

The Social Dynamics Channelling Latina College Graduates into the Teaching Profession

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Sociologists examine the persistence of occupational sex segregation in two primary ways, vertically (within occupations) and horizontally (across occupations). Feminist scholars analysing gender and race inequality within work organizations have used 'glass escalator' and 'glass barriers' to document men's experiences in occupations where women concentrate, falling under the vertical epistemology. These race and gender theories are crucial to our understanding of workplace inequities, but they only address privilege or discrimination once women have entered or try climbing the work organization. Based on interviews with 40 Latina teachers in Southern California, this paper examines the point of occupational entry, and explains why college-educated Latinas, the daughters of working-class Latino immigrants, are disproportionately entering the teaching profession in the United States. We suggest that Latinas are socially channelled into the teaching occupation, and show how collective family considerations inform agency and occupational decision-making for these women, resulting in a type of glass ceiling shaped by family and social class. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of collective-informed agency for future studies of upwardly mobile Latinas in the professions.

Keywords: class, glass ceiling, upward mobility, Latina teachers, intersectionalities

Introduction

Sociologists examine the persistence of occupational sex segregation in two primary ways, vertically (within occupations) and horizontally (across occupations) (Gottfried, 2006; Reskin and Roos, 1990). Recently, several studies have adopted an intersectionalities framework to examine the penalties that college-educated Latina women experience in white-collar occupations (Flores, 2011; García-López, 2008). But few studies have looked at the 'flip-side' of occupational segregation among college-educated Latina women: those who have made inroads into certain gendered professional niches. Today, teaching is the number one career attracting college-educated Latina¹ women, and they are now entering the teaching profession at greater rates than African Americans or Asian Americans (California Department of Education, 2009; Feistritz, 2005; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). In 2010, teachers of Latina/o origin increased more than teachers from other racial-ethnic groups, especially in the pre-school, elementary and middle school sectors (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010b).² While the demographic increase in Latino students is well known, Latina demographic growth in the teaching occupation is also significant because Latinas have traditionally been 'hypersegregated' in low-wage service or pink-collar work, such as domestic,

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day-care work (Catanzarite and Trimble, 2008; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001), and clerical work (Segura, 1992).³ This article examines the social dynamics that channel Latina women into the teaching profession by developing a horizontal analysis of gender and work and revisiting glass ceiling dynamics.

Feminist scholars analysing gender and race inequality within work organizations have coined concepts such as the 'glass escalator' (Williams, 1992) and 'glass barriers' (Wingfield, 2009) to document men's experiences in occupations where women concentrate. Examining vertical occupational segregation, the glass escalator is used to explain how white men are pushed upwards into administrative positions within culturally feminized occupations such as teaching and social work. In contrast to the 'glass ceiling' — where women are constrained by invisible barriers to promotion in their careers — many of the men Williams interviewed seemed to encounter a glass escalator and were 'kicked upstairs'. In other words, despite their intentions, they would often face invisible pressures to move up in their professions. Williams' finding was thought to apply to all men in these jobs, assuming a race/ethnic homogenization of men workers in women's professions. Offering an alternative account, Wingfield (2009) proposed that the glass escalator is a racialized and gendered concept that does not capture the glass barriers black men experience in nursing, such as an undermining of their suitability for higher status work. Using young second-generation Dominican women in her sample, López (2003) too, argues that although they were networked into 'pink-collar ghettos' and remained hopeful about education, these Dominican women faced a coloured and gendered glass ceiling once in their jobs. These race and gender theories are crucial to our understanding of workplace inequities, but they only address privilege or discrimination within feminized jobs once women have entered or try climbing the work organization.

This article addresses the point of professional occupational entry. What are the factors that shape the pathways leading Latina college graduates into the teaching career? This article relies on secondary statistical data, an analysis of regional trends, and 40 in-depth interviews with Latina teachers in Southern California to answer this research question. We analyse this process with a focus on financial constraints, gendered family dynamics and intersectionalities, which emphasizes the links between race, gender and class in organizations and the labour market (Browne and Misra, 2003; Collins, 1990; Holvino, 2010; Segura, 1989). Our analysis underscores the powerful force of social class, and we show how class occurs not in a vacuum but is refracted through other institutions and processes, particularly those related to gendered practices within Latino families and education. As our research shows, most Latina women reported they did not aspire to become teachers, but said that they simply 'fell into it'. We show how powerful currents of social class in Latino blue-collar families, and in the context of regional demographic change, the high cost of higher education, and social networks, propelled Latina college graduate women into the teaching profession in recent years.

College-educated Latina women's career aspirations and preferences have been a neglected area of research, particularly in the literature on occupational sex segregation and the professions. This research adds to our knowledge of the educational and career routes of the new second generation, in particular, the college-educated Latina daughters of working-class immigrants. Three-quarters (29 of 40) of the teachers interviewed for this study had at least one immigrant parent, and most of these immigrant parents hailed from Mexico. Previous studies, especially those in the segmented assimilation frame, have raised concerns about second-generation downward mobility among second-generation Mexicans (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Others have argued against second-generation decline (Feliciano and Rumbaut, 2005; Morando, 2013). Morando (2013), in particular, argues that second-generation Mexicans activate parental support, seek advice and guidance from extra-familial mentors, and use Spanish/English bilingualism in their paths to mobility given the structural challenges they face. We contribute to this literature by detailing the educational and occupational sorting processes experienced by college-educated Latina women. We show how collective family considerations inform agency and occupational decision-making for these women, resulting in a type of glass ceiling shaped by family and social class.

Research has examined how different educational tracks in high school funnel Latino students into vocational tracks rather than college preparatory tracks upon graduation (Romo and Falbo, 1996). With few exceptions (Gandara, 1995), research has not yet examined how educational tracking unfolds at the college level. We do know that Latino undergraduate students who go on to four-year institutions are much less likely to complete a bachelor's degree than their White and Asian counterparts (Fry, 2004). In this article we build on this analysis by emphasizing how being embedded in a primarily Mexican American working-class background is also central to understanding why and how the teaching profession has emerged as the number one occupation for college-educated Latinas. We argue that Latina college students and graduates are channelled into teaching careers by a series of factors that remain inextricably intertwined with gender and social class, and we suggest that these Latina women are experiencing glass ceilings shaped by family dynamics, institutions of higher education and economic constraints.

Entering the teaching profession

Among teachers, elementary school teachers receive less status than high school teachers, as teaching in the primary grades is believed to require less specialization (Bernbaum *et al.*, 1969). Teacher pay scales are also contingent on education level and years on the job. This ordering, however, is not universal. In fact, there is a long tradition of viewing teaching as a noble career and calling and there are nations that still hold teaching in high esteem (Lortie, 2002; Suarez, 2002). For example, teaching is highly regarded in some European nations, such as Finland, Italy, Portugal and Spain, but less so in the United States (Hargreaves, 2009).

The literature points to three explanations for the growing concentration of Latina women in teaching in the United States. First, teaching meshes with feminine gender ideals and it remains an overwhelmingly feminized profession, as 81.8 per cent of all elementary and middle school teachers in the United States are women (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010b).⁴ Like nursing and social work, teaching is perceived as a feminine 'helping' profession, one associated with motherhood, nurturance, social reproduction and caring for others (Acker, 1983, 1989; Etzioni, 1969). Correspondingly, teachers' hours of work duty are also seen as compatible with the social organization of motherhood and family obligations, offering holidays, summer vacations, and a work day that presumably ends at 3 p.m. These are powerful forces for Latina women, who are traditionally dedicated to family, motherhood and caring for extended kin (Segura, 1992; Zinn, 1979). Unlike women who work in law firms, who ultimately depart from the profession due to work–family life tension and their perceptions of their opportunities for promotion and career advancement (Walsh, 2012), teaching is often seen as congruous with domestic activities. However, while middle-class white women's family needs are generally oriented towards their children (Stone, 2007), Latina women carry additional invisible obligations to help their parents, family of origin and extended kin (Vallejo and Lee, 2009; Alvarez, 1994; Hite, 2007; Segura and Pierce, 1993). There is a long sociological tradition of seeing Mexican and Latino families as 'familistic', ruled by family solidarity, values and actions that seek to preserve the family over the individual (Keefe and Padilla, 1987; Moore and Pachon, 1985). At times, this has been viewed as a Latino cultural pathology, as an instance of the family holding back the individual. We do not subscribe to the pathology view, but we underscore the gendered nature of these practices: the burden of maintaining Latino family solidarity often falls on the shoulders of Latina mothers and daughters. This has consequences for mobility. As Vallejo and Lee (2009) underscore, the upwardly mobile daughters of poorer Latino immigrants must often postpone childbearing, buying homes and delay college attendance because of obligations to their families of origin. In this paper, we recast familism within a structure–agency framework, and we note that this is both an ethnic and class-based practice. As we shall see below, in Mexican immigrant working-class families, these more expansive definitions of family obligations play an important part in channelling Latina college graduates into teaching.

Another explanation may be gendered and racialized labour queues (López-Sanders, 2009; Reskin and Roos, 1990; Waldinger and Lichter, 2003). The queuing perspective was introduced by Reskin and

Roos (1990) to describe white women's entrance into male-dominated workplaces. This model describes the uneven distribution of groups across occupations as the result of a dual-queuing process: labour queues that order groups of workers in terms of their attractiveness to employers, and job queues in which workers rank the jobs themselves. World systems perspectives explain that global markets have led to a permanent built-in demand for low-wage service workers in many post-industrial nations, leading to a queuing of workers and jobs that are racialized and gendered (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Ramirez and Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2009). Scholars such as López-Sanders (2009) and Waldinger and Lichter (2003) have built upon queuing theory to examine the preference for Latino immigrant labour in low wage sectors such as agriculture or poultry processing plants. This is also why we see a preponderance of South Asian doctors (Murti, 2012) and Filipina nurses (Espiritu, 2003) in the United States. As we can see, queuing operates in both the secondary sector of the labour market as well as in white-collar fields, but we know much less about college-educated Latina women. This structural framework may help us understand the predominance of Latina teachers.

Among working-class racial-ethnic minority groups in the United States, teaching has also served as a platform for promoting not only individual mobility but also community mobility and 'racial uplift' (Gordon, 2002). As Adam Fairclough (2007) argues, Black teachers in the segregated South gravitated to the teaching profession so that they might promote 'racial uplift' for children in their communities, but also because during segregation, few white teachers served Black communities. Many Black women entered teaching careers to give back, to promote social advancement and also because they were excluded from other jobs and could be paid much less than white teachers (Jones, 1985; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993). As Tomaskovic-Devey's (1993) quantitative study suggests, the structure of the labour market and workplace experiences such as constantly being reminded of subordinate racial status and intensive surveillance and supervision by whites encouraged African Americans to seek out employment in fields where they would encounter fewer hassles.⁵ Moreover, as Maya Beasley (2011) explains, upwardly mobile African Americans have shied away from occupations in which they anticipate a high degree of occupational racism and they turn instead to occupations either with a higher proportion of Blacks, or mainstream careers with a focus on Black markets. Similarly, many Latinas have entered the teaching profession because they wish to make educational improvements and remedy the inferior education — crowded classrooms, old textbooks, racism — that they experienced as children (Galindo, 1996). Many Latina teachers see teaching as a 'noble gesture of service', one that will advance minority students who have been devalued and disadvantaged by poverty and racism (Galindo, 1996; Suárez, 2002; Ochoa, 2007). Like college-educated African Americans, some Latinas also perceive teaching as an employment sphere with less racial and class discrimination than other professions.

Finally, Latino families encourage their daughters to pursue teaching. Latino families, especially those from rural immigrant backgrounds in Mexico and Central America, accord great respect to the authority of 'la maestra' (the teacher) and they want their children to be 'bien educado' (well-educated and well-behaved) (Galindo, 1996; Gordon, 2002). Studies have shown that college-educated Latina women are networked into pink-collar and clerical work with familial support and by community-based organizations (López, 2003; Smith, 2006). In one study, Segura (1989) found that Chicana and Mexican immigrant women saw clerical jobs as desirable because they are 'clean' jobs that put one in a 'nice' atmosphere, working with other women. One reason for this high regard is that Chicanas' point of reference is often farm work or manual labour (strenuous, low-paying and low-prestige). Latino immigrants come to the United States and labour in back-breaking jobs precisely because they want their children to enjoy educational and occupational opportunities. As June Gordon points out in her study of inner-city teachers of colour (2002), Latino immigrant families and communities value respect for education. Consequently, they urge their children to pursue careers in teaching.

To sum up, we have presented several perspectives on why Latinos, and Latina women in particular, are pursuing teaching as a profession. Gender ideals, queuing mechanisms and family socialization help explain why Latina college-educated women are going into teaching, and in this article we add to this literature by focusing on the ways socio-economic class, family obligations and demographic growth of the Latino school population intersect with these factors. There are few Latina/o students in

the pipeline for higher education, and we show that limited class resources and gendered family dynamics contribute to this and we suggest that, paradoxically, this same class context explains why Latinas who make it through college are then going into teaching. Latina college graduates are overwhelmingly from working-class families with limited financial resources (Galindo, 2007; Zarate and Pachon, 2006). According to Lortie (2002, p. 48), the teaching profession is able 'to take advantage of socioeconomic constraints which limit access to college education'. Moreover, most Latina teachers are second generation, and the majority are children of Mexican immigrants, the immigrant group with the lowest levels of human capital, and the one that is most concentrated in the lowest occupational sectors of US job hierarchies, and that has historically encountered the harshest context of reception of all immigrant groups in the United States (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006). To best understand why Latina/Chicana college graduates are increasingly concentrated in the teaching profession, we advocate an intersectionalities approach that takes class and immigrant family origins seriously.

Description of research sites and research

This study draws from 40 interviews with Latina elementary school teachers who work in three distinct predominantly immigrant school districts and communities in Southern California: 21 in Santa Ana, nine in Compton and ten in Rosemead. Latina teachers included in this study worked as full-time teachers for the Santa Ana Unified School District, Compton Unified School District and Garvey Unified School District. These school districts were selected because they experienced considerable growth in their Latina teacher workforce and serve predominantly immigrant and multi-racial populations. Over 90 per cent of students in Santa Ana schools are of Latino origin, and Latina teachers comprise nearly 30 per cent of the teacher force there (SAUSD, 2014). Although the city of Compton is racialized as an African American city by popular culture, today over 80 per cent of students in Compton schools are of working-class Latino origin, while African American students comprise only 20 per cent of the student population and are dwindling in number. The teacher force in Compton schools is predominantly African American and Latino (66 per cent), with African American teachers outnumbering Latinos/as, 41 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively (California Department of Education, 2010). Lastly, in the Garvey District alone, 56 per cent of students are Asian, 41 per cent are Latino and only 1 per cent are white (California Department of Education, 2010). The teacher distribution mirrored the student breakdown with Asian teachers (40 per cent) outnumbering Latinas (26 per cent) in the district. Thus, in all three of these districts, Latinas comprised a significant percentage of teachers and were growing in number.

In the first phase of the research with teachers in Santa Ana in 2007, the interview guide consisted of open-ended questions. This instrument asked the Latina teachers how they decided to become teachers, their experiences in US schools, their major motivations for entering teaching, and why they believed so many other Latina women had entered the profession. These responses made it clear that more probing questions had to be added to the interview guide to increase the validity of results. We added questions that asked teachers if they had considered other careers before teaching, the paths they took in their undergraduate schooling and credential programmes, and how their family members reacted towards their becoming teachers. Interviews were then conducted in two other school districts in 2009–2010.

At all schools, snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. The first author conducted and transcribed all of the interviews. The interview guide included open-ended questions on three broad central domains: motivations for entering the teaching profession, the implementation of Latino ethnic origins and class-based strategies in minority school contexts and multiracial relationships and interactions. Prior to beginning the interview, each teacher was asked to fill out a demographic face sheet which queried them about their marital status, their parents' place of birth and occupation, their own place of birth, city of residence, and the highest level of schooling obtained as well as their credentialing institution and whether or not they had a CLAD or a BCLAD⁶ as detailed in Table 1. At the time of the interview, with the exception of one teacher in

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of teachers

Pseudonym	Age	Teacher (POB)	Parent (POB)	Father occupation	Mother occupation	Undergrad. institution	Credential institution	Years teaching	Annual income
<i>Santa Ana</i> Ms Fuentes**	30	Santa Ana, CA	Mexico	Construction	Apt. manager	Cal State Fullerton (Business)	UCI (BCLAD/ MA in Educational Admin.)	6	\$55,000
Ms Ponce**	28	Santa Ana, CA	Mexico	Dental tech.	Lunch lady	Cal State Fullerton (Liberal Studies)	Cal State Fullerton* (BCLAD/ MA in Educational Admin.)	8	\$58,000
Mrs Lomell**	31	Santa Ana, CA	Mexico	Tree trimmer	Home-maker	Cal State Fullerton (English)	Cal State Fullerton* (BCLAD/ MA in Educational Leadership)	7	\$70,000
Ms Ramirez**	28	Santa Ana, CA	Mexico/El Salvador	N/A	Makes window drapes	Cal State Fullerton	UCI (BCLAD)	5	\$50,000
Mrs Anderson*	32	Peru	Peru	Military	Secretary	Cal State Fullerton	Cal State Fullerton* (BCLAD/ MA in Teaching Reading)	8	\$60,000
Mrs Valenzuela**	52	East LA	Mexico	Meat-packing	Home-maker	Cal State LA (Spanish)	Cal State LA (BCLAD/ MS in Public School Admin.)	25	\$90,000
Mrs Cervantes**	34	Santa Ana, CA	Mexico	Warehouse	Factory	Cal State Fullerton (Math)	Cal State Fullerton* (CLAD)	3	\$57,000
Ms Ledesma**	29	Tulare, CA	Mexico	Farm labourer	Farm labourer	UCI (Liberal Studies)	UCI (CLAD)	5	\$48,000
Ms Villalobos**	29	Garden Grove, CA	Mexico	Self-employed (gardener/ construction)	Home-maker	Cal State Fullerton (Liberal Studies)	Cal State Fullerton (BCLAD)	6	\$59,000
Mrs Aguirre**	29	Mexico	Mexico/Guatemala	Welder	Home-maker	Cal State Fullerton (Child & Adolescent Studies)	Cal State Fullerton (BCLAD/ MA in Admin.)	6	\$50,000
Ms Benavidez**	31	Los Angeles, CA	Mexico	Business owners	Business owners	UCLA (Sociology)	Cal State Fullerton* (BCLAD/ MA Education)	7	\$66,000
Mrs Gonzalez**	42	New Mexico	Mexico	Factory worker	Home-maker	Pepperdine University (Business Management)	Cal State Fullerton* (BCLAD/ MA in Curriculum Instruction)	10	\$75,000
Mrs Blanco*	50	Mexico	Mexico	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	13	\$65,000
Ms Pedroza**	37	Los Angeles, CA	Mexico	Gardening/ construction	Hotel cleaner	Cal State Fullerton (Finance)	Cal State Fullerton* (CLAD/ MA in Education)	13	\$74,432
Mrs Cardenas**	40	Norwalk, CA	Mexico	Factory	Factory	Cal State Fullerton	Cal State Fullerton*	14	\$82,000
Mrs Chambers**	50	Tucson, AZ	Arizona/ Puerto Rico	Air Force	Nurse	Chapman (Spanish)	Cal State Fullerton* (BCLAD/ MA in Library Science)	25	\$75,000

Mrs Barney**	63	Austin, TX	Mexico	Consul for Mexican govt.	Consul for Mexican govt.	Univ. of Texas, Austin	N/A	40	\$70,000
Ms Tienda*	28	Mexico	Mexico	N/A	Domestic	San Luis Obispo (Liberal Studies)	Cal State Fullerton (CLAD/MA in Curriculum Instruction)	5	\$58,600
Ms Galvan**	33	Los Angeles, CA	Mexico	Shipping	Home-maker	UCI (Psychology & Social Behavior)	UCI (CLAD/MS in School Psychology)	11	\$68,000
Mrs Prieto-Wilke**	34	Santa Ana, CA	Mexico	Welder	Factory	Vanguard University (Org. Management & Business)	Cal State Fullerton* (CLAD)	9	\$78,000
Mrs Rojas**	33	Santa Ana, CA	Mexico/Germany	High school teacher	Kindergarten teacher	Cal State Fullerton (Child Dev.)	Cal State Fullerton* (CLAD)	10	\$50,000
Compton Mrs Kingston*	40	Mexico	Mexico	Retired teacher in Mexico	Retired teacher in Mexico	Cal Poly Pomona (Finance)	Compton District Program* (CLAD)	9	\$60,000
Ms Gutierrez*	35	Mexico	Mexico	N/A	Retired	Cal State LA (Liberal Studies)	Cal State LA* (CLAD)	4	\$54,000
Mrs Crescent**	33	Orange County	Cuba/El Salvador	Bank executive	Nurse	Cal Poly Pomona (Liberal Studies)	Compton District Program* (CLAD)	6	\$56,000
Mrs Madrigal*	33	Mexico	Mexico	Welder	Home-maker	Cal State LA (Multicultural Education)	Cal State LA* (CLAD)	5	\$45,000
Mrs Estrada**	34	Santa Ana, CA	Mexico	Welder	Independent distributing company owner	Cal State Fullerton (Liberal Studies)	Compton District Program* (CLAD)	5	\$36,000
Ms Tiscareno**	27	Long Beach, CA	Mexico	Shipper/custodian	Home-maker	Cal State Long Beach (Liberal Studies)	Cal State Long Beach (CLAD)	4	\$52,000
Mrs Godinez**	39	East LA	Mexico	Clerk	Seamstress	Cal State Dominguez (Spanish/Mex-Am Studies)	Cal State Dominguez Hills (BCLAD/MA in Multicultural Education)	14	\$76,000
Mrs Velásquez**	34	Chicago	Mexico/Texas	Car wash/electronic tech	Teacher aide	Cal State Long Beach (Chicano/Latino Studies)	National University (CLAD)	5	N/A
Mrs Rivas**	39	Sacramento	Mexico	N/A	Operator	Cal State Dominguez (Psychology/Chicano/Latino Studies)	San Jose University* (CLAD)	15	\$78,000

Table 1: Continued

Pseudonym	Age	Teacher (POB)	Parent (POB)	Father occupation	Mother occupation	Undergrad. institution	Credential institution	Years teaching	Annual income
<i>Rosemead</i> Ms Davila***	34	Bellflower, CA	Kansas/ Iowa	Warehouse	Cashier	UCLA (Theater)	Cal State LA* (CLAD)	9	\$51,000
Mrs Robles***	36	Rosemead, CA	Los Angeles, CA	Mail carrier	Pharmaceutical clerk	Cal State LA (Health Sciences)	Cal State LA* (CLAD/MA in Arts in Education & Reading Specialist)	14	\$80,000
Ms Maciel**	40	Rosemead, CA	Mexico	Warehouse	Home-maker	Cal State LA (Child Dev.)	Cal State LA* (BCLAD/M.A. in Reading)	14	\$80,000
Mrs Arenas***	61	San Gabriel, CA	CA	Agriculture	Agriculture/ pre-school teacher	Cal State LA (Liberal Studies)	Cal State LA (CLAD/MA in Education & Reading Specialist)	21	\$86,000
Mrs Franco**	30	Montebello, CA	Mexico/CA	Plumber	Teacher aide	UCLA (Sociology)	University of Phoenix (CLAD/MA in Education)	9	\$70,000
Mrs Larry***	36	San Dimas, CA	OK, Mexico	Painter in aeronautics	Home-maker	Cal State LA (Social Science)	Cal State LA (CLAD/MA in Education)	11	\$68,000
Mrs Cadena***	41	Orange, CA	Santa Ana, CA	Welding supervisor	Factory	Cal State LA (Child Dev.)	Cal State LA (CLAD/MA in Admin.)	11	\$67,000
Ms Sanchez***	39	East LA	East LA	Core maker	Teacher aide	Cal State LA (Computer Information Systems)	University of Phoenix (CLAD/MA in Education)	5	\$50,000
Mrs Quiroz**	29	San Gabriel, CA	Guatemala	Mechanic	Home-maker	Cal State LA (Child Dev.)	Cal State LA (CLAD/MA in Reading)	5	\$44,000
Mrs Perez***	57	Texas	Texas	Warehouse manager	Home-maker	Cal State LA (Languages)	Cal State LA (CLAD)	29	\$85,000
N = 40									

* Teacher generation level noted by asterisk next to last name (i.e. * 1.5 generation; ** 2nd generation; *** 3rd generation; **** 4th generation). Asterisk in credential institution box denotes if the teacher was hired with emergency credential. We only marked those that explicitly said it. (22)

Compton, all teachers were fully credentialed. All teachers were asked to approximate their own annual income, excluding sources of income such as second jobs. Some teachers asked if they should include their spouse's income into the total, but they were specifically asked to only write their personal earned income. This also included income from any after-school or summer teaching they might have completed during the school year. A few of the teachers declined to state income information.

Each interview lasted between one and three hours. Teachers were often interviewed in intervals of 30-minute blocks over a couple of days in order to avoid interrupting instructed learning time during the school day. Most teachers were interviewed after school, before school or during lunchtime. Strauss's (1987) coding scheme was used to evaluate the data. Each transcript and set of field notes was read various times and anatomized into key themes. We also shared the transcripts and field notes and discussed these with colleagues.

Description of research sample

Latino origin families living in the US are not a homogeneous group, but are differentiated by generation and class. Table 2 gives an overview of the participants included in this study, and as the table shows, about three-quarters are daughters of Mexican immigrants. Of all immigrant groups in the United States, Mexican immigrants are the largest and have the lowest levels of education, with only 4.2 per cent having graduated from college, as reported in the 2000 Census (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006, p. 69). Of the teachers interviewed for this article, three-quarters (29 out of 40) had at least one parent born in Mexico, and several had parents born in Central America, two from South America and two from the Caribbean. Most of these teachers were born in Southern California, but a few hailed from Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Chicago.

Table 2 provides a brief snapshot of the Latina teachers' parental backgrounds, including information about their place of birth and the occupations their parents held, both at the time of our interview and while these Latina teachers were growing up. These Latina teachers came from immigrant and working-class homes, with parents who worked in low-skilled, manual jobs (66 per cent). A handful of Latina teachers grew up in middle-class homes, some with mothers who worked as teacher aides. Over 70 per cent of the Latina teachers, however, grew up in working-class homes and received their Bachelor's and teaching credentials at what is among the most affordable state college system in the nation, the California State University. From Table 2, we see that two-thirds were second generation, that is, US-born children of immigrant parents. Table 2 also shows that over half (55 per cent) of the Latina teachers included in this study entered the teaching profession on an emergency teaching credential. As these demographic tables suggest, class, race, gender and immigrant origins form structural pathways that channel Latina college graduates into teaching. To closely examine the social underpinnings of Latina pathways into teaching, we focus on four factors: scarce financial resources for the pursuit of higher education and the obligation to 'give back' in Latino working-class families; the feasibility of completing professional preparation and the perception of teaching as an occupation less marked by class and racial discrimination; demographic growth of Latino student population and subsequent growth in job demand; and family social networks that connect to school-based jobs.

Channelling Latinas into teaching

While a few Latina teachers said that they had always aspired to become teachers, the vast majority reported that they became teachers 'by accident'. They explained their pathways into the teaching profession as accidental happenstance, a serendipitous fluke of fate that was not intentionally planned or preferred. They said, 'It's not like I grew up thinking I was gonna be a teacher', or 'I just kind of bumped upon it'. Examining the interview transcripts, however, suggests that a series of patterned social factors lead to a concentration of Latina college graduates in the teaching field. The extended

Table 2: Summary statistics of Latina teachers

Category	Average	Range	Raw score	Per cent
Age	37	28–61		
Years teaching	11	3–29		
Annual income	\$64,000	\$36,000–\$90,000		
Emergency credential			22	55%
Teacher generation				
1.5			6	15%
2 nd			27	67.5%
3 rd +			7	17.5%
Parental nativity				
Mexico			53	66%
United States			18	23%
Central American			5	6%
Puerto Rican			1	1%
Cuban			1	1%
South American			2	3%
Parental occupation*				
Blue-collar			21	33%
Service sector			14	22%
White-collar			6	10%
Teacher aids			3	5%
Homemaker			12	19%
Factory			7	11%
Undergrad. institution				
CSU			30	77%
UC			5	13%
Private			3	8%
Public Ivy			1	3%
Credential institution				
CSU			28	74%
UC			4	11%
Online			3	8%
District Program			3	8%

* Military (2); Nurse (2); Professional jobs in Mexico (4).

quote below, from a young woman who had been teaching in Santa Ana schools for seven years, begins to hint at a series of factors channelling Latina college graduates into the teaching profession.

To be honest with you, teaching was just a temporary thing for me. I mean, when I was growing up, like I always wanted to be a teacher ... but when I actually went into school, I wanted to go to law school. I wanted to go to Cornell [private Ivy league university]. My parents said they couldn't pay for my schooling. At that time when I graduated from UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] they were hiring teachers like crazy. Like all you had to do was pass your CBEST (California Basic Educational Skills Test). My plan was just to teach one year, two years, (and) make enough money to apply to law school. And that was my plan, but somewhere between that first year of teaching, I fell in love with teaching and I decided to stay here. (Mrs Benavidez, Santa Ana)

Here we begin to see how other more highly regarded occupational aspirations held by Latina college graduates may be thwarted by family financial constraints and the commodification of higher education in the US, and later, by the surprise of falling 'in love with teaching'. We also get a hint of how

the burgeoning demand for bilingual, bicultural teachers in the 1990s, combined with the financial feasibility of the shorter educational preparation for the teaching career, served as magnets drawing Latinas into the job. Below, we explore these factors further.

Familial educational encouragement and scarce financial resources

It is well known that Mexican immigrant parents invoke stories of their hard work and sacrifice to induce their children to study and get good jobs. This process has been referred to as the 'immigrant narrative' (Vallejo and Lee, 2009) and the 'immigrant bargain' (Smith, 2006), and the majority of the Latina teachers said this dynamic had been important in their upbringing. The Latina teachers painted vivid portraits of the workplace struggles their parents had encountered in the US, and they described how their parents used their own low levels of education and arduous manual jobs as sources of motivation to push their daughters towards higher education and upward mobility. As one teacher, the daughter of an immigrant mother who worked in a T-shirt factory and the father as a welder, explained:

My mom always said, '*Si tu quieres trabajar como burro, entonces no vayas a la escuela. Si no quieres trabajar como burro como yo, entonces ve a la escuela y agarra tu educación*'. [If you want to work like a burro, then don't go to school. If you don't want to work like a burro like me, then go to school and get your education] ... They had a third grade education. (Mrs Prieto-Wilke, Santa Ana)

As Mrs Velásquez, a kindergarten teacher said,

[My dad] would say simple things like he came to this country when he was like 18, right? And he told me that he was working his first job at a car wash in Chicago in the winter, below freezing ... It was like 'You are here. I came to this country to give you a chance. You have no excuses'. (Mrs Velásquez, Compton)

The Latina teachers credited their parents' immigrant backgrounds for giving them an inner drive and determination to succeed in school, but at the same time they said that their parents had been unable to help finance their college educations. The vast majority received little to no parental financial support for college. They turned to scholarships, loans, part-time jobs and other sources of support. Ms Tienda, the daughter of a live-in domestic, described the stark numbers of her case: 'My mother made \$110 dollars [a week] when I went off to college. That is \$440 dollars a month. That's nothing. You can't survive on that ... I was very naïve, and I would say, "I'm just going to go to college and I'm going to get a scholarship!"' Another teacher, Mrs Gonzales explained how her employer had paid for her BA in Business Management and teaching credential at that time, a 3M Company where she worked for nearly 12 years. She credited this company for helping her complete her studies to become a teacher:

When I first started college I was going to Pepperdine University and I saw people from different walks of life. A lot of them were from the upper, affluent families because Pepperdine is a private school. My work [3M employer] was paying for [college] so I didn't have to pay for it. My parents couldn't afford to go there but they put so much emphasis on education. Education is everything to them. (Mrs Gonzales, Santa Ana)

As we see in Table 1, the overwhelming majority of these Latina teachers had fathers who worked in blue-collar occupations as welders, construction workers, plumbers, janitors and in warehouses as stockers. Nearly a quarter of their mothers were homemakers while others worked in factories, as domestics, in agricultural fields or in education (as aides, pre-school, teacher). As

Vallejo and Lee (2009) show, many Latinas/os from working-class backgrounds who experience upward social mobility and are one generation removed from the immigrant experience wish to 'give back' financially and socially to their families and communities. The immigrant narrative is borne out of parental sacrifice and struggle, and the expectation is that the children should reciprocate with their parents. This social dynamic was important for the Latina teachers, as they cited 'giving back' as both an expectation and motivation for starting their post-college earning careers sooner rather than later. Unlike professions with longer courses of preparation, teaching requires a shorter period of schooling.

This relatively shorter period of educational preparation was important, as these daughters of immigrants wanted to financially assist their parents. This desire to help their family economically and emotionally, they said, began when they were children and adolescents. As youths, many of them had accompanied their parents to work, and had also worked jobs in high school to help supplement the family's income. Many of the Latina teachers recalled being aware of their family's precarious economic status, and felt a responsibility to ensure their family's wellbeing before their own. For this reason, most of them worked while in college. As Mrs Madrigal, whose father was a welder and mother a homemaker explained:

My focus has always been helping my mom, with bills and just helping out emotionally and with other aspects I had to do in the house ... So when I got to Cal State [public university] and I heard (teaching) was not so long, I jumped on it ... It's just my responsibility ... I guess when I was little it's because I was the oldest [eldest girl]. I felt obligated to helping. So then as I grew older, got married, financial stability is there so now it's more of a, more of a responsibility ... I am going to do that until ya' know until they're not here ... You have to give priority to your family first. (Mrs Madrigal, Compton)

Latina teachers explained that going to school was an emotional and financial sacrifice because it meant that time devoted to school impinged on their ability to help the family financially. Mrs Estrada, for example, felt torn by the strain of simultaneously studying and trying to help out her family monetarily. She recognized this as a key difference between American individualistic family values, which mandate 'do for yourself first and then the family', and Mexican collectivist family values, which require 'you'll do for the family before you do for you'.

The family just holds you back ... Because your family wants you to get a job, they want you to pay money and you are like 'I can't because I have to pay this book or I have to pay this class' and they don't understand because they didn't go to college ... It would be okay if your family wasn't in a financial crisis and you decide to go to college instead of help out ... Anytime you are doing something for you, 'it's like you are selfish'. And it comes with guilt ... You are going to school and you feel the guilt. [laughs] (Mrs Estrada, Compton)

Some of the Latina teachers felt guilty for pursuing an individual education while family financial urgencies remained. As a consequence, many reported that obligations to help their families had required them to forego professional careers with longer courses of study in favour of teaching. For example, Ms Tienda, the daughter of a live-in domestic, recalled that her mother 'was not so great at saving for her future as far as college', but she knew her mother was counting on her and she could not disappoint her in terms of their future stability. With aspirations to get a PhD in education, through a cracked voice and tears, Ms Tienda spoke of the message reverberating in her mind in college: ensuring that her mother was taken care of and buying a town home.

I have to support her ... My mom is the most important person in my life and financially it is very difficult in Orange County. I have a nice town home. It is brand new. My mom deserves to have everything paid for and people are expensive when they don't have medical and I have to think about my mom and I have to think about my future. (Ms Tienda, Santa Ana)

The responsibility to 'give back' and take care of parents was echoed by other Latina teachers. Mrs Franco said she had initially wanted to become a doctor, and did not plan on becoming a teacher but

did so to start paying bills in her family: 'I could see my parents struggle and I didn't want to have to do that ... I wanted to be able to give something back to my parents' (Mrs Franco, Rosemead).

Latina teachers wanted the ability to financially provide for themselves and their families. This cultural tradition from their working-class Latino background propelled them to think about their family's wellbeing, and directed them to select careers as teachers. This is a prime example of how glass ceilings operate within working-class Latino gendered family dynamics. In the section below we see that not only the shorter course of study, but other factors made teaching a feasible career option for these working-class daughters with immigrant roots.

Feasibility and protection

In his seminal book on teachers, Lortie (2002) claims that teaching draws many college students with limited financial resources who begin their studies with other career ambitions. This resonates with our study, as we found many Latina teachers who had initially aspired to become lawyers, doctors and professors had never imagined entering teaching because of its lower-ranked professional status. Although teaching is held in high prestige in many European nations and in Latin America, it holds less prestige in the United States (Hargreaves, 2009). In the end, teaching seemed not only more financially feasible, but as a less competitive field of study, it also seemed more readily achievable for students who did not grow up in homes with the cultural capital and informational resources that might help them navigate more competitive programmes of study in higher education. A combination of self-doubt, lack of money and lack of cultural capital and informational resources, and importantly the desire to seek an occupational space where they would be protected from overt racial discrimination and class elitism, directed them towards teaching, much like African American respondents in Beasley's study (2011).

Acquiring education for the teaching profession is less expensive than medicine or law. Students from working-class backgrounds incur more debt than those from affluent upbringings because they cannot rely on accumulated wealth and family support, and the average debt at graduation for a Latino medical student is just shy of \$122,300 (Jolly, 2005). Of course, doctors and lawyers are expected to make up that money and pay off their loans after securing employment, but the Latina teachers in our study were less sanguine about the possibility of quickly paying off student loans. Teaching seemed more flexible than other career preparation options, allowing them to help their families while simultaneously navigating their work/school schedules. Latina teachers were savvy in terms of finding financial support, seeking part-time jobs or accessing programmes that would help them pay for their schooling.

Compared to law or medicine, the teaching profession requires a relatively short course of study, usually four years of college with an extra year to obtain a credential (State of California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2014). Moreover, entry requirements are less competitive than other professions, so it offers accessibility and certainty, and, importantly, it is often possible to work in a teaching capacity while still in college. Teaching is perceived as easier than other degrees with uncertain outcomes. While higher GPAs (grade point averages), attendance at an elite college and stratospheric board scores may be required for entry to many professional and graduate programmes, a school teacher in California must obtain a BA/BS in any subject, successfully complete three tests,⁷ and obtain a multiple subject teaching credential. Latina teachers indicated that they entered the profession because it required a shorter period of educational preparation, it allowed them to work while finishing school, and there was a degree of certainty that a job would be readily available, especially in immigrant communities. As Mrs Aguirre reasoned:

It's a career that you know if you are really focused it's going to take you four years or five years to finish, to complete it. They have different schedules where if you have to work during the day, you go to school at night ... it's not like you have to go to school for ten years. I looked into

becoming a psychologist and it was just crazy the amount of years you have to go to school. (Mrs Aguirre, Santa Ana)

Similarly, Mrs Lomeli had aspired to become a lawyer and during the interview, she was extremely encouraging to the first author, urging her to finish her doctoral programme. Mrs Lomeli's occupational dream of becoming a lawyer had been stymied by several circumstances. A college professor had dissuaded her from pursuing law school, as he had advised that this would be 'too hard' for her. Like others, she needed to quickly earn income. As she explained, 'At the time I was working part time at a law firm and I was getting married the following year and I thought I need more income and my cousin's like, "well you should teach" and it's been working very well. I like teaching'. Similarly, Mrs Robles, a fourth-generation Latina teacher who studied Health Science, said she saw too much competition in health science and worried whether it would be possible to get a job in the medical field.

Social class, limited cultural capital and lack of informational resources channelled working-class students, many of them the daughters of working-class Mexican immigrants, into teaching. As Bourdieu (1973) has indicated, class social reproduction hinges on the cultural capital or accumulated knowledge and attitudes that allow for the accumulation of status, education and power. These Latina college graduates were upwardly mobile, but their working-class parents had not passed on the kinds of informal know-how and information that upper and professional class parents are able to impart to their children, and hence these women were restricted in navigating the higher echelons of education and the professions. Most parental support throughout collegiate attendance for first-generation Latino college students takes the form of verbal support and encouragement (Gandara, 1995). Children in working-class immigrant families are less likely to have been concertedly cultivated with professional class privileges, resources and expectations, and they are also less likely to have connections with elites (Lareau, 2003). Even Latina teachers who grew up in middle-class families explained that their parents did not have elite connections and were unable to help them pursue higher status occupations. Although all Latina teachers disliked that society perceived elementary teaching as an easier career, they said they did not pursue other careers because they worried whether it was possible for them to succeed and secure employment. Several Latina teachers seemed to doubt their capabilities in their original intended fields, short-changing themselves in a way and second-guessing their abilities. 'I kind of feel that I was nervous to do biology. I did pretty well and I kind of felt myself too, that I kind of limit myself' (Ms Tienda, Santa Ana). Others were wary of entering elite, white professions. Mrs Prieto-Wilke said teaching seemed like a fairer and more democratically allocated profession. Unlike in business or other fields, elitism and racism would not be a decisive factor in the allocation of teaching jobs and outcomes:

That's the one thing I liked about this profession because the other job where I was at [business job] oh that was where it was really bad. You could tell who was going to get the job because of their looks and who wasn't. But this job was pretty fair as far as that's concerned because you have to go to school. Everybody does. It doesn't matter where they go. You can go to USC or Princeton [private universities] but they have to get their bachelor's, they have to get their credential, you have to take the same tests. You either pass or you don't and so as far as that is concerned I think that was the fairest of all the jobs. (Mrs Prieto-Wilke, Santa Ana)

Similarly, Mrs Pedroza had studied finance and was contemplating moving up in the banking world, but was ultimately pushed out by a discriminatory branch manager and entered teaching with an emergency credential, a field that gave her the impression that Latinas were the 'preferred' labour pool in immigrant enclaves and communities.

Loans, scholarships, financial aid and often part-time jobs allowed the Latina teachers to finish college. Over half of the Latina teachers in this study (26) worked while in college. They worked in indoor swap-meets, shopping malls, offices, chain stores and as tutors. As Mrs Quiroz explained, 'Luckily I was able to obtain a lot of financial aid but then I had to pay for my books and things like that. I just did part time jobs just to do that'. After obtaining their college degrees, Latina teachers also found financial support for their credential programmes. Some were also linked with disadvantaged

school districts with large Latino populations that offered enticing financial aid programmes to pay college costs for graduates willing to work in the districts for a certain number of years.

Latina teachers also defrayed expenses by attending colleges that were in close proximity to their homes and workplaces. Nearly 85 per cent (34 out of 40) of the interviewees in this study attended colleges located minutes from their home. A total of 38 of the 40 interviewees attended college in California and 30 graduated from the California State University (CSU) system, among the most affordable higher education systems in the nation. It is also the biggest producer of California teachers. As Ms Maciel said of her collegiate experience at California State University Los Angeles: 'It worked out perfectly that it was really close. I wasn't even driving ... [laughs] I would take the bus, and it was just — it was just very convenient'. Some Latina teachers explained that they were admitted to other colleges where they would have had to move away, but they opted for California State Universities because they were attempting to save money and limit reliance on loans. This finding resonates with Zarate and Pachon's (2006) study, which indicates that Latino working-class families hesitate to take out educational loans and to incur vast debt. Affordability and proximity to home and family were important considerations in choosing a college and course of study. As Ms Dávila, a third-generation Latina teacher, recalled:

It was really close to work ... it was just kind of on the way home and you just go from work, you stop at school, you go there for a couple of hours, and you head home and it was affordable. I could pay for it without having to take out a loan and a lot of other teachers [at the school] had done their credentials there, so they were familiar and I knew that I could call them if I needed help with anything and that was it, basically just convenience and price. (Ms Dávila, Rosemead)

As Lortie (2002, p. 48) claims, state colleges that specialize in teacher training can become 'more than an institution of socialization — it also recruits. One finds a kind of "entrapment" as such colleges draw in students of limited opportunity whose initial interest in teaching is low' [sic]. This limited opportunity is especially significant for working-class Latina teachers because in addition to the financial constraints, we find Latina teachers were also eager to avoid college loans, and to find occupations where they could succeed. They sought to avoid educational and career arenas where they would encounter discrimination due to race, class origins, and lack of cultural capital and elite connections.

Growing demand

In the 1990s, California schools 'were hiring teachers like crazy'. A growing demand for teachers, especially for bilingual and minority teachers in the 1990s was fuelled by increases in the Latino student population and bilingual education programmes (Hart and Burr, 1996; Ryan and Cooper, 2010). While the current financial crisis (2008–2012) has resulted in layoffs and contractions, the number of classroom teachers in elementary and secondary schools is projected to increase until 2018, primarily because of teacher retirements, and an increase in student enrolments (Hussar and Bailey, 2009; Ryan and Cooper, 2010). This is consistent with other demographic changes as more professions continue to open up for white women, drawing them out of exclusively female-dominated professions, and second-generation, working-class, college-educated Latina women are now filling these jobs.

Demographic change in the student population also drove demand for Latina teachers. Increased immigration from Latin America and Asian countries in the 1980s and 1990s fuelled demand for bilingual educators who provided an alternative to monolingual, white, middle-class teachers (Su, 1996). This process was institutionalized through legislation. Queuing theory (Reskin and Roos, 1990) has largely been used to explain women's entrance into male-dominated jobs, but within the context of schools we see a change in the labour queue, in which demographic changes in schools and bilingual abilities expanded job opportunities to Latina women. For instance, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 provided federal funds to aid language minority students in the acquisition of the English

language, and in 1996, the California State Legislature created the Class Size Reduction (CSR) programme, which prompted more job openings in kindergarten to third-grade classes.⁸

To meet the rapidly growing demand for teachers, emergency credential programmes started as early as 1989, and by 1994–5 teachers working with emergency credentials or waivers in California grew to 50 per cent since the programme's inception (Hart and Burr, 1996). During this particular period, most emergency credentialed teachers were hired in Southern California, 60 per cent of the state-wide total in Los Angeles County alone. In 1991, the most dire need was in bilingual education, which then accounted for 72 per cent of Los Angeles Unified School District's emergency teachers (Ed-Data, 2009; Hart and Burr, 1996). The labour queue shifted as districts sought teachers who would be able to communicate with Spanish-speaking Latino parents and children, and bilingual Spanish-speaking teachers (mostly women) were recruited. As the Latina teachers explained, teaching credentials were not obligatory and in the 1990s 'they (school districts) were just getting anybody' who had a BA and had passed the CBEST exam. Importantly, financial aid was also available:

You just had to have your BA and your CBEST ... Because then the bilingual program was in effect in this district [Santa Ana] and I believe in Anaheim and Los Angeles too. There was a lot of bilingual people. So they got a lot of people. And then they gave them the opportunity and then they were offering to pay for the credential program too so it was easier for them not only to get their credential but also to get their Master's too. (Mrs Cardenas, Santa Ana)

While it is common for teachers in Europe to promote a multilingual society and in many cases are literate in multiple languages, the United States promotes English monolingualism. Thus, bilingual education later came under attack with Proposition 227, a 1998 proposition known as the 'English for the Children Initiative', which ultimately dismantled most bilingual education programmes in the state of California, but in this earlier expansionary phase, jobs were plentiful and they set up job opportunities for future waves of Latina teachers. As Mrs Gonzales (Santa Ana) recalled, 'before Prop 227 ... it (was) very easy to get into teaching ... I basically walked in the door'. Mrs Rojas (Santa Ana) also recalled, 'As I was leaving the interview room, the woman that was next door to my interview room overheard it and called me over. "Psst, hey come here. Do you speak Spanish?" And that got me in the door. And an hour later I had an interview and I got a job here. That was my advantage'.

There are few professions where Latina college-educated women have an advantage or an 'in', even if they speak Spanish (see Morando, 2013), but teaching became an exception. The interviewees still marvelled at this because speaking Spanish has historically been met with hostility or at least ambivalence in the US (Gonzalez, 1997). But in the 1990s, Spanish bilingualism was perceived as an asset and these Latina college graduates had a hiring advantage over monolingual teachers. Mrs Madrigal said, 'It seemed like one door opened another door ... I was just in the right place at the right time when it opened up', and Ms Valenzuela said, 'they were just getting anybody'. Class sized reduction under Senate Bill 1777 opened more doors for Latina teachers, and many then took advantage of the credential programmes, which they perceived as quick and easy to get. As Mrs Estrada said, '[the credential] seemed like the most appealing and fast'. There were multiple ways to obtain a credential and many of them did not require Latina teachers to 'pay a dime'. Some reported obtaining their credential online.

Other Latina teachers were directly recruited into the teaching profession. There is a long history of direct labour recruitment for Mexican immigrant men, through '*enganchadas*' [hooks] and the contracts of the Bracero Program (Martinez, 1996). These direct recruitment strategies are also used by military recruiters who specifically target urban and low-income schools (Mariscal, 2003). Here we see something similar, but within the context of college settings and college-educated Latina women working for disadvantaged schools. The Latina teachers reported encountering recruiters at their college campuses, sometimes holding 'Teacher Fairs' where they were eagerly sought out and encouraged to interview and apply right on the spot. As Mrs Valenzuela recalled, 'The school districts would go on campus and look for bilingual people even if you weren't in education just as long as

you had a degree in something. They would ask if you were interested in teaching and they could help you get an emergency credential'. Mrs Crescent, a Cuban/Salvadoran teacher had been a microbiology major, but changed her major to liberal studies when she was having difficulty passing her science courses. As she recalled,

I happened to meet a Compton recruiter at Cal Poly Pomona one day who told me about their district intern program and how you can pursue your credential through their program and work at the same time ... It almost was 100 per cent that you would get employment through Compton ... Work always comes first, so to work and go to school at the same time was the incentive. (Mrs Crescent, Compton)

Working and studying at the same time was an attractive option for these working-class students who wanted to aid their families. Many Latina women took advantage of district programmes, which would help them pay for their credential and guaranteed them employment if they remained with the district. Beyond their college campuses, some Latina teachers said they had been encouraged to get into teaching by former teachers and administrators.

Family social networks: 'It was so easy for me to walk into teaching'

Most Americans are familiar with the dictum that 'It's not what you know, but whom you know' that determines where you get a job, as many job seekers rely on social networks to secure employment. This is true among Mexican migrant agricultural workers, domestic workers and factory workers (Massey *et al.*, 1987; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Waldinger and Lichter, 2003), as well as among Latinas networked into pink-collar jobs (López, 2003; Smith, 2006) and among professionals seeking highly coveted positions (Lin, 1999; Lin *et al.*, 1981). For Latina teachers, social ties — especially to family members — served as important channels of information about job opportunities in schools. While the majority of these teachers came from working-class families, nearly half of the interviewees reported having family members — typically cousins, sisters and aunts — that worked in schools. These family ties helped draw them into teaching jobs.

As noted earlier, most of these women reported initial ambivalence about going into teaching. In fact, Mrs Franco described teaching as the 'professional version of babysitting' and one interviewee noted that her immigrant mother did not hold the profession in high regard. Yet family members with ties to the teaching profession or other jobs in the schools had extended important job information at a time when these young women had been uncertain about other future job aspirations. For example, Mrs Prieto-Wilke had finished a BA in Business, but she had no job offer. She reported:

My husband was already teaching and I went to a Christmas party and it so happened that the principal in charge of the school was my principal when I was in first grade at a Santa Ana school, and she (had) really helped our family out a lot as far as giving us items. I thought, 'Hey this is a great opportunity, I can get in'.

Here, thick, localized neighbourhood networks included not only her husband, but also her own former principal from elementary school in Santa Ana. Not everyone could cite former teachers and principals drawing them back to the schools, but family connections were common. Mrs Lomeli reported a similar path, with family members drawing her into teaching. She said, 'I have I think 10 cousins who teach and they said you should try it'. Her cousins, she said, were instrumental in helping her find a teaching job.

It wasn't even that I had started contemplating the issue of teaching. It was actually many factors. I had left grad school, I wanted some type of directionality, I needed income, and another co-worker of mine was applying to teaching. She's like, 'I'm applying in Santa Ana'. So I called my

cousins and they were like, 'Oh yes! You should call so and so' ... it was so easy to get hired for me personally in Santa Ana'.

Ms Sanchez reported similar experiences:

I went into (studying) computers but didn't find a job in computers. And so then I managed to come across — actually my sister told me about a program about getting credentials, it was a master's and a credential. So that's actually how I really got into it.

None of these women had aspired to go into teaching — Mrs Prieto-Wilke had a BA in Business, and Mrs Lomeli had a degree in English and aspired to become a law professor, and Ms Sanchez had studied computer technology — but they were all experiencing financial urgencies and facing uncertain career paths into law, business and high technology. With family and community social networks linking them to the schools, they were pulled onto the inside track for teaching jobs.

Family members, more than friends, were critical in drawing Latina women into this white-collar occupation. This speaks to the strength of family relations in Mexican and Chicano families (Zinn, 1979). Sixteen of the 40 Latina teachers interviewed reported having cousins or other family members who worked as teachers. Family was defined expansively, beyond the nuclear family to include cousins, aunts and uncles. A few had parents who worked as teachers. Mrs Rojas' father taught high school, and her mother kindergarten, and although she herself had aspired to become a professor of African American history, she said that after she became pregnant at age 21, her father persuaded her to become a teacher:

I didn't want to become a teacher. Both of my parents are teachers and I fought them about becoming a teacher for years ... my dad was a big influence on my life ... my dad sat me down and said as a single person (with a child), this career is a steady career ... So that was it.

Mrs Franco cited several family members who drew her into teaching:

My mom worked in education (as a teacher's aide), my *nina* (godmother) worked in education, and then my brother ... he started teaching and it seemed like he liked it. So it was kind of like I just fell into it because it was around, and I didn't really know what else to do, and it was something familiar.

Schools located in Latino neighbourhoods provide hubs of employment for Latina women in a number of positions, as lunch ladies, yard duty supervisors, secretaries, teachers' aides and administrative staff. These Latina school employees helped carve a pathway to teaching for their college-educated nieces and daughters by passing on information about job openings and providing personal references. Mrs Robles, for example, explained how she began working as an instructional aide at the school where she later became a teacher: 'One of my aunts was an office manager at a school, and I was going to college at Cal State LA, and she asked me if I was interested in trying to work at the school and I said, yeah, I would give it a try'. And Ms Velásquez, whose mother worked as a teacher aide and whose father worked in a car wash and as an electrician, found herself ultimately persuaded by her father's exhortations to try substitute teaching (open to all college graduates) at her mother's school:

That was him telling me, 'Start subbing, start subbing at your mom's school. You're gonna like it, you're gonna like it'. I was like, 'Dad, I don't want to work there, I don't want to be a teacher, I don't want to be that'. And he was like, 'No, no, no, just try it. It's good income'. And then I started liking it, and he was like, 'See, I told you so'.

In his classic article on the strength of weak social ties, Mark Granovetter (1973) showed the important role that even relatively fleeting and weak social networks can play in job recruitment, but here we see something different: the strength of strong family ties operating within the context of Latino/Chicano familism. This Latino/Chicano familism involves expectations of mutual support and assistance, regular socializing with kin, and often selection of *compadres* (godparents) from kin

(Alvarez, 1994; Keefe and Padilla, 1987). These strong ties in large extended families, and regular contact with many cousins, aunts, uncles, together with expectations of mutual aid, create a dense web of social networks that translated into job contacts. Moreover, as we have seen, for some of the Latina teachers, there were strong patterns of residential neighbourhood stability and, moreover, public schools in Latino neighbourhoods serve as hubs of employment for Latina women. All of the Latina teachers interviewed for this study went to college locally, in Southern California, and many returned to work in their neighbourhood schools, or in schools located just a few miles from where they grew up. This results in a type of cumulative causation network, or reproductive aspect to the social networks. Latina teachers, as well as teachers' aides and other school support staff, establish a foothold in schools in Latino neighbourhoods and they then recruit their female kin into the profession.

Conclusions and discussion

The experiences of Latina college graduates getting into the teaching profession sheds light on the factors that shape sex segregation across occupations for minority students and second-generation Latina women, the children of immigrants. Studies on Latina women in white-collar occupations have detailed the obstacles they encounter moving to the upper echelons of the professions. Previous explanations for Latina pathways into the teaching profession have focused on occupational routes conditioned by gender ideals and family socialization. Labour market studies taking an intersectional approach highlight race/gender interactions, but have most often viewed social class as an outcome rather than as a factor in shaping occupational choices and outcomes. This paper highlights the role of social class in occupational sorting, but examines class as it is refracted through intersectional social dynamics and processes of inequality. The data and analysis presented in this paper underscore the important role of Latino working-class constraints, as reflected through family obligations; assessments of feasibility of educational and career arenas, especially those deemed more democratic and less marked by class elitism and racism; growing demand for bilingual teachers based on demographic growth of Latino pupils; and Latina family social networks that connect job seekers to school jobs. We suggest that Latinas are socially channelled into the teaching profession due to glass ceilings imposed by gendered family dynamics and economic constraints and we argue that the glass ceiling is imposed long before they begin their jobs, not only as they try to climb the work organization. Below we summarize how these glass ceilings channel disproportionate numbers of Latina college graduates into a teaching career.

Family socialization is important, but only a few of our interviewees reported that their parents had steered them in the direction of teaching. Their immigrant parents had exhorted them to study and stake out a profession, but the daughters opted for teaching because it would enable them to quickly begin earning postgraduate income in order to financially help their families. Vallejo and Lee (2009) postulate that Latinos who are one generation removed from the immigrant experience and poverty are more likely to give back financially to their parents. Nearly all of these Latina teachers came from working-class immigrant families with precarious financial situations, and they wanted to help relieve the financial stress on their families. These dutiful Latina women were eager to find a profession that would provide them with a steady income. Unlike careers in medicine and law, teaching offered that ability to 'give back' during college, and soon after graduation.

The Latina women were also drawn to teaching because it seemed do-able, both financially and in terms of competing for professional school positions and jobs because they thought occupational racism would be drastically lessened due to the concentration of Latino students and staff in the schools. In this regard, pursuing other professions seemed daunting. As working-class students, they knew there would be no family safety net to support their higher education. Unpaid internships, now an institutionalized route to many higher status, higher paid professions, were out of the question for these working-class Latina college students. To fund their college education, these Latina women often combined different strategies of self-funding, including attending community colleges and state colleges near home, working part-time jobs while studying, and often living at home while in college.

Unlike some of the longer and more onerous pathways required to become a doctor, dentist, lawyer, business executive or professor, teaching seemed accessible, and open to all who completed the basic requisite requirements. Attending a California State University might serve as a deterrent to gaining admission to a competitive professional school, but it provided a nearly seamless feeder to teaching, as the California State University system serves as the main institution conferring teaching credentials in California. Teaching also gave college-educated Latinas the sense that potential employers preferred them, would not scrutinize their collegiate educations, institutions and credentials and overt racism would be less apparent.

Thirdly, the growing Latino immigrant population in the last two decades of the twentieth century, particularly in Southern California, fuelled a skyrocketing demand for bilingual and bicultural teachers in public schools and immigrant communities, pushing them up in the labour queue and increasing the likelihood of being selected by potential employers. Increases in the Latino student population and student population in general, set the stage for class size reduction programmes and called for a 20:1 ratio in classrooms and emergency credential programmes, opening a door for college-educated Latinas. These credential programmes in the 1990s may mark the high water era for working-class, college-educated Latina women going into the teaching profession. Yet they set up cumulative causation social networks for subsequent waves of Latina teachers to enter the occupation once emergency credential programmes ended in California.

Finally, strong Latina/Chicana familial ties with aunts, sisters and female cousins, embedded in neighbourhoods, pulled these Latina college graduates into teaching. Strikingly, it was not friends, but family members and relatives who told them about teaching position openings. With a growing proportion of school staff constituted by Latina women working not only as teachers but also in jobs as yard duty supervisors, lunch-ladies, teacher aides and secretaries, these young Latina women were drawn into the teaching jobs, many of them into schools that they themselves had attended as children.

It is important to note here that these Latina teachers, from working-class and primarily Mexican immigrant families, are exceptional in their levels of educational attainment. Most of them are second-generation, and they are second-generation success stories. These women are part of a highly educated numerical minority within a racial/ethnic minority group that suffers from high rates of high school drop-outs. The high school drop-out rate remains higher for Latinos than any other racial ethnic group in the US; about 41 per cent of all Latinos in the US lack a high school diploma, and for young adult Latinos raised in the US, the drop-out rate is still high at 21 per cent (Fry, 2010). Fewer Latinos graduate from college than in any other racial-ethnic group. Today, 30 per cent of the US population holds a four-year college degree, and among Latinos it is alarmingly low, only 9.6 per cent (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010a). Among the Mexican-origin population in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, only 6.6 per cent hold a Bachelor's degree or higher (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). Clearly, these Latina college graduate teachers are the ones who 'made it' in their families and communities. Many of them work in schools where Latino and other minority students are concentrated, and they are dedicated to helping this next generation reach and succeed in higher education.

These Latina teachers have achieved inter-generational mobility, with the majority of them surpassing their parents in education, income and occupational status. They are justifiably proud of their jobs and the occupational success that allows them to give back financially to family members, and to their work, which broadly serves Latino children and their families in ways that might ameliorate the inferior education that has prevailed in minority disadvantaged communities. Although the Latina teachers in this study are the success stories in their families and communities, many of them were hampered in the pursuit of their original occupational choices due to the interplay between their race/ethnic, immigrant family origins and socio-economic class constraints. Many of them aspired to become doctors, psychologists and even a scientist, but they were tracked into teaching in ways that parallel the tracking of minority high school students into vocational rather than academic college-prep classes. To be sure, the dynamics were different, as this usually did not occur overtly (although two of the interviewees reported professors who doubted their abilities to pursue other courses of study). Social forces and glass ceilings imposed by gendered family dynamics and economic constraints channelled

them into teaching. These women followed the rules set out by the promise of meritocracy and the American dream of higher education, that is, the idea that studying, working hard and graduating college will allow one to reap a panoply of career choices. But instead, they 'fell into teaching'.

Will they remain in teaching? Some of them were relatively new teachers and others had been teaching for more than 20 years. The younger Latina teachers still expressed motivations to pursue higher status occupations, but only a longitudinal study can reveal if they ultimately will pursue another career. Future research should examine the attrition and retention rates of Latina teachers and their options for pursuing their original intended fields after joining the middle class. Another occupational mobility option for middle-class Latina teachers are positions in school administration (which many of them considered), and that too is another option that is beyond the scope of this paper and might be considered. Comparative future research should also examine the characteristics and resources available to the smaller group of Latinas who have entered the higher status professions of law, medicine and engineering.

Study implications: what does this say about agency?

The findings in this paper also make a larger contribution to studies about gender and work, social mobility and agency. As we have seen, many of the teachers said they had begun their college careers with other professional goals that they deemed more reputable, and see their pathways into teaching as an accidental twist of fate. Building on the work of Vallejo and Lee (2009), we show how the obligation of giving back to the family is rooted in working-class Latino family struggles for economic survival and mobility. Rather than individual agency, we see these young Latina college students and graduates making academic and career choices based not only on their individual proclivities or preferences (Hakim, 2000, 2002), but based on their social locations, gendered dynamics within Latino families, and obligations to family kin. Hite (2007, p. 25) underscores that 'family roles may complicate career choices for [Hispanic] women' in new, small Latino destinations. Our findings may generate questions for investigating gender and work among second generations in other regions of the US and in other nations. Second-generation youth elsewhere may also deploy collectively informed agency in their career path decisions. As opposed to conceptualizing agency as an individual property of preference, we suggest that these college-educated Latina women navigate their educational and career choices with collectively informed agency, one defined by both structural constraints and familial obligations. If we define agency as the property of individuals or a personal preference, then agency seems to have played a small role in channelling Latina women into teaching jobs. But if we define agency as collective rather than as exclusively individual, we can understand how Latina women are both self-propelled and channelled into teaching careers. These Latina women made career choices not only with their own individual futures in mind, but they were also deeply cognizant of how their choices would affect their family members in the present and in the future. A sociological analysis shows strong social channelling forces and collectively informed agency operating in coordination with family and economy. First, the Latina teachers college and career choices were both enabled and hampered by their families' limited financial resources, exhortations to study, and the absence of a free higher education system in the United States. Secondly, their class, gender and ethnic immigrant backgrounds created strong obligations to 'give back' and teaching offered the quickest post-BA income earning option. Thirdly, the growing presence of Latino immigrant children in California schools created a burgeoning demand for Spanish-speaking, bilingual teachers in the 1990s, complete with both formal and informal recruitment efforts. Finally, strong familial social networks channelled them to job openings in schools in Latino neighbourhoods. Intersecting relations of class, Latina immigrant ethnicity, gender and Latino demographic growth in the schools were crucial factors in channelling them into the teaching profession. As these women gain experience with teaching, they report high job satisfaction, even an enthusiasm approaching missionary zeal (Flores, forthcoming). But in terms of the social process of securing a career, individual agency and choice were less operative for Latina teachers than collectively informed agency, and the strong social

channelling of class, as refracted through gender, ethnicity and working-class immigrant family origins, and contextualized through demographic transformations and structural employment demands.

Notes

1. In this paper we use the term Latina to refer to the teachers in this study. We use the term to capture the pathways of teachers who were born in Latin America or had ancestors from Latin America that migrated to the US from geographical regions such as Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and South America. In some cases, we also use Chicana, a term used by many Latina teachers that had at least one parent born in Latin America.
2. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010b), African Americans accounted for 10.4 per cent of all elementary and middle school teachers nationwide, but decreased to 9.3 per cent in 2010. Teachers of Latina/o origin accounted for 5.9 per cent of all teachers in 2003 and 7.3 per cent in 2010. The percentage of Asian American teachers went from 1.9 per cent in 2003 to 2.4 per cent in 2010.
3. Latina/o students now make up nearly one-quarter (23.9 per cent) per cent of all K-12 students nationwide (Fry and Lopez, 2011), and nearly 50 per cent of students in K-12 public schools in California (California Department of Education, 2010). While Latina teachers are increasing in number, the percentage of Latina teachers does not approach the percentage of Latina/o students. For example, in the state of California, Latino students account for half of the student population, while nearly 17 per cent of the K-12 teachers are Latina/o (Ed-Data, 2009; California Department of Education 2010).
4. The most highly regarded and remunerated professions tend to be male dominated (although this is gradually changing, as more women go into law and medicine), while teaching, nursing and social work jobs are still largely occupied by women (Catanzarite and Trimble, 2008). When white men go into teaching, nursing and social work, they generally experience a 'glass escalator' into supervisory positions of authority (Williams, 1992).
5. Despite the fact that Tomaskovic-Devey finds that minorities seek race-segregated occupations, he also found that inequality was rampant in these settings due to the notion that as more women or minorities enter a particular organization, the prestige of the job is devalued.
6. Acronyms stand for Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development, and Bilingual Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development. In the state of California, it is required that all teachers obtain a multiple subject teaching credential in order to become an elementary school teacher. Owing to critical teacher shortages, some states allocate temporary and emergency licenses that bypass state licensing requirements. Emergency credentials are granted to individuals to teach in high-need subject areas, such as bilingual education, or for high-need geographic locations such as urban schools.
7. Teaching requires successful completion of the following tests: CBEST (California Basic Educational Skills Test); CSET (California Subject Examinations for Teachers); RICA (Reading Instruction Competence Assessment); and BTSA (Beginning Teacher Support and Training), a programme sponsored by the California Department of Education and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing for professional development of newly credentialed teachers (2 years) (source: State of California Commission on Teacher Credentialing 2010).
8. This resulted in Senate Bill 1777, which provided incentives for school districts to reduce K-3 classes to a pupil-teacher ratio of no more than 20:1. This legislation originally provided annual incentive funding of \$650 for each student in a smaller class and an option of \$325 for students in a staggered session in which the pupil-teacher ratio is no more than 20:1 for half the day, creating the need for more teachers in the lower grades.

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