics, and ethics regarding early childhood development are inseparable from histories of structural violence and power that reproduce hierarchies of race, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and other forms of difference. In looking to family childcare, I thus hope to expand our knowledge of how the work of making individual, collective, and national futures is inseparable from our present and historical ways of conceptualizing and governing biological and social life, which are rooted in place and enacted in material objects and labor.

Costumes and Other Methods

Micaela di Leonardo uses the Halloween costume metaphor to describe the tropes (like the "human nature expert") by which anthropologists have historically marketed themselves—and the discipline by extension—in the US public sphere (1998). I often found myself in a far-different set of costumes that gave me unprecedented access to the RCT campaign. As a participant observer in the #gapbusters bus tour, I volunteered to dress up in a tan #gapbuster jumpsuit covered in large letters and numbers, brandishing an awkward backpack hose attachment meant to mimic the original *Ghostbusters* outfit.

I spent the bulk of my time out of costume, though, and as a volunteer researcher at SEIU Local 99, a Los Angeles-based labor union representing education workers, where I was permitted to conduct the bulk of my ethnographic observation for nearly four years of fieldwork, from August 2012 to May 2016. During this time, I conducted intensive participant observation among family childcare providers, low-wage parents, and early education advocates in Los Angeles. In addition to dressing as a gapbuster and participating in other public demonstrations, I witnessed legislative sessions and attended administrative court hearings where providers' livelihoods were held in the balance. I attended union-sponsored trainings for providers and early childhood professional conferences. I went with Local 99 organizers to dozens of home visits, where providers spoke of their experiences, grievances, and aspirations. The diversity of activities I attended spoke both to the ways in which social movement-oriented labor unions like SEIU Local 99 have expanded their focus and strategies and to the ways in which providers must perform in a wide range of institutional settings and with a vast repertoire of cultural practices. I observed and experienced such a range, in other words, because providers lead vast, rich, and quite challenging lives, about which they gave me the privilege of briefly sharing and learning.

As a volunteer at Local 99, I worked on data entry, making sense of and updating regulatory manuals, finding funding opportunities, and linking the union with community reinvestment funding for early childhood education.

From 2013 to 2016, I conducted twenty-five audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with caregivers, parents, and state officials in Spanish and English, twenty of which involved extensive life history interviews. Interviews were primarily hosted at the daycare homes, which gave me exclusive access to the intimate encounters among caregivers, assistants, children, and parents. During home visits, I executed brief and informal semi-structured interviews with parents. I analyzed dozens of transcripts from union-led provider focus groups. Thanks to my National Science Foundation research grant, I was able to offer a cash gift to providers for their interview time. In addition, I was able to use support from the Wenner-Gren foundation to offer much-needed bilingual children’s books to those family childcare homes that I followed over the four years.

I collected extensive field notes, as well as photographs and videos, and built an archive of social media and promotional materials from provider-led early education campaigns. I discovered early on that labor organizing had evolved technologically from my previous work at

SEIU's sister union, AFSCME, on the United Childcare Campaign (Proveedoras Unidas) nearly a decade prior. I often dated myself to the mostly twenty-something organizers when I would mention the bulky *Thomas Guide* map books I had used to find provider home addresses and navigate urban and suburban roads and highways. I observed how union organizers, providers, and parents juggled multiple personal and work-specific smartphones in a daily struggle to maintain a life-work balance. Yet such technology, including FaceTime, Skype, texting, GPS, and other mapping devices, made multimodal communication among providers, parents, and activists possible. The Local 99 RCT campaign was highly media savvy, as their public relations team orchestrated an impressive bilingual news media strategy which brought together their organizers, strategist, and researcher. In my analysis, I make use of social media posts, images, and comment sections from platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, in addition to childcare-related email listserves and websites. Such platforms enhance the sensation of intimacy by allowing working parents to participate in their children's daily lives across time and space. Smartphones, in particular, allow providers to document their lives and promote their work on their personal and business social media accounts. I followed childcare-related posts from unions, nonprofits, politicians, and providers themselves in order to trace debates and track developments during heightened moments of the unionization campaigns.

In Summer 2015, I published a policy brief with the UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE) regarding the need for childcare investment that specifically addressed the needs of family childcare providers. This was done as part of an interest in and commitment to engaged research and provided an important opportunity to gain feedback on the direction of my research from providers and organizers and contribute to RCT policy advocacy.

Prior to my fieldwork, I had served as an organizer on a far different childcare campaign in New Mexico from 2006 to 2008. My two years of intensive interpersonal organizing facilitated my understanding of the campaign overall and allowed me to quickly build relationships in the field—and, of course, motivated this dissertation. I saw then how the work of providers is obscured and how it is linked to critical anthropological questions and to a more robust North American discipline. The New Mexico campaigns inspired many of my original questions, which evolved thanks to the patient guidance of my dissertation committee and the generous feedback from fellowship application reviews.

From June 2013 to May 2015, I also served as a research fellow at the UCLA Labor Center in a Ms. Foundation-funded project investigating the structural barriers low-wage workers face in gaining access to childcare in Los Angeles. As part of a team of researchers, garment workers, and advocates, I assisted with the development of a survey instrument and helped run workshops to train garment workers on community-based participatory research methods. I helped analyze the results of the more than 80 surveys gathered and, following feedback sessions with garment workers, synthesized the findings into a published report with policy recommendations. I then analyzed the survey process and circulations of the report by participating organizations independently, linking the experiences of garment workers to those of caregivers and to the histories of labor, immigrant rights, and feminist politics in the US.

With the support of the Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, I analyzed the interviews, video clips, field notes, documents, and social media data into a partial accounting of the lives of Mexican, Central American, and African-American family childcare providers, their activism, and their everyday intimate practices caring for mostly black and Latinx children. My analytical interventions and frameworks represent an interdisciplinary mix of anthropology, sociology, history, and American Studies and draw from feminist, ethnic studies, immigration, childhood, labor, and queer scholarly traditions. I strove to maintain a feminist anthropological focus on the how representations of the "home" and the "family" are connected to shifting national projects and global market relations. Anthropologists of North America are quick to point out how the politics of the home are the staging grounds for conflict outside the home and abroad. In examining these dynamics, di Leonardo's (1991, 2013) work to elucidate a "culture and political economy" framework and Shankar and Cavanaugh's (2012) "language materiality" ensured that questions of material life remained at the center of how I was collecting and interpreting data.

It was important to interpret these experiences working with Local 99 and garment worker-parents vis-à-vis the current historical moment: at the tail end of the Great Recession and the second term of the Obama presidency. Obama's mixed-race parentage led mainstream and new-right academics to celebrate a post-racial America (cf. Ledwidge, Verney, and Parmar 2013). In response, many scholars and organizers alike sought to debunk the myth of a post-racial society by highlighting the persistence of inequalities tied to racialization and gender formation (Ibid.) During my dissertation fieldwork, media attention to the supposed increase in the migration of Central American children, noted above, brought the construction and maintenance of hierarchies of difference and questions of citizenship to the center. A record number of forced removals of immigrants (i.e., deportations) led top activists to label Obama, the son of a Kenyan immigrant, the “Deporter in Chief” (Chishti et al. 2016). Obama, of course, inherited a robust immigration enforcement regime from President Bill Clinton’s 1996 immigration reforms and George W. Bush’s post-September 11 restrictions (Chavez 2013). As providers drew the links among the prison industrial complex and early intervention, the Black Lives Matter movement ignited a more pointed discourse than ever before on the topic of mass incarceration, and Californians passed Proposition 47 to reduce mandatory minimum sentences, one of the first state ballot initiatives to begin to scale back the long road of punitive justice (Pastor 2018; Taylor 2016).

The effects of the Great Recession, both in terms of austerity politics and the continued effects of the foreclosure crisis, also loomed heavily. Throughout the dissertation, I tie in archival research to recuperate the political and economic histories exposing how and why austerity and foreclosure hit the communities where providers lived particularly hard. I trace how contemporary political-economic dislocations shaped both the broader project of early education as intervention and providers’ participation in and the daily work of family childcare.

Providers’ practices and motivations to enact particular kinds of early interventions brought to light the limits of reducing their choices to an economic determinism, and their engagement with a multiplicity of state agencies (including through the union) emphasized the need to avoid reifying the state as a unitary power with unassailable control over racial and gender formations and the terms of citizenship. Instead, providers' accounts of their own desires, practices, and affective relationships suggested new directions for theory and empirical knowledge—emplacing the intimate as an active staging ground for collective identifications and politics, negotiated among the destructive extent, slippages, and contradictions of an actually-lived neoliberal governmentality and capitalist accumulation in the Southwestern United States.

Material Intimacies, Affective Infrastructures

Examining the conjuncture of welfare, immigration, and education upon the lives of the youngest, most marginalized citizen-subjects—particularly from the vantage point of providers—exposes a particular set of contradictions, wherein the interpersonal and intimate nature of care is being managed through seemingly distant state institutions and an even more remote set of market forces. At the most surface level, the sheer fact that the state facilitates and regulates the intimate relationships among parents, providers, and children encapsulate an infinite amount of problematic tensions. Providers take on great risk by opening up their homes to the general public and must comply with health, safety, fire, and first aid regulations, as well as maintain expensive business and home insurance plans. As a public business, they are subject to Civil Rights anti-discrimination laws (Title VI), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and occupational safety regulations, not to mention a host of particular regulations related to their care practices. In other words, providers bear all of the responsibilities and limitations of US public entities while being monitored by multiple agencies *and* still having to function as independent, under-resourced small businesses in a supposedly private space (the home). Even further, providers are charged with understanding and communicating how to remunerate their intimate work in a context where their subsidies are defined by the welfare-to-work apparatus and within a labor market which has devalued women of color's and migrant women's care labor across generations (cf. Collins and Mayer 2010; Glenn 2010).

Although the concept of intimacy is value-laden and has multiple meanings, Nicole Constable effectively summarizes it as "relationships that are—or give the impression of being physical, and/or emotionally close, personal and sexually intimate…caring and loving." (2009: 50) Intimacy in the vernacular is fettered with notions of the private, the embodied, and occurring on the local and micro-levels of life (Wilson 2016). Indeed, prevalent understandings of modernization largely rely on intimacy as a convenient way for demarcating among the private and the public and the local and the global (Wilson 2016). Vivian Zelizer summarizes the twin concepts, bifurcating the market and the intimate as "separate spheres and hostile worlds" (2007: 1060). Scholarship on affect and affective labor has challenged such demarcations, capturing the global commodification of intimacy and the growth of different forms of service work intended to "invoke feelings in others," including "entitlement, superiority, relief, affirmations, [and] pleasure" (Parreñas, Thai, and Silvey 2016: 3). The term "economies of affect" has been proposed to capture these processes as part of broader market constructions and to understand how subject positions shift in relation to neoliberal sensibilities (Richards and Rudnyckyj 2009).

Discussions of the economies of intimacy (and particularly care) in scholarship—and to some extent, as I will outline, among some parents who place children in care or among providers themselves—often suggest that the external, modern, Western, and capitalist state and/or market forces impose themselves onto a presumably authentic, local, and intimate life (Boris and Parrenas 2010; Constable 2009). Feminist and queer studies have been particularly critical in re-examining intimacy as less a fixed sphere and more an analytical device and a domain of power, a construct that allows for the distribution of unequal resources across differentially valued relations (Constable 2009). I share Ara Wilson's desire to resist forms of knowledge that, in reference to the intimate, rationalize global inequality, particularly through the ideological reification of the family, sexuality, and community (2016).

Ara Wilson suggests we can expand feminist and queer studies' analytics of intimacy by building off the infrastructural turn in ethnographic scholarship, which looks at infrastructure through the "capacious meaning of *what something requires to function*s" (2016: 249, emphasis in original). This literature utilizes ethnography to examine assemblages and systems—such as water, public transportation, financial services, or the internet—that form the material underpinnings of modern life and often (though certainly not always) only become noticeable when they break down or when they become sites for struggle over material resources and access (Anand 2017; Elyachar 2016; Robbins 2014; Star 1999). Of particular relevance to childcare infrastructures, feminist scholar and progenitor of ethnographies of infrastructure Susan Leigh Star notes that infrastructures are often built onto an existing "base," have certain internal conventions and dominant communities of practice, are produced through myriad forms of invisible labor, and function as an "embodiment" of a set of standards (1999). In studying monetary and other less-than-"hard" systems, scholars like Julia Elyachar have helped advance studies of infrastructure in ways that do not always "privilege the technological" (Larkin 2013:

339; Elyachar 2010, 2012). I hope to further this approach by focusing on childcare and early education. They are systems which are not as obviously technoscientific as, say, fiber optic cables, but which are nevertheless critical to the functioning and reproduction of society—and are technologies of power and knowledge in their own right. This infrastructure, as I explore it, brings together care providers, state subcontracting agencies, state inspectors, childcare experts, policymakers, parents, children, and most recently service sector laborers, and it is enacted in homes, workplaces where care is offered, childcare centers, preschools, universities, state buildings, and more. In this dissertation, I focus on family childcare, which represents the vast majority of licensed early care provision, but there are of course other interlocking systems of early education– like daycares, private preschools, and non-licensed home-based kin care (Child Care Aware 2017). Given that family childcare providers also receive the bulk of childcare subsidies via workfare, honing in on family childcare providers also draws attention to the significance of shifting welfare and education institutions in the US.

Wilson's analysis underscores the fact that intimate relations function through the complex ways in which "capitalism, materiality, and people" come together (elucidated in infrastructural studies) while taking seriously questions of affective life, norms, and bodily relations in the production of infrastructures (2016: 253). I find Wilson's constructionist attention to the infrastructure of intimacy a fruitful route to "empirically tracing the circuits of power, norms, and agency [and in this case, agencies] realized" in the ways familial relations and intimacy are commercialized and subsumed under the aegis of the workfare state (*Ibid.*). Bridging the scholarships on intimacy and infrastructure helps avoid the traps of Whig histories, reifications of the state, static notions of identity, and especially the reduction of material life to discourse—without neglecting race, gender, sexuality, and other attendant hierarchies of difference that define capitalist life. Early childhood is an ideal site to further illuminate the linkages among the intimate and the infrastructural, while also advancing studies of the latter through further ethnographic insight into systems driven by human capital.

As anthropologist Brian Larkin attests, how an infrastructure is ultimately defined—what is left out and what is considered a part of such systems—is charged with "political and ethical commitments" (2013: 328). The functioning of infrastructure implicates much of the same norms feminist and queer scholars attempt to excavate when they study intimacy—namely the invisible, taken-for-granted ideologies affecting embodied and relational life in the US, such as racism, gender binaries, modernity, colonialism, and citizenship (Anand 2017; Constable 2009; Elyachar 2010). Both infrastructure and intimacy work best when they go unnoticed. The often taken-for-granted ideological stakes in intimacy and infrastructure alike are material, political, and economic; when brought to the surface, conflicts, questions, and disagreements regarding both phenomena expose ideological divides among socialist, social welfare, and neoliberal programs. The functioning and maintenance of infrastructure and intimacy are inseparable, in other words, from the ideologies that determine how we define and demarcate these assemblages. Chief among these ideologies in the context of the contemporary US is neoliberalism – an ethical and political stance that proffers subsuming all public and private activity under market logics, privatizing state services, and removing all barriers to market actors will lead to "optimal social ends" (Harvey 2009, di Leonardo 2008: 5, Brown 2015).

Questions of who is allowed to utilize infrastructure and how it is enacted help bring to light the ideological and political stakes of technoscientific systems meant to address social needs (like early childhood education). Infrastructure, when surfaced, also becomes a space for making claims to the right to citizenship itself under varying regimes, as much as for demarcating national and community boundaries (Amin 2014; Anand 2017; Dent 2017; Von Schnitzer 2016). Infrastructures often mark the differential power of people and even border places, but they also index humankind's relationship to nature, to non-human actors, and to time/space (Carse 2012; Kimura 2011; Star 2010). The case of early education—and the right to such services—is likewise shaped by who is deemed a citizen, as I discuss in Chapter 1. But it is also critical to address who *enacts* such infrastructure—in other words, whose labor makes infrastructure possible—and how their positions as subject-citizens relate to their work.

At stake in the rights to and the functioning of early childcare as a neoliberal infrastructure are ideological constructions of childhood, family, race, gender, and the modern liberal nation-state, which are detailed throughout this dissertation. Welfare-to-work legislation, which emerged in the 1980s in Los Angeles and was cemented federally in the mid-1990s, underwrites the social material and symbolic relations among welfare-recipient parents, their children, and their caregivers. In Chapter 1, I trace the genealogies of the current conceptions of early intervention to the Progressive Era, elucidating the ways in which racialized public health paradigms and gendered ideologies privileging biological motherhood dominate state-funded childcare. Tying in the overlapping histories of union and welfare activism, I note how social movements have been critical to reinterpreting the varying ideologies defining the operation of state institutions – and with it the terms of citizenship and belonging. In other words, I capture the ways in which infrastructures of intimacy are "embedded" in dense social relations and histories and erected upon this prior base (Star 1999; Larkin 2013).

Looking at providers' engagement with the intimate infrastructure of early education brings social reproduction to the center —offering the opportunity to further a feminist anthropological approach to the complexities and contradictions of neoliberal governmentality, austerity, and economic change in the US. Charged with social reproduction in a context of biopolitical, yet still punitive governance and visceral precarity, providers provide a critical theoretical corrective to our knowledge of the relationships among the state, the market, and the domestic sphere—as well as highlighting the political and material implications of the boundaries between these constructs.

As Lauren Berlant notes, the political and public significance of intimacy has been occluded in twentieth-century liberalism through efforts to enshrine normative forms of white and heterosexual domestic intimacy as separate from the public (1997, 2005; Berlant and Warner 1998). This ideological opposition privileges biological motherhood while eliding the historical and contemporary commodification of care. US feminist movements and scholars have worked hard to brings claims regarding social reproduction to the public sphere, and as Brown notes, "women's struggles for social, political, and economic freedom in the United States" have at times centered on making claims on the state to intervene in and challenge inequality in the realm of domesticity and the "family" itself (1992: 7). Bhattacharjee (1998) suggests there are limits to strategies to bring private concerns to the state, as the public is a racialized and nationalized space, which impedes differently-racialized groups from making certain claims for state intervention. This is particularly relevant to the case of providers, predominantly black and Latinx and coming from mixed-status households. Processes of racialization, while often elided in studies of infrastructure, are inseparable from the development of welfare and educational institutions in the US –in fact these institutions have done much work to classify racialized bodies and determine which are worthy of services and access.

Even so, providers do align with the trajectory in US feminist movements to make demands upon state institutions and in the public sphere: the broader project to alter inequalities through a collective contract with the state squarely seeks to regulate the private through the public. They draw from feminist-movement trajectories noted in Chapter 1, including women-led union movements and black and more recently migrant women's welfare activism, that have made claims to state services on the basis of their status as mothers, workers and citizens. But their willingness to make claims on the state, as I describe in Chapter 2, is also due in part to their own experiences with violence at the hands of state institutions and with gendered, racialized and economic inequality.

But I also encountered the ways in which providers view their daily practices of intimacy as central to political projects meant to shift inequalities and advance new visions of child development and well-being. In many ways, they counter the violence they experienced with new projects of care and what I term *intimate interventions*, detailed in Chapter 5. Providers and parents, in other words, take on social reproduction in the hidden, intimate spaces of their homes in ways that align with past second-wave feminist objectives to bring the state to bear on the domestic, while actively remaking the space of the home and intimacy in ways that are less visible, but nevertheless politically charged.

Complicating the boundaries of public/private and market/state/household are questions regarding the role of childhood development experts and knowledge producers, who inform how the state approaches care, how kin decide upon what is appropriate in the home, and what is valorized by economic and corporate actors. As Nikolas Rose notes, one must move beyond locating technoscientific experts as serving the abstracted state—instead one must recognize that these experts "shape and transform the objects, techniques, and ends of power" (1990: xxii; 1999). In Chapter 3, I document how the presence and power of experts and their analytical rubrics, assessments, and instruments of measurement play critically into the ways in which the state institutions monitor and discipline workers, with significant implications for providers' survival in a precarious market. In Chapter 4, I explore how the production and market for toys and other material objects are also shaped by expert conceptions of appropriate care shaped by (il)liberal notions of subjectivity and neoliberal "circuits of capital" in which corporations market diversity stripped of an understanding of inequality (Shankar 2015). These processes highlight the importance of understanding what we know about the intimate in this particular historical juncture—including how particular forms of knowledge of human bodies and development are codified, categorized, and assigned particular value and/or purchase.

Experts, in other words, blur the lines between the public and the private, but they also hold considerable power across these spheres to define the functioning of state and markets at the household level. Providers adjust to, utilize, or at times challenge these forms of expertise which circulate through this infrastructure. In Chapter 4, I document how providers take up prescribed notions of care to gain advantage in precarious market. But I also highlight in Chapter 5 the ways in which providers enact new forms of knowledge from the vantage point of their own intimate experiences with children and families that are the target of early intervention.

As a whole, providers' struggles for recognition and rights offer the opportunity to better understand how the lines among public and private and the household/market/state are demarcated—and how such boundaries reveal ethical, political-economic, and technoscientific implications. The very architecture of the neoliberal workfare state has pushed the burden of public functions into private spaces, and providers are working within this context to bring public rights to bear on their everyday practices. They must balance how the state, market forces, experts, parents, and others continually reframe the meanings and expectations of child-rearing and subject-making. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (2012) point to the importance of elucidating the dynamism of legal and discursive divides between public and private—and how the oppositions and distinctions among the market and the state are in fact nested (or even "fractal") and historically situated. If the opposition separating public and private has the "ideological effect of hiding the linkages between these two categories of practices, activities, and institutional organization," then questions of how welfare and educational institutions shape the lives of the youngest children in the nation gives us the opportunity to unpack the layers and interconnections by which political-economic life is defined and lived (Gal and Kligman 2012: 62). Looking to childcare brings the household to the center of debate as a locus of state and market power in the neoliberal US.

Throughout this dissertation, I pay attention to material processes and practices but also to the critical dimension of language, drawing from linguistic anthropology. Indexicality describes how, beyond referential and descriptive talk of objects, language can "function to point indirectly to complex notions" and "entire social systems of meaning" (Shankar 2006: 297; Cavanaugh 2004; Silverstein 2002). As I explore in Chapter 4, everyday material objects in childcare homes – from repurposed pill containers to Disney dolls – and the talk about them speaks the divides among public/private, but also the conceptualization of childhood, race, gender, and other significant constructions that shape state-provisioned early education. Talk and other mediated signifiers are also assigned material and political value – much in the ways the #gapbusters photos of children circulated to build political support (cf. Cavanaugh and Shankar 2012). In making sense of the ways in which the early education infrastructure is lived, it is critical to grasp how it is talked about – and how talk of the populations that are targeted and whose labor makes this system possible – circulates through this infrastructure.

Locating the contradictions and complexities of commodified and state-managed intimacy within the circuits of early childhood infrastructure—linking welfare, education, and immigration institutions—makes the material implications of talk regarding public/private and market/state/domestic constructions even more clear. An infrastructural lens allows us to grasp how the boundaries among these constructs are tangled with the ways in which citizenship is enacted via state-market-household relations; is enacted and embodied in everyday relations; and, as scholars of intimacy remind us, is also stratified along the lines of race, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and other hierarchies of difference.

Chapter 1: Raising the Infrastructure of Intervention

In the winter of 2013, the Service Employees International Union local union president, Eddie Reed, died unexpectedly while in office. His funeral took place in the auditorium of Miguel Contreras High School, named for the Latino labor leader who helmed the LA County Federation of Labor in the mid-1990s and who helped press for inclusion of immigrant workers into the leadership of the regional labor movement (Frank and Wong 2004). The room was packed with family, friends and fellow union members and community activists, including many child care providers.

Reed's life and legacy mark not only a major shift in Local 99's history, and also the history of labor and social movements in the US. Reed represented the grassroots of the union: he was born on September 15, 1958 in Louisville, Kentucky and moved to California during the second great black migration. He served as a bus driver for the LAUSD school district for more than thirty years and moved up the union leadership from among Local 99's "rank and file" membership composed of classroom assistants, and food service, maintenance and education para-professional staff. He took over the headship of Local 99 in 2009 after the former president was charged with embezzlement during a city council race, prompting a takeover by the national union body and a high-stakes public discussion about the entwining of unions and electoral politics in Los Angeles (Matthews 2006; McGreevy 2006).

As Local 99 president during the Great Recession he worked to push for summer unemployment eligibility –something offered to teachers and administration - for the classified staff at LAUSD (SEIU Local 99 2013). Under his leadership, the union rallied members, parents and community organizations to maintain the breakfast in the classroom program that the school board considered cutting to meet budget gaps in 2013, following the economic downturn (Castellanos 2013). Most significantly for early childhood education, he backed the local union efforts to integrate family childcare as a unit within the ranks of classified employees of LAUSD. At time of his passing, the Board surrounding Eddie was majority black and Latinx, reflecting not only the public sector workforce but also a labor movement that had since the 1990s began to link the struggles of black and (often-Latinx) immigrant public employees and service workers.

Eddie Reed's life represents the ways in which labor movements have changed Los Angeles' political landscape – often by directly addressing the functioning of welfare, education and other state institutions. Exemplified by Reed and other activists like Miguel Contreras, migrant workers - both internal black migrants and Latinx and Asian transnational migrants - have been at the center of movements making claims to the rights to state services and protections at the urban level, even helping elect or becoming commission members, councilmembers, mayors and county supervisors.[2] Labor and community organizations' power has reverberated to the state level, encapsulated in immigrant rights and labor leader Kevin de Leon's election to State Senate President Pro Tempore in 2014 (Pastor 2018). De Leon was a chief sponsor of SB 548 and, at the time of writing, was running for US Senator against liberal Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein, who has held the position since 1992.

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[2] Of course, such power is not without its pitfalls as demonstrated by the ouster of former Local 99 president in a corruption case implicating labor, city council and mayoral officials together (Matthews 2007).

But as the challenges with passing childcare unionization legislation outlined in the Introduction demonstrate, even with the growing influence of union movements, providers, parents and organizers have encountered significant roadblocks to shifting the terms and functioning of the workfare and education system. In providers' daily work and engagement with the early education infrastructure, significant political questions regarding economic inequality, institutional rigidities and entrenched hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality arise.

Making sense of the complex ways welfare and educational institutions affect the lives of the youngest subject-citizens and those who care for them, it's important to first map their institutional genealogies and uncover the material and ideological underpinnings that shape contemporary practice. In what follows, I look to both the foundations of the current childcare system and why and how a union like Local 99 found itself at the forefront of the efforts to remake this infrastructure from the grassroots in Los Angeles.

Framing the Genealogies of Early Intervention

Scholars of infrastructure point to the ways in which state and private institutions are erected upon existing environmental, material and power arrangements that affect their current functioning and how they are understood (Star 1999; Larkin 2013; Chun 2008). If infrastructure can be crudely seen as what lies beneath, then there are also other systems and objects layered under their present iteration. As Collier demonstrates in his analysis of post-Soviet planning, through tracing the historical development of particular infrastructures we can understand the ways in which certain conceptualizations and ideologies materialize, or as Larkin puts it, become "operationalized" (Collier 2011; Larkin 2013).

When looking at welfare and educational institutions that care for infants and toddlers, I suggest that racialized and gendered public health regimes and punitive child welfare institutions have shaped the ways early intervention efforts operate in contemporary Los Angeles. Neoliberal experts and economists have drawn upon a long-standing emphasis in local and state-level policy on infants-as-future producers, codifying this discourse in a cost-benefit analysis that drives current policymaking. Social movements directly and indirectly participate in these processes, helping shape what kinds of citizens and workers are valorized. "Movements" here includes right-wing elite activism to exclude, middle-class efforts to reform, and working-poor efforts to shape who recieves services, how services are delivered, and why they are delivered in the first place.

In these contestations, it becomes clear that participation and access to certain forms of infrastructure are both defined by who is deemed a citizen – but also come to define citizenship itself (Anand 2017; Von Schnitzler 2016). As Anand suggests, infrastructures are often shaped by discourses of scarcity (real or imaged) – and that citizen-residents must demand services in "proper" ways to be considered good citizens (2017). Of course, many residents – often poor or marginalized – are often policed in their actual use of services. These principles hold true in the case of early childchood bureacracies, which particularly in the neoliberal era are shaped by discourses of austerity and supposedly-tight budgets, and where racialized and gendered (usually black and migrant) bodies are scrutinized for "improperly" accessing the same services other residents utilize freely (Collins and Mayer 2010; Fraser & Gordon 1994; Morgen and Maskovsky 2003). Welfare rights movements, at the same time, have been integral to helping push the exclusionary models of welfare services and recasting the terms of citizenship. Labor union activism has also developed in such a way to address economic citizenship by turning questions of public health and safety as workplace issues 180 degrees. They have also brought to light the essential labor performed to maintain state and societal functioning. This shift is due in part in changes to Los Angeles' union movements, from a more "business union" approach to a social movement model, as well as their inclusion of racialized, immigrant workers.

By tracing the development of infrastructures of early education, to paraphrase Ashley Carse, I look to uncover the "active and inherently political process" by which such systems are "built, invested in, made functional, and managed" (2012:2). In so doing, we can see the ways in which "human values are inscribed" into a supposedly-neutral, technocratic project like early intervention (Ibid.). This opens the door to better understanding what is at stake in providers' unionization efforts and in their daily work to maintain their businesses and care for children in a time of significant economic uncertainty.

The Underpinnings of Infrastructure: The Public Health Paradigm

In California, family childcare homes are independent contractors to the state, which requires regulatory oversight outlined in Title 22 of the California Educational Code (EDC). Title 22 governs the everyday operation of family childcare homes, elder-care homes, group homes, and childcare centers as well. Title 22 regulates activities that range from personnel requirements, record keeping, and reporting to home alterations, staff ratios, and other day-to-day operations.

License Program Analysts hold significant power in the context of the welfare to work system. While not directly managing state employees like in a public health clinic or educational setting, the community care licensing division oversees privatized subcontracted state agents, and is the gatekeeper to their employment. According to California's Child Care Licensing Program's public website mission statement:

> The core mission of the Child Care Licensing Program is to ensure the health and safety of children in care. The Child Care Licensing Program strives to provide preventive, protective, and quality services to children in care by ensuring that licensed facilities meet established health and safety standards through monitoring facilities, providing technical assistance, and establishing partnerships with providers, parents, and the child care community (CDSS, n.d.).

The notion that it is the state's role to protect and care for child citizens is a relatively modern intervention in the U.S. (Martin 2011). It is well-documented that the concept of childhood as understood today was relatively unknown from the US colonial period to the early 20th century (Zelizer 1985). During the colonial period, roughly two-thirds of children under four did not survive, and the vast majority of children moved quickly from infant status to contributing economically to their households (McGowan 2010; Zelizer 1985). Although there was no welfare system, both orphans and children of paupers were treated alike, under rules mirroring the English poor laws throughout the late 18th and 19th centuries. Dependent children orphaned or otherwise wards of the state were sent to almshouses until they were indentured, usually by age eight. Social provision for dependent children in the first two centuries of history of the U.S. state, according to McGowan, could be characterized as “meager arrangement made on a reluctant and begrudging basis to maintain a minimal level of subsistence” (2010: 12). What programs existed were purported to instill a work ethic and promote a religious upbringing. Children were for the most part considered property, and the concept of children’s rights was nonexistent (Mason 1996).

Racial formations, though, stratified the child care/labor nexus: during the nineteenth century, the rise of the bourgeois class of family and the entrenchment of slavery furthered the construction of a separate “domestic” sphere, dependent on the labor of women and black slaves and servants who replaced the indentured services of children for a growing number of families (Matthews 1987). Upper class families began to emphasize the developmental and educational needs of their children, a notion that trickled down to working class (Anglo) citizens as well. In the early 19th century, a short-lived, privately-managed “infant schools” movement attempted to supplement public education by providing aristocratic children a “head start” towards future endeavors, and in another context reforming the moral behaviors of the working poor (Cahan 1989). However, infant schools dissolved as researchers claimed children needed less mental stimulation at that age (interestingly similar to today’s free play movements that call for maximizing unstructured play time), and moral crusaders pushed a “domestic ethic” of child-rearing with an emphasis on socialization in the home (Ibid.; Wood 2014). The opposition among the domestic/home and the private/market in conceptualizing childcare – one in which the former has been privileged as the site of appropriate caregiving - has been a persistent theme and tension into the present.

The abolition of slavery and the waves of mass migration during the late 19th century signaled transforming racialized arrangements in the U.S., but also shaped modern perceptions of children and their relationships to the state. White children's labor more broadly became a flashpoint in post-abolition labor advocacy. Black children's labor, though, did not elicit the same protest among white reformers, nor did these laws tangibly affect the lives of black children (Hindman 2002; Lleras-Muney 2002). The large-scale waves of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants during this period also contributed to the changing racial and religious compositions of poor children, increasingly of Catholic and Jewish ancestry, and to the proliferation of new charitable institutions within these communities (Butler 2016). The predecessors of today's daycare and family childcare system emerged most visibly in black communities, which heavily invested in what came to be known as day nurseries supported by predominantly-black colleges and university institutions (Cahan 1989; Lerner 1974).

During the first half of the 19th century, state interventions in children's lives were predicated on the idea that dependent children posed an immediate and future threat to the social order. During the latter half of the century, from the Settlement House movements and middle-class reformers of the Progressive era led the charge for the creation of minimal basic standards for children that would be enforced through newly created public oversight agencies (Popkewitz 2012). The growth of institutions like day nurseries, orphanages, and asylums, supported by philanthropic and religious bodies, soon came under greater public scrutiny. Philanthropic institutions, some run by women, began to invest in "day nurseries," meant to replace almshouses or workhouses and to house women workers' children (Durst 2005; Brown 1960).

Local practices varied to some degree: in some settings, working women parents did find space to assert their own aspirations and providers did offer more educationally-focused services (Durst 2005) But, overwhelmingly, day nurseries were more focused on welfare (i.e. basic protection) than on early education and on keeping poor families intact (Cahan 1989; Durst 2005).

As day nurseries proliferated more prominently in Anglo and immigrant communities, they came to the center of a Progressive-era debate regarding the nature of childhood and the limits of providing child care to allow women to work (Koven & Michel 1990; Michel 1993). Reformers like Jane Addams questioned whether women workers were being pushed to the limit, and pointed out that nurseries did little to alleviate the fact that women were working long hours for low wages. Reformers wondered if, as a result, nurseries were encouraging “indolence” among men or undermining the domestic sphere as the primary place of childrearing (Cahan 1989; Koven & Michel 1990; Michel 1993). They responded by ushering in some of the first state-level mothers’ pensions. But notions of child vulnerability and of protecting “future producers” dominated among progressive reformers, which meant greater focus on securing child labor reforms, the social work caseworker system, and child protection and early education in nurseries, versus empowering women as workers (Cahan 1989).

At the turn of the century, policymakers influenced by the Progressive shift in government practices began to impose strong regulatory systems including licensing, monitoring, and accountability to protect (mostly white) children through local and state-level institutions. The California Board of Charities and Corrections — the foundation of the CCLD — emerged out of the growing bureaucratization, professionalization, and expanded state-level intervention around the turn of the 20th century (Putnam 1966). The board sought to improve child welfare through overseeing orphan asylums and day nurseries, implementing compulsory school attendance, reducing juvenile crime, and enforcing child labor laws.

Public health paradigms – what Foucault and Rose term population-level interventions - strongly defined the conceptualization of bureaucracy in the Progressive Era (Foucault 2007; Rose 1991, 1999). These conceptualizations bore strong weight in Los Angeles's growth and development: From its earliest years in the late 19th century, public health officials in Los Angeles took on a "booster" role in promoting the city as a "salubrious" location for rest and health — for Northeastern and Midwestern white settler-led labor movements seeking to displace Chinese and Mexican workers and businesses, the California Board of Charities and Corrections targeted Chinatown and Mexican neighborhoods with "sanitary" campaigns (Ibid; Shah 2001, 2011). Public health became a primary axis in the social construction of difference in Los Angeles, promoting notions of white supremacy and Anglo destiny in the colonization of the West. With the growing centrality of eugenics, the board was notably charged with enforcing the 1909 sterilization laws that targeted not only the "feeble minded" but later on poor whites and Mexican, African American, and Native American women (Molina 2006; Stern 2005). Public health officials took key leadership roles in local and state branches of the Board of Charities and Corrections, charged with investigating childcare facilities, hospitals, and even private homes to determine the fitness of care. In their rhetoric, the board targeted poor, most-often immigrant youth and orphans. Predicated on finding health dangers lurking within improperly-maintained (or underfunded) facilities, officials used their access to schools to criminalize children through truancy laws and to stigmatize poor or orphaned children as a threat to moral order and public health (Wild 2002). The antecedent of CCLD, in other words, was strongly influenced by a racialized lens treating migrant and youth of color, but also their private caretakers, as suspect, and risks to the population.

Nationally, the Social Security Act of 1935 proved a watershed in public services, establishing Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and the first attempts to coordinate state and federal child welfare services. AFDC had its roots in the mother's pension system, which buttressed the notion of a separate domestic sphere and enshrined maternal care (Cahan 1989).[3] Title V of the Social Security Act laid out obligations for funding for a national health policy that included "maternal and child health services" as well as services for children with disabilities and child welfare services (Meisels and Shonokoff 2000: 10). The latter focused on children "dependent" upon the state and especially those in poor rural areas where charitable services rarely reached (Ibid.).

Getting a Head Start on Intervention

But universal public childcare remained far from the public imaginary until the Second World War, when states experimented with infant care and preschools run directly by state employees.[4] When women entered war-related industries during World War II, the emergency situation prompted the Lanham Act of 1940, which authorized the first and only federally-funded child care program for working mothers regardless of income, serving approximately 600,000 children at 3,100 centers across the country at its height (Fousekis 2011). While the Lanham Act was not reauthorized after the war, activist working mothers and center workers came together and pushed to convert war-time centers into a permanent program in California lasting into the 1960s. However, the new state-based program was more restrictive, with income requirements and increased parent fees. The post-war child care programs introduced "means testing," preventing middle class women from accessing these services, linking public child care programs to welfare programs geared to poor or single women (Stoltzfus 2003). In the postwar era, policymakers stripped down state services providing early childcare, and during the War on Poverty, preschools as well as private institutions like group homes and foster programs received sparse funding (Fousekis 2011).

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[3] The New Deal also extended these services to black children who were previously (often explicitly) excluded from the child welfare system prior to the passage of the Social Security Act, and received services only if they were marked as "delinquent" and entered the juvenile court system. Although the New Deal shifted this dramatically, black families continued to receive inferior services (McGowan 2005).

Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and War on Poverty programs provided a major boost to child care with the "Head Start" program. As researcher Abby Cohen notes, Head Start was "premised on the notion that early childhood education could have a substantial impact on poor children's later success" and provided a "comprehensive child development program" that linked learning, health, social service and parent involvement (2011).The Head Start program's emphasis on child development led to its success, but the program is limited in scope, only serving families below the federal poverty level, and with a limited budget.

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[4] In the 1940s, California created the most robust public childcare program in the US through the federal Lanham Act (Fousekis 2011). The legislation provided federal funds to operate public childcare centers for the children of women recruited to work in defense industry.

In 1971, US Senator Walter Mondale proposed a multi-million dollar federally-funded daycare system through the bipartisan Comprehensive Child Care Act. The Act was meant to unify these diverse programs and make it easier for single parents to work -- but it was vetoed by President Richard Nixon, whose allies utilized culture war rhetoric contrasting the “dangers” of communal child rearing to a “family-centered” approach (Fousekis 2011) A decade later, President Ronald Reagan accelerated the dismantling of social programs, privatizing the public sector and deploying race-based rhetoric, such as the image of the Welfare Queen, to further stigmatize welfare and social service recipients (cf. di Leonardo 2008).

The War on Poverty did contribute to a burgeoning child development field by drawing attention to the “formative” first years of life as a bounded period of rapid development and marked vulnerability (Fuller 2008). While questioning the idea of predetermined trajectories into poverty, advocates of the War emphasized expert intervention into this fixed period of life (Ibid.). New federal “Head Start” programs attempted to “catch up” poor children on basic skills — that ostensibly they had failed to receive at home — through early education in 8-week sessions the summer before entering elementary school (McGowan 2005). In the 1970s, psychological and education researchers began to conduct longitudinal studies to see where and how early intervention affected children’s grade school outcomes, codifying the Head Start concept of “early intervention” (e.g. Ramey and Cambpell 1991). The life course was increasingly viewed as a zero-sum, wherein one had to intervene early, or children would be destined to be poor, delinquent, or otherwise unproductive.

Most other state-based child services, like foster care, continued to emphasize stemming juvenile "delinquency," disproportionately targeting black and brown youth. Domestic and parental authority remained an ideal, one that could be supplanted by state intervention to protect vulnerable and otherwise dangerous children (Cahan 1989).

For nearly a century, the Board of Charities and Corrections remained a central anchor in state-provided infant and child services in California. In 1973, California passed the Community Care Facilities Act, instituting new state scrutiny of community care facilities in charge of dependent children or adults who require out-patient medical services and creating a licensing program for non-medical, out-of-home care facilities (CDSS, n.d.). The shifting mission within the existing state welfare bureaucracy coincided with the growing popularity of two movements: 1) the deinstitutionalization of mental and physical health services, and 2) the deregulation and privatization of state agencies, backed by emergent neoliberal advocates and policymakers (Brown 2015; Goode & Maskovsky 2001; Harvey 2009; Rapp & Ginsburg 2001). Community care facilities, a more social model situated in residential neighborhoods, emerged as an alternative to institutionalized settings. In 1978, this distinction was reified with the establishment of the Community Care Licensing Department (CCLD), which followed the rest of the Board of Charities into the newly established Department of Human and Social Services (DHSS) (CCLD, n.d). Thus, through deinstitutionalization, privatization, and the changing focus of state-run institutions from providing public services to licensing and monitoring private ones, the groundwork for the rise of family child care homes was laid.

However, public funds allocated to child care did not disappear completely. Childcare subsidies, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as part of "welfare to work" programs, reflect in some ways a shift back to the ethos of the day nurseries of the late 19th century (McGowan 2005). Childcare block grants to home-based providers facilitated women's low-wage labor, while offering minimally-funded services. Contradictorily, none of these services were meant to supplant biological parental authority, but much as Jane Addams complained in the late 19th century, policymakers expected mothers to simultaneously succeed as primary caregivers, workers, and home-makers.

The welfare-to-work revolution drew from efforts to "open the market of child care service", as well as a long-term conservative elite effort to dismantle welfare (Collins and Mayer 2010). Market logics are also reflected in the ways in which experts and policymakers discussed early intervention as a project. In the 1990s and 2000s, a flurry of new research demonstrated the importance of early education to later academic and economic achievement (Heckman 2013; Karoly et al. 2006; Osgood 2004). Diverging from War on Poverty and Head Start rhetoric, policymakers and researchers began to speak of the choice to intervene as one born of a rational "cost-benefits" calculus (Karoly and Laveux 1998; Heckman 2013). In other words, investment in childcare needed to be considered as a means to save costs to the state down the road, in terms of both not having to incarcerate but also in terms of not having to provide welfare services for unproductive citizens.

The newer research also centered on poor parents themselves and their failure to provide particular kinds of support for children. Studies have particularly quantified linguistic development as an index of early learning, measuring the number of (English) words used by parents and other (Hurtado et al. 2008; Marchmand and Fernald 2008; Skibbe et al. 2008). Researchers have also focused on parents' cultural beliefs and the home environment as "predictors" of children's later success, which while cast in a neutral technocratic light, echo in some ways liberal "culture of poverty" arguments from the 1960s, which blamed Latinx and black families for their poverty (Davis-Kean 2005; Farver et al. 2008; cf. di Leonardo 1998).

More recently, policymakers at the federal level have translated this impetus to intervene with new inversions of funds to supplement welfare-to-work early education programs – but contingent on certain measures of success. President Barack Obama's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), a federally-funded pilot program to reach low-income and English learners with quality preschool for children ages 3 to 5, awarded California $75 million from January 2012 to December 2015[5]. The plan is focused on quality care and child development as well as kindergarten readiness and closing educational achievement gaps. But it also reflected a neoliberal ethos whereby jurisdictions must compete for federal grants by demonstrating their "measurable results." They mirror the "No Child Left Behind" K-12 educational policies of the early 2000s that made federal school resources dependent on achieving test scores, and in fact punished schools that did not meet these standards by stripping them of resources (Lipman 2004, 2008).

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[5] LA Universal Preschool. "Los Angeles Universal Preschool's Implementation of Race to the Top –Early Learning Challenge (RTT-EL)." Los Angeles: LAUP. 2013.

Contesting Welfare, Constructing Citizenship

Much in the way Progressive advocates shaped the system of child protection and welfare, the New Deal and Great Society shifts towards a national welfare mechanism cannot be understood without attention to the social movements that shaped these policies and politics. Piven and Cloward note that the major breakthroughs in welfare activism – the Social Security Act of 1935 and War on Poverty policies like AFDC and Head Start – came at key junctures of economic crises and wider activist mobilizations by (mostly-urban) poor populations (1979, 2012). New Deal labor activism during the Great Depression and civil rights activism during the 1960s urban "crises" brought to public view the perspective of the poorest citizen-subjects, in the former putting worker's identities at the center, and the latter making clear the disproptionate racialized effects of poverty (Ibid.). Grassroots protest movements led by workers and the poor, Piven and Cloward contended, help explain why there is *any* welfare state in the US, which is far different from Europe, where formal channels for labor parties and political enfranchisement contributed to the welfare state formation (2012).

Reese adds that the capacity of poor people's movements to enact change in the Depression and postwar era hinged upon multi-racial, cross-sectoral alliances built by organizers (2011). Scholarship on the workfare era likewise echoes the importance of alliances and solidarities in shaping US welfare politics (Goode and Maskovsky 2001; Kornbluh 2007). Of course, as Goode's analysis of Philadelphia housing organizing also demonstrates, building cross-racial solidarities is no easy feat, fraught with tensions regarding which oppositions are constructed (e.g. white vs. non-white), how class and political-economic commonalities are discussed, and what oppositions and tensions are foregrounded or elided (2001). In other words, while alliances are important as an overarching strategy, they are always situated in particular collective identity formations and constructions of race and gender, rooted in place and time. Goode and Maskovsky note that activism during and after the 1990s welfare reform was "advanced through elaboration of political identities that reference multiple scales and multiple axes of difference" (2001: 21).

The movements challenging workfare in California, Reese documents, exemplify the potential of such solidarities: organizations working across the state did obtain the replacement of certain benefits eliminated at the federal level in the mid-1990s (2011). In particular, activists succesfully pressed the state government to launch programs like Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI), which provided social security and other benefits to elderly and disabled non-citizens (Ibid). Developing alliances among Asian and Latinx community and labor organizations, which had been cemented earlier in the decade in struggles against Proposition 187 (1994) and other nativist ballot initiatives, were critical to finding a means to recuperate welfare services for immigrants. Proposition 187 was fundamentally about the overlapping welfare and education roles of the state as much as it was about immigration. It was designed to cut access to public services – including education - for any undocumented immigrants (Jacobson 2008). As Pastor et al. note, organizing to halt Prop 187 drew upon broader multi-racial progressive community organizing that followed the 1992 uprising: located in South Central, Koreatown, and other neighborhoods at the center of the uprising, new coalitions attempted both to build bridges among immigrant and black communities and secure basic resources for communities that faced decades of disinvestment (Ibid.) In the wake of the 1992 uprising and Prop.187, new immigrant rights organizations coalesced and soon came to the defense of welfare rights for immigrants in particular. Organizers benefitted from an emerging class of Latino politicians – like future mayor Antonio Villaraigosa - who had entered local office through the support of changing labor unions (Reese 2011; Pastor et al. 2016).

To succeed, activists needed to recast citizenship to counter the narratives of nativist, anti-tax and revanchist suburban movements and policymakers. In Los Angeles, the efforts to halt immigrants from accessing public welfare brought together three overlapping threads of US ideologies – a national-level backlash to civil rights and feminist movements; statewide nativist movements targeting Latinx and Asian immigrants; and statewide local anti-tax, white suburban movements (Marchevsky and Theoharis 2006). Mike Davis describes the last catergory as Los Angeles' middle and upper class, white suburban "insurgents" who coalesced in support of Howard Jarvis' platform challenging property taxes for "redistributional" services and against school desegregation and bussing (2006). They in fact set the stage for the national Reagan revolt in passing Proposition 13 (1978), a massive property tax cap, and helped make Los Angeles the experimental ground for welfare-to-work long before it hit the national stage (Ibid; Pastor 2018).[6]

In both debates on Prop 187 and workfare, Howard Jarvis' tax reform organization and policymakers like former governor Pete Wilson cast Mexican residents (indexed in talk of "illegal immigrants" who "did not speak English") as not paying their "fair share" of taxes and as failing in their conformity to a US "work ethic" (Jacobson 2008). Welfare-to-work legislation represented the extension of the logic of Prop. 187, casting all non-citizens, regardless of status, as unproductive and undeserving of state assistance (Marchevsky and Theoharis 2006).

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[6] See Chapter 2 for more on the workfare experiments in Los Angeles and surrounding counties.

In response, organizers to mitigate workfare reforms pointed to examples of "hard-working" immigrant like Hmong populations, which had particular appeal given that many had served the US government during the Vietnam War (Reese 2011). Activists also drew attention to the effects on children, many of whom were pulled out of schools, and the effects on the US in the long term. Advocates and Democratic Party allies at the city and state level spoke of the "vulnerability" of children targeted by the law, and media narratives circulated quotes from children who asked not to be punished for the fact their parents "broke the law" (Ono and Sloop 2009: 94).[7] Liberal commentators spoke of the cruelty of a law that denied services of those who work had to clean, cook and provide labor key to the functioning of the city (Ibid.). In other words, immigrants' claims to state services and economic citizenship were staked upon both their productivity as workers, and their construction as vulnerable children.

Other movements to reform workfare likewise captured the ways in which the delivery of welfare and education services became contingent upon a version of economic citizenship that valorized the "productive" worker-subject position. In Los Angeles, organizers from the neighborhood organizing group ACORN launched a campaign in 1996 to counter workfare reforms in which campaigners conciously called themselves "GR Workers," indexing the ways in which they both had to depend on welfare and low-wage labor (Reese 2011). In the campaign, workers also engaged in protest actions that symbolically suggested their willingness to work – such as filling out job application documents and dropping them off en masse at state offices. The campaign resulted in a grievance process in which workfare workers could file complaints (and workers' compensation claims) about assignments to the state, as well as practices to prioritize these applicants for county hiring (Ibid.). Over the next decade, as direct organizing against welfare subsided, neighborhood organizations took up these job-creation demands and secured multiple community benefit agreements where developers would also agree to hire workfare applicants and other "transitional workers" (like the formerly-incarcerated) via unions and neighborhood groups (Parks and Warren 2009). As Gilbert points out, poor people's movements in the 1990s had moved significantly from the welfare activism of the 1960s and the ideal of a guaranteed income, focusing instead on the right to a living wage job (2013).

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[7] The debates on Proposition 187 represent some of the first iterations of a narrative reproduced in US media and policymaker narratives regarding child migration in the 2010s, particularly regarding the status and culpability of undocumented youth "DREAMers" versus Central American "unaccompanied" child-migrants (Canizales 2015; Carrasco and Seif 2014).

The Place of Labor

To some degree, the constructions of economic citizenship as contingent on hardwork and individualism are nothing new, representing a return to US Progressive era discourses regarding indolence and productivity (Katz 1986). And of course, the structuring of welfare to discourage poor citizens from seeking aid were only heightened by the expansion of neoliberal ideologies enshrined in the Reagan, Clinton and Bush Jr. administrations, fomenting an individualistic ethos through which all humans are imagined to be free capitalist agents, and "free" markets the most optimal form of social life (Brown 2015; Ong 2006). But this economic citizenship ideology is not unassailable or totalizing. And unions are key to guaranteeing the living wage jobs that are now the focus of welfare activism (Gilbert 2013). In Los Angeles, labor unions played a key role in reshaping the nature of the role of the worker-subject and in the material provision of welfare and educational services. Local labor organizing not only overturned notions of work but also took to task the public health ethos and institutions that defined Los Angeles' welfare state, and directed these institutions towards protecting workers. SEIU Local 99 is firmly embedded in this history, which helps explain its active role in organizing early education and other public sector educational workers.

In the late 1980s, Local 99's sister local, Local 399, organizing private-sector janitorial workers, had to confront the fact that building owners working with small, "flexible" subcontractors could easily switch to another company if one unionized (Glass 2016). Companies also began to hire more US-born Mexican and Mexican and Central American migrants to replace the once predominantly-black male workforce, in an attempt to curtail labor militancy (Milkman 2006). Throughout the 1980s, conservative lawkmakers and think tanks worked to chip away at collective bargaining rights, exemplified by the high-profile 1981 firing of air traffic control workers that kicked off the Reagan presidency (cf. Harvey 2009, McCartin 2006).

Dealing with the particularities of a disaggregated industry, SEIU's leadership erred in favor of broadening its scope to focus on building owners and cleaning companies together. They called upon the state to perform occupational health and safety inspections, and launched massive street demonstrations and actions (Glass 2016). To pressure the state to act, labor organizers developed new community alliances with faith-based organizations, non-profits and other advocacy groups, and enacted large-scale public direct actions and media strategies - a set of practices often referred to as "social movement unionism" (Fantasia and Voss 2004). As Rick Fantasia and Kim Voss document, emerging service union leadership pushed a significant departure from the "business unionism" model that made uneasy partnerships with corporations the central axis of private sector union activity from the 1950s to the 1980s (2004). Unions had become unwieldy, top-down bureaucracies- focused on servicing members and making contract gains through employer initiatives and "backroom deals" - and needed to address the "unorganized" in the evolving neoliberal, flexible economy (*Ibid.*: 97*;* Van Dyke et al 1997). But often left out of the story is the fact that the shift to "social movement unionism" or "community unionism" and the ways in which labor was now engaging directly with the state *and* employers simultaneously. This may seem counter intuitive in an era of deregulation, but existing labor and in fact occupational health organizations more rooted in Progressive and New Deal-era ideologies could still be leveraged against corporate "flexible" actors.

Contrary to the perceptions of employers regarding migrant worker docility (due in part to fear of deportation), SEIU's success with Justice for Janitors, as Ruth Milkman points out, was contingent on the fact many immigrant workers came from left and radical organizing backgrounds and histories of labor militancy in Central America and Mexico (2006). Leaders from immigrant communities took center stage in media and protests, using bilingual slogans and chants.Thus, labor organizers advanced a notion of citizenship that emphasized that working poor immigrants, regardless of immigration status and language, were deserving of rights to dignified and well-paid work. This construction placed the onus on the private and public sector alike to deliver adequate (and healthy) conditions, rather than articulating gradients of who was deserving of rights or casting immigrants as simply vulnerable.

Labor movements in Los Angeles also gave new, significant attention to electoral politics (which as the case of Local 99 demonstrates, can be a minefield). Unions mobilized immigrant communities – even when they are barred from voting –to influence local and state elected bodies (Pastor et al. 2016). In the last decade, as providers were organizing their efforts to collectively bargain with the state, local labor-community alliances, anchored heavily in immigrant communities, and pro-labor city and state politicians, achieved $15 minimum wage ordinances, sick pay requirements, and other victories (Pastor 2018). Many of these relied upon enforcement by state worker health and safety organizations.

As Eddie Reed's history signifies, Local 99's trajectory reflects labor's role in shaping welfare, education and immigration in Los Angeles. Prior to the 1990s expansion of social movement unionism, Local 99 already had begun to address the concerns of racialized public workers. Local 99 was founded when LAUSD custodian staff's joined the Building Service Employees Unions in the 1950s. The union of classified LAUSD employees joined with teachers unions to remain active throughout the middle of the century, despite Los Angeles' status as a notoriously anti-union "open shop" city (cf. Davis 2006). Their activism paralleled the continued growth of public unions in the 1970s, which drew from civil rights activism to bring racialized workers to the center of the labor movement (McCartin 2006) BSEU merged with SEIU to become the largest labor union during the Reagan presidency in the 1980s.

In 1975, the first term Governor Jerry Brown signed the Educational Employments Relations Act (Senate Bill 160) which granted collective bargaining rights for employees of Public K-12 school and colleges. (The very same governor, returned to office in 2011, would then veto the providers' childcare unionization bill in 2014).

As SEIU grew as a political presence in Los Angeles, so too did its locals. In the 1990s, Local 99 added teaching assistants, and later supervisors, playground aides and cafeteria workers and won a bilingual differential in the bargaining contract. The latter was a significant feat as it occurred during the height of California's vocal nativist movements, which, along with Prop 187, also sought to dismantle bilingual education in the region (Pastor 2018).

In the 2000s, Local 99 expanded its ranks to encompass the suburban, but also predominantly Latinx and black Lynwood and Torrance school districts and to turn their attention to early education. The first campaign to organize childcare workers began with the unionization of Options Inc., a resource and referral agency that operates childcare centers throughout the mostly-Latino and Asian San Gabriel Valley of Los Angeles. The campaign at Options represented not only a foray into educational services for children age 0 to 5, but into an increasingly complex world of private, non-profit educational providers contracted by the state.

A year earlier, 74,000 in-home care workers (IHSS) in Los Angeles Counted voted to join SEIU- a decade-long campaign that resulted in the largest union victory since the 1940s. With the success of the IHSS campaigns, SEIU and AFSCME set their sights on family childcare providers, who shared an analogous independent contractor status, working from private homes. Similar, IHSS workers' unions realized that a legislative strategy was required in order to gain collective bargaining and establish the state as the employer of record with the union (Smith 2006; Boris 2015). But part of the success of the IHSS legislative strategy was the intimate relationship with their clients/consumers and the coalition they formed with these patient-clients in order to advocate for more public resources, recognizing that home healthcare had become a key part of the functioning of the U.S. welfare system (Ibid).

As a result of a legislative strategy making labor demands upon state institutions, and again due in part to the intimate relationships shared by providers and their clients (or in this case, their clients' children) providers, SEIU and AFSCME locals built coalitions with clients/consumers of their services and public resources - mostly women who were welfare to work recipients. In 2007, I attended the first joint SEIU and AFSCME cosponsored lobby day, the first failed attempt to convince then-Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to sign a bill to grant collective bargaining rights to providers. The halls were filled with providers as well as black and brown parents from across the state. In 2015, parents were even more involved in the RCT lobbying; for example, flyers quoted a Latinx mother from San Jose describing how her "family child care provider is a partner in moving my family forward."

Most every provider with whom I spoke recalls the way in which unions pushed Governor Schwarzenegger to veto the budgets that cut funding for childcare in 2010 (cf. Rothfeld and Goldmacher 2009). During the same time, a broader coalition in California's labor movement also brought significant media attention to the price of Great Recession austerity measures, with large rallies featuring state workers like teachers, firefighters and other widely-sympathetic (and sometimes white) workers (Glass 2016). After the deep cuts, despite the lack of formal bargaining power, Local 99 and affiliated provider locals did manage to restore funding cuts and childcare subsidies.

The links among providers and those most affected by the welfare system became key for the union to assemble a broader coalition for political action, much as it did with health care workers. This move to organize intimate service workers and parents is inseparable from efforts to restore union power - particularly successful in Los Angeles and California to some degree - by organizing immigrant workers and second-generation Latinxs in coalition with black workers and building with community organizations. For Local 99, these solidarities are based on more than just strategy, but connected to many of the shared experiences among black and Latinx providers and their efforts to particpate in a broader projects of challenging inequality.

Conclusions:

Felicia Kornbluh's history of welfare rights organizing documents the decades-long intwining of welfare and labor activism, beginning in the New Deal and spanning the United Farm Workers' "benefits-based activism" in the 1970s (2007). This organizing, Kornbluh points out, has been multiracial and brought questions of gender, sexuality and social reproduction to the foreground (Ibid.). In the case of Los Angeles, welfare and labor activism have been mutually constituted with immigrant rights' movements. In navigating discourses of who is worthy of welfare and educational services (and what the scope of those services will be), labor-community alliances have drawn attention to the terms of racialized and gendered citizenship and the complexities of valorizing the position of the worker-subject in the neoliberal era.

Aihwa Ong notes that given the “discontinuous, even fragmentary” nature of state power in the US, social groups and political organizations have a key role in shaping the boundaries of citizenship and processes of subject-formation (1996, 2006). These processes are fundamentally linked to place and space –while the terms of citizenship may be national, they are locally contested. In this case, different movements – from across the political spectrum – have recast the terms of citizenship. Children are not exempt from these constructions. Their value has often been staked on their future productivity as workers, particularly when it comes to black children and the children of immigrants. These culture and political constructions are fundamental to the functioning of the workfare system and to the project of early intervention.

In drawing attention to the underlying histories of an infrastructure and their relationships to U.S. citizenship, it becomes clear that the people who utilize and make claims upon an infrastructure and the infrastructure itself are mutually constituted. The prior iterations and layers upon which services are built affect the possibilities of making claims in the present; there is a continual dialectic at work (Anand 2017). The infrastructure of childcare in California rests upon racialized and gendered constructions of public health, as well as the ways in which policymakers have enshrined biological motherhood and defined poor children as risks to populations. These histories reverberate in the project of “early intervention,” and the very structures of the agencies like the CCLD tasked with raising the next generation

In contemporary Los Angeles, while the state’s Child Care Licensing Division could have relied on well-meaning white middle-class women to monitor these facilities and propose reforms, the division decided to give the task to Licensing Program Analysts (LPA), mostly-black and second generation Latinx public workers. Home inspections are key to this apparatus. As part of the "cultural practices by which the state is symbolically represented to its employees and to citizens of the nation," they make visible the state's power to protect children and to monitor decentralized care (Gupta 1995). The routine surveillance of family childcare provider homes — and even the looming specter of the visits — are the "mundane activities" that reproduce "the primacy of the state" and its "superiority over other social institutions" (Gupta and Sharma 2003: 13). They are where the genealogies of this infrastructure are made visible, enacted, and contested.

Examining lived experience helps shift from static views of continuity or change in institutions like welfare and immigration to exposing the "complex entanglements of histories, identities and power struggles" that shape the present (Silliman 212; cf. Lightfoot 1995). Next, I consider the life histories of providers to understand how and why workers who have often been the subject of the US' state's punitive welfare and immigration measures take up the project of early intervention, and the ways in which they both find themselves bound by these histories of structural violence but also remake these infrastructures from the inside out.

Chapter 2: Producing Precarious Household Entrepreneurs

"He chased me with an AK-47, but he wasn't able to find the [trigger] safety," said Esperanza as she retold for me her harrowing escape from a 1970s Nicaraguan burglary-turned-homicide that left her brother-in-law dead. Esperanza, a family childcare provider in Los Angeles, rose from her chair across the table, formed the shape of a gun with her right hand, and approached my chair from behind. I tensed up as she dug her index finger into my neck, reenacting the violent assault at her dining table amidst our plates of pasta and crimson-colored beets, as infants and toddlers played in the back room. Esperanza had fled to Nicaragua and had been there barely one month when violence struck at her sister's husband's storefront pharmacy. Esperanza, who was then nineteen, remembered identifying the assailants' bodies, killed by US-backed Somoza security forces shortly after the attack, before returning to El Salvador with her brother-in-law's fresh corpse.

In setting out to understand the trajectories to the childcare profession of diverse women of color in Los Angeles from a wide range of educational, class, and migration backgrounds, stories like Esperanza's figured large, speaking to the surprising centrality of violence in their lives. Intimate violence, as Phillipe Bourgois and Nancy Scheper-Hughes argue, appears as the tip of the iceberg in public consciousness, while structural, symbolic, and normalized violence remain hidden in plain sight (Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2004).[8] Rather than isolate physical violence, they instead propose concept of a continuum of violence- a non-linear and multi-directional approach to contextualizing interpersonal violence. Their conceptualization of violence brings to light commonly-overlooked relationships and complications of power and vulnerability. Historical patterns of violence, I find, circumscribe Central, Mexican, and African-American women's and men's work lives and household formations. Tracing these interconnections across time and space provides insight into differential experiences of structural inequality across racial, gender and class backgrounds as well as the historically-constituted, political-economic antecedents of contemporary relations of precarity.

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[8] Anthropologist Paul Farmer defines structural violence as the ways in which elites and other powerful groups "systematically [exert]" poverty, racism, gendered exclusion, and other forms of inequality (2004: 306; cf. Galtung 1963, 1979). Derived from Bourdieu, symbolic violence refers to a state in which "the socially dominated naturalize the status quo and blame themselves for their domination" (Bourgois 2001; cf. Bourdieu 2000, 2001).

Frameworks: Lives Animating the Past and Present

In what follows, I argue that by contextualizing family childcare providers' experiences of structural and interpersonal violence as part of local and global political economic shifts, we can account for the emergence of their precarious status as home-based childcare business owners. In more than 25 life histories conducted from 2013 to 2015, union-affiliated providers recounted to me their early childhoods, migration pathways, and work histories, leading up to their entry into the childcare field in the Los Angeles region. All were members the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 99, where I conducted more than 27 months of fieldwork participating in and observing their provider-led organizing campaign. Following a brief literature review on precarious labor and violence, I recount here the life histories of six childcare providers who identify as Central-, Mexican-, or African-American, and whose experiences encapsulate the diversity of providers' trajectories. I focus upon formative work events, with attention to structural inequalities and violence described by the interlocutors. Then, I map themes from their work and family lives at the twilight of Fordism and the rise of "welfare-to-work" or workfare systems and finally the neoliberal global austerity politics. By situating formative life events in relation to historically-produced and locally-situated race, class, and gender formations, I elucidate the violent processes by which precarious labor is produced and the ways in which the household emerges as a central site for global capital accumulation, dispossession, and inequality in the twenty-first century.

Precarious Work: Welfare recipients using childcare vouchers, as a result of workfare requirements, are a large proportion of home-based childcare providers' clientele. Latina/o immigrants, as well as African-American women, dominate the home-based childcare market in Southern California[9] as one of many income generation strategies. The median pay for childcare workers nationally is already low at $10.31 an hour, with childcare workers twice as likely to live in poverty compared to other workers (Goulde and Cooke 2015). The state allows staggeringly low "reimbursement" rates upon providers, while placing restrictions on the rates they bill "private pay" or non-subsidized parents. Government reimbursements are subject to budgetary discretion and have fluctuated based on state financial constraints, with nearly a billion dollars' worth of childcare cuts made in California after the 2008 recession (National Women's Law Center 2012).

The situation is even more dire for family childcare providers: family care providers are paid per child, not per hour, through state-dispersed federal block grants, which on average are $4.98 an hour, far below the minimum wage (Layzer and Goodson 2007). As self-employed small business owners, these providers also bear additional costs and risks on behalf of the state, like food, gas, and liability and health insurance. In line with the demands of the “flexible” low-wage service economy, family childcare homes are open for business 24 hours a day and seven days a week in order to compete with other childcare centers, and especially with other home-based childcare providers. For those I interviewed, childcare occurs along with other income-generating forms of household labor like sewing garments and catering.

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[9] The composition of the family childcare workforce depends on local racialized divisions of labor: in other regions of the US, the family childcare workforce is predominantly African-American (cf. Tuominen 2003).

Providers’ working conditions exemplify what anthropologists and others have widely identified as precarious. Here precarity can be defined as including: the resurgence of “irregular piecework, of menial ‘workfare,’ [and] of relatively insecure, transient [...] occupation” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 5; Molé 2010); the reliance upon contracted work versus labor contracts (Bodnar 2006); and the demand that workers provide affective and service-oriented labor (Matos 2012; Muehlenbach 2011, 2012). While initial work on precarity conceptualized the ways in which the precariat has replaced the proletariat as a universalizing class category, anthropologists have "provincializ[ed] universalizing claims” about precarity through “pointing to how the contemporary sensorium is culturally and historically mediated—grounded in local vernaculars of labor, family, society, wealth, desire, and loss" (Muehlebach 2013: 298; cf. Hardt and Negri 2000; Matos 2012; Ross 2009; Wacquant 2008; Standing 2009). In so doing, scholars such as Han (2012), Molé (2010), Matos (2012), and Weeks (2015) have moved apprehensions of precarity away from arguments that either claim that precarity is simply a solipsistic rendering of pre-existing conditions of poverty and exploitation or a clear break with a secure (Fordist/ Keynesian) past that is causing widespread ontological and affective crises (cf. Allison 2012, 2013; Berlant 2011; Cross 2010). Taking into account the "contingent nature" of precarity, as Matos explains, allows for the "explanatory and emancipatory value" of this analytical category and its viability as a political tool. Anthropological analysis can move us from "ahistorical fixed categories" to a better grasp of where there are indeed "common struggles, feelings and values" while tracing the "uneven and contradictory dialectics of exploitation that capitalism under neoliberal governance entails" (2012: 24; cf. Thorkelson 2016).

Building from this literature, I examine providers' accounts of their work and family trajectories to understand how providers' current precarious conditions relate to global, national, and regional political-economic conditions and racial and gendered formations. Situating the life histories providers choose to express within specific histories allows "us to grasp the contingencies of the present and the ways in which the present comes to be through the past" (Collins 2013: 40). Turning to the scale of the household brings into focus the structural and interpersonal violence that defines the lives of racialized and gendered subjects in the US -- and enables and constrains the potential for workers to organize and transform their precarity.

The Household: While the factory or shop floor are often the sites of ethnographic investigation of precarity, examining the household as a worksite brings into relief contradictions in precarious economic life and contemporary state-subject relations. Studies of precarity often consider the ways in which the household serves as a space outside of work, of care relations where the material and ontological vicissitudes of insecurity are managed (Allison 2013, Han 2012). But the household has also been transformed with the resurgence of piecework and other forms of home-based labor under neoliberalism, exemplified in childcare, as well as the increasing commodification of affective labor. Childcare providers exemplify these relations: round-the-clock care, spatially-bound-to-care work, dispersed from others in urban and suburban landscapes. Providers maintain the workfare state at minimized costs but with maximum attention and affective investment. Several providers in this chapter also suggest that their insecurity is increased when losing one's home means losing one's shelter *and* one's livelihood.

Analyzing the household allows us to grasp what, as Jane Collins notes, "neoclassical economics makes us forget: living, breathing, gendered and raced bodies under social relations that exploit them; bodies living […] with persons and on whom they depend; and bodies who enter into the work of making a living with liveliness, creativity and skills" – and how each of these phenomena are intimately connected (2013: 27). But it also allows us to grasp the underlying ideologies and hierarchies that define how we understand the home, the family, and other constructs meant to encapsulate the household. As Micaela di Leonardo asserts: "Our homes, and our understandings of them, in ways that American public culture does and does not allow us to see, are fundamentally political. They both index and manifest gender, class, race, power, and the world of nations" (2004:150). Comparing the experiences of households, and the ways in which household members' everyday lives are imbued with politics, offers new insights into how racialized, gendered, and classed processes shape precarious life in the US.

As Judith Butler suggests, shared vulnerability can also create opportunities for subjects to understand and act upon their interdependencies, and in fact underlies our shared ethics (2009, 2012). Worth notes that experiences of precarity among women workers she interviewed are not individualized stories of flexibility but make continual reference to the "social self" and relationships to others (2016: 612). The household proves a critical setting to bring to light the relational nature of casualized, vulnerable labor. Materially, the household is a space wherein kin and non-kin pool resources and construct shared futures (Collins 2013). Many providers' household members become enrolled in their state-subsidized business, contributing labor, capital, or affective support, making the family childcare enterprise (and other forms of home-based labor) importantly a collective "entrepreneurial" project.

These interrelationships go far beyond sharing monetary and labor resources. The household is likewise an "interstitial" capitalist space that is pregnant with the "liberatory" (albeit limited) potential of social reproduction (Collins 2013:34). Providers attempt to transform the home into a space of care and concern for non-kin and kin alike. Providers draw from their unique role in this space of both market and non-market relations to shift perceived inequalities and create counteractively non-violent spaces. Tracing how provider households have organized themselves in the face of uneven racialized and gendered capitalist development moves us from a static, individualized understanding of precarity to a processual, dynamic analysis that gives insight into the ways in which precarity is challenged.

***Violence*:** The household, in numerous providers' accounts, is a space of possibility but also of violence, from interpersonal, domestic violence to murder (as Esperanza's story describes), as well as poverty, dispossession, discrimination, and other inequalities. As such, providers' life histories elucidate the complex interconnections among visible forms of violence, like murder or abuse, and less-recognized forms of symbolic and structural violence. They also place these forms of violence in relation to the political and economic transformations across the Americas, and elucidate the ways in which they are central aspects of the “consolidation of the punitive form of neoliberalism” leading into the twenty-first century (Bourgois 2009: 18). Attention to structural violence, if grounded in ethnography and life histories, brings to light “the multiple ways in which this violence is reworked through the routines of daily life as well as enacted through social relations and social institutions” and comes to shape “people’s subjectivities and practices” (Green 2004: 320; Farmer 2004). In this case, analyzing providers’ life histories gives insight into the particular actors and “identifiable institutions, relationships, force fields and ideologies” that have reduced the life chances (albeit differentially) of whole swaths of populations (Bourgois 2009: 19; Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2004).

On the flipside, providers’ organizing to improve early education suggests that they too name and understand the structural violence that has shaped their lives. They are taking an active role to address issues like the health and well-being of entire communities, creating spaces of care and new relationality in their daily labor, but also demanding that the state ensure the security of its population. Grasping providers’ involvement in these quotidian efforts and in larger-scale movements requires attention to their intimate knowledge of the continuum of violence that accompanies the uneven development of globalized neoliberal capitalism across the Americas.

Esperanza: Placed “in a hole”

Esperanza spoke of the shame of returning home to El Salvador as a single adolescent mother. She had originally fled from her abusive husband to her sister’s home in Nicaragua, but was forced to return several months later after the murder of her brother-in-law. The father of her child interpreted the tragic events as divine retribution: they had befallen Esperanza because she left him and fled the country with his child. Esperanza originally fled from El Salvador to Nicaragua after her family tried to force her to marry this abusive man. "You are going to shame the family," Esperanza's own father told her and essentially excommunicated her from her family. "You were not *even* allowed to travel if you were married without your husband's permission in those Latin American countries, especially if you had a kid," she commented.

Domestic violence coupled with the stigma of single motherhood are among the most important reasons Esperanza migrated from El Salvador to the US. In leaving, Esperanza was making a tremendous gamble, hoping to stay out of reach of her abusive husband and to eventually bring her now-widowed sister and her children to the US as well. In the following reported conversation, Esperanza signals how the stigma of single motherhood in El Salvador weighed heavily in her decision to make the costly and dangerous trip to the US:

> [Esperanza asked:] Do you have the nerve to let me borrow two-thousand five hundred dollars?
>
> [Esperanza gasped then she began parroting her sister's reported response:] But it's the only money I have to support my children.
>
> [Esperanza answered her sister:] I'll go to the US illegally, I'll send for you, I'll pay you back and you can take your children, *because in El Salvador and widowed with seven children, how would you raise them*?
>
> [Esperanza ended with her sister's prescient rejoinder:] How can you be certain the US won't be the same?

Esperanza rejected her abusive husband, and without her family's approval or any other official authorization, traveled clandestinely to the US in 1980. She arrived a month later and ten pounds lighter to the home of relatives near San Francisco, California. While Salvadorans had migrated to San Francisco since the 1930s and 1940s, recruited to work on shipping lines to the

Panama Canal, nearly half of the city's Salvadoran population arrived between 1980 and 1990 (Menjívar 2000). The nightmares from her traumatic migration haunted her for a week after arrival, yet she was able to find work as a live-in domestic worker for a young professional couple in Marin County. Co-sleeping with her employers' newborn during her first months in the US provided her some consolation for having placed her own infant in the care of her sister in El Salvador. Esperanza, who had been educated in a private boarding school, found domestic work lacking and longed to return to school. She eventually convinced her employers to allow her to attend English language classes, but had difficulty traveling to and from classes from the affluent suburban area in Northern California, where public transit was limited. The irregular bus service often meant coming back home late, creating tension with her employers. Without her own transportation she experienced sexual harassment, with male classmates, for example, offering her rides in exchange for sexual favors. "They wanted me to drop my *chones* [colloquial term for underwear] for them," she said as she fought back tears.

She returned to El Salvador in 1986, when her father, Don Chico, a sugar cane mill owner, was murdered amidst the chaos of the escalating civil war. Don Chico was targeted for his prominent role as a community leader who advocated for educational, health, and other development-related public projects. Her family suspected that the local landowners, who resisted public appropriation of local land, had been involved with his murder. Although Esperanza describes Don Chico as a social justice advocate, he was not aligned with the Faribundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and other left-wing insurgents, since he did not think socialism would work in a poor country like El Salvador. Don Chico, according to

Esperanza, created a lasting impact on their local community by donating land and leading UN-sponsored efforts to build a public school, greatly influencing Esperanza's passion for education. Fear of retaliation deterred Esperanza's family from trying to bring anyone to justice for Don Chico's murder.

Esperanza managed two more trips to El Salvador, holding false documents and traversing less-militarized (at the time) land border crossings near Tijuana. Her passage was situated as part of an emerging transnational geography linking El Salvador and Los Angeles, facilitated in part by circular migration via clandestine routes and, for some, the securing of refugee status (Bailey and Hane 1995; Bailey et al 2002; Coutin 2003a, 2003b).

Unlike many Salvadoran migrants to the US who relied upon temporary protected status and asylum, Esperanza considers herself "blessed" to have regularized her legal status after marrying a Jewish-American whom she credits with helping raise her daughters and introducing them to Jewish "culture" (cf. Coutin 2003a, 2007). Marrying a Jewish-American white ethnic further exposed Esperanza and her daughters to different forms of US racial hierarchy. As a result of her experiences with discrimination, Esperanza shared the following adage she tells her daughters: "In this country, the fact of being a woman places you in a hole. The fact of being a Latina it becomes deeper. The fact of not having papers, I've felt discrimination and it hurts."

Esperanza's formative career was as an early interventionist working with children with special needs, as part of the Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) Paraeducator Career Ladder program. She worked alongside speech pathologists, as well as physical and occupational therapists, to assist children who were blind, deaf, and mute, had physical impairments, or were diagnosed with developmental delays such as Down Syndrome and Tay-Sachs disease. Although Esperanza excelled in working with special needs children, after nearly a decade she became disenchanted with Los Angeles public educational employment when she found herself paying out of pocket for classroom supplies and developing debilitating asthma symptoms from the long, polluted commute. She decided to open up her childcare center from home in the West San Fernando Valley, where she started providing free care for neighborhood children as a way to build her clientele.

Nelly & Manuel: El castigo/The punishment

For Nelly, also a woman from Central America who spent considerable time in domestic work, the fact that she migrated several decades after Esperanza and came from a poorer family quite differentially altered her path to childcare. But Nelly's story similarly cannot be told without also considering her partner in her business, her husband Manuel.

I first met Manuel – a middle aged Guatemalan man – and his elderly father Caetano at their table in the cafeteria of the Los Angeles Trade Technical College (LATTC). While a growing number of men had been participating in childcare union meetings, Caetano and Manuel stood out among the mostly women caregivers and union staff. Manuel had a stout stature and mustache, with grayish hair hidden under a cap. He was wearing the new purple union t-shirt that read, "Raising Kids and Hope: For Women and Families." Manuel has attended union meetings on behalf of the home-based childcare center he and his wife Nelly own in a working-class neighborhood in Long Beach[10], so Nelly could operate their center on Saturday morning. Manuel's elderly father, gray-haired and with leathery skin, just arrived from Escuintla, Guatemala and sat beside him quietly listening to our conversation. Caetano was planning on staying in the US because Manuel believed Guatemala was not a safe country in which to live or travel. Manuel had fled Guatemala during the Central American nation's violent decades-long civil war. He understands the war as fundamentally fought due to "economic" reasons, but insists he was not involved with either side of the conflict.

Though he did detail names and numerous issues with the subcontracted referral agencies upon which providers relied for their subsidies, Manuel was reluctant to discuss his role in the family childcare home, and insisted I speak with his wife.

The following day, with Manuel's invitation, I visited their single family home in the South Bay. Waiting at the front door, as I arrived, was Nelly, black hair to her shoulders, in a plaid sleeveless blouse and jeans, standing under the US flag. She had three siblings who were all born in Escuintla, Guatemala to a poor Ladina family; her youngest brother was killed three years ago. She described her childhood as positive and full of freedom in relation to her current status as a migrant in the US. She worked at a commercial office as a secretary before becoming the sole family member to have migrated to the US in the early 1990s due to the severe economic downturn associated with the civil war.

Our conversation in the Sanchez living room that Sunday morning quickly turned to her immigration status. She described her arduous undocumented journey to the US on buses and on foot through rivers and deserts. Upon crossing the US border in the desert, the group of immigrants she traveled with was detained and jailed for three days in Arizona. She was released into the custody of family members in Long Beach under the specter of a pending deportation order which continues to haunt her today. US immigration law includes a ten-year bar, what Nelly referred to as a "castigo" (or punishment), for migrants caught without authorization at the border or within the US.

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[10] While an independent city of nearly 470,000, Long Beach is connected geographically and historically to the city of Los Angeles and is part of Los Angeles County (US Census, American Community Survey 2013).

She began working as a domestic worker cleaning houses. She worked for a family in Redlands and she lived in her employer's home for her first years in the US. Although she developed sentimental feelings towards the family of a professional couple and two adolescent children, she grew weary of working "encerrada" (live-in). Her duties included maintaining the entire home clean and dust-free, making beds, washing dishes, and even cooking and providing childcare for other kin. She quit during the mid-1990s after the husband – a medical doctor – passed away suddenly and the household finances became strained. She then took up a position as a part-time nanny for six years, during which time she married and had two children. Over time, Nelly's schedule of working during the day and Manuel's working at night put an emotional strain on Nelly, who felt guilty for leaving her children. As a result, she decided to get her family childcare license and work from home.

Given her lack of legal status, she used an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) to obtain a family childcare license and pay taxes (in the absence of a Social Security Number). Using an ITIN had drawback for Nelly, however: it marked her ineligible to receive reimbursement from publicly funded programs and raised public officials' suspicions of undocumented status. Manuel, who is a naturalized citizen, worked as a forklift operator in a distribution warehouse for garment manufacturing (one of Los Angeles's largest transnational industries), but was laid off in 2008 (cf. De Lara 2009). The workers at the warehouse had tried to unionize as the economic situation worsened, but the effort failed, resulting in multiple layoffs. Manuel then decided to work full-time at the family's home daycare center, which was also registered, due to Nelly's lack of status, under his name and social security number.

Manuel's job transition helped make relationships with the state community care licensing agencies more workable. Nelly experienced significant tension when field agents – who have the power to cite, fine, and otherwise revoke the license of a home facility – would drop in asking for Manuel, whose name appeared on the family childcare license. Nelly tried evading the agent's questions about Manuel's whereabouts; she felt inspectors were particularly suspicious of Nelly's ITIN – that indexes her immigration status. Once Manuel could be present for the inspections, state agents' comportment, according to Nelly, went from hostile and "despotic" to more cooperative and cordial.

The interplay of economic downturn and mixed legal status among household members created the foundation for Manuel's participation as co-provider of caregiving for non-relative children – largely a female-dominated industry. Fix and Zimmerman define mixed-status households as "when one or both parents [are] non-citizen[s] and one or more children [are] citizens" (2001: 156). Although on the surface the restructuring of the regional economy away from manufacturing appears to have altered gender divisions of labor, turning Manuel into caregiver, other gendered dynamics are reinforced within mixed-status households. Nelly depends on Manuel's status for receiving reimbursement from the state. Due to the stigmanization of men in childcare and gendered divisions of labor in family childcare settings, Manuel's limited the ways he shared caregiving with his wife. Nonetheless, despite his initial reluctance to say so, Manuel understood his active presence as a caregiver and overall involvement in the family as providing a form of paternal investment – albeit commodified – which according to Manuel, clientele families often lack. In Manuel's words, he likes family childcare because the children are away from "bad influences and gangs."

But while the situation has proven workable, Nelly, who is a few credits short of finishing her child development degree at a local state college, felt increasingly ambivalent about the prospects of immigration reform and thus questions the value of completing her educational program. Like Esperanza, she is passionate about her work with children, but she must rely upon her husband – far more tepid about the work – to be the face of the business and to receive payment for their collective labor. Finding her spatial, economic, and educational mobility limited, Nelly remains trapped, weighing the risks of submitting her immigration application, fearing losing her business and her household's entire livelihood.

Ofelia: Bitter harvest in LA's citrus suburbs

For Ofelia, a Mexican-American provider, entering childcare was also fraught with legal tensions, violence, and racialized and gendered exclusions; yet, her experiences are refracted through differential US-Mexico migration trajectories made visible at the household scale.

Ofelia lives in a single-family home in the working-class neighborhood of Baldwin Park. She has been a family childcare provider for thirty-six years – the longest of any provider documented here; her husband, like Manuel, who is a retired aerospace industry welder, now serves as de facto assistant.

Ofelia's father was a police officer on the "Mexican side" of the US and Baja California border. She described her upbringing in the rural outskirts of Mexicali as rustic, recalling how her sixteen siblings took turns daily fetching water from local wells. She expressed her appreciation for her now-deceased father and her now-ninety-year-old mother for giving Ofelia and her siblings relative material comfort on her father's salary as a police officer. Her father warned all of her siblings and herself not to risk their lives in law enforcement because of the threat of violence and low pay that plague the Mexican police force. As a young woman, Ofelia defied her father's warning and applied for the police academy anyway. The police department rejected her application because she was "too short" and was "too soft." Ofelia stood at five foot two inches tall the day I met her at her home. She earned a bilingual secretary certification from a Mexican university instead.

While studying at the university, she was selected for a Mexican government-sponsored visa to study English in the US. While studying in Los Angeles, she married her husband, a US citizen, and had two children. She has been married for more than forty years to her husband Pedro, who is ten years older. Ofelia and Pedro purchased their first home with an eight hundred dollar down payment on a seventy-five thousand dollar home. The home was located in Baldwin Park – a predominantly-Latino working-class suburb of Los Angeles – with the help of the part-time job Ofelia held at an electronics factory not far from the home. Baldwin Park lies at the center of the San Gabriel Valley, one of Southern California's many "citrus suburbs" and *colonias* that was shaped by early twentieth century agricultural and industrial development that relied heavily on Mexican and Asian workers. This history gave way to suburban residential development with deindustrialization in the 1950s and 1960s and the availability of cheap land with built-out freeways and municipal infrastructure (Cheng 2013; Garcia 2010). Ofelia followed many Latino and Asian residents of San Gabriel Valley, who took advantage of the neighborhood's location outside of municipalities with existing explicit (and implicit) racial covenants that excluded non-whites from home ownership (Cheng 2013).

Originally Ofelia's husband opposed her working, but his salary as a trucker — one of the first industries to experience widespread deregulation during the 1970s — wasn't enough to make ends meet in the early 1980s (cf. Belzer 2000). Ofelia worked the night shift assembling electronic parts for radios and alarms in Irwindale. Irwindale, which Ofelia also recalls nostalgically as mostly orange groves and strawberry fields, also experienced rapid industrialization with the move of agriculture towards the Central Valley, fed by trucking routes that converge along major freeway corridors and near distribution warehouses. Ofelia's former employer, the American Application Company (AAC), later merged into Honeywell Inc. — a massive global aerospace and technology conglomerate — putting additional pressures on workers. Honeywell exemplifies Los Angeles's long-standing postwar reliance on aerospace industries since World War II, spurred by federal defense expenditures and favored by Sun Belt cities as an alternative to unionized manufacturing, as in the Midwest (Abu-Lughod 1999; Davis 2006). Ofelia quit factory work due to the difficulty of balancing motherhood and paid labor demands.

My inquiry about previous experience working sparked a critical discussion of discrimination and other observations on US racial hierarchies in the manufacturing sectors, as well as the lack of labor protections. Ofelia recalled her experience at AAC and how she dealt with racial discrimination.

> Ofelia: There was never a union there. There was instead much discrimination [sardonic tone]. Because the owner was American and I saw that most of those in higher positions there were Americans, too. Yes, it's the truth. One manager [who] was American, very American and she got a really a good job, but they later fired her for being lazy. She worked in the office just checking things, which for me is nothing, checking email, checking papers. Checking papers, that's nothing. And she would arrive to work whenever she wanted. She used the company car to come to and from work and they never gave any of us a company car. Why? *Because we were not Americans!*
>
> Me: So the majority of workers were Latinos?
>
> Ofelia: They were Latinos, *Black. Poor Blacks, it was worse for them*. They did not like us [Latinos and Blacks]. They discriminated.
>
> Me: Did you ever complain about the discrimination?
>
> Ofelia: Yes, we would complain, but, look, we'd say let's go speak with the owner, but it was lies. We never spoke up, but how *they would increase quotas* on us, man, you can be certain for Christmas they would all say "thank you" [English in quotes] and that's it! [incredulous tone] They would not give like in other places that give bonuses and other things. There [AAC] they gave us nothing. Quite the opposite. They would say "a thousand pieces" and they'd give you "sixteen hundred or two thousand" [English in quotes] more.

Ofelia colors her retelling of the moment she came across a newspaper ad promoting family childcare as a career with an overtone of a religious calling. She and her husband had lived for five years at their first home in Baldwin Park, which was a two bedroom (not far from where they live now), when she opened her childcare business in the early 1980s. At that time, her husband worked as a molder for a company that made parts for trains and airplanes in El Monte, also in San Gabriel Valley. When the company made plans to move further inland to San

Bernardino after local residents complained about the pollution, Ofelia and her husband planned to follow the company and pack up the childcare operation. During this time in the late 1980s, home values had more than doubled due to real estate speculation spurred by rumors that the Raiders National Football League team might move to Irwindale after the city had provided the team $10 million and promised to build a massive stadium (Chang 1990).[11] Cashing in on the speculation, they sold their home and purchased a newly built home in exurban Riverside. Riverside and other parts of San Bernardino county – also former “citrus suburbs” – were experiencing the first signals of a housing boom, with many African-American, Latino, and Asian families leaving the tumultuous central core of Los Angeles towards the region’s much more affordable homes for working families (De Lara 2009; Pfeiffer 2013).

But Ofelia and her husband’s move to the exurbs proved premature, per Ofelia, because her husband’s company renegotiated with the city of El Monte to stay. After six months, the traffic-clogged commute brought them back to Baldwin Park. Ofelia sold the Riverside County home after she loaned an African-American woman the down payment. Ofelia boasted about the fact that she negotiated the entire house sale and purchase without her husband’s assistance. She called the families of the fourteen Baldwin Park children she had cared for previously and was able to re-enlist nine of those same children in her childcare center again. She also recalled proudly the fact that she relied on word of mouth recommendations as opposed to advertisements and had even cared for multiple generations of children and parents through personal referrals.

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[11] Ultimately, the city of Irwindale’s negotiations failed, and the Raiders moved to Oakland. Many local residents speculate the Raiders never had the intention to move to Irwindale in the first place.

Marina: Living labor militancy

Ofelia’s story as a Mexican-American Sun Belt manufacturing worker who faced discrimination and low wages while struggling with the volatility of home ownership has many parallels to that of Marina, who is also from Mexico. Due to earlier migration and resettlement patterns, both found readily available employment in manufacturing, primarily apparel and electronics. While from divergent class backgrounds, Marina and Ofelia also share stories of state and corporate repression, gendered discrimination, and blocked mobility in Mexico and the US.

Marina is a middle-aged provider who lives in multi-family home in a narrow residential block in Lynwood, California. She had been a provider for eight years at the time of our meeting. She supplemented her income from childcare with a taco catering business, which has allowed her survive recession-provoked unemployment and the near-foreclosure of the subdivided home she shared with her daughter.

I sat with her on child-size chairs and among children’s toys, under the shade of trees at the end of her driveway. She was born in a remote village in Jalisco, Mexico. Her family were landless peasants; she and her siblings would taxi water jugs for wealthier families for fifty *centavos* to supplement the household income. Her father forebade Marina and her sisters from attending school after a local teacher was charged with sexual molestation. As a result, Marina and her sisters ended their schooling in the second grade. Her family, in order to escape abject poverty, moved to the international seaside tourist destination of Puerto Vallarta, where she and other kin worked selling hot lunches. She recalled to me the turbulent way she moved up in the service industry to become a private cook in wealthy homes.

For Marina and her family, it was not merely fortuitous to have moved into these wealthy homes; rather, such a change was due in part to the burgeoning labor militancy occurring at that time in Mexico (Carr 1992). She achieved her position as a cook through her involvement on the winning side of a union organizing drive of the domestic workers for the wealthy American expatriates in Puerto Vallarta. She vividly recalled how she and her coworkers were left bloodied at the hands of the opposition company *unión*, Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicano (CTM), as the labor strike took a violent turn. Her wealthy employers pressured her to support CTM, whom she felt favored employers' interests above those of the domestic workers. The union she supported, Confederación Revolutionario de Obreros y Campesinos (CROC), won the campaign, and she was rewarded with a position in the kitchen of a wealthy expatriate.

Marina arrived in California in 1977, where she landed work in the burgeoning garment industry, which was exploding with the move to global "flexible" supply chains and modes of accumulation that centered on the Pacific Rim and Mexico (Bonacich and Appelbaum 2000). With her previous garment work experience, she moved up the apparel industry's cut and sew chain to a prized position as a seamstress specializing in producing the model garments that were sent to factories for mass production. During the 1990s, Marina moved to higher-end labels such as Victoria's Secret in garment factories in Santa Monica. The development of factories like this in Los Angeles emerged out of contradictory trends in the garment sector, with a global move towards "fast fashion" wherein high-end retailers turned to low-cost, rapid production of the "latest trends," coupled with the off-shoring of other aspects of garment production in the 1990s (Bonacich and Appelbaum 2000; Collins 2003; Tokatli 2008).

However, the 2008 global recession hit even “fast fashion” producers in Los Angeles hard, and with the slowdown and lack of union protection, Marina was laid off (Shadduck-Hernandéz et al 2015). Her daughter, who at this time had children, began working for FedEx full time. With her husband no longer in the picture, Marina decided to obtain her family childcare license to generate income and care for her grandchildren:

> The company closed and I was left without work for almost a year. My daughter married and began having children, so I told her that I would get licensed to take care of her children. I had tried to get my license four or five years ago, but they told us we had to do this and that to the house and *my husband said no we are not changing anything about the house*. So now that I was *single* I said, well, now I will make the necessary renovations. And that is why I started as a provider and I have enjoyed it a lot because *I was not able to raise my own children*. When I had my children I hardly saw them, so now the idea is that my grandkids and the other children I care for are like *my own children*. So the children come and go and they don’t want to leave and begin to cry when they come for them, which means they are happy here, and my grandkids basically live with me.

Marina, like Nelly and Manuel, lives in a mixed-status household, which exposes all household members to the risk of being swept up by immigration enforcement through raids and checkpoints, in collaboration with local police (Fix and Zimmernan 2001). Although Marina was able to regulate her status during the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), some of her younger siblings were not. Her younger brother had accumulated warrants for misdemeanors while undocumented and lived with her before recently moving back to Mexico. She spoke of the recent Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) immigration sweeps and how she was often caught up in these block-by-block military-like campaigns common in her predominantly-Latino neighborhood. She was startled when heavily armed LAPD S.W.A.T officers pounded on her door one morning in bulletproof vests. Her initial thought was that perhaps her daughter had been fatally injured. An LAPD officer explained to her in English that they were looking for her brother. When she realized who they were looking for, she went to great lengths explaining to a bilingual officer that her brother had repatriated back to Mexico, and showed them pictures of his new family. Police constantly harrass and pull over her US-born son, who currently lives with her and has the same name as her brother. She worries that she may become swept up in another raid and that it will bring chaos to her home and childcare business.

Sonia: “I forgot that I am black”

While migrant trajectories and immigrant status mark providers like Marina and Nelly with illegality, African-American providers like Sonia well understand the structural violence of US racial and gendered inequalities — and the pain of violence in the household. Sonia had expressed her interest in sharing her story with me at a union meeting I attended in Lakewood. She is a tall, slender, middle-aged women who wears a bright smile and describes herself as a strong personality. She had recently returned from a trip to the Southern US, her original home, and appeared eager to recall the memories that recent trip had triggered.

Sonia was born in Memphis, Tennessee to a single mother who, including Sonia, had children with four different fathers. Her father along with the fathers of her siblings were absent during most of their childhood. When she was old enough, she took over the responsibility of acting as the “mother of the house” from her older brother as their mother worked. Sonia remembered vividly how, in 1968, she was watching her siblings playing outside when she heard the tragic news of Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination. Even though she was ten years old, she described this major moment in Civil Rights history as a deeply profound moment in her own life and recalled that they were scheduled to hear Dr. King speak later that evening in Memphis.

In the early 1970s, Sonia's mother married and moved their family to Los Angeles's Compton neighborhood. Their move coincided with the tail end of the Second Great Migration from the South to the region. The Second Great Migration led to a jump in the Los Angeles' black population from 63,744 to 763,000 from 1940 to 1970 (Sides 2000). African-Americans migrated throughout the twentieth century from predominantly-urban Western Southern destinations like Louisiana. Some of these migrants in the early part of the twentieth century had the resources to flee the Jim Crow South for a more comfortable Southern California life, and others had sought World War II (and postwar) opportunities in manufacturing (Flamming 2006). In the decade prior to Sonia's arrival, black communities had moved from the old core on Central Avenue in Los Angeles to more suburbanized (but still highly-segregated) settlements South and West of downtown – a transformation that brought cleavages among middle-class and working-poor residents to the surface. Often recent migrants like Sonia, who came directly to areas like Compton and Watts, were greeted with disdain by wealthier residents (Ibid.).

With constricted mobility in segregated neighborhoods and a economic base shifting away from manufacturing, Sonia did not necessarily experience the idyllic conditions in Southern California that many blacks sought (Sides 2006). She described her mother as physically and psychologically abusive. Sonia described a moment in childhood when she, as an adolescent, stood up to her mother's physical abuse. Her mother expected Sonia, as the oldest girl, to watch her younger siblings as well as to keep the house clean. On one occasion early in her stay in

Compton, her mother became angry enough at Sonia about the house cleaning that she threatened to “whoop her good” with a thick tree branch. Sonia determined not to let her mother hit her this time. So she hastily ran from her home and wandered streets of Compton, which were still unfamiliar to her. She described Compton’s streets at the time as being “not yet taken over” by gangs. Gangs were present though: two of her brothers were approached but able to opt out of gang recruitment as high school students, while another avoided them altogether by going to high school in Hollywood. Not knowing where to go, she walked aimlessly until her cousin spotted her and brought her home, where she ultimately met her mother’s abusive wrath. Sonia’s relationship with her stepfather, whom she described as having only an elementary school education, was distant at best. In her mid-twenties, she confronted him about the poor treatment she suffered as his stepchild, but she did not wish to confront her mother, given that was “the best that [her mother] knew.”

In high school, Sonia discovered she had a facility with numbers and banking. She began working for Bank of America doing credit scoring for their loan office while in her last year of high school. They offered her a job upon graduation. She worked at the bank during the day and went to college for an accounting degree at night. For the best part of forty years, Sonia struggled to work her way up to corporate management positions, but was confronted repeatedly with racial discrimination. In her early career, a hiring manager in Beverly Hills turned her down for a bank manager position because the mostly white clientele did not “accept” her, presumably because of her color. She described to me how racist employees and management at a paper-making company finally brought her to drop her corporate career and pursue family childcare.

Originally, her managers hired her for an assistant management position at the factory, which they then gave to a less qualified white applicant. Other employees noticed how management overlooked Sonia for promotion and one commented to her that "[n]o one of color had ever gotten a position where [she] wanted to go." She was finally promoted to the assistant manager position, albeit two years later, and she remained the only black manager at the company. Sonia described how her managers soon fired her because of the color of her skin:

> When they fired me they offered me seventeen thousand dollars and then I [said], "If I did something wrong, then why are you offering me this money?" Because they knew I had a lot of things *I had on them* because I had started documenting, you know, the history and, so, that was it! The first time I ever had to say you're firing me because I'm black. This last thing was that I was supposed to go with all the managers from the other regions as their accounting manager, so they were supposed to tell me the day before [that]it was time to go. All the other managers [were] going, but I [was] the only black manager and so they told me it was not necessary for me to go …There [are] days when I *forget that I'm black.* I go to the mirror I say, "Oh, you know, that's right."

Sonia's experiences speak to many US African-American women's position as "last hired, first fired," historically in manufacturing but also in professional sectors (Anderson 1982, Simpson 1996). At the time of her firing, Sonia was divorced from her son's father. Sonia's abusive childhood experiences caused her to delay having her own family until later in life. In her mid-thirties, she married an African immigrant and gave birth to her only son. Her marriage to her husband lasted a decade but dissolved over "culturally" different "perceptions of women." Sonia described herself as more outspoken and that she was far from the "traditional African women" mold, which she believed caused her relationship to fracture. Sonia had also recently purchased a new home prior to being fired, which only added insult to injury. As she unpacked children's books from the moving boxes in her new home in Lakewood, Sonia realized that she wanted to pursue childcare, and that she would build this enterprise in her new home.

Critical Threads: Postwar US imperialism and the politics of reproduction

The histories of these Central American, Mexican, and African-American providers, each migrants in their own way, reveal that providers' current positions as precarious workers are inseparable from global capitalist transformations and shifts in California's regional economy. The greater Los Angeles area became a key site for defense spending, a space of policy experimentation on welfare, a hub of real estate busts and booms, and a bellwether of radical demographic shifts in the US. Throughout the postwar era, policymakers steadily eroded prospects for centralized, publicly-funded childcare system in the US and instead constructed a "workfare" system hinging upon the childcare labor of women of color "reimbursed" for their care through a complex subsidy system. The providers' histories, marked with various forms of interpersonal or "visible" violence, must be read alongside the structural and symbolic violence, perpetuated by various institutions and elite actors, that has facilitated the rise of globalized neoliberal capitalism (Bourgois 2009).

Civil Rights and (Imperial) Civil Wars**:** A postwar racialized and gendered division of labor and US Cold War imperialism refracted Latina and African-American providers' participation in California's workforce in the 1970s and 1980s. While in the postwar era, a labor union and government-led campaign – and, as Becky Nicolaedes highlights, middle-class male property owners in suburban Los Angeles – sought to push white women out of paid employment back into unpaid domestic work, women of color became integral low-wage labor for the domestic, manufacturing, and garment sectors in Los Angeles (2002; Scott 1993).

Women of color helped propel the Civil Rights movement, pushing Cold War racial liberals to pass the 1965 Civil Rights Act, which gave women grounds to challenge discriminatory employment practices. At the same time, the 1965 Hart-Cellar Immigration Act dramatically opened family and employment visas for residents of Latin America, Asia, and Africa (cf. Melamed 2011). Cold War proxy wars between the US and the Soviet Union led to the suppression of Central American democratic peasant movements by US-backed military dictators and sponsored paramilitary death squads, all of which, as Esperanza and Nelly's experiences suggest, spurred immigration to Los Angeles starting in the 1970s (Hamilton and Chinchilla 2001). The promise of job opportunities, respite from virulent racism, and long-established kin networks continued to draw African-Americans to Los Angeles from the Civil Rights-era South, as white middle-class residents fled from West and Southside suburbs like Lakewood for areas even farther from the central core (Kurashige 2010; Sides 2006).

US proxy wars against the Soviet Union ultimately took nearly 10 million lives globally and cost the US $16 billion dollars, radically exacerbating inequalities at home and siphoning funds from Great Society social services (Lutz 2002). Further, conservative elites exploited anti-communist sentiment – as well as the underlying racial tensions of the Civil War era – to begin to unravel embedded liberalism. As I have noted, in 1972, President Nixon vetoed the Comprehensive Child Development Bill on the grounds that the bill "commit[s] the vast moral authority of the national government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing [over] the family-centered approach" (Cohen 2013). Southern-based advocacy organizations seeking to preserve Head Start and services for poor children helped craft the bipartisan bill, which offered a rare prospect for universal childcare in the US (Morgan 2001). Conservative figurehead Pat Buchanan, as well as other members of Nixon's cabinet, saw the opportunity (especially prior to the 1972 election) to halt any further compromise with civil and women's rights advocates and to cement the New Right's coalition of Northern white ethnics and Southern segregationists by raising the specter that liberals would determine "what the racial make-up of each center ought to be" (Morgan 2001: 234). Nixon's veto proved an early salvo in the "Culture Wars" and several decades of New Right backlash against the New Deal and Civil Rights eras.

Restructuring Los Angeles**:** Continued Cold War defense expenditures (and corporations fleeing the unionized Midwest and Northeast for the historically anti-union, "open shop" region) secured the region's growth in manufacturing in the 1970s, which shaped Marina's, Ofelia's, and other providers' early careers (Davis 2006). California accounted for between 16.0 and 23.0 percent of US defense contract awards from 1970 to 1990. Aerospace manufacturers Lockheed, Douglas, and Northrop Grummond (producer of the B-2 "stealth bomber") coalesced in Los Angeles, as did radio, television, computer, and other electronic communication manufacturers (Scott 1993). Job hubs grew scattered throughout the city, from the South Bay to the East San Fernando Valley and Antelope Valley – areas where many providers with whom I spoke are located (Scott 1993; Law et al 1993). As Marina and Ofelia's experiences confirm, the most lucrative jobs in defense-related industries, such as research positions, remained the domain of men (to a small degree men of color), while women were constrained to the lowest-paying manufacturing jobs (Law et al. 1993).

With the further financialization and globalization of the economy, facilitated by the collapse of the gold standard and the disintegration of the Bretton Woods Accord, garment, furniture, and other labor-intensive subcontracted industries under “flexible” production regimes also set up shop in Los Angeles (Bonacich and Appelbaum 2000; Scott 1996; Soja et al 1983). Fleeing heavily unionized regions of the Northeast and Midwest, corporations relocated key operations to the “open shop” Sun Belt economies like Los Angeles (Cowie 2001). Post-1965 immigration from Latin America and the US former colonies in Asia – and the escalation of US-funded wars – provided a constant stream of cheap immigrant labor, most fleeing civil war and state violence, for these manufacturing (and service) industries (Soja et al. 1983; Sassen 2001). During the 1980s, Los Angeles replaced New York as the primary immigration destination (Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996). Immigration to the US, at the fin de siècle, was characteristically more educated, urbanized, and feminized, reflected in the experiences of childcare providers (Hernández-León 2008). Latina women workers, in particular, became central to the low-wage manufacturing and service economies of Southern California (Morales and Ong 1991; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983).

As Los Angeles’s racialized division of labor shifted in the 1960s, with African-American women leaving domestic work for the expanding public sector, Latina migrants took up many of these care positions (Chang 1996; Romero 1992; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007). Female migrants like Nelly and Esperanza became part of an expanding “global nanny chain” of women from the

Global South who "migrate to perform care labor for upper- and middle-class women in advanced economies in both the North and the South" (Cheng 2004: 151; cf. Chang 1994; Hochschild 2000; Parrenas 2001; Lan 2006).

Not all women entered low-wage manufacturing and service labor: Sonia and other Angeleno African-Americans with whom I spoke found careers in the finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) sectors, which grew with financialization of the economy (cf. Harvey 2009, Sassen 2001). In fact, African-American women's employment in Los Angeles's FIRE sectors grew from 6 percent in 1970 to 10.1 percent in 1990, and during this same time period, black women's employment jumped from 29.8 to 37.4 percent in professional services (James et al. 2000). Black women's professional employment in Los Angeles has been tempered, as Sonia's experience signals, by the fact that these workers still receive substantially less pay and advancement opportunities (Ibid.).

Despotism and the Shop Floor: California was a bellwether of the expanding neoliberalization of the US economically *and* politically. With the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980, the gains of the labor, feminist, and immigration movements were curtailed under a neoliberal orthodoxy of limited government and privatization and an increase in punitive laws and free trade (Harvey 2012). While serving as California governor from the mid 1960's and 1970s, Reagan launched efforts to privatize public services like public education, introducing tuition at state colleges and universities. As US president, Reagan immediately wielded Taft-Hartley to suppress labor unions at the time public and service sector unions began to increase membership among women and US minorities. Coupling this anti-labor climate with the decline of unionized manufacturing jobs irreversibly atrophied a once-formidable stalwart to management and reduced the availability of well-paid positions for women and minorities. The rise of flexible production, the active dismantling of unions, and the decline of manufacturing all prompted the disintegration of the "family wage," pushing more women into the workforce in the 1970s and 1980s (Collins and Mayer 2010). Ofelia sought work at the electronics factory in order to make ends meet and secure stability in terms of purchasing a home. Marina worked as a seamstress in the apparel sector as one anchor in a dual-income household prior to carework.

The collapse of the Soviet Union during the early 1990s ushered in globalized neoliberal capitalist expansion. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 eliminated trade barriers among Canada, US, and Mexican markets. US manufacturers were able to move production to Mexico in zones along the border, which enhanced corporate management power, using the threat of capital flight (Cowie 2001). Michael Buroway refers to the threat of capital flight as hegemonic despotism (Buroway 1985). Hegemonic despotism is not only structurally violent but has disparate impacts along gendered, racial, and regional lines. Ofelia, Marina, and Manuel experienced the "pay cuts, irregular hours…smaller benefits packages, and reduced enforcement of health and safety regulations" under the hegemonic despotism that ensued in the wake of NAFTA. They also experienced the ways in which the garment industry's predominately feminized workforce was affected on both side of the US/Mexico Border (Collins 2006:155): Ofelia and her AAC co-workers' calls for bonuses were met with increased quotas. By threatening to move further inland, the AAC pitted one economically-distressed neighborhood against another to force the local government into 11th hour concessions to stay despite complaints from local residents. Manuel also spoke of a failed union drive at the apparel warehouse and the forced layoffs that ensued.

***Finding Family Childcare*:** In the context of late liberalism in California, home-based childcare appears less a pursuit of entrepreneurial middle-class dreams than a response, organized at the household level, to the economic dislocations wrought by a restructured Californian economy. In fact, the neoliberalization of welfare policy occuring alongside these global and regional economic shifts made the growth of the family childcare sector possible.

California was ground zero for the dismantling of the US welfare system, a project initiated by Reagan but ultimately realized in the 1990s by Democratic president Bill Clinton. California's welfare programs are subcontracted out to 58 counties, and local governments in Southern California became pioneers in neoliberal experiments to dismantle welfare. In the late 1980s, Riverside County piloted the first welfare-to-work program, known locally as GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence). GAIN became widely-touted by neoliberal policymakers as a model to be replicated in the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which eliminated cash aid for needy families, introduced workfare mandates, and instituted stringent time limits on welfare. As one senior program executive proudly admitted, the impetus behind GAIN was to determine "how few services can [we] render and still get someone employment" and "to become a Wal-Mart kind of organization [that could] keep our costs down, our overhead low, and deal in volume" (Peck 1998).

Compared to other California counties, Riverside's GAIN also nearly halved the availability of childcare subsidies and the payments provided families, a model replicated in the 1988 Job

Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) pilot program and the 1996 PRWORA (Peck 1998). In both JOBS and PRWORA, policymakers proffered federal childcare block grants to state governments as a market solution to increase participation of women with children in the paid labor force. Public subsidy rates for childcare providers were determined through a reimbursement formula based on regional market-based surveys developed during the shift towards private management of public programs in the 1980s (Cohen 2013). Given the ever-lower subsidies states offered for childcare – and the limitation of adjoining federal programs like Head Start – many participants in JOBS and later PRWORA programs turned to informal kin networks and to the family childcare system to find affordable, consistent care (Hagen and Lurie 1993; Touminen 2003).

Illegality at the Center**:** Tracing providers' lives makes clear the centrality of ideologies of gender and motherhood to elite efforts to remake welfare and foreclose the terms of citizenship. In recomposing the welfare system in the 1980s and 1990s, policymakers and anti-welfare ideologues deployed racially-inflected notions of "welfare queens" and "underclass" pathologies like teen pregnancy and single motherhood (Collins and Mayer 2010; di Leonardo 1998: 124). In hearings and media, proponents of welfare reform, in particular lawmakers from California and the Southwest, deployed interconnected racialized discourses demonizing immigrant women and their children as draining the state's coffers (Chock 1995, 1999). Advocates of new workfare regimes exploited anti-immigrant nativism to push through the elimination of welfare benefits to that population. Supposedly-"illegal" Latina mothers and children became visible targets in the debates on California's Proposition 187, the 1996 PRWORA, and Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) (Kretsedemas and Aparicio 2004; Chock 1995, 1999). Together, IIRIRA and PRWORA eliminated welfare benefits for the undocumented as well as for legal permanent residents, and Proposition 187 (which passed but was ultimately deemed unconstitutional) sought to make undocumented immigrants ineligible for health, education, and other public services (Ibid.).

As Nicholas De Genova points out, "delinquency" – more specifically "illegality" – is in itself produced but also productive (2002). Constructions of illegality affected immigrant women and poor women in parallel ways, deployed to discipline low-wage service workers through the workfare state (Collins and Mayer 2010). Welfare-to-work rendered receipt of (very limited) benefits dependent on participation in the low-wage workforce, often for multinational corporations demanding a cheap and flexible labor pool (Ibid.). Maggie Dickinson stresses that welfare reform was not about erasing welfare but rather restructuring workfare to "subsidize low wages and punish unemployment," emblematic of "reconfigured relationships among citizens, employers, and the state" (2016: 279).

As providers' experiences suggest, constructions of migrant illegality and "dependency" make many women's and men's participation in care work essential to the maintenance of the evolving workfare state. Nelly, Manuel, and Marina turned to childcare as a household strategy to deal with the instabilities of belonging to mixed-status households. Of course, their position within this industry is fragile. Manuel noted the irony of US politicians claiming to promote a business-friendly climate that fosters entrepreneurship, but then fomenting nativist politics that hamper immigrant microentrepreneurs. "It's my business, and here [in the US] opening a small business is encouraged, but not for the undocumented," he pointed out scathingly.

Conclusions: Towards A Counter Space of Care

After revealing her past trauma to me, Esperanza confided that recently she had been physically assaulted by her long-term neighbor, outside her home in a residential area of the West San Fernando Valley. Tensions with her neighbor, whom she describes as "harassing her day in and day out for fifteen years, and insulting [her]," purportedly about noise and traffic from the daycare center, finally came to a boil a few weeks prior to my visiting in November 2015. An active union member, Esperanza lamented the fact that the union has been slow to assist her with legal advice on dealing with her neighbor, whom she also accused of poisoning her dog through a hole in the fence. In full disclosure, the union reached out to me for legal advice on Esperanza's behalf via text message the day before my visit, due to my previous work in housing and tenants' rights. I realized that the union staff and organizers were unsure how to address the dispute, one of many complex situations that arise when the household becomes the "shop floor," where multiple forms of racialized, gendered, and class inequalities "come home."

Esperanza's experience reminds us that family childcare providers do not simply remember past interpersonal or "visible" violence; they live it in the present. But, like the violence that they have seen manifest throughout their lives, structural and symbolic violence continues to entwine fundamentally with the interpersonal violence to which they are at times subject. Structural and symbolic violence also weaves into providers' positions as racialized and gendered economic and political subjects. It must be read as enmeshed with the rise of neoliberal capitalism across the Americas, part of the continual restructuring of political and economic life in a way that renders labor vulnerable, and life itself precarious.

But households experience neither precarity nor violence equally. Utilizing the household as a unit of analysis brings to light the ways in which policymakers and elites deploy racialized and gendered constructions of difference in ways that facilitate privatization, labor devaluation, commodification, spatial dispossession, and other aspects of neoliberal capitalism. Ethnographic examination into the ways in which relations of precarity enmesh with the household provides an important corrective to what di Leonardo terms the “Harvey effect” – the occlusion of race and gender in scholarship on globalized neoliberal capitalism (2008: 16).

For providers, the household is not merely a nexus for past sufferings and present insecurities, but a space to transform contemporary relations. From the vantage point of the household, one can see how providers attempt to create counterspaces of care for their and others’ kin, in opposition to the violence that marks the lives of working-poor families in the US. Counter to many accounts of precarity, providers do not describe a nostalgia for Fordism, for an imagined, secure past of employment, or even for the more recent post-Fordist past, even though many did find work in manufacturing and the professional sector (Week 2015). For many, the past is marked with suffering and loss that, as Han describes, “*presents* itself” in everyday life (2012). They are also well aware of the suffering of the families and children they care for; it is experienced, not simply represented in narrative. Providers instead construct identities as entrepreneurs and early childhood educators and build new socialities that challenge racialized inequalities and violence through their labor. Given their histories, they identify closely with their clients and other marginalized households and collectively seek to improve the well-being and life chances of these communities – in other words, to propel an ethic of care into the project of early intervention.

Miriam Ticktin critiques care as antipolitics, but understanding the relationship between providers' past and present suggests care is not necessarily devoid of politics nor merely "compassion for suffering bodies recognized as morally legitimate" (Han 2012: 23; Ticktin 2011). A feminist anthropological lens, focusing our gaze to household labor and historical political economy, allows us to foreground economically and socially vulnerable workers' differential conditions and the ways in which subject formation is reproduced and contested in intimate and public ways. Providers' care labor and organizing produce spaces where racialized and gendered structural and physical violence are confronted every day. They, at times, encounter ghosts of past dispossessions as present sufferings. These confrontations and sufferings, however, can be reckoned with through relations of care and projects to transform welfare and education vis-à-vis early intervention.

Chapter 3: Chill Pills, Play and Panic

> [Ms. Williams' Attorney] I see there are some bottles out on the counter in this photograph, can you describe what is happening in this photograph?
> [Ms. Williams] The bottles are getting washed before the art project, all these bottles.
> [Attorney] Can you turn to the photograph in U4? What is U4 a picture of?
> [Ms. Williams] It's the "happy boxes" that the children made. And I'm letting the parents know we made three different things: we made "chill pill containers." "Chill pill containers" contain either Jujubes or M&M candies. So, whenever they felt the need that they were getting out of sorts, they could ask their parent for a "chill pill." The second box was a safety kit, first-aid kit. In that kit if they got hurt there were Band-Aids, and some Vaseline we call the ointment. Cotton balls we couldn't fit so we put them in the "happy boxes." The last thing is the "dental box."
> When the kids – they like to brush their teeth. We took a trip to the dentist's office. So they gave them little teeny tiny dental brushes, that come already with the toothpaste on it. So the kids can brush their teeth and use the dental floss. And they like the dental floss because it is cherry flavored.
> …. [Attorney] And if you can turn to it, U7 and U8 look like pictures of the finished product with the medicine bottles.
> [Ms. Williams] Yes, we tried to make them as authentic as possible. Like labels that come from a pharmacy. When the parents go and get their medicine filled, the kids wanted to have real labels on their bottles, too [like their parents].
> [Attorney] Between U7 and U8 there is a chill pill container, dental kits, and a medicine kit.

This opening exchange occurred inside an administrative hearing room on the sixth floor of the Junipero Serra State building in downtown Los Angeles, during the spring of 2015. In the case, the judge was presented with accusations that Ms. Jackie Williams, an entertainment legal secretary turned licensed childcare provider, endangered children at her home-based business. State agents, known as license program analysts (LPA), claimed that during the course of a home inspection, they witnessed Ms. Williams — who has been providing licensed care for eight years — exposing children to prescription drugs and paint cans. Ms. Williams's attorney's defense was predicated on convincing the administrative judge that, despite the appearance of skirting state regulations, Ms. Williams's actions were far more innocuous than the state was making them to seem; they were, in fact, evidence of her capacity to resourcefully repurpose everyday objects and make toys for child's play.

Even though Ms. William's administrative hearings focused on play, it was not to be taken lightly: the hearings are charged sites where childcare providers must defend themselves against having their licenses revoked and their livelihood cut short. The LPA's claims were adjudicated as accurate, meaning Ms. Williams violated Title 22 of the California Educational code, which governs family childcare homes across the state. The court did not, ultimately, suspend her license, though the judge did levy heavy annual fines and place Ms. Williams under a three-year probationary period — a decision that Ms. Williams felt was undeserved.

The irony was not lost on most people in the courtroom that "chill pill" in everyday parlance and youth vernacular is used to dissuade others from overreacting and to promote calm. However, in this context, this popular expression created the opposite effect — at the least among adult observers. Nonetheless, I argue that the stakes were so high for Ms. Williams, who besides having to hire a private counsel, had her capacity as a caregiver impugned, because of the centrality of consumption in the material, ideological, and structural relations defining childhood and the weight given “early intervention” in the life course. These relations are fundamentally entwined with who is deemed a proper citizen and market participant.

Anthropological theory offers critical insight into “child’s play”, toys and crafts as a materialization of childhood *and* broader social realities (Schwartzman 2005, 1979; Chin 2001). In the following pages, I suggest that the differing interpretations of the “chill pill” and other play in family childcare homes demonstrate the significance of shifting social constructions of childhood as a means to underpin the power of state agents and experts in the commodified childcare marketplace. In scrutinizing the material practices and objects of childhood defined by play, postwelfare public and private institutions assert a vision of childhood as a risky enterprise of producing future independent, economic subjects--children--that providers, and workfare parents must negotiate. I offer multiple ethnographic vignettes that give context to the use of and panic regarding “chill pills” and illuminate interactions, relationships and contestations among state agents, nonprofits, providers and parents that signal the way the “translocal” state is produced in everyday settings (Gupta 2012; Sharma and Gupta 2009). Read in the context of broader histories of state-sponsored childcare services in the US, and in light of contemporary calls for intervention into the earliest stages of the life course, the politics of play index shifting boundaries among household, market, and state, and fundamentally emplace the socialization of the productive child subject at the center of the modern liberal nation-building project.

Childhood, in this light, is constructed dialectically vis-a-vis adulthood: Ms. Williams’s hearing points to the ways in which providers are positioned as othered subjects, simultaneously under state surveillance and scrutiny and obscured from public view. The boundaries among child and adult, vulnerability and agency — of who bears and produces risk — are in constant tension and shape the ways rights and punitive measures are assigned along continua of power and hierarchies of difference. Experts' and state bureaucrats' scrutiny of child's play and material culture demonstrates how childhood and adulthood are far from fixed life stages. They are better understood as material and ideological constructions, historically contingent and locally situated, bearing the weight of moral orders and anxieties concerning imagined national futures, fundamental to shifting state power that advances the marketization of everyday life.

Seeing State Power

This chapter draws significantly from ethnographic observation of administrative court hearings in Los Angeles in 2015. I also draw from ethnographic observation and interviews with family childcare provider interlocutors, conducted from 2012 to 2015. Particularly salient were conversations conducted during dozens of visits to providers' homes and more informal childcare union meetings, where providers discussed their relationships to the families they served and to the state that subsidized their incomes. I also conducted supplementary informational interviews with licensed program analysts and California Child Care Licensing Division staff, in what turned out to be a protracted (and ultimately unsuccessful) process of attempting to secure the most current and full Community Care Licensing program manuals.

Observing the language of the public administrative court hearings and the CCLD documents I did obtain allowed me access to their dynamic legal, juridical, and bureaucratic discursive framings, which show how state agents use home inspections to monitor and socialize private residences into complying with shifting regulatory regimes in early childhood education.

I also paid attention to how providers and parents discuss the state and its role, which are key to how the state materializes locally (Sharma and Gupta 2009).

Despite being state-subsidized, providers rarely interact with state agents. Their payments often come from nonprofit subcontractors, their clients deal with welfare-to-work applications, and their training is usually at their own behest via local colleges and universities. When they do come into contact with state power, it is through these street-level bureaucrats who hold significant ability to influence their lives. The determinations made by licensing agents, on the other hand, are loosely bound by a field operation manual obscured from public view. Most providers never see the full field manual. The union had been able to obtain parts of a version of the field operation manual from nearly a decade prior, which it presented to providers at workshops and other sessions. But the CCLD supposedly updated the document since the mid-2000s. One LPA I interviewed explained the agency was in the process of adding to manual (including putting in a section on the "rights of the child"), but CCLD was still editing it and could not provide it to members of the public. During my multiple years of fieldwork, no updated version of the manual was ever released.

Because of state agents' heavy workload, investigations are often triggered by and dependent upon rumors and hearsay, which most often come from (at times resentful) parents, neighbors, and former employees. Unlike in criminal court, administrative judges may rule these complaints admissible. Thus, the "effect" of state power is refracted through at times tense relations and interpersonal and professional conflicts among providers and the adults in their environment (cf. Mitchell 1991).

Frameworks at Play

Critical Childhood Studies

Childhood studies draw attention to understanding children as social actors, and the agentive ways in which children are not only influenced by but actively change their environment (Wood 2014; Katz 2004; Schwartzman 1979, 2006). In the US, this scholarship provides a counterweight to popular, expert, and policymaker notions — enshrined in many of the state policies described in this chapter — that portray children as "nonproductive, social beings in progress" and in fact as preeminent consumers of material and emotional life (Chin 2001: 131). Scholars of childhood have drawn particular attention to play, often assumed to be outside the purview of politics or meaning (Greishaber & McArdle 2010; Schwartzman 2006). Anthropologist Helen Schwartzman notes that for numerous decades much research "implicitly or explicitly [cast] childhood as a time for purposeless activity, the child passing time in play until it can begin to learn important things or be useful" (1979). Sociologists and psychology researchers, for instance, have found children "doing gender," reflecting "adult" meanings about femininity and masculinity, and replicating racialized ideologies, racially classifying playmates as early as kindergarten (Blaise 2005; Fishbein & Imai 1993; Renold 2006; cf. West and Zimmerman 1987). Care providers' and children's interactions in play are ideally situated scenarios from which to glean children's desires and aspirations as well as the ways in which they explore and remake their surroundings (Schwartzman 1979, 2006).

Cindi Katz (2004) and Lauren Martin (2011) note that understanding the child as a social and political agent requires significant nuance, especially when it comes to analyzing citizenship and state power vis-a-vis children's daily practices. New scholarship, particularly in geography, contends that children assert agency in what they identify as the "liminal" political spaces of everyday life — like school playgrounds (Skelton 2009; Pauliina & Häkli 2011; Wood 2012). An analytic of the "everyday," Katz, Martin, and other researchers contend, requires elucidating the "historical context and relations of power" that shape and constrain children's lives (Elwood and Mitchell 2012). For example, in certain Western liberal contexts, children are viewed in terms of their "best interests," but, paradoxically, these must be articulated by adults or by the state (Katz 2004; Martin 2011).[12]

Underlying most social scientific studies of child's play, and analytics of child versus adult agency, is the assumed universality of childhood identity, which, as anthropologists have pointed out, can be more taken-for-granted than those formed around class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality (Jenks 1996; Gupta 2002). Although there is widespread disagreement among scholars about what childhood is, Western notions divide children into grades (typically based on age) and life into stages (*Ibid*). Life cycle models presume a natural division of childhood, middle-age, and old-age life stages, predicated on a chronological directionality that is uniform and progressive, from the novice child to general adulthood (Schwartzman 1979, 2006). A zero-sum, rigidly linear view of life stages arises continuously in discussion of the role of providers, viewed as critical to "early intervention" in the first years of life as essential to closing academic achievement gaps and later performance in the economy.

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[12] Martin uses the example of children in US immigration court to show the real constraints on child agency. In these spaces, children are cast as "presumed innocent" subjects, but also bound up in geopolitical mappings of "external danger" to the nation that render parents "hyper-responsible" and criminal (2011). The paradoxical vulnerability of children vis-a-vis the nation-state allows all sorts of actions that punish parent and child alike.

Alternatively, anthropologist Akhil Gupta sheds light on the multiplicity of conceptions of childhood, like those in Tibetan Buddhist narratives of reincarnated children, which disrupt ontological assumptions “about the time of childhood” and life stages in general (2002). Western notions, Gupta notes, reflect an orientation where history moves ever forward in a teleological directionality and in which childhood is equated with linear growth and continuity (Ibid.; cf. Gould 1987). The way that reincarnated children and those who otherwise remember past lives report embodied memories, Gupta argues, calls into question teleological narratives involving temporality and childhood (Ibid).

A critical ethnographic lens can give us a clearer understanding of the mutual construction of adulthood and childhood beyond a narrow, time-bound frame – and bring to light the significance of linear life course models to the power of state and market actors. Particularly salient to the case of family childcare, ethnography provides critical insight into how, ultimately, state agents and experts reify life stage models and the childhood/adulthood binary in order to fashion (and ultimately govern) children and adults alike into cooperative agents who will maintain the broader social, political, and economic order (cf. Durham & Solway 2017; Mulderig 2011; Gupta 2002).

Margaret Mead and the Child-Primitive

Returning to the presumed godmother of the anthropology of childhood, Margaret Mead, helps us further understand the history of thought in anthropology regarding the politics of children and their agency. Mead utilized representations of what she termed sexually permissive “primitive” Samoan adolescents to critique rising Western anxieties around “youth delinquency” and "sexual experimentation," rooted in increasing consumerism in the early twentieth century (Mead 1930, 1954; Ryan 2008). Mead's work has been critiqued for its reification of static notions of culture, cementing "primitive as commodity" anthropology with herself as authoritative interpreter of "the uses of exotic merchandise" (di Leonardo 1998). Mead's work and the commodification of the "exotic" reiterate the centrality of material culture — its production, consumption, circulation — to the construction of childhood and adulthood. Through ethnography, I aim to capture the production, circulation, and consumption of childhood and things among households with whom I worked and the meaning drawn from such dynamic interactions.

But what Mead's work is perhaps most indicative of is the ways in which social scientific notions of childhood — interrelated with popular culture and often promulgated by state agencies and non-governmental experts — are fundamentally linked to the production of race and gender and enmeshed in power relations and US imperialism. As Gupta notes, a narrow concept of human development, with its "assumed hierarchies, directionality, purposiveness, and goal orientations, not only emplots individual lives, but cultures and nations into primitive, backwards or underdeveloped" (2002: 18). It is no coincidence then that the notion of children developed in the nineteenth century during the heyday of European colonialism (as well as industrialization). During this formative period for the modern era, the figure of the savage and the primitive was fused to that of the child (Gupta 2002; cf. Schwartzman 1979). The child-as-primitive trope harkens to studies of child's play in the Victorian Era, where evolutionary anthropologists such as G. Stanley Hall claimed that examining (then) contemporary child's play

— "instinctive, untaught and non-imitative" served as a window into the lives of past generations of adults (1904 in Schwartzman 1979: 22). The relationship between the child and the "primitive" makes further sense when one considers that, in the European feudal context, childhood denoted a relationship of dependency whereby lords would commonly refer to adult serfs as children (Gupta 2002). Despite the shift to industrial capitalism, the "relationship between children as the forbearers of adulthood and primitive man as the forbearer of civilization" has remained relatively consistent (Ibid.).

Children, even within social science, continue be a "paradigmatic other" in the words of Chris Jenks, a lens through which we see and know racialized, gendered, and classed difference (1996). Implicit in this "othering" of children, I contend, is the figure of the proper adult — the desired political and economic modern subject. For example, improper behavior in adults is frequently referred to as "childhood," in contemporary political analysis, pundits contrast the "adults in the room" to self-interested or squabbling politicians labeled as child-like (Mann 2017).[13] In similar ways, as Shalini Shankar summarizes, critical race theorists point to the ways in which whiteness becomes the "mark of modernity" only in contradistinction to blackness and black lives (2014; cf. Fabian 2006; Hesse 2011). As childhood is continually re-created, so is adulthood defined: the roles of non-kin caregiver, responsible adult, adult perpetrator, or victim are continually in flux and in juxtaposition to childhood. The "othering" of childhood is intimately co-produced with the marginalization of the non-white racialized and non-parent female (and at times queer) gendered bodies of commodified caregivers.

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[13] Interestingly, at time of writing, many pundits have labeled and lifted up military officials "adults" in contrast to the erratic Trump regime (Mann 2017).

Feminist Conundrums

Recognizing the interrelation of the "othering" of commodified care workers and children requires feminist analytics, yet childhood and feminist studies rarely intersect in their investigations of the ways in which gender and other hierarchies are reproduced. Sociologist Berry Mayall identifies the fact that social scientific studies of childhood "[emphasize] the socio-political character of children as a social group, on the tense, but often parallel trajectory with feminist scholarship" (2002). As Karen Twamley, Rachel Rosen, and Mayall note, few studies directly explore the ways in which scholars and activists discuss the interests and (even liberation?) of women and children as antagonistic to each other (Twamley et al. 2016).[14] Feminist theorists have argued that feminist subjectivity is constructed in tension with men; Elizabeth Chin takes this one step further, suggesting the absence of children in feminist theory points to how feminist subjectivity is also in tension with Western notions of children (Chin 2001). In fact, some feminist scholars argue that expanding global regimes' children's rights and value, embodied in programs of early education, have only increased the care and labor burden on women (Cornwall & Molyneux 2006; Newberry 2014). Chin argues that tools of feminist anthropology are actually ideal for studying childhood, as they can be of use in addressing how "structures of power manufacture and maintain silence," to maintain an intentional focus on everyday practice, and to veer from universalizing and essentializing subjects (2001).

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[14] To this end, Twamley et al. have developed a new research workshop and project, Feminism and the Politics of Childhood: Friends or Foes?, to better bridge these bodies of scholarship. For more: https://feminismandchildhood.wordpress.com/

Critical feminist anthropology draws attention to the broader political and economic context in which providers' and children's everyday actions and play come under scrutiny. In their own contributions to a social constructionist lens, feminist anthropologists have provided a means to capture gender (and interrelated hierarchies) as ideologically-produced but also materially grounded in institutions. Feminist anthropologists have encapsulated historical material trends but also the uses of history in ideological debates, and the importance of capturing multiple forms and patterns of inequality (1991: 29-31; di Leonardo and Lancaster 1997). For example, feminist studies in the US contexts have elucidated the gap between the treatment of mother-child caregiving as a universal that is placed in opposition to the ubiquitous global "nanny chains" that underpin neoliberal globalized capitalism - labor relations often absent from childhood studies (cf. Hochschild 2000a, b; Ikasen et al. 2008; Parreñas 2012; Yeates 2004).

Taking account of the shift toward non-kin and commercial caregiving practice allows insight into the tensions among children and caregivers produced in these intimate spaces (cf. Lancy 2007). The interlinked lives of children and adults in the eyes of the workfare state and neoliberal global market forces leaves providers themselves "at risk." Family childcare relationships are contractual, and money is exchanged; children are circulated among households. Social factors and structural inequality co-exist along market-based exchanges: most providers share racial and economic subject positions with their parent clients and children. As I explore in this chapter, state agents, experts and nonprofits, "other" parents, children, and providers — and childhood and adulthood writ large — are positioned differentially and often in opposition to each other. Parents, providers, and children navigate and deploy these oppositions to gain a foothold vis-a-vis the state and in the market. Parents may be stripped of power and treated as suspect by welfare-to-work agencies, yet at other times may lodge complaints and instigate investigation against their childcare providers. Children exert agency and power in particular ways that state agencies often elide or readily dismiss as adult "lack of supervision."

Through a material feminist lens, we see that child's play and provider practices are enmeshed in webs of local bureaucrats, agencies, non-governmental bodies, and other state-related institutions that point to the translocality of the post-welfare state (Gupta 1995, 2012; Sharma and Gupta 2009). Gupta highlights the dialectical reproduction of the "translocal" state as citizens and bureaucrats talk about and relate to each other in everyday practice, processes by which racial, gender and class inequalities and power imbalances are maintained. I elucidate how the state becomes "visible" in the practices of street-level bureaucrats like home inspections entwine with private nonprofit subcontractors' practices, as well as providers' own talk about the state and parents and providers' "hearsay" (i.e., gossip) regarding providers' homes, which often was used to spark home inspections. By paying attention to how play is seen, heard, and treated in everyday institutional domestic care settings, I am able to make visible how configurations of "state" and market power manifest in everyday settings and the specific actors who reproduce or challenge racialized, gendered, and class inequalities.

Queering the Future

Here I only begin to problematize and decenter heteronormative masculinities by examining men's participation in childcare homes in a climate where they are often dismissed as absent or unemployed and therefore non-contributory (Bray & Bradt 2007). I find that men are present, but their activities with children continue to be limited to certain forms of masculinized play (often outside the physical boundaries of the home). They test the limits of dominant stereotypes of masculinities while reproducing others in their activities and care work with children.

Haunting these male-adult-children interactions are figurations of queer bodies. Ethnographic insight into the shifting morality plays involving children and non-kin caregivers in licensed home facilities offers an opportunity to bring together childhood and queer studies. Like feminist studies, queer and childhood studies are often in marked opposition to each other. Queer scholars have singled out the importance of challenging the hegemonic position of the image-of-the-child-as-collective-future as reproductive futurism. Some of the most radical queer theorists question whether “a nation made for adult citizens has been replaced by one imagined for fetuses and children” (Langdridge 2013; Edelman 2004; Kidd 2011) Through analyzing the contestations and practices of play in the family childcare home, I find that child-centric policy is indeed constructed in juxtaposition to queer bodies that purportedly endanger future producers. In the shadow of “reproductive futurism,” commodified caregiving becomes a fraught labor, inflected with the weight of national imaginaries and market-made anxieties.

I further argue that “queer vs. child” antimonies omit the lives of a panoply of actors — especially commodified caregivers — who themselves are “othered” and who push at the boundaries of the heteronormative nuclear family and its attendant national projects. In protecting the reproductive future, family childcare providers are central to facilitating economic nation-building projects, yet they are viewed as putting these projects at risk. As di Leonardo argues regarding constructions of the urban and the home, broadly, providers' homes are trapped between binaries of pleasure and danger, of who is (white women) permitted "unruly" homes and who (women of color) must be policed, whose domesticity is presupposed and who is posed as a risk to children (2003).[15]

Heteronormative frames for kinship, which are reproduced in state power and marketized relations, limit the ways in which the public can imagine the complex intimacies of non-biological and commodified care, especially in family childcare homes. Family childcare homes are spaces in which providers are themselves "queered" as non-kin caregivers, and at times promote a "right to be queer" – both of which manifest in how state agents and experts consider play and material culture like toys. In other words, providers, in their everyday practices with children, complicate and challenge racial and gendered formations. Providers discussed in this specific chapter (and in this dissertation more broadly) must confront the valences, values, and violence embedded in childhood, and, in so doing, throw into question racial, gendered, and class-based power. In the work of helping children play, they raise the possibility that the future will not simply reproduce, but actually produce new ways of being human.

Dangerous Games

According to the state licensing agents' and the regional licensing office director's testimony, Ms. Williams violated the following sections of Title 22:

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[15] Relevant to an analytics of queer bodies and childcare homes, geographer David Bell argues these faultlines among where pleasure is permitted or danger is assumed are fundamentally interlinked with the construction of "sexual citizenship" (1995).

> *(d) The home shall provide* ***safe toys, play equipment*** *and* ***materials***
> *(g) (4) Poison, detergents, cleaning compounds, medicine, firearms and other items* ***which could*** *pose danger if readily available to children shall be stored where they are inaccessible to children - Field operation manual 102417.*

This excerpt is taken from the field operation manual for community care licensing agents, which mandates how licensing program analysts (LPA) enforce Title 22. In addition, it provides analysts the authority to issue citations for non-compliance to state educational and health and safety codes using an alphabetized ranked coding system: type A, B, and C. Type A violations are reserved for the most egregious violations deemed to "pose a current risk to children's health and safety or violate personal rights" (CA-CCL, n.d.) Providers given multiple "type A" violations are subject to license revocation hearings, fines and charges from the state, and posting a notice of violation for parents to view. LPAs had issued Ms. Williams several type A violations in their field report, which led to the license revocation administrative hearings.

The multiple impulses informing the work of the CCLD noted in Chapter 1 — including the racialized public health frame, the primacy given to biological and maternal kin care, and the positioning of children as morally and physically vulnerable, particularly in the early years of life, undergird the tensions and conflicts that brought Ms. Williams before an administrative judge.[16] Constructions of children as vulnerable and at risk underpin the childcare licensing legal framework and the role of state licensing agents who must "protect" children on behalf of the state in the present and the potential future. According to the field guide given to LPAs, similar to the practices used to inspect other community care facilities, a written determination of risk can either be based on a specific part of a regulation or justified by "[explaining] how the deficiency will have an immediate or future impact on children." These lines among present action, future harm, and "deficiency" delineate what childhood is supposed to be and normative family childcare practices.

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[16] See Chapter 1 for a detailed genealogy of the CCLD.

But what makes play – identified in the above excerpt as "safe toys, play equipment and materials" – a key terrain for state power and intervention into childcare homes? As the following excerpt suggests, objects (especially toys) in childcare homes come under particular scrutiny because they are a material record that can be inspected by the state agents during visits:

> [Ms. Williams' Attorney] If you could turn, Ms. Williams, to U5.
> What do you have there — like some paint can there in U5. Where did those come from?
> [Ms. Williams] The paint cans were donated by Lowes and, um, we have a running inside joke {giggles}. The kids used to make their drum sets out of oatmeal containers and by the time we have a good music jam session, the oatmeal boxes would be gone.
> So one of the parents suggested to step it up a notch. We have a professional drummer come in and he suggested, 'Yea, we can do this.' So what he did, he taught kids about timbos and sound waves, and each paint can would have to be filled with water, rice, beans, and left open to give a different sound, and we teach them rhythm.
> [Attorney] Looks like U-5 is a picture of the construction in progress of the drums?
> [Ms. Williams] Yes sir and over to the side, this is a cowbell.
> [Attorney] You are referring to the black object that is located to the right?
> [Ms. Williams] Over on the right side is the tambourine.
> [Attorney] Ms. Williams, U-6 looks like paint cans were used for something else. Can you talk about what is going on in U-6?
> [Ms. Williams] The kids were learning to be kind to others. They made flower containers.

> We talked about being kind to one another. We want everyone to know [that] you needed to care. So we had stuff left over from Mother's Day, so the kids wanted to make flowers, and they made flower containers according to the colors they had at their house. They used the duct tape for masking. These are colorful cotton balls.
>
> [Attorney] Just to be clear, you are talking about the base of the paint cans.
>
> [Ms. Williams] Each paint can was clean, again — it's a donation from Lowes.

The material record of child's play in the "chill pill" case is read and interpreted differently from Ms. Williams's account when regulatory norms are strictly applied. Even with Ms. Williams's detailed description of how she transformed the paint cans into a series of artistic and musical activities, and how they were obtained from a corporate donor specifically for re-use, the LPAs presented a narrative that no amount of labor could absolve the paint cans of risk.

Play, as Susan Gaskins and colleagues point out, is not only "culturally constructed" through adult caretakers' child-rearing beliefs, values and ideas (in this case, in tension with the LPA's conceptions) but the social relations and interactions of play are structured by available material resources (2007). These repurposed objects, in this light, signal something else: how providers make do with low subsidy reimbursement rates and, even more than schoolteachers, must subsidize supplies required for childcare out of their own pockets or through seeking out donations, small grants, or other means. According to providers, while state agencies impose numerous restrictions on appropriate care, in the context of workfare subsidies, policymakers offer little funding to actually meet the demands of the occupation. In the course of fieldwork with the union, I was asked to identify private philanthropic or federal and state grants that could be used to obtain supplies or continuing education. Most required a non-profit status (versus an

LLC, which most providers had) and were geared towards private and public schoolteachers, leaving providers with few options to raise funds.

Re-imagined pill containers and paint cans are an acute reflection of the uneven and shifting racialized geographies of Los Angeles County during the turn of the 21st century, in particular in the northeastern high desert exurbs of the Antelope Valley where Ms. Williams resides. Until recently the region was predominantly white and middle class, when aerospace industry professionals populated the arid landscapes. The area has since gone through both economic and demographic diversification with the decline of aerospace industry and the rising cost of living in central Los Angeles (Kurwa 2015; Bargmann 2011). The Antelope Valley cities of Lancaster and Palmdale experienced a thirty percent increase in population from 2000 to 2010 (Kurwa 2015). These represented the largest increases in black and Latinx populations in the Los Angeles region, as residents like Ms. Williams fled the high costs of living in the urban core on the one hand, and inner-city disinvestment on the other (Tumpson Molina 2016a, b; Policylink & PERE 2017). During the Great Recession from 2007 to the early 2010s, these two cities accounted for roughly eighteen percent of all foreclosures in Los Angeles County, and property values dropped by half locally (Kurwa 2015). While scholars have debated which properties would remain vacant — exurbs or "inner-ring" suburbs — after the crisis, it turns out it is not geography, but race which is the most accurate predicting factor: Lancaster and Palmdale demonstrate that areas with more black and Latinx residents have been more likely to maintain high rates of vacancy post-crisis (Tumpson Molina 2016a, b). In other words, racialized disparities undergirded both the turn to subprime mortgages and the uneven recovery and investment patterns following the foreclosure crisis, all of which occurred as Ms. Williams built her childcare business serving low-income families.

Providers describe the ways in which parent-clients' lack of resources affect care. Antelope Valley providers I spoke to also described the rapid drop in non-subsidy parents in the wake of the foreclosure crisis, and how they struggled to keep their businesses out of further debt. Parents on welfare-to-work subsidies are meant to pay some portion of the child care in cash to the provider, but numerous providers in the Antelope Valley and other impoverished parts of the region found themselves continually having to wait months for payment from parents, or never getting paid at all. They described elaborate workarounds, as well as their own efforts to help "fill in the gaps" by providing extra formula, diapers, meals, toys, and other resources to subsidize the children's upbringing. In fact, a parent I interviewed at Ms. Williams's trial took time off from her minimum wage job as a corporate drugstore pharmacy assistant to testify on Williams's behalf, as the parent who donated the empty pill containers.

While Ms. Williams's toys can be read as an index of stigmatized poverty and the challenges of operating a small business in the impoverished region, for the LPA agents, the presence of everyday objects repurposed as toys and the ambiguity of child's play became the grounds to question the provider's judgment and capacity. The agent decontextualized the use of paint canisters as flower pots and drum sets and medicinal bottles as "chill pill" containers, which suggested that these toys were far too "unpredictable," to use Schwartzman's terminology (1979). Because the act is framed as "risk," even if it is "current," no harm actually had to have occurred. In suspending or revoking Ms. Williams's license to provide care, the state acted in a manner to reaffirm the role of licensing institutions as protectors of children against health and safety risks, detailed further below, which during the crucial "first 5" years are viewed as deciding the entering life course. Turning a blind eye to the racialized political-economic context, the state thereby exacerbates resource disparities and leaves care providers attempting to spin shoestring-budgets into gold.

Pill Panics and Contextualizing Risks

> [Ms. Williams' Attorney] I wanted to ask you about the final incident. It is alleged that in March of this year, you left medication out on your kitchen counter. First of all, did you have medication bottles on your kitchen counter?
> [Ms. Williams] I had several of them.
> [Attorney] Why did you have a medication bottle of your prescription on your kitchen counter?
> [Ms. Williams] Because I had told the parents about a project we were going to do and the parents were donating bottles along with CVS, Rite Aid, Kaiser. And from the pictures all of those bottles were empty.
> [Attorney] So how did you make sure that Oxycodone or Paxil or something wasn't in the bottle by mistake before the bottles were transferred to the kids?

Ms. Williams' attorney's line of questioning provides further insight into how notions of child vulnerability in the early life stages (and the unpredictable nature of play) are mediated by ever-shifting notions of moral and legal dis/order. As Schwartzman notes, how children will utilize toys and play is "complicated and hard to predict," but what interpretations of play do tell us are adults' "concerns, fears, ideas and issues" (1979). Ms. Williams' attorney raised the fear that he assumed were underlying the state's actions: the suspicion of the presence of the narcotic

Oxycodone, which indexes contemporary moral panics regarding prescription painkiller addiction among young populations in the US. As anthropologist Gilbert Quintero explains, since the late 1990s public health advocates, news media, and anti-drug agencies have targeted what they term “Generation Rx”, touting rising numbers of pharmaceutical use among youth to suggest widespread drug abuse (2012). These discourses resurrect notions of “gateway drugs” and make thinly-documented links among prescription drug access and “illicit” pharmacies, “pill mills,” violent robberies for drugs, and other criminalized practices (Ibid.).

As Roger Lancaster explains, moral panics are buried in “a false, exaggerated, or ill-defined moral threat to society” and are addressed through punitive measures, such as everyday surveillance, “zero tolerance” laws and a range of other, often violent legal-juridical and collective enforcement mechanisms (2011: 37-38). While the particular focus on drug-based moral panics in the US may be changing, as anthropologist Stanley Cohen’s classic anthropological work pointed out decades ago, the moral panic around “psychoactive drugs has been remarkably consistent, casting evil pushers and vulnerable users; the slippery slope between soft and hard drugs: and transition from safe to dangerous” (2002).

Of course, pill-panics are not complete fabrication: an estimated twelve million Americans abuse prescription medication, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths every year (Burke 2016 & Brady et al. 2016). But the threat is indeed, to draw from Lancaster, “ill-defined” and, in this case, overlaps quite clearly with fantasy, particularly when it comes to children (2011). Analyzing the National Drug Control Policy statements on illicit pharmaceutical use, Quintero points out that the lines among medical and nonmedical “use, misuse and abuse” become blurred “by being reduced to two essential features” — the suggestion they are not medically sanctioned or that they are used for pleasure (2012: 504).

Chill pills, in Ms. Williams’s case, perpetuate the idea that children and drugs are a deadly mix, even if the medicine is “pretend” and the drug bottle a material signifier. Implicit in the state’s actions against Ms. Williams is the accusation that she is inadvertently contributing to a purportedly-widening generational crisis of addiction. Social scientific analysis has shown that the response to widening prescription drug access has indeed been racialized: the use of prescription drugs among white populations, particularly in the South and Midwest, has been treated far less punitively than black and Latinx heroin use in the late 2000s, or marijuana and crack use during the height of the War on Drugs (Netherland & Hansen 2016). While the children may not be white middle-class youth, those who provide (or in this case, bring) drug-affiliated materials to children are subject to intensive punitive measures and scorn in the US context (cf. Quintero 2012).

Throughout the hearing, any object deemed “medication” was swept up in a broad moral panic regarding addiction. But, as Ms. Williams notes throughout the case, prescription medication is commonly found in most households in the US, and keeping medications completely out of sight from children is a near-impossible task. In fact, as noted above, these pill boxes were donated by a parent who worked at a pharmacy, and who also had them in her home — and whose testimony, given her occupation, should have lent credibility to the assertion of safety of the containers.

The panic around opioid use and addiction is particularly ironic given that this particular "crisis" arises directly out of an institutionally-sanctioned rise in pharmaceutical prescriptions. Children are not immune from this trend: during the 1990s, doctors dramatically increased the number of medications readily prescribed to children in the US, from Adderall for behavior modification to inhalers for asthma (Insel 2014). Among other trends, the number of psychostimulants prescribed to children grew five-fold from 1988-1994 to 2007-2010, and the rates of children under five prescribed psychotropics peaked at 1.45% in 2002-2005 (Chirdkiatgumchai V, et al. 2013; NCHS 2013). In fact, as Ms. Williams's trial was going on, state legislators had put in place a new California law requiring family childcare providers to create a plan for administering prescribed medications to children in their care (particularly for insulin shots). In global contexts, such as that of epidemics, children worldwide engage in administering medicine and providing care for their parents (Hunleth 2017). The realities of medicalization in and around childcare homes are obfuscated by moral outrage: taboos loom large in discussions of moral panics, as Lancaster notes, citing Radcliffe-Brown's notion of taboos inciting fear and initiating collective censure (2011).

Anthropologist Summerson Carr further argues that policymakers and ideologues entwine addictions or "chemical dependency" with economic dependency to substantiate highly gendered notions of "welfare dependency" (2010; McCorkel 2004; Reid & Carr 2006). Echoing Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon (1994) on the political and economic valence of addiction in therapeutic language, both "dependency" on drugs and on state benefits have collapsed into an all-encompassing psychological register indexing the "pathological manifestation of inherently dependent psyches" (Carr 2010). The connections become particularly salient in the context of publicly subsidized childcare settings, where the fear of parents' and children's dependence on the state looms large. Since the 1980s, conservative elites' continually-resurfacing accusations that welfare recipients were overwhelmingly drug addicts, and that crack had even led to the "erosion of maternal instinct" — discourses that in the contemporary moment reappear in state-level drug testing for recipients (Ortiz & Briggs 2003; Campbell 1999; Owen 2017). While not directly mentioned in the case, the fact that the children in Ms. Williams's care are welfare recipients likely heightens the hysteria regarding the use of pharmaceutical objects and the fear of future dependency.

"He whipped me like a country slave"

> [Provider's Attorney] Let me ask you, you also testified a moment ago that you were whipped and I believe you testified that it was the seven-year-old that whipped you?
> [Ms. Williams] Yes, sir, he whipped me like a country slave and said that he would "eff" me up again if I said anything. I called C-C-R-C. Nicole was working there; she was on the line the whole time. I said I'm getting ready to call the cops. CCRC pled with me not to call the cops. I should've just called the fire department so that they could've just talked those kids out of my home.
> [Attorney] And how were you able to separate Mikey and Johnny?
> [Ms. Williams] By playing goalie.
> [Attorney] You mentioned before playing referee and goalie. What does that look like exactly? Can you describe what you did?
> [Ms. Williams] You have seen soccer? Okay, when you are running from place to place, 'Baby, don't do that! Baby, don't run! You could get hurt. Baby, don't hit me with that!

> You can do better than that.’ [reported speech] Talk to them, ‘Come on. You can do better than that.’
> [Attorney] Did you ever grab Mikey by the wrist?
> [Ms. Williams] Never touched him.
> [Attorney] Did you ever throw Mikey across the room?
> [Ms. Williams] Huh? NO! I had the phone on one hand talking on the phone with Nicole, trying to keep balance.
> [Attorney] Did you ever kick Johnny on the knee?
> [Ms. Williams] Did I kick Johnny on knee? [incredulous] NO! He kicked me on the knee!
> [Attorney] So you testified earlier that you were trying to get ahold of Mrs. James? Did you ever get a hold of Mrs. James [Johnny and Mikey’s mother]?
> [Ms. Williams] Yes.
> [Attorney] How long did it take you to get a hold of Mrs. James?
> [Ms. Williams] Two and a half hours.
> [Attorney] What were you doing in those two and a half hours?
> [Ms. Williams] You are soaking wet because they have drenched you with water.
> [Attorney] Your Honor, at this time I would like to play a video for the court.

In the conflict among Ms. Williams, Johnny, and Mikey, constructions of childhood vulnerability and provider culpability again surfaced in the context of child’s play. Children’s aggressive behavior in family childcare homes is routine and met with soothing utterances such as those Ms. Williams demonstrated to the children. Ms. Williams sought to protect herself; she deployed a sports metaphor (e.g. soccer) in order to describe her reaction to the two physically aggressive boys, especially the exchange of blows to the body. Even more notable than this outward violence, however, was the way in which public agencies subcontracted by the state, and ultimately the police (arm of the punitive state *par excellence*), became involved in managing *un*spoken violence.

In the opinion of the state licensing agent, the fact that Ms. Williams turned to the subcontracting agency-network CCRC meant that she had lost control of the children and that she unnecessarily separated a child from the other and his brothers. Ms. Williams claimed the boy was out of control and even caused her bodily harm. She asserted that she had only agreed to take the children temporarily and that Mrs. James, Johnny and Mikey's mother, hid the fact that the children were prone to violent outbursts and that one had an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) from the state. As evidence entered into the hearing as "administrative hearsay," Ms. Williams played parts of a digital video recording she took of the child's bad behavior and her unsuccessful efforts to calm him down. The courtroom was hushed as the video played on the projector screen. Recorded from the perspective of the provider, Ms. Williams looks down on the boys as she makes helpless pleas from the sidelines talking to the children in soothing tones.

Like providers, some children come from the economically beleaguered Antelope Valley where structural and interpersonal violence from police, immigration officials, neighbors, or kin regularly surfaces. Violence enters the care setting in other ways, as aggressive play and as part of children's life histories and memories, or as the structural violence of resource inequalities in material for games and other everyday learning. At times, this violence is sanctioned in play as in the case of male-led self-defense courses, and in others, when rumors and state inspections align, can put providers at risk. The conflict with the two children was actually the original catalyst for

LPAs to be sent to Williams's home; they did not originally come for "chill pills," but to follow-up on Mrs. James's complaints.

Part of Williams's defense strategy relied upon bringing to light children's unpredictable temperaments and the perceived risks working with a high volume of infants and toddlers from a variety of unknown backgrounds. In light of these realities and state oversight, providers often invented creative ways to reward and discipline behavior like violent outbursts — hence Ms. Williams's chill pills. Chill pills demonstrate that providers view children's boundary-testing as normalized and work to coax children through incentives (e.g. treats) rather than punishment or criticism.

The classification and management of children with "behavioral" issues more broadly constrained Ms. Williams, but also Johnny, Mikey, and their mother. Ms. Williams understood that the parent attempted to hide the IEP from her at the initial interview stage. When Ms. Williams suspected the children had behavioral problems, she was experienced enough to request the IEP paperwork. Legally, Ms. Williams is barred from discriminating against children with IEPs or any disabilities. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, public businesses must make reasonable accommodations; however, in practice, such accommodations are rarely enforced and are often used as an excuse to deny service. When faced with state sanction, Ms. Williams's remaining recourse seemed to be to turn on the parents and cast them as deceptive and as potentially breaching the parent-provider contracts they signed.

Researchers have pointed to the ways in which black, and to some degree Latinx, children are disproportionately marked as having behavioral issues and, even further, needing special education services, managed via IEPs (Gregory et al. 2010; Skiba et al. 2002). Educational scholars have demonstrated that while youth behavior is affected by exposure to trauma and violence, there are no statistical differences in the prevalence of violence among white boys or other boys of color in the US. What is different is their treatment in the context of schooling institutions (Skiba et al. 2002). Beth Ferri and David Connor identify special educational exclusion practices as essential to the often-noted resegregation of public education via systems that treat race and ability as "biological markers" as opposed to social constructions (2005). Neoliberal educational reformers utilized "No Child Left Behind" and other early 21st century US educational reforms to enshrine the use of strategies like IEPs, which Alfredo Artilles labels as an "inclusion-and-difference paradigm" (2011; cf. Epstein 2007). US education in the contemporary regime at once universalizes a set of broad expected standards, but also promises the tracking of data and quite literal surveillance, via tools like IEPs, of particular individual bodies marked with difference in terms of race, gender, or ability (Ibid.).[17]

In the management of everyday play, which can easily be read as violence, providers find themselves confronting the paradoxes of inclusion and difference, and the facts that while children are considered vulnerable to providers, black and brown boys in particular are also continually identified by state agents and actors as risks. Especially in later stages, if Johnny and Mikey continue to experience behavioral issues, the real risk is that they will become ensnared in punitive, policing school practices like suspension and expulsion (also linked to special education referral) (Gregory et al. 2010). One can then see why chill pills are a creative solution to children's more egregious misbehaviors. In fact, they delineate when a child is out of line or "out of sorts." Ms. Williams's strategy recognizes that, as Wood notes, children are constantly asserting agency in "learning about the internal rules that govern play, the self-control and self-regulation that are needed to sustain play, and ways of resisting adults' rules or boundaries" (2014). The chill pills, along with the "happy box," imply a contractual agreement between the child and adult caregiver as tools to create boundaries, to demarcate accepted play from what might be violent or harmful. Chill pills demonstrate that providers view children's boundary testing as normalized and as such work to coax children through treats rather than punishment or criticism. The happy box and chill pills in fact recognize children's agency materials, whose function and substance as toys are not only created by children for children, but for the explicit purpose of providing pleasure and benefit.

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[17] Antilles points to the limits of existing research, which is often focused on present patterns of the disproportionate referral of students of color into special education (2011). He calls instead for much deeper research into the entwining of racial and ability categories; the creation of "separates" spaces and practices for differently abled people, and the ideological underpinnings of such projects.

The "Other" Side of Childhood

Ms. Williams and other providers' attempts to break from the punitive agenda are rarely rewarded. Even as they creatively attempt to maintain control of what can be a volatile space and something as unpredictable as play, commodified caregivers are continually suspect, especially in the eyes of state agents tied to long genealogies of managing care and public health via punitive surveillance. Whether in the context of chill pill play or male roles in the childcare home, the adult non-kin caregiver is somewhat contradictorily treated as unpredictable, irresponsible, and risky. The governance of play is not only a way in which conceptions of childhood are reinforced, but actually how adult providers are socialized — if not disciplined —

as state and market subjects. The architecture of the subsidized care system, rooted in home inspections, continuously implicates adults in their assessment of risk: these spaces are risky not because of the children, but because of providers' looming failure as caregivers and non-kin status, their continual risk to the project of national future-making.

Providers are in many senses othered — or at the very least, treated as incapable of making their own choices and needing monitoring: a childlike adult. They are at once saddled with gendered labor, but desexualized and viewed as incapable of replacing biological care. The above-documented practices suggest kin care is privileged both socially and academically. While anthropologists may have wielded a scholarly veto against any singular trajectories of child development, these are reinforced through state and expert intervention that particularly privilege biological parenting (Bluebond-Langer and Korbin 2007). In the contemporary context, the heteronormative marriage of neoliberalism and neoconservatism in the US has at once accelerated the use of commodified care, particularly through privatizing the welfare state and pushing poor women into the low-wage workforce, while at the same time enshrining conceptions of dual-biological parent households and rigid views of motherhood.

Privileging mother-child interactions elides the ubiquitous nature of historically-situated and locally-enacted alternative childcare arrangements. Obscuring the role of non-kin caregivers contributes to the "other"-ing of childcare workers, which in turn contributes to their precariousness. Racialized and gendered ideologies inflect the intimate surveillance and public suspicion of this predominantly women-of-color, often migrant workforce. When family childcare providers come into view (or under purview) for state agents, nonprofit networks, or even parents, it is through a matrix of assessments, inspections, rating scales, and metrics. Child's play, as a messy, unpredictable set of cultural practices (but also a market in and of itself where value is accumulated), brings to light the ideologies, histories and contradictions that underpin these evaluative technologies. The state treatment of providers is not dissimilar to the way the state defines welfare recipients — constantly on the verge of making poor "choices," capable of fraud, and a risk to the future and the nation (Collins & Mayer 2010; Fraser 1994; McCorkel 2004; Morgen & Maskovsky 2003). This orientation towards providers intersects with a broader move to the punitive state, continually refracted in moral panics, such as the most current regarding drug addiction. By "perpetually stoking fear, [from] the vigilant preemption of real and imagined threats," state and civil society become addicted to "ever harsher penalties against even more minor infractions" (Lancaster 2011: 29).

State surveillance via unexpected home inspections dominated the conversation at more than one union-sponsored workshop. At one workshop in particular, the topic of home inspections dominated the legal aid attorney workshop session meant to cover parent-provider contracts and other legal topics. During this session, the attorney, much to everyone's surprise, strongly urged providers against operating twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. The attorney's objections were based on the Title 22 regulation allowing for unannounced home inspections during business hours or while children are present. The attorney's strong recommendation against operating a 24/7 daycare, would appear on the surface somewhat paranoid but for the fact that when they are "open for business," family childcare providers must also open their doors at any time to inspections by state agents and even parents. The LPA manual does indeed offer wide latitude for the surveillance of FCC homes:

> a) Any duly authorized officer, employee, or agent of the Department shall, upon presentation of proper identification, enter and **inspect any place** providing personal care, supervision, and services **at any time, with or without advance notice**, *to secure* compliance with, or *to prevent* a violation of, the regulations. – Title 22 102391 (a)

One provider scoffed at how unannounced inspections disregard their daily schedule and take providers' full attention away from carework. Providers viewed with concern the fact that they were subject to such sweeping intrusion and surveillance in the most intimate and private settings, and home inspections were probably the most commonly-heard complaint among interlocutors. These practices were in fact a major recruiting point for the unionization effort. At provider gatherings in union members' homes, they can be frequently overheard swapping horror stories about "rude" LPAs, who are often also racialized minority public sector workers. Others speak to the stress of constantly being under the suspicion and juggling to meet changing and even contradictory regulations while providing care. And as the above documented vignettes note, despite under-resourcing and high expectations for provision of toys and the unpredictable nature play, these material objects and cultural practices could easily be referenced as proof of providers' failure or success in any given moment. In the absence of any formal mechanism to contribute to the interpretation of Title 22, providers have collectively organized in order to obtain a statewide contract that would stem their need to defend themselves on a case-by-case basis in regional administrative court hearings. In the meantime, they shift their practices to adjust to this scrutiny and work through the welfare-to-work architecture, attempting to align with FCCERS-R to appease nonprofit networks and earn some respite in the market.

Children and their play become a major flashpoint whereby adults draw larger political, economic, and moral conclusions, making childcare a complex terrain in which to operate a business, especially in the face of globalized economic precarity and inequality. But, not satisfied with being treated as othered adults, providers not only find everyday solutions but also organize collective actions to protect their labor and make their own perspectives on child-life understood.

An analytics of childhood and adulthood shows the importance of considering what and how the figure of the "adult" is understood vis-a-vis state practice in the context of ever-marketized life and as it manifests in "cultural" practice like play. Martin's (2011) analysis of legal conceptions of children in US immigration draws attention to the fact that investigations of children's agency are implicitly studies of the mutual construction of adulthood. New anthropological work on adulthood takes on these meanings, especially in global contexts where "youth" are unable to meet certain locally-defined life course markers given economic instability, mass unemployment, or casualized labor relations, leading to talk of "delayed,"' "fleeting," "unstable," and other "elusive" adulthoods (Durham and Solway 2017).

As I have demonstrated, addressing the oft-dialectical (and frequently contradictory) relations among childhood and adulthood holds significant implications for grasping the instabilities of state subjectivity, citizenship, and economic life more broadly in the 21st century globalized economy. Ideal-type stages of the life course fail to capture realities like long-term mass unemployment, institutional racism, or post-welfare political transformations (Durham and Solway 2017; Fine and Ruglis 2009). Capturing the ways in which state agencies, private experts, and market actors figure children and adults — particularly in the everyday — will be fundamental to understanding a rapidly-changing political-economic global order in its local context and contestations.

Chapter 4: Toying with Gender and Race

I sat at a chain cafe located in a strip shopping mall near the foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains interviewing Tiffany, a family childcare provider who lives in the sprawling inland suburbs of Fontana. Tiffany and her husband Frank have been co-operating a childcare home from their two-story single family home for almost a decade. In the middle of our audio-recorded interview, her cell phone rang. Upon hanging up the phone, she abruptly began to gather her belongings and explained in an apologetic tone that she had to end our interview in order to return home to help her husband change a diaper.

> “Yes, because when, if I ever leave the house, I have a little girl that’s in diapers. My husband, he will never change the diapers because we don’t want any hearsay, any anything being said. Like he is nothing, you know, and so, we always make sure too just because — again no hearsay. My husband has no reputation or anything but you never know what people might say, you know. So my husband is always, you know, if he has a girl in the daycare, he always makes sure that there is somebody else — you know, like another child that is, you know, obviously old enough to say, if you were to ask a question, who will be able to say — yes or no, answer the question. Anyway, like right now and there are five other kids there [chuckle] and she — anyway, he’s like I need you to come home because she needs a diaper change and it’s number two. [chuckle]

Tiffany struggled from the loss of income when she quit her job and stayed at home to care for her first son. She recalled having to go without modern luxuries like a cell phone and cable television and how she collected recycling in order to make ends meet. After she became pregnant a second time, her sister suggested she obtain a childcare license. After he was laid off following the 2008 economic crash, Tiffany’s husband joined her business as an assistant a year into her childcare venture. In addition to childcare, Tiffany supplements her income with direct sales, peddling Pampered Chef catalogue products to her friends and neighbors.

Tiffany spoke of the “hearsay” and her husband’s reputation as a way of explicitly signaling the potential risk of allegations of sexual abuse. This risk of “hearsay” is gendered, aimed particularly at men like Tiffany’s husband who work in family childcare homes. Tiffany is well aware of the influence of hearsay and rumors over her own reputation and ability to gain trust from parents, but also in influencing inspections and state agency interventions. When I visited the daycare later that day, as a cis-gendered gay man, glances from parents (and a few remarks from Tiffany) made me vividly aware of the stigma against adult men and non-related children. Union organizers and staff often worried aloud to me how my gender might make providers wary to allow me into their homes. On the more positive side, academics and activists applauded me and seemed encouraged by my presence within female-dominated spaces.

Tiffany’s worries and my interactions indicate that in the family childcare environment, talk is not cheap. Tiffany feared the talk centered on her husband’s handling of a rather-innocuous object – in this case, a diaper - could put her business at risk. Diapers, much as Ms. Williams’ chill pills, index the ways in which the constructions of childhood and our relationships to objects entwine within the context of commodified care setting. In this intimate setting, talk can be dangerous – but it can also be generative and materially rewarding. This chapter centers on the ways in which family childcare providers negotiate shifting paradigms within early education circles that promote a “gender neutral” and multicultural consumption of children’s toys, books, films, clothes, and other material culture. Talk about and objects of play conversely can demarcate the inappropriate – often in relation to sexuality and queerness. In the family chilcare setting, where market values and state power are in full play, consumption and play become a culturally-disputed terrain where state power and ideologies of modern subjectivity are negotiated at the household level.

Meta-consumption and morality play

In this chapter, I put feminist scholarship in further conversation with childhood studies with a focus on material culture and talk within family child care homes by examining toys, books, films, clothes and other consumer objects in providers' homes. The debates involving gender neutrality and multiculturalism/racial diversity in early education expert circles are indexed through the (meta)-consumptive practices and discursive framings of products and merchandise for children - I examine how the consumption of toys and other children's material culture pertain to the circuits of market power and techno-scientific knowledge by which corporations and experts delineate debates on race, gender, sexuality and childhood. Providers' survival as precarious businesses requires managing the expectations of state and market forces through equipping their home with certain resources, while selectively attempting to pursue their own ways of understanding race, gender, and sexuality in determining the psychological and emotional wellbeing of black and Latinx children. While I applaud and sympathize with such efforts for a more critical reading of norms regarding gender and race, it is also critical to acknowledge the ways in which they reinforce (il)liberal notions of reified, distinct cultures and gendered binaries while obscuring sexuality (e.g. queerness) altogether.

In what follows, I analyze the intersection of consumption behavior and talk of consumption in family childcare as they pertain to shifting understandings of childhood racial formations and gender/sexual identity. Shalini Shankar's ethnographic study of Silicon Valley, California examines how language mediated middle class Desi youth's relationship with objects and with each one another in a diaspora (2008). Shankar examines talk as a relational process linking humans and "objects as well as objectification;" talk of actually-possessed and imagined objects bears social significance within different communities, circulating and accruing particular forms of value (2006: 295). Metaconsumption is the indexical "process of creating and circulating objectification of objects through talk" (Ibid, Shankar 2008). Metaconsumptive practices elucidate how talk can shape consumption and its interconnections to "the related dimension of identity, status, and community" (ibid.) Shankar from of a wealth of material cultural studies examining how consumption is central to shaping not only individual identity but also kinship, emotional expression, and relationships more broadly (Friedman 1994; Miller 1998).

I explore what the objectification of multiculturalism through ethnic dolls indexes for both producers and consumers of children toys in the context of Angeleno majority Latinx youth in California. I also ask what some providers' policing of and talk about *not* consuming toys, dolls, games and films that index gender and sexuality reveals about what people do with objectifications of children's material culture. Providers index shifting modern (il)liberal ways of being and professional status based on how they talk about what they do and do not consume for their family childcare. Experts codify metaconsumptive practices in their rating scales calling for particular kinds of objects that are coded as gender-neutral or multicultural and assign them professional value. Metaconsumptive practices among Angelenos provider reveal the contested objectification of modernity and (il)liberal politics of commodified culture and gender that is reified through toy, book and films.

The Silent Childcare Partner

Tiffany's talk of diapers and gossip evinces the ways in which sexuality is a primary axis through which childhood is deemed as a time of danger and risk, much to the harm of children themselves (Levine 2003; Irvine 2004). Of course, within this frame, queer and non-queer bodies are treated differently, with the former being the subject of continual scrutiny and media panic (Goode & Ben-Yahuda 2010; Lancaster 2011; Robinson 2008). Fears of homosexual male "deviance" underline much of the way the state constructs child vulnerability in the US (Ibid.). Homophobia contributes to a broader suspicion and active policing of men anywhere children are present – and I argue, particularly in spaces of play marked for youth. In fact, as I was writing this chapter, the Los Angeles City Council was fielding a proposal banning any single, childless adults from playground areas in city parks, a debate in which only men were discussed (Smith 2016).

In looking at the experiences of providers regarding the presence of men like Frank in the home, one can see how the vulnerability of children is not merely enforced by state policies or media: the threat of "hearsay" that Tiffany and other providers like Nelly and Manuel mentioned includes the perceptions of parents and other guardians of the children in care, and ostensibly any other onlookers.[18] Gossip, everyday talk, and rigid state policies shape the hypersexualization of men in family childcare organizational life in ways that echo Lancaster's "sex panic" analysis (2011). As Lancaster argues, such panics lead to an increasingly-punitive set of legal policies based on "imagined risks and anticipated future victimizations" (2011: 24). Future vulnerabilities are objectified through statistics and quantitative "truths" that replicate mass mediated fears. Legislating based on "sex panic" often contains racial undertones, wherein oft-repeated statistics circulate in news media claiming that US Latino men have higher incidences of rape compare to rates of black and white men (Ibid.). The suspicion of Latino men cast a shadow over the mostly Mexican and Central American family childcare homes with which I worked.

Over the course of a decade working with providers, I encountered only two allegations of sexual misconduct, both against Latino childcare providers. In one case, an active childcare union member, originally from Peru, was arrested on suspicion of multiple charges of child molestation, which launched an ethical debate within the labor organization concerning whether to defend him and how to support his wife and fellow union member, who was now stripped of her license and had her business shuttered. Although I spoke casually with the accused on several occasions, I too felt ethically torn when I was asked to write a letter to the court on his behalf — ultimately opting against it based on having had few interactions with him.

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[18] This stigma against male (assumed hetero and often Latino) bodies connecting with children has continually surfaced in my fieldwork and even prior, when I went collecting union cards from family childcare providers door-to-door. When possible, male union staff were often paired with women when visiting childcare homes. I was conscious of how I dressed in order to mitigate such fears, wearing brighter colors and softer tones as a way of appearing less threatening. Even so, providers often made assumptions about my sexuality when discussing my promising hetero-normative dating prospects.

U.S moral contagions regarding children and sexuality have produced in the United States a complex legal framework focused on the particularities of "high ages of consent, elaborate age-difference schemes, and laws against sex between minors," all of which reinforce rigid life course models of childhood (Lancaster 2011: 67). They also give the state additional impetus to extend its influence into the domestic sphere, directly through its agents but also through a niche economy of institutions and organizations dedicated to child protection (Ibid.). State childcare agencies participate in this growing labor and have developed multiple practices focused on mitigating the risk of sexual abuse. California state law requires that all adults who live in the household be fingerprinted and have background checks, and that the licensing agency be notified of their presence. The community care licensing division requires all licensed childcare providers to register with TrustLine, a database of nannies and babysitters who have cleared criminal background checks (including fingerprinting) in California. The online database, an example of what Lancaster calls a "fitness evaluator," was created by the California legislature and is maintained by the California Department of Social Services (2011: 14). The childcare TrustLine markets itself as unique for its ability to access both California Department of Justice and FBI databases. Providers may have their TrustLine clearance revoked as the result of a judgment against them in an administrative hearing process. These private, profit-driven services – underpinned by moral panics regarding sexuality - reinforce suspicion of non-kin providers, while accruing value for a broader industry of childcare related "protective" services.

These suspicions extend beyond providers to their relatives and friends: Part of the work of field inspections calls for LPAs to account for all adults present in the home (whether they are assistants or not) and to verify residency, clearance, and criminal background check paperwork on file for each. The apparatus of background checks can complicate extended familial relationships: for example, relatives (with no related children in care) who want to visit are not permitted to be present unless they fulfill the background check requirements. Providers often swap stories of the chaos of such policing of adult kin that, for example on holidays and birthdays, causes them to have awkward conversation with visiting loved ones on limiting their stay and requesting that they find alternative lodgings. Conversations among providers suggest that such policies are much more strongly enforced and directed towards adolescent and adult men who may be present in the home. These policies of extended background checks put Marina in an awkward position – does she register her undocumented son, and submit him to background checks that could sweep him into the criminal-immigration system, or does she not register him and risk his being discovered by licensing agents?

While male presence is often obfuscated by taboos and ill-defined threats circulated in gossip and objectified in surveillance mechanisms, closer examination reveals that adult men are present in family childcare homes as older children or spouses, and that their level of participation in care/domestic work varies. As the life histories of FCC revealed in Chapter 2, the 2008 recession affected male-dominated employment sectors in Southern California, leading many men to work alongside their wives to care for children at home. Manuel’s decision to limit his participation in Nelly’s business may also be related to the social construction of childhood, which limits men’s participation and ultimately perpetuates rigid gender labor norms within childcare homes.

What do adult men do within FCC homes in this context? Manuel reflexively points to the importance of men in childcare because they provide surrogate paternal investment for families from female-headed households. His talk of paternal investment are highly gendered performances along particular dominant frames of representations of masculinity. Men are also relegated to participation quite literally "outside" the FCC home – and most often manifested through objects and practices of play. Frank, for example, takes the boys to the skate park and teaches them how to skateboard. Skate parks are increasing popular within public parks systems throughout Southern California's suburban and urban neighborhoods, though skateboarding remains viewed as a quintessential public space activity for young boys. Public parks and spaces have also been designated particular spaces of risk, but, in this case, the danger is lessened through reference to a masculinized sport under the watch of a heterosexual male. Another provider's husband whom I met is a professional mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter. He teaches the older boys in childcare the basics of self-defense in the yard or at the gym where he works in the San Fernando Valley. When asked about instructing children in seemingly-violent sports (which have gained particular appeal among young men), he explained that his work would help children protect themselves from bullying; to him, it was defensive in nature alone. His intensive training receives much less scrutiny, though, than Ms. Williams's "illicit" chill pills.

Men are distanced from caretaking roles, spatially segregated, and contribute through gendered forms of play; talk about their participation otherwise in childcare would otherwise mark them as queer and, therefore, as a risk. Hicks and McDermott note that risk, homophobia, and the sexual division of labor are mutually constructed, noting that the idea that men are not "natural caregivers" helps further the idea that queer men would pose a sexualized risk (Hicks & McDermott 1999 in Landridge Darren 2013). Edelman notes that, in the US, pedophilia has long been constructed as the preeminent risk not only to children's bodies, but also to reproduction, family, and national projects (2004). The control exerted by the state over family child care homes, involves then a simultaneous accounting of what is proper childhood and who is a proper caregiver, both tied to notions which stigmatize queerness and sexuality more broadly.

The weight of discursive panics over non-kin male caregivers reinforced by multiple agencies overseeing home-based care invariably circumscribes women's roles in childcare homes as well. Women do more than play with children: they take on the wide swath of everyday labor – from changing diapers to feeding, leading activities, reading, and so forth. However, ironically, such work is rarely discussed as women's labor. As non-biological mothers to the clients' children, providers are even distanced from being associated with a feminized "nurturing" status, giving female providers a desexualized "educator" role instead.[19] In other words, men in childcare home are hypersexualized, and women and children are desexualized in ways that maintain rigid divisions of labor (and, likely, the attendant devaluation of carework).

Rating Childcare, Neutralizing Gender

As Elizabeth Chin notes, and the above cases exemplify, children in the public imaginary in the US are persistently figured as consumers — nonproductive, passive, dependent — which makes what they consume central to their subjectivity (1999). This subject-position also informs a multi-billion dollar a year toy market, which is often cast as a space of democratic choice and freedom, much in the same way that neoliberal ideologues speak of the market (Ibid.).[20] The instruments of measurement and expert knowledge shaping family childcare also index the ways the childcare market becomes a place to shape proper future citizen-subjects by reinforcing liberal hierarchies of difference intimately entwined with constructions of child and adulthood.

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[19] This may be due to the urgent effort by childcare experts, policymakers, and others to distinguish biological mothers' care from non-kin commodified care – in ways that still enshrine biological mothers' care as providing something irreplaceable by non-kin care. (It may also be, as I discuss in Chapter 5, due in part to providers' own efforts to lift up their unique market value as early educators.)

This link between the ideologies of the market and toy marketing and sales became clear to me during a tour of Marina's stucco-plastered home in Southeastern Los Angeles. Marina, a home based childcare provider, invited me and her union staff over to her modest home to eat tacos - which she sells in addition to caregiving in order make ends meet. We were to eat in the childcare play area behind the duplex home she shares with her adult daughter and her grandchildren whom Marina cares for, in addition to those children enrolled in her childcare. When we reached her back play area, Marina emphatically pointed out to me the surprising absence the popular Disney Corporation merchandise amidst the plethora of toys neatly organized. The multinational Walt Disney Corporation is the world leader in mass media and entertainment, primarily targeting families with children; Disney's headquarters in Burbank and original theme parks in Anaheim lie only a short drive away from Marina's home. She pointed to creative board games, stuffed animals, dolls, and toys without any recognizable "brand." I frequently encountered Disney films, dolls, books, puzzles, and other merchandise from the multinational which has dominated the child film and toy industry. Marina, a Mexican migrant and former garment worker turned childcare provider, appeared to be bucking Disney's dominance over the children's toy market. Why was she taking on this project?

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[20] As the home of the Disney Corporation and Mattel, which launched the first targeted television advertising geared at child-consumers (during Disney programming), Los Angeles has been a central site for the production of consumer toys and the circulation of television advertising (most notably "program length commercials") to promote these goods (Kunkel 1988). It is also, as discussed in this section, the home of Lakeshore, a major educational retailer that holds significant influence over the circulation of consumer toys and material geared towards educational institutions and providers.

At that time, the Disney *Frozen* films and franchise became one of the 5th highest grossing animated films of 2013 (1.2 billion worldwide) (Lev Ram 2014; Lynskey 2014). In the animated film, the redheaded fearless lead Princess Anna sets out to undo an icy spell of perpetual winter her older sister Princess Elsa placed on the magic kingdom of Arendelle. The film departs from the conventional Disney film formulas when Elsa learns to accept herself and her love for her sister, and she rescues both Anna and Arendelle from a frozen demise without the aid of a handsome prince (Lev Ram 2014). In some homes, even where Disney products were largely absent, *Frozen* was often the exception largely due the film's marketing as empowering to young girls with the casting of two strong female leads.

While *Frozen* is part of decades-long franchise of Disney "princesses," this particular brand had gained traction to a degree that surprised many in the media and film critics alike (Lynskey 2014). Marina insisted that Disney, using the example of the *Frozen* princess dolls, reinforced gender stereotypes. She echoed feminist critics who countered months of media coverage from the *New York Post* to *Fortune* discussing — mostly extolling — *Frozen* as a breakthrough "feminist" film (Schaefer Riley 2014). Literally and figuratively, Marina was not buying it! In this case, the metaconsumptive talk involved disavowing a set of objects – in order to draw attention to (and speak against) its gendered significance.

Marina's tacos and toy tour suggest that providers are not merely purveyors of a status quo of rigid gendered hierarchies but are actively involved in altering them through the curation of toy, books, and films present or not in their childcare homes. Her practices, respond in part to emerging trends towards "diversity" institutionalized by subcontracted workfare agencies made up of early childcare experts and enforced through the technologies of governmentality - technocratic rating scales, metrics and surveillance. These ideologies shape gendered and racial formations in ways that reflect modern liberal ways of being that at once attempt to efface gender, while reinforcing biological and market-driven meanings of race and culture.

Scholars have drawn attention to the growing influence of expert-knowledge production in the many aspects of life and most especially in regards to child-rearing (Gupta 2012; Rose 1987, 1993). In the same ways experts quantity the costs and benefits of early intervention (noted in the Introduction and Chapter 1), educational advocates and researchers also attempt to quantify quality care in order to show its value in raising overall K-12 educational performance in the US. In Los Angeles, childcare networks (literally referred to as the "networks" by providers) that serve as childcare subsidy intermediaries, and their cadres of in-house experts, analysts, and researchers team up with community colleges and hospitals to observe, provide feedback, and ultimately measure the quality of family childcare homes. CCLD had temporarily created a statewide registry based on similar scales – which included all licensing violations – that made public the evaluation of all state-funded providers, but this was taken down when providers argued that the publication of the addresses posed a danger to their own safety. In meetings with union organizers, providers continually circulated rumors that the state was interested in resurrecting the registry, especially under pressure from parents and with the rise of similar public evaluation systems for public K-12 schools and higher education.

Nonprofit childcare networks and some state agencies in the US (like First 5) most often rely on Family Childcare Environment Rating Scales (Revised Edition), known among providers as FCCERS-R (Harms et al., 2007). The scale aggregates scores in seven "sub" areas, labeled as spaces and furnishing, personal care routines, listening and talking, activities, interaction, program structure, and parent and provider (Ibid.). FCCERS-R authors claim it rates programs according to their potential to "maximize positive development," drawing from "research evidence from a number of relevant fields (health, development, and education), professional views of best practice, and the practical constraints of real life in a family child care setting" (FPG Child Development Institute, n.d.). The FCCRS was first developed in 1989; the authors have since revised the scale in the mid-2000s, ostensibly to include a "deeper focus on sensitivity to cultural and socioeconomic diversity" and better meet the needs of "exceptional children" (Ibid.). In the same year that the RCT family childcare unionization bill was vetoed, California's state legislature passed a law requiring Quality Rating Improvement Systems that would likely utilize FCCER-S as its rating scale.

Providers frequently purchase this guide to understand the ways in which they are being rated by networks and some state agencies, and to get trained in how to comply with these standards. While I was conducting fieldwork, one of the authors of the FCCERS-R conducted a well-attended workshop for the Mexican American Opportunities Fund (MAOF), a nonprofit "network" with a prominent childcare referral service active in Los Angeles County, as well as

Monterey County, a working poor, increasingly Latinx region of California's Central Coast.[21] In addition to operating the referral service, which includes FCCERS-R ratings, MAOF also distributes childcare funds. The workshop partnered several agencies (from cities such as the Orange County working-class suburb of Gardena) with MAOF and other quite prominent networks like Crystal Stairs.

The latest iteration of the scale — which is available through numerous online outlets — includes scoresheets where observers look for and tally answers to different sets of yes/no questions in each area. There are between three and 11 overarching themes per subsection. For example, under "Listening and Talking," there is a set of yes/no questions about "Helping children understand language," that includes the use of "descriptive words" by the provider. "Activities" includes a prominent section marked "Promoting acceptance of diversity." One yes/no question gives "points" for toys characterized as non-gender stereotypes (for example, women doctors or male nurses) on the rating scale, and there is also a space for the observer to tally the number of books, pictures, and materials that promote diversity in "race/culture, age, abilities, and gender." Of course, "Activities" is the largest subsection, where there are 11 categories that give about as many points for diversity as for meeting a set of standards on having accessible blocks for building, "nature/science" objects, or sand and water for play.

For Marina and others, the practice of decentering gendered stereotypes does indeed index a paradigm shift in childhood development, one that aligns with and is reinforced by a set of expert-defined metrics and surveillance practices that divide child rearing into practices that are either positive or ostensibly detrimental to the life course. Far different from critiques of "performativity" and feminist analytics of structural power, which problematize fixed categories of gender, the attempt to provide "neutral" toys enshrined in the FCCERS-R aims to obscure difference altogether (cf. Butler 2011). Drawn from liberal feminist critique, gender-neutral child rearing emphasizes an environmental, material change to open up a set of "choices" for young girls, in terms of their domestic and labor market "sex roles" (Martin 2005). Interestingly, sociologist Karen Martin notes that the advice and expertise on gender-neutrality is often bounded by an attempt to avoid "advocating" for homosexuality, suggesting that liberal feminists ultimately reinforce practices and rational-scientific knowledge that promote heteronormativity (2005). This is glaringly obvious in the production of commercial toys like those for *Frozen*, which while purportedly feminist, enforce a heteronormative narrative, but also in the FCCERS-R rating system, which has no mention of homosexuality or queerness, even with its preoccupation with neutralizing gender "roles."

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[21] According to the website, the mission of the MAOF is "to provide for the socio-economic betterment of the greater Latino community of California, while preserving the pride, values and heritage of the Mexican American culture."

While gender-neutral advocates tend to focus on the realm of (ostensibly biological) parenting, the setting here shifts to commodified care and the workfare state, enforced by experts in magazines, books, and other media (Hulbert 2003). Gender neutrality in this context also reveals how the state interprets childhood and the child-citizen. Constitutional claims to equality — based on children's sexual identity and conduct — have been litigated through the US court system in notable cases such as Lawrence v. Texas and United States v. Windsor. According to law professor Clifford Rosky, the first, fifth, and fourteenth amendments "demonstrate that the state has no legitimate interest in promoting heterosexuality among children — and conversely, that every child has a constitutional right to be queer" (2013). In other words, liberal jurisprudence leaves queerness as a right *in abstentia*. The ways in which state and experts construct a gender-neutral child through play is in fact an everyday expression and extension of liberal notions of citizenship and subjectivity. This is made possible by an interpretations of life cycles and development that view children in infancy as a sort of blank slate to be shaped by gender and only much later, by sexuality.

Marketing Multiculturalism

Excerpts from the FCCERS-R field manual reveal a parallel preoccupation with racial formation aimed at "diversity" in "race/cultures." Toys and other childcare-specific materials loom large in determining acceptance of diversity. For example, FCCERS-R rate family childcare homes positively if they find at least four examples of "props" accessible for dramatic play representing various races/cultures (for example, dolls of different races, ethnic clothing, and cooking and eating utensils from various cultural groups).

The use of "props" based on everyday items' racial diversity harkens to the model of the exotic as commodity long ago championed by Margaret Mead. Likewise, the continual reference to distinct "races" or "cultures" symbolized by material objects of play indexes the late anthropologist Eric Wolf's critique of "billiard ball" notions of the world as fixed, distinct cultures, and even to scientific racism (2010; di Leonardo 1998).

Locating such "props" representing "races/cultures" is of course up to the providers, and to the resources they can muster as subsidized caregivers. Stores like Lakeshore Inc., a specialty educational supply store chain based out of Los Angeles, make this possible, but often at a significant expense. The store chain proudly touts its founding by Evelyn Kaplan, a single mother in California in 1954, who then developed loyal customers among classroom teachers and other educators for products that, in the case of early childhood, "prep for grade-school success."

Their inventory most notably includes entire collections of racially diverse dolls, like the "Soft & Safe Family" sets of plastic toddler-safe female and male parents and boy and girl children that come in "Hispanic, Black, Asian and White" families and at the time of writing sold for $115 US dollars. Lakeshore targets providers who are interested in raising their ratings on FCCERS-R by advertising products that align in language and content with different aspects of the rating scales, and in stores labeling items as "guaranteed to increase your FCCERS-R rating." Prices at Lakeshore are significantly higher than in big-box retailers, and much of this constitutes an out-of-pocket expense that providers must bear. Liberal diversity in early childcare is reified as toys, books, food, and celebrations and commodified for monetary gain in niche commercial markets that cater to educators, and now childcare providers. Well-meaning educational academics and consultants' ability to enforce diversity as material consumption in ways that further the commodification of childcare is only made possible by the ways in which state agencies' empower nonprofit agencies to rate and assess providers, and the broader privatization of public welfare services.

The conceptualization and enforcement of diversity with children in subsidized care reveals the ways in which racism and inequality may complement corporate and conservative post-racial imaginaries (Berrey 2015; Shankar 2015). Shankar points to the ways in which racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual difference are “given market value” through the complex mediation of advertising and marketing (2015: 15). While capitalism has been racialized in the West for centuries, neoliberal capitalist institutions and corporations colonize difference and interlinked social projects, per Povinelli, swallowing “alternative social projects” and “reducing all social value into one market value” (2011 in Shankar 2015; Marable 2015). These marketized forms of diversity entwine with determinations of national belonging and “racial naturalization,” helping to delineate particular groups as part of the nation (albeit through very constricted and specific meanings) (Ibid.). In the childcare home, a panoply of postwelfare state actors at once elide and naturalize racial inequalities through advancing commodified notions of diversity enshrined in the corporate and educational toy markets.

The child rating scales ensure that racialized and gendered forms embodied in children’s toys do more than provide profit for Lakeshore Inc.; they also become a means for providers to accrue value in their businesses. By investing in particular material symbols of gender neutrality and racial diversity, providers establish further legitimacy in the family childcare marketplace and in the eyes of state and non-state “experts.” In the case of racial formations, as state-sponsored agents, they come to represent the assent of the state to specific understandings of difference — a discrete symbol of a racialized “other,” always in opposition to a white archetype and refracted through what Mathew Ruben labels the “white suburban optic” (2000). Gender neutrality — the ability to raze difference altogether, in the interest of promoting “choice” and asserting liberal heteronormativity and notions of jurisprudential “fairness” — can also enhance competitiveness (cf. Martin 2005).

Family childcare providers work at the boundaries to challenge racial and gendered hierarchies, but find themselves delimited by the ways in which these arrangements are inseparable from marketized notions of difference reinforced by the manifestations of the “translocal” postwelfare state. While play proves dangerous for Ms. Williams and puts her business at stake, for Marina and others it becomes a source of desperately-needed economic advantage in a race-to-the-bottom market. In both cases though, the market risks and value of difference are mediated by il/liberal state power and subject-formation.

Conclusions

Looking at play provides an unexpected lens into how constructions of child and adulthood entwine with the ways in which state and market power are defined. State agents and experts both scrutinize play as a terrain of danger and risk, a means to assert control in the everyday practices of the childcare home through bureaucratic ratings and inspections, but also a means to enforce a model of consumer-citizenship and liberal ideologies of child development. Play comes to highlight a central contradiction in the workfare state, whereby the commodified market is posited as realm of choice and freedom that can undo racialized, gendered, sexualized, and classed hierarchies of difference when, in fact, these hierarchies (exemplified by the welfare-to-work system and the feminization of labor in general) are reinforced by it.

Digital videos of white children playing with black dolls and boys playing with babies or dressing up in dresses and high heels going viral online are a further extension of the metaconsumptive practices that circulate as parenting trends. [22] The ways parents, teachers and providers objectify multiculturalism and gender-neutral signals modern (il)liberal secular child rearing that provides an illusion of choice through consumption. Rather than creating spaces where questions of gender and race are addressed in practice, these metaconsumptive practices signal the reification of commodified fixed identities and hegemonic gender binaries. The question is not whether multiculturalism and gender neutral childrearing are good or bad, but who determines and who produce such toys, books, films, and other objects? The Walt Disney Corporation, has dominated the toy industry and had long been criticized for its racial stereotyping and sexist representations of women and men, despite its best efforts at commodifying multicultural and faux feminist rebranding in its latest popular animated films like *Moana*, *Coco*, and *Frozen*. [23] Despite the multi-billion dollar advertising targeting children parents and caregivers, I found that the ways in which Marina objectified Disney products *in absentia* as indexical of her stance on broader cultural debates on children, consumption and identity. While much metaconsumption is about an attachment to objects, providers' (and the

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[22] Laurel Wider, a psychotherapist with a specialty in gender and identity, developed the WonderCrew dolls collection to challenge rigid gendering of toys and inspire "nurturing in boys" (Popek 2018). Lauren Spinner, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Kent was quoted endorsing the dolls as a "vital alternative to stereotyping narratives" (Ibid.). The Wonder Crew product website say WonderCrew are superhero dolls that come in four different skin tones are marketed as "inspired by boys but made for all" and won Doll of the Year award in 2018.

[23] Relatives of the renowned Mexican artist Frida Kahlo won a temporary injunction against the American multinational Mattel Inc. toy corporation to stop the sale of the Frida Kahlo Barbie in Mexico (Kini 2018). The doll sparked backlash in Mexico when the multibillion dollar Mattel Inc commercialized the distinct artist's image without obtaining trademarked licensing from the Kahlo family. The dolls had been further criticized as more like Barbie than Frida – whose trademark uni-brow and darker features were whitewashed. The family is arguing in court that the Barbie "promotes unrealistic body-image and consumerist lifestyles" which Kahlo opposed as a life-long feminist and communist party member (AP 2018). The Frida Kahlo doll was part of Mattel's efforts to diversify and promote "role models" for girls that launched on International Women's Day in 2018.

FCCER-S scale rating providers for their material objects) talk illustrates the politics and value of refuting the presence of certain objects (and at times, people).

Childcare providers' experiences remind us of the need to move beyond the ways in which state and market forces classify and categorize to how classes and categories are enacted through everyday relationships, interactions and practices among state agents (which includes private subcontractors), subjects and market circuits. Gupta and Sharma argue that "representations, symbols, practices and materiality are interlinked" in the production of state power in ways that often reproduce social inequalities (2003: 15). In a neoliberal era where the subject of politics is inseparable from market power, representations and talk of consumption also figure heavily into the ways state power and governmentality are materialized. The histories of state-sponsored child services (and early education in general) remain rooted in institutions that continue to enshrine the nuclear family as a national norm and to obscure the relationships that dominate the current political economy. Interrelated are images of children at the foundation of a hegemonic politics that hinges upon reproductive futurism, ultimately "formulating a politics of sexual citizenship" (Edelman 2004; Langdridge 2013). Interrelated circuits of corporate marketing lift up the child as consumer-citizen and proffer notions of choice, while offering a limited set of options that reify race and gender and erase the possibilities of addressing inequality through education.

These relations of power are apparent in the ways in which mundane objects are talked about – even when they are not there. The specter of objects and people not present – whether it is in everyday banter, in what providers tell parents or what is inscribed on the FCCER-S checklists that inspectors carry with them – come to index the power state and corporate actors have to reinforce norms and authority over intimate practices as much as the ways providers seek to enact their own politics. In the next chapter, I look more closely at the ways in which providers' everyday practices and collective mobilizations challenge fixed notions of childhood and adulthood and redefine how human life is categorized and valued - fundamental to a politics of care that can shift material relations of inequality.

Chapter 5: The Intimacy of Intervention

> My name is [Sara] and I am with SEIU Local 99. We represent Family Childcare providers from SB [San Bernardino] and LA [Los Angeles].
> Several family childcare providers who participated in the City of Gardena-FCCHEN [Family Childcare Home Education Network] program have brought to our attention that they are being required to fill out DRDPs. It is our understanding the providers are not supposed to be filling them out.
> ED CODE SECTION 8246
> …..
> Greetings,
> I contacted the Program Director of City of Gardena-FCCHEN Program. I reminded her that while providers are responsible for close coordination with the contractors' staff member designated as the child's teacher, the provider is not responsible for completing the DRDPs. The providers share knowledge of child/children through anecdotal records, observations, photos.

The above email exchange between Sara, a Service Employee International Union (SEIU) Local 99 staff, and the staff of the Early Education and Support Division at the California Department of Education signals the increasing pressures upon family childcare providers to standardize, measure, and document their care work, operating as subcontractors within the workfare era. While this email exchange was civil, the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), a technoscientific instrument designed for evaluating early child development, became a major flashpoint among family childcare providers during my first year of ethnographic fieldwork with SEIU Local 99. DRDPs focus on tracking the development of children's behavior, knowledge, and skills, and are used by state agencies to capture measurable results through expert observation within "natural settings" like classrooms, care homes, and centers. It became common practice, however, for subcontracted agencies managing providers for the

California Department of Education to shirk their responsibility for filling out the DRDP forms and transfer it to providers. Sara's cordial emails mask numerous verbal disputes that occurred among street-level bureaucrats and providers within homes across California regarding what defines providers' responsibilities when it comes to assessing "desired results."

At union meetings, providers realized how widespread the contractors' practices were. Some providers vocalized during the meetings that the DRDP's were more than a matter of additional bureaucratic work — they also meant further surveillance and standardization of diverse practices providers worked hard to cultivate and tailor to the children they serve. Multiple providers resolved to challenge the contractors individually, and did. When the contractors threatened them with retaliation — lowering providers' assessment scores and withholding funding — the union decided to blow the whistle to the Department of Education, which in turn put pressure on their contractors to complete their own forms. The union provided a collective voice to challenge institutional power dynamics that overburdened the subcontracted caregivers with time-consuming paperwork and technocratic child development assessments.

This incident involving DRDPs again illustrates the increasing influence of institutionalized early childhood expertise in organizing and shaping the lives of youth and their caregivers in California. As Chapters 3 and 4 document, incidents among providers and education and welfare bureaucrats reveal an inherent tension based in part on constructions of childhood that align with neoliberal state and market formations. Although providers operate independent home-based childcare programming, their care work is subject to state disciple through a panopticon of expert-driven surveillance and evaluations. The DRDP required providers to share “knowledge of child/children through anecdotal records, observations, photos,” exemplary of the Foucaultian impetus toward public interventions and evaluations of everyday “conduct of conduct” (Foucault 2009: 389). In this case, the technologies of governmentality conform to neoliberal US-specific conceptions of child-rearing and human development. The DRDP signals how the intimacies of care are catalogued and assessed into a biopolitical apparatus that extracts value from all forms of everyday interaction to maximize productivity (cf. Kenny 2015; Lorenz 2012). The DRDP also indexes the ways in which providers are constantly monitored as “othered adults” under the racialized and gendered ethos of workfare.

Yet intimate care work does not so easily fall under these regimes, according to providers. Nor should they be tasked, providers contend, with reducing their work at all times to these regimes of measurement. Providers affiliated with SEIU Local 99 were able to claim victory against the state contractors’ attempt to push further bureaucratic assessment tasks onto them. In so doing, they demonstrated their collective power, which in turn helped recruit new members into their ranks.

The Raising California Together campaign signals that providers did not wholly disavow the state’s projects of raising the next generation of citizen-workers, nor its emphasis on closing the widening racial achievement gaps. But they did draw certain boundaries around the power of state and market to impinge on their practices, countering, for example, the use of DRDPs. And they also advanced their own intimate practices — from expansive notions of gender neutrality to Ms. Williams’s “chill pills” — based on the knowledge they accumulated of the populations served by welfare-to-work. In negotiating state and expert practices, providers continually bring to the fore the value of their intimate relationships and knowledge — claims that inform their individual practices and collective mobilization.

These tensions raise important theoretical and empirical questions: How and why does the everyday intimacy among providers, parents, and children take on cultural and political significance and drive union efforts? How do these intimate relationships relate to and inform collective identities based on race, gender, and class, which in turn challenge and reproduce institutional inequalities for Latinx and black children?

Framework: Towards an Intimate Politics

In considering how commodified intimacy is linked to and the subject of political action, many scholars tends to focus on the ways in which employers and clients use intimate relations against those who perform this labor. These relationships become a ground, scholars point out, to facilitate the exploitation of domestic workers, sex workers, beauty workers, and other (often-women) workers (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007; Kang 2010). Others attempt to recover the potential for agency within intimate work itself, even to, as Rhacel Parreñas suggests, "to forge identities, enable self-actualization, and allow self-growth" (2017: 407; Barron 2014). But as Nicole Constable points out, the agency-victimhood oppositions — much like the blanket dualisms between "real" and commodified intimacy — lead to analytical "dead end[s]" (2009: 57).

Providers' experiences suggest that commodified intimate relations can become spaces for taking political action and producing cultural identity. In discussing childcare workers, Reese points to the ways in which the intimate is an important signifier and providers' activism centers on their relationships with children (2010, 2011). However, Reese's work speaks of intimacy mostly as a discourse providers use to mobilize rather than a material set of practices and knowledge, limiting the insight gained from looking at the labor itself and the ways it is situated in state/market projects (in this case, of early intervention).

Turning to the links among infrastructure and intimacy provides a fruitful means to understand how care practices become a site of cultural and political struggle – and reveal the stakes of interlinked projects of neoliberal governmentality and marketization. Providers must work through the material infrastructure for the provision of care, which shapes political possibilities. As Wilson points out, keeping an analytical eye on infrastructure allows us to "[relocate] questions from the discursive operations of biopolitical logics to the institutional structure that provision needs themselves" and their relationship to public entities and private markets (2016: 274). The "hard" material realities of this infrastructure — its resourcing through complex, multi-scale (federal, state, local) funding streams, its reliance upon disaggregated subcontractors as "pass-throughs," its relationship to mental and physical health services, and so forth — all affect how and where change can and is enacted in the functioning of early education systems (cf. Star 1999; Larkin 2013).

Providers' relationships to the childcare infrastructure defy any simple narrative of resistance or compliance to early intervention efforts. Tanya Murray Li, by employing both Foucauldian and Gramscian analytics in her study of large-scale economic development projects, provides a useful theoretical framework to understand the interconnection among providers' cultural and political struggles and (infra)structures of market and state power (2007). As Li explains, a Foucauldian lens elucidates the ways in which “diagnoses of deficiencies imposed from above become ‘repossessed’ as demands from below, backed by a sense of entitlement” (2007: 26). A Gramscian analytics allows insight into how such demands figure into collective political action and the “practice of politics,” that responds to a “constellation of power in particular times and places” (Ibid.). It is important to understand how actors participate in and at times rework processes of governmentality, and how they individually and collectively fit these actions into wider political movements and identifications.

In what follows, I suggest intimate cultural practices themselves become a ground for providers to make claims to their own expertise — a way at times to counter and other times to expand the kinds of technoscientific knowledge focused on securing the biopolitical advancement of the next generation. I utilize the term *intimate intervention* to describe the contradictory ways in which providers adopt top-down standards of child development while enhancing and discarding other trends and “expert” knowledge. Providers do take up the call of the state to create productive future subject-citizens, particularly a supposedly-lacking or “behind” majority-minority generation. But they assert their own terms, individually and collectively, on the project of raising the next generation of citizen-workers. They selectively engage with and negotiate notions of proper care for children - whether it is parents’ individual choices or state-mandated practices - and uphold their own, intimate forms of knowledge regarding best practices. As providers apply their own, often culturally-inflected interventions, they must tangle with material practices and representations of race, gender, and sexuality deeply enmeshed with (and at times defined through) “circuits of capital” (cf. Shankar 2015). They engage with neoliberal logics that not only marketize care but state institutions themselves in ways that subsume "all human and institutional action as rational entrepreneurial action," calculated "against a microeconomic grid of scarcity, supply and demand, and moral value-neutrality" (Brown 2015: 40).

*Intimate intervention*s also link to broader collective identifications, and allow providers to maintain solidarities among one another as well as with other racialized and gendered parents and workers. The practices, in this case, are part of the ways providers connect to labor movements, including to black and Latinx caucuses in the union. At times providers' practices (to employ a Gramscian lens) align them with other hegemonic and counter-hegemonic efforts, such as elite projects of respectability. Providers' life histories and cultural solidarities — and the limits placed upon their intimate interventions — inform their political confrontations with state agencies, clients, therapists and others who participate in early education.

Providers supply new insight to understand how intimate workers do not simply resist "expert" knowledge, but reconstruct ways of knowing at the "grassroots." Montoya suggests the importance of looking to "community knowledge" — taking community in a relational sense that can produce an "organic epistemological criticism of the life and social sciences." He argues that this kind of relational criticism serves as a world-making practice and holds emancipatory potential (2013: S55). Community knowledge projects can, Montoya outlines, decenter technoscientific, statistical forms of knowledge, and enact "epistemological diversities" that hold political value and power (Ibid.).

Projects of grassroots knowledge are nevertheless positioned within the hard realities of infrastructure and entrenched power, in particular racial and gender formations and material political-economic histories. As much as they are limited by their embeddedness in such structures, community knowledge practices also draw from more liberatory and expansive political movements and identifications. Even where they emerge out of neoliberal projects to raise future (respectable) productive citizen-workers from racialized children, providers assert that their intimate interventions can disrupt some of the dominant rationales of neoliberalism, where "inequality becomes legitimate, even normative, in every sphere" (Brown 2015: 64). Even where they emerge out of biopolitical projects with sometimes-narrow views of human development enshriing expertise or bureaucratic power, providers proffer more expansive notions of ability, racial diversity, solidarity, and cultural reproduction. Even where they often appear to be individual actors working at the margins, their practices are often inseparable from – and can become far more powerful as part of - collective movements and politics like majority-minority unions capable of transforming state, market and cultural relations and their intimate workings.

Tiffany, Lizzeth, and the "Mexican Lady": Culture and Respectability

To grasp the political possibilities and interconnections in providers' intimate work, it is critical first to grasp the extent of commodification and the political *ambiguities* and complexities therein. In 2014, I waited for Lizzeth in a residential development of two story single-family homes on winding, privately patrolled sidewalked streets in Fontana, a city in the foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains. Lizzeth – a middle-aged organizer at Local 99 –

decided on meeting in this residential community. She chose the location because it was safer to leave my 2005 Toyota Corolla parked undisturbed. Lizzeth, who lived nearby, compared the suburban and conspicuously upwardly mobile area to the more densely populated and high crime areas just south of the 210 freeway, where we visited more family childcare providers to talk about the union.

We arrived at Tiffany's Inland Empire home, having yet to cross the 210 freeway, in an area that – according to its boosters on online real estate sites and free magazines - touted low crime rates and suburban amenities (like the residential golf course). Tiffany described to Lizzeth and me how she had decided to become a family childcare provider five years previously. She recounted that the difficulty of finding a childcare provider for her first son Ezekiel was the main reason for becoming one herself. Tiffany took Ezekiel to a "daycare" home when she was working, but he would complain about how the provider would leave the windows open year-round. Tiffany pointed to the fact the caregiver was a "Mexican lady" as an explanation of this practice.

Lizzeth and I, who share a second-generation Mexican background, nodded our heads in agreement to attest to this custom. Tiffany conceded to sympathizing with leaving the windows open and revealed to us she was a second-generation Mexican immigrant. She understood why pleasure was drawn from allowing outside breezes to circulate air within one's home. However, she withdrew Ezekiel from the childcare anyway because he frequently complained and experienced cold-related illnesses.

Starting her own childcare, Tiffany said she strove to create an atmosphere that was welcoming of children from diverse backgrounds, and where she could take care of Ezekiel and her newborn Jeremiah. Many of the parent-clients were local nurses but she also served multiple welfare-to-work parents who were registered at the local "transitional assistance" center. The thing with "subsidy kids," Tiffany explained, was they often came to her childcare with "more attitude problems, or come with more challenging problems." In fact, several of her "girlfriends" had trouble controlling children of workfare parents. She assured us that these kids "shape up really quickly with me because I'm really fun and lenient to some point, but I'm really stern when it come to respect." She also highlighted how she would not charge workfare parents any gas for pickup or any late fees, exhibiting certain leniency towards the "subsidy" parents as well.

This anecdote highlights the ways certain care practices, such a leaving windows open, serve as markers of cultural difference. Seemingly-banal, everyday domestic practices become inculcated in the selection and provision of commodified care. Parent, child, and provider relationships encapsulate the very essence of intimate labor, as defined by Parreñas and Boris: "the work of forging, sustaining, nurturing, maintaining, and managing interpersonal ties, as well as the work of tending to the sexual, bodily, health, hygiene, and care needs of individuals" (in Parreñas et al. 2016: 2). This work becomes read through a nexus that is as much about the constructions of cultural (and with it classed, racialized and gendered) difference as it is about market relations.

In this case, the intimate practice of keeping windows open in one's own home marked Tiffany's "daycare" provider with *Mexicanidad*. Tiffany identified this practice as culturally rooted; more precisely, she pointed to her experience as a fellow member of the Mexican diaspora to catalog this practice as a common custom from the warmer climates of Latin America. Ezekiel, who was born and raised in the US context, was unable to adjust his body to having windows open all year, even in the temperate climate of an area once known for its citrus groves. This practice of opening windows indexed *Mexicanidad* in a way that Tiffany, who was clearly upwardly-mobile, did not necessarily want to expose her son. On the flipside, she distinguished her son from children whose parents received subsidies and needed a particular inculcation in respect – in other words, middle-class respectability.

According to Mary Tounimen, "Mothers frequently seek out childcare providers who share their cultural values and practices and race and ethnicity" (2003: 163). Providers – many mothers themselves - attempt to create spaces that reflect their own practices and identifications. Touminen refers to providers' desire for "racial safety" and to create a community, which examples in this paper affirm, in operating their care environments (Ibid.). Writing with Lynet Uttal, Toumimen notes that provider-parent cultural affinities signal the meaningful nature of childcare work and its potential to challenge racial inequalities (1999).

But providers' talk of intimate cultural practices cannot be romanticized. As anthropologists have well documented, reified concepts of culture can be deployed for any range of political projects, and perceived cultural and intimate practice can lead to tension as much as solidarity (cf. di Leonardo 1998; Conquergood 2013). Providers, of course, must attempt to accommodate children regardless of their abilities and without discriminating on the basis of race or gender. Tiffany and many other providers would instead articulate the conflicts among parents and providers regarding culturally-inflected care practices in terms of whether a family would "fit in" at the care home, and several parents told me that they had "preferences" that other care sites (including center-based care) could not meet. Her son did not "fit in" with the first-generation Mexican providers. "Fitting in" to the childcare Tiffany built up meant conforming to a particular notion of "respect." As di Leonardo notes, elite politicians, church pastors and public figures espousing respectability politics have often targeted black Americans and blamed them for their marginalization, an ideology that has only been amplified by neoliberal repertoires prizing "extreme individual self reliance" (2016: 360; Higgenbotham 1993; Harris 2014.) The crosses and bible quotes posted throughout the house, as well as the names Tiffany chose for her children, suggest that her notions of respect may also be linked to her protestant Christian beliefs, in line with the religious antecedents of respectability ideology (Higgenbothan 1993). The lineages of this politics of responsibalization overlap with the project of state agencies to turn black and Latinx children into productive future neoliberal subject-citizens.

The discourse of "fit" and "preferences," as much as reflecting cultural politics, also speaks to the ways that childcare becomes viewed as a free and open market of care practices: Parents can select other providers they align with in matters of intimacy (or even start their own site, as Tiffany did), while providers can market their childcare to particular parents and children. Welfare-to-work has enshrined the market model, with its reliance upon family childcare subsidies. In fact, in the years leading up to reform, government and university resources released a flurry of studies regarding the unmet childcare "preferences" and limited "satisfaction" of mothers on welfare (Aid for Families with Dependent Children at the time) regarding childcare, and the need for welfare systems to incorporate more childcare options (Porter 1991; Meyers and Van Leuwen 1992; Sonestein and Wolf 1991). [24] These discourses in some ways helped grow support for family child care.

The inseparability of intimacy and market processes in childcare, in other words, is riddled with ambiguity in ways that evince the (il)liberal politics of culture as choice but also as determined. Yet even where culture and intimacy cleave, they also can bring providers and union organizers together, as the discussion of *Mexicanidad* did for Lizzeth and Tiffany. Several times during the home visit it was clear that they found commonality via particular racialized identifications — in this case *Mexicanidad* and second-generation immigrant status. The connections that providers and organizers make through cultural intimacies are by no means easy or universal. Scholars of racial formation have noted how different "Latino" categorizations in the US, including national identifications, are "remarkably elastic and contested" (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2004). Juan Flores notes that the categorization of pan-Latinx or Latino nationalities in the US often hinges on the configuration of immigrant groups versus "native-born," although (as discussed in Chapter 2) the vast majority of people in the US Latin American diaspora are in mixed-status families (2000). Racial formations among Latina migrant providers are furthermore produced through gender, generation, and ability. In this case, Tiffany implied that there is a difference between second-generation Latinxs like herself (and even more so her son) and her first provider, one we can only assume was heightened by Tiffany's class mobility. But there were common experiences across these generations that tied Tiffany and Lizzeth.

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[24] The "preference" in care discourses mirror contemporary "school choice" debates, wherein neoliberal policymakers and lobbyists seeking to privatize K-12 education claim voucher systems can help poor families better access quality education (Lipman 2008, Wells et al. 2002).

Tiffany's involvement as a provider began precisely because she sought to create a service that met the particular market niche that "fit" a particular notion of respectable care. Providers' intimate practices become a means to define interpersonal and market boundaries — to show where a "fit" among providers and certain parents and children may not be possible, but also to bring participants in the union effort like Tiffany and Lizzeth to common understandings that can support political action.

Contracting the Intimate

Beyond discursive talk of "fit" and cultural mis/understanding, providers also attempted to codify the terms of the intimate within their contracts. Parental contracts, whereby parents agree to predetermined conditions such as pay rates, holidays, and sick policy, are provider-produced documents that vary in style but are largely uniform in content. Some contracts differed in terms of how explicit they were regarding controversial topics. For example, some contracts providers showed me outlines of parental responsibilities, such as providing diapers and clothes; others stipulate disciplining methods, explicitly outlawing corporal punishment. The contracts are a form for mutual understanding around often-unspoken matters. They are also, as several providers told me, a way for providers to demonstrate their professionalism as caregivers and to give providers the authority to take certain actions as educators and caretakers. In fact, providers are required to have parental contracts if they are subsidized by the state; Cal-Works uses them to determine a provider's pay rate and holidays.

These documents are not static, but constantly (re)negotiated in accord with parental, state, and market demands. Providers update their parent contracts for many reasons; however, shifting social policies and emerging child development trends loom large over their practices. Early education experts are quick to disabuse caregivers and parents alike of assuming that the way they were raised in their own homes — often cast as a set of (often maternal) "beliefs" or blankly as culture — is adequate for other children (cf. Davis et al 2016; Garcia 2004; Lamorey 2002). As Tiffany's example shows, providers must do the same. Contracts allow providers to codify the value of their beliefs to experts and parents alike, at times deploying empirical evidence in the form of clinical studies, statistics, and other techno-scientific talk.

The contract allows the triangulation of the requirements of the legal-juridical state, intimate relationships, and the market. The contracts parallel to some degree the ways that classroom teachers have parents sign agreements at the beginning of the academic year, except that they are given more legal and political weight in the context of this marketized industry and by the state agencies. As in the case of Ms. Williams, citing the requirement in her contract to disclose any learning agreements, contracts also become tools to defend providers in the course of state inspections (see Chapter 3). They are a way for providers to set certain expectations of parents themselves, in a realm where they have little other authority. As a whole, they come to assert a providers' individual *right to intervene* in intimate and sensitive matters of childrearing.

The neoliberalized model of employment that individualizes labor arrangements and fetishizes entrepreneurship gives the contract further power over demarcating the shifting boundaries of the intimate (cf. Freeman 2014; Gershon 2011). Neoliberal economists Hart and

Holmstrom cast the contract as the ideal form of economic organization, as it promotes a set of socially-enforced obligations that facilitate free exchange based on shared norms and understanding (1986). Contracts come to embody and index the neoliberal entrepreneurial self, the *homo economicus*, in as much as they are part of subsuming social relations into market processes (Mehan 2014). But as Uppinder Mehan explains, such contractual "free exchange" representing the "utopian dream of contemporary capitalists" is really one that centers on the vision of property owners who have resources to wealth (and who profit from others' labor) to protect themselves in negotiating and managing contracts (2014: 271). And it is not just contracts in general: as David Harvey notes, the move to undermine labor power forces workers to turn to individualized, shorter-term contracts (like those annually renewed among parents and providers) that hold far less "security of tenure" to protect themselves (2005: 168). Contracts are indeed one of the few means through which providers can secure their employment in a precarious market, both when it comes to questions like pay but also in their ability to provide care as they deem fit.

The union here plays a unique role in at once recognizing the neoliberal reliance upon individual contract labor while simultaneously attempting to push for a collective contract, more in line with the liberal-Fordist model of labor relations. Union organizers did hold workshops to support providers in crafting and comparing these documents, bringing in legal experts to explain how to develop the contracts, and fielding many individual questions on their terms. In so doing, the union was able to aid providers in documenting the value of their intimate interventions and protecting their rights to define what may "fit" in their worksite (within the bounds of course of anti-discrimination laws regarding disability, race and gender).

At the same time, central to the union's mission was working to secure a c*ollective c*ontract with the state, which would give providers more authority over their own contracts with subcontractors and parents and their intimate relationships with children. The language of the childcare bills supporting unionization, like the vetoed Raising Child Care Quality Act (2015), illustrate the tightrope the union walked in both recognizing providers as entrepreneurs and experts (in a more neoliberal sense), while also pushing for collective bargaining rights that would guarantee far more "security of tenure." In the latter case, providers' need to codify providers' intimate labor was used as rationale for their collective protection.

Yvette: Changing the Playing Field

While providers attempt to navigate (and even take up) market mechanisms and discourses as they engage in their intimate work, the same complexities and even tensions can also be the launching point for political action to challenge neoliberal inequalities. Yvette, a provider at the forefront of the Raising California Together campaign, who ended up taking a seat on Local 99's Executive Board, described to me an interaction with a child's father during a routine pickup at her home in Long Beach. Yvette greeted the father and began reporting about the day's activities with the infants and toddlers. The father, she remembers, curiously inquired about her business model and began to guess out loud to her what he thought she was earning as a childcare business. To her irritation, he began counting out loud the number of children in her home and calculating that total number with the amount he paid her to watch his child. "One, two, three, four…" Yvette mocked the father-client's futile efforts to calculate her earnings. To Yvette, the parent's cynical attempt to calculate her profit margins struck at the heart of what she thought was wrong about the public perception of providers such as herself: parents in particular and the public in general made negative assumptions about providers, their care practices, judgment, and even motivation in providing childcare in the first place because they were paid for their intimate work.

Perceptions of providers' motives are often tainted based on common tropes of market moralities and what economic sociologist Vivian Zelizer calls the ambiguity of the "purchase of intimacy" (2000). Social scientists have explored how in some contexts - most recently, the rise of "sharing" platforms like AirBnB - further commodification is cast by its neoliberal progenitors as signs of modern progress and even liberating in terms of widening access to goods and services (Pauwels 2015; Schorr and Atwood Charles 2017). But, Constable explains, "as the scope of commodification expands into realms of intimacy," these changes are met with "countervailing discourses and action involving reciprocity, and gift giving, claims to altruism, and assertions of love" (2009: 58).

Yvette quickly pointed out that even fellow union members from other sectors, who are educators themselves, had been dismissive of providers' work. Yvette recalled hosting a meeting of the Local 99 African American Caucus, for which she was the chairperson, where such tensions arose. The African American (AFRAM) Caucus is a voluntary membership-based committee within the SEIU internal structure, collecting separate dues and meeting nationally at the union's annual conference. The creation of the AFRAM caucus originated through a struggle to establish the Civil and Human Rights Committees among SEIU leadership in the 1970s and 1980s (AFRAM n.d.). SEIU's constitution authorized the formation of the International Caucus for people of African Descent in the same year that a record number of African Americans were elected and appointed to leadership positions (Garcia 2002). The AFRAM Caucus at Local 99 holds monthly meetings and promotes events, fundraisers, and film screenings in support of the Black Worker Center and Black Lives Matter in Los Angeles.

At the meeting in Yvette's home, fellow AFRAM caucus members reacted incredulously to the sight of a her home childcare classroom. "Oh, you teach?" one member questioned. Although Yvette remembered feeling frustration with her fellow African American caucus members' uninformed assumptions about the contributions of family childcare, she ultimately understood the incident as a reminder of the work yet to be done to expose fellow working class black Americans to the plight of workers in childcare and domestic work more broadly.

Yvette viewed AFRAM itself as a critical site to advancing a political project focused on early education particularly attuned to questions of race, class and blackness. Yvette sought to build African American identity-based coalitions with other union members out of a long-standing recognition of the importance of such alliances in enacting institutional change for childcare providers. Engaging in these caucuses created support from the local membership for continuing childcare organizing itself, even as state legislative bills supporting collective bargaining faced continual vetoes.

Yvette's leadership in AFRAM as well as in RCT and Local 99 highlight the important intersection of black politics and labor activism - which, as historian Robin D.G. Kelley points out, refigures prominently in the collective identities of black working people but also "substantially shapes the entire nation's conceptions of class and gender" (Kelley 1996: 5).

Yvette's leadership of the AFRAM local caucus also signals the prominence of black women's activism in addressing the interplay of race, gender, and class (Collins 2002). This work can also be seen as aligned with the ways in which black women organize across the home, workplace, and the public sphere, which Leith Mullings describes as "transformative work" (2005, 1995). Mullings defines this work as focused on both sustaining certain cultural and social practices in the face of transformation as well as attempting to transform circumstances in the face of continuity — in ways that often put inequality at the center (Ibid.) In this case, Yvette aligns with a longer tradition in US black communities where "othermothers…who assist blood mothers by sharing mother responsibilities" have been vital to reproduction (Collins 2002: 178). Hill Collins points to the ways these kin and non-kin women represent both "a continuation of African-derived cultural sensibilities and functional adaptations to intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, and nation" (*Ibid.* Tanner 1974; Stack 1974; Reagon 1987). Yvette also pushes against the gendered devaluation of such intimate labor or its limitation to mothering, and organizes within the union to protect providers and their roles in countering inequality via early education.

Yvette, like several African American providers I interviewed, was unequivocal in addressing unequal treatment and enforcing fairness among children in their majority-minority communities. Yvette put into practice multiple intimate interventions to address racial and class inequality. She enforced a strict policy of not allowing favoritism among the children. For example, she refused to honor parents' requests for special treatment and prohibited wealthier parents from leaving their children with special snacks, toys, or other treats in her home. Yvette insisted on mitigating the inequality between the children of "food stamps moms" and wealthier parent-clients. She resolved, much to the chagrin of some families, that she would pay out of pocket for all meals and activities for children in her care.

Yvette described the continued everyday challenges of class inequality in her daycare. She told me in a typically frank tone:

> I started say no to parents' request; I'm their childcare provider, I'm not their mom...You have to learn how to address without showing favoritism. When you have those parents and they have their precious little angels (and I'm saying that sarcastically) and they want their precious little angels to be treated differently from other children at the daycare and would like their kids to be teacher's pet.

She continued:

> A great example: We take a field trip and mom wants to send precious angel with this big bag of, ugh, sandwiches, chocolate chip cookies, juices — ugh, just goo gabs of kid sugary happy stuff. Then you have *my* mom who is getting food stamps who at the time can only make — let's see — a cheese sandwich and we'll put some chips in it — oh, and "Ms. Yvette can you give them something to drink." It's like — okay, right off the bat, when I started as a provider, these are the differences I noticed, and my second year... I just eliminated all of that.

Indeed, Yvette took action:

> I told them: You cannot send anything with your kids. I'm going to provide all the food, you can't pay whereever we're going — I'm paying for their trip. So you can't send any money so that now I'm responsible for when we go to the amusement park, to Adventure City. Then your kids you send with all this money — with money they can buy all of this stuff, no! I incur all the cost for everybody and it just worked better. That way nobody is better than the other. I had parents who did not understand it. No — we are all doing this together and we are all the same.

Yvette took on a financial burden along with some parent-client resentment in order to enforce a policy that addresses inequality at her childcare. She enacted a moral economy where, while enmeshed in the intimate work of childrearing and instilling values, she still distinguished herself from kin or relatives and placed herself squarely as a businesswoman and educator. Yvette also enforced control over nutrition choices and extracurricular activities as a means to produce a more equal "playing field" regardless of the different statuses of children across and within families. She was willing to incur significant out of pocket cost to ensure (even at the risk of losing clients) that the children whose families received workfare subsidies would not feel excluded. Her own home became a veritable site for transforming inequalities of birth and closing achievement gaps.

Yvette's intimate interventions are based on personal experiences, she described, including her own past experiences in foster care, buttressed by her years as a respected caregiver. She told me of the difficulty of confronting certain parents in the past due to the parents' unequal treatment of siblings within blended families. Like the providers whose experiences with violence motivated their work, Yvette noted how her care practices were shaped by her own experiences growing up in an abusive foster care environment. She recalled how, despite having visible signs of child abuse, no teachers or adults around her took action to help her. Yvette's project of acknowledging and addressing inequalities within intimate household settings stands in significant contrast to ideologies that demarcate boundaries between private and public life in modern liberal states. She drew upon the visible encroachment of market and state power into the household to assert a broader project of care that placed inequality at the center and that countered the harms she knew all too personally.

Esperanza: Assessing Autism

As we saw earlier, Esperanza also experienced deep violence that motivated her intimate labor: She, too, quite explicitly understood the political significance of her labor. In December of 2015, she invited me to visit for another musical jam session with her regular morning group of toddlers: Eva, Leandro, Marcus, Silvia, Lucas, and Lucy, all under three. When I entered her spacious single-family home childcare in the east San Fernando Valley, the six children were sitting in a circle with three adults including Esperanza, her niece and assistant Yesenia, and Marcus's speech therapist Kathy. I joined in as the group played bongo drums, tambourines, and maracas and sang songs in English, Spanish, and Farsi.

"Time to play outside," Esperanza declared as she tried to gain control of the room, which had at some point devolved (or evolved) into an impromptu dance party. Lucy began to scream in an agonized tone and lingered in the playroom. The other children, after retrieving their shoes, moved toward the exit that leads to a play area behind the home. Esperanza planted herself at the opening of the sliding glass door that separated the family room-turned-childcare classroom from the shaded patio and grass areas outside and inspected every child before allowing them to exit.

"Lucy, come on let's go. You want to stay there that is fine. But you can bring your toys," Esperanza calmly coaxed a visibly upset Lucy from across the line of children. Despite Lucy's frequent and audible outbursts throughout the morning, her five peers seemed unfazed.

Lucy was the last toddler to leave the room and join her peers who, at that point, were well into play activity under the warm Valley sun.

Outside, all the children but Marcus played on the grass where the large play equipment sat, including two slides, a sandbox, climbing equipment, and a plethora of toys. On the cemented patio under the shade of a canopy, Marcus sat with Kathy, who hovered and probed him with questions as he played with miniature toy cars. Lucy clung to Esperanza, tugging at her clothes and bursting into fits of rage until Esperanza gently soothed her by rocking on a hammock swing together. Lucy continued to keep close to Esperanza and largely remained distant from and indifferent to the other children playing all around her. After playtime, we ate a delicious vegan lunch Yesenia had prepared, and the children headed to naptime.

Esperanza told me that she was destined to work with *niños con necesidades especiales* – special needs kids. Esperanza suspected that Lucy was on the autism spectrum and that she may have cognitive delay as well. As evidence, she pointed to the Autism Spectrum Screening Questionnaire (ASSQ) she completed.[25] While the twenty-seven-question document is often completed by parents, Esperanza took it upon herself to assess Lucy using the ASSQ:

> I'm going to pretend I'm [Lucy's] mother and answer the questions according to what I see in my childcare, and it was amazing how low my score was…There was even some questions that I asked the mom, because I know, even though [Lucy]'s not here with me twenty-four hours a day, I see it, because of how she has a hard time with transitions.

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[25] The ASSQ document covers a range of questions that focus on children's behavior and whether it can be seen as "unusual," "old-fashioned," or a range of other terminologies that index a standard for behavior and deviance from a norm (Posserud et al. 2006). According to clinical literature, the measure is better at gauging autism in both young boys and girls (Kopp et al. 2011). Most interesting to scholars may be the measure on the ASSQ that asks whether the child can be "regarded as an 'eccentric professor' by the other children."

Lucy's low score on the ASSQ, coupled with Esperanza's own observations, led her to believe Lucy needed an emergency evaluation. Esperanza described to me the process for legally determining whether a young child has a special need, which includes an evaluation from a state-approved specialist. The specialist would utilize observations and tests to rule out other hearing, vision, neurological, and somatic conditions before a therapy plan could be created.

Esperanza stressed that there is a legal timeframe of forty-five days for emergency referrals. During this period, a child should be evaluated and a therapy plan, which incorporates parents, determined. Lucy, Esperanza lamented, had yet to see the specialists for an evaluation and had yet to get a diagnosis, let alone a treatment plan. Esperanza was familiar with most of the local therapists through her years as an early interventionist, but Lucy's mother was responsible ultimately for initiating the referral, and did not follow through on Esperanza's suggestions. This limited Esperanza's ability to then work with Lucy's mother to advance a long-term treatment plan:

> It's not cognitive; it is not physical; so we have to be discarding all of these things with the doctors and then we can concentrate on what it is. Is it autism? Is it developmental delay? Or is it speech delay? And [then we can see] what the parents are supposed to do — because it doesn't matter what they [the therapist] can do in a small period of time. If she is with me, and I have a plan then I say, okay, I have a language program that I use in my intervention program and I have used it on them.

Despite her familiarity with technoscientific assessments (and assessors) of autism, Esperanza was nevertheless disenchanted with the cognitive specialists and therapists assigned by the state to support individual children in her childcare. In her childcare, besides Kathy who works with Marcus, there were three other therapists who worked with other children, including one who had recently begun working with Lucy. Drawing from her experience and education as a bilingual provider who has worked previously in early intervention (as a teaching aide at the local public schools), Esperanza viewed autism as a social and relational condition as much as a physical one. As such, she was dubious about therapists who privilege their interaction with the special needs child over all others, and their more individualistic treatment models.

> And a lot of the professionals, it's their ego. Oh, he likes it with me. You know it's not about me, it's about **you** [the special needs child] socializing with your peers. Go over there, go with your peers. Go play. I don't need you here. With me you are not going to learn anything. You are going to learn with your peers.
> [Me] I saw you giving that encouragement earlier.
> [Esperanza] I do it all day long.

In contrast, Esperanza sought to implement her own intimate interventions regarding autism that were more relational and holistic. She accommodated special needs children like Lucy who has difficulty with transitioning from one activity to another, for example, by allowing Lucy to drag her feet and slowly encouraging her to move from eating to play in a calming, soothing voice. She encouraged slow and steady peer interaction.

Part of Esperanza's frustration with state-assigned therapists may be due to the fact that her interpretation of the social causes of autism runs counter to trends focusing on the biological, especially neuroscientific and genetic, causes (Frith and Happé in Fitzgerald 2017).[26] In her skepticism of biological accounts naturalizing autism, Esperanza found strange political bedfellows in parent “anti-vax” movements blaming vaccines for fomenting autism. The movement has been particularly prominent in the wealthiest zip codes (many in Los Angeles and Orange County) which have some of the lowest vaccination rates in the US, on par with sub-Saharan Africa (Berezin 2016; Ingraham 2015).

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[26] The American Psychological Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5) defines autism spectrum disorder, including Asperger's, through social "abnormalities" in relation to conversation, eye contact, repetitive behavior, and sensitivity to sensory environments. Autism diagnoses emerged during the high point of American psychoanalysis. During this time, maternal influences on autistic children were often ascribed blame. When psychoanalysis waned in the 1980s, clinical and mainstream research methods began to be employed to understand the "weak central coherence" that led autistic people to focus on detail at the expense of the "whole picture" (Frith and Happé in Fitzgerald 2017).

In July 2016, the vaccine-autism debate came to the fore in California with the passage of State Senate Bill 277, which placed restrictions on the personal belief exemption allowed for children in public schools. As the bill was being debated, I attended a large community event at Casa del Pueblo, which featured California State Senator and President Pro-Tempore Kevin de Leon, and included Central American dance performances and beauty pageant winners. I had been present because de Leon was a quite public ally and proponent of increasing childcare subsidies and a supporter of the union. I happened to enter at the same time as a noticeable group of women (a few of whom reluctantly parked their luxury vehicles in the city streets), who then proceeded to storm the Casa del Pueblo to confront Senator De Leon regarding his support of SB 277. While complaining about the long drive from Malibu to get to the open house event (located near the urban core), they claimed parental rights not to vaccinate and lectured the Senate President on inconclusive vaccine medical science.

Esperanza found herself agreeing with some of the principles of the Malibu parents. During a union meeting that same year, Esperanza spoke up in opposition to a related bill, SB 792, which required childcare workers to be vaccinated with at least ten specified vaccines. Esperanza was the lone voice to raise objections to the union’s neutral position on the bill and cited her knowledge of medical experiments conducted on Central Americans by US researchers during the US-backed military regimes of the mid-twentieth century (cf. Rodriguez and Garcia 2013). Esperanza's identification with this movement points to the ways in which, in the Gramscian sense, providers' linking of their intimate work with broader political efforts that challenge the biopolitical state projects can also put them in line with more hegemonic and elite movements. Her concerns about vaccines also speak to the contradictions of the neoliberal biopolitical state that must advance population-level interventions to advance economic competition with the continual re-affirmation a market-based individualism.

Esperanza: Transcendental Transformations

But Eseperanza's affinities were not always as elite as her sympathies with an "anti-vax" perspective; she also saw her interest in alternative therapies and healing practices as integral to her efforts to mitigate racialized inequality. Esperanza's naptime room also doubled as a dance and yoga room. The room sits on the opposite corner to her childcare classroom, near the front of the house, and leads out to fruit trees and a vegetable garden adorned with cherub and saint statues. Esperanza told me that the room was once a garage, but through retrofitting and collecting the proper permits, she began using the space for her childcare.

The open floor space was covered with mats and exercise balls. Here Esperanza and Yesenia taught children how to walk on all fours like elephants, or sit with their feet pressed together and knees pointing out like butterfly wings. Esperanza showed off her photos of children doing downward-facing dog and wheel poses. In the latter, children bent their bodies back over one another, using their hands and knees for support. Esperanza had her own reasoning for the importance of early intervention and how yoga and meditation are critically therapeutic for young children. First, she spoke of the emerging science of early education especially in regards to linguistic development.

> Yo estuve en un training en el Fair Oaks College en eso que se llama post-graduate something something college. Nos dieron un training tan lindo [emphasis] de esta señora que estaban haciendo un investigación de muchos años acerca de bilingual education. Y fue tan interesante como las estadísticas que entre cero a tres años los niños pueden aprender treinta millones de palabras. I'm like woah! Lo que voy a aprender el resto de mi vida. Pueden ser capaces de increíble desarrollo lingüístico porque imagínate que puede estar los niños bien iluminados.
>
> [I was at a training at Fair Oaks College in that post-graduate something something college. They gave us a training that was so nice from this woman who had been conducting research for many years about bilingual education. And it was so interesting how the statistics of how from zero to three years children can learn thirty million words. I'm like woah! What I will learn the rest of my life. They are capable of incredible linguistic development because think about how children can be really enlightened.]

Second, Esperanza emphasized the importance of helping children with developmental delays and other special needs develop relationships with their peers. She did so by building trust among the children; for example, through the execution of yoga poses like the wheel.

> [Lucy] is autistic, and her brother is too, and when we try to do yoga they become in their own different world. It seems to be hard [with autistic children] but it is so easy. How you can work in partners — they learn how to work in cooperation [she shows a picture of the children stretching and holding yoga poses]. I tell them so so and so is not going to hurt you if you are in the right position. And let your body just fall, and they will have to feel the trusting: This person is trustworthy; trust your friend is not going to let you fall. And when you stand up again, you don't do it *brusca* [abrupt] you do it very gently and just get up. Now you be the carrier.

The third set of reasons were more transcendental, and related to the ways in which yoga and meditation help develop children in somatic ways that encourage their unique personal development.

> En la práctica de yoga es lo que nos dicen, fíjate cuando tu naces esta parte de ti [pointing to the forehead] esta suave, y lo que está suave aquí tenemos nuestro pineal gland. Y nuestro pineal gland es prácticamente como dicen eso switch de energía. Cuando tu estas chiquito todos tus electronics y botones están conectados, closes y estamos todos conectado. Y en el momento en que se te cierra se te calcifica. Y tu pineal gland deja de funcionar. Entonces imagínate se los niños aprenden a meditar y hacer ejercicio por que yo se como hacer ejercicio para activar a tu pineal gland [switch to English] You are going to be like in a third dimension.
> So, like, that is my dream. I want these kids to be like [pause] transcending! Because if just imagine todo lo que hemos perdido. ¿Atraves de que? [Strict teacher voice] "Sentadito!" [mocking pupil tone] Yes teacher, no teacher, be a good boy!"
>
> [In the practice of yoga it's like what they tell us, notice when you are born this part of you {pointing to her forehead} is soft. And the soft spot area covers our pineal gland. And our pineal gland is practically, how do you say, our energy switch. When you are young all your electrical and buttons are connected, and we are all connected to each other. And when the time come for your soft spot to close, your pineal gland stops functioning. So then imagine if the kids learn to meditate and do exercise in order to activate their pineal gland. They are going to be in like a third dimension.
> So, like, that is my dream. I want these kids to be like [pause] transcending! Because if you just imagine all that we have lost. And for what reason? [Strict teacher tone] "Sit nicely!" {mocking pupil tone} "Yes teacher, no teacher, be a good boy!"]

Esperanza here reinterpreted for me the potential of early intervention along with alternative theories of human development. Her interest in mind-body connections moved beyond Cartesian dualisms and more clinical Western scientific accounts that rely upon neurological explanations and individualized clinical solutions. She was quick to caution that hers was scientific practices and not spiritual: "You have to be careful [and] yoga is not a religion."

Esperanza was intentional about the fact that she wanted to promote access to these holistic and somatic practices to Latinx families. As noted above, she went to extra lengths to complete assessments for most often-Latinx parents so that their children could qualify for state benefits that come with certain diagnoses.

Parents were at times resistant to Esperanza pressing them to access state services (as in the case with Lucy) and her applying non-Western knowledge on child development to their children. Esperanza saw their reluctance as only fomenting further inequality:

> My niece worked for Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD). They were doing therapy for Lou Diamond Phillips's kids — and they get these services for *free*.[27] And all these wealthy families get services and the Latino community [sardonic tone]: "I don't want. Oh, nothing is wrong with them, bla bla bla. Oh, he wants to play video games he doesn't bother anyone." [incredulous tone] And they think that is normal.

At the same time, Esperanza did not give up on or begrudge parents their skepticism. Latinx parents in Los Angeles often fear accessing public childcare services due to immigration status; their positioning as deportable subjects (often regardless of their actual legal status) acts as a barrier to accessing public services (Garcia, Shadduck-Hernandez, and Valles 2015). Given her experience and time living undocumented in the US, Esperanza understood these quandaries and worked to provide as many resources as she could within the context of her home, and (as in the case with Lucy) help overcome hurdles like evaluation processes. As part of her work, Esperanza challenged Latinx parents to acknowledge their child's condition and to intervene early to address developmental delays through accessing public resources. Her masterful combination of early intervention expertise and cultural work allowed her some success in overcoming Latinx parents' reservations about seeking state resources but also in regards to yoga and other non-Western practices enhancing child development.

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[27] Filipino-American actor Lou Diamond Phillips, who has played numerous Latino characters in film and television, has been a spokesperson for Autism Care Treatment Today! (ACT Today!), a nonprofit that funds CARD's services for children.

Esperanza's approach and understanding of Latinx families differed substantially from some of the research and expert-suggested "best practices" regarding the differential treatment of disabilities in Latinx (often Mexican-American) communities - which often squarely blame parents. Garcia et al., for example, suggest that Mexican-American mothers are more concerned with " 'mothering' rather than 'teaching' as their primary responsibility" and that as such they "may not be as concerned about the achievement of developmental milestones as are middle-class White parents" (2000: 94). Esperanza proffered a more nuanced approach that did not necessarily put the blame on an abstract set of cultural beliefs, but conceded that the intimate infrastructure itself requires reworking and reimagining to better serve parents and children alike.

Esperanza viewed her intervention as an ecclesiastical endeavor to work with Latinx children with special needs in the US and in Latin America, hoping one day to continue her calling by building an early education center in El Salvador. While an active member of the union, much of her "mission" occurred outside of the scope of the union and, as with the question of vaccines, not always in alignment with the union's political stances. Her intimate knowledge of child behavior — on par with the parents themselves, she suggested — fueled her work to make diagnoses, seek treatments, and implement her own practices to support children's development. At the center of this project was an analytics of autism, linguistic development and other special needs as social and even political questions. On the one hand, she recognized the cultural and historical patterns that caused Latinx parents to distrust such diagnoses. On the other, she critiqued the limited institutional options dominated by technoscientific forms of knowledge centered on Western medicine, neurology and narrow constructions of child development. Her holistic practices of care navigated these poles in ways that belie any narrow constructions of pan-Latinidad, childhood, health, or national belonging.

Local 99: The Price of Nutrition

As Esparanza and Yvette enacted intimate interventions in early education that paid specific attention to racialized inequality, both found themselves coming up against the challenges with a key material resource for childcare: food. Food is deeply cultural, and eating and food distribution highly intimate. Anthropologists have well documented the ways in which societies order, distribute, and share food not only index particular cultural markers and meanings, but also are key to hierarchies and political orders (Miller 2002; Manning 2012). Food is also about the distribution of resources and power. Nally highlights the ways in which food security emerges as a capitalist biopolitical project, linked to myriad "curative interventions" to control the diets of both colonized and marginalized people, as well as to propose agro-biotechnologies as solutions to questions of hunger and food access (2011: 37).

The biopolitics of food often come "home" to providers — and become an integral part of the intimate infrastructure of childcare — via state agencies' efforts to shape "healthy" nutrition choices at the earliest ages. These biopolitics have become even more acute with racialized panics regarding obesity and diabetes in low-income Latinx and black communities, driven by neoliberal discourses of individual self-governance and public health models centered on rational choice, which at times even implicate teachers' own food choices (Gibson & Dempsey 2013; Guthman 2009; Montoya 2011; Schee and Gard 2014).

Thus, food and nutrition becomes a matter of significant material concern and contestation for providers. Among the biggest costs of caregiving for children is food. Esperanza recounted spending up to 400 dollars a week on grocery bills, and several other providers I spoke to echoed this number. Despite the burden, Yvette, for instance, challenged neoclassic theoretical assumptions of *homo economicus* every day as she absorbed all out-of-pocket costs for all food and snacks for her business. Furthermore, nutrition was an important component of Yvette's culturally-inflected intimate interventions. A trained culinary chef, she described using cooking to promote healthy diets in addition to teaching basic counting and measuring skills. Esperanza was also willing to absorb the costs of providing vegan meals, given their alignment with her values regarding non-Western practices like yoga linking mind and body.

Alongside groceries, games and toys are a constant challenge due to high use and wear and tear. Esperanza and other providers came up with innovative and resourceful ways to keep themselves afloat, like repurposing and recycling food-related ingredients and packaging for use in play. Esperanza made her own sand and clay, improvising with corn masa mixed with water to form dough. "We use masa to make tortillas, put our hands in it," she explained, so it was a natural choice to create a clay for the children.

Even as the demands on providers to offer nutritious food to children in care increased, and providers themselves used food for a multiplicity of interventions, the childcare infrastructure failed to support providers' ability to obtain this commodity. Over the last decades, the federal government has limited the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a program that reimburses care providers for up to two meals and snack per child daily and has roots in the 1960s War on Poverty. The first cuts to this program came in 1996 with the onset of welfare-to-work, when providers had to undergo means-testing for any reimbursements, cutting overall access to the program (FRAC 2017). Food reimbursements, providers describe, became a lengthy, time-consuming process that involved online forms mandating providers plan out detailed monthly meal calendars and daily logging of food consumed.

In 2012, the California legislature halted its contribution supplementing the CACFP, further limiting the reimbursements available. Around that same time, the US Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, which set stringent requirements on what could be reimbursed along with new dietary guidelines meant to counteract childhood obesity (USDA 2016). Resources declined as requirements became more stringent — leading, quite expectedly, to more than 200,000 children statewide losing access to food programs in childcare from 2010 to 2016 (Gutierrez et al 2017).

But providers encountered limits to their capacity to transform the childcare food distribution system. Their struggles mirrored the ways in which social scientists discuss the challenges in repairing or altering infrastructure that is being controlled from a multiplicity of vantage points and scales (Star 1999). Providers raised the concern repeatedly in larger group meetings and one-on-ones with the union. Union organizers, though, chose not to integrate the food program concerns in with their childcare campaign platform. They saw the federal battle to reduce onerous reporting, increase funding, and loosen means-testing for food — in other words, over key elements of the post-1996 workfare infrastructure— as a losing battle. Instead, they turned providers' attention to acquiring a contract at the state level, a more manageable fight that they hoped would lead to increased subsidy rates overall. The federal scale, in organizers' eyes, was too far from the intimate scale of the household; the federal elements of the childcare infrastructure were far too broken to repair. Instead, the union invested in bringing their collective voice to an arena that organizers thought could bear more fruit: a changing, majority-minority California with a greater stake in intimate interventions to address racialized inequality.

Conclusions: Intimate interventions and transformative horizons

The experiences and organizing of family childcare union members reveal how markets of care and social reproduction are institutionalized in workfare-era California. Family childcare aligns with other intimate industries that "produce, enable, promote and market some relational connections while disrupting or rearranging other previous existing social relations" (Parreñas et al. 2016: 2). As a sector reliant upon feminized labor, family childcare helps maintain an idealized family formation and domestic sensibility (Collins and Mayer 2010). Even as the idea of a single-wage, nuclear family proves elusive, providers' labor in some sense reaffirms the home and the private as the sphere of care and social reproduction. Providers' experiences with state surveillance and parent mistrust reveal hierarchical regimes of intimate labor reproduced in everyday interaction.

From the unique vantage point of the intimate, Latina and black caregivers also offer poignant critiques that bring to the fore the functioning of the childcare system and the reproduction of inequalities — an infrastructure which they are charged with maintaining. Food practices, resource distributions, mental health, and child development become sites of contestation among providers, parents, bureaucrats, experts, and policymakers. At stake are the political and cultural lives of infants and toddlers, the conditions within which they are raised, and the effectiveness of early intervention strategies to address a multiplicity of inequities. Providers offer new insight into the nature of women of color's "transformative work," outlined by Mullings, that bridges household, community, and work, and attempts to retain cultural and social practice while creating new continuities (1995, 1996). For childcare providers, transformative work involves quite explicit engagement with often-contradictory notions of biopolitical life, processes of governmentality, and the nature of commodification that constitute contemporary neoliberalism. In each case, providers reimagined particular biopolitical and economic projects - like treatment of autism or food provision - through intimate interventions; these individual practices were also located in and often reaffirmed though a wider set of politics and movements. Providers demonstrated you cannot think through Foucault without Gramsci (and vice versa), and corroborate the inseparability of culture and political economy (di Leonardo 1991; Murray Li 2007).

Yvette enforced equality among the children of her "food stamp moms" and more upwardly-mobile parents through controlling the production and distribution of food and objects like toys. Even though some parents may have disagreed, she viewed eliminating preferential treatment as important to providing care, despite the out-of-pocket cost she incurred to implement her system. Through her intimate work, she was able to confront parents on behalf of children who faced inequalities even within their own blended families. Yvette rationalized her intimate interventions by pointing to her own experiences with intimate violence and lack of adult support growing up in foster care.

Also confronting intimate violence, Esperanza drew meaning from working with children with special needs. She helped often-Latinx children on the autism spectrum and with speech delay access resources and treatment therapies through her cultural acumen and intimate relationships with them and their parents. In addition to seeking Western biomedical and behavioral therapies, she incorporated alternative therapeutic and holistic approaches like yoga and meditation that build trust and mutual respect among children. She shaped her intimate interventions based on observations of improved behavior and learning and an expansive reconceptualization of the bodily and mental capacities and potential of early childhood.

Providers' intimate interventions — and interconnected desires to create social change — of course face myriad challenges, not the least of which are the intricacies (and rigidities) of US early childcare infrastructure, and its layering across national, state, local, and other scales. Providers continually trespass assumed divides across public and private, home and market, and intimate and commodified, which elicits suspicion from parents, state agents, early education experts, and others. From the parent mocking Yvette's interest in the children in her care to Latinx parents' mistrust of Esperanza's autism testing, providers are viewed with suspicion precisely because their presence intimates state and market power in the private sphere. At times, they must build solidarities with parents on often-cultural lines; at others, they must use contracts and notions of market choice to draw boundaries around what kind of intimate work they will perform and how they will raise children.

Providers, in the latter case, utilize the architecture of legal-juridical power and neoliberal (entrepreneurial) rationality - the individual, short-term contract - to intervene in ways they designate as appropriate. The technology of the contract becomes a means for providers to assert their rights to intimately intervene vis-a-vis parents, while also legitimizing providers in the eyes of the state. Their interest in contracts is not purely to secure their individual security in a tenuous market: providers use this mechanism to assert certain cultural rights and to push for a collective employment contract more in line with liberal Fordist notions.

Providers' intimate relations must be read in their place and time, with attention to the shifting racial and gendered formations and hierarchies through which US neoliberalism is advanced. The DRDP and new nutrition programs are examples of how different early intervention policies reify moral anxieties - like those regarding childhood obesity - and assign Latinx and black diaspora youth with the responsibility for national competitiveness and even survival. At times, as Tiffany demonstrated, providers reaffirmed notions of respectability in their attempts to shape the emerging majority-minority generation.

Most often, providers do indeed recognize the inequalities facing black and Latinx youth, but often attempt to build with parents and other educational workers, rather than in spite of them. Yvette helped develop the union's AFRAM caucus in ways that expand knowledge of childcare work, and ensured that often-racialized children whose parents cannot afford certain food are not left out. Esperanza understands the limited access Latinx parents have to information and resources regarding special needs services. For Tiffany, Yvette and Esperanza, agreeing with and understanding parents' (and other workers') cultural and social contexts does not always mean going along with them, but they see their role as being able to productively challenge them in ways that benefit children. They overturn notions of black, Latinx and "immigrant culture" as monolithic and deficient, and affirm the value in their own cultural practices and identifications.

Cultural determination serves as a critical ideological terrain for Latinxs to organize a labor movement with black providers that contests racial and gendered structural violence and produces new narratives of a changing US. Providers make these claims within a context of nearly three decades of social movement and community union efforts that have brought Latino and black workers in coalition, and have brought labor to work more strongly on questions of state power. They build union movements that can better bring workers in solidarity without simply effacing difference but by building upon intimate workers' cultural practices and identifications *and* raising questions of social reproduction.

At Local 99, a historically majority-black membership is also learning to incorporate Latinx migrant providers to forge new cross-racial and gendered alliances and identities. In addition to the AFRAM, the African American caucus, the union has added a new Latinos caucus and invited Dolores Huerta, Eliseo Medina and other Latinx labor and community leaders to participate in harnessing the emerging Latinx majority.

Despite some of the differing care practices and intimate relationships outlined (not to mention economic competition) providers are forging a new union that turns upon intimacy — in other words, heeding the call by Berlant to understand the intimacy of public life (1996, 1997). Issues like DRDPs and food program access reflect the contradictions of market rationality and biopolitical governmentality and their implications for workers like Yvette, Tiffany and Esperanza and for material practices of care. Unions like Local 99 are poised to capture the ways in which the intimate infrastructure of early education (and other welfare and educational institutions) standardizes practices that fail to meet the needs of migrant and non-white majority populations, and that often make exorbitant demands upon providers in the form of bureaucratic surveillance coupled with dwindling public funding. They take on the ways that "the state as an institution is instantiated in people's lives through apparently *banal* practices of bureaucracies" and challenge the influence of that power on the intimate and everyday (Sharma and Gupta 2006, emphasis original). The union members also provide a "counterpublic" to institutionalized and sterile technocratic constructions of childhood and identity, and enact alternative visions of the future through their everyday caregiving (cf. di Leonardo 2016).

Of course, the providers' union experiences key roadblocks to remaking an infrastructure of childcare that has been radically shaped by entrenched racial hierarchies and nationalism, the devaluing of feminized care work, and the multiple, often contradictory scales at which the state is constituted. But, nevertheless, providers persist. They rework institutionalization and commodification of intimate care from the grassroots. They refuse to make early childhood solely a matter of political hegemony and economic accumulation. They put the intimate *and* inequality at the center — intervening to raise new knowledge and new futures.

Conclusion: Twenty-first century childcare - Initial thoughts on the Century of Women

Close, close, close the gap.
Our children must succeed.
Quality, quality, quality, quality.
Providers are the key

- *Nursery Rhyme at RCT Protest, 2015 (To the Tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")*

On June 4th 2015, fourteen women were arrested in a SEIU-orchestrated "Turning up the Heat" civil disobedience demonstration, were they blocked the intersection north of the state capitol building. Dozens of Sacramento Police Department officers were on hand to arrest the women one-by-one by placing plastic restraints on their hands and leading them to a waiting van as the crowd of several hundred fellow protestors chanted "shero." Earlier in the day, several hundred parent and provider protestors, led by childcare union leaders pushing empty strollers, marched around the capitol building holding signs demanding "Childcare Now" in English and Spanish. With baby rattles and bullhorns, they drew attention to speeches from Yvette, a provider-parent, union icon Dolores Huerta, and a state senator and head of the women's caucus. A rabbi, a priest, and several pastors then gathered the women to be arrested in a circle and blessed them before their action. Union activists flung a banner out of two eighth floor windows that read, "Enough Childcare Now SB 548 [sic.]" out of the building that overlooked the blocked intersection and that strategically faced Governor Brown's office.

This civil disobedience effort marked the *dénoument* of a ten-year campaign to unionize family childcare providers in California. In between my voluntary crowd control duties I managed to speak with an AFSCME union activist I had known at the beginning of the campaign a decade ago, when I was still an organizer. She spoke of the fatigue SEIU's sister union experienced after repeated executive branch vetoes from governors across the political aisles. While the heat had been turned up on the state, AFCSME organizers experienced burnout that led to the diminished presence of AFSCME as a coalition partner at events like the capital civil disobedience and the massive Raising California Together campaign in 2015.

Although the bill would directly affect their lives, family childcare providers themselves were not among those arrested that day. Providers' licenses depend upon passing criminal background checks, and the costs of arrest outweigh the benefits of civil disobedience. After Governor Brown vetoed SB 548 in October 2015, many providers expressed deep dismay at legislative defeat that made collective bargaining rights a fleeting dream. The next year, the defeat of Hillary Clinton, whom SEIU supported and who campaigned as a grandmother concerned about childcare, cemented the feeling that the political pendulum had swung back and that many of the labor gains accomplished by fellow domestic workers such as state Domestic Worker Bill of Rights (2012) would evade them for now.

Raising California Together captures a key juncture in the family childcare union movement in California between 2013 and 2016, one filled with both dynamic change and profound struggles for providers, parents and organizers. Through my ethnography, I have sought to capture the seemingly contradictory-ways in which providers joined together across households and racial divides to protect the myriad individualized practices they offer as private businesses from the endless technoscientific evaluative regimes and scrutiny in the name of “measurable results.” Ironically, Brown justified his vetoing of SB 548 because the legislation established training requirements that “prematurely anticipates what will be necessary to comply with new federal Child Care and Development block grants” (LA County Childcare Planning Committee 2016). Intimate interventions describe the process by which providers forge and transform relationships with children and parents and the culturally-rich and politically-informed ways in which they re/address inequality and structural violence in their everyday practices. Increased calls for early intervention in education and welfare services – particularly those restricted to a neoliberal calculus tabulating the costs of imprisoning versus educating – obscure the experiences of those doing the intervening, and the dynamic ways they engage with the problems and questions posed by care for a changing California childhood population.

As I wrapped up fieldwork, SEIU Local 99 kept providers engaged through innovative bilingual trainings and programming tailored to the family childcare industry. The trainings – which included health and safety and working with children with special needs and disabilities- have since become part of a union-created, state-recognized apprenticeship program. SEIU Local 99’s family childcare union apprenticeship program is modeled after those of fellow male-dominated trade unions, and is a means to valorize the craft of childcare. Among the many on the list of modules for the apprenticeship program are child development and learning, culture diversity and equity, and dual language development. In this case, providers are taking on the terms of race/ethnicity, gender and diversity/inclusion, and it will be exciting to see how these go beyond the limits of corporatized diversity an (il)liberal notions of gender and sexuality.

Local 99's activism draws attention to the specific position of women workers and contributes to what Jane Collins identifies as a "gendered model of community unionism," that recognizes the specific concerns of women workers as well as women's negotiations among "work, home and community" (2009). Providers' union activism and hidden intimate interventions also hearken to the "Wages for Housework" and the "Worthy Wages" campaigns of 20th century feminism that center on the home as a site of production and political struggle. What lessons can those interested in feminist projects centered on domestic work learn from the family childcare union movement of the twenty first century? Unions like SEIU have been adapting to a post-Fordist climate hostile to organized labor precisely because of the work of providers and others to make labor organizations responsive to highly-feminized and immigrant intimate entrepreneurs. The future of feminist movements may rely upon taking seriously the questions of social reproduction in the context of the household – and with this, intentionally redefining the lines among public and private and the enshrinement of biological motherhood and family in ways that constrain political possibility.

US childcare from a global perspective

In terms of understanding why the US is among the few OECD countries to lack a national child care policy I echo political scientist Kimberly Morgan's argument that childcare policy in Western Europe and the US will largely depend on the strength of labor unions (2005). Morgan examines childcare policy in Sweden, France and the US to determine that the first two have national policies as a result of varying degrees of pressure from strong labor unions, while, given the lack of union strength in US, there is a more privatized childcare market. Western Europe's strong labor union puts pressure on rising wages, which makes government-subsidized childcare politically necessary (Ibid.). The U.S in turn has weak labor union and lax enforcement labor laws, and thus a private childcare market thrives.

On the flipside, there are ways in which other national childcare policies are driven by the same impulses that drive early education in the US. Other European nations offer subsidized childcare for citizens in order to increase declining birthrates among non-immigrant nationals (Castiles 2003). In East Asia, the tightening job market has meant that, for example, in Japan children's futures are shaped by rigorous entrance exams and interviews that determine the quality of preschool one will attend (Holloway 2013). The most prestigious of the preschools are affiliated with the top universities. Japan's high-stakes preschool entrance exams exacerbate inequality, with wealthier parents able to afford tutoring and private coaching as a result of the ways in which the exam that determine life outcomes (Ibid.)

Even a brief comparison of national cases reaffirms that childcare and family leave policy are embedded in social relations, economics and demographic shifts of nation-states. Places with declining birthrates and aging populations are among those countries with the most robust public funding and nationalized policies. Childcare policies from Europe to Japan, however, largely benefit citizens of a particular social position. It is critical to look at experiences within these nationalized systems to understand how nativist, class and other dynamics are institutionalized in childcare policy.

Ethnographic analysis gives insight into the quandaries of looking at childcare policy solely on a national scale and treating it as a cohesive and linear whole. This dissertation sheds light on the many roles labor unions play even in the private US childcare system, as well as the need to more carefully understand how childhood is conceived in practice. The technoscientific forms of measurements and observations reflect Euro-American anxieties of ensuring a future productive majority-minority workforce that is able to compete globally. The variety of intimate intervention practices I observed are illustrative of how nation-building projects are neither static nor unidirectional, but are in fact embodied in everyday family childcare homes. Demands for early intervention are repossessed from below and reinterpreted in practice. The lives of caretakers of infants and toddlers are rife with insight into the connections among culture, politics, and economics and the ways in which knowledge of human life and development is interpreted and remade in the everyday.

The infrastructural lens that is attuned to intimacy proposed by Wilson, I have sought to demonstrate, provides a broad enough lens understand the often inchoate yet still interconnected ways state, market and civil institutions operating from differing vantage points and rooted in converging histories converge on a shared project like early childhood education (2016). Providers, parents, and labor movements' engagement with the infrastructure of intimacy of early childcare is one where the all-consuming but deeply rewarding work of caring for the youngest subject-citizens and forging new futures frays against the hard, material relations of the contemporary US workfare state and demographic shifts brought on by immigration. Long-spanning histories of racialized economic exclusion, punitive welfare systems, the gendered articulation of the home as separate from public life, biopolitical projects that negate the value of racialized and gendered bodies, and border-spanning violence all inform the ways in which a national project of promoting early intervention in order to combat the achievement gap is enacted and embodied in the contemporary Los Angeles landscape. Providers, parents, and union activists draw from their own experiences with these systems to reinterpret the "deficit model" of viewing the majority-minority future, to address institutionalized inequalities, and to make claims to new ways of being a citizen. At the same time, morality and status circumscribe early education discourses and practices such as child's play and toy consumption, which at the least are shaped by corporate multiculturalism among other factors, and in their most extreme instantiation lead to punitive consequences for children and adults alike. Taken together, an ethnography of this infrastructure provides the opportunity to explore the ways in which institutional understanding of childhood are shifting in ways that fundamentally define the everyday lives of black and Latinx youth. Through this lens, race, gender, sexuality, generation and ability come into focus in way that call into question linear and universalizing constructions of childhood in any context – national or otherwise.

Notes for An Americanist Anthropology

Black and Latinx identities and racial formations figure crucially into the ways in which intimate relations are evaluated and sustained, and merit further study, especially to move Americanist anthropology forward. Understanding the political and cultural life of the non-white majority is critical to moving beyond static and binary culture-war debates about immigration and demographic shifts. Through ethnographic observation of intimate relations and their connection to institutional shifts, we are able to highlight how racial formations figure into collective mobilization but also how these movements are grounded in everyday negotiations of cultural practice in often-obscured domestic and social spaces (cf. Winegar 2012).

More specifically, the experiences of providers signal the need for further research into long-term immigrant resettlement patterns and interracial relations among immigrant and racialized groups. Local 99's institutional history reflects a union that benefitited from the civil rights movement and that represented an African-American majority membership. Over the course of the last century, waves of immigration from Mexico and Central America replenished the local membership rolls. Family childcare is the most recent wave of predominantly-Latinx migrant women into the ranks of SEIU, the most powerful union in California. These Latinx activists along with fellow black comrades are reshaping SEIU and the broader labor movement with energy and the potential for radical politics. There are of course questions and tensions across immigrant generations of Latinx (and Asian and black populations) that cannot be answered either by reducing them to black/brown tensions or taking for granted the cohesiveness of *Latinidad* (De Genova and Ramos-Zaya 2004; Kun & Pulido 2013). In Los Angeles and other US cities, the complexities of racial formation are being addressed in explicitly political spaces and within the less-visible spaces of home and work (and home/work), all of which are deserving of further analysis.

Of course, these politics and questions also span beyond the urban core that has long been the focus of ethnographic study. Emerging work from Ana Aparicio and others demonstrates that Latin American immigrants are moving into suburban, rural and exurban areas, and are shedding light on the prospect of upward mobility and the limits of public policy (2014; Pastor et al 2016). Most of the family childcare homes I visited during the course of research were in working and middle-class suburbs. It was through their experiences that I was able to grasp transformation and shifting migration patterns occurring in the Southern California region. The 2008 recession caused by the housing crisis hit the residential suburbs of Los Angeles particularly hard. Many providers lost their homes to foreclosure, and subsequently their livelihoods as home-based workers. With the downturn in the housing market, employment in related industries like construction and trades drove many men into childcare work assisting their wives and mothers, at least temporarily. When unemployment peaked double digits in many parts of Southern California, parents became unable to afford childcare at the same time the state cut funding to Cal Works subsidizes - effectively eliminating childcare slots for families.

We know little though about the extent and complexity of sub/exurban precarity. How do the infrastructures of welfare and education that were often fought for in urban core extend into these regions? Latin American diaspora, mixed-status households and coalition movement-building are all themes central to family childcare providers' lives. Illegality and legal-juridical constructions of citizenship and distribution of rights and resources are also central. All of these constructions and processes are just as critical to an understanding of suburban and exurban politics as they are urban dynamics. What is clear from looking at Raising California Together is that place is vital to grasping racial and gendered ideologies among diaspora communities, and attention to regional processes linking suburban, urban and exurban communities will be even more vital as urban cores become more gentrified and financial and housing markets oscillate.

Of course, continued research on interrelated welfare and educational institutions is also necessary. Moving forward, I intend to investigate how African immigrants, refugees, and other non-Spanish speaking immigrant populations are differently incorporated into the social welfare, educational and health infrastructure. I have noted that participation in these institutional state systems was often supplemented with participation in informal and formal home-based labor. Paradoxically, the economic conditions of the times instigated an entrepreneurial ethos among the micro enterprising family childcare provider (albeit a precarious one). For example, providers I spoke with made ends meet through secondary businesses like food vending (Marina's taquería) and direct sales (Tiffany's Pampered Chef) in addition to operating a childcare business. Although, like most racialized women in the US, operating multiple micro-enterprising income sources has historically been a necessity due to the combined effects of employment discrimination and the "motherhood penalty." I look to understand how these patterns differ and hold among other immigrant populations working within the welfare, education and health infrastructure, and what these tell us about the changing nature of public employment that is both essential to state functions yet so often devalued by neoliberal ideologues.

Comparative ethnographic research can shed light into how ideas circulate with the flow of people and things – whether it is across lines of difference in majority-minority communities, across suburban/exurban/urban lines, in welfare and educational infrastructures, or all of the above. Household ethnographies are charged sites for connecting local practices with global processes of demographic change, state transformations and relocation/dislocations. Building from kinship theories and feminist anthropology, the household as a unit of analysis proves a fruitful window into political, economic and cultural shifts, conflicts and connections that can continue to enliven Americanist anthropology and the discipline more widely.

Moving California Forward

With the rise of austerity politics globally, policymakers targeted organized labor's bargaining power at a time when women and immigrant workers like family child care providers were rapidly unionizing. National labor unions are awaiting judicial rulings on two major cases affecting them. The first is *Harris v Quinn*, a case stemming from a challenge to Illinois in-home care worker providers unions specifically. In the summer of 2014, the US Supreme Court decision barred SEIU Illinois from deducting automatic dues from state home-care workers based on the First Amendment. This decision targeted a particular class of public workers - namely subcontracted health and in home services. These home care workers were once presented as one of organized labor's major successes of the early 21st century and inspired family childcare providers, but their union's solidarity is now is at risk of being compromised (Boris 2015). *Janus v ASFME Council 31* is also pending a Supreme Court decision that will make it harder for all public unions to collect dues from union members regardless of the class of workers. Taken together these court decisions will overrule the 1977 *Abood v Detroit Board of Education* decision which allowed public sector unions to collect agency dues - also known as fair share - from non-union members covered under collective bargaining agreements. The Supreme Court decision on *Janus* is expected later in 2018.

In addition to those court cases, a conservative-backed organization named the "Freedom Foundation" launched a door-to-door anti-union campaign targeting family childcare providers with recognized collective bargaining contracts in Washington and Oregon (Greenhouse 2016). The Freedom Foundation is attempting to persuade workers to opt out of paying union dues and to decertify their union altogether, citing the recent *Harris v Quinn* decision, according to news reports and their website (Ibid.)

Existential threats to organized labor affect family childcare providers. The judicial dismantling of Fordist-era labor legislation and even post-Fordist gains in organizing health and welfare labor will inevitably stir internal debates and could exacerbate existing factionalism with labor unions like SEIU. My hope is that the growing structural challenges to traditional labor organizing models based on collective bargaining will lead to innovation and reinvention, and spark new solidarities. Providers have made clear, in their everyday practices and collective action, that they are ready to push forward the horizons of organized labor. They remake garages into yoga and wellness rooms, turn snacktime into a lesson on equality, take on state agencies' mistrust and surveillance, and far more. Given the chance to lead, providers like Yvette, Marina, Sonia and others can expand the perspectives of the labor movement, and with it extend the frontiers of education, immigration, and feminist politics in the US – and maybe, if Esperanza has her way, far beyond.

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