INTERSECTING LIVES: LABOR AND SPIRIT IN THE ORAL HISTORY OF DORA CUIDAD

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on oral histories with Dora Cuidad, a paid domestic worker in Lima, Peru. Dora Cuidad’s stories are a window into how relationships permeated with racial and class differences, may be negotiated by paid domestic workers and the families that employ them. Dora depicts a life in the Zwinkel household, filled with intimate moments and acts that create emotional bonds that extend across generations as well as over distance and time. Dora’s vibrant narrative also reflects how a working-class individual in Lima, Peru imbues meaning to her life experiences, how such an individual engages with the world as she attempts to further the well-being of her children and fulfill her own dreams.
Four women stand in a kitchen. Their aprons dirty, the baking interrupted by the flash of a camera as the photographer, my aunt Penelope, attempts to capture the fleeting moment. Four women stand next to each other, almost shoulder to shoulder, in the grainy photograph. On the far left stands Maximila, the cook of the Zwinkel house, my mother, Ileana Maria, stands to her left, holding a bag of brown sugar. Carolina, Penelope’s friend, who came for the day to help, holds a bowl and smiles into the lens. Dora stands on the far right; she does not look into the camera. Her hands continue to knead the
dough; her gaze follows her work - *Mente, vision y no charlar*. That is how you do good work, she has told me many times. Because if you talk while you work, while you are mixing, you forget how much you have put in, may it be yeast or flour. And then things do not come out right. My grandmother Inga taught her that saying, because it was Inga who taught Dora how to bake the delicate pastries, soft breads and unforgettable cookies and cakes which were sold at one time in the family business and I consumed in my childhood, sweet memories of molasses and spice.

Enclosed in these pages is part of Dora’s life story as she chose to narrate it. This text also holds stories about my family, specifically of my grandmother Inga. She is not in the picture, maybe because when it was taken, she was not at home. She was probably out working, living out her dream of being a comedian, a television star. The exploration I will embark on in the next few pages is just a small window into a relationship that spanned fifty years between two strong women, Dora and Inga, one who was hired as a domestic worker and stayed to play multiple roles in our home, and the other who among many other things did the hiring.
INTRODUCTION

Estoy mirando, oyendo,
con la mitad del alma en el mar y la mitad del alma en la tierra,
y con las dos mitades del alma miro el mundo.¹

This thesis began as a personal journey to understand who I am. Since I migrated at a young age to the United States from Peru, I have always felt divided. That is why I began this work with a quote by Pablo Neruda. As I read his words, the land represents for me the United States, because as I gaze into my life here, I can trace what has shaped me, but Peru is different. Peru for me is the sea, a space of unfathomable depths, a place of childhood memories, shadowed by distance and time. When I migrated to this country, I felt that I had lost something and ever since I have been trying to regain it back, to return. I looked toward the South in hopes of finding the pieces that made who I am; I listened to the stories that my family relived around the kitchen table in hopes of encountering the scattered self among anecdotes of people that I encountered during my childhood, but now I barely remembered; now only shadows to my adult self. So I searched for a project that would ease that longing, that would bring me closer to an understanding of what I had lost along the way.

As I thought about what kind of project I would like to embark on for my Women’s Studies Master Thesis, I considered various social justice issues that were

¹ [I am gazing, hearing, with half a soul in the sea and half a soul in the earth, and with both halves of my soul I gaze the world.] Pablo Neruda, “Agua Sexual,” Residencia en la Tierra. (Chile: Losada, 1974). My translation.
pertinent in Peru. I had already taken an interest in paid domestic service and immigration issues in the United States, courtesy of living on the border, and I had hoped at some time in my academic career to investigate the topic further. I had also grown up in a household in Peru where paid domestic workers had been present throughout my childhood. After living in the United States for a couple of years, my annual visits to family in Peru became embedded with a struggle to negotiate the dissonance that emerged from witnessing how paid domestic workers where treated by my family and friends, particularly my parents’ old acquaintances. Still, I thought that the topic had already been explored and nothing interesting could come of researching it further.

It was by chance, in a casual conversation at the University, that I mentioned that my grandmother Inga had been a well-known television star in Peru. I was told by one of my professors that I should consider her writing an oral history as my Master’s Thesis. For a while, my interests led me from one subject to another, but the lure of doing an oral history had been already firmly planted in my mind. I decided to undertake my grandmother Inga’s life history but to include the oral history of Dora, a paid domestic worker who worked with her for more than thirty-five years and whom I have known for all my life. Through their stories, I thought I would get the opportunity to examine the life that they shared as employer and employee. Although, I was interested in both Dora and Inga’s narrative, the project quickly turned in a different direction partly due to my grandmother Inga suffering from Alzheimer’s disease as well as time constraints.

As the end product will demonstrate, this thesis does not equally explore Inga’s life as it does Dora’s; Inga’s life story will have to wait for another time. Though I
provide some background, I did not have the space or time to do her story justice. Also at some point, Dora’s life story took over. Therefore, this thesis makes use of Dora’s narratives to examine not only her life experiences but also the relationship that existed between Dora and Inga. Her life with all of its obstacles and travails is represented through her words as a life defined by her own personal qualities, such as her moral values and strength of character, as well as her religious faith. Dora’s narrative is also a window into how race and class differences were negotiated within a household where the employer was German-American and the employee a migrant from Huamán, a small town near the coastal town of Trujillo.²

As I explore Dora’s life and work within the Zwinkel household, questions about what kind of relationship may be formed between a paid domestic worker and her employee arise. Can they be more than employer and employee? How about friends or family? Are their respective positions within the hierarchical structure of paid domestic service with all its implications of race and class an insurmountable obstacle to the formation of any kind of affective relationship between them? So when expressions and practices that suggest some kind of affective ties arise, should we reduce them to instances of false consciousness in the case of the worker or attempts to obfuscate exploitative practices in the case of employers? As I engaged with Dora’s narrative, I began to consider that maybe in the intimate spaces of the household, paid domestic workers and their employers may engage in shifting relationships that are more complex than those depicted in the past and worth exploring in the future.

² Trujillo is located in northwestern Peru. It is the third largest city and the capital of the departamento [state] La Libertad.
Many of my childhood memories about Dora take place in the kitchen. I remember that I would compete with my brother and cousins for the sweet and warm, metal cake pans, which she would give us to scrape with our fingers and teeth after she had removed the cakes to a rack to cool. After migrating to the United States, when we would return home my brother and I would again step into her kitchen to beg, but this time for gingerbread cookies and black bread. When she no longer worked with my grandmother and I would return home again for vacations, I would search for Dora in the marketplace where she worked. My older self would no longer beg for cookies or cakes, because I had a different kind of hunger, resulting from an emptiness that I have described above. I wanted connections to my childhood self, to my Peruvian roots and I looked to Dora for them. I still return, and every time I go to Peru I make sure to visit Dora. Without realizing it, over time, she has become a way home for me. This thesis is just one manifestation of that journey and Dora is my guide.
Methodology

This project is an oral history of Dora Cuidad. Before I describe in detail how the work was conducted, I would like to briefly discuss why I found that using oral history as an approach to examine paid domestic employer and employee relationships could further enrich the existing literature of domestic service in Peru. Oral history as a methodology has been increasingly used to explore topics that have in the past been overlooked or to further provide a diverse set of perspectives on subjects that have been discussed in the past. Oral histories have been written about working-class women in Latin America. See for instance Ruth Behar, Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza’s Story (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), and Hans and Judith-Maria Buechler, The World of Sofia Velasquez: The Autobiography of a Bolivian Market Vendor, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

Oral history can be used to deepen our understanding of the complex nature of individual, and collective consciousness and identity... Oral sources are especially fruitful in this regard, because they reveal, to any critical analyst, that identity is not univocal and that consciousness consists of multiple, parallel, and competing claims to identity.4

As scholars John French and Daniel James state:

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In the case of paid domestic literature in Peru, much of the work has emphasized looking at the institutional structures such as the family, the church, and the state that shape domestic service. Paid domestic work has also been explored through the words of women who have engaged as paid domestic laborers through testimonials, but these works have been compiled by organizations interested in collective organizing. Although I find their contribution to the literature significant, the stories collected tend to reflect a politicized worker. Dora Cuidad’s oral history provides us an alternative view to these collected works. She never joined a labor union for paid domestic workers so her stories are about individual struggle in the face of limited socio-economic opportunities. Her narrative depicts how a strong, resourceful working-class woman attempts to better her situation and that of her family. At the same time, her stories reflect how she imbues meaning to her life as well as how she has negotiated differences of race and class in paid domestic work by deploying particular gendered and classed identities.

The research for this oral history was conducted during the summer of 2008 in Chaclacayo and Chosica in the departamento (state) of Lima, Peru. Chaclacayo is a small community about forty kilometers from the outskirts of the city of Lima connected through an interstate highway that runs from the coast into the Andean regions of Peru. Due to its small size, though the population has increased in recent years, Chaclacayo does not have many job opportunities. Many individuals residing in Chaclacayo commute to Lima for work. In addition, due to its sunny weather (especially when contrasted with Lima’s grey and drizzly skies), Chaclacayo has become a weekend destination for Lima residents. This is the town where I grew up, and where many
members of my family have resided for more than fifty years. This is where the stories that you will hear take place. Chaclacayo has been my grandmother Inga’s hometown in Peru for most of her life there as well as Dora’s home after she started working for her. Chosica is the next town over, a ten-minute ride on a bus or *combi* on a newly improved road. A bustling community of small shops, a hospital, and an open-air food market, Chosica has become a hub for people from surrounding communities shopping for supplies to take back to their home. Beyond Chosica lies a string of small communities which primarily still practice agriculture. My interviews with Dora took place in Chosica. Although she still resides in Chaclacayo, she now works in Chosica selling second-hand clothes from a stall that she owns. Sitting there many mornings and afternoons, I conducted fourteen interviews with Dora. On a couple of occasions, I had to stop the recordings and as discretely as possible walk away to gaze into other stalls, when potential buyers showed interest in Dora’s merchandise. Although she repeated several times that she enjoyed my company and was glad that I was there, in my mind I was always aware that selling clothes was her livelihood, and therefore I tried to make sure that I did not impede her ability to do so.

To further learn about my grandmother Inga’s life, I conducted interviews with both of her eldest living daughters at her home in Chaclacayo. Though I have plenty of memories about my grandmother, I did not feel that they sufficiently illuminated the person that my grandmother was and that Alzheimer’s disease has taken away. Sitting at her kitchen table, I became reacquainted with the person that Inga was once, through the words of my mother Ileana Maria and my aunt, Penelope. Both Penelope and my mother
reside in the United States and were visiting their mother, Inga. Since I made the
decision to concentrate my efforts to present Dora’s life including her relationship with
my grandmother Inga through Dora’s words, I primarily made use of the information
gathered through my interviews with Ileana Maria and Penelope to provide a short
biographical description of Inga at the beginning of chapter three.

Dora is the narrator of this oral history. It is through her stories that we are
allowed a glimpse into the life of a paid domestic worker. This is the reason why I chose
to keep her words in Spanish, embedded in the main text. I did my own transcribing and
translating. I did minimal editing during the transcription phase of the interviews in
hopes to keep the clarity and integrity of Dora’s voice. Her stories would sometimes
flow from one topic into another. In some cases, I have presented the narrative as it
moved from one story to another including side commentary if it was present which has
resulted in long quotes by Dora on the page. In other cases, I have made the decision
where to begin or end at a particular passage. At no time, have I spliced together any
stories or phrases and presented them as one cohesive story. Most of the editing within
particular quotes has consisted of removing guttural sounds that I felt distracted the flow
of the narrative. Many of these sounds (i.e. Mm, and Ah) were my own, as I engaged
with Dora’s stories and expressed agreement or acknowledged that I had heard particular
points. In addition, I did not quote direct questions that I may have asked, although many
times I have included them in my prose to provide context for a particular statement or
story. The choice of which questions to include were made on the basis of their
proximity to the answer. Most of the questions I asked where open ended and many
times Dora would move on from one story to another without any prompting from me. At those times, I felt that the topic Dora engaged in did not necessarily have any relation to the initial question, but more to Dora’s particular state of mind, and where her thoughts and memories led her.

The translation did not place grammar over content or voice. By this I mean that in the translation, I attempted to reflect Dora’s particular speech patterns, even if the English sentence did not particularly sound grammatically correct. At the same time, I hoped to keep the meanings that Dora was conveying as clear as possible, even if that meant failing to follow her speech pattern. Oral language and voice are hard things to capture in a written form, and translation from a Romantic language into a Germanic one adds complexity to this endeavor. This is why I chose to keep Dora’s words in Dora’s native language as well as offer an English translation.5 Because in every “Puchica” and “A Dios gracias” Dora pours meanings that cannot be translated and are much her own; reflecting who she is or wants to be.

For similar reasons, I have provided the original Spanish for quotations from scholars that wrote their materials in Spanish as well as my own translation. I wanted individuals with bilingual Spanish/English skills to be able to ascertain the meaning of passages without having to rely on my translation. I stand by my own interpretations, but I would like those who are able, to make up their own minds. Certain words defy

5 All of Dora’s quotes as well as their translations remained in the same font, New Times Roman (font size 12), as the prose text, but were italicized. The three quotes from my mother Ileana Maria and their respective translations, were also italicized but the font was changed to Arial (font size 11), in order to differentiate from Dora’s words. All of the translations are enclosed in brackets (i.e. [ ]). The only quote by my grandmother Inga was also italicized but the font was changed to Courier (Font size 11).
translation, so those terms, I have left in place while providing the closest word(s) that I was able to gather from the English language to define them.

Writing an oral history is an interexchange between two people. It should never be described as simply one person listening and recording, while the other speaks. I did listen and record, but I also asked questions and searched for clarifications. More so, I know that my privileged position as an educated individual shaped our interviews. I also recognize that my position as a Zwinkel family member, granddaughter to Inga, as well as having been cared for by Dora herself, played a significant role in which stories Dora chose to narrate and which she may have silenced. The fact that Dora has known me since my birth and helped raise me, may have allowed her to trust me with her story. At the same time, my listening as well as engaging with her narrative has deepened our relationship. I have not only gained knowledge about Peru and paid domestic service, but also about Dora’s life and the rest of my family. In turn, Dora through our conversations has had the opportunity to voice her thoughts and opinions as well as to reflect about her life. Still, I am aware that there may have been times that our personal relationship may have silenced some of those thoughts and opinions, particularly if they were critical of the Zwinkel family. The fact that Dora no longer worked for Inga may have intensified those silences, their presence reverberating in the different accounts on what actually happened. Was she fired or did she leave voluntarily? The fact that I have yet to find a clear answer to this question may be a reflection of one moment that no one wishes to discuss; that remains riddled with tension and contradictions. Our relationship, infused with complex issues of love, work and motherhood as well as permeated by power
differentials surrounding race and class, has influenced how she narrated the stories that she did share.

As I listened through the recordings, I chose passages that I felt Dora emphasized through repetition, or contained elements that shared particular themes. In the end I made the final choice of what pieces to present in this work. There are more stories that I could have included, areas of exploration that will need to wait for another time. Nevertheless, throughout this editing process, I have made every effort to keep the integrity of Dora’s voice and let her shape the final product. Regrettably, I cannot give her the written work for her to proofread, however I will present her with a copy of this work, upon completion.

Before I conclude the introduction with an overview of the chapters, I would like to present a brief time frame as well as background that may provide the reader with context for some of the stories that Dora will relate in subsequent chapters. Dora Cuidad has known my family for more than fifty years, and has worked in Inga’s household in a variety of capacities for thirty-five of them.6 Dora began to work as a paid domestic worker to the Zwinkel household in Nogales Street in 1957. She was quickly transferred to work in the bakery business for a while and when the family moved in 1964 to a house in Victoria Street, Dora went along and continued to labor as a baker. I mention the streets where the houses were located, because throughout her stories Dora will sometimes identify a particular house by using the street name. In 1970, Dora moves

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6 The number of years spent by Dora in the Zwinkel household, thirty-five, takes into account that Dora returned to Trujillo for five years. In addition, Dora stopped working in Inga’s household in 1997, but we have still kept in touch. Overall, from the first time she stepped into the Zwinkel household in 1957, a little over fifty years have passed.
back to Trujillo for five years for reasons that will be explained in a later chapter. Upon her return, she not only finds that the Zwinkel household has moved again, this time to a house in Las Begonias (sometimes referred to as the house in front of the Casona - a small restaurant/hotel business), but also that Inga’s eldest daughter, Cecilia has died in her absence (Dora sometimes refers to her as Maria Cecilia). In the house in Las Begonias, Dora becomes head housekeeper. As time went by and my grandfather became ill, Dora began to devote more of her time to his caretaking until his death in 1988. In the home in Las Begonias, the bakery became my mother Ileana Maria’s business and she labored in it without any help until we migrated to the United States in 1990. My grandmother Inga and Dora moved for the last time to Inga’s current home in el cerro (the mountain) in 1991. In the house in el cerro, Dora was head housekeeper and oversaw the English muffin business until 1997 when Dora ceased working in the Zwinkel household. I should make it explicit that though I have described Dora moving from house to house along with the Zwinkel family, Dora was not a live-in paid domestic worker. She actually had her own home where she raised six children as a single mother. As she described in one of the interviews, she worked from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm. At times, she would stay and work late to get overtime.\footnote{I did not discuss with Dora how much she received for wages, so I do not have a monetary amount to provide the reader. I did discuss the matter with my mother Ileana Maria and she stated that my grandmother tended to pay wages slightly higher than the average. The payment of overtime is not usual though and I have yet to encounter a discussion in the paid domestic work literature.} Sundays were her day off and I know for certain that she had at least three paid holidays including Christmas, New
Year’s Day and Independence Day. It was sometime during her time in the house in La Victoria (late 1960s) when my grandmother enrolled her in a health insurance program.8

This thesis has been organized in the following way: The first chapter will provide a brief overview of the history of domestic work in Peru as well as highlight some of the key issues documented in the scholarly literature on paid domestic service. The second chapter is about Dora’s life as she chose to narrate it. It is a life depicted through recurrent themes in her memories, which include stories related to family, childhood dreams, strength of character, and spiritual and religious faith. This chapter reveals particular aspects of Dora’s life and identity endowing us with knowledge to better engage with the chapter that follows. The third chapter elaborates on Dora and Inga’s relationship as well as Dora’s position in the Zwinkel household. In this chapter, Dora’s words elucidate how differences in race and class are negotiated and how she imbues meaning to her work as a paid domestic worker in particular ways.

8 Inga enrolled Dora in a health insurance program before any laws were implemented that attempted to regulate paid domestic work such as those that were passed under Peruvian President Velasco in 1971. Actually most of the literature stated that even after the laws were passed, most paid domestic workers did not receive any benefits. Thea Schelleckens and Anja Van der Schoot, “Todos Me Dicen que Soy Muchachita: Trabajo y Organización de las Trabajadoras del Hogar en Lima, Perú” (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of Nijmegen, Netherlands, 1984) asserted that the intimate nature of the work as well as the isolation that paid domestic workers endured were obstacles not only to collective organizing, but for government enforcement of labor laws that were applicable to paid domestic workers.
CHAPTER 1- LITERATURE REVIEW

Like thousands of working class women in Peru, Dora Cuidad worked in a household as a paid domestic employee. Her story provides us with an opportunity to explore the nature of this type of work as well as how race and class are negotiated within the household between employer and employee. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background, as well as a point of comparison or departure, to better understand how Dora’s story builds on and/or challenges assumptions and conclusions that have emerged from studies conducted on domestic workers in Peru. Though Dora, a working-class woman, engaged in other kinds of labor, paid domestic service was throughout her life, her primary occupation, and that is why I chose to concentrate on scholarly texts that dealt with that particular subject. This literature review does not attempt to examine all the studies that have been conducted on paid domestic service across the world. That would be an overwhelming task to pursue in the limited time and space that has been allotted for this oral history project, therefore I have chosen to include works pertaining particularly to Peru as well as a few others that I found especially illuminating when thinking about particular aspects of Dora’s life.

For this thesis, I have divided the literature review into the following four sections: a brief history of domestic service; migration, labor, and class mobility; race, racism, and labor organizing; and relationships within the household. Organizing the chapter through these four subsections is a reflection on the topics that have been most emphasized in domestic service literature in the past. At the same time, each section
provides insight into what factors shape the experiences of paid domestic workers in Peru and how Dora’s stories fit within this larger narrative.

One of the dangers of organizing the chapter as I have done may result in severing intricate relationships as I work to fit a subject into a confined category. To compensate against the dissolution of such connections, I may repeat similar arguments, or discuss the same scholars throughout different sections. For example, although migration and race are two separate sections in this paper, migration in Latin America is a racialized phenomenon. However before we begin that discussion, let me provide a brief history of paid domestic service in Peru.
A Brief History: Paid Domestic Service in Latin America

Domestic service literature on Peru as well as on the rest of Latin America has emphasized that Spanish colonizers to the region brought the structures characteristic to domestic service even to this day. Elizabeth Kuznesof has described households in colonial Spanish America as “patriarchal households” that “became the central units of social control.”¹ Within those households, work was usually carried out by indigenous women who engaged in a variety of services that included but were not limited to cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children. Many times they also became mistresses to the patrón, living alongside the Spanish wife.² It was not only indigenous women who have engaged in domestic service. Male servants as well as white female individuals (migrants from Spain to the New World) have made up Spanish household staffs particularly in the sixteenth century. Still over time female members of castas of mixed racial descent such as mestizas - usually the illegitimate children of Spaniards and Indigenous women - have increasingly made up a larger percentage of servants in the household³ replacing male and indigenous women as the largest pool of domestic workers.

As Latin America experienced industrialization in the nineteenth century, employment in factories for women increased. Nevertheless domestic service during this period continued to be one of the few options of employment available for women. The

² Ibid.
association of the “home as a place of respectability” as well as patriarchal notions of what kind of labor women should perform held both by potential paid domestic employers and domestic employees and their families contributed to the high percentage of participation of women in domestic service. Patriarchal notions of respectability and protection of moral values also imbued domestic service with ideas about education of poor young girls by their employers similar to those seen in pre-industrial Europe. In the case of Peru, scholar Patricia Panato Rosado discusses *compadrazgo*, a particular social exchange of labor for protection and education that still prevails particularly in the Andean regions of the country. *Compadrazgo* is an arrangement within families, where one family usually has a higher status and more wealth than the other family. The poorer family will give up a daughter to another family in hopes of improving not only her life but also that of the family. In exchange, the wealthier family promises to treat the child as a daughter, whose personal development, both morally and intellectually, would be taken care of for a minimal commitment that the child will help her *madrina* or godmother, who is often the mistress of the new household, with certain duties. This particular kind of exchange has been criticized to lead to complete control of young girls in households, where their labor may be exploited and where they may suffer physical and mental abuse.

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5 Ibid.
Other institutionalized practices originating in Spanish colonial rule have infused the rationale, which still prevails to this day, surrounding domestic service and the women who labor in it, with racist and sexist ideologies. As Maruja Barrig writes in *El Mundo al Revés: Imágenes de la Mujer Indígena*, the differentiation of the indigenous population and their allocation in the power hierarchy as servants of the white Spanish conquistadors that occurred in Colonial Spanish America took on physical characteristics as it ascribed particular traits to indigenous bodies. Barrig quotes Karen Spalding’s analysis of differentiation of labor in Peru where Spalding argues that the demarcation between nobility and the commoners was brought to the colonies by Spanish conquistadors. This division was particularly emphasized through labor relations - those who served and those who were served. The *mita*, a practice where the indigenous populace gave tribute to the Inca, was used by the conquistadors to justify their position as those to be served in exchange of the benefits that they brought with them, religion and civilization. The most pertinent analysis identified by Barrig from Spalding’s essay is that:

It reveals that the weave of colonial domination was not woven between indigenous and non-indigenous but between societies, sealing a hierarchical structure between indigenous and non-indigenous and connecting an image of the indigenous with service work.8

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Some of the other attributes assigned to indigenous bodies are that of docility, ignorance and uncleanliness. The latter is reflected, in conjunction with ideas pertaining to visual differentiations of employer and employee to emphasize power. An example of this practice is the use of uniforms by household employees. This practice will be discussed in greater length later. Here I would like to note that in a country like Peru where race cannot be reduced to phenotypical characteristics due to the large intermixing between groups of people including the indigenous and Spanish, the uniform then is used to mark difference where the eye fails to distinguish any, among the faces inhabiting the same household. So in a sense the uniform creates the racialized difference marker that is not only used to create the “other,” but is also used to stigmatize the domestic worker’s body through the racist language of uncleanliness, ignorance and docility.

Domestic service in Latin America during the twentieth century as in the past, has also fluctuated with changes in availability of labor for women in industry, laborsaving technology in the home as well as the available income of possible employers. For example, the economic crisis of 1929 and 1930 without question affected household incomes across Latin America, which in turn may have left many paid domestic workers without jobs. As economic conditions improved in Latin America during the period between the 1940s to the 1970s female employment, particularly white-collar jobs, expanded.9 As educated women from the middle and upper classes left their homes and joined the workforce, it expanded the market for domestic servants. During this period, unskilled female employment in industry declined due to labor reforms in many Latin

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9 Kuznesof, 29.
American countries that mandated female wages to be equal to that of male workers. In Peru, David Chaplin found that there was a marked decline in women’s participation in industrial labor. He attributed the decline to increased availability of male labor as well as the establishment of welfare laws that in many cases resulted in making female labor more expensive than that of their male counterparts.\(^{10}\) The reduced number of available jobs for unskilled females pushed them into domestic spaces created by urban middle and upper class women exiting households to enter the workforce. Margo Smith noted that from 1940-1961, there was a marked increase, from 9.7 to 21.4 percent, in the number of domestic servants that made up the total female workforce.\(^{11}\)

Domestic workers in Latin America, particularly Peru, are usually internal migrants, many from provinces including many Andean rural towns and small villages. In most cases migration for these individuals results from an economic crisis in these regions.\(^{12}\) Young girls migrating from rural areas to the city in search for jobs are vulnerable to predatory practices by employers, which may be fueled by racist, classist, and patriarchal ideologies still existent in Peruvian society. In Peru, labor laws previously denied to domestic servants, were first passed in the government of general Juan Velasco Alvarado in 1971. Additional labor protections were added in 1996 under then President, Alberto Fujimori. Although the laws are supposed to protect the rights of paid domestic workers by limiting the number of hours they work as well as requiring

\(^{10}\) Kuznesof, 29-30.  
\(^{12}\) Patricia Panato Rosado also discusses this topic in her 1996 article “¿Trabajo o Servidumbre? Servicio Doméstico en Cusco.”
employers to provide health benefits for their employees, no real enforcement has occurred. The failure to regulate compliance with the law has been in part due to the space that the household occupied in society. Ideas of privacy as well as patriarchal control of not only the household, but of all members residing within it have clashed with the state and its labor regulations, finding them intrusive and/or unnecessary.

Paid domestic labor in Latin America is intricately tied to structures and ideologies introduced by Spanish and Portuguese colonization that created assumptions and divisions along lines of race, ethnicity, and class. Patriarchal ideas of protection of women’s morality and gendered division of labor within the household, created a space for women that were not immediate members of the household to find work within it. Nowadays, domestic workers do not necessarily reside within the household, but their duties remain the same. They are still expected to cook, clean, and do the laundry, as well as take care of children and the elderly.
Shifting Spaces: Migration, labor and class mobility

Dora emigrated from Trujillo to Lima when she was a young teenager. She was one of the hundreds of thousands in Latin America that migrated from the countryside to a large metropolitan city, pushed by poverty and limited access to educational or employment opportunities. Once in the city, Dora formulated her strategy for success. Her efforts to attain better jobs and education for her children took the shape of an individual practice, not a collective one. Dora’s experience is similar to those documented in paid domestic literature conducted in Peru, so it would be beneficial to review scholarly works that have recognized the interrelated nature of migration, labor and class mobility.

Most of the domestic service literature in Peru examines the topic of migration, particularly internal migration. Although the degree to which each topic is discussed varies across the studies, most scholars agree that a large percentage of the individuals employed as household workers tend to be young female migrants from the Peruvian countryside. Scholars such as Elizabeth Jelin, Alberto Rutte Garcia, and Margo Smith have attempted to identify the push and pull factors that may drive migration from the countryside to the cities. These scholars as well as others such as Blanca Figueroa Galup, have also examined how paid domestic service may serve newly arrived female rural migrants as means to adapt to urban life, while at the same time it defines their class position in an urban setting.\(^\text{13}\) A limited number of scholars have also discussed how

\(^{13}\) It should be noted, that although scholars have covered different aspects of rural to urban migration, there has been limited discussion of migration to other coastal cities in Peru. This may be due to the fact that actual studies of paid domestic service in Peru
migration for a young girl from the countryside is facilitated by different mechanisms including institutionalized cultural practices such as *compadrazgo*.

Scholar Rutte Garcia describes rural to urban migration in terms of “expulsion from the countryside” and the “attraction of Lima.”¹⁴ This “expulsion” refers to economic crises in the region, where land and opportunity for education or even subsistence, are scarce. Poverty and the lack of opportunities that could lead to material improvement in the lives of individuals, as well as specific cultural and economic variations of work found in the cycle of development of the family, drive particular age groups of migrants to Lima. In the context of domestic service, scholar Patricia Panato Rosado calculates that the most common ages of migration of individuals that engage in such work is 15 years or younger.¹⁵ In contrast, in their study of domestic workers and have not been conducted anywhere outside of the cities of Lima and Cusco. In the same vein, the conflating of migration data and by this I mean discussing individuals from rural Andean regions as well as members from the coastal and jungle *departamentos* as if they were the “same” kind of migrant can be misleading. In Peru, the larger divisions are called departments, equivalent to the word states used in the United States. *Provincias* as the subdivisions found within the *departamentos*. Although some scholars such as Bunster and Chaney were careful to list the different places that migrants are coming from in terms of *departamentos* and quoted Figueroa Galup’s findings that few domestic employees in Lima came from the coastal or jungle areas of Peru, other scholars did not do the same. Similarly, it is difficult to trust Figueroa Galup’s assertions since her study only examined 4 out of the 24 departments in Peru and 3 out of those 4 were from the Andean region (Ximena Bunster and Elsa M. Chaney. *Sellers and Servants: Working Women in Lima, Peru* (New York: Praeger, 1985, 33). Assuming that all migrants to Lima that engage in paid domestic work are from similar locales is problematic because it obscures regional cultural and socio economic differences that may affect how such individuals adapt to a new life not only in a metropolis, but to life within a household where race and ethnic, and class differences may be present.


¹⁵ Panato Rosado, 52.
street sellers, Ximena Bunster and Elsa Chaney, calculate that the ages of most female
migrants fall between 15-25 years. Still from either study, it can be concluded that the
individuals migrating from provincial towns and rural areas to the metropolis of Lima are young. I should note that Dora was either 12 or 13 years old, when she migrated to Lima for the first time to work as a paid domestic worker. The lack of economic and educational opportunities available in her hometown propelled her to move. Dora’s experiences as a young teenager describe a pattern similar to that traced by scholar Panato Rosado and other scholars.

But why migrate to Lima? According to scholars young rural migrants perceive the city of Lima as “El Dorado” where the possibility of progress and success through education and hard work, as well as upward class mobility is within their grasp. In 1977, Jelin published an article on urban to rural migration in Latin America. Widely cited, Jelin’s article provides a comprehensive review of female domestic labor and migration for that time in Latin America. In her article, Jelin not only asserts that women migrate to cities in larger numbers than men, but also concludes that there is a sharp difference in the type of labor held by “native” women born in the city and migrant women, where the latter group is found to participate in larger numbers in paid domestic service. In Peru, a study of migrants to the city conducted between 1956 and 1965

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16 Bunster and Chaney, 31.
18 Jelin, 132-134.
concluded that 62.5 percent of “economically active female migrants” were employed as paid domestic workers.19

Scholars have discussed how paid domestic service may aid young female rural migrants to adapt to urban life. In her work Peruvian scholar Blanca Figueroa Galup found that in Lima paid domestic service played an important role in the socialization of migrant women from rural areas in Peru where city life shaped the identity, including solidifying the lower-class position, of the rural migrant female worker.20 At the same time scholars found that domestic service can serve as an educational experience for a newly arrived individual from the countryside. What is defined as being “learned” by the young girl, as well as why domestic service is particularly seen as a good place to “learn” varies from scholar to scholar.

This “learning” might include such things as acquiring urban dress and abandoning traditional, cultural attires as polleras (a type of skirt used in the highlands of Peru) as well as modes of speech. Schellekens and Van der Schoot argued that one of the main processes of adaptation to urban life that a paid domestic worker engaged in, was related to physical appearances. They found that in Lima many paid domestic workers no longer had braids or wore polleras.21 By discarding traditional garb in exchange for urban outfits and make-up, the indigenous individual transformed herself into a “cholita.”

20 Blanca Figueroa Galup, “La Trabajadora Doméstica en el Perú: El Caso de Lima,” Boletín Documental sobre la Mujer de CIDAL (1975): 1. Figueroa Galup’s findings were used a decade later by Bunster and Chaney in their work on domestic service and street sellers in Lima, Peru.
21 Schelleckens and Schoot, 28-29.
A recurrent theme in paid domestic service literature is the construction of the paid domestic service individual as someone of lesser class and intelligence due to their indigenous background, a term to which “cholita” refers. This is something that I will discuss more fully in the section on race.

Dora’s experience as she narrates in her stories both reinforce as well as challenge some of the assumptions about individuals employed in paid domestic service. Dora did cut her braids but her reasons differ from those of just altering her appearance in an attempt to “fit in” or reflect a “city” persona. Dora cut her hair, because she thought it would be easier to manage. Also she was young and she was not practiced in brushing and braiding her own hair since her aunt had always taken care of it for her. Most scholars also discussed migrants as originating from highland communities in Peru where attires such as polleras are commonly used, therefore when they arrived in Lima they were automatically differentiated from “city folk” by their garb. In actuality, many individuals that migrate to Lima from provincial towns do not necessarily wear identifiable cultural attires, unless you count clothing that is worn out and/or of poorer quality as a kind of ethnic marker. For example, Dora never wore the kind of pollera that scholars such as Shelleckens and Van der Schoot describe. Still it should be noted that Dora at one moment during our interviews did describe her adaptation to urban life as a process where she left the “chuncha” behind. The term “chuncha” can be used negatively to refer to an indigenous individual that is ignorant, stubborn and sullen.

The idea of acquiring “learning” through migration could be thought of in terms of class mobility (i.e. defined as gaining knowledge and skills through education). Smith
argues that beyond “learning” how to act and dress like someone from the city, domestic service actually can facilitate upward or at least horizontal class mobility within the lower class. Individuals can improve their situation by learning new skills while employed, take vocational classes, or continue their education through government or Church sponsored programs such as special literacy programs, craft classes and/or primary and secondary schools. In addition, domestic service can provide an individual the opportunity to improve her situation by providing her with shelter, food, as well as monetary compensation while she searches for better jobs or gets married. In addition, domestic employees look for better working conditions such as work placement in better neighborhoods as a way to improve their lives. Smith concludes that domestic service work is transitory, and that individuals have a high degree of mobility within the domestic work market as well as outside of it.\textsuperscript{22}

In contrast to Smith, Ximena Bunster and Elsa Chaney characterized domestic service as a “permanent” occupation under current conditions in Latin America.\textsuperscript{23} They also disagree with Smith’s 1971 findings that women in domestic service may better their situation within the occupation itself, either by searching for jobs in better neighborhoods and/or moving from maid-of-all-work to a position which they believe pays better, such as that of cook or \textit{ama} (nanny). They disagree with Smith that domestic service is extensively used by working women as a vehicle for upward mobility out of the

\textsuperscript{22} Smith, “Domestic Service as a Channel of Upward Mobility for the Lower-Class Woman: The Lima Case,” 196-198.
\textsuperscript{23} Bunster and Chaney, 19.
“servant’s class.” Jelin supports Bunster and Chaney’s argument by finding that domestic service is in itself a dead-end occupation.

Dora’s life narrative both supports and challenges the findings of scholar Margo Smith. Dora understood her employment in paid domestic service not as transitory as Smith attests, but permanent. Still, Dora through her employment did acquire new learning skills and opportunities that could have facilitated her upward mobility, if not of herself, of those of her children. Her aspirations for personal betterment and that of her children are similar to Smith’s description of upward mobility. In a subsequent article, Smith acknowledged that for some individuals, paid domestic work may be more of a permanent position, still she found that within that employment, upward mobility was possible. She concluded that at that time due to lack of data, it was impossible to further explore how personal upward mobility was experienced by an individual who had been employed as a paid domestic worker for most of her life. Smith concludes that “what is needed is a larger number of detailed life histories of former servants that follow them over a long-period of time as they enter and leave serious occupations and sector of the labor force, raise children, and eventually become grandmothers.” The work of this thesis in some ways speaks to that void.

Dora’s life history also supports and challenges the work of scholars such as Chaney and Bunster. Although Dora at a later age did move into the informal sector as a

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24 Ibid., 23.
25 Jelin, 137.
seller of second hand clothing, a move that would have been described as an example of horizontal movement and not upward mobility, Dora’s narrative contests how scholars such as Chaney and Bunster would describe her choices. Even though domestic service was not Dora’s dream job, she would not have called it a “dead-end occupation.” Dora took pride in the work that she did and of the skills that she acquired while performing it. She did actively search for better job opportunities that benefit her not only monetarily, but also allowed her to perform jobs that she found to be more meaningful.
The Condition of the Paid Domestic Worker: Labor Organizing, Race and Racism in Peru

A perusal of the paid domestic service literature conducted in Peru reveals a preoccupation with the labor conditions of paid domestic workers particularly in ways that expose exploitative structures and practices. Imbricated in this exploration is the attempt to understand how the development of class-consciousness occurs within this particular type of labor and a recognition of the obstacles that limit collective organizing among such workers. As a result much of the literature concentrates on the formations of class identity among individuals and relegates other ways of defining or understanding the self aside. This is one of the reasons why discussions on race and paid domestic work have been limited, a topic that I will examine later on. In the following section, I will first explore how the literature has discussed class and collective organizing. The latter part of the section will explore the topic of race in Peru. The purpose of this section is to provide a background to better understand Dora’s experiences and consciousness as a classed and raced, laboring individual in Lima, Peru.

Dora’s personal narrative situates her in the laboring class of Peru. Still in her life, Dora did not see herself as part of a collective struggle. By this I mean that she never chose to join a syndicate or labor union that fought to improve the working conditions of paid domestic employees. Her stories actually illuminate how a paid domestic worker may opt to use individual solutions to make a better life for herself. Still, the work conducted on paid domestic service and labor organizing in Peru can elucidate aspects of Dora’s life and provide us with a better understanding of the choices
she made. There have been several studies conducted in Peru that discuss the difficulties of organizing domestic workers into unions. Scholars such as Figueroa Galup, Panato Rosado, and Schellekens and Van der Schoot have extensively discussed in their work the formation of syndicates as well as the limitations that have curtailed such activities. In this same vein, labor unions have compiled testimonials by paid household workers to provide significant first-hand accounts on the experiences of domestic workers in Peru. But before we turn to examine these works, I would like to start with a brief discussion on how working conditions have been portrayed in paid domestic literature as well as how implementation and regulation of labor laws have been discussed in the past.

Small wages, long working hours, a few paid holidays (when present) and days of rest (also when present), limited access to healthcare, and other protections have been topics emphasized to different degrees by many scholars examining paid domestic service in Peru. Smith found that full-time paid domestic workers, especially if they were live-in employees, could work up to and beyond eighty hours per week; days off were many times reduced to a day or a few hours per week; and paid vacations also varied even though law mandated them.27 Dora was not a live-in paid domestic worker, but she has sometimes described her workday in Inga’s household as very long. Many times the duration of her day was lengthened by her choice to work overtime. I should note that I have yet to find a discussion of overtime for paid domestic workers. Most of the literature discusses low wages and long days without any kind of benefits or compensations. Still, it seems that Inga did pay for overtime work, and Dora many times

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27 Smith, “Institutionalized Servitude,” 132-152.
chose to stay to increase her earnings. Although Dora informed me that she was paid fairly in the Zwinkel household, her acknowledgement that she “chose” to work overtime to be able pay for the person that took care of her own children while she worked, complicates the meanings of both the terms “choice” and “fair wage” in this case.

Dora’s assessment that she was treated fairly in the Zwinkel household may have been one of the reasons why she did not feel that she had to join a labor union or be part of a collective struggle for better working conditions. Scholar Figueroa Galup recognized in her work that “good” treatment by the patrona could prevent paid domestic service workers from developing class-consciousness. Schellekens and Van der Schoot furthered Figueroa Galup’s findings concluding that there may be other factors that act as impediments for domestic workers, which weaken the efforts to create solidarity among themselves, such as constraints on free time that curtail the participation of many domestic employees, as well as fear to lose their positions if their employers find out about their activities.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, in attempts to reveal the conditions of paid domestic workers and the need for collective organizing, testimonials of household workers were gathered and published. In 1982, the Sindicato de Trabajadoras del Hogar en Cusco compiled the testimonial narratives of their members in a book called Basta.

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28 Figueroa Galup, 10-11.
Mexico’s Fondo de Cultura Económica also published testimonials of domestic workers in Cusco in a book called *Se Necesita Muchacha.* In Lima, the stories of several domestic workers were assembled by the Instituto de Promoción y Formación a la Trabajadora del Hogar (IPROFOTH) into a manual to disseminate information and to train individuals in organizing. These texts have influenced how domestic service is viewed in Peru as well as how scholars have approached the examination of paid domestic service. The importance of this form of expression is reflected by the fact that the most complete anthology on domestic service up to date, *Muchachas No More,* has a large section dedicated to the testimonies of workers called: In Their Own Words. Although paid domestic employees wrote the stories presented in these texts or were oral testimonies collected and transcribed by both scholars and non-academic individuals alike, the narratives gathered tended to reflect an already politicized paid household worker. I have found these collections to be poignant and illuminating of the harrowing, exploitative conditions that many paid domestic employees have experienced. It should be also acknowledged that these testimonial narratives have been gathered for particular political purposes that in part seek to promote collective social formations as solutions to labor conditions found in domestic service.

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33 The section “In Their Own Words” contains a number of pieces by different authors and can be found in the anthology: *Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean,* ed. E. M. Chaney and M. G. Castro. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).
As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, due to the preoccupation with class and collective organizing, much of the discussions on race in paid domestic service have been limited to descriptions of racist attitudes and practices by employers that affect the employee. Much of this racism has been depicted in the literature as resulting from the need of employers to establish through difference, status. By this I mean, through racist practices, the employer emphasized his/her class position. As I was working on this project, I found myself trying to understand how scholars discussed racist practices, but failed to have in-depth discussions on race. At the same time as I listened to interviews with Dora and I thought about my personal experiences in Peru, I found that somehow although racism was rampant and blatant in practice, my understanding of racial constructions in Peruvian society was also limited. This is why I turned to the literature to better understand how race is thought about in Peru and why it seemed mostly absent in the literature on domestic work.

Peruvian scholars Leon Ramón, Gino Reyes, and Oscar Vela ask in the introduction to their book, *Racismo, Aristocracia y Pseudomodernidad: Actitudes Raciales en Lima y Trujillo*, the following question of the Peruvian nation, “Are we a racist country?” to which they answered the following:

> Until a few years ago we would have answered in unison that no. Now, after everything that has been lived in Peru in the last two decades, in the best of cases we stop doubtfully and we opt to give an affirmative response: we are, we have been, and how things are shaping, we will continue to be for many years, if significant social changes are not produced.34

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I have found Ramón, Reyes, and Vela’s discussion on race in Peru particularly helpful as I tried to understand how in-depth discussions on race had been mostly absent in paid domestic literature on Peru. Also, their work provided me with an understanding of how most of the Peruvian population including me, discussed race in our daily lives not through precise, clear statements but through euphemisms, obfuscating racist ideologies through jokes and coded words, and practices.

Ramón, Reyes and Vela also elucidate how class and race are interconnected in Peruvian society. Since different racial categories are hard to define in Peru, particular practices have developed to create hierarchies among individuals, many of which rely on status derived from social positions in terms of class. This does not mean though that race ceases to exist, but that it is deployed in particular ways to emphasize hierarchies of power. As Vargas Llosa has stated, “In Peru as one ascends the social ladder, one starts to get ‘lighter.’”35 By ‘lighter’ Llosa, is referring to the lighter skinned tones of Peruvian mestizo individuals. These concepts of race in Peru are important to know in order to understand particular sentiments that Dora expresses. At the same time, many of her narratives reflect the complexity of trying to comprehend the role of race not only in paid domestic service, but also in the broader Peruvian society.

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35 LLosa, Vargas (1996) as quoted by Ramón, León, Gino Reyes and Oscar Vela, 19. The English translation is mine. The Spanish quote read as follows: “en el Perú conforme se asciende en la escala social uno se va ‘blanqueando.’”
As I have stated above, the topic of race has received minimal attention in paid
domestic literature in Peru. Scholars such as Thea Schellekens and Anja Van der Schoot,
and Patricia Panato Rosado discussed race and racism in their work, but their analysis is
limited to describing the discrimination of individuals due to their place of birth. These
scholars have described how rural to urban migration brings indigenous people into the
city and once in the urban setting they are classified as “indios.” This category is
associated with a number of racist assumptions about behaviors and attitudes of
indigenous rural persons. The adaptation of migrant rural individuals to urban life also
changes the nature of the racial category. As Panato Rosado states, “the maid stops being
the “indian” to slowly transform herself into a “chola””. In this context, chola is a
negative term used to describe someone of mixed-race and/or mixed-cultural attitudes
and behaviors. In addition, these scholars also conclude that the appalling treatment
experienced by many household workers at the hand of their employers is determined by
such racist attitudes.

The intersection of race and paid domestic labor was also examined by scholars in
the use of distinct garments such as uniforms by domestic employees. Some scholars
such as Smith found that the use of uniforms was related to status and not necessarily to
issues of race. For patronas, uniforms are a way to emphasize class position and status,
to differentiate and distance themselves from the their employees which many times
share the same racial and ethnic characteristics as their patrons. “The badge of a servant

36 Panato Rosado, 61. I translated the quote. The Spanish quote reads as follows: “La
empleada deja de ser “india” para convertirse progresivamente en “chola,” en el sentido
cultural de ambos términos.”
is her uniform.”37 It is the uniform that makes her the most visible component of a household while at the same time masking her individual identity. For Smith, the uniform is used to emphasize differences in class position.

In contrast, scholar Maruja Barrig contends that the uniform may be used as a result of the association of the indigenous with filth. Barrig is one of the few scholars studying in Peru, who not only traces the use of the uniform from the Peruvian colonial era, but also makes race an integral component of her analysis on domestic service in Peru. As she states, “biologically determined for belonging to an inferior group, submissive and ignorant, and subordinated due to their condition as maids, domestic employees are without any remedy, dirty.”38

Scholars have also argued that the use of the uniform is not the only discriminatory practice that reflects how employers attempt to keep their distance from domestic employees. As Mary Goldsmith points out in her study of domestic service in Mexico, domestic employees have restrictions in the use of space (i.e. the living room, certain bathrooms). She also discusses the practice of assigning paid domestic workers separate utensils and plates.39 Scholar Sandra Azeredo describes a similar situation on her work of relationships between black household employees and their white employers in Brazil. Azeredo concludes that these discriminatory practices are representative of

38 Barrig, 43. I translated the quote. The Spanish quote is as follows: “biologizadas por su pertenencia a un grupo inferior, sumiso e ignorante, y subordinadas por su condición de sirvientas, las empleadas domésticas son irremediablemente sucias.”
racist ideas and assumptions that designate certain groups of individuals such as paid
domestic workers as dirty and lacking in hygiene.40

Dora never wore a uniform in any of the households she worked in. As she
narrates, throughout her life, Dora worked for mostly white German and German-
American families. One can speculate whether racial differences between Dora and her
employers had anything to do with the choice to not enforce that practice. The employers
did not need a physical marker to emphasize their position as employers. At the same
time, it should be recognized that some of her employers might have not shared the racist
ideologies that conflate indigenous individuals with uncleanliness.

40 Sandra Azeredo, “Relações entre empregadas e patroas: reflexões sobre o feminismo
em países multirraciais,” In Rebeldia e Submissão, ed. A. D Oliveira Costa and C.
Bruschini (São Paulo: Fundación Carlos Chagas 1989), 215, quoted in Maruja Barrig
(2001), 43.
Paid domestic service by definition is work that takes place within the confined, intimate spaces of the household. This characteristic has led certain scholars such as Margo Smith and Mary Goldsmith to examine the household in spatial terms, how it is divided and who gets to inhabit which spaces. The location as well as the particular type of jobs that paid domestic workers engage in, have also led scholars to examine the relationships and interactions between individuals, usually members of the family, and paid household employees. Dora’s narrative takes us through these physical and emotional landscapes, illuminating how relationships between a paid domestic worker and her employer are negotiated in a milieu permeated by racial and class differences. Her stories are a window to a complex set of relations that (self)define Dora as a worker, wife, and mother as she moves through spaces that are created as well as collapsed by the movement of other household members. To understand how paid domestic workers perform all of these roles, in this section I will present how other scholars have engaged with this particular topic. I will end the section by presenting scholars’ exploration on the construction of class-consciousness and how it may be affected by employee/employer interactions.

Smith has discussed spatial divisions within the household at length in a study where she surveyed more than 1,000 residences in the city of Lima. She concludes that how space is divided within a household and who gets access to that space is one of the
ways that social positions are reinforced between the employers and their employees. The living conditions of a paid domestic servant as represented through their living quarters, portray the unequal relationship and treatment that they may experience daily in their work. Goldsmith broadens Smith works, that recognizes that the spaces within a household as well as the physical work done by domestic employees, by stating that such relationships are imbued with intimacy, and by acknowledging that there is also an emotional component in paid domestic work that has been seldom discussed. Scholars Mary Romero and Mahna Kousha have called this kind of work “emotional labor.”

“Emotional labor” refers to the practice that results when domestic workers are hired to fulfill the emotional needs of their employers. Kousha explored the interrelations of race, gender, and class in paid domestic service in the southern region of the United States, where the employers were white women and the employees, mostly African American. Romero examined Chicana workers in the northwestern region of the United States. In her studies, Kousha also found that hiring African-American paid domestic workers also contributed to the employer’s feelings of class and racial superiority. Kousha’s work is significant, because it reflects that employer and employee relationships are complex and multidimensional as Dora’s experiences can attest.

The relationship between the employer and the paid domestic servant in Peru has been discussed extensively by a number of scholars. Although some have discussed the *patrón*’s relationship with the female servant, most scholarship concentrates on describing how the female head of household, or *patrona*, relates to the female paid domestic servant under her employment. Scholars have used statements by employees as well as employers gathered through interviews to describe how the domestic servant’s identity was constructed through racist and classist terminology that reflected discriminatory perceptions held by employers. What has been lacking from many these studies was the paid domestic worker’s perspective. How she constructed herself as a worker and how she interpreted the kind of labor she produced.

In her work, scholar Margo L. Smith describes the employer and domestic worker’s relationship in Lima in terms of clearly defined Marxist definitions of exploitation of labor. For example, the paid domestic worker works long hours, many times for little pay. Smith also portrays the interactions between *patrona* and her employee as riddled with dominant, discriminatory and often racist behaviors on the part of the former and subservience of the latter. The subordination of the domestic worker is emphasized through the description by *patronas* of their employees that use terms such as “thieves,” “ignorant” or “mentally inferior,” and “dirty.” According to Smith, these are qualities attributed to the domestic servant due to her identification as a lower-class provincial individual. Panato Rosado has described their relationship as clearly top-down where the domestic service worker “suffers double marginalization and oppression:

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44 Ibid., 262.
one by society for being a women and the other by the female employer for being a maid.\textsuperscript{45} But maltreatment and exploitation is not limited to pitiful wages and 12-14 hour days.

Several studies have argued that sexual exploitation of young female employees by male members of the household is common. Female paid household workers often are on the receiving end of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can range from unwelcomed sexual comments and touch or caresses, to rape by her male employers, which may include the adolescent male offspring of the family or the \textit{patrón} himself.\textsuperscript{46} But not all scholars agree with this assessment. Goldsmith argues that rape is not as common as it has been discussed in the literature. She argues that the relations between paid household workers and their male employers have been sensationalized and perpetuated by images and stories in movies and soap operas such as “\textit{Simplemente Maria}” and “\textit{Rosa Salvaje}.” These popular soap operas have story lines involving domestic workers who become pregnant by the son’s of their \textit{patrona} or by her husband, or story lines where the domestic worker is the seducer herself.\textsuperscript{47}

Many scholars argue that certain aspects of the treatment of domestic employees by their employers have been shaped in part by how the household as a patriarchal

\textsuperscript{45} Panato Rosado, 68. My translation. The Spanish quote read as follows: “Sufre una doble marginación y opresión: de la sociedad por ser mujer y de la patrona por ser sirvienta” Thea Schellekens and Anja van der Schoot (1984), and Grace Esther Young, “The Myth of Being “Like a Daughter.” \textit{Latin American Perspectives} 14 (1987): 365-380, have also described the \textit{patrona} and paid household employee interactions along similar lines.  

\textsuperscript{46} Smith, “Institutionalized Servitude”, 249-250; Schelleckens and Van der Schoot, “Todos Me Dicen que Soy Muchachita”, 45-47; Panato Rosado, 63-70.  

\textsuperscript{47} Goldsmith, 92-93.
institutions have been constructed. One of the ways that patriarchy is discussed in the household context is through the examination of sentiments expressed by employers, which refer to treating their domestic employees as if they were “their own daughters” or “like family.” Smith finds that these sentiments could in part arise from previous kinds of relationships that were more akin to familial arrangements that have been said to exist in greater abundance in Peru not far in the past. 48 These “fictive kinship ties” such as compadrazgo were established between employer and employee by making the patrona act as madrina for her employee’s baby or wedding have been discussed previously. At the time of her study, Smith found that paid domestic workers no longer used such “fictive kinship ties” to improve their situation, even when they were already established. Still, Smith did consider that such relationships as well as statements such as “I treat her like a daughter” could be used to conceal the exploitation that domestic workers may experience in a household.49

Another form of patriarchy that has been discussed in the literature is what Figueroa Galup calls “emotivo paternalismo” [affective paternalism]. 50 Unlike the idea that the domestic worker is “like your daughter,” she is seen in the condescending view of a poor migrant who knows nothing of urban life and needs to be guided to make the “right” choices by someone like the employer. This practice is similar to what Judith Rollins calls “maternalism” where the domestic worker is seen as someone who needs to be guided to make the “right” choices by someone like the employer, but the terms

48 Smith, “Institutionalized Servitude”, 56.
49 Ibid., 259.
50 Figueroa Galup, 6.
should not to be used interchangeably. As Rollins distinctly states maternalism is a “concept related to women’s supportive intrafamilial roles of nurturing, loving, and attending to affective needs.”51 In contrast, paternalism is based on the exchange of “protection for service and loyalty.”52

It should also be noted that Figueroa Galup has been the only scholar studying domestic service in the Peruvian context (although her findings have been quoted by many) who has recorded that *patronas* from different classes (i.e. urban upper-class vs. middle-class) treat their domestic workers differently. Figueroa Galup found that urban upper-middle-class employers were less likely to physically abuse or emotionally denigrate their paid domestic employees because marked class differences between the employer and employee were already present. According to Figueroa Galup, a lower-class woman who hired a paid domestic worker would have to establish a difference of status between herself and her employee through discriminatory practices including physical abuse in the absence of differentiated class markers.53 Although insightful, her work would have benefited from the inclusion of race as an additional category of analysis.

As I have mentioned before not all paid household employees described their employers in negative terms. Actually, many of the studies found that a good number of domestic workers spoke favorably of their employers. Most scholars including Smith, Schellekens and Van der Schoot have dismissed paid domestic worker’s positive views

52 Ibid.
53 Figueroa Galup, 4-6.
and assertions about their work and their employers, as a kind of “false consciousness.” For example, in their study Schellekens and Van der Schoot, describe that several of the paid domestic workers that they encountered emphasized the importance of the personality of the employer when thinking about their work conditions. In one particular case, two of their paid domestic informants identified as L. and R. stated that they could obtain a job with a higher salary, but they would not accept it “because they love their patrona so much.”\footnote{Schellekens and Van der Schoot, 50-51. My translation, the Spanish quote reads as follows: “porque quieren tanto a la patrona.”} Further in the same section, Schellekens and Van de Schoot concluded that after a time as domestic worker acquired more experience and created connections outside her workplace, she became more conscious about her situation. The scholars went on to quote another paid domestic informant to support their assessment: “When we have consciousness, we are little interested in the good disposition of our employers because we know how to defend ourselves with reasonable/rational arguments.”\footnote{Schellekens and Van der Schoot, 52. My translation, the Spanish quote reads as follows: “Cuando tenemos conciencia, ya poco nos interesa el buen animo de los patrones porque sepamos defendernos con argumentos razonables.”} Although I already discussed the development of class consciousness relating to union organizing and labor laws, it is important to note that scholars such as Figueroa Galup have concluded that it may be the amicable treatment by patronas that could curtail the development of class-consciousness in domestic workers, making union organizing efforts more difficult.

In contrast, to the “false consciousness” argument, other scholars such as Kousha have determined that employer and employee relationships are complex and that the
favorable reviews by domestic workers may be a form of emotional strategy to handle what they see as an “intimate yet socially distant relationship with their employers.”

The strategies that paid domestic workers may engage range from complete detachment to avoid emotional involvement with their employer to complete attachment accompanied with claims of love and mutual friendship by household employees. Still, as Kousha’s findings in the southern part of the United States attest, the latter claims of an egalitarian relationship proclaimed by paid household workers, is not necessarily shared by their white employers. In the case of domestic work in Kousha’s study, race and class become the insurmountable obstacle that derails a true friendship between a domestic employee and her employer.

Dora’s narrative elucidates how the employer and employee relationship develops within the intimate realm of the paid domestic service. It opens up the space of the household to scrutiny, so as scholars we can examine the practices and strategies that are developed by paid domestic workers to negotiate hierarchies of power that are imbued with racial and class differences. It allows for complexity in a relationship that in the past has been depicted as only exploitative. Although work by scholars such as Rollins and Kousha have began to examine how such labor relations are complex and multidimensional, similar exploration has not been applied to paid domestic service in the Peruvian context where the topic of race has been either limited or completely absent from academic conversations.

56 Kousha, 79, Mahnaz Kousha conducted her study in the Southern region of the United States were she interviewed African-American paid domestic workers and their white employers.
Conclusion

I have chosen to divide the literature on domestic service in Peru into four sections that discuss in broad terms the roots of domestic service in Peru as well as issues of mobility, race and labor organizing, and relationships formed within the household. These four sections should have provided the reader with a better understanding of not only how paid domestic service has been studied in Peru, but also the social, political and economic factors that shape the domestic worker experience even before they step into their first household as a new employee. It is with this understanding that we move on to the next chapter where we will embark on a new exploration of domestic work and laboring class life through the words of Dora Cuidad. We should make use of the information obtained in this chapter not to attempt to fit Dora into prescribed categories of servitude and exploitation, but to listen with a generous ear to how Dora makes challenges as well as defines her own life, as she navigates through some of the experiences faced by domestic workers that have been identified throughout this chapter.
This is Dora Cuidad. She stands at the center of the photograph and demands your attention. Although she has one arm outstretched as if leaning on the wooden frame in front of her stall in Chosica, she does not seem to need it for support. Dora’s vibrancy leaps out of the page, she is about to tell you something, about to laugh, about to reach out and embrace you. Her eyes smile as she looks beyond the camera lens and into you. This is Dora Cuidad in the midst of storytelling.
I find Dora sitting on a small stool, her back resting on the wooden frame that outlines the door to her small stall. The winter sun of Chosica creates patterns on the floor and on her lap. Wisps of hair stray loose from her ponytail, white strands on jet black. She is quick to smile adding another crease to the many others that populate her face. I think again, she has not changed. For the thirty years that I have known her, this is the same face that I carry. I have no memory of a younger Dora. The only thing that has changed is the height; I see the woman that used to tower over me and inspire fear and awe in my cousins and friends, much smaller. She is wearing a faded, checkered apron with large pockets in the front. From time to time, she will reach in and get a small piece of tissue to dry the moisture that gathers in her left eye. She also has a small plastic bag with change, which she rattles and turns as we talk. I find a place beside her and sit on the cement floor. Behind me in the darkness of the stall are small piles of clothing lying seemingly at random to me, but organized and catalogued in Dora’s mind. I place the digital recorder on my knee and press the on button, but Dora has already started. This is a funny story about my grandmother Inga, Dora, Penelope, and a tapeworm. Throughout the interviews, stories about Dora’s childhood, about her family and her faith, about working as a paid domestic worker and about Inga emerge.

The memories that Dora chooses to share elucidate a life of struggle and ambition, of joy and pain. How Dora shapes her narrative allows us to examine how a lower-class individual with a limited education in Peruvian society attempts to better her social and
economic situation as well as that of her family. At the same time, her story allows for a
glimpse of how a working class individual imbues meaning to her life, how she
negotiates a patriarchal, classist and racist society particularly when those attitudes and
practices are recreated in the workspace through traditional constructions of the
household. In the case of Dora, her choice to work in households where traditional
constructions of the home may be disrupted, as it is in the case of the Zwinkel household,
may have been a way to challenge discriminating practices found in other homes. As we
will see, Dora is armed with a set of individual solutions such as working in the homes of
foreigners that are permeated with not only gumption and perseverance, but also with a
particular set of moral values. This is a story of strategic, conscious choices as she seeks
to not only negotiate her class position and that of her offspring, but also to find meaning
and purpose in her life.

The following pages contain a number of stories that reveal different facets of
Dora’s life. I have attempted to arrange her stories thematically, emphasizing those
which she took pleasure in telling, or elaborated carefully or repeatedly. The result is a
chapter divided into four sections that discuss her family (i.e. her children), her migration
to Lima and childhood dreams, strength of character, and faith as well as life and death.
Each section reveals aspects of Dora as a mother, child, and laborer, as well as speaks to
hopes, dreams, and faith as well as disappointments, difficulties, and obstacles she has
faced. Even though I divided her stories into themes, as the reader will see the sections
overlap, her stories bleed across and reconnect in different ways forming an image of a
woman who cannot be easily defined, a life that refuses to be reduced.
On Family

Lo que me gusto fue que mi primera hija fuera enfermera, la otra costurera. Yo se lo pague cuando estuve en el Norte, pero no aprendió nada. El otro {Julio Alberto}1 que estudio laboratorio clínico pero por las puras porque se alejo de ello. Le dieron diploma, le dieron todo y no siguió el trabajo. Cosas así. Se pueden decir que son cosas personales de uno, que quedan, que uno recuerda. A veces cuando me pongo a pensar, ¿para eso tanto he trabajado, tanto he luchado para que aprendan? Y no son nada. Un día les dije, “Todos ustedes son una tira de burros, porque nada se les ha quedado en la mente. Por las puras he trabajado, les he dado estudio. Por las puras.” Nunca han estudiado nada. Ninguno es profesional. Bueno, mi hija la mayor allá, ella si estudio enfermería, termino. El otro {Julio Alberto} termino laboratorio clínico, termino con diploma y todo pero por falla razón de su mente, por encamotarse con una mujer, dejo su trabajo y nunca mas retorno. Presento a recursos pero no pudo conseguir nada. Ahora para que trabaje como un cholo como dicen pues. Esclavizado ahí. Sin reconocimiento de nada.

[What I liked was that my first daughter became a nurse, the other a seamstress. I paid for her while I was up North, but she learned nothing. The other {Julio Alberto} studied to be a laboratory technician but it was all for nothing because he put it aside. They gave him his diploma, gave him everything and he did not continue with the work. Things like that. You could say that they are personal things that remain, that one remembers. Sometimes I think, for this I have worked so much, I have fought so much so they can learn? And they are nothing. One day I told them, “All of you are a bunch of asses, because nothings has remained in your mind. For nothing I have worked, I have given you studies. For nothing.” They never studied anything. None of them are professionals. Well, my daughter, the older one, she did study nursing, finished it. The other {Julio Alberto} finished studying for laboratory technician, finished with a diploma and all for making a mistake in his mind, for falling for a woman, he left his work and never returned. He presented his paper with human recourses, but did not get anything. Now he works like a cholo as they say. Slaving there. Without recognition of any kind.]

The quote above is Dora’s answer to the following question: What do you want people to know about you life? Dora’s answer was to speak about her children and what

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1 Any interruptions that I make in any of the quotes to add comments that clarify sentences or thoughts, or to describe particular physical expressions that an individual may have articulated in hopes to enhance the understanding of the narratives, will be enclosed in braces (i.e. { }).
she had hoped for them. For her eldest Luzmilla, Dora wanted a career as a nurse; the same career that she would like to have had and dreamt since childhood. The decision to speak about her life through her children is not surprising in the context of class mobility and domestic service in Peru. The desire for children to achieve a higher status than their parents, to move up the class ladder is not new. As subsequent quotes will show Dora recognizes that her opportunities were limited so she worked hard to provide a different future for her children, a future that involved an education, a professional career and economic stability.

To understand Dora’s position as part of the laboring class in Peruvian society, one has to know a little more about where she came from. Although subsequent quotes will illuminate Dora’s life in richer detail, I will just pause a brief moment to provide a bare background.

Norberta Dora Cuidad Zavaleta was born in the northwestern region of Peru in a city called Trujillo on May 20, 1929. Her mother, Rosa Zavaleta, left her at a young age with her uncle and aunt, Otilio Zavaleta and Santos Guzman. Dora grew up in what Dora refers to as la serrania, or the highlands of Peru, and like many children in the rural areas of Peru, Dora worked from a young age not only within the walls of her home, but also outside of them. She helped her aunt and uncle in their vegetable stall and for a brief period when she was eight, Dora became a companion to a younger child from a nearby Japanese farmer. As a child, Dora wanted to be a nurse but due to her family’s economic situation, she could not pursue her dreams. Dora was actually forced to leave school after barely finishing third grade. Soon after Dora was sent by her aunt to work in Lima as a
paid domestic worker. Dora never married, but she had seven children with three
different fathers. Luzmila is her oldest daughter, followed by Janet; the last four children
are males named, Rodolfo, Julio Alberto, Vicente, and Eric. One of her seven children
was a baby girl, but she died when she was just a few months old.

Helping her children to become professionals was important to Dora. As she
states in the excerpt above, “A veces cuando me pongo a pensar, ¿para eso tanto he
trabajado, tanto he luchado para que aprendan? Y no son nada.” [Sometimes I think, for
this I have worked so much, I have fought so much so they can learn? And they are
nothing.] Dora understands that for upward class mobility, one needs an education, a
diploma, and a career. That is why in her statement she vacillates between criticizing her
children’s life decisions and emphasizing that Luzmila did finish studying and that Julio
Alberto did get his diploma. Dora is proud that they both studied, but she derides their
decisions to not work and build a career using the education that Dora, through her work,
helped them attain. “Ninguno es profesional” [None of them are professional] Dora
states. The failure to become professionals is connected by Dora to the idea that the only
thing that they have left then is to work, “como un cholo” [like a cholo.] For Dora to
work like a “cholo” is to be “esclavizado” [enslaved], to work “sin reconocimiento de
nada” [without any recognition of any kind]. The latter quote may refer to recognition in
terms of security or protection by the state such as pensions and health insurance as well
as recognition by society in terms of status and respect. The use of “cholo” reflects how
class and race are imbricated in Peruvian society as they mutually construct each other.
Another reason for Dora’s desire for her children to become professionals goes beyond economic security and social standing. Nursing was Dora’s dream and since she could not fulfill it, she invested herself emotionally and physically to provide Luzmila the opportunity to become a professional. This is why Luzmila’s choice to not practice as a nurse impacted Dora the most, as she tells me at a later conversation. Her second daughter Janet also failed to live up to Dora’s expectations and find a better position by furthering her education. As Dora stated:

*Janet yo quería que sea una costurera. Un año le pague corte y confección. Ni pegar botones sabe. No le entraba ni por aquí, ni por allá. Por ahí le tengo todo lo que le enseñaban. Por ahí tengo sus trapos.*

I wanted Janet to be a seamstress. I paid one year of cut and confection. She does not even know how to sew buttons. It did not go into her mind either this way, or that way. Somewhere over there I have everything that they taught her. Somewhere over there I have all her rags.

Dora’s choices of careers for her daughters reflect Peru’s patriarchal societal values. McEwen Scott describes that Peru’s educational system segregated into occupations appropriate for females and those appropriate for males.² For laboring class individuals, desirable ‘female’ occupations included nursing, dressmaking, hairdressing, and secretarial work.³ Among paid domestic workers, Bunster, Chaney and Young found that nursing, dressmaking and hairdressing were desirable occupations for themselves and to some extent for their daughters.⁴

³ Ibid.
⁴ Bunster and Chaney, 67.
For her sons, Dora wanted the military. Three of her four male children served in one of the three Peruvian military branches. For example her third offspring, Rodolfo served in the army, but could not go further in the institution, because he failed to finish high school.

Rodolfo fue militar, pero le pedían los papeles de estudio. Y el no estudió. El se quedó en tercero de primaria porque no quería estudiar. “No quiero estudiar.” No quiere, no quiere. “No voy y no voy y no voy.” Así que se quedó por terco. Ni más.

[Rodolfo was military, but they asked for his certification of studies. He did not study. He stopped at third grade because he did not want to study. “I do not want to study.” He didn’t want to, he didn’t want to. “I won’t go and I won’t go and I won’t go.” So he remained behind for stubbornness. What can you do?]

This quote shows that even to become a soldier in the armed forces in Peru, a career often touted as a good option for impoverished men, a lack of education will limit your chances to go further within the institution. What made Dora mad about Rodolfo’s situation is that she saw her son’s lack of education as his personal failure. He had the opportunity to continue studying, an opportunity that she did not have when she was a child, and he dropped out. Her other son Julio Alberto did continue his studies and briefly was employed as a laboratory technician, but he quit his job when he became entangled with a co-worker who later became his wife. Throughout the interviews, Dora many times expressed disappointment in Julio Alberto’s choices. Dora felt that like her other children, Luzmila, Janet, and Rodolfo, Julio Alberto not only wasted his opportunity, but that through his actions, he also disregarded the sacrifices that were made by Dora to provide him with a chance to have a career and with that a better future.
The initial quote is representative of Dora’s complex relationship with her children where love and pain, disappointment, and pride converge. The quote also reflects her ambitions for upward mobility and her perception of education as the mechanism to do it, and her desires for her children to succeed as professionals, to advance economically and socially in ways that she could not do. At the same time, her disappointment of her children’s life choices is palpable. Still, she recognizes that she has expected much of them and has pushed them hard. The reason for that drive, to make her children succeed, has emerged from her personal life experiences:

*Siempre, siempre he sido un poquita dura con todos. Siempre así. Ya me viera a los años, peor he sido. Uno crece, uno mira, lo pisan, que esto, que el otro, allá, acá.*

*[Always, always I have been a little hard with all of them. Always like that. If I saw myself after years, I have been worse. One grows, one sees, you get stepped on, this happens, that happens, here, there.]*

The use of the word “*pisan*” [*get stepped on*] is poignant. Dora is pointing to how lower class individuals are many times trodden upon, exploited, and discriminated by other individuals. She wants her children to experience something better.

Struggle and sacrifice are themes that permeate Dora’s stories. These descriptors have been recognized as a part of the self-defining discourse of the laboring class or “*clase trabajadora*” in Peru where the “focal point of their identities” is work, be it in the informal or formal sectors of the Peruvian economy.5 When she discusses her family, Dora emphasized the sacrifices that she made to make sure her children received what

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5 MacEwen Scott, 8.
circumstances denied her. At the same time, Dora has tried to funnel her children into careers that she herself valued. As she stated:

El ser militar y ser enfermera, esas son dos carreras que a mi me han gustado.

[Being military and being a nurse, these are two careers that I have liked.]

As I mentioned above, her first child Luzmila studied to be a nurse. While three of her four sons, including Rodolfo joined the military. Her fourth child, Julio Alberto was too short to become a soldier. As Dora told me, the military at that time had a height requirement and Julio Alberto did not meet it. Ironically, he was the only one of her boys who truly wanted to join the service, unlike the other three that were emotionally prodded by Dora to do so. An example of how Dora urged her sons to join the military can be seen in the conversation that Dora had with Vicente, her fifth son, which resulted in him joining the Fuerzas Aéreas Peruana (FAP) or Peruvian Air Force.

Cuando mi hijo se accidento en la FAP, en el servicio militar. Para eso ahí sí me sentía culpable porque cuando tenía los dieciséis yendo a los dieciocho años le dije “Ya es tiempo que vayas pensando que tienes que entrar al servicio.” “No,” me dijo, “yo no voy.” Pa que me contesto así. “Ah, no vas,” le dije. “Caramba,” le dije. “El hombre,” le dije, “ha nacido para servir a su patria y no para ser un sinvergüenza o un cobarde. Si tu no vas a las buenas, yo te cargo con un guardia y te entrego al servicio. A cualquier lado.” Como el trabajaba en una carpintería en ese tiempo, para eso el maestro me dice, “Le doy dos meses de plazo y ya el es un profesional en la carpintería.” Después en la noche me la pase así pensando, “este va a dejar el trabajo y no hacer nada.” Llego al siguiente día y le digo, “Vicentito, habla con el maestro pa que te ayude a sacar tus papeles.” “No,” me dijo. “Me voy al servicio.” “Adonde vas a ir?” “Me voy a la FAP.” Se fue a la FAP y ahí iba a visitarlo.

[When my son had an accident while in the FAP, in the military service, by then I did feel guilty because when he was seventeen going to eighteen years old, I told him “It is time that you started thinking about entering the service.” “No,” he told me, “I am not going.” For what did he answer me that way. “Ah, you are not going,” I told him. “Good heavens,” I told him. “Man,” I told him, “was born to serve his country and not to be a scoundrel or a coward. If you do not go
on your own, I will take you with a guard and give you over to the service. Which
ever one.” At that time, he was working in a carpentry business so the carpenter
master told me. “I give him two months and he is a professional carpenter.” That
ight I spent thinking, “he is going to leave work and not do anything.” I arrive
ext day and tell him, “Vicentito, talk to the master carpenter so you can get your
certification.” “No,” he tells me. “I am going to join the service.” “Where are
you going to go?” “I am going to the FAP.” And he went to the FAP and there I
went to visit him."

Interestingly, in this quote Dora not only shows how her strong character and opinions
shaped her relationship with her child, it also presents a time where Dora recognizes that
her forceful manner in dealing with her child as well as imposing her desires may have
been a mistake. It should be noted that in Peruvian society, particularly at this time, the
thought expressed by Dora about “men” and serving in the military is not unusual. Like
her preferences for particular careers for her daughters, Dora’s ideas regarding “real”
men and their place as defenders of the nation reflect gender ideologies prevalent in
Peruvian society. In addition, as I mentioned before, the army was touted as a “good”
option for lower class individuals. As the story goes, Vicente was accidentally shot by
friendly fire while serving. The conflict reflected in Dora’s assertions of guilt may arise
from the knowledge that due to her influence, Vicente traded the possibilities of a
respected career to fulfill what was considered an obligation of a man to serve his
country. Carpentry could have provided Vicente with economic stability and furnished a
higher status as an educated manual laborer. Instead due to his accident in the army, the
opportunity was lost. Still it should be noted, that regardless of the outcome, Dora was
extremely proud that her sons were military men at one time or another. Throughout
several interviews, Dora related stories of how she visited them at their bases and how
she went to see them march in the military parades. I think that her pride is not derived
necessarily out of a sense of patriotism or nationalism, but out of Peruvian gender ideologies that clearly define how men and women should behave. For Dora to be a good mother meant that her children reflect a particular set of social values that are found within a patriarchal Peruvian society. Her sons’ participation in the military shows that they are “good men” who are disciplined and responsible enough to serve their country as they should, and by extension it makes Dora a “virtuous mother” who has raised such sons.

Dora’s children followed for a time particular education and employment choices at their mother’s advice, cajoling or prodding. Dora’s sons joined the military, and Janet and Luzmila studied dressmaking and nursing respectively. It is the latter, Luzmila’s career choice though that was really important for Dora. Nursing was Dora’s dream, conceived in her childhood years, but carried within herself all her life. Through Luzmila, Dora sought to fulfill her career aspirations, so when Luzmila found herself pregnant and seemingly walking away from nursing, Dora fell into a deep depression. It was at this time that she left the Zwinkel household and moved to Trujillo for five years. This is an example of how much her daughter becoming a nurse meant to her. The pain that Dora describes still reverberates in the inflections of her voice as she narrates this story.

Por un motivo tonto o un dolor de madre. Fue porque mi hija la mayor {Luzmila}; yo quería que termine estudiar y comience una carrera de enfermería. Porque para mi, el es militar y ser enfermera, esas son dos carreras que a mí me han gustado. Entonces yo quería que {Luzmila} estudiara enfermería. Pero {Luzmila} salio en cinta de su hija la mayor. Entonces para mi fue una desilusión tremenda tanta que yo cuando salía a la calle, salía como la sonámbula, como dicen. Caminaba yo, iba pa allá, iba pa aca. Tenia un dolor profundo único, que le dije {a Luzmila}, “yo me voy.” Ahi es donde vendí
todititas mis cosas. No deje nada. Sí, le di carta poder a unos señores donde ella {Luzmila} trabajaba, a unos profesores. Ellos fueron los padrinos, hicieron de mi cuando {Luzmila} se caso con el papa de sus hijos. A raíz de eso es que yo me he ido. Porque recibí esa desilusión tan interna, tan triste para mi, que yo lo vi todo, ya todo para mi era aburrido, tirado, no me importaba nada. Se acabo. Se acabo. Ese fue mi motivo. Porque yo no pensaba irme. Para mí lo que yo quería que ella {Luzmila} estudiase la enfermería. Después ella estudio. Su esposo me dijo, “Señora usted quiere que Luzmila sea enfermera. Ella va estudiar.” Estudio y termino su enfermería. Pero ya fue inútil porque ya no con tanto muchacho ya no podía trabajar, ni tampoco seguir una carrera así. Pero de estudiar, estudio.

[For a dumb motive or a motherly hurt. It was because of my older daughter {Luzmila}; I wanted her to finish her studies and to start a career in nursing. Because for me, the military and nursing, has been two careers that I have liked. So I wanted her {Luzmila} to study nursing. But she {Luzmila} became pregnant with her oldest daughter. It was a great disillusionment for me so much that when I would go into the street, I would go out like a sleepwalker, like they say. I would walk, go there, come here. I had such a unique profound hurt, that I told her {Luzmila}, “I am leaving.” That is when I sold all of my things. I left nothing. Yes, I did give power of attorney to some Señores where she {Luzmila} worked, to some professors. They were the godparents; they acted instead of me when she married the father of her children. That is why I left. Because I received disillusionment so deep, so sad for me, that I saw everything, everything for me was boring, worthless, nothing matters anymore. It was over. It was over. That was my reason. Because I was not thinking about leaving. For me what I wanted was for her {Luzmila} to study nursing. Later she did study. Her husband told me, “Señora you want Luzmila to be a nurse. She will study.” She studied and finished nursing. But it was not worth it anymore because with so many kids, she could not work, or continue that kind of career. But study, she did.]

Dora was much affected by Luzmila’s pregnancy and what she considered the loss of an opportunity to become a professional. The only other time that I have heard Dora express the kind of depression that is described in this story was when Dora told me how she lost her baby girl. Luzmila’s pregnancy and what it meant for her future as a nurse was for Dora like the death of a child, it was the death of her own dream. Although she could take pride that at least Luzmila worked hard, studied and got her nursing degree, Dora
knew that she would never practice in the profession. Luzmila had the chance for upward
social mobility, to gain recognition as a professional and have economic stability. When
she became pregnant, Luzmila limited her chances for a life different from her mother’s.
Dora simply wanted more for her daughter, but from Dora’s perspective it came to
nothing. Dora could take solace in the fact that Luzmila did finish her studies, so at least
Dora could say that her daughter was an educated individual.

Work and working has shaped Dora’s life. How she defines herself as well as
others, what she considers success or failure, what her memories contain are all entangled
with the kinds of labor that she or others have performed and how such labor has been
rewarded or not. As stated before, participation in particular types of labor is how the
laboring class in Peru defines itself as a social group. Dora’s stories of hardship, poverty,
low status and sacrifice are representative descriptors present in the discourse that
surrounds laboring class identity in Peru. As it can be noted from the excepts that have
been included above as well as the ones in the subsequent sections, many of the stories
that Dora chooses to narrate fall within such discourse.
The first job in Lima/other jobs and dreams- What she wanted to be, what she became


[When I first came to Lima it was with a family from Arequipa. From Arequipa. Something like that. My aunt knew them and I probably was 12 or 13 years of age. I did not have more. The woman had told her, “I want to take a girl with me so she can work in my house and I will treat her like she was my daughter.” I know that the last name was Wuitaburi. Guillermo Wuitaburi he was called. “Why do you not go with them,” my aunt tells me. “They will take you. You would go with a good family. I know them. Go to Lima. You go to work.” In those times the streetcars still existed. “Ok,” I told her, “I will go.” And what did I do? I came with them. So I came with them to Lima. I worked for those people. One year I was there in Jirón Huancayo that is near the Parque de las Reservas. Somewhere there is the Jirón. The mistress of the house took me well to clean and cook. She taught me how to do it. She had two kids. At that age I had my hair long and I did not know how to brush it. In the mornings I would cry because I did not know how to brush my hair. It is because all of my life my aunt would brush it for me. She would braid it. Within a year I went back to Trujillo. I returned again to Trujillo.]

The circumstances surrounding Dora’s migration to Lima and her first job as a paid domestic worker in the capital are typical of what studies on domestic service in Peru as well as other countries in Latin America have found. Dora moved to Lima when her aunt and uncle could no longer pay for her schooling. As Dora informed me, the
family that first employed her was acquainted with her uncle and aunt. Even the statement made by her soon to be employer, “I will treat her like my own daughter,” is a typical sentiment found in Latin American domestic service literature where the female heads of households, who employ particularly young, recently emigrated women from rural areas, express that they will treat their workers like family. The fact that young Dora did not last long in her work is not surprising. What makes Dora’s a different story from the familiar stories of young, migrant domestic workers is that she does not at any moment portray the work as harsh, exploitative and demeaning. Descriptions of such negative treatment of paid domestic workers, particularly young female migrants by their employers has been common in testimonial literature and domestic service studies that have emerged in Latin America. The fact that Dora does not disclose such treatment does not necessarily signify that it was not present. The omission, actually might say more about how Dora chooses to portray her life than what her experiences may have been.

Why Dora chooses to depict her first employment experience in positive terms may have something to do with how she has chosen to portray herself in her life story.

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She defines herself as a strong, proud moral woman who does the ‘right’ thing regardless of the sacrifice involved. At times during the interviews, I felt that she would not disclose inappropriate or unfair treatment by employers (even others that were not my family), because it would put her in a position of victimhood. Though Dora narrates some difficult times in her life as a few of the stories I have included in this work reveal, she still would overwhelmingly emphasize her strong spirit and character, and how in one way or another she was in charge of the decisions that were made. This is why the narrative above is particularly poignant. In this story, Dora shows how young, vulnerable and inexperienced she was. The sorrow of being far from home, away from the protection of her family at such a young age is revealed in her comment about her inability to brush her own hair, how her aunt always had done that for her in the past.

Dora’s sadness leads her to return to Trujillo once again, but not before she resolves the problem of her hair. Even at that age Dora begins to take charge of her life. Dora has her hair cut one braid at a time by other workers in the Wuitanburi household thus solving the problem. But Dora does not last long in Trujillo. She returns to work in Lima one year later, and remains there moving from job to job, always searching for a better position and pay until she arrives in Inga’s household.

Paid domestic service was not Dora’s dream job. As I have stated before, since childhood Dora expressed a desire to pursue a different career. The following story was the response to my question: Did you ever think about doing something different than paid domestic service?

_De chiquita cuando estaba en el Norte todavía, antes de venirme acá, siempre tuve la en la mente estudiar para ser enfermera. A mí me gustaba la enfermería._
Porque en ese entonces cuando me puso mi tía a estudiar me salía temprano del colegio en Trujillo. Me salía temprano, preguntaba yo la hora y me iba derecho al hospital de Belén, ahí en Trujillo. Me iba y agarraba y me metía. Y andaba atrás de las enfermeras viendo cuando curaban a los enfermos, como inyectaban, que le ponían. Y para todo lado andaba así detrás de ellas. Entonces una madre una vez me, me agarro pues. Y me dice, “¿Tu porque vienes acá?” “Madre,” le digo, “es que yo quiero aprender de, la, como hace la señorita para curar a los enfermos. Yo quiero aprender también como ella.” “¿Y tu donde vives?” El sitio donde yo vivía se llamaba Huamán. “En Huamán,” le dije. “¿Y por acá cerca quien es familia?” “Mi tía vende en el mercado,” le dije. “En el mercado central en tal puesto esta mi tía.” Y esta madre ha ido a donde ella y yo no sabía. Entonces me pregunto, “¿Y tu como te llamas?” Le dije “Me llamo fulana de tal.” “¿Y tu donde estudias?” “En el colegio modelo.” “Ah ya,” me dice. Y la madre había ido en busca de mi tía. “¿Y quien es la señora fulana? ¿Usted es la tía de la, de esta chica que se llama así, que estudia en el modelo?” “Si madre,” le dice mi tía. “Porque ella siempre lo veo en el hospital,” le dijo, “detrás de la enfermeras.” “Dícese que quiere ser enfermera y que va, que quiere aprender como ponen inyección.” Ya. Entonces la madre le dijo, porque yo a mi tía nunca le dije que yo iba al hospital. Yo no le decía. Entonces le dijo, “Mira,” {la madre} le dijo “ahí en el hospital hay trabajo que se le puede dar a ella y puede estudiar.” “Pero si” {la madre} le dijo, “no soportaría mucho el trabajo porque muy flaquita y el trabajo es fuerte. Ella {Dora} se enfermaría mucho.” Entonces, que hablaría mas mi tía con la madre. Cuando yo llegue a la casa mi tía me dice, “¿A que cosa vas as hospital?” “A ver como curan las enfermeras, a ver como hacen esto, como hacen el otro. ¿Y como sabe usted,” le digo “que yo voy al hospital?” “Ah,” me dijo, “Porque una madre ha venido ha hablar conmigo y me ha dicho.” “Ah, la madre, es la madre que me encontró allá.” “Pero dice ella {la madre} que aunque hay trabajo ahí, no puedes ir porque tu eres muy flaca y el trabajo es demasiado duro ahí en el hospital. Y yo no puedo darte educación para que tu puedas aprender.” Ya pues deje de ir. Ya no fui ya pues.

[Since I was a child still in the North, before coming here, I always had in my mind studying to become a nurse. I liked nursing. Because then when my aunt put me to study, I would leave early the school in Trujillo. I would leave early, I would ask the time, and would go directly to the hospital in Belén, there in Trujillo. I would go and I would sneak in. And I would follow the nurses around looking how they cured the sick, how they injected, what they gave them. And everywhere like that I would follow them. Then one day a nun caught me. And she asks me, “Why do you come here?” “Nun,” I tell her, “is that I want to learn from the, I want to see how the nurse cures the sick. I want to learn like her.” “And where do you live?” The place that I lived was called Huamán. “In Huamán,” I told her. “And near here, who is your family?” “My aunt sells in the market,” I told her. “In the central market in that stall, my aunt is.” And
this nun has gone searching for her and I did not know it. So she asked me, “What is your name?” I told her, “My name is such and such.” “And where do you study?” “In a model school.” “Ah, ok,” she tells me. And the nun has gone in search of my aunt. “And who is the lady such and such? Are you the aunt of this girl, the girl named like this, that studies in the model school?” “Yes, nun,” my aunt, tells her. “Because I always see her in the hospital,” she told her, “after the nurses.” “She says that she wants to be a nurse and that she wants to learn how to put injections.” So the nun told her, because I never told my aunt that I was going to the hospital. I had not told my aunt. So she {the nun} told her, “look, in the hospital there is work that can be given to her and she can study.” “But,” she {the nun} said, “She {Dora} could not handle the work because she is too skinny and the work is hard. She would get sick too much.” Who knows what else my aunt spoke with the nun. When I arrived home my aunt tells me, “What for do you go to the hospital?” “To see how the nurses cure, to see how they do this, how they do that. And how do you know that,” I ask her, “that I go to the hospital?” “Ah,” she tells me “because a nun has come to talk to me and she has told me.” “Ah, the nun that found me there.” “But she {the nun} says that although there is work there, you cannot go because you are too skinny and the work is too hard there in the hospital. And I cannot give you an education so you can learn.” So I stopped going. I did not go again.

Nursing was Dora’s dream. Since her uncle and aunt could not afford to send her to school and since she was too thin to work for her studies, Dora did not become a professional nurse. Her situation is not uncommon, as poverty and malnourishment is rampant in the highlands of Peru. While she did not have the economic means to study, it is still interesting to see how throughout her life, Dora does see herself as having been a caregiver, “una enfermera de chiripa” [a nurse by fluke]. After telling me her childhood dream, Dora without pausing, continued her story with the following excerpt:

_Pero si te puedo decir que al finadito de tu abuelo yo lo cure de la escara sin, sin aprender nada. Basta que vi una sola vez que lo curo el doctor y de ahí igualito lo hacia yo a el. Yo lo cure; lo sane. Durante su enfermedad que tuvo, yo a pie de el hasta que Dios se lo llevo. Después como buena he atendido tres o cuatro partos. El ultimo parte es fue en el Norte. Pero acá en Chaclacayo atendi a una muchacha que iba a tener mellizos. La muchacha esta iba a dar a luz, cuando vino su suegra. La atendió y la hizo perder bastante sangre. Y justo yo llegue a la casa a darle de comer a los muchachos. “Señora Dora, Señora Dora venga un ratito usted va a ser la salvación,” me llama. No se como se llamaba esta chica._
“Esta dando a luz,” me dijo, “pero no puede dar, no puede dar a luz. Se ha sangrado todo.” Entonces yo agarre no mas pe y me fui de frente. Amita, se llamaba la chica.

[But I can tell you that to your finadito grandfather I cured him of a skin disease without having learned anything. It only took seeing once how the doctor cured him and after that just like him I did it. I cured him; made him healthy. During the sickness that he had, I stood next to him until God took him. After that, like someone who knows what’s up, I have attended three or four births. The last one was up North. But here in Chaclacayo I attended a young girl who was going to have twins. This young girl was going to give birth when her mother-in-law came. She tended to her and made her lose a lot of blood. I had just arrived home to give food for my kids. “Mrs. Dora, Mrs. Dora come here for just a moment, you are going to be salvation” she called me. I do not remember the name of the girl. “She is giving birth, “ she told me, “but she can’t, she can’t give birth. She is bleeding all over.” So I just went straight there. Amita, the girl was called.]

At this point we were briefly interrupted by a question from a passerby regarding if Dora had shoes for sale for a baby. Dora told her that she did not, and as the woman walked away, she returned to her story without any prompting from my part.

Y como yo había visto obtetrisas también como atendían el parto, cuando me atendían a mi, cuando atendían a otros. Entonces yo ya había visto como hacían. Todo eso yo tenía en la mente; como una profesional pues. Entonces ya a su esposo le digo, “ponga una olla con agua,” le dije, “porque esta recontra sucia. Y trae trapos limpios,” le dije, “que esto esta cochino.” Ya le habían sacado un bebito. Ella ya estaba en las ultimas. Abría su boquita así, la pobrecita. Y para eso había un medico, ahí en el Parque Central y le habían avisado, lo habían ido a traer para que vea. Llega el doctor y la toca así en su barriga de ella. Y dice, “aquí adentro hay otro.” “Ay, doctor por favor atiéndela.” “No,” dijo. “Llévela a la Maternidad.” Agarro su maletín y se salio y se fue. No quiso ayudar. Para eso yo me acorde de un señor que cuando yo he tenido a mi Erico, a mi chancho, a mi ultimo, el me iba a visitar y me contaba que así en su tierra, parte serranía, no se que sitio, “Ahí,” me dice, “señora a donde acudimos nosotros pa un medico cuando hay partería. No hay médicos. Cuando un bebe se queda suspendido dentro del vientre de la madre o la placenta esta pegada, entonces se pone una

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7 The use of the term finada or finado to refer to someone is a sign of respect as well of emotional attachment in Dora’s case. Finada(o) comes from the Spanish word fino [fine and/or elegant] and translates as gentleman or gentlewoman.

[And since I had seen obstetricians deliver babies, when they helped me, and when they helped others. So then I had seen how they did it. All that I had in my mind; like a professional. So to her husband I say, “Place a pot with water.” I told him, “Because she is very dirty. And bring clean rags,” I told him, “because this is filthy.” They had already taken a baby out. She was at her end. She would open her mouth like this, the poor girl. And for that, there was a doctor, there in Parque Central and they had told him, they had gone to bring him here to help. The doctor comes and touches her like this in her stomach. And he says, “There is another one in here.” “Ay, doctor, please help her.” “No,” he said. “Take her to the Maternidad Hospital.” He took his bag and got out and left. He did not want to help. So I remembered that a gentleman when I had Erico, my piglet, my last, he came to visit and was telling me that in his home, part of the highlands, I do not know where, “There,” he tells me, “ma’am where do we go to get a doctor when a women is giving birth. There are no doctors. When a child is left inside of the mother or the placenta stays stuck you have to put a pot of boiling water,” he told me. “You place rags inside. You have to endure what burns. You wring them and place them over the patient’s stomach. And that helps with sliding.” So I did the same operation. To her husband I told him this and I did this. I gave her to drink a fourth of cognac with oregano water. “Drink this,” I told her because she was getting cold. With that she seem to revive because it warmed her body. And we placed these rags with the help of her husband and moments later she starts to push. “You feel it,” I tell her. “Yes,” she tells me, “I feel like pushing.” “Do it then,” I tell her. So then I opened her thing and I place my hands like this and the child slipped into them. The child slipped and it was already dead. Born dead. So sad. Maria Cecilia, this is how it is. This size was the whole placenta.]
Dora picks up a small child’s shirt and lifts it in front of her so I can see the size of
the placenta that she extracted from the woman. She continues using the t-shirt as a prop for her story:


[The belly button of the child was here and of the other baby was there. They were twins. So I slipped the whole of it and took it out nicely. Everything slowly. I took it all out and put it aside. “Now,” I said, “warm water with clean rags.” And for that I had made them buy pills in the pharmacy for the infection, that she needed to take. At that time, these nuns would come down to read the catechism for the boys near the train tracks where they lived. They came down to read the catechism and one of them, I suppose one that was trained as an obstetrician or studied for that came in and said, “Who has attended the birthing.” “The lady,” they told her. “Mother,” I told her, “I have helped her with this second child. The first was done by her mother-in-law.” “Ma’am, let me see,” she said, “please pick up the placenta.” I have had to put my hands like this and pick it up.
And the nun started from here and began. She checked the whole edge. She was checking that no piece was missing, left inside. All of it she finished. “Mrs.” she said, “the whole placenta is complete.” “Now let me see, unwrap her to see the cleaning.” I unwrapped her. The nun asks me, “Have you studied to be an obstetrician?” “No, mother” I told her, “only by curiosity when I have seen it done.” “But this is good,” she said. “She is well attended, she is clean. Everything is complete,” she told me. “There is no problem here,” she said. “So gentlewoman,” she told him, “the lady has attended well, the lady is well tended for, and now you have to see about your children, what you are going to do, how you are going to do it. The children, both of them were dead. Little ones. One was black and the other white, because she was olive-skinned and the man was white. I mean cholo, but white. And I had to go to iron some clothes in this other house further up. So I cleaned her up well, I made them change her clothing in which she slept, and I gave her a pill. I told them, “Tomorrow at this time call me so I can come and clean her up again and give her the medicine.” So happy with life, she was calm, I came out and left. I was happy.

Dora laughs briefly and continues her story:

¿Y porque vienes tan tarde?” me dice la señora pa quien trabajo. “Ay, señora, vengo con un cuento de la patada.” Yo feliz de la vida contarle. Y ella se pone así. “¿Tu sabes a lo que te has metido?” me dijo. “¿Tu sabes lo que has hecho? Da gracias a Dios,” me dijo, “que te salo bien el segundo parto porque si a ella le pasa algo, no salen la placenta completa, a ti te detienen. Todo por haber metido las manos.” Ya pues, no le di importancia. Le termine de contar como fue y me puse a planchar. De ahí le dije, “me voy seño.” Cuando estuve en mi casa y lo veo a mis hijos ya de noche acostados todos y me puse a pensar, “Puñalada Dios mío. Gracias a Dios que no ha pasado nada.” Pensaba en mis hijos. Si me hubieran llevado o algo, ¿que hubiera pasado? Si me llevaban a mi ¿que hubiera sido de ellos? ¿Quien me los cuidaba? ¿Quien? Y comence a llorar porque ya sentí porque la señora me había dicho eso. Pero no un remordimiento no. Porque yo había ayudado a una persona que estaba necesitando. Eso es lo que hice. Pero a Dios gracias, ya cuando menos me acuerdo ella ya estaba tranquila caminando. Le llevaron a sus hijitos, no se a donde los llevarían a enterrarlos, quizás a Chaclacayo. Pero así pues a mi siempre me ha tocado, mi turno me han dado. De ahí pues ahí en el Norte. El ultimo. Cuando me llaman, “La señora ya ha dado a luz.” Y cuando la voy a ver, ella arrodillada, agarrada de su cama y el bebe en el suelo. No tenia nadie que la ayudara. La ha hecho subir a la cama, soltar su placenta, igualito. El bebe tambien falleció. El chiquito.
well because if something happened to her, the placenta does not come out complete, you would have been detained. Just because you stuck your hand in.” Anyway, I did not give it importance. I finished telling her how it was and continued ironing. Then I told her, “I am living ma’am.” When I was at home and I see my children, at night sleeping and I started thinking, “Oh my God. Thank God that nothing happened.” I was thinking about my children. If they had taken me, or something, what would have happened? If they had taken me, what would have happened to them? Who would have taken care of them? Who? And I started crying because I felt what the lady had told me. But not remorse, no. Because I had helped someone in need. That is what I did. But thank God, as I think of her, she was walking calm. They took her children I do not know were, maybe to Chaclacayo. But that is how it is, it has always fallen to me, I have been given my turn. Then up North. The last one. When they call me, “the lady has given birth.” And when I go to see her, she was there, kneeling by her bed, and the baby on the floor. She had no one to help her. I have made her get up into bed, slipped the placenta, the same. The baby also was born dead. The little one.]

Dora told me the stories of her assisting at different childbirths three times. Each time, she emphasized how the doctor had refused to help, how the nun had praised her skill, how the placenta had come out entirely, and how upon telling the woman for whom she was doing extra work for why she was late, her employer’s comments had made her realize later that she could have been arrested and cried upon thinking what could have happened to her own children. Each time, she concluded though that she had helped someone in need and that she had no regrets. The story about taking care of my grandfather was also repeated many times, but as it will be shown in next chapter, those stories had different variations.

Dora’s repetitions highlight how she sees herself as well as her actions. The doctor’s emphatic refusal to help shows his callousness that acts as a foil to her unrepentant, unselfish actions. She hears the call to help and she goes to aid the distressed individuals without any thought of repercussions to herself economically or
criminally. Dora practices her natural gift of observation and healing and her skills are recognized by an authority figure, a nun, who is not only “learned” about child birthing, but also is shrouded by the sanctity of her position as a servant of the Catholic Church. The importance of the latter for Dora will become apparent in subsequent sections. The only time that Dora’s strength waivers and she feels fear, is when she thinks about how her children would have fared, had she been arrested. Worrying about her children and not herself reflects what a good mother she is. The statement about who would care for her children also shows how she feels that in many times in her life, she has been alone. She has had no one to count on, to help her or her children.

This story also reveals the plight of many impoverished lower-class individuals who cannot afford proper medical care. The professional doctor’s refusal to provide any assistance can be used as a mirror of interclass struggles in Peru where the middle-class shows no concern for lower-class members. The doctor walks away, so the husband turns to other members of the lower class for aid. One cannot help but wonder that if the young woman had been a middle class individual would her babies have survived. Unequal access to care and a racist and classist disregard for human life may have been what killed the children that Dora helped bring into the world.

Dora did not have the opportunity to study to be a nurse, so she taught herself to be a caregiver, a nurse without the official studies. Her economic position may have limited her chances for an education, but Dora has found ways in her life to still pursue her interests. For example, she takes pride that she has learned to heal through sheer will and careful observation:
Solamente de mirona no mas, de curiosidad. Porque me ha gustado siempre ver cuando curan, entonces yo puedo hacerlo mismo. Si yo lo puedo hacer, yo lo hago. Para mi no hay miedo, no “Ay, ¿que va a pasar?” No. Yo me aviento no mas asi y punto, se acabo. Yo no se. Hay que tener coraje para eso. Yo hubiera querido que mi hija estudiara para enfermería. Estudio pero ya muy tarde ya.

[Only by being an onlooker, curious. Because I have always liked watching how people cure, so then I can do the same. If I can do it, I do it. For me there is no fear, no “Ay, what is going to happen?” No. I just throw myself and that is it. I do not know. One has to have courage for this. I would have liked that my daughter studied nursing. She studied, but it was too late.]

The courage she describes does not only apply to healing. It is an essence that Dora carries within herself and expressed through her different stories.
On Strength

Una sola. No tenia apoyo de nadie. Nunca tuve apoyo de la mama, de las hermanas, ni de la tia, de la prima, ni nadie. Yo solita no mas pa adelante. Salí pa adelante.

[One alone. I had no one’s support. Never had the support from a mother, from the sisters, or of the aunt, the cousin, of no one. I alone moved forward. I moved ahead.]

In one of my last interviews, I asked Dora where she got all her strength. This is what she answered:

Desde chiquita en el Norte, todavía debía de tener seis, siete años, como la finada de mi tía vendía verduras, uno tenia que irse a las cuatro de la mañana para estar a las cinco y media de la mañana entrando al Mercado. Yo estaba con...estábamos ahí. Yo tenia, yo ayudaba arreglar todo el puesto para vender. De ahí preparaba el desayuno, tomaba el desayuno y después agarraba y partía para el colegio. A las ocho en punto tenia que estar en el colegio para que no me cierren la puerta. Si me cerraban la puerta, me hacían pasar pero me castigaban adentro ya. Tenia que volar con todo. Todos los días. Todos los días. En la tarde llegaba a mi casa había que lavar esto, lavar el otro. Y de ahí hasta las doce de la noche hacia mis tareas que me mandaban.

[Since I was a child in the North, I probably had six, seven years, since la finada of my aunt sold vegetables, one had to go around four in the morning so you could be there at five thirty in the morning to go in into the open market. I was there...we were there. I had to; I helped fix the whole stand to sell. After that I would fix breakfast, eat the breakfast and after that I would head to school. At eight exactly I would have to be in school so they would not close the doors on me. If the doors would close on me, they would let me in but I would be punished inside. I had to fly quickly with everything. Every day. Every day. In the afternoon I would arrive home and I had to wash this, wash that. And after that until twelve at night I would do my homework that I was assigned.]

From Dora’s answer it could be surmised that since an early age, she has been taught and expected to work hard. Her work ethic has been further shaped by experiences gathered through working in different households. For example, Dora attributes that part of the way of how she approaches work has been learned from working in foreign households, particularly German ones.
Como te digo. Yo he aprendido en haber trabajado en casa extranjera. Entonces el extranjero es más recto, más organizado para trabajar. Y si uno tiene interés en querer salir adelante, hay que ofrecerse a ese trabajo. Así es.

[Like I tell you. I have learned from working in foreign houses. So the foreigner is more correct, more organized in their work. And if one has desire to get ahead, one has to offer themselves to that work. That’s how it is.]

One of the bastions of her work ethic, Dora attributes to Inga. In several occasions, including the first interview, Dora would state a variation of the following saying:

Cuando se trabaja... mente, visión y no charlar. Boca cerrada para que las cosas salgan bien.

[When you work... mind, sight and no talking. Mouth closed so things come out well.]

This particular saying was accompanied with particular hand gestures. Dora would first bring her right hand up and touch her temple lightly with her index finger followed by the hand gesture that signifies “looking,” using both her index and middle fingers. She would end by mimicking the closing of her mouth as if it was a zipper from left to right.

Dora explained that what she learned from Inga she passed on to others:

Cuando uno trabaja, mente, visión y no charlar. Boca cerrada para que las cosas siempre salgan bien. Porque si tu te pones a conversar a lo que tu estas haciendo tu mezcla, a lo que estaba haciendo la repostería, yo por contestar o mirar ahí, me olvidaba cuanto tenía que echarle, o sea levadura, o harina. Ese es lo yo le digo.

[When one works, “mind, sight and no talking.” Closed mouth so things always come out well. Because if you start talking at the same time you are mixing, when you are baking, I because I answer you or look over there, I would forget how much I had to put in, may it be yeast or flour. This is what I tell them.]

This saying, complete with hand gestures, was repeated by Dora at different times throughout the interviews when she wanted to emphasize how an individual, herself or others, should conduct themselves while working if they wanted to get good results.
Dora takes pride in her work ethic, but at the same time looks to others to validate her labor as well as recognize her as a “good” human being.

*Todo, todo parece mentira. Hay madres que tienen dificultad con una criatura, con otra criatura. Que no pueden trabajar. Y yo digo, como yo con seis muchachos, he podido trabajar. He cumplido en mi casa, en mi trabajo. Porque en la vida, tu abuela o tu tía han dicho que “ha hecho mal esto y que se largue.” Nunca. Todo sitio en donde yo he estado, nunca he quedado mal. Nunca.*

[Everything, everything seems a lie. There are mothers who have difficulties with one child, with another child. That they cannot work. And I say, how is it that with six children, I have been able to work. I have fulfilled my obligations in my house, in my work. Because in all my life, your grandmother, or your aunt have said “she has done this wrong and so she needs to go.” Never. In every place that I have been, I have never looked bad. Never.]

In other cases, the validation of honesty and rectitude has come from chance encounters with strangers in a time of crisis. For example, Dora relates that one time when her youngest son Federico was seven, a car hit him. Dora first went to the hospital where Federico was treated for broken bones, and later had to go to the local police station to place “*una denuncia*” (an equivalent of an official police report) where she actually came face to face with the reckless driver.

*El guardia que estaba ahí me dice, “Señora cuanto usted va a cobrar por el atropello de su hijo?” “Disculpeme,” le dije. “Yo plata no he venido a cobrar, le dije, “ni pienso cobrar.” “Lo único que quiero,” le dije, “es que este señor se haga cargo de la curación de mi hijo y que quede completamente sano.” “Yo no quiero dinero.” “Que raro,” me dijo, “señora, sabe lo que usted esta hablando?” me dice. “Lógico. Yo se de lo que estoy hablando,” le dije. “La plata se me esfuma y mi hijo se queda malogrado.” A lo que este señor le dije, “que pague hasta que quede sano.” El era un ingeniero de la Orolla y entonces el señor le habían quitado su carro. Le detuvieron su carro y cuando regreso de todo esto se entero. Entonces el señor fue a buscarme. “Señora si yo hubiera sabido que usted es una bella persona,” me dijo, “que primera vez en mi vida que conozco una persona que no le interesa el dinero sino la vida de su hijo.” Yo le dije, “Disculpeme señor pero con la plata, yo no hago nada.” Entonces nos hemos ido al hospital. En el hospital le dice “doctor, quiero un examen total de este niño, de pies a cabeza. Quiero que quede completamente sano, que no tenga*
nada.” Y de verdad le han hecho el examen completito. Tiene la marca, pero salió sanito, igualito.

[The guard that was there tells me, “Ma’am how much are you going to charge for the running over of your child?” “Excuse me,” I said. “Money I have not come to collect,” I told him, “and I do not plan to collect.” “The only thing I want, “ I told him, “ is that this gentleman takes care of the treatment of my son and that he ends up completely healthy.” “I do not want money.” “That is strange,” he told me, “ma’am do you know what you are talking about?” he tells me. “Of course. I know what I am talking about,” I told him. “Money disappears and my son would remain broken.” So to this man I told him “that they pay until he becomes healthy again.” He was an engineer from the Orolla and they had taken his car. They impounded his car so when he returned to get it, he found out all about this. So the gentleman went looking for me. “Ma’am if I had known that you were such a beautiful person,” he told me, “first time in my life that I meet a person who does not care about money, but the life of her son.” I told him, “Excuse me sir, but with money, I can’t do anything.” So we went to the hospital. In the hospital he states, “Doctor, I want a complete exam of this child, from head to toe. I want him to be completely healthy, that he has nothing.” And truth be told, they examined him completely. He has a scar, but he left healthy, the same.]

Without going into the history of Peruvian law enforcement with its underlying social and economic issues, it should be noted for readers that do not have experience with Peruvian police work, that many times money changing hands is used to expedite “justice.” In the tale that Dora recounts, the police officer is asking Dora, how much she will ask from the driver so the latter avoids getting sued. The fact that she refuses money and only asks for medical care would have surprised many. But this is not necessarily what makes the story an interesting narrative. Dora’s choice to tell me this particular memory in such a way, places her rectitude in the forefront. Not only does she face authority and is not afraid to speak, but challenges their values through her actions and words. The policeman is baffled and the professional, middle-class engineer proclaims her virtue as an individual and mother. She emerges from this moment of crisis with her
moral ethics intact while at the same time is rewarded for her integrity by a son who came out of the hospital healthy. In a way, her choice to relate this particular story is to make sure that through me, the larger reading public will know that she is a good, moral person and by our collective listening, we validate her assertion.

In this story Dora also challenges prescribed gendered, classed, and racialized behaviors present in Peruvian society. Although Dora is using motherhood as well as a narrative of virtue as her position from which to argue for medical care, she is contesting notions attributed to women, particularly lower-class women of color in Peru. Lower-class women of color, including paid domestic workers, are expected to be submissive in front of male authority. By speaking up to both the policeman and the middle-class engineer, Dora is deploying motherhood as position of strength.

Dora attributes her fortitude not only as arising from her experiences, but also as an attribute granted by God.

_Yo cuando me pongo a pensar digo, como Dios a uno le da poder y le da esencia espiritual, que se yo, maternal. Yo tenía el tiempo para mi casa, para mis hijos, para ir a trabajar, Cumplir con todo. Volver nuevamente y nunca tenía como se puede decir, ningún tropiezo. Es mejor decir, esto va a pasar o esto. Tranquila. Todos los días para mi eran igual. Siempre he tenido habilidad para trabajar. No me ha gustado estar quieta._

[When I start thinking I ask myself, how is it that God gives one power and gives them a spiritual essence, I do not know, maternal. I had time for my house, for my children, to go to work. To fulfill all my obligations. To return again and I never had, how do you say, any kind of hitch. Better said, this will happen or that. I remained calm. All the days for me were the same. I have always had the ability to work. I have never liked to stay put.]

For Dora, being strong is more than just physical endurance. It is a virtue gifted by God, an emotional as well as spiritual component that has allowed her not only to do her work
well but also has allowed her to raise her children to be honest, respectful and hardworking.

_Toda la vida en trabajado en este sentido. Pobres pero con la mano en alto. Que nadie señale, que sean testigos, que no hemos sido rateros, ni malandrines de ninguna clase. Donde quieran que vayan. Ese es el consejo que le he dado a mis chicos._

[I have worked all my life in that way. Poor but with the hand raised. No one can point to us, they can be witnesses, we have not been thieves, or scoundrels of any kind. Wherever they go. This is the advice I have given to my children].

Dora defines herself as a moral individual. The strength of her character has been shaped by experiences as a laborer, as a child and as a mother. Many of her stories illuminate her fortitude, her courage and rectitude even in times of crisis. At the same time many of her stories reflect her spiritual and religious beliefs.
At the Threshold: Religion, Life and Death

No hay nada que hacer. Cuando uno esta con Dios, tienes la bendición de el, uno puede hacer lo que sea, pero sale bien.

[There is nothing to do. When one is with God, when you have his blessing, one can do whatever, but it comes out well.]

Dora’s spiritual and religious beliefs permeate her life. As it has been discussed in the previous section, Dora would not separate her work ethic from her religious beliefs. Like many Peruvians, Dora is Catholic and has great reverence for the Virgin and the Saints. She prays to them as well as the souls of the dead for guidance and protection. Throughout the interviews, Dora would make comments of observations about her spiritual or religious beliefs. She would tell me such things as:


[We are in reality Christ’s cross. We stand there and we crucify ourselves and we are the same. We are the same. And everything that we carry, that we are, that we ask. We ask, how do you say, we ask for ourselves, and yours, and for others. You alone are not the earth. And let’s give thanks to God that we have everything, even if it is little. Because we have, and we have our health thank the Lord. This is the truth.]

Twice she followed such statements with stories of miraculous healing and present day saintly individuals that God had graced with divine powers.

Whom Dora chose to include in her prayers and what she asked for, illuminate certain aspects of Dora’s life including what she cares about.

Todos los años que uno a pasado. Te voy a decir que, mira ve, yo vivo solita. Duermo solita. Yo no tengo a nadie mas. Yo me encomiendo a Dios, a todas las
almas, a veces le recuerdo a Cecilia, a tu abuelo, o las demás almas benditas que han partido, que se han ido.

[All the years that one has lived through. I am going to tell you, see, I live alone. I sleep alone. I have no one else. I give myself over to God, to all the souls, and sometimes I remember Cecilia, your grandfather, or the others blessed souls who have journeyed on, who have left us.]

In this excerpt, Dora states that she lives alone. This feeling of having found herself alone not only at night, but throughout her life surfaces from time to time during the interviews. Even though she told me that her son Eric came every night for dinner, comments about feelings of isolation and loneliness would sometimes surface particularly in moments when we discussed family and how it was defined. It is interesting to note that in her prayers, she includes Inga’s deceased daughter Cecilia, and Inga’s husband, my grandfather. At another time, Dora tells me:

Yo en las noches, a Dios, a todos los santos les pido clemencia. ¿Porque? Primeramente porque yo me quedo solita y nadie me acompaña. Pido por mis hijos que están lejos, que Dios los cuide y los acompañe en todo momento. Por tu abuela también que no se vaya a caer de la escaleras porque las escaleras son feas. Vaya a salir afuera y se vaya caer. Porque ella tenía la costumbre de salir y sentarse afuera. Aclamar por vivos o muertos. Sean o no sean tu familia. Una es católica y Dios les da. Yo todos los días leo aunque sea un pedacito del libro.

[At night, I ask God and all the saints for clemency. Why? First of all because I remain alone and no one keeps me company. I ask for my children that are far, that God takes care of them and keeps them company at all times. For your grandmother also, so she does not fall down the stairs because the stairs are ugly. She may go outside and fall down. Because she used to go out there and sit. To pray for the dead and the living. Be it family or not. One is catholic and God gives to you. I read everyday even if it is just a small piece of the book.]

Not only does she pray for Inga’s deceased family members, but she also remembers to pray for Inga. Her prayer is specific; she asks for Inga not to fall down the stairs. Now
that she no longer can protect her physically, by keeping an eye on Inga when she sits outside to smoke a cigarette, Dora asks God and the saints to do it for her.

Dora’s nightly prayers are not the only way that Dora has communicated with the dead. After Cecilia died, many individuals thought that she haunted her mother’s house. Many years ago, my grandmother Inga told me that Cecilia’s soul had come to her while she was lying in bed awake and told her that she, Cecilia, was at peace. My aunt Penelope and uncle Lucho (Cecilia’s siblings) both told me that they believed that for a time Cecilia haunted the house. They would hear steps in the upstairs bedrooms and doors slam shut even though no air was running through the house. The following is the story that Dora told me about the haunting:

_Yo regreso a la casa a trabajar después que ella falleció. Cuando ella falleció, no lo dejaba a los muchachos, le quitaba las frazadas que les daba tu abuela para que duerman. Arriba caminaba en el piso, bajaba la escalera, subía. Mejor dicho sus pasos todo, todo se escuchaba ahí en la casa de las Begonias. Ya un día estuve con Penelope en el cuarto de atrás, cuando escuchamos “Pum.” La puerta del archivo. Me dice, “Ahí esta Maria Cecilia.” Yo fui a mirar y no había nadie. Nadie, nadie había. Ya cuando yo estuve solita ahí me pare en centro del cuarto, y hable con ella._

[I came back to work after she died. When she died, she would not leave the boys, she would take the covers that your grandmother would give them to sleep. Upstairs she would walk, would come down the stairs, went up. Better said her steps, all of them could be heard there in the house in Las Begonías street. One day I was with Penelope in the backroom, when we hear the “Pum.” The door of the filing cabinet. She tells me, “there is Maria Cecilia.” I went to see and no one was there. No one, no one was there. When I was alone, I stood there in the center of the room and spoke to her.]

Dora pauses briefly before continuing. Her tone becomes a little more serious for a moment. The change in her voice is a reflection of the depth of her faith.

_Dice que uno, tu puedes orar, no necesitas estar acompañada, aquel fulano o otro fulano. Tu solita no mas. Tu puedes hablar con Dios. Tu hablas, conversas_
porque Dios te escucha, Dios te oye. Sea por lo que sea. Tu clamas a el, pides, oras y le pides su bendición. Estas tranquila, tranquila. Así es. Una ora, se aprende. Yo lo saco de lo que leo, de los catecismos. No volvió a molestar ella nunca más. Nunca más se escucharon sus pasos. Al muchacho le dije, “Felipe, ¿te sigue molestando?” “No, señora. Ahora duermo bien.” Ella quería que alguien se preocupe, que le hable. Porque yo dije, “tu y tu papa están en el cielo. Quédate tranquila. Vela tu ahora junto a Dios por tu madre para que las cosas salgan bien en su negocio, no quiebren, para que los muchachos no hagan nada malo, por el resto de tus hermanos, que no pase nada. No los fastidies, ellos no han agarrado las cosas. Tu mama le ha dado. A ellos no los fastidies, déjalos en paz, no los asustes.” Así no mas no entraban para adentro. Tenían miedo.

It is said, that one can pray, you do not need to be in the company of such a person or another person. You by yourself, only. You can speak to God. You speak, converse because God listens, God hears you. Be it what it is. You pray to him, ask, pray, and ask for his blessing. You are peaceful, peaceful. That is how it is. One prays, one learns. I get it from what I read. She never bothered anyone again. Her steps were never heard again. To the boy I asked him, “Felipe, does she still bother you?” “No, ma’am. Now I sleep well.” She just wanted someone to take care of her, to talk to her. Because I told her, “You and your dad are in heaven. Be at peace. Keep vigil next to God for your mother so things come out all right in her business, so it does not go bankrupt, so the boys do not do anything bad, for the rest of your siblings, so nothing happens. Do not bother them; they have not taken your things. Your mother has given them away. Do not bother them, leave then in peace, do not scare them.” Just like that they would not go inside. They were afraid.

Dora’s voice turns lighthearted as she continues narrating this story. Towards the end she breaks in laughter as she recalls what she told another employee in Inga’s house,

Asunción:

Había una muchacha que trabajaba, una señora que se llamaba Asunción. Me acuerdo un dia que cuando estábamos empaquetando los muñenzos y le digo, “Oye Asunción tráeme bolsas del comedor, en el segundo cajón ahí están las bolsas. tráeme un paquete que me faltan bolsas. Ha llegado hasta la puerta de la cocina y de ahí se regresó. Me dice, “Dora, anda tu mejor porque Maria Cecilia no me va a dejar sacar.” “Ay,” le digo, “que barbaridad.” “Tu eres la muerte,” le digo. “Que abras hecho tu,” le dije, “para tener miedo. Ella no te va hacer nada a ti,” le dije. Le tenían miedo.

[There was a girl that worked, an older lady named Asunción. I remember one day when we were packaging English muffins and I tell her “Hey, Asunción,
bring me bags from the dining room, in the second drawer, the bags are there. She has gotten all the way to the kitchen door and then she came back. She tells me, “Dora, better if you go because Maria Cecilia will not let me get them out.” “Ay,” I tell her, “that is crazy.” “You are crazy,” I tell her. “What have you done,” I told her, “to have fear. She is not going to do anything to you,” I told her. They were afraid of her.

Cecilia died in an accident during the five years that Dora was away in Trujillo. Dora had fond memories to tell about Cecilia and the story she narrated about her ghost, she did while laughing. Like many of her stories, it is Dora who has the courage to speak up, in this case with the dead. As she did in life, she gives comfort to Cecilia and tells her to be at peace and Cecilia listened to her old nana and left. This story also reveals how Dora feels about religious intervention. She believes she has a direct relationship with God and speaks to him without any need of other human intervention. She stood in the middle of the room, armed with knowledge acquired through her own efforts and spoke to God and to a lost soul, remedying a problem.

Dora has brought life into the world as we have learned in this chapter and she has taken care of the dead, as we will see in the next one. She has taken lost souls beyond the material world, while at the same time, she has spent a lifetime taking care of the living as a caregiver and a mother. Much of this emotional labor, the roles of mother and caretaker have been performed in the Zwinkel household as we will shortly explore in the next chapter.
Dora and Inga stand side by side in front of the fireplace in the Zwinkel household. If we did not already know their relationship as employer and employee what would we see? How would we read this photograph? Two women embrace, pulling slightly on each other, the beginning of a smile. Could they be friends? Colleagues? Family? At that thought, race takes the foreground. Would we think paid domestic employee and employer? Maybe we would need to know more. Where was the picture taken? What was the event? If I said, it was taken in Peru, would race again become prominent in our
minds? They are both wearing casual clothing, Dora’s shirt is still rolled up. What makes this moment an event is the fact that the picture was taken.
Before I delve into examining Inga and Dora’s relationship, I need to provide the reader with background on Inga. Due to limits of time and space, I was not be able to develop an entire chapter on Inga as I had originally planned so I will attempt to present a brief overview for Inga in the following section.

**Inga**

Although my memory is crumbling into obscurity.
I am a memory for someone,
living again in their recollection.¹

Who was my grandmother Inga? It is a difficult endeavor to pick among the myriad of memories that we carry for her to describe this quite singular woman and the life she created for herself and others around her. I am quite tempted to write down a string of images, to create a collage of photographs and quotes, yellowed newspaper articles and excerpts of videos; to lose myself in the bustle of creative energy, searching how to best capture her life story and through her, our own family’s story. But I feel this is not that time for that project, so I will set it aside for another time when I can bring out my box of paints, and just provide a brief narrative of Inga supported by a few quotes.

When I asked my mother, Ileana Maria, what she thought my grandmother would have liked others to know about her (Inga’s life), my mother answered the following:

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Su mensaje espiritual, su filosofía de la vida en la cual enfoca todo lo positivo que ha sucedido en su vida. Siempre fue una mujer religiosa. Siempre estuvo leyendo libros sobre superación espiritual; ella los subrayaba; los volvía a leer. Inclusive para ayudar a la gente hizo traducir un libro que se llamaba, “El Poder que Esta en Ti.” La versión que tenía estaba en inglés, y ella hizo que fuera traducido, claro de Ingles a Español, porque el libro estaba en Ingles.

[Her spiritual message, her life philosophy in which she emphasizes all the positive things that have happened in her life. She was always a religious woman. She was always reading those books about spiritual growth, she would; she would underline them; read then again. In addition even to help people she made a book called “The Power Within You.” The version she had was in English, and she made it get translated, of course from English to Spanish, because the book was in English.]

My grandmother Inga was a spiritual woman. I remember walking up the steps to her house and finding her outside in her patio, a cigarette in hand and a cup of hot coffee resting on the wooden table nearby. She would be reading a ratty, old copy of some book or article that started with titles such as “Twelve keys to success” or “Many lives, many souls.” The pages would be creased and bent, and the words would be underlined with blue and red ink, whatever pen had been most readily available; the margins filled with comments, her large handwriting similar to my mother’s. She would then proceed to tell me about how God loved all of his children, how much peace she felt in her garden, how we should not judge others, and try to be generous with whatever we had since God had blessed us with so much. Then she would ask me if I had another cigarette. In the same vein, one of my brother’s favorite memories about my grandmother was the time when, again, she was sitting outside of her house reading. The book was the Prophet by Kahlil Gibran. My brother, Tshilo, sat by her and mentioned that it was one of his favorite books. Suddenly, she ripped the book in half and gave him part of it to read. For Tshilo, this moment portrayed the generous, if often offbeat nature of my grandmother.
The book, *El Poder esta en Ti* [*The Power is within You*], was one of those kinds of books that promised spiritual growth and renewal through personal daily exercises. My mother remembers it well, because my grandmother believed deeply that its contents could help those who read it. That is why she worked on getting it translated into Spanish, and that is why she went to the prisons to distribute it among the incarcerated. My mother also remembers this book well, not only because the cards with daily exercises can still be found around the house in the odd metal filing cabinet, but because one day more than twenty-five years ago, she found herself watching the news about an attempted escape by prisoners from a horrendous Peruvian prison named Lurigancho. The prisoners took several hostages, including a famous television actress named Inga. The escape was foiled and many people were killed. My grandmother was the only one to survive the ordeal after the police opened fire on the van that carried her as well as other hostages, which included nuns as well as prisoners. Only one of the dozen of bullets fired that day, grazed the top of her head leaving an angry streak, bright red against the white of her scalp.

Shortly after being released from the hospital, Inga went on to denounce the police for mishandling the matter and placed the blame of all of the deaths on their shoulders. It was through the news that my family found out that my grandmother Inga had been going to the Lurigancho prison for some time. For my mother, Ileana Maria, this incident left her wondering how much she actually knew about the kinds of volunteering work that her mother might have done.

¿Cuántas serán las obras que hacía en secreto que uno nunca supo de nada? ¿Cuántas cosas abra echo ella que nosotros no hemos sabido? Porque por
ejemplo lo que paso en Lurigancho, nadie sabia nada. El único que sabia era un muchacho, Chicho, que trabajaba con ella. En si nosotros no sabíamos nada, hasta el dia que estuvo en la televisión que de repente vino alguien y nos dijo que había una Inga en la televisión y que pasaba algo… Resulta pues cuando salio todo a luz, que {Inga} se había ido a Lurigancho ese día para estar con las monjitas y para ayudar a los presos. Porque parece que visitaba las cárcel aparte de estar en el Palacio de Justicia arreglando los papeles para sacar a los presos… Pero, parece que también se iba a Lurigancho. Y ese día le tomaron rehén pues.

[How many are the works/charities that she has done in secret that one never knew anything about? How many things she might have done that we know nothing about? Because for example what happened in Lurigancho, no one knew anything about. The only person that knew was that kid, Chicho, that worked with her. Actually we did not know anything, until the day that it was on the television where suddenly someone came and told us that there was an Inga in the television and that something was happening… It turns out when everything came to light, that she {Inga} had gone to Lurigancho that day to be with the nuns and to help the prisoners. Because it seems that she went and visited the prisons in addition to going to the Palace of Justice to fix the papers to let the prisoners out… Still, it seems that she also went to Lurigancho. And that day, they took her hostage.]

So how did Inga get there, to that moment in front of television cameras denouncing the Peruvian police as totally incompetent in her heavily accented Spanish?

Inga Zwinkel Cook was born in Dresden, Germany on March 10, 1920. She immigrated to the United States as a child when her family sought to escape the Second World War and settled in Maine. Not much is known about why her family left Germany, but of her childhood my grandmother always liked to tell a particular set of stories. As my mother, Ileana Maria narrated:

Su madre ella {Inga} me contaba que era una mujer de empresa. Que tenía su empresa allí en Alemania. Su pequeña empresa de, no se si era de canastas o de sombreros, era de algo. Pero ella tenía su empresa allí y todo le iba bien hasta que el abuelo {padre de Inga} quiso emigrar. Creo que emigraron a raíz de la guerra, pero no lo se, pero emigraron y el abuelo siempre tenía muchas ideas. Tenía mucho en su cabeza, era inventor. Siempre andaba inventando algo. Y se paraban mudando de un lado al otro… Y la abuela siempre estaba haciendo algo. Ella siempre era muy industriosa, la abuela.
Inga described my great-grandmother, Clara, as a strong, working woman. My great-grandfather in turn, was an idealist, an inventor who according to my grandmother invented the engine for the jet. The constant moving, my grandmother once explained, was due to the fact that they could not afford to live in one place for long, so after a few months of not paying the rent, they would default on their lease and move on in the middle of the night. My grandmother Inga would also tell me about how she grew up helping her father to fish, because although he was an inventor, fishing was what brought money and food into the household. This is a story that Dora also relates. Inga always thought that her father had wanted his eldest offspring to be a boy and when she came along, she was assigned the role.

Inga hated fishing and living in small towns in Maine, so when she turned eighteen, she took a bus to New York to become an actress. There she met my grandfather, a Peruvian from a wealthy family and got married. After their first two children were born, Maria Cecilia and Ileana Maria (my mother), Inga went to visit her in-laws for the first time in Peru. As Inga wrote in 1958 in what it seems now to be part of a series of articles titled “An American in South America”:

Our trip to Peru was one of those “the Man Who Came to Dinner” affairs. We came for two weeks and are here now for more than ten years.
My knowledge of Peru was that of many Americans - vague or nothing. The scant association I had with it in geography class was on the bitter side. We were told to paste products of Peru on our hand drawn maps. Everyone else was contented to glue on a wisp of cotton or a coffee bean and forget about it. But, of course anything so simple, so lacking in opportunity to impress the teacher with my genius, was unthinkable. The cotton dipped in brown shoe polish to represent vicuña would show her once and for all that students who got 15 in bookkeeping weren’t necessarily sub-morons. As usual, “Lady Luck” was dealing from the bottom of the deck. Teacher had to wear a white dress that day, and the shoe polish had to rub off on it. At least I earned the gratitude of the class for the rest of the semester. With a heavy sigh she took down the “THINK” sign.

Cecilia was six, and Maria about a year when my husband received word that his mother in Peru was very ill. He was tied up with the office, but thought the sight of the children might give her incentive to recover.

We lived in New York and I called up my family in Maine about the trip. Everyone’s reaction, after a detailed weather report from each, was more or less typical. Mama cried up two dollars worth of time (she wouldn’t believe that I would return), my kid brother asked me to bring him back a shrunken head—providing it wasn’t mine, of course, whereupon Ma took over the phone and cried two dollars more. Then Pa said, “they ain’t even got hot running water down there!” He was once a sailor whom even a wife and children never succeeded in anchoring down after he left the marines. Suspecting that he was jealous, and nettled with their supposedly worldly reactions, I snapped back hotly, “so what am I supposed to do with hot running water—throw it at the Indians?”

No matter how many air trips I might yet in my life take, it will always seem incredible that one must force their way through the snow and wind misery of February to board a plane in New York and some hours later, having peeled off enroute excess layers of outer clothing like the leaves on a cabbage, and step into the blazing sun and bougainvillea.

I found the few yellowed, typewritten pages that contained this excerpt floating in an old cabinet in my grandmother’s house. I do not know if she ever went beyond the seven pages I found, still they serve as a sad remainder of missed opportunities to learn about the life that now due to Alzheimer’s will remain a mystery to me. At the same time, her written words perhaps decades old, also contain a light-heartedness, an ability to amuse and fling a joke that exemplifies who Inga was and how later in her life she came to be a celebrity, a comedian in a Peruvian variety show.

Clara, Inga’s mother, was right. Inga never came back to reside in the United States. She loved Peru so much, that she became a part of it in the most unlikely of ways.
After working in the United States embassy as a secretary and starting a bakery in her home, Inga decided to give television a try. She began in a children’s show with a man called Tío Johnny. After a stint, she moved on to “Trampolín a la Fama,” a variety show that catered to the Peruvian populous. There she was nicknamed “La Gringa Inga” and for the next couple of decades she was part of the supporting cast, an entertainer and comedian in Peruvian television. She also had two more children, Penelope and Lucho as well as lost her eldest, Maria Cecilia to a train accident. By that time she was taken hostage in Lurigancho, Inga had lived in Peru for more than thirty-five years.

It would be easy to mistakenly think of my grandmother as a wealthy individual or as belonging to the upper strata of Peruvian society. Although she married a man whose family at the time was part of the elite in Lima, my grandfather did not have access to any of his family’s fortune. Several years after Inga and Lucho were married, Lucho’s side of the family ceased contact with both of them. Although the details of the estrangement have never been clear, I should note that Inga and Lucho’s societal and economic position could be more aptly described as middle-class. In addition, for most of Inga’s married life, she had to work. By the time Dora began to work in the Nogales street house, Inga had already started a bakery business from her home in Chaclacayo as well as an English muffin one. This is why even though Dora was hired as a paid domestic worker to clean and cook, she was quickly transferred to work as a baker, and another person was hired to work in the household in her place. It was Inga who worked side by side with Dora, teaching her how to make different cakes and pastries, which were sold to a number of small supermarkets. When Inga began working in television,
Dora was solely in charge of the bakery for a time. The business eventually failed and Dora returned to Trujillo for five years. Upon her return, the whole household moved to another residence in Las Begonias street (Dora sometimes locates this house as being across from The Casona), my mother Ileana Maria started a new bakery and although Dora helped her, with my grandfather ailing, most of Dora’s energies were spent working in the household as the main housekeeper. After my grandfather died, Inga moved to a different house, a block from her old residence in Las Begonias, which was located high up on a mountainside (Dora refers to this house as the *la casa del cerro* [the house in the mountain]). In that residence, Dora was in charge of both the home and the English muffins business. Both Dora’s business savvy and her skills in running the household, as well as my grandmother’s television career, kept the house running smoothly and economically. Shortly after Dora and Inga parted ways, my grandmother closed the English muffin business when it became unprofitable. By that time, my grandmother had also stopped working in television. Several years later my grandmother Inga was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.

The purpose of this brief section was to provide the reader with a sense of who Inga was, not only as an employer, but also as an individual. While her capacity to narrate her own life has been taken away by Alzheimer’s, there are many of us who carry her memories, remembering how she impacted our lives through jokes, writings and actions. Dora, like the rest of her family and friends, has many stories about Inga and in this chapter, we will hear some of them. The stories found in this chapter provide us with images of Inga as well as life in the Zwinkel household from Dora’s perspective. At the
same time, Dora’s narrative also illuminates the kinds of relationships that can develop between two individuals that although different in many ways, shared the intimate space of a household for three and half decades.
Forming a Relationship

Cuando nació Penelope. Ahí fue cuando recién comencé a trabajar ahí. Mi hija, mi Janet, son contemporáneas por una semana con Penelope. Por una semana se lleva de edad con Penelope. Nada más. De ahí he entrado a trabajar con ella {Janet}. Bebita no más. Tengo una foto de mi hija cuando la he puesto en la vereda en frente de la casa, la puse una alfombra así. En ese tiempo todavía estaba Ingaruca como fotógrafo. El le tomó la foto echadita así. Entonces yo comencé a trabajar cuando Penelope era recién nacida. Yo la recibí, cuando yo abrí la puerta. La recibí así en mis brazos.

When Penelope was born. That is when I began working there. My daughter, my Janet, is contemporary by one week with Penelope. She is one week older than Penelope. No more. From there I have started working with her {Janet}. Just a baby. I have a picture of my daughter when I placed her in the sidewalk in front of the house, I placed her on top of a rug like this. At that time, Ingaruca was still working as a photographer. He took a picture of her, lying down like this. So I started working when Penelope was a newborn. I received her, when I opened the door. I received her like this in my arms.

The above quote was Dora’s answer to the question: When did you start working for Inga? Dora’s memory identifies the moment of her entrance into Inga’s household by connecting it to the arrival of two children, her second daughter Janet and Inga’s third daughter, Penelope. Dora’s answer to a question about labor, an answer that is usually reducible to a date on any job application, in turn is imbricated with a memory of personal familial celebration, the birth of a child. She goes on to speak about recording the moment, a photograph she still has of Janet on the sidewalk in front of the house. The photographer’s identity is important, because Ingaruca is considered a pillar in the Chaclacayan community. Even now, people in Chaclacayo remember him as the photographer who was present in all momentous occasions be it weddings, baptisms or birthday parties. The memory of her child lies within the memory of the birth of another, Inga’s child, Penelope. Dora stands at the threshold and receives Penelope’s newborn body. A body that she embraces in her arms. From the description one can imagine,
Dora standing at the entrance of the house, the door open and one of her first jobs is to hold a child that is not her own. One cannot help to notice that the child is a small, white bundle with wisps of blond hair against her strong tanned skin. She is the one to usher the newborn child into her new home. In a romantic light, one could say that she is the keeper of the house. She opens the door and welcomes other souls to enter. But if there is anything that has been learned from testimonials by paid household laborers and studies conducted on paid domestic service, the work cannot and should not be romanticized.

Within the household, employers of paid domestic workers have engaged in racist and discriminatory practices that have undermined and exploited physically and emotionally individuals under their employment. At the same time many paid domestic employees have developed strategies to deal with employers attitudes and demands in attempts to mitigate the impact of such practices and protect themselves. But is this Dora’s narrative? Through Dora’s stories, this chapter will explore the relationships between Dora and Inga, as well as between Dora and other members of the Zwinkel family. Her narrative provides an opportunity to explore how differences of race and class were negotiated within a Peruvian household mid-twentieth century. Dora’s stories are striking in their emphasis on the complexity of employer and employee interrelations where the employee does not view herself as a victim of exploitation. In addition, her stories are unique since they shed light on a household where the employer is not a Peruvian national. Having a German-American employer may have opened spaces for Dora to assert herself not only as a strong woman in a machista society but the pervasive
attitudes related to class differentiation and status within the household may have been attenuated.
Gender and Space in Peruvian Society

Cuando Ferrando dijo, “Voy a presentarles a una nueva persona. Es una belleza. Es un orgullo tener esta gente. La Gringa Inga.” Así la presento Ferrando. Para ese tiempo estaba Chicho, Carbajal, la Violeta, Tribilin y otros dos mas que respaldaban. Bonito era el show.

[When Ferrando said, “I am going to present to you a new person. She is a beauty. It is an honor to have these people. La Gringa Inga.” That is how Ferrando presented her. By that time there were Chicho, Carbajal, La Violeta, Tribilin, and another two who were back ups. The show was pretty.]

Hay una parte donde sale y dicen “La Gringa Inga va hablar,” pero no se que iba a agradecer, Oh my God! “Yo agradecer a Ferrando por esto...” Y el publico, “ja, ja, ja...” Yo miraba todo los programas. Yo siempre veía el show.

[There was a part where they would come on and say “La Gringa Inga is going to speak,” but I am not sure what she was going to thank. Oh my God! “I thank Ferrando for this...” And the audience, “ja, ja, ja,...” I would watch all of the programs. I always watch the show.]

Most Peruvian people remember my grandmother, Inga as a television star. Although it may be hard to describe her exact performance in the Peruvian variety show, “Trampolín a la Fama,” the second quote is how Dora attempts to capture Inga’s role in the show. Sufficient to say she was an entertainer, a comedian of sorts who made use of her “Americaness” (including her heavily accented Spanish) as a performative tool to make people laugh. Ferrando was the main character (kind of the ring leader) and my grandmother along with other members was the supporting cast. The show was made up of different contests where people came from all areas in Peru to participate in hopes of winning baskets of food, home appliances, and/or small amounts of money. The show also included brief comedy skits and moments of inspirational thought. In addition, there were also performances and presentations by famous dancers, singers, comedians, and at one time then President of Peru, Alberto Fujimori, showed up to dance a waltz.
Although few in her family ever watched her perform as a comedian in the Peruvian variety show, “Trampolín a la Fama,” Dora did. Although Inga’s family failed to participate in this aspect of her life, in contrast, millions of lower-class Peruvians watched her. The audience of “Trampolín a la Fama” was “el pueblo.” Did we as a family not enjoy watching the show because it did not appeal to our middle-class sensibilities? It is difficult to say. Some of us have reflected on this possibility, but we have yet to arrive at a clear consensus in the matter. Regardless, Dora did watch it and as her words attest, she liked it. The reason that I bring this up, is not about taste in television programs, but about the space that Inga inhabited in Peruvian society. Inga was a public figure, inhabiting a public space that in traditional Peruvian middle-class culture was reserved to men. As Alison MacEwen Scott states, the gendered middle-class values as expressed through the family, differentiated between the public and private spheres, located women in the latter making them economically and socially dependent on men.² Even though Maruja Barrig has suggested that the construct of the middle-class began to change during the 1960s as it was challenged by factors such as the growth of feminist women’s movements, the expansion of state-led education for women, the increased availability and awareness of contraceptive methods, and the “influence of a more ‘liberated’ international media,”³ the ideas that women belonged in the domestic space were still prevalent. Though in the above statement, I am discussing middle-class values, it should be noted that in Peru, those values were not necessarily limited to the

² MacEwen Scott, 80
³ Maruja Barrig, *Cinturon de Castidad* (Lima: Mosca Azul, 1971), 76 as quoted in MacEwen Scott, 82
middle-class. The peasant and laboring class were affected by similar ideologies, but due to their economic status, women as well as men were part of the public sphere through their need to labor in formal and informal markets in the case of the laboring class, and in the fields or market places in the case of the peasants. Needless to say, unpaid domestic work translated for many women as what is now described as “the second shift.” Work outside the home was also gendered, where women were expected to engage in particular kinds of labor. Dora’s labor as a paid domestic worker was one of the “approved” kinds of labor that women were expected to engage in.

Dora worked within a household and the tasks that she engaged in, including cleaning, cooking, baking, raising children, and caretaking fell in the realm of the “feminine.” Inga’s choice to be a comedian in a television variety show did not align with ideas of confinement and domesticity. But this was not a new choice, television was not Inga’s first venture into the public sphere. On the contrary, the Inga that Dora knew and described in her stories was an individual that tended to break away at times from patriarchal impositions.

A tu abuelito un tiempo lo llevaron al Loayza {Hospital Nacional Arzobispo Loayza-HNAL}, en ese tiempo cuando estábamos en los Nogales. Lo llevaron a operar de las vistas. Ahí lo operaron en el Loayza y cuando el vino también le abrió la puerta, lo recibí, también así, el vendado. Yo le daba de comer en la boca; cuando tenía que ir al baño, yo llamaba a uno de los muchachos para que lo llevaran. Pero tu abuelita era una callejera. Decía, “Ya vengo, me voy a donde Fulano.” En ese tiempo había un comandante que no me acuerdo como se llama. Se iba a la casa de ellos. A veces venía media chispeada. A la hora del almuerzo a veces nos abandonaba, pero ya la Maximila servía la comida. Le daba de comer a Penelope, a Maria Cecilia, a Maria, todos comían y nos llamaba también a nosotros a la hora del almuerzo para comer.

[For a time, your grandfather was taken to the Loayza {Archbishop Loayza National Hospital}, at that time when we were in the Nogales house. They took
him to operate his eyesight. They operated him there in the Loayza, and when he
returned I also opened the door for him, I received him, also like that, bandaged
as he was. I would feed him directly into his mouth; when he had to go to the
bathroom, I would call one of the boys to take him. But your grandmother liked
to go out. She would say, “I will be right back, I am going over to some person or
another.” At that time there was a commander whose name I do not remember.
She would go to their house. Sometimes she would come back a little tipsy. At
lunch time she would sometime abandon us, but Maximila would serve the meal.
She would feed Penelope, Maria Cecilia, Maria, everyone ate and she would also
call us at lunchtime to eat.

In this excerpt Dora places herself in the domestic sphere. She is the one that
receives my grandfather Lucho. She is the one again standing at the threshold, receiving
and taking into the house a fragile creature, temporarily blinded by an operation.
Reminiscent of the newborn Penelope story, Dora receives my grandfather and brings
him into the safety of the house. The image of her arm extended, the blind man reaching,
touching, holding her arm as he shuffles slowly inside guided by his trusted ama de llaves
[housekeeper]. Dora follows the intimate description of how she took care of him by
stating that Inga was a person who liked to go out. Dora continues her memory:

Ahí he trabajado se puede decir bastante tiempo. Ahí he estado mas de seis años
con ellos. Mas de seis años. En ese tiempo agarra tu abuela y me asegura.
Después de ahí, creo, me fui al Norte cinco años. A Trujillo. Ya cuando volví me
reincorpore aquí con la Inga a seguir trabajando de nuevo allí. De ahí nos hemos
ido al cerro hasta el ultimo que he trabajado. Tu hermano chiquito como una
lombriz, era chiquitito. Tu también. Mas bien ahí en frente a La Casona, ahí tu
chiquita, bebita no mas en el coche. Cuando tu mama salía, tu en el coche y yo
en la cocina te quedabas; ahí comías, jugabas, dormías.

[There I have worked you can say a long time. I was there for more than six
years with them. More than six. At that time you grandmother gives me health
insurance. After that I believe, I left and went back up North. To Trujillo. When
I came back, I reincorporated myself there with Inga to continue working again.
After that we have gone to the mountain house until the end of my work. Your
brother was little like a earthworm, he was very small. You too. More so there in
front of La Casona, you were small, just a baby in your baby carriage. When
your mother would go out, you in your baby carriage and me in the kitchen, you would stay; there you ate, played, slept.]

Dora and I laugh at the pleasure of this memory of a younger me nestled in the warmth of stroller in the kitchen. Dora continues:

Tu has crecido ahí en la cocina. Para que te voy a decir Maria Cecilia que todo, todo, todo, jamás en la santa vida, sería un pecado, si yo mintiese que me han faltado al respeto, ni tu dijunto abuelo, ni cuando cai mal ahí en frente de La Casona. Cuando el {mi abuelo Lucho} cayo enfermo, cayo mal con esa tos que tuvo que murió ahogado. Yo lo curaba. Yo le cure una laga donde el carro lo habitía tirado al suelo. No se podia mover, estaba postrado en cama. Me acuerdo que el doctor que iba a atenderlo le decía, “Lucho, tu esto esta sanando muy bien. ¿Y que enfermera te cura?” le dice. Y el {Lucho} le dice, “a mi no me cura ninguna enfermera. Mi ama de llaves es la que me cura.” “¿Y donde esta tu ama de llaves?” “Ella,” le dice y me señala. “Señora,” me dice, “¿usted sabe algo de medicina?” “No,” doctor, “no se nada.” Pero el hecho que yo lo curaba, le cambiaba, lo atendía, lo asistía como corresponde. Cuando estaba mal de la flema también, hasta el ultimo dia que he estado con el ahí cuidándolo. Ya me iba a las seis de la tarde, cuando escucho, “Señora Dora tengo hambre.” Otra vez a licuarle la comida , darle por sorberte. De ahí me dice, “Señora Dora, quiero tomar Coca Cola.” Ya le tuve que recalentarle mas o menos para que no la tome tan fria. Y le di la Coca Cola. Después me dice, “Señora Dora, quiero tomar mis pastillas.” Tenia una canastita redonda, llena de pastillas. “¿Que pastillas quiere?” “Tal.” Y le di de tomar. Ya el muchacho lo cambio porque le pusieron su inyeccion. El doctor le dijo, “Lucho, ya mañana tu estarás caminando todo Chaclacayo.” Y eso fue una mentira, porque el muchacho lo llevo al baño y cuando salio, salio toditito mojado asi. Todo mojado, su camisa asi. “Oye bruto, yo no te he mandado para que lo vas a bajar,” le dije al muchacho. “No,” me dijo, “Señora esta sudando.” Estaba sudando porque la inyeccion le hacía un efecto, que parece que no era para esa enfermedad lo que tenía. Que inyeccion seria. Ya agarre, lo cambie todo, le di todo lo que me pidió. Y me dice, “Ahora si señora Dora, puede irse .” Eran las nueves de la noche. “Ahora si se puede ir porque yo tambien ya me voy a acostar,” me dijo.

[You have grown up there in the kitchen. Why would I tell you differently Maria Cecilia that everything, everything, everything, never in my life, it would be a sin, if I would lie and say that anyone has disrespected me, not your deceased grandfather, not when I fell ill in the house in from of La Casona. When he {my grandfather Lucho} fell sick, fell ill with that cough that he had and died suffocated. I would cure him. I cured him that wound where the car had thrown him into the ground. He could not move, he was confined to bed. I remember that the doctor that tended to him would say, “Lucho, you are healing well. And
what nurse cures you?” he says. An he [Lucho] tells him, “No nurse cures me. My housekeeper is the one that cures me.” “And where is your housekeeper?” “Her,” he tells him and points to me. “Ma’am,” he tells me, “do you know anything about medicine?” “No,” doctor, “I do not know anything.” But it is the truth that I would cure him, I changed him, tended to him, assisted him, how it should be. When he was sick with the phlegm also, even until the last day that I was there, taking care of him. I was about to leave around six in the afternoon when I hear, “Señora Dora, I am hungry.” Again I have to blend his food, feed him through a straw. Then he tells me, “Señora Dora, I want to drink Coca Cola.” So I had to warm it up a little bit so he would not drink it so cold. And I gave Coca Cola. Then he tells me, “Señora Dora, I want to take my pills.” He had this small round basket full of pills. “What pills do you want?” “Those.” And I gave them to him to take. The boy then changed him because they gave him his injection. The doctor told him, “Lucho, tomorrow you will be walking all of Chaclacayo.” And that was a lie, because the boy took him to the bathroom and when he came out, he came out all wet like this. All wet, his shirt like this. “Hey dummy, I did not send you to give him a bath,” I told the boy. “No,” he told me, “Señora he is sweating.” He was sweating because the injection gave him an effect, it seems that it was not for the illness that he had. Who knows what kind of injection it was. I changed him completely, gave him everything he asked me. And he tells me, “Now Señora Dora, you can leave.” It was nine at night. “Now you can leave because I am also going to go to sleep,” he told me.]

Dora pauses briefly before continuing with her story:

Al siguiente dia a las siete yo ya estaba llegando, cuando doy la curva llegando a la casa, lo veo a tu papa parado afuera con las manos acá en el bolsillo. Dije, “Don Lucho partió.” Justo llego y me dice, “Vieja, nos dejo Don Lucho.” “Ya Doctor.” Había fallecido. Yo con tu mama lo hemos vestido con su terno, con su corbata. Tu abuelita casi, no se le daba mucho por atenderlo. Mas lo atendía yo. A el quien mas lo atendía era yo. Porque como estábamos cuando estaba con esa flema, tenía que estar con papel higiénico. Cuando le agarra esa tos, ese ahogo, botaba esa flema y tenía que con mi mano, agarraba papel higiénico y agarraba yo y le jalaba; le sacaba así de su boca como tiras. Así es como le jalaba yo.

[The next day, at seven I was already arriving, when I turn the corner arriving to the house, I see your dad standing outside with his hands, here, in his pocket. I said, “Don Lucho has left.” I arrived and he tells me, “Vieja, Don Lucho left us.” “Yes Doctor.” He had died. Your mother and I dressed him in his suit, with his tie. Your grandmother almost did not do much to tend to him. I would take care of him more. The person who took more care of him was I. Because how we were, when he had that phlegm, I had to have toilet paper. When that coughing would get him, that suffocation, he would expel that phlegm and I would have to
with my hand, I would take the toilet paper and would pull; I would take it out of his mouth like strips. That is how I would pull it out of him.]

The image that begins to emerge is about whom in Dora’s memory inhabits the household space. At the same time, in this excerpt we can explore how labor allocations in this particular domestic space differ up to a certain extent from other “traditional” Peruvian households. With the exception of the five years when Dora returns to Trujillo, Dora is always present in Inga’s household. It is interesting that she uses the word “reincorporar” to describe her return to Inga’s household. As its English counterpart, reincorporation, reincorporar is defined as the action “to [re]unite or [re]work into something already existent so as to form an indistinguishable whole; to [re]blend or [re]combine thoroughly to give material form: [re]embody; to [re]unite in or as one body.” For Dora, leaving for Trujillo was an unexpected break, returning to work was a fluid, seamless motion. In a sense, it is as she never left. Dora’s memories that relate to Inga always place her, Dora, within the household. In turn, Inga is many times described as absent. Dora is the person that took care of Lucho, as Dora states: “Tu abuelita casi, no se le daba mucho por atenderlo. Mas lo atendía yo. A el quien mas lo atendía era yo.” [Your grandmother almost did not do much to tend to him. I would take care of him more. The person who took more care of him was I.] When Lucho died, it was Dora along with my mother who dressed his body. The use of vieja [old person] by my father, Guillermo, is an acknowledgment of closeness, an intimate exchange through word play. From this excerpt and others that will follow, it should be noted that Dora’s detailed descriptions of caretaking not only reveal the emotional and physical investment that she

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poured into her work, but also continue to illuminate her personal aspirations and childhood dreams, and as I elaborated in the previous chapter, the ways that she attempted to realize them within the confined spaces of paid domestic work.

Dora’s memory continued down this particular path when I asked her if she knew what kind of disease affected my grandfather’s lungs. Dora went on to explain:

It seems that throughout his life he had colds. He also liked to drink his whisky with cold soda. Sometimes I would be in the kitchen and he would say, “Señora Dora, do you want a drink?” And he would give me one. Your grandmother once told me, “Dora you are very bad.” “Why?” I said, “Señora.” “Because you are going to take my husband,” she tells me joking.

At this point in the interview, Dora’s imitation of my grandmother’s broken Spanish and heavy American accent made me burst into laughter. Dora joined me before returning to her story in a melodic but more serious tone.

It was that coldness seeping into his lungs that gave him the congestion that he had. I asked my eldest daughter, the one that studied nursing. She told me, “Mom, with that which he has, they can take him to the hospital and take the phlegm out. They can take everything out, but it would come back in a larger
quantity. It comes back in larger quantity, it reproduces itself anew.” He did not want to go to the hospital. “No,” he would tell me. “Do not take me to the hospital.” “No,” he would tell me. So he left. From then no more did I work with the bakery business. Only the English muffin business was worked by Máximo and the other boy. From there we went to the house in the mountain. And after that I left. Did not return again. My own also grew up, needed more care. I could no longer leave them alone. For me, everything, everything, everything, from el finado, to your mother, to your grandmother, everyone has been good for me. Very good.

The last sentence was uttered softly.

As Dora continues with her story her tone becomes lighthearted again and parts of the narrative are infused with laughter from both her and I.

Cuando yo iba a trabajar ahí, cuando iba a tener no a mi hija, pero al otro a mi tercer varón, estaba en estado y así iba a trabajar. Y el finado me decía, “Panzona, ¿que quieres comer para traerte?” Porque el hacía las compras en el mercado. Él le decía a la señora que cocinaba, “esto vas a hacer porque la Panzona quiere comer esto.” Agarraba y me daba mis gustos. Muy bueno han sido para mi. Muy buenos, muy buenos. Para mi, para mis hijos. Como yo les cuento es como si han sido, mi familia verdadera. Bonito la he pasado con ellos. A veces cuando le entraba el berrinche a la Inga nos gritaba. A todos le gritaba; hasta al finadito de tu tío Carlos, el hermano de tu abuelo Lucho. Una vez hicieron fiesta ahí en los Nogales. Ahi bailo tu abuela el Charleston con el. Lindo, lindo, lindo. Y una vez que estuve agachada limpiando así la chimenea a donde estaba colgado el cuadro de la mama de ellos. Cuando me fui a agachar, y Pum! Se cae el cuadro de arriba. Yo no había visto que el finado Carlos estaba atrás mío. “Vez,” me dice, “Dora. “Ella te va a castigar si tu no limpias bien.” Pero para que, he pasado una vida linda. El señor Carlos también era una buena familia. Muy buenos eran. Yo tengo muy buenos recuerdos de todos ustedes.

[When I would go work there, when I was going to have not my daughter, but my third male child, I was pregnant and I would go like that to work. And el finado would tell me, “Panzona [Big belly] what do you want to eat to bring it for you?” Because he was the one to do the shopping in the open market. He would tell the señora that cooked, “This is what you are going to make because the Panzona wants to eat this.” He would give me my pleasures. They have been very good to me. Very good, very good. For me, for my kids. Like I tell them it is like they have been my true family. I have spent it nice with them. Sometimes when a temper tantrum would get into your grandmother she would scream at us. She screamed at everyone; even the finadito of your uncle Carlos, the brother of your grandfather Lucho. One time they had a party there in the Nogales house. There
your grandmother danced the Charleston with him. Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. And one time I was crouching cleaning the chimney like this where there was this painting of their mother. When I went to crouch, and Pum! The painting falls down from up there. I had not seen that the finado Carlos was behind me. “See,” he tells me, “Dora.” “She will punish you if you do not clean well.” But what I can say, I have passed a beautiful life. The señor Carlos was also good family. Very good they were. I have fond memories of all of you.

What are the connections that she seeks to reveal, and what other facts does this excerpt bring to light? To begin, we find out through Dora that Lucho actually takes care of domestic affairs such as shopping for food for household consumption. As I am informed by Dora my grandfather Lucho’s infirmity and his inability to obtain jobs outside the home locate him as part of the domestic sphere, and results in Inga being the sole breadwinner in the public. This is a reversal of “traditional” middle-class familial constructions in Peru. But Lucho’s masculinity does not seem to suffer in the domestic sphere, because within it, as Dora attests, he can still take the paternal role of caretaker. His foil is pregnant Dora. Lucho asks Dora what she desires, this exchange could easily be confused as a conversation between a wife and a husband, and it does not go unnoticed by Inga. When Inga jokingly comments “*tu me vas a quitar a mi esposo*” [you are going to take my husband], it shows that the close relationship between Dora and Lucho is acknowledged. In a sense, Inga’s joke marks her space as Lucho’s “real” wife, effectively removing Dora from occupying that space if ever so briefly. Throughout her stories, Dora has constructed a space for herself as “mother” and “wife” not only of her biological children, but also of the inhabitants of the Zwinkel household. At the same time, in her narratives, Dora locates herself in the space of paid worker. Let us explore
further how she moves from one space into another through the narratives found in this chapter.

As I have previously stated, in several of Dora’s stories about working in the Zwinkel household, Inga is absent by either being somewhere outside the home or by occupying a room in the house where Dora’s memory does not linger. In the story at the beginning of this chapter, Dora places Inga outside the house. While Inga is “absent,” Dora is the one who welcomes Lucho back into the home and nurses him back to health. Maximila, the cook, is the one that feeds Inga’s children as well as calls Dora and serves her meals. Inga comes back into the story as a “benevolent” employer who takes care of Dora by providing her with a pension. This comment is significant because as I will discuss later in the chapter, the topic of who has a pension is not only of particular importance in terms of security for the laboring class of Peru, but is something that Dora discussed at some length. In a matter of two sentences, Inga is reintroduced into the narrative of the household and assigned the role of head, “volví a reincorporar ahí con la Inga a seguir trabajando de nuevo allí.” [I reincorporated myself there with Inga to continue working again]. Dora retakes her mantle as paid domestic employee.

I want to briefly state that although the previous sentence may make it seem that being in the subordinate position of paid domestic worker can easily be shed, traded or discarded like an overused cloak, Dora never strays from her identification as a worker in Inga’s house. The narrative she provides us has an underlining thread describing her condition as a laborer, and at many times during her stories, she places that class identity at the center of the story. What I actually want to elucidate in this section, is that as she
constructs her story, Dora presents herself in a variety of lights, as a mother figure through recollections of childcare and pregnancy, as a “wife”, as a nurse with the capacity to cure, and as a paid domestic employee. It is interesting to note, that the mother and wife figures assumed in this memory make use of Inga’s children and husband. It is almost as if in Inga’s absence, that space in the domestic realm is left open for Dora to step in and fill.

Studies have shown that paid domestic employees such as nannies have taken roles as “mothers” for other women’s children. The emotional expenditure by individuals such as nannies as they create emotional linkages with children other than their own, has been documented. The use of these emotional linkages by workers and the performance of motherhood using the children of others as a way to enrich the meaning and purpose of particular kinds of labor, has been less explored. I believe that consciously or unconsciously Dora, uses all these “valued identities” to construct a narrative of a life, full of meaning and purpose. A life that is not easily reducible to a tale of just laboring class exploitation. At the same time, in her narrative she is able to move

5 Many scholars have written about motherhood and paid household labor such as maids and nannies in the context of transnational migration including: Grace Chang, Disposable Domestics: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 2000); Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild (eds), Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy (New York: Metropolitan/Owl Books, 2002); Janet Henshall Momsen, Gender, ed. Migration and Domestic Service (London; New York: Routledge, 1999); Pei-Chia Lan, Global Cinderellas: Migrant Domestics and Newly Rich Employers in Taiwan (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001); Mary K. Zimmerman, Jacquelyn S. Litt ad Christine E. Bose (eds), Global Dimensions of Gender and Carework (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006).
between spaces that in the material reality of Peruvian stratified society would be hard to accomplish. By this I mean, that in her narrative, Dora can construct a self that can move closer to embodying a traditional, middle-class existence, a feat that is much harder to do in material life, especially for female lower-class workers in the informal sector of domestic service. The embodiment is transitory as racialized and classed bodies move in and out of the household changing the dynamics found within. At the same time, the emotional linkages that are developed may lead Dora to claim at times that Inga’s family was like her own family. This particular assertion will be discussed at greater length in the following section.

As Dora continues her story, we find again that a medical professional recognizes Dora’s talent as a nurse, which, as discussed in the last chapter, was Dora’s childhood dream. At this point, Lucho’s clarification that there is no nurse, but that it is Dora, his “ama de llaves” who is his healer, reinforces that Dora’s work went beyond taking care of the house, that her labor was important to the physical well being of Lucho. Such fact is clearly recognized by both the doctor and Lucho, as well as by the audience of this narrative. At the end of this story, Dora returns to the “role” of domestic worker with a lighthearted, yet haunting description of herself cleaning the fireplace where she is not only being watched by her employer’s brother Carlos, but also by the portrait of the deceased mother of the head of household. Carlos jokingly delivered statement: “Vez Dora... Ella te va a castigar si tu no limpias bien,” [“See Dora ... She will punish you if

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6 As I discussed in the literature review, scholars including Ximena Bunster and Elsa Chaney (1985) have found that there is little evidence to support that paid domestic work serves a “bridge” to a better occupations, that upward (also referred as vertical) mobility for paid domestic workers in Peruvian Society is difficult in material reality.
you do not clean well.”] is reminiscent of actual physical punishment experienced by
dividuals in domestic service at the hands of their employers.

Dora laughed when she was re-telling this particular memory, but when I
transcribed it, I felt it contain an ominous tone. It may be that I had read so much on the
topic of maltreatment of paid domestic workers, a sad reality that seems to be widespread
in Peruvian society, that I reacted to the joke with a shiver of revulsion. But why is Dora
amused by the memory? There are several answers that come to mind. It could be that
Dora did not know about the detrimental labor condition and treatment of other paid
domestic workers, but I seriously doubt it. Throughout the interviews Dora stated that
she saw a difference of treatment between certain employers and that is why she chose to
work in particular households. Another reason could be that although Dora knew that
many paid domestic workers in her situation did get punished, she was certain that
Carlos’ joke was just that, a joke. Dora knew that in Inga’s household, either a deceased
member of the household nor a living one would maltreat her. As Dora states about
Carlos and the rest of the family “El señor Carlos también era una buena familia. Muy
buenos eran. Yo tengo muy buenos recuerdos de todos ustedes.” [The señor Carlos was
also good family. Very good they were. I have fond memories of all of you.]
Intimacy: Negotiating class and race within the Zwinkel household

In case Dora’s memories that I have quoted up until now have not formed an image of the intimate nature of much paid domestic service work, let me quote one of Dora’s first remembrances that I recorded for this project:

Ella {Penelope}, ella tuvo este bicho interno…la solitaria. Entonces ella ya estaba orinando ella tenía dos años, tres años mas o menos…una vez, Inga estaba en el baño. La había llevado ella al baño y ella al hacer comenzo …a salir el animal. Y se empalma en el piso. Si. Así que tu abuela comienzo, “Dora, Dora.” Comenzó ella a llamarme... “A Penelope sus tripas se salen,” me dijo. “Sus tripas se salen.” Cuando lo fui a ver… yo para eso, yo no sabía como era la solitaria osea que la haga visto simplemente yo pod’ sabía la solitaria en dibujo pero e leído en el libro...Entonces digo, “no son tripas.” Le digo a Inga, “ese la solitaria.” Entonces ella comenzamos a jalar mas asi…la puso {a Penelope} asi sobre aca mi falda y ella le jala asi con el papelito y ella jala, jala, jala, jala, sale, sale, sale, sale...Y dicen cuando no sale la cabeza se reproduce de nuevo. Pero mas no se si salio o no salio la cabeza. Creo que no salio. Porque no se que medico era que lo trataba y le mandaba unos liquidos de unos pomitos asi chiquititos. En la manana tomaba a las ocho de la manana ya no tomaba nada hasta las diez, once de la manana. Pa que le haga efecto. Eso asi como lo hemos curado. Niñita todavía. Y asi se lo curó. Ay, como sera.

[She {Penelope}, she had this internal creature…a tapeworm. Then she was already peeing, she was two years, three years old, give or take. Once, Inga was in the bathroom. She had taken her to the bathroom, and as she went, it started…the animal started to come out. And [it] falls to the ground. Yes. So your grandmother started: “Dora, Dora.” She started to call me... “Penelope’s intestines are coming out,” she told me. “Her intestines are coming out.” When I went to see it...I for that, I did not know how a tapeworm was, I mean that I had simply seen it. I knew the tapeworm by drawing but I read it in a book...So I said, “They are not intestines.” I said to Inga, “Is the tapeworm.” So then she begins to pull this way. She placed her {Penelope} here on my skirt and she pulled it from her like this with a small paper and she pulled, pulled, pulled, and it came out, came out, came out.... And it, I said that if the head does not come out, it reproduces anew. More, I do not know, if it came out, or the head did not come out. I believe it did not. I do not know which doctor was treating it but he would send some liquid in a some small bottle, this little. In the morning she would drink at eight in the morning and would not take anything until ten, eleven in the morning. So it would have an effect. That is how we have cured her. Yes, still a little girl. And that is how it was cured. Ay, how it is.]
This was the first story Dora shared with me after I asked her to relate her life during the time she worked with Inga. The memory that she chose to narrate, involved Inga and herself as they sat in the confined space of a bathroom. In that cramped space, they face each other, a sick child, Penelope, between them as they endeavored to pull an intestinal parasite out of her. Dora held Penelope in her lap as Inga attempted to remove the tapeworm. Dora laughed as she told me Inga’s initial reaction upon seeing the tapeworm and how her own knowledge played a significant part in resolving the situation. Dora does not shy away from reeling in her audience (me and through me, you - the reader) into intimate spaces through the use of graphic details about bodies, illness, emotions, death and birth. Her tales take us into ephemeral once physical spaces now residing in her mind such as bathrooms and bedrooms, the kitchen and the living room; she also takes you into emotional ones, as she relates personal exchanges between herself and others, moments of pain, fear, depression as well as joy and love. Her remembrances provide us with a glimpse of the lives that normally lay hidden from view behind the walls that usually enclose the domestic space of the household. In the following paragraphs I will continue to explore further how the intimate nature of domestic labor and differences of class and race present in the home, are negotiated by Dora and how the characteristics of the Zwinkel household, particularly Inga’s own life experiences may have contributed to Dora’s own understanding of her position in terms of class, race and kinship.

In previous discussions I have already elucidated how throughout her life and those of her children, Dora’s desire for upward mobility shaped certain decisions such as
the education of her children. As is clear from studies on domestic literature, upward mobility from the laboring class to the middle class is limited or non-existent for paid domestic workers. In the last section, I also discussed how Dora’s construction of her own story in the Zwinkel household, would at times obscure class lines; Dora in her story located herself not only at the center of the narrative, but in spaces that would normally be occupied by the female head of household. Those temporary identity positions would shift as racialized and classed bodies entered or left rooms, or the home. Such shifts may have allowed Dora to further enrich her life experiences by associating her labor with recognizable and respected Peruvian identities, that of a middle-class mother and wife. Another strategy that Dora may have engaged with as she negotiated differences of class and race in the Zwinkel household may have been by redefining Inga’s class and race.

Siempre tenia, ella siempre era, siempre tenia la adoración a Dios. Ella ha sido, como se dice, una gringa, pero sencilla. Una gringa que desde su niñez a tenido esa quebrantación de ser, ser, como dijo ella misma, “cuando nosotros nos escapamos de la Segunda Guerra mundial que iba a ver, nosotros nos fuimos lejos. Vivíamos en una chacra. No teníamos nada. Teníamos la casa, teníamos que vivir escondidos.” Ella ha crecido como un pobre. Siempre con lo poco que ha tenido, nada de lujo, nada de esto; ni por acá, ni por allá. Entonces para ella en sus sentimientos ha tenido ese recordatorio. Se acordaba mucho de su hermana. Porque una vez ella me dijo, “Mi papa fue el primer hombre que ideó los aviones. Usábamos lanchas para pescar y yo me iba al mar a pescar con mi papa. De eso vivíamos. Sacábamos peces y de eso comíamos. Porque no teníamos plata,” me decía. “Si se necesitaba algo, se vendía algo, se trabajaba en algo. Porque nunca hemos tenido grandeza,” me decía. Ella me contaba. Por eso digo que ella, ella a sabido desde chica, a tenido esa vida y la ha llevado así. Ella eso si ha sido una mujer mas para el trabajo que para la diversión.

[Always had, she always was, she always had the adoration to God. She has been, how do you say, a gringa, but modest/simple. A gringa that since her childhood had that sensibility that came from tribulation. Like she said, “When we escaped the Second World War that was going to happen, we went far away. We lived in a farm. We had nothing. We had a house, we had to live hidden.” She has grown up poor. Always with the little that she has had, no luxuries,
nothing like that; neither here, nor there. So for her in her sentiments she has had those remembrances. She remembered her sister a lot. Because one day she told me, “My father was the first man to think/invent the airplanes. We used fishing boats and I would go to fish with my father. We lived off that. We would get the fish and from that we would eat. Because we did not have money,” she would tell me. “If we needed anything, we would sell something, one would work in something. Because we have never had any grandness,” she would say. She would tell me. That is why I say that she, she has known since she was small, she has had that life and she has carried like that. She has always been a woman more for work than for partying.]

Dora remembers Inga as a hardworking woman. Inga shared childhood memories of times when she was poor with Dora. Inga was part of the laboring class and even though she was able to become part of the middle-class through marriage and later through her success in television, Dora believes that Inga is different because her experiences as a worker are now part of her and define her.

En primer lugar te voy a decir, que ella se puede decir a tratado con mucha gente pobre. Y que ella sea una famosa, hacerse famosa, a ella no le inspiraba. Porque ella dijo una vez, “Esta bien. Yo puedo ser todo lo que sea, pero no darme, no creerme mas arriba,” dijo, “No, porque si lo hago, estoy humillando a la gente de abajo. Mil veces yo si salgo a la calle, yo prefiero ver a la gente que esta sentada vendiendo,” me dijo, “antes de meterme a una tienda donde hay cosas lujosas. Mil veces mirar a la gente que esta sentada allí.” Ya, o sea que, su sentimiento de ella, era otra manera de pensar. No todos son así. No todos son iguales.

I want to clarify the statement that my great-grandfather invented airplanes. Since I can remember, my grandmother Inga has told the story that her father was the true inventor of the jet. According to her, her father drew up plans for the jet but that some apprentice of his stole his idea. My grandmother Inga would tell this story to everyone and sometimes she would elaborate it by commenting that after the plans were stolen, her mother got tired of having the fabric for the wings lying around and not being used, that in a moment of inspired practicality, she made curtains and a couch cover with it. So Dora’s memory is not erroneous in this particular account. The statement that follows it about the boats refers to the fact that Inga’s father was a fisherman in Maine and that when she was young, Inga would go fishing with him. Those particular childhood memories of fishing, Inga did not share broadly. My grandmother told me that she hated going fishing, the water was too cold and it was a strenuous endeavor.
[In first place I am going to tell you that she, you can say, has had contact/dealings with many poor people. And that she was a famous person, becoming famous, it did not inspire her. Because she once told me, “It is fine. I can be all that I want, but I can’t give me, can’t think myself higher,” she said, “No, because if I do it, I am humiliating the people that are below. A thousand times if I go out into the street, I prefer to see the people that are sitting down selling,” she told me, “before going into a store that sells luxurious things.” Ok, meaning that, her sentiment, was a different way of thinking. Not everyone is like that. Not everyone is the same.]

To place the above quote in context, Dora had been telling me about some actress or other that had been caught doing drugs. Dora had read in the newspaper that this famous individual had engaged in scandalous behavior drinking, partying and doing drugs. Dora stated that it was too bad, but it seemed that fame went to people’s heads. I took this time to steer the conversation towards my grandmother so I asked her if my grandmother had engaged in such behaviors. The answer was a resonating, “No.” So I asked what she thought kept my grandmother from engaging in such behavior. The quote above was her answer. For Dora, Inga would not have engaged in questionable behaviors, including snobbery because according to Dora, Inga would not insult someone’s life, someone who had less, by putting on airs. Dora describes Inga as an individual who preferred to engage with regular people in streets than with the elites.8

Through these two quotes Dora connects Inga with ideas of hard work and sacrifice, modesty and humility, all attributes that are not only virtuous but considered as descriptors of the laboring class as defined by someone who belongs to it. In a sense,

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8 I have heard Inga express this particular sentiment of preferring to mingle with working class individuals than wealthy ones. For the same reason, Inga enjoyed using public transportation such as combis (small, crammed buses typical in Peru) instead of taxis as well as going to fairs and celebrations that were open and free to the general Peruvian public.
even though Dora recognizes that fame (due to the type of work) as well as race, “es una gringa,” places Inga in a different social bracket, still Inga has characteristics that Dora values. Dora follows “es una gringa” with “pero sencilla” [but modest/simple] and Dora states that Inga “siempre tenia la adoración a Dios” [she always had the adoration to God]. The latter speaks to faith and Christian beliefs that underlie Dora’s moral values.

Inga is recognized by Dora as a particular kind of “Gringa” which allows for spaces where Dora can connect with Inga through shared value systems. In these spaces differences of race and class may not unduly affect the construction of their relationship.

Dora’s and Inga’s situation stands in contrast to the documented experiences of many paid domestic servants in Peru, Latin America and beyond where issues of race and class manifested a myriad of attitudes, assumptions that resulted in prejudicial and discriminatory practices such as the forced use of the uniform, creation of separate spaces and eating utensils and physical abuse endured by paid domestic workers at the hands of their employers. To be clear, I do not want to imply that differences of race and class virtually dissipated into thin air in the Zwinkel household. As I have previously stated, Dora’s words reflect that she does not forget her position as a worker in Inga’s household. Within the hierarchical structure of domestic service, Dora was able to relate to Inga in a number of ways that eased the tensions that may arise as employers and employees enact classed and racialized practices. But let us look a little further into issues of race in Peruvian society through the lens of Dora’s comments.

Será porque me he criado dentro, de cómo se dice, de los blanquiñosos y no dentro de mis compatriotas, gente Peruana. Es la honradez es la que vale mas que nada. Eso es lo que vale. Dios mismo dice que no pienses en el dinero. Tu alma es la que vale, el dinero es como Satanás te embrolla. Esa es la verdad.
[Maybe because I have been raised within, how do you say, the light-skinned and not within my fellow patriots, Peruvian people. It is honesty that what is worth more than anything. That is what has value. God himself says that you should not think about money. Your soul us what is of value, money is how Satan entangles you. That is the truth.]

Mas con extranjeros que con Peruanos he trabajado. Con el Peruano según dicen, me han dicho, y veo, mas claro: No hay carisma para el tratamiento con el empleado. No, no tienen carisma. Es distinto.

[More with the foreigners than with Peruvians I have worked. With the Peruvian it is said, I been told, and I see more clearly: There is no charisma in the treatment of the employee. No, they do not have charisma. It is different.]

Dora’s comments reflect how many Peruvians perceive other Peruvians.

Descriptors of individuals as dishonest, lazy, or dirty have been used within Peruvian society to demark class differences through racist terminology. For example, paid domestic servants have been called by their employers “indios,” “serranos,” or “cholos,” and descriptors such as “ignorant,” “dishonest” and “dirty” have followed. It is interesting to note that serious discussions on race or racism in Peru have not taken place until recently. In the past, like many countries in Latin America, Peru has stood by the idea that racism did not exist within its national boundaries. As scholars have engaged with this misconception some have determined that racism in Peru takes “singular” characteristics. As León Ramón, Gino Reyes, and Oscar Vela have stated:

{Racism} is, in the first place, a racism that in general does not use the word race. The white race, the black race, the indigenous race; you never hear this terminology being used in public life in Peru. Much less if through them we are referring to ourselves. Light, brown, cholitos, dark; at most black: our proclivity for euphemisms are expressed in those words, which are a refuge to avoid terms that are more precise; a refuge that is useable especially when we speak in public.
... The racism that is lived and practiced in Peru cannot be defined as a clear ideology, instead it hides behind pretty phases.  

So when Dora uses words such as “blanquinosos” we can recognize her engagement with the racial practices described by Ramón, Gino, and Vela described above. By this I mean, Dora does not use a specific racial terminology, i.e. she does not say “white” people. Instead she uses a euphemism that refers to lighter skin. Interestingly, her description could apply to a light mestizo individual as well as a Caucasian of any country including Peru, but the way she constructs her statement, she defines the “blanquinosos” as non-Peruvian. In her quote Peruvians are the “other,” they are the non-“blanquinosos,” which result then in her reducing all Peruvian people as non-white.

During our conversations Dora would sometimes use terms such as “cholo” or “serrano” to describe other individuals in a negative light. At one time, she identified herself as “una chuncha” until she came to Lima and was civilized. At another, she stated that she admired the mayor of Chosica because he identified himself in his speeches as “un serrano.” One day she was telling me about her morning and how she had informed a man that she had worked for la Gringa Inga. At one point Dora states: “Yo soy de los Gringos, no tengo el mismo color, pero soy de ellos.” [I am one of the

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9 Ramón, León, Gino Reyes and Oscar Vela, 17. The English translation is mine. The Spanish quote read as follows: “Es {racismo}, en primer lugar, un racismo que por lo general no emplea la palabra raza. Raza blanca, raza negra, raza aborigen: no se escuchan mucho estos términos en la vida publica del Perú. Mucho menos si, a través de ellos, nos referimos a nosotros mismos. Claros, morenos, chólitos, oscuritos; a lo sumo negritos: nuestra proclividad al eufemismo se expresa en esas palabras, que son refugio para evitar términos mas precisos; refugios muy útiles sobre todo cuando hablamos en publico.” ... “El racismo que se vive y se practica en el Perú no se define como una ideología clara, sino se esconde en frases bonitas.”
gringos, I do not have the same color, but I am theirs]. In this quote Dora acknowledges that there might be phenotypical differences ("not the same skin color") but her assertion that she was one of them is tied to cultural and social values that she has absorbed by “growing” up with them.

Si yo hubiera tenido oportunidad de aprender Ingles, de ir al teatro, escuchar conciertos. A mí me ha gustado la música clásica bastante. Bonito, bonito. Mira con decirte que soy Peruana y me debería gustarme los Huaynos. Yo detesto cuando los veo en la televisión o escucho. Mas bien veo un ratito, pero no mas. No es igual que escuchar una música serena, o a los Mexicanos como Pedro Infante, o los otros que eran musicales. Que cosa mas bonita.

[If I had had the opportunity to learn English, to go to the theatre, to listen to concerts. I have liked classical music a lot. Beautiful, beautiful. Just to only say that I am Peruvian and that I should like Huaynos. I hated it when I see them in television or hear them. I may see them for brief time, but no more. It is not the same as listening to serene music, or to the Mexicans such as Pedro Infante, or the other that were musical. What a beautiful thing.] 10

By sometimes distancing herself from her Peruvian indigenous roots and at the same time creating closer ties with German and American foreigners, or with cultural elements of the middle class, Dora seems to be describing an individual, personal social climb in terms of race and class. As Ramón, Gino, and Vela have noted, race in Peru is not about racial phenotype. Instead:

Race associated with culture or uncouthness; race associated with progress or backwardness; race associated with cleanliness or filth. Sometimes subtle connections; vulgar on other occasions. It is there that we have to look for the explanation of our singular racism, which at the same time is a flexible racism, as Vargas Llosa (1996) has stated, that in Peru as one ascends the social ladder one starts to get ‘lighter.’ 11

10 Huaynos are a type of traditional Andean music.
11 Ramón, León, Gino Reyes and Oscar Vela, 19. The English translation is mine. The Spanish quote read as follows: “Raza asociada a cultura o a incultura; raza asociada a progreso o atraso; raza asociada a limpieza o a suciedad. Vinculaciones sutiles a veces; groseras en otras ocasiones. Es por allí que tenemos que buscar la explicación para
So when Dora told me about a conversation that she had with some friends in the market place where she showcased the English she had learned from Inga, Dora was performing class:

\[
A \text{ veces cuando digo “Good Morning Madam,” ya piensan que los estoy insultando. “Les estoy diciendo un poquito de Ingles pa que aprendan.” “No estoy diciendo lisuras,” les digo, “estoy saludándolos como gente educada.” Ya una o otra palabra me acuerdo. Ya cuando un pierde el contacto, uno se olvida.}
\]

[Sometimes when I say “Good Morning Madam,” they think that I am insulting them. “I am telling you a little bit of English so you learn.” “I am not saying curse words,” I tell them, “I am greeting you like educated people.” I remember one or two words. When one loses contact, one forgets.]

English was not the only thing that Dora learned from Inga. As I have already discussed Dora attributed certain aspects of her work ethic to Inga.

\[
Yo tengo muy buenos recuerdos de todos ustedes por eso cuando yo veo acá como tratan a la gente yo digo, “así no se trabaja.” Tu abuela siempre me decía, “es hora de trabajar así que mente, ojos y boca cerrada.” Pensar lo que vas hacer, mirar lo que estas haciendo y no conversar para no confundir lo que estas haciendo.
\]

[I have very good memories of all of you that is why when I see how people are treated here I say, “That is not how one should work .” Your grandmother always told me, “it is time to work so mind, eyes and closed mouth.” Think what you are going to do, look what you are doing and do not talk so you do not confuse what you are doing.]\(^{12}\)

But Dora at the same time did not always approve of how Inga performed her work.

Dora related the one time that she criticized Inga’s performance on “Trampolin a la Fama”:

nuestro singular racismo, que es asimismo un racismo flexible, pues como lo dice Vargas Llosa (1996), en el Perú conforme se asciende en la escala social uno se va ‘blanqueando.’”

\(^{12}\) By “here” Dora refers to her current workplace- the market in Chosica. The individuals that she is referring to are her stall neighbors.
Ferrando agarra cincuenta soles y los tira así al suelo. Y le dice, “Inga, si tu quieres plata anda y recógelos.” Para mi modo pensar mío, dije para mi, esa es una humillación. Es una humillación lo que hace Ferrando con ella. La Inga no debe aceptarle. Cuando llego a la casa, yo le dije “Señora Inga, porque usted permite que Ferrando la trate así de esa manera.” “Esa es una ofensa,” le dije, “para usted.” “No, Dora es una parte de un chiste, que así se hace,” me dice. “No, esta muy mal,” le digo. “Esta bien que lo mande a este moreno, como se llama, a Tribilin, o la Violeta. A la Violeta porque no la mandan,” le dije. Que no. “Si tu quieres la plata, recógelo,” así le dijo. A mi me dolió tanto, tanto porque para mi que me tiren una cosa y que me manden que lo recoja, a mi me estoy muriendo. No es cierto? Al menos. Pero para ella no se. Dice que es una parte del show. Yo siempre veía esa parte de su trabajo.

Dora found this episode to be demeaning. Without trying to delve into an in-depth analysis of the show and a lengthy discussion on its racist and classist overtones (which have been debated amply in Peru’s media), let us take this story and just examine Dora and Inga’s positions. Dora felt it was a lack of respect for Inga to be used in such a way to make a joke at her expense. Dora did not mind if someone else was demeaned, she points to the black comedian, Tribilin, or to Violeta, the mestiza actress. Dora has no problem expressing her disapproval to Inga. Inga in turn, argues that Dora does not understand what show business is and how comedy works. What is interesting to note in this exchange is even though Dora was the employee, in Inga’s house there was a space
for her to voice her opinions. And this was not the only disagreement that Dora and Inga
had over the thirty-five years that they spent in the same household. Like Dora said: “así
hemos pasado, a veces peleábamos; a veces estábamos bien.” [That is how we have
passed it, sometimes we fought; sometimes we were fine.]

In the end most of Dora’s stories reveal a rich life in Inga’s household. The
moments that they shared ranged from the mundane to many of an extremely intimate
text. From everyday tales of children with intestinal parasites and haunting specters to
the birth and death of family members. And although many of the quotes have described
experiences that Dora witnessed and participated in relating to different members of the
Zwinkel household, Inga was also a participant and witness to intimate moments in
Dora’s own life:

Para que voy a decir, me han gritado, me han hecho esto. Es así. Eso ya sería
faltar el respeto a las almas benditas y a ustedes que todavía están creciendo. Yo
estoy muy agradecida con todos. Una bebe a mi se murió cuando tenía tres
meses. Yo allí pagaba a una muchacha y mi hija la mayor estaba mas grande. Y
me dice, “mama, mama a Angélica así, así, así, pum a cabeza con la piedra.” Es
que le había soltado la cabecita contra la piedra. Al siguiente día me fui al
Hospital del Niño. Lo vio el doctor y me dijo, “tiene que internarlo señora.” Lo
lleve. Ocho días. A los ocho días, ya murió porque el golpe le había, le había
tocado esto {Dora se toca la mano a la cabeza.} No hubo la sangre, ya no salió
hacia fuera y se fue derecho al cerebro. Yo fui a verla un día domingo pero el
doctor no me, no me dejó verla. No me abrieron la puerta mejor dicho. Solo por
la luna la mire. Yo mire a ella y dije, “mi hija no, no vive, ella muere.” Al
siguiente día a las cinco de la tarde, el carro ya estaba en la puerta avisándome
que la chica había muerto. De tres meses no más. Ahí yo cai mal yo, enferma así
boca abajo {Dora abre los brazos y se pone boca abajo}. Puchica. El día que la
Inga se vaya, yo me voy atrás de ella. {Dora lo dice llorando} sí es que no me
voy antes. Ella pago el médico, pago las enfermeras, pago pensión, pa mi hijo pa
que tenga. Porque yo, no miraba yo, así de frente. Paraba así boca abajo.
Tirada. No podía levantarme. Gracias a ella. Por todo, todo. Yo les he dicho
to ellos, “a nosotros la Inga nos ha salvado de mucho,” les digo. “A ustedes así
como su hubiera sido una segunda madre. Una segunda madre a sido. Ustedes
chicos no mas.” Nos ha ayudado bastante, bastante. Mientras yo viva, tu abuela
yo siempre me acuerdo. Siempre le, siempre le digo a Don Luchito. Ahí vamos luchando. Tu Inga esta allá. Ya llegara la hora. Todos, todos han sido buenos.

[Why would I say, that I been screamed at, or that they have done this to me. This is how it is. That would be not respectful of the blessed souls and all of you who are still all growing. I am very thankful to everyone. A baby of mine died when she was months old. I then paid a young girl and my eldest daughter was older. And she said to me, "mom, mom, Angelica like this, like this, like this, pum, her head with a rock." Is that her head had been let go against a rock. The next day, I went to the Hospital del Niño. The doctor saw her and told me, "You have to leave her in the hospital, ma’am." So I took her. Eight days. After eight days, she died because the hit had, had touched her like this {Dora touches her head to her head}. There was no blood. It did not come out and it went straight to her brain. I went to see her one day Sunday, but the doctor did not let me see her. Better said they did not open the door for me. I only saw her through the glass. I saw her and said, "My daughter, won’t, won’t live. She dies." The next day after five p.m., the car was at the door telling me that the girl had died. Only three months old. Right then I fell ill, sick like this face down {Dora spreads her arms by her sides and faces forward like she was being pushed forward}. Puchica {similar to the expression Oh my God} the day that Inga leaves, I am going after her {Dora states this crying} that is if I do not leave before. She paid for the doctor, for the nurses, paid my pension, paid for my son so he could have. Because I, did not see, like this in front {Dora spreads her arms again and faces the ground}. I kept staying face down. I could not get up. Thanks to her. For everything, everything. I have told them, "Inga has saved us from a lot," I tell them. "She has been to you like a second mother. Like a second mother she has been. You, were only children." She has helped us a lot, a lot. While I am still alive, I will always remember your grandmother. I always, always, tell Don Luchito. There we go fighting. Your Inga is over there. The time will come. Everyone, everyone has been good.]

Dora and Inga shared fifty years of their lives, thirty-five of them in the same household. I have attempted to elucidate how aspects of their lives could reveal how race and class differences were negotiated within the household. I know that my work does not do sufficient justice, does not speak to the rich reality of Dora and Inga’s individual and shared lives. The stories are abundant; overflowing; material for many works, academic or not. Like a small broken mirror, I have picked up small fragments to
illuminate certain aspects, but I have many questions left to ponder. I am not sure what makes a family. I have read how paid domestic workers and caretakers have been emotionally exploited, how female heads of households have used phrases such as “she is like a daughter” to hide the exploitative conditions that affect young girls under their employment. Much of this has been documented in the paid domestic service literature.

It is difficult for me to assess what Dora means when she sometimes states that she felt like she was and is part of my family. I have a hard time reducing her expressed feelings to just “false consciousness.” I also know that my presence as the oral history researcher and my position as a member of the Zwinkel family may have affected what and how she chose to shape her experiences in Inga’s household. There may be experiences in Dora’s life while she was in Inga’s house that she chose not to share, because she may have felt that certain “truths” would be too hurtful for me to hear or maybe too painful for her to remember. It is easy to be silenced in the name of love and pain, care and shame. At the same time, the silences implied in statements such as “Para que voy a decir, me han gritado, me han hecho esto. Es así. Eso ya sería faltar el respeto a las almas benditas y a ustedes que todavía están creciendo” [Why would I say, that I been screamed at, or that they have done this to me. This is how it is. That would be not respectful of the blessed souls and all of you who are still all growing] and in the last quote in this chapter, may also reflect how Dora saw that a negative depiction of her life with Inga by her would be a treasonous act, one that she refuses to commit. Then silence can be seen as a form of continued loyalty, a reflection of kinship ties that not only organically emerged throughout time, but are also a strategy in Dora’s life that allowed her to negotiate her
relationships with members of the household as well as further imbed meanings to her life’s story.

Mientras Dios nos da vida y tenemos el espíritu, mas que nada se puede decir, un espíritu que uno no esconde nada, que nunca en la vida le ha hecho daño a nadie. Uno tiene el espíritu joven y eso es lo que a uno lo levanta. Porque hay muchas personas que son muchas más jóvenes que yo, pero están mal, porque dicen que cuando tienes una maldad, eso te va envejeciendo mas. Porque es su propia alma es lo que los achica. Alli tienes a tu abue, ¿cuantos años tiene? Ella fue una mujer, no voy a decir que no fue gritona, gritaba. Pero una bella persona. Una mujer que cuando murió mi bebe, que yo no podía alzar la cabeza para nada. Ella me pago por todo. Ella pago pensión para mi, pensión pa los hijos, medico para que vaya a mirar. ¿Quien va hacer eso? Y yo voy a ser una reprochadora , una traicionera en tal sentido. No, Mari. Eso para mi es un gran recuerdo que llevo en el alma. Es como si hubiese sido mi verdadera familia. Aunque no tengo cara de extranjera, no importa.

[While God gives us life and we have the spirit, more than anything one can say, a spirit that hides nothing, that has never in life hurt anyone. One has a young spirit and that is what it brings you up. Because there a lot of people much younger than I, but they are worse off, because it is said that when you have a wickedness, that ages you more. Because it is their own soul that makes them wither/small. There you have your grandma, how old is she? She was a woman, I will not say that she did not scream, she did scream. But a beautiful person. A woman that when my baby died, I could not lift my head up for anything. She paid for everything. She paid for my pension, my children’s pension, the doctor so he would come to see. Who would do that? And I am going to be a person that reproaches, a traitor in that way. No, Mari. That for me is a great memory that I carry in my soul. It is like they were my true family. Even though I do not have the face of a foreigner, it does not matter.]
Dora and I smile into the camera. This photograph was taken in the summer of 2008 while I was collecting Dora’s oral history. As through her stories, Dora reaches behind me and brings me forward, closer to her. Beyond the image presented, my arms wrap around her waist and embrace her.
CONCLUSION

Two days before I last left Peru in 2008, I went to Chosica to see Dora. I meant only to stop briefly by her stall and say goodbye, yet, I quickly found myself sitting on the cement floor and having a conversation about family and how hard it was to leave Peru. My digital recorder was already packed in my computer bag and no particular words or statements remain in my memory. I simply remember that it was difficult, and that Dora cried. In the end, we hugged tightly and I told her that we would see each other again soon. I stated that I would return next summer and visit her again, so let us not say goodbye, but *te vuelvo a ver pronto* [I will see you soon]. My farewell with Dora was a replay of so many departures in my life, where I have used the same words, *te vuelvo a ver pronto*, to mask the sense of loss, to create the illusion that time and distance matter not, that what binds us does not always require the constant reinforcement of newly shared moments. We remind each other that the past, and the new memories gathered on this particular trip are enough for both of us to know, that we hold a space in each other’s life no matter how infrequent we see each other. After a few moments of embrace, we are once again composed, after all this is not the first nor the last time we will do this; we have decades of practice.

With each visit to see Dora in Chosica, our relationship grew deeper and was transformed. I learned not only about Dora’s life, but also how she sees herself. She defines herself as a strong, proud, moral woman who does the right thing regardless of the sacrifice involved. Time and again, her stories depicted moments where she faced
crises or challenges, and how she overcame them. Dora’s narrative also illuminates the roles that faith and labor have played in shaping her identity. Dora described her fortitude as an essence that God has given her and that life experiences have honed. Dora’s stories reveal how life and work are imbued with value, and how meaning can be found in everyday practices. I also further learned about Dora’s childhood as well as her life as a paid domestic worker in Lima. Dora shared stories about her family, her dreams, and hopes. As I spent more time with her and listened to her stories, our relationship shifted. Although I approached her with my recorder as a researcher, I was also a friend and family. During our interviews Dora took the time to ask plenty of questions about my life, work, relationships and we engaged in chisme [gossip] about family and friends, and the latest Chaclacayo and Chosica scandals. As I sat there on the cement floor of her stall, Dora began to get reacquainted with the person that I am today. At the same time, as I began to learn more about her life, my understanding of who she is expanded beyond my childhood memories. I can now see the person that she is more clearly, my admiration and esteem redoubled by the knowledge of her lived experiences. I cannot deny though, that as I heard the many stories she had to share, I uncomfortably realized how little I had previously known of her personal life. This experience underscored the fact that many times we know so little about other people’s lives. In the end, I know that the time we spent together strengthened the affective bonds that we already carried.

While I physically left Dora in Peru, I actually carried much of her in the small digital recorder tucked in my black shoulder bag. Throughout the past year, I have been on a journey with Dora as my guide. I imagine that she is largely unaware of the impact
she has had on me as I have listened for hours upon hours to the stories that she has shared. I look forward to our next meeting so that I can express the extent to which she has, through her narrative, begun to fill some of the gaps in my own life.

Dora’s narrative allowed me to piece together memories of my childhood, to assign meanings to images of life in Peru that were once disjointed. Through Dora’s stories, I have come to know more about my family, including my grandmother Inga, my grandfather Lucho, and about Dora. By sharing with me her stories about the family, they merged with my own memories. Dora, like the rest of the family, is a keeper of Inga’s memories. Alzheimer’s is a cruel disease for those who have it and the loved ones that surround them. To be forgotten is a painful thing. Several times during our conversations, Dora told me about the last time she had seen my grandmother, a few months prior to my visit. Dora was walking in the central park of Chosica when she encountered Inga who had been brought to the park by her caretaker, Rosa, to have a cup of coffee and watch people go by. Dora approached her but Inga did not remember her at all. Dora was terribly saddened and she could not understand why she had been forgotten. I told her that Inga did not remember me at all either; that she no longer knew who I was. I explained that she, Dora, had not been forgotten, but that a disease had ripped her out of my grandmother’s memories. I then told her how often Inga thought that I worked for her, and would send me on errands, usually to purchase cigarettes. The latter would make Dora laugh, she recognized the familiarity of my grandmother’s habits. As I listened to Dora’s stories about Inga, it allowed me to better come to terms with the disease. Alzheimer’s could threaten to make an empty shell out of an individual you care
about, but other people carry on the essence of that person in their memories. Then storytelling becomes an act of resistance and an expression of love. My arsenal of stories grew as I sat on the cement floor in Dora’s stall, stories that I can share with family members and friends, and more importantly with Inga herself.

Dora’s stories also allowed me to learn more about Peru, about its history and culture, about its people. Dora’s words have provided me with a greater understanding in how class and race may be experienced in Peru, particularly by individuals that engage in paid domestic work. At the same time, Dora’s stories elucidated gaps in the literature while also challenging how we view the paid domestic employee and employer relationship. Dora’s narrative further complicates assertions by scholars that such relationships are permeated by exploitation where differences in race and class are insurmountable and affective ties cannot be formed. In the literature, any kind of emotional connection claimed by the employer has been described as a deliberate or unconscious strategy to obfuscate the exploitation of the employee. In the same fashion, any emotional bond claimed by the employee has been reduced to “false consciousness” or as a strategy for the employee to further secure her position. Dora’s assertions of being part of the Zwinkel family as well as how she shapes her narrative in terms of being an essential component of the family, playing the roles of mother, wife and caretaker asks of us, as listeners, to validate the affective connections that she has formed throughout her life with not only her employer, but with her employer’s children and grandchildren. The stories that she relates about the Zwinkel family are fashioned in terms of belonging, of inclusion and not exclusion. It may be that it takes the
granddaughter of an employer, someone who shares those emotional bonds with Dora, to question what it is that we feel, how our relationship is shaped and how do we negotiate differences in race and class.

This thesis began as part of a personal journey and as it unfolded, questions emerged, many of which I would like to pursue further in future work. Dora’s narrative is a window to examine how a working-class woman in Lima, Peru imbues meaning to her life experiences. At the same time, Dora’s memories in Inga’s household raised questions about the nature of the relationship of paid domestic workers and their employers, how race and class is constructed in Peru and negotiated in the intimate spaces of the household, and the meanings of family and kinship.
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REFERENCES – Continued


