
Stitching Together More Expansive Latinx Teacher Self/ves: *Movidas* of *Rasquache* and Spaces of Counter-Conduct in El Sur Latinx

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Introduction

In this paper, I bring Foucauldian understandings of subjectivity and space into conversation with Chicana thought to examine how Latinx teachers and educators in growing Latinx areas (i.e., the United States South) remake their relations (to their self/ves). I link a broad understanding of government(ality), specifically Foucault's (1982, 2007a) discussion of (counter)conduct, to examine how and where individuals come to know and enact themselves as Latinx teachers. This framing guided a thinking with theory methodological approach to analyze the narratives of three Latinx K-12 educators in the state of South Carolina. Taking seriously Ball's (2016; see also Ball & Olmedo, 2013) argument that subjectivity is a key site of political struggle in the context of neoliberal teacher governmentality, I suggest that Latinx teacher *movidas* of *rasquache*, which are intentional and gendered acts of resourcefulness, scrappiness, and inventiveness, create spaces of counter-conduct where educators struggle toward new subjectivities. As such, this paper is significant in both expanding the breadth of theoretical frames used in investigating Latinx teacher

subjectivity, and in bringing Latinx/Chicana understandings into post-structural, particularly Foucauldian, analysis. A larger contribution is to show the value of entangling such perspectives into how schools and teacher educators think about the spaces, embodied knowledges, and subjective (im)possibilities of Latinx teachers. It also engages more recent discussions linking Foucault to explicit examination of (educational) space (Crampton, 2012; Crampton & Elder, 2007; Foucault, 1980, 1984, 1986, 2007b; Gregory, Meusburger, & Suarsana, 2015; Huxley, 2007; Monreal, 2020; Murdoch, 2006).

To develop my argument, I first briefly situate the research context, El Sur Latinx. This is important because the Latinx population of the U.S. South grew faster than in any other U.S. region from 2010-2019 (Noe-Bustamante, Lopez, & Krogstad, 2020) and many of these spaces have histories of problematic race relations along with relatively little experience of Latinx communities. Next, I detail my use of Foucault's concept of (counter)conduct in relation to space and subjectivity. I also explain how entangling a Chicana understanding of *rasquache* within such a theoretical frame allowed me to examine how Latinx teachers, even within constraining material conditions, are simultaneously (re)making, and (re)made in, the South. Then, I describe my methodology rooted in semi-structured interviews and photovoice to create participant narratives that I analyzed via a thinking with theory approach. Through analysis of participant narratives, I discuss how particular Latinx teachers engaged *movidas* of *rasquache* to challenge what teachers were made to be versus what they struggled to become (counter-conduct). I close by reflecting on the implications of relying on such *movidas*, the "wounds and openings...constraints and liberations" (Foucault, 2017, p. 11) of subjective *rasquachismx* as entry points and spaces of struggle—sites of agonism, refusal, and resistance—with/in the processes of subjection and subjectification (Ball 2016, Blackman et al., 2008).

Latinx Educators in El Sur Latinx

"El Sur Latinx" (Arellano, 2019; Delorme & Passidomo, 2017; Monreal, 2020) describes recent demographic shifts fueled by a relatively cheap cost of living, the promise of year-round employment in meat processing, poultry, and construction, and expanding social-spatial networks that make the United States South home to the fastest growing Latinx population in the country (Butler, 1998a-i; Guerrero, 2017; Johnson & Kasarda, 2009; Odem & Lacy, 2009; Ribas, 2015). To get an idea of this change, South Carolina, where this research took place and where I completed my

doctoral studies and taught middle school, had a 172% increase in its Hispanic population from 2000-2014 (Stepler & Lopez, 2016). Despite initial tolerance about Latinx population growth in Southern locales, what Torres, Popke, & Hapke (2006) call a “silent bargain,”¹ the 2000s brought a rapid shift toward more explicit anti-Latinx state/local policy that marks life for Latinx in the U.S. South today. In lieu of national immigration reform, many states, counties, and municipalities throughout the South enacted their own policies regarding Latinx population growth and immigration, often with the feeling of trying to one-up their respective neighbor (Jones, 2019; Lacy & Odem, 2009). These state policies and local ordinances, interacting with inaccurate, inflammatory, and racialized discourse, and passed at a furious rate, were overwhelmingly restrictive and affected housing, driving, policing, education, and access to resources, thus materially limiting the lives of Latinx (Rodriguez & Monreal, 2017). For one example that specifically pertains to education, South Carolina passed H. 4400 in 2008 that bars undocumented students from public higher education and from receiving state-based merit scholarships and financial aid.

Although all public schools and educators face the task of providing a just and quality education within such a context, Latinx educators face a daily reality where they are made subject to myriad discourses and knowledges about teaching in general, for example what it means to be a “professional” (Ball, 2003; Hara & Sherbine, 2018) *and* the restrictive policies and deleterious discourse that constructs Latinx as Othered threats, criminals, and deviants (Rodriguez & Monreal, 2017). Latinx educators, despite their professional and class status, feel the strains of negative discourse and policy leveled against Latinx in the U.S. South broadly. Although they are not employed in the food processing, manufacturing, and agricultural sectors, Latinx teachers can, too, be exploitable, racialized workers sought for their perceived Spanish instruction, translating ability, and cultural skills in/for a new, globalized, and diverse Southern economy (Okraski & Madison, 2020). As a result, they are limited in their sharing of professional knowledge, striving of leadership opportunities, and expression of political advocacy (Colomer, 2019; Monreal, 2020). Such processes are made more

¹ Such a “silent bargain” was/is a tacit agreement, “in which the Latino presence within the community is acceptable to established residents as long as it remains relatively unobtrusive; and the harsh conditions of life and work in rural areas is acceptable to Latinos as long as they are given the relative space to live in peace” (Torres, Popke, & Hapke, 2006, p. 45).

challenging for K-12 Latinx teachers, as they are severely underrepresented in Southern schools. For example, in South Carolina only 1% of all teachers identify as “Hispanic,” many of whom are international teachers on temporary visas who face precarious and restrictive employment (Bowers, 2017; Reed, 2017).² Thus, Latinx educators in their exceptionally visible and public roles serving youth and community in the U.S. South stand in and are dispersed through an assemblage at the crossroads of myriad processes that (re)make their subject positions.

(Counter)Conduct

Foucault raises the concept of “conduct” in his initial outlines of governmentality (Foucault, 1991a, 2007a). While governmentality produces more than subjects,” (Kearns, 2007, p. 210) Foucault (1982) outlines a close relationship between the two as the ways individuals come to know and conduct themselves are central components of (self)governance. Government then is a lateral and hierarchical “activity or practice;” (Gordon, 1991, p. 3) that functions to “conduct the conduct” of individuals. Understanding how individuals come to govern themselves and others (Foucault, 1991b, p. 79) in relation to racialized norms, rules, and standards of being the self (Sonu, 2020) is central to understanding not only how people conduct themselves, but also how people see and understand themselves, their subjectivities (Gordon, 1991; Popkewitz, 1998). Throughout this paper I focus on this dimension of government(ality) that consists in the conduct of conduct and its link to subjectivity and space as a key understanding of how and where individuals come to know and act themselves as Latinx teachers in the contexts of the U.S. South described in the previous section.

In particular, *conduct* demonstrates both object and action, the ways in which individual behavior is the focus of certain ways of normalized subjectivities, and

² I estimate that on the lowest end about 20% of all Latinx teachers in South Carolina are “international teachers” recruited through private companies, specialized programs, and cultural exchange (J-1) visas. This estimate comes from experience working throughout the state in combination with South Carolina State Department of Education data (Self & Dulaney, 2018; South Carolina Department of Education, 2016). The South Carolina Department of Education facilitates the recruitment of “international teachers,” and they are increasingly used to fill long-term vacancies as they are substantially cheaper and (can) have little recourse for unsatisfactory working conditions and assignments (Bowers, 2017).

the processes of intervention and management to create such beings. Foucault (2007a) maintains “conduct” refers to two things:

Conduct is the activity of conducting (*conduire*), of conduction (*la conduction*) if you would like, but it is equally the way in which one conducts oneself (*se conduit*), lets oneself be conducted (*se laisse conduire*), is conducted (*est conduit*), and finally, in which one behaves (*se comporter*) as an effect of a form of conduct (*une conduite*) as the action of conducting or of conduction. (p. 193)

Latinx teacher identity, then, becomes an object of conduction and a relational site of intervention in which individuals continually internalize, negotiate, and reject this process of subjection, this conduction of their conduct. Although such processes and markers of conduct are not inherently negative, the boundaries of normalized conduct(ion) of Latinx teachers fall within certain racial hierarchies that work to collapse and limit their becoming (Sonu, 2020). If, then, Latinx teachers seek to disrupt their detrimental and narrow racialized subject positions toward different conduct, if they are to wrestle self-formation from the techniques of government and make themselves intelligible on different terms, it is essential to take seriously how and where they come to know themselves and others. In this sense, and crucial to the framing of the research with Latinx teachers “the target is not to discover who we are but to refuse who we are,” and in turn “battle for and promote new forms of subjectivity” (Foucault, 1982, p. 785).

Thus, in explaining his later scholarship, Foucault (1982) states that he is most interested in how “a human being turns himself into a subject” (p. 778) so that individuals might come to conduct themselves differently. Foucault (1982, 2007a) plays with the notion of counter-conduct. With the introduction of counter-conduct, Foucault (2007a) references an active “struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others [and ourselves]” (p. 201) in hopes that we might take seriously the task of conducting our own conduct. Importantly, counter-conduct is not merely the opposite or inverse of “conduct;” rather, it is a productive intervention, a process of confrontation and agonism within power relations, including power relations to/with one’s self (Ball, 2016; Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Foucault, 1982). As an example, Davidson (2007) calls to mind the ubiquitous exclamation of adults, often teachers, toward children, to “behave yourself!” A phrase like “behave yourself” is both instruction and an “admonition that we can still learn to combat” (Davidson, 2007, p. xxxii). And while the production of the (neoliberal Latinx teaching) subject is certainly

constraining, *movidas* of *rasquache*, an example of Foucauldian counter-conduct, open up and (re)create spaces of refusal and agonism (Ball, 2016; Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Foucault, 1982), truth-telling (Ball, 2016; Kuntz, 2019) and care of self (Besley, 2005; Bondy, 2016; Foucault, 1997). Before outlining *rasquache* in greater detail, I next move to the relationship between space, subjectivity, and (counter)conduct.

Space, Subjectivity, and Conduct

Space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power. (Foucault, 1984, p. 252)

Everything is spatial, on the material as well as the mental level (Foucault, 1980, p. 148)

Although Foucault’s engagement with space is fiercely contested (see Crampton & Elden, 2007), it is clear his thinking is imbued with spatial overtones and consequences with which scholars are increasingly engaging. Foucault (1980, 1984, 1986, 2007b, c, d) discusses, even conceptualizes, space(s) a variety of times over his extensive body of work, but I am most interested in his thoughts connecting space with subject-making processes. For Foucault, space is not only a tool for supervision and surveillance, it is also productive; spatial practices, spatial knowledges, spatial organization, and spatial distributions positively steer, normalize, and conduct certain conducts; “space is integral to the formation, rather than the suppression of the modern soul” (Huxley, 2007, p. 193). As such, different spaces create different practices of (self)conduct (Foucault, 2007b) and hence, “governmentality is indelibly spatial, both in terms of the spaces it seeks to create and in the causal logics that imbue such attempts with their rationalities” (Huxley, 2007, p. 199). Space, then, becomes a battle for the conduction of conducts, the production of subjectivity, and adds nuance to Ball’s (2016) argument that subjectivity is a site of struggle that necessitates the creation of space(s) for creative agonisms “to make oneself thinkable in a different way” (p. 1141).

Spatial distribution and (self) knowledge are mutually constitutive and rely on interlocking webs of relations. For example, the architectural arrangement and organization of teacher/students/class/school subjects allow for people to know where and how to locate individuals in relation to others, and correspondingly to “be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual [including one’s self], to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits” (Foucault, 1977, p. 143). This, in short, allows for the uninterrupted monitoring of the

normalized rules and standards that outline the boundaries of appropriate conduct—inclusive/exclusive speech, action, and be(coming) with/in certain spaces (i.e., Latinx teachers in schools; Latinx in the South). In this view, school practices like the curriculum, the schedule of classes, the reporting of grades, and class assignment (tracking) constitute spatial acts because they perform an integral part in supervising, assessing, and disciplining bodies, outlining what can be said and done, what counts as rational knowledge (of the self) in a particular (school) space. This accounts for the production of subjectivity, the conduction of conduct, as who/what someone can be(come), or resist becoming, is constrained by the racialized knowledge-power-spaces one inhabits. These processes are highly contingent, perpetually processual, and locally negotiated. In sum, Latinx teachers as subjects are “in a continual process of constructing and transforming their selves and their worlds through their interactions with others” (Jackson, 2013, p. 839), and space plays a substantial role in fostering, managing, monitoring, and conducting this conduct (Huxley, 2007). Space, thus, churns out restrictive subject position, *and* signals an opportunity to create different relations of counter-conduct.

Hence, in this article I start from the embedded subject location(s) of Latinx teachers in South Carolina to map the spatialized relations that create, normalize, disrupt, and resist the bounded sites of their subjectivities (Guyotte, Flint, & Latopolski, 2019). For in thinking through how and where subject-positions of Latinx teachers in South Carolina are (trans)formed it is possible to challenge those practices that marginalize and exploit as well as to highlight the ingenuity and creativity of teachers’ own solutions to establish other spaces, other relations, other lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) to become otherwise. One such strategy some teachers use to create spaces of (self) counter-conduct are *movidas* of *rasquache*.

Rasquache: Making Do With What’s at Hand

Rasquache is a Chicax concept that highlights the resilience, resourcefulness, and inventiveness at the heart of everyday experience for racialized and marginalized communities. *Rasquachismx* is the collection of improvisational *movidas*—doing the most with the least and making do with what’s at hand (*hacer para rendir cosas*)—that springs from the insistence to survive a daily grind of material struggle while stitching together a life of dignity (Lomelí, 2013; Mesa-Bains, 1999; Pérez, 1993; Pizzaro, 1999; Ybarra-Frausto, 1989, 1991, 2003). Acknowledging the difficulty of putting into words a dynamic, non-linear, and

irreducible sensibility, Ybarra-Frausto (1991) forwards a three-part attempt:

- 1) *Rasquachismo* is an underdog perspective, a view from *los de abajo*.³
- 2) *Rasquachismo* as a worldview of the have-not is exemplified in objects, places, spaces (a *rasquache* car, house, or business) and in social comportment (the *rasquache* things people do, *movidas*)⁴
- 3) *Rasquachismo* is a bicultural sensibility, usually among Mexican-Americans (p.156).

As such, examples of *rasquache* include turning a parked car into a business that sells *tamales* (Rojas, 2015), using a shoelace to fix a car (Anderson, 2017), tricking out a low-rider (Mejia & Pulido, 2018), adding *harina*⁵ to the *frijoles*⁶ (Barrio Dog Productions, 2011), and turning one’s home into an ad-hoc art installation of bright colors, flower pots from coffee cans, pieces of plastic, and other repurposed odds and ends (Bedoya, 2014; Cooper, 2018). Comically, Ybarra-Frausto (1991) sums up his understanding with the words of a Chicano theater performer, “*rasquachismo* is when you use a loaf of bread as a prop, and somebody eats it” (p. 160). As a general framework, *rasquache* is most often applied to understand arts/aesthetics (Diaz-Barriga & Dorsey, 2017; Cordova, 2015; Mesa-Bains, 1999, Ybarra-Frasuto, 1989, 1991, 2003), but also lawyering (Mirandé, 2011), literature (Dery, 2017), rhetoric (Medina-López, 2018), architecture (Bedoya, 2015), and education (typically pedagogy; Aviña, 2016; Mejia & Pulido, 2018; Monreal, 2019; Morales, Aviña, & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Pérez, 1993). However, the idea of linking *rasquache* to subject (re)formation (Pizzaro, 1999), especially with regard to the where and what of Latinx teacher subjectivities, is largely unexamined in the academic literature.

An embrace of *rasquache* centers, and showcases with pride, a (re)appropriation, an (in)version, and a (re/de)ployment of certain knowledges of self and co-racialized others. It is a reclamation and playful subversion that challenges a discourse of subjection tied to inadequacy and exclusion. To recognize one’s self as *rasquache* is to assert the beauty in “molding worthiness out of *perceived* deficiencies” (Ybarra-Frausto, 1989, p.7, emphasis mine). Thus, to be(come) *rasquache* is to embrace and repurpose the

³ Those at the bottom.

⁴ *Movidas* can be translated as moves or acts. This is a fundamental point because *rasquache* is not something you possess; it is something one *does* with/in the world.

⁵ Flour.

⁶ Beans.

position of underdog as subjective possibility rather than foreclosed objectification (Pizzaro, 1999).

Movidas of *rasquache*, then, signal creative action in relation to self and others with/in particular spaces and places. They are agentic interventions, tactical subjectivity/ies, to exploit the (im)possibilities and loopholes of essentialized and racialized norms. One revels in identifying, even transgressing, a self with that that should be vulgar and tacky; one puts oneself together–(re/de)forms, (re)invents, and (re)claims a self–with that that is falling apart. “This use of available resources [of the self] engenders hybridization, juxtaposition, and integration [of the self” (Ybarra-Frausto, 2003, p. 191). Important to this study as all three focus participants identify as Latinas, *movidas* are also gendered technologies of struggle, acts of everyday labor, that work to create new sites (of subjectivity) with/in unexpected of even hostile spaces (Cotera, Blackwell, & Espinoza, 2018). For example, Cotera, Blackwell, and Espinoza (2018) outline “hallway *movidas*” as the strategic ways Chicana activists “met each other in the hallways of meetings, conferences, and political gatherings to address the ways they were excluded [and] to expand the agenda of the Chicano movement and the women’s movement” (p. 12). These small acts of *rebeldia*⁷ rooted in *la facultad* of Latina’s embodied knowledges (Anzaldúa, 2012) open a praxis of reimagining subjectivities. In discussion with Foucault’s concept of counter-conduct, *rasquache* subjectivities are more than the opposite of conduct(ion)—a mirrored act of resistance—but rather a (re)production and agonism of the [gendered] self that both shatters and coyly deploys (normed) appearances “beyond the purely negative act of disobedience” (Davidson, 2007, p. xxi). Therefore, in centering *movidas* of *rasquache* we gain understanding into how Latinx teachers are simultaneously conducting and conducted, how they are (re)making and (re)made (by themselves and others) in the South.

Rasquache is also indelibly spatial, not only in creatively reshaping the aesthetics of place, but also in challenging the sets of power relations that co-constitute the boundaries of who and where, subjectivity and space. *Movidas* of *rasquache* “gain time, make options, and retain hope” (Ybarra-Frausto, 1991, p. 156) by creating spaces of counter-conduct. The physical reshaping of the environment—the flamboyant pink house, the do-it-yourself style fashioned from second hand clothes, the outside altar or shrine with Christmas tree lights, the Spanglish sign announcing a church taco sale—celebrates that which should be in bad taste and redefi(n)es the normalized rules and behaviors of

seemingly closed spaces. As such, *movidas* of *rasquache* are “about making and holding space” (Danielson, 2016, p. 312) improvising different spatial imaginations (Bedoya, 2014), and (dis)locating new geographies (of the self) toward expanded territories of becoming (Kyriacopoulos & Sánchez, 2017). Morales, Aviña, and Delgado Bernal (2016) apply such a view of *rasquache* space and subject-making in their work with Latinx youth writing, “[we] used what we had available to us to create a classroom space that was relational, healing, disrupted dominant standards of teaching and learned and fused together messy, complicated, yet beautiful subjectivities” (p. 71). Therefore, when combining a spatial orientation with the Chicana concept of *rasquache* is it possible to identify the resourceful and resilient ways Latinx teachers challenge stability, practicing “the art of making something from nothing” (Danielson, 2016, p. 312) and “using what they have at hand” (Medina-López, 2018, p. 3) to reinvent, resist, remix, and reclaim space and self in classrooms in the U.S South.

Methodology

The data (chunks) I use in this article come from a larger qualitative study of 25 K-12 Latinx teachers and educators conducted in South Carolina from August 2019-January 2020⁸ that examined the shifting, contingent, and fluid subjectivities and spaces participants traversed (see Monreal, 2020). In the larger study I used a number of methods to collect data including semi-structured interviews, photovoice, ecomapping, field notes, and district/school websites. In this paper, I focus on the semi-structured interviews and photovoice of three participants⁹ to analyze their narratives. While various researchers (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Lather, 2004, 2009; Rodriguez, 2016) problematize the use of interviews and the resultant privileging of “voice” in post-structural research, I believe they do provide a targeted discursive activity to examine how participants describe, understand, and have “made meaning” of their experiences with/in power relations, spatial practices, and subjectivities (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 3; Prasad, 2005). I lean on

⁸ Participant recruitment took place in August 2019. It was a relatively quick process because I had worked as a classroom teacher in South Carolina and had spent over four years there in related teaching, advocacy, and community endeavors. Thus, most participants were previous personal connections. A small number of participants also came from snowball sampling via these established personal relationships.

⁹ All participant names and school locations are pseudonyms.

⁷ Rebellion

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) that remind us that even as interview data is “partial, incomplete and always being re-told and re-remembered... [voices can] produce multiplicities and excesses of meaning and subjectivities” (p. ix). The interviews lasted from approximately 30 minutes to 150 minutes¹⁰ and prompts included questions about their social-spatial identities, relations, and teaching. For the photovoice phase, I asked participants to take between six to eight pictures in response to the following prompt: *What images best communicate/capture your experiences and relationships as a Latinx teacher in South Carolina?* After I collected the photos, the participants and I engaged in an open-ended dialogue about them. It became clear to me that participants used the photographs and resulting dialogue to not only weave another set of narratives into the research (Fine et al., 2003), but as Shah (2011) outlined in her photovoice research, “to tell me stories on their own terms” (p. 102). Of course, this did not erase or equalize the power relations inherent in the research process, but it provided a reflective shift, an opening into negotiating another layer of control, voice, and representation.

I analyzed the data through a thinking with theory approach. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) describe such a *process* as a way of “plugging in” one set of texts into another, in my case participant narratives with my readings of Foucauldian counter-conduct and Chicana *rasquache* outlined above. In this way, I both “do and use the vocabulary and concepts” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. 7, emphasis original) in thinking with the data, seeking to produce knowledge outside reductive codes, themes, and categories. Thus, I focus analysis intently on specific data chunks, short portions of participant narrative that lead each sub-section of the findings and that I put into conversation with my theoretical frame.

I give more information about each of the three participants as I discuss their narratives, but to give a brief sketch, the three individuals work in public school across South Carolina. Two work in elementary schools with high percentages of Latinx students, and the third is a high school teacher at a school that now offers magnet and International Baccalaureate programs to counter what the participant called “White flight” from the school/district. The three participants do not work in schools in large metropolises, but the contexts certainly share urban characteristics. Milner (2012) describes such schools as “not located in big or midsized cities but may be starting to experience some of the challenges that are sometimes associated with urban

school contexts” (p. 559). Such examples pertinent to the participants include a large majority of students receiving free and reduced lunch, a rapid increase of emergent bilinguals, the specter of state takeover due to standardized test scores, and high teacher turnover. These three participants were also relatively unique across the larger sample as they shared a Mexican ethnic background and have resided and/or taught in South Carolina for a majority, if not all, of their professional/personal lives. Similarly, although *rasquache* was not a focus of the larger research project, I found examples of *rasquache* in the participants’ interviews and, then, discussed the concept with them, something I did not do across the sample.

Positionality

In many ways, the researchers’ own understanding of self/ves is another text that must be accounted for and reflected upon within the analytic process. My own parents, a White mother and Mexican American father, scraped together every opportunity they could find for their nine children, and such *movidas* of *rasquache* were often sources of embarrassment for me as a child. Thus, similar to Mejia and Pulido’s (2018) own reflection, I agree that “growing up ‘*rasquache*’ was part of [my] normal everyday life” (p. 3). I remember one time as a child I went to IHOP with my grandmother and grandfather, and I asked the waiter for a lemonade. *Mi abuela*¹¹ quickly interjected, “What he means is a cup of water with two lemons.” When the waiter left my grandma turned to me and said, “*mijo*,¹² never pay for a lemonade at a restaurant when you can make your own.” When the waiter brought my water, my grandma emptied two packets of Splenda into the cup, “*mijo, mira*,¹³ you squeeze the lemons into your water, mix it with sweetener, and then you have lemonade, free.”

Now, however, I very much credit a *rasquache* perspective—my working class, Do-It-Yourself, “where there’s a will there’s a way” upbringing—as a strength I relied upon to raise two young children and work full time as a classroom teacher en route to finishing an unfunded PhD program. Similarly, I relied on *rasquache* to navigate, and find opportunities to disrupt the unfamiliar and conservative school and community spaces that I encountered when I moved to South Carolina from California for graduate school (Monreal, 2017, 2019). In short, I acknowledge a certain intimacy

¹¹ My grandmother.

¹² Often though of a sort of conjunction with the words *mi hijo* (my son), it is used as a term of endearment for a child.

¹³ Look.

¹⁰ Each participant was formally interviewed one time in addition to 2-3 informal meetings/interviews where I took field notes.

and experiential connection to the research at hand. I also recognize how easy it is to situate myself near my participants. Pillow (2003) cautions that such reflexivity falls “into seeking similarities between the researcher and the subject,” and thus, I worked to both assert the knowledges, subjectivities, and experiences I bring to the analysis, with a reflexivity of discomfort that challenged and critiqued my own interpretations, representations, and claims, an ongoing process.

Latinx Educator *Movidas* of *Rasquache* in South Carolina

“So, I Am Making a Statement with This”

My first week of school when I started, I had a teacher come up to me and said, “Yo quiero Taco Bell...you know, tacos.” She laughed, she caught me off guard...and I was like shocked...

So, when that happened I was immediately like how do you respond to that? When that happened, I was just like shocked. After she left, I just kinda shook my head. I was like really; she doesn’t even think it’s wrong...

So last week I was at Walmart getting some stuff and they had this lanyard...this is

the new one that I wear at school. Look what it says, “I love tacos” [We both

laugh]. Look I found it and said it is perfect. So, I wear this to school now and the

lady that prompted the incident looked at me, and she hasn’t said anything about

tacos, but what I did was I have taken this as an opportunity to make it awkward.

I felt that I was objectified by tacos and that was like she didn’t see this person advocating for the community in all walks of life. She didn’t see that. She only associated me with tacos, because that is exactly what she said... “Yo quiero Taco Bell”

...So, I am making a statement with this [lanyard].
(Interview, October 2019)



Figure 1. “I love Tacos” photovoice picture by Sandra (Interview, October 2019)

Sandra was born and raised in a smaller South Carolina city and now works at the same elementary school she attended as a child. Reminded by the struggles her own family encountered when immigrating to the United States and settling in South Carolina, Sandra is driven to support the area’s rapidly increasing Latinx community. In fact, she now holds an elected position in her town and has led efforts for inclusive parks, bilingual library books, and transparent government meetings. Yet, Sandra believed such organizing and leadership went unseen as her colleague wrote essentialized discourse (“tacos”) about Latinx onto Sandra’s body. More specifically, Sandra felt “objectified by tacos,” turned into a hyper (in)visible thing where certain parts of her subjectivity (community advocate) disappeared to others’ knowledge about what Latinx should be. This objectification divided Sandra inside herself (Foucault, 1982, p. 778), and she was left to act within/against/for intolerable sets of relations that (re)produced such objectifying knowledge in seemingly mundane and normal situations (Ball & Olmedo, 2013). Sandra responded by redeploing and reclaiming the object of her construction into a subjective *movida*, an agentic act, of *rasquache*.

Sandra’s choice to buy an “I love Tacos” lanyard (at Wal-Mart nonetheless)¹⁴ and intentionally wear it at her school opened a space for becoming differently, reconfiguring, reversing, and blurring the boundaries between different subject’s relations to peace and perturbation, comfort and consternation, humor and hostility. In one sense, the *movida* speaks to *rasquache* as “witty and ironic, but not mean-spirited (there is sincerity in its artifice)” (Ybarra-Frausto, 1991, p. 155). However, even in this playfulness there was a forceful act of subversive agency against the racialized norms of certain spaces (Lomeli, 2013). In fact, Sandra re(per)formed and inverted the discourse about herself in a material fashion (lanyard) experimenting with the potentiality of hostility (“make it awkward”). As such, Sandra welcomed, even facilitated, transgression, focusing a practice of agonism to create spaces of confrontation with (the exercises of powers) “that make oneself thinkable in a different way” (Ball, 2016, p. 1141; Foucault, 1982). The provocation of spaces of agonism/hostility were a *rasquache* strategy, a *movida*, to use what was at hand to refuse and disrupt unjust

¹⁴ Ybarra-Frausto (1991) remarks that shopping at certain stores, like J.C. Penny’s, is *muy rasquache*. To this point, my 8 siblings and I often tease my dad for being the last person to still shop at J.C. Penny’s.

relations and open a path toward producing, or at least problematizing, a set of truths about who/what a Latinx teacher should be/do. In sum, by turning her subject position on its head Sandra transforms her subjectivity into a vehicle of power, a counter-conduction, “into the disparate fields of possibilities brought to bear upon [the seemingly] permanent structures [of schooling]” (Foucault, 1982, p. 788).

“I Keep a Bag of Hair Products at School”

My dad worked really hard with me to love my hair and not want to straighten it. Over the last like five or six years I'll brush my hair out and like wear it in a big poof ball fro, I'll wear it curly, I'll wear it however. For me as I've gotten more comfortable with all the expressions of, of how I can do my hair, how I come across to people ethnicity wise, it's like one of those things where I may not talk about it out loud, but like being that role model for a girl, you know, in the hallway or in class.

So I am very mindful of hair and I keep a bag of hair products at school, not just for me in case I have a rough morning, but I've had I want to say two different girls on at least two different occasions where they'll come to school and they'll have their hood on and they want to put their head down and I'll just come up real quiet...I'll just whisper, “you know what? I have a bag full of hair products. Would you like to use them?” And they're like, “yeah.” And I'm like, “cool.” And they'll just head out. No one knows anything. They come back, you know their hoods off and their heads up and they're like actually doing work. (Interview, December 2019)

Amara self-identified as Afro-Latina and although she was born and raised in Southern California she has been teaching middle and high school mathematics in South Carolina for nearly 20 years. Amara consistently reiterated the strengths and assets of her school and students, but also stressed that her district sought to counter “White Flight” (Anyon, 2014) by offering a magnet arts program and the International Baccalaureate at her high school. Thus, while she highlighted her school's increasingly diverse student population, including more Middle Eastern and Pacific Islander students, as reflective of a changing South Carolina, Amara understood such shifts weren't welcomed by all stakeholders. In fact, speaking to her belief that South Carolina continued to have a closed and essentialized view of people of color, specifically Latinx people, she shared, “so the perception of what it is to be Latino here is still very much like a certain vision and then you add to it the Trump rhetoric and it's kind of like just stuck there” (Interview, October, 2019). Thus, even though Amara also described being constricted by the racialized norms/conduct of the teacher “professional” such as “tone policing,” a “customer-service” ethos, and the (non)display of

certain emotions (Daniels & Varghese, 2019; Zembylas, 2005), she felt her hair was a signal to her public presence as Afro-Latina, something she wanted to address in order to disrupt essentializing views of Latinx in the South. In fact, the narrative at the beginning of this subsection was part of her explanation as to why she felt it was important to include a picture of her hair in the photovoice.¹⁵ Amara extends another *movida* of *rasquache* focused on hair and physical appearance, keeping a bag of hair products at school “in case I have a rough morning,” to her students. In communicating her willingness to literally “make do (her appearance)” at school, she passes this resistant and resilient attitude to her students by devising a simple but meaningful way to help them survive school spaces with a sense of dignity.

Moreover, Amara's counter-conduct, the willingness to transgress, play with, and use the racialized norms of appearance to challenge “appropriate” behavior tied to certain spaces is also highly gendered. As Mesa-Bains (1999) describes, “Chicana *rasquache* (*domesticana*)...not only grows out of resistance to majority culture and affirmation of cultural values, but from women's restrictions with the culture” (p. 161) and as such Amara's techniques of subversion challenge both community restrictions of Latinx and women. Amara's *movidas* are grounded in both her every day, minor actions with others and her deeply personal (accumulation) of embodied knowledge about the racialized and gendered ways ones is to conduct themselves in school spaces. The explicit sharing of this knowledge with students draws upon “a theory in the flesh,” the physical realities of her/their lives, to communicate and disrupt the (im)possibilities of teacher/student subjectivities. As Moraga and Anzaldúa (2002) write, “our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity” (p. 21). Amara's hair is but one way to put her subjective conduct to use, to share her personal story and narrative so that others might become differently.

Amara's *movidas* of *rasquache* open a (classroom) space that eschews and refigures the normalized boundaries of public/private/professional space allowing her and her students to reclaim a location of themselves, a more expansive subject position in the face of anti-Latinx rhetoric discourse. The public and visible nature of Amara's counter-conduct are certainly important, but I would charge her willingness to facilitate spaces of *rasquachismx* with students, her redefinition of classroom relations, is equally

¹⁵ In order to protect participant anonymity, I do not share this photograph of Amara's face and hair.

significant. Not only did Amara problematize a set of truths about who/what a teacher should be/do, she produced a crack for students to wrestle with the norms of conduct(ion) by “open[ing] spaces in which it is possible to be otherwise” (Ball, 2016, p. 1135). Stated simply, Amara’s presentation and defense of herself makes space for, and underlies, additional and future negotiations of counter-conduct. As Pizzaro (1999) argues, a *rasquache* identity that turns “traditional constructions [conduct/ions] on their end” (p. 206) is one path toward creating social *spaces* that facilitate and value the creative revisioning, refixing, and remixing of a Latinx self and community rooted in shared success, rather than individualistic accomplishment.

“You’re Going to Have to Figure Out How to Fix a Mistake and Turn it into Something Else”

Even though art isn’t always valued in our district I’ve been able to do so much work. I make sure we take care of our own. I have kids winning art competitions and using their portfolios to get into selective middle schools, you know get into gifted and talented programs or School of the Arts. Even the kids that didn’t get into anything, le digo los ninos¹⁶ the point is not to teach you how to be a master artist...Like check this out. See this? No erasers, none of the pencils in my class have erasers. Why do I do this? There are no erasers because I tell them in life you make a mistake and you can’t go back and erase it. You’re going to have to figure out how to fix a mistake and turn it into something else. So, when you’re drawing and if you make a mistake you turn that into something awesome. Yeah, turn into something amazing and they think I’m crazy but they eventually you know, they get it.

Bri’s family moved to South Carolina from California in the 1980s when she was four years old. She believes her family was one of the first Mexican families to settle in the major city she continues to call home. Growing up she recounted being the only Mexican in every class, which is dramatically different from the school she currently works at as an elementary art teacher. Signaling the rapid growth of Latinx communities in the state, North Elementary School is nearly 70% “Hispanic” and over 90% students of color. Due to external pressure by outside auditors, and now a management firm, she shared that “art isn’t valued” in the district. Although Bri wishes this was otherwise, this inattention also allows her a fair amount of freedom to teach a curriculum, steeped in Latinx art, she values while finding inventive and purposeful ways to “take care of our own [Latinx students].” In particular, Bri helps students build art portfolios and enter art contests

¹⁶ I tell the kids (students).

that will make them competitive candidates for selective middle schools¹⁷ as she shared in the following picture (Figure 2). As the picture displays, Bri’s *movidas* to center student’s own embodied knowledge through art is both an aesthetic intervention towards different spatial imaginations (Bedoya, 2014), and an opportunity to (dis)locating new geographies (of the self) toward expanded territories of becoming (Kyriacopoulos & Sánchez, 2017).

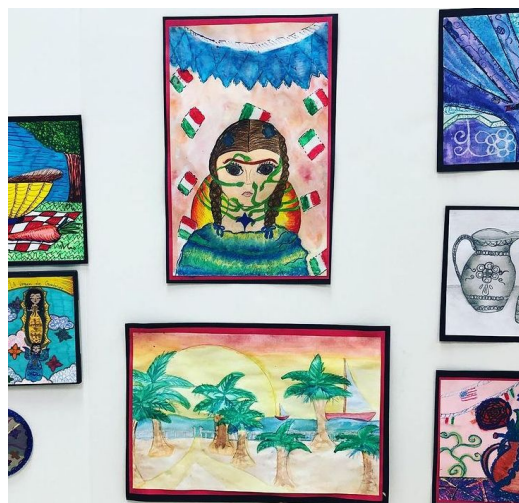


Figure 2. Student artwork as part of an application to for a select middle school.

Further, she passes on a *rasquache* attitude to her students with her pencil/eraser *movida* to help them understand the “resilience and resourcefulness [that] spring from making do with what is at hand (their mistakes)” (Ybarra-Frausto, 1991, p. 156). Refixing and reusing her devalued subject position, Bri makes innovative use of her power as an art teacher to link her own embodied knowledge to that of her students and ultimately advocate for their future becomings. Thus, even as Foucault (2007c) speaks of specific “revolts of conduct,” Bri also evidences *movidas* of *rasquache* “as more diffuse and subdued forms of resistance [counter-conduct]” (p. 194, 200). Such subtle *movidas* of counter-conduct seek to pry open a school and classroom space where both Bri and her students might escape the definition of others towards defining new ways “for each to conduct themselves” (Foucault, 2007a, p. 195).

Conclusion

¹⁷ Bri worked in a so-called “choice” district where students could be nominated for and apply to selective public middle school programs.

In this paper, I analyzed the narratives of three separate Latinx educators in South Carolina to examine how *movidas* of *rasquache* were inventive strategies of counter-conduct in the battle for new, expansive forms of subjectivity. I suggest that such acts of resourcefulness, scrappiness, and inventiveness were also spatial interventions promoting the possibilities for Latinx teachers (and their students) to be(come) otherwise within the restrictive and racialized contexts of (schools in) El Sur Latinx. For example, Sandra refracted and inverted a racist stereotype lobbied at her, “Yo quiero Tacos,” by wearing a Taco lanyard bought at Walmart. Sandra agentially turned her subjectivity on its head, using it to create a school space of awkwardness and hostility for her colleague. Amara sought a redefinition of both herself and students by playing with, and transgressing, the racialized norms of professional appearance while also supporting students with hair products so they felt confident and dignified in school spaces. Finally, Bri found enterprising ways to use power in her subject position as an undervalued art teacher to advocate for Latinx students. She also emphasized a *rasquache* attitude by helping students productively reclaim and redefine their understanding of mistakes.

Such *movidas* of *rasquache* not only opened up “new networks of resistance” (Cotera, Blackwell, & Espinoza, 2018, p. 12) but also were productive interventions, counter-conduct(ion)s, towards “spaces of possibility” (Rodriguez, 2013) that consisted of more expansive relations to self and others. Thus even if we are to read Amara and Bri’s motivations to be their students while Sandra’s pushed back against her colleague’s racist discourse, there is a shared thread that Latinx teachers must find creative ways to conduct themselves differently for the benefit of their students and communities. Thought in this way, their *movidas* of *rasquache* are minor acts of *rebeldia* and agonism to develop new political subjectivities. In sum, the teachers employed *rasquache* to find and exploit “loopholes and blind spots,” (Pérez, 1993, p. 277) what Foucault might call “wounds and openings” (Foucault, 2017, p. 11) within practices of (self)conduct. Employing a “make-do-with-what’s-at-hand” (Pérez, 1993, p. 277) approach to stitch together a politics of the self was but one way particular Latinx teachers in South Carolina used creative tactics to reclaim and reconstitute their subjectivities. Thus, as Ball (2016) lays out, such agonistic practices of the (Latinx) teacher self constitute a necessary, but perhaps insufficient, intervention to refuse who we are in the hopes of coming to know, conduct, and care for ourselves differently.

To this point, *movidas* of *rasquache* were neither limitless nor a complete solution to racialized, neoliberal teacher governmentality. First, even as the participants shared the importance of challenging and remaking their relations and spaces, they often undertook such agonism alone. As Latinx teachers were made “to feel lonely, isolated, and unaware of each other” (Webb, 2009, p. 136), they often faced the challenge of recreating the self without the support of other Latinx teachers. Even with *movidas* of *rasquache*, it was/is not easy to perpetually interrogate, refuse, and reconstitute the Latinx teacher self/ves especially when such work, such conduct, is counter to their conduct(ion). Therefore, there appears to be a need for Latinx teachers to engage in collective political work toward the coordination of individual teacher *movidas* and a collaborative movement of meeting points toward creative resistance. Such collective work is especially important because even though individual Latinx teacher subjectivities were a source of refusal and recreation, they were also redeployed against such ends. For example, Bri shared she was recently refused a transfer to a “dream job” closer to her family’s house because the district needed her in a school with high numbers of Latinx. In this way the school district reappropriated her subjectivity in a restrictive fashion outlining her becoming and prescribing her being; the district told her who she was to be, where. Importantly, it should not solely be the job of Latinx teachers to reimagine (spaces of) expansive subject positions as school leaders, district officials, and other teachers can work with Latinx teachers to create and maintain spaces of counter-conduct. I ask what would it mean for schools and even teacher educator to center the spaces, embodied knowledges, and subjective (im)possibilities of Latinx teachers? To this point, and taking seriously the ideas of *rasquache* and counter-conduct in Latinx teachers’ lives, we might heed Jackson’s (2013) insights:

instead of offering external solutions to change the power relations, I argue that those very solutions are [the creative actions] already embedded within and embodied by practices...The point is to figure out how to create more fluid, open conditions—or becoming-spaces—within which people can transform themselves. (pp. 845-846)

Such a call not only asks researchers, colleagues, administrators, and teacher educators to locate, and create space, for *movidas* of *rasquache* and counter-conduct within schools, but to focus Latinx teachers in discussion of how they should be taken up. This opens a line of valuable and relevant research,

thinking, and practice both inside and outside El Sur Latinx.

In conclusion, this study is significant in expanding the breadth of theoretical frames used to investigate Latinx teacher subjectivity while also bringing Latinx/Chicanx understandings into post-structural, particularly Foucauldian, analysis. Scholarship that details and explores Latinx teacher subjectivity in novel directions is particularly worthwhile in spaces such as El Sur Latinx that have growing Latinx student populations and relatively few Latinx teachers. For even as the educators in this article found a variety of ways to use their own subject positions to loosen the grips between subjectification and subjection, and create new paths of power relations for their Latinx students, the process is always already on-going and tenuous. Latinx teachers in South Carolina find a way to traverse an environment “always on the edge of coming apart” by holding and molding themselves together through “spit, grit, and *movidas*” (Ybarra-Frausto, 1991, p.5). These *movidas* teach us much about (counter)conducting the self within constraining spaces, but they also point to how we might also conduct space toward more expansive subject possibilities.

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