

*Donde Hay Confianza, Hay Todo: Latina Mothers' Perspectives on Confianza  
in the New Latino Diaspora*

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## ABSTRACT

ESMERALDA RODRIGUEZ: *Donde Hay Confianza, Hay Todo: Latina Mothers' Perspectives on Confianza in the New Latino Diaspora*

The purpose of this study is to expand on the existing literature on Latina ways of knowing. Using a Chicana feminist perspective and *mujerista* perspective (Villenas et al., 2006), this study centers the lived experiences and narratives of two Latina mothers living in a small college town in North Carolina. This is a study on relationships—specifically the relationships between, Alma and Blanca<sup>1</sup>, their respective children, and their communities. Using these two case studies, this thesis focuses on how Alma and Blanca operationalize *confianza* and as well as outlines how *convivencia*, *respeto*, and *cariño* serve as important pillars of establishing and maintaining *confianza*.

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<sup>1</sup> Names have been changed to protect the participants' identities

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I owe a great amount of gratitude to the women who opened up their homes and told their stories. I am especially grateful to them because in those moments of conversation, they bestowed upon me their *confianza*. I am indebted to all my mentors for their continued guidance and support in completing this project. *Este tesis se lo dedico a mi madre, Juana María Rodríguez—que sus enseñanzas me siguen guiando e informando. Ella fue la primera persona en quien confie.*

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## CHAPTER 1

### LATINA PEDAGOGIES IN THE NEW LATINO DIASPORA

As the number of Latina/os increases in non-traditional Latina/o immigration states (Hamann, Worthham, & Murillo, 2002), Latina/os living in the New Latino Diaspora face unique challenges as “creators and forgers of new Latino communities” (Villenas, 2002, p. 30). Historically, Latinos have been absent from the demographic, economic, cultural, and political systems of the south, thus the increased Latino migration of the 1990’s has caused a profound shift (Furuseh & Smith, 2006). This migration disrupted “the social status, economic relations, and public consciousness” (Furuseh & Smith, 2006, p. 2) long established by the Black and White racial dichotomy that dominates the south (Hamman & Harklau, 2010). Thus, Latina/os now face important questions about identity, race, and place in their new communities. Hamann, Wortham, and Murillo (2002) argue that once Latina/os enter these new diaspora spaces, their “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al., 1992 as used in Hamann, Worthham, and Murillo, 2002) can often be at odds with the racially dichotomous systems that exist in states like North Carolina, where this study takes place. In the creation of these new Latina/o communities, Latina/os are in a liminal state where they can either imagine themselves as part of these new communities or they can feel isolated and detached from them (Hamann, Worthham, & Murillo, 2002); they must also contend with being simultaneously framed as an asset and a problem by those in power (Furuseh & Smith, 2006).

Scholarship on the New Latino Diaspora has found that public institutions such as schooling have not been responsive to new communities of Latina/o parents and their children (Hamann, Worthham, & Murillo, 2002) and often, Latina/os have been reduced to their worker status and seen as a problem that needs to be fixed (Villenas, 2001; Murillo, 2002). Latina/os have been framed as a needy group of people whose differences in race, language, and class rendered them culturally flawed. There emerged programs that, at face value, offered assistance to Latina/os. However, Latina/os were at the risk of being reduced their plight and thus being seen as clients, rather than people with agency (Villenas, 2001). For example, Villenas (2001) described a program in Hope City, North Carolina that was designed to teach Latina mothers on how to be good parents. This program serves as an example of how benevolent racism (Villenas, 2001) can contribute to the historical and significant deficit rhetoric and public stigma surrounding Latina/os.

In her ethnographic study on the rural town, Hope City, North Carolina (Villenas, 2001; Villenas & Moreno, 2001; Villenas, 2002; Villenas, 2006), Villenas specifically highlighted the raced and gendered experiences of Latina mothers. She focused on the how Latina mothers performed pedagogical moments (Villenas, 2006) in culturally specific ways while at the same time negotiating struggles and oppressions. She found that these experiences were both similar and different to those of Latinas living in traditional gateway states where Latina/o presence is more historically and politically marked. Villenas (2002) found that *educación* in the New Latino Diaspora also disrupted monolithic views on *educación* and child rearing in general. Her work offered an interesting view on the fears and contradictions Latina mothers had and the adjustments they had to make when raising their children where ties to an emerging community were

not as strong yet. The inculcation of *educación* as a moral education was underlined by a sense of urgency to instill moral values that the children could abide by while their mothers fulfilled their duties as workers in the factories of Hope City. Villenas and Moreno's (2001) work on Latina mother/daughter relationships in the New Latino Diaspora looked specifically at the education mothers instilled in their daughters. They educated their daughters on being women who are duty bound to certain culturally defined responsibilities such as being *una mujer de hogar* (a woman of the home). However, these mothers also conveyed messages that subverted these same patriarchal systems and taught them through the use of *consejos* to *valerse por si misma*, to be self-reliant and seek more than just a place in the home.

In this study, I hope to continue the conversations Sofia Villenas started on Latinas, motherhood, and *educación* in the New Latino Diaspora by contributing to the unpacking of the cultural concept of *confianza*. Moreno (2009) noted that *confianza* serves as a cultural support system that consists of making oneself vulnerable and willing to engage in social transactions of trust. In his work on parent relationships with schools, Stanton-Salazar (2001) found that *confianza* was key to developing strong relationships. When there is *confianza* between people, there is an obligation that is constantly established and reinforced (Gonzalez et. al, 1995). Stanton-Salazar and Urso Spina (2003) argued that Mexican immigrants have a "communitarian" orientation that is characterized by *confianza en confianza* (trust in trust). *Confianza en confianza* is learned through intimate and often family based social interactions or close peer interactions (Ream, 2005). In communitarian-oriented communities, there is a "psychocultural" expectation for ongoing and reciprocal generosity in trusting and intimate relations

(Stanton-Salazar & Urso Spina, 2003). In my review of the literature, I have found that while *confianza* is a recurring and important cultural concept in Latina/o scholarship, there is a dearth of qualitative studies that address how *confianza* is taught, learned, reaffirmed, and used by Latina mothers. This thesis seeks to address those holes in the literature by answering the following questions: 1.) How do Latina mothers living in the New Latino Diaspora define *confianza*? And 2.) How do these mother use *confianza* to create and support important relationship in the family and their communities?

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PRESENT STUDY

At its inception, this project was envisioned as being an extension of a mentoring program evaluation—with a specific focus on the Latina mothers of mentees. However, I realized that the goals I envisioned for this thesis were not reflected in the initial interviews conducted for the evaluation. I went back to the Latina mothers interviewed and chose Alma and Blanca to serve as case studies (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Yin, 1989; Patton, 2001). I conducted a second round of interviews focused on their family relationships, *confianza*, and mentoring. The interviews were semi-structured (Wengraf, 2001). I prepared a set of questions to guide the interview, however, I attempted to treat them less like interviews and more like *pláticas*—*essentially*, relaxed conversations rather than tense interrogations.

#### *Narratives as Method*

This study was designed to provide the avenue to document and elucidate these Latina mothers' narratives. By using narratives with a Chicana feminist perspective (Delgado Bernal, 1998; 2001; Elenes, Gonzalez, Delgado Bernal & Villenas, 2001), I sought to honor the lived experiences of these mothers. Narratives of life experiences are a phenomenon that, if used as a method, can provide critical insight into the complexity of life experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Webster & Petrova, 2007). Bell (2002) describes the use of narrative inquiry as

“going beyond the use of narratives as rhetorical structure, that is, simply telling stories, to an analytic examination of the underlying insights and assumptions that

the story illustrates” (p. 208).

These narratives can be presented in different ways such as interviews, written narratives, and story telling (Bell, 2002; Xu, Connelly, Fang He, & Phillion, 2007). The interviews presented in this study serve as narratives. I intended for the participants to depict their worlds through their interviews (Webster & Petrova, 2007) and thus construct their own narratives as Latina mothers living in the New Latino Diaspora. Webster and Petrova (2007) asserted that narratives do not exist in a vacuum and are shaped by personal experiences as well as community narratives. This aspect of narratives is very important to this work as it seeks to contribute to the literature on Chicana ways of knowing and teaching.

Chicana feminist frameworks are informed by community history and knowledge. Just as their pedagogies do not exist in a vacuum, neither do their narratives. Community narratives are also an important part of these Latina mothers’ narratives because as part of the New Latino Diaspora, they were creating new communities in spaces that do not have a historical Latina/o presence, thus providing narratives that are unique to new diaspora spaces.

In the researcher/participant relationship, where powers dynamics can favor the researcher, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) assert that in narratives, participants must have a voice in the research relationship and researchers must privilege the participant by centering their narratives. In their work on teachers, Connelly and Clandinin (1990), argue that practitioners can often be silenced in the research relationship. Historically, Latina/os have been silenced and marginalized by academia. To be more specific, uncritical scholarship on Latinas has failed to acknowledge the different raced, gendered,

and classed systems of oppression (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Villenas et al., 2006; Villenas, 2001). Thus Canagarajah (1996) contended that narratives can disrupt the elitist scholarly discourses by offering an opportunity for marginalized groups to participate in knowledge construction. These narratives can be very purposeful in acknowledging and highlighting the local knowledge of the communities and also create knowledge from the grassroots up rather than academia/researcher-imposed theories that go from the top down.

### *Data Analysis*

Because one of the primary goals of this study was to identify how these Latina mothers defined *confianza*, inductive analysis proved to be the best method for analysis. Patton (2001) argues that “where there are several cases to be compared and contrasted, an inductive approach begins by constructing individual cases...once that is done, cross-case analysis can begin in search of patterns and themes that cut across individual experiences” (p. 57). I sought to understand each woman’s narrative individually before developing “The Pillars of *Confianza*.” It was important to preserve each woman’s point of view and acknowledge the similarities and differences in their interpretations of *confianza*. For example, you will see that in my discussion of *obligación* (under the section titled *Respeto*), Alma and Blanca had two different interpretations of what *obligación* means and its role in *confianza*. Inductive analysis helped to preserve key differences as well as make connections between both of the narratives.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

#### *Chicana Feminisms*

This thesis is framed by Chicana Feminisms. In their work, Chicana feminist scholars seek to dismantle the historically deficit and peripheral frames that compound the systems of oppression that Chicanas are subject to (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Chicana feminist theory centers lived experiences and Chicana feminist scholars “theorize... lived experience as a knowledge base to understand, critique, and challenge system oppression and theorize identity, sexuality, the body, resistance, healing, transformation, and empowerment” (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012, p. 395). One way Chicana scholars have done this, is by redefining everyday experiences and culturally specific ways of teaching and knowing as important sources of knowledge and communal knowing (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Villenas, Godínez, Delgado Bernal, & Elenes, 2006). Chicana feminist scholarship has elucidated multiple ways of teaching and knowing amongst Chicanas. They are, to name a few, the concept of *educación, la facultad* (knowing through experience and intuition), *consejos* (narrative advice), *respeto* (respect), and *valerse por si misma* (self reliance) (Villenas et al., 2006; Elenes, Gonzalez, Delgado Bernal & Villenas, 2001; Valdés, 1996). Chicana feminist theory is a theory of agency that is woman centered and woman defined. Chicana feminist scholarship frames mothers as central figures to their children’s socialization and serve as the conduits through which cultural knowledge is transmitted (Villenas et al., 2006). Taking into account Ream’s

(2005) assertion that *confianza* is learned through family interactions and coupling this knowledge with Chicana feminist frameworks, this project focuses on how these Latina mothers define and practice *confianza* with the families and communities.

### *Cultural Intuition*

It is important for me, as a Chicana researcher employing a Chicana feminist epistemology, to acknowledge the origins of this project. The conceptual idea for this project on *confianza* arose out of the experience of interviewing Alma Martínez, a Mexican immigrant mother, as part of a research team evaluating a mentoring program that Alma's children were a part of. While the content of her interview revealed critical insight into the mentoring program and her experiences with program coordinators and mentors, what struck me most was how we experienced the interviewing process. Here, I give an account of my experiences in the Martínez home and will further explain how I drew the concept of *confianza* out of them.

As one of two native Spanish speakers and the only Chicana member of the evaluation team, one of my most prominent roles was interview the Latina/o parents and their children. By virtue of how potential interviewees were divided amongst the researchers and also by virtue of timing, it was I who ended up recruiting Alma Martínez and her three children for interviews. She gave her permission to interview herself and her children and we arranged for the interviews to be conducted over a two consecutive day period. Alma, with her children lined up behind her, greeted me at the door and directed me to sit in the living room while her children put away their homework. I observed the family pictures, the eldest daughter's *Quinceañera* portrait and the small *Virgen de Guadalupe* image above the family laptop—all objects I was familiar with and

accustomed to seeing in my mother's and my grandmothers' homes. *Platicamos* (we chatted), mostly in Spanish, on the nature of the program evaluation and purpose of the interviews as well as soccer, given that Patrizia, the youngest, had just arrived from soccer practice. I divulged that while I loved the sport, I was a very poor player. When I asked who would like to be interviewed first, Alma instructed that I interview her children first and she wanted to be interviewed last, on the second day. I interviewed Evelyn, the oldest, first and then Patrizia. It is important to note that both interviews were conducted in the presence of their mother, who, despite not speaking and understanding very little English, quietly watched my interactions with her daughters. On the second night, our greetings were less formal as we were a little more familiar with each other. Again, *platicamos* a little before I began the interviews. It was during this *plática*, that we discovered that both of our families were immigrants from the Mexican state of Tamaulipas and I grew up an hour from their hometown.

ER: “¿Són de Reynosa? Yo soy de Roma en este lado del río. Mis papás son de Cuidad Miguel Alemán. Me encantaba ir a Reynosa. (You are from Reynosa? I am from Roma on this side of the river. My parents are from Cuidad Miguel Aleman. I loved going to Reynosa)

AM: “¿Ahh si? Miguel Alemán no esta tan lejos de Reynosa. Si lo conozco. ¿A que te gustaba ir [a Reynosa]?” (Ahh yes? Miguel Aleman is not far from Reynosa. I do know it. Why did you like to go [to Reynosa]?)

We discussed my favorite restaurant in Reynosa and lamented that it in fact had closed a couple of years back. Before we could continue this conversation, Evelyn interrupted us to ask me if I thought the actor in the *telenovela* (soap opera) she was watching was “guapo” (attractive). I responded to her honestly when I said that I did not and Alma laughed and Evelyn reacted in such a way that gave me the impression that I might have settled a debate between them. Still, Evelyn protested that she thought he was “hot”.

These interactions, along with the ones from the day before, set the tone for my interview with Alma. During my interview with Alma, she openly (and unsolicited) revealed her and her family's undocumented status to me. This was the moment that struck me, as I did not expect her to openly reveal this to a stranger. I am not trying to imply that immigration status is something that one should be ashamed of revealing but in my mind, I had stepped into this home, a complete stranger, representing a research team and my purpose was to interview them about this mentoring program. Alma felt that it was safe to reveal to me this kind of sensitive information. This moment, I believe, was facilitated by the interactions (some of which are described in this section) she had seen me have with her children and herself. I drew on my cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) to unpack the meaning of this experience and realized that during this two-day period, we had established a certain level of *confianza*.

To give name to my experiences as a Chicana researcher as well as provide a space for these women to share their narratives, I borrow Delgado Bernal's (1998) work on cultural intuition. Delgado Bernal's (1998) notion of cultural intuition itself draws from Strauss and Corbin's (1990) work on theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity refers to researchers being able to use personal experiences as "[an] ability to give meaning to data, [a] capacity to understand, and [a] capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (as quoted in Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 33). Delgado Bernal (1998) extends on theoretical sensitivity by developing the four sources of cultural intuition, which are: Personal experiences, existing literature, professional experience, and analytical research process. Cultural intuition differs from theoretical sensitivity in that Delgado Bernal asserts that personal experiences are shaped by and include

collective experiences and community memories and knowledge. Some of the ways community memory and knowledge is passed down include *leyendas*, *corridos*, storytelling, and behaviors such as *consejos*, *respeto* and *educación* (Delgado Bernal, 1998; 2001). *Educación* is an education on morals, ethics, and values (Valdés, 1996) and Villenas (2001) defined a person with *buena educación* as someone who has proper social skills, is respectful and worthy of respect, and also, someone who has loyalty to their families and communities. My *educación*, largely shaped by my Mexican immigrant mother, along with existing Chicana feminist literature made me sensitive to different and important sources of knowledge. My cultural intuition as a Chicana allowed me to recognize the *confianza* between I, as a researcher, and Alma, as a participant. But “cultural intuition is a complex process that is experiential, intuitive, and dynamic” (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 567-568) and thus, I felt that I could not and should not articulate for these women what *confianza* is and thus, I must acknowledge Alma and Beatriz as agents of knowledge that should participate in the intellectual discourse I am developing around the concept of *confianza*.

## CHAPTER 4

### CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA: A SNAPSHOT

In the past twenty years, North Carolina has experienced a steady and significant growth in their Latina/o population. In 1990, Latina/os made up 1.2 percent of the state population (US Census, 1990). This number grew to 4.7 percent in 2000 and the most recent numbers reflect that population has risen to 8.6 percent (US Census, 2000; 2011). In their evaluation of population data from the year 2000, Suro and Singer (2002) found that the Raleigh-Durham was among the metropolitan areas that experienced a “Hispanic hypergrowth”—meaning that their population number grew more than 300 percent. From the years 1980 to 2000, the years from which they gathered their data, Raleigh-Durham experienced a 1180 percent growth in their Latina/o populations (Furusetth & Smith, 2006).

Chapel Hill is part of the New Latino Diaspora. While Suro and Singer (2000) do not specifically address Chapel Hill in their discussions of Raleigh-Durham, Furusetth and Smith (2006) note that the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro urban area is the “fastest growing Hispanic hypergrowth metro in the U.S” (p.11). From the year 2000 to 2010, the Latina/o population living in Chapel Hill doubled from 3.2 percent to 6.4 percent. At the center of the town is the state’s flagship university, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The university serves as the largest employer in the area as well as the largest source of town residents, with university students making up nearly 51 percent of the entire town population (Chapel Hill Planning Department, 2012). But an

important marker of Chapel Hill is also how “white” the town is with White people making up nearly 73 percent of the entire population (US Census, 2010). The town is also known for being predominately middle class with the median household of \$58, 415—\$12, 124 more than the state average. Chapel Hill was often at the center of Alma and Blanca’s narratives as they each revealed context specific perspectives experiences of space that resulted in a *confianza* or lack-thereof in their communities. This is further elaborated in the section titled “Confianza in the New Latino Diaspora”.

## CHAPTER 5

### BUSCANDO CONFIANZA

*Alma*

Alma is an immigrant from the Mexican state of Tamaulipas who came to Chapel Hill in 2002. Her husband, Roberto Sr., had already been living in Chapel Hill for a year. His trip to Chapel Hill was supposed to be temporary, as he had come with the intentions of visiting his brother. However, after being a year away from his family, Roberto Sr. told Alma that Chapel Hill had more to offer for their children than Reynosa and that instead of him returning to Mexico, she, along with their children—Evelyn (now 17 years old), Roberto Jr. (now 15 years old), and Patrizia (now 11 years old)—should join him in the United States. “*Allá es mas difícil... no hay beneficios para ayudarnos como aquí. Por eso nos venimos ya que nosotros no pudimos salir adelante por el estudio. [Roberto] pensó mas en [nuestros hijos] para que ellos tuvieran algo mejor que nosotros*”.<sup>2</sup> [It is more difficult over there... there are not any benefits to help us like there are here. That’s why we came, since we could not get ahead with our studies. Roberto thought of our children so they could have something better than us]. Here, Alma was very clear that the goal of moving the entire family to the United States was to take advantage of the educational opportunities this country could offer to Evelyn, Roberto Jr., and Patrizia.

Alma revealed that she had a difficult time adjusting to life in the United States.

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<sup>2</sup> Both interviews were conducted in Spanish. In order to preserve Alma and Blanca’s voices, I first quote them in Spanish and provide the English translation in the brackets immediately following the Spanish quotation.

She explained that the linguistic and cultural differences were difficult to navigate and her uneasiness was exasperated by the fact that her oldest daughter, who was seven years old at the time, was also having difficulty with the language at school. Alma had even more difficulty adjusting after her brother in law, the only family member outside her children and husband living in the country and the person most familiar with Chapel Hill, decided to move back to Mexico. She said:

*“Nos quedamos solitos. Si estuve muy triste por que yo nunca estuve fuera de Reynosa y del momento que me casé si me separé de mis papás pero vivíamos ahí, cerquita, que cuando nos venimos para acá, si fue muy duro. Hasta lloraba en las noches. Estaba muy triste. Pero me fui adaptando.”* [We were left alone. I was very sad because I had never been outside of Reynosa and from the moment that I got married, I did separate from my parents, but we lived right there, so close, that when we came over here, it was very hard. I would even cry at nights. I was so sad. But I started adapting].

Her adaptation to Chapel Hill came as a result of establishing some friendships but cites that her biggest motivation for adapting came from seeing that her children were showing signs of being academically successful, especially after the oldest began to learn more English. *“Empecé a tenerle mas confianza a este lugar.”* [I began to trust this place more]. Only through the passage of time and the fact that her Evelyn could help by serving as a translator for her mother, was Alma able to begin to have *confianza* towards this space.

Communication plays an important role in Alma’s relationship with her children. She expressed that her mother had taught her to always be open with her children and talk with them. She conveyed a sense of pride in describing her relationship to all three of her children. Alma, who cleans houses for a living, tried to be home before her youngest, Patrizia is home from school and if she is not, she said that once she gets home, her

children stop whatever it is that they are doing, turn off the television, and sit her in the kitchen to discuss how everyone's day went. "Ellos *respetan el tiempo que tenemos juntos*". [They respect the time we have together]. Time spent *en convivencia* provided the groundwork necessary to establish the family's systems of support. While there is no perfect English translation to *convivencia* (the closest translation of the word would be co-existence), Jasis and Ordonez-Jasis (2004) described it as "moments of collective creation and solidarity". For this Alma and her family, moments of co-existence and solidarity most happened at the kitchen table, through conversations.

*"Mas que nada es para que ellos tengan confianza en mi... Para mi, mas que todo, es la comunicaci3n. Es por eso que platico mucho con las ni1as. Les pregunto que inquietudes tienen, les pregunto de sus amigos, amigas. Al ni1o igual. Le dije a mi esposo que el se va a encargar de el por que ni1o pero desgraciadamente, mi esposo, por su trabajo no tiene suficiente para mi ni1o del modo que tambi3n que ya empez3 a crecer y tambi3n le pregunto que inquietudes tiene y platicamos."* [More than anything its so they can have *confianza* in me... for me, more than anything, its about communication. That's why I have a lot of conversations with the girls. I ask them about their worries, about their friends. The boy, it's the same. I told my husband that he was going to be in charge of his because he was a boy but unfortunately, my husband, because of his work, he does not have enough time. Now that he is getting older, I also ask him about his worries and we talk].

It is important to note that for Alma, it was important for her children to have *confianza* in her and she laid the groundwork for this by showing interest in their daily lives—by asking. Even with her son, with whom she thought it would be different, she learned that she could have meaningful conversations with him—in the end, it did not matter that he was male and she female because most importantly, they were mother and son.

She also divulged that she had very few friends because "*hay personas que les gusta estar en el chisme. Yo prefiero retirarme de personas as3. Por eso me mantengo mas en mi casa. Por que no me gusta estar escuchando de esta persona o otra. Me gusta*

*estar enfocando en mis hijos, en mi casa*". [there are people who only like to gossip. I prefer to get away from people like that. That's why I like to keep to my house. Because I do not like hearing about this person or that person. I like to focus on my children, on my home]. For Alma, gossip was not meaningful communication and she also considered it a poor character trait—one that does not necessarily warrant her *confianza*. Thus, when discussing what *confianza* meant to her, she always referred back to her relationships with her children. For Alma, *confianza* is very much tied to family—it is about familial unity. So when I asked who she had *confianza* towards, outside of her family, and she cited Rachel, Evelyn's mentor, as one of the few people she had a lot of *confianza* in, she described Allison as being part of the family. At the time of the interview, Allison had served as Evelyn's mentor for six years and when Evelyn had her *Quinceañera*, Allison solidified her place as a member of the family by accepting to be Evelyn's godmother. Alma recognized that Allison was an important part of Evelyn's life and expressed a great amount of gratitude for and towards her. At first, though, Alma was hesitant to trust Allison but both women made an effort to engage and get to know one other in order to establish that *confianza*. According to Alma, Allison showed interest in improving her Spanish in order to better communicate with her, and Allison also accepted invitations to spend time with the family as a whole (making *tamales*, attending birthday parties, and Christmas celebrations) rather than limiting her interactions to only Evelyn.

In summary, for Alma, establishing and maintaining *confianza* was of utmost importance for the relationship between herself and her children. She noted that *confianza* "*es para que uno se sienta seguro de esa persona... mas que nada, la seguridad. Le tiene que dar confianza por conociéndola, tratándola*". [its so one can feel

secure... more than anything, its security. You give *confianza* by knowing a person, interacting with a person]. In Alma's case, *confianza* was constantly being (re)affirmed by partaking in moments of solidarity and communication and she did express security in knowing that her children not only respected their time together but also respected their mother even when they were not in her presence. Some examples she gave were checking in with her when out with friends and modeling her respectful treatment of others.

### *Blanca*

Blanca, an immigrant from the Palmira Valle area in Colombia, came to Chapel Hill via New York City 16 years ago. Blanca and her husband, Alberto—an immigrant from Guanajuato, Mexico—have three children, Lucía (17 years old), Eduardo (11 years old) and Gabriela (5 years old). Blanca and Alberto chose to move to Chapel Hill because, at the time, Alberto's sister lived there. However, Blanca's sister in law no longer lived in North Carolina and like Alma, Blanca did not have any other family living in the area. Blanca described feeling culture shocked when they first moved to Chapel Hill because while they had been used to a bigger number of Latina/os living in New York City, they now found themselves in an area where there were not only few Latina/os living there at the time, but the town was also relatively new to Latina/o migration. She remembered feeling stressed because of the language differences but her feelings soon changed. “Después *nos gustó mucho porque aquí, la ayuda que dan para los hijos, el ambiente para la familia, no es comparable a lo de Nueva York. Entonces fue lo que mas nos gusto*”. [Afterwards, we liked it a lot because here, the help that is given for the children, the environment for the family, you can't compare it to New York. That is what we liked the most.] In fact, both Blanca and Alma cited *lo calmado* (how calm)

Chapel Hill was for raising children. At the same time, however, Blanca did not feel as welcomed to the space and expressed that she had been living in Chapel Hill long enough to sense a shift in sentiment towards Latina/os.

*“Cuando nosotros llegamos primero aquí, no quiero decir que la gente es mas grosera ahora pero años atrás era súper amable, súper cordial. Yo me acuerdo que me decían hola y hasta me volteaba para ver a quien le hablaban pero me daba cuenta que era a mi... Pero a cambiando un poquito. No se que paso, pero si a cambiando. Hay gente que es mas racista... pienso que es por que hay mas Latinos.”* [When we first got here, I don’t want to say that people are more rude today but years ago they were super amiable, super cordial. I remember that people used to say hi and I would even turn around to see who they were talking about but I realized they were talking to me... But it has changed a little. I do not know why but it has changed. There are more racist people... I think its because there are more Latinos].

The realization that with greater numbers comes more awareness of and resistance to Latina/os was of particular importance to Blanca because she too, then, became aware of racism. She told a story of an experience with a racist gas station attendant who, upon listening to them speak Spanish, told Blanca and her co-workers that they should not speak Spanish because they were living in America. While her co-workers were visibly distraught and cried in the vehicle, Blanca told them that they should ignore that gas attendant and should continue to speak however they want, wherever they want. Blanca’s refusal to be shamed at that moment highlights why it’s so important for her children to maintain the Spanish language. Her oldest daughter, in her first years of adolescence, began to refuse to speak Spanish and denounced it as an ugly language. Blanca blamed other children in the schools for putting those ideas in Lucía’s head. In particular, she mostly blamed other Latino students for modeling their refusal to speak Spanish. But Blanca was pro-active in her desire for her children to continue speaking Spanish. In her efforts to ensure that Gabriela, her youngest child, would not suffer from the same

internalized oppressions and possibly limit her exposure to negative language ideologies that privilege the English language, Blanca placed her in a Spanish language daycare and had plans to transfer her to a dual language school once she entered the first grade. She also revealed that speaking English and watching English language television was prohibited in her home, and that the family language was and would always be Spanish.

For Blanca, the most important reason for why her children needed maintain the Spanish language was so they could communicate meaningfully with each other. When asked what was important to her and her relationship with Lucía, Alberto, and Gabriela was communication.

*“Para nosotros es muy importante el hablar. Hablar, hablar, y hablar. Para aconsejarlos. Para enseñarles a ser amable, que no hagan bully. Para aconsejarlos que estudien mucho para que no tengan que trabajar duro como nosotros. Yo limpio casas y mi esposo el manager de mantenimiento de unos apartamentos. Ese trabajo es bien pesado ”* [For us, its really important to talk. Talk, talk, and talk. So we can give them advice. So we can teach them to be amiable, that they should no bully. So we can advice them to study a lot so they do not have to work hard like we do. I clean houses and my husband is an apartment maintenance manager. This kind of work is really heavy].

Blanca, who did not speak English, sarcastically said *“desafortunadamente para ellos tienen papas hispanos y nosotros hablamos el español.”* [Unfortunately for them, they have Hispanic parents and we speak Spanish]. Also, it was important for Blanca to use her and her husband’s stories of struggle and *sacrificio* (sacrifice) as the foundation for the *educación* of their children. This was done through the use of *consejos*—*narrative* advice—as well as taking Lucía, who, at the time, thinking about colleges, to clean houses with her to that her daughter actually experience what her mother would talk to her about. To Blanca, this kind of communication was one of the most important to have.

In describing what *confianza* meant to her, Blanca found it easier to derive

meaning through telling me the story of how one can lose *confianza*.

*“Lucía tuvo una etapa súper difícil. Era muy rebelde. Mi esposo y yo tuvimos muchos problemas. Ella me atacaba más a mí. Entonces yo me aleje de ella. Ella me decía ‘es que tu no me quieres, nunca me dices’... le dije que ‘es que yo ya no te tengo confianza por que me has atacado tanto... esa confianza te la tienes que volver a ganar por que yo estoy desilusionada en ti.’ Entonces, ya habla más conmigo. Se a ganado mi confianza .”* [Lucia went through a stage that was very difficult. She was very rebellious. My husband and I had a lot of problems. She would attack me more. So then, I distanced myself from her. She would tell me ‘you don’t love me, you never tell me you do’... I told her ‘its that I no longer have *confianza* in you because you have attacked me so much... you have to earn my *confianza* again because I am disillusioned in you.’ Now she talks to me more. She has earned my *confianza*].

Blanca’s description is interesting because whereas Alma talked about what she had to do for her children to have *confianza* in her, Blanca described it as what her daughter had to do to earn her mother’s *confianza* and emphasized what one has to do to prove themselves worthy of *confianza*. This was not limited to her children, however. She described Marisa, her best friend and someone whom she has complete *confianza* towards, as someone who, through actions, has proven herself not only worthy of friendship but of *confianza*. Blanca divulged that she has learned to be very selective with her friendships because she had experienced various forms of betrayal at the hands of people she thought were her friends. However, Marisa, whom she has been friends with for seven years, is someone who Blanca can feel she can “desahogarse”, someone she can vent to and talk about issues, particularly those involving her side of the family, that she does not feel comfortable sharing with her husband. “Ella a estado ahí en las buenas y en las malas.” [She has been there in the good, and in the bad.] She gave the example of when she had surgery the year before, Marisa not only visited her in the hospital, but helped care for her during recovery. No other friend, she said, was willing to do that for

her. She also spoke very highly of her Lucía's mentor, Iris. "*Iris sabe todo de la vida de mi hija. Iris me ha visto llorar. A sido mi paño de lagrimas. A respecto de mi hija, si se la quiere llevar, se la puede llevar. Le tengo toda la confianza. Se que es responsable.*"

[Iris knows everything about my daughter's life. Iris has seen me cry. She has been the cloth to my tears. In terms of my daughter, if she wants to take her somewhere, she can take her. I have all the *confianza* in her. I know she is responsible.] In her interview, Blanca showed how and why *confianza* was lost and to a certain extent what one has to do (re)gain *confianza*. For Blanca, *confianza* was about showing love through respect. It was reciprocity, about reaping the rewards of *confianza*. But she also showed that the loss of *confianza* could be a very painful experience.

*"Yo siempre he dicho que los hijos, el matrimonio, y las amistades son como una planta. Si la cuidas, la alimentas, le das cariño, ¿qué te va a dar? Mucho fruto, hojas brillantes. Si no la cuidas, esa planta se marchita y se va a morir. Eso es lo que pasa con uno. Uno se va marchitando... tienes que querer tener esa confianza. Que trabajar por ella."* [I have always said that our children, marriage, and friendships are like a plant. If you take care of it, you feeds it, you care for it, what is it going to give you? A lot of fruit, brilliant leaves. If you do not take care of it, that plan will wither and die. That is what can happen to a person. A person will begin to wither... you have to want to have that *confianza*. You have to work for it]

## CHAPTER 6

### THE PILLARS OF CONFIANZA

Alma and Blanca differed, at some points, in how they interpreted and operationalized *confianza*. However, they discussed themes of *confianza*. In my analysis of Alma and Blanca's narratives, I identified three pillars that are key to establishing and sustaining *confianza*. They are *convivencia* (communal coexistence), *respeto* (respect) and *cariño* (affection). Below, I describe and, define each pillar and discuss how it related to *confianza*.

#### *Convivencia*

Jasis and Ordoñez- Jasis (2004, 2005) began exploring the concept of *convivencia*. Roughly translated, *convivencia* means co-existence. They note that trust and solidarity are developed through *convivencia*, “flowing moments of collective creation and solidarity, the bonding that developed from a joint emerging moral quest against the backdrop of existential sharing” (35). For both Alma and Blanca, time spent together as a family was of utmost importance. Most of the (re)affirmations of support and *confianza* for one another happened sitting around the kitchen table talking.

According to their narratives, for these mothers, conversations about friends, school, insecurities, and even chores also served as moments of teaching and learning—mainly through the use of *consejos*, which Delgado-Gaitan (1994) defined as cultural narratives of advice. For Blanca, *convivencia* provided stability for her family, stability necessary for her there to be *confianza* amongst each other. “Necesitamos *estas unidos*. *Si los*

*padres están acá arriba, los hijos también tienen que estar arriba... hay que tener una firmeza en el matrimonio, en familia, para que los hijos te tengan confianza.*” [We need to be united. If the parents are on top, the children also need to be on top... there had to be a firmness in the marriage, in the family, so that the children can have *confianza* in you]. She described playing karaoke games and I Spy games instead of watching television when they are bored. She used these games to inspire family unity and to bridge the top-down gap that can exist between parents and their children.

Both women expressed that in order to have *confianza* towards someone, they had to know the person very well—to know their character. One of the reasons Alma had such few friendships and could not necessarily name many people she could trust was because through time spent with some of these women, she got to know their behaviors and their beliefs. As aforementioned, for Alma, gossiping was a poor character trait and she lost respect for women who constantly engaged in it. Blanca had a similar experience when spending time with friends she does not necessarily have *confianza* in. The most important point of this, is that these women were also able to determine who was and was not worth of having their *confianza* by spending time with them. The only way to truly get to know someone is to *convivir* with him or her. Alma stated:

*“Necesita uno conocer [a la persona] ver si le tiene confianza o no... pero es muy difícil que yo le tenga confianza a alguien. Pasaría mucho tiempo para que yo tenga confianza... necesitaría ver como es esa persona. Si es reservada como yo. No le gusta a andar para allá y para acá.”* [You need to know the person to see if you can have *confianza* or not... but its difficult for me to have *confianza* in someone. A lot of time would need to pass so I can have *confianza*... I would need to see how that person is. If they are reserved like me. That they do not like to be going here and there.]

In this excerpt, Alma also made an interesting point about compatibility and being able to recognize herself, her morals, and values in others. In her interview about mentoring,

Alma revealed that she did not trust Allison at first. She was hesitant to let her then 11 year old daughter go anywhere with Allison. But in time, the women got to know each other and Alma cited that they both hold similar values—especially when it came to their goals for Evelyn. Allison supported Alma by expecting and helping Evelyn to achieve high academic success. *Convivencia* is not just about being in the same space but it is also about communal sharing of thoughts, ideas, and time. This is why the direct English translation for the word (co-exist) does not exemplify what the operationalization of *convivencia* looks like and what it is meant to do. Time spent in *convivencia* between Alma and Allison played an important role in establishing and maintaining *confianza* between both of these women—especially for Alma who is hesitant to *confiar* in anyone outside of her family. Allison also furthered her studies in Spanish in order to have better communication with Alma as well as visited with the entire family in addition to assembling *tamales* at the kitchen table.

### *Respeto*

*“La diferencia cuando una persona tiene esa confianza en ti, te respeta, te admira,. Todo esta unido. Si tu respetas, las persona te va tener la confianza total .”* [The difference is that when has that *confianza* in you, they will respect you, they will admire you. Everything is united. If you respect, that person will have total *confianza* in you]—Alma

Like *convivencia*, Valdés (1996), argues that the notion of *respeto* is a concept that is not fully encompassed by its English translation (respect). She argued that

*“respeto* in its broadest sense is a set of attitudes toward individuals and/or the roles that they occupy. It is believed that certain roles demand or require particular types of behavior... it is especially significant among members of the family. Having *respeto* for one’s family involves functioning according to specific views about the nature of the roles filled by various members of the family.... It involved demonstrating personal regard for the individual.” (Valdés, 1996; p. 130).

Both Alma and Blanca, cited *respeto* as being one of the most important lessons they

taught (and were still teaching) their children. One aspect of *respeto* in terms of *confianza* is how Alma described her and her son's manners. She taught her children *respeto* mainly through example— by honoring her responsibilities and treating others cordially. She expressed that, in particular, she was very *orgullosa* (proud) of Roberto Jr. because his friends' parents often commented to her about how he was always very respectful and cordial. “*Me siento admirada mucho de eso porque así saben que le pueden tener confianza a mi hijo.*” [I feel admired because of that because now they know that they can trust him]. She felt Roberto Jr.'s manners and how he presented himself to his friends' parents led them to trust him. This could be because she felt his *respeto* towards adults is an indicator of good character. Blanca expressed a similar sentiment when she described how she required her children to address adults as *señor* or *señora*. Formality was also another sign of a *buena educación* (a good moral education).

Another incarnation of *respeto* within the concept of *confianza* is the idea of *obligaciones* (obligations) and reciprocity. Alma and Blanca both differed on the role *obligación* had in their definitions of *confianza*. In describing her *obligaciones* to her family, Blanca expressed that she had to fulfill her duties as a wife and mother everyday. Among the most important of her duties, was showing her family that she respected them. For example, both Blanca and her husband gave Lucía their permission for her to have a boyfriend. Her husband, however, showed a great dislike for the young man and constantly made remarks to Lucía. Blanca took it upon herself to instruct her husband to respect the fact that he had given his permission for Lucía to date this particular boy and to also respect her choice of boyfriend. “*No lo tiene que querer, pero si tiene que respetar como padre*” [He does not have to love him, but he does have to respect as a

father]. Here she designated that their roles as parents, their obligations as parents, were to support and respect their daughter and give her space to make her own decisions. This is an example of Blanca showing that she both had *confianza* that her daughter would make the right decision, as well as reaffirmed to Lucía that her mother was also someone worth exhibiting *confianza* towards. Also, for Blanca, there were clear behaviors her children had to exhibit in order to warrant giving her *confianza* to them. For example, the story about her issues with Lucía showed that in Blanca's eyes Lucía was not treated her with the level of *respeto* a child was supposed to afford to her mother. Lucía would raise her voice, insult Alma, and made accusations towards her. This behavior pushed Blanca away and resulted in her losing a great amount of *confianza* towards her daughter. Alma rejected the idea of *obligaciones* as she wanted her children to do the right thing because they wanted to—for them to have an inner desire to fulfill their responsibilities. *Obligación* had the connotation that her children were being forced to act in certain ways. So for Alma, the key difference was between wanting to and having to do something. Exhibiting *respeto* was a part of their character.

Responsibility is another way of identifying someone worth or *confianza*—thus recognizing whether a person is or is not responsible is key to establishing *confianza*. Blanca's discussion of responsibility differs from her discussion of *obligación* in that she spoke specifically about Iris's responsibility as a mentor to Lucía. But it was not necessarily responsibility in completely certain tasks but in Iris's regard towards Alma and her husband as Lucía's parents.

*“Una persona responsable, siempre he dicho, tiene que ser una persona honesta. Por que el que no es responsable, no le va a importar nada. La persona que es responsable se va a preocupar por que va a decir ‘o que dirán los papás si yo no llego a tiempo.’ Esa persona va a cuidar lo que uno piensa de ellos.”* [A

responsible person, I have always said, has to be an honest person. Because those who are not responsible are not going to care about anything. The person that is responsible is going to worry because they will say ‘oh what would the parents think if I do not get back on time.’ That person is going to care about what we think about them.]

For the mentor relationship to be right and effective for the children, the mentor’s relations must be right with the parents’ as well. Iris’s apparent *respeto* and regard for Blanca is one of the reasons why Blanca feels it’s okay to exhibit *confianza* towards her. *Confiar* that she will take care of her daughter, *confiar* that she respects her rules, and most importantly, *confiar* that Iris is also there to help Blanca. This leads me to my discussion of *cariño*.

### *Cariño*

The third pillar of *confianza* is *cariño*. *Cariño* refers to the love and affection that characterize a relationship with *confianza*. Alma and Blanca were both very forthcoming with the fact that they did not have *confianza* in many people outside of their family. In fact, they were cautious in investing in people whom they did not trust. This led me to conclude that those relationships that do have *confianza*, are prioritized over others. Therefore, these relationships and the *confianza* that characterizes them must be nurtured by showing *cariño*.

In these mother-child relationships, *cariño* was by being honest and open with their children. When Lucía began dating her boyfriend, Blanca had a conversation with Lucía about the possibility of her becoming sexually active. Blanca told me that her goals in having this conversation with her daughter were to show her daughter that she does not judge her so that when the time comes, Lucía can trust her mother enough to be open with her. “Quería que supiera que yo estoy aquí para darle apoyo. Yo la llevo al doctor para tomar

*todas las precauciones*” [I wanted her to know that I am here to support her. I will take her to the doctor so she can take all the precautions]. In this case, Blanca approached the situation calmly and from a genuine place of love.

*Cariño* is also about solidarity. As mentioned in her narrative, Iris showed *cariño* when she comforted Blanca through some of the most contentious and painful moments in the relationship with her daughter. Even though Iris was technically not there to provide this emotional support for her mentee’s mother, she still fulfilled that role because they had established a connection beyond mentoring and the mentoring program. It is about showing and knowing that both parties are invested in growing, protecting, and re-affirming their commitments to the relationship. *Cariño* is also about honoring, accepting, and loving people for who they are.

## CHAPTER 7

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW LATINO DIASPORA ON *CONFIANZA*

I would also like to engage in an important, albeit, brief, discussion on the how living in Chapel Hill as part of the New Latino Diaspora, affected Alma and Blanca's *confianza* towards this space and the people in it.

For Alma, her relationship with the family was of utmost importance. Thus, our discussion of *confianza* typically landed on, specifically, how she related to her children. Those outside of her family were usually met with precaution. Again, Alma does not have any other family outside of her children and husband living in the area. Living Chapel Hill has led Alma to live almost in isolation because aside from not having any other family in the country, she does not have very many friends. Therefore, Alma has a difficult time affording *confianza* to other people because most of the network of people with whom she can have *confianza* with live in another country. Alma also related a story regarding her youngest daughters' experiences with being shuffled between three different schools every year since the end of second grade. This was a great point of concern for Alma because she noted that Patrizia was scared of new environments so the constant shuffling had a deep impact on her. Alma accepted a translator's offer for help in bridging the dialogue between herself and a group of other Latina/o parents whose children has also been affected and the school board meeting. When the school board ignored her, the other parents', and even children's pleas, Alma said she felt had been pushed aside and discriminated against because of her ethnicity. The translator told her

that his only role in this would be to translate and that he could not help beyond that. Feeling pushed aside and ignored by those who were supposedly there to listen and help, Alma lost faith and *confianza* in the possibility of her being able to do more. Her daughter was switched again at the beginning of the new school year. This lack of *confianza* in the system resulted from feeling powerless in making the school board realize that their needs needed to be addressed.

Blanca began her interview by stating that she liked living in Chapel Hill because of all the opportunities that the school system could afford to her children. However, not long after she made this statement, Alma revealed to me that while she liked living here, she no longer felt comfortable in this space. She had hinted at this in her story of the racist gas station attendant, but she further elaborated by noting the recent slew of anti-immigrant rhetoric sweeping the state. She specifically talked about North Carolina's proposed design of driving licenses for undocumented people—which were to have a bright pink line across the top of the license. She no longer felt as comfortable even going out to the movies or dinner with her husband. She described what I feel was almost a sense of constant surveillance and questioning. This caused her to not have as much *confianza* in her surroundings as she had had in the past.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In “Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education” Nel Noddings (1984) states that “care is a state of mental suffering or engrossment” (p. 9); thus, those who are caring and those who are being cared engage in a reciprocal relationship of “profound relatedness” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 106). Both Noddings and Valenzuela agree that instances of caring in schools, for example, are focused more on an aesthetic caring. According to Valenzuela (1999), aesthetic caring does not privilege interpersonal and nurturing relationship and in the case of the Mexican American youth of Seguin High School, caring is limited by the continued disembodiment of relationships, dehistoricization of Mexican origin people, and power inequalities.

The conversations surrounding identifying, establishing, and sustaining *confianza* is pertinent to scholarship on authentic caring, cross race relationships in education, and the importance of engaging Latina/o parents and youth. While this research only focused on the perspectives of two mothers living in North Carolina, it can serve to provide an avenue through which scholars can formulate a dialogue on relationships in and with the Latina/o community. I propose that further studies are needed in order to continue defining what *confianza* in different kinds of relationships. For example, what does *confianza* mean to Latina/o youth or to fathers or to teachers? What are the nuances in *confianza* when it comes to different kinds of relationships? And, it is important to continue the conversation on *confianza*, like the one in this thesis, in order to unpack the

implications on authentic caring.

*Confianza* is about relationships and in reviewing the literature on caring, I pose that establishing and sustaining meaningful *confianza* plays a key role in engaging in a ‘caring relationship’. In her account of Mr. Sosa, the marching band director, Valenzuela (1999) relayed that “in order for learning to take place, he first had to earn his students’ respect and confidence. He emphasized that this happened slowly...” (p.111). While Valenzuela did not use the term *confianza*, I argue that, indeed, this was the very thing Mr. Sosa was working towards earning. Interestingly, Mr. Sosa’s commitment to gaining his students’ *confianza* was facilitated by the simple yet powerful act of making *taquitos* for his students. This act is reminiscent of Allison’s willing participation in learning to make *tamales*.

This is a commitment to authentic caring (Valenzuela, 1999). Valenzuela (1999) argued that immigrant and US born Mexican youth “are committed to an *authentic* form of caring that emphasizes relations of reciprocity...” (p. 61). While, in this case Valenzuela was talking about student/teacher relationships, the notion of authentic caring and the emphasis on reciprocity can be applied to my discussion of *confianza*. As these mothers have demonstrated, you cannot trust someone who does not care for you or your wellbeing. You cannot trust someone who does not respect you. You cannot trust someone who you do not know. Blanca poignantly stated: “donde *hay confianza, hay todo.*” [Where there is *confianza*, there is everything. The possibilities of establishing, nurturing, and sustaining relationships based on *confianza* are endless; on the other side, however, as some of the narratives have revealed, the loss of *confianza* can very detrimental to effectiveness of a relationship.

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