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A Phenomenological Study of Latina Poets as Leaders at Higher Education Institutions

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF LATINA POETS AS LEADERS AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

A Dissertation

by

RODNEY GOMEZ

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ABSTRACT

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This interpretive phenomenological study addresses the underrepresentation of Latinas in higher education leadership roles by focusing on the lived experiences of Latina poets who have served as higher education leaders. Data, collected through semi-structured participant interviews and participant writing samples, was analyzed through a standard method of thematic analysis. Latin American and U.S. theories of decoloniality and Yosso's theory of community cultural capital guided interpretation of participant experiences. Five themes emerged from the analysis: border negation, foundational values, othered leadership, importance of community, and writing as necessity. Discussion of participation experiences suggests ways that poetry and creative writing can be used to inform higher education leadership. The study supports directions for future practical research concerning the link between writing and leadership.

DEDICATION

To my family no longer here: my father, Alfonso Gomez and my mother, Irma Gomez, my niece Joanna, and my brother Eli. To my sisters: Belinda, who was the first to walk me to the library and accompany me on field trips; Norma, who purchased my first books and invited me everywhere; Susie, who taught me how to fight and be loud; and Bea, who always opened her home when I needed it. To Sara: my spouse, best friend, and source of endless encouragement. To my children, Gemma and August: my reasons, my blessings, my heart, and the very best of us.

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Dr. Veronica Sandoval and jo reyes-boitel, fellow poets: thank you for helping me think through the research questions and providing guidance on how to improve the direction of my research. I am honored.

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Finally, and most importantly, I want to express my gratitude to the participants, who were so gracious with their time and generously shared their insights. Thank you for being the brilliant, powerful Latina poets, writers, and thinkers you are. I admire your work and your words.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are complex organizations: their bureaucracies are often difficult to comprehend and their activities are in constant flux (Stensaker, 2018; Teichler, 2006). Analogizing them to biological systems that adapt and respond to the complexity of their environments, Pinheiro and Young (2017) describe higher education institutions as sites of non-linear processes, disallowing simple and reductive conclusions about their behaviors.

Higher education leaders must possess keen social skills, such as the ability to unite diverse opinions and empathize with stakeholders, to be effective (Barceló, 2014; Burch et al., 2015). However, poets are not often thought to possess these necessary traits for leadership (Sharma & Chandiramani, 2018): the image of the neurotic and misanthropic writer is entrenched in the public imagination and seems to expose a reality that a writer is more comfortable interacting with words than with people. In one study supporting this view, poets scored significantly higher on personality inventory scales of neuroticism (moodiness and emotional instability) and introversion (low assertiveness) than non-poets (Sharma & Chandiramani, 2018). A poet does not seem well-suited to inspire others to action as the leader of an organization, much less control their household, which popular media often portrays as shambolic (see the films *Barton Fink*, *Adaptation*, or *Paterson*, to name a few examples.

Nevertheless, poets (like other artists) can be, and sometimes are, effective leaders. These include Ethelbert Miller, who for many years served as Director of the African American Studies Resource Center at Howard University (Poetry Foundation, n.d.), and Crystal Ann Williams,

President of the Rhode Island School of Design and former Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion at Boston University (Barlow, 2017). Creativity is a prerequisite for poetic expression, and the ability to lead creatively is an important skill to wield in a higher education environment, especially as a critical component of a larger knowledge economy (Kandiko, 2012). Poets can thus be an important target of study in creative leadership. This phenomenological study will attempt to understand how the artistic practices of one group of poets—Latina poets—inform their work in leadership positions at higher education institutions.

Rationale

Several studies in the literature explore how creativity can inform leadership (Basadur, 2004; Beghetto, 2015; Mainemelis et al., 2015). Research also describes specific behaviors, habits, and knowledge that artists possess that can be used to develop effective leadership practices (Cadenhead & Fischer, 2000; Dodson, 2022). For instance, some researchers have studied how art administrators who are also painters draw upon what they have learned as visual artists to create principles they follow in their administrative activities (Saraniero, 2004). However, few studies investigate how creative writing as a practice or set of unique behaviors can serve as a source of leadership practice.

One recent unpublished dissertation (Dodson, 2022) explores the experiences of university administrators with advanced degrees in creative writing who have published at least one creative work to determine how creative writing affects their self-perceptions as leaders. The dissertation uncovered seven themes, including that creative writers define leadership as people-focused, in contrast to a kind of leadership that is more focused on work product (Dodson, 2022). However, not one of those themes is unique to creative writers or non-creatives—even people with no artistic inclination but a high emotional intelligence may think of leadership in people-

focused terms (Parrish, 2015). That study also does not focus on the lived experience of poets as creative writers, make distinctions based on race or ethnicity, nor include Latinas as leaders. Moreover, it concerns only mid-level administrators, whereas leadership can apply to many formal and informal roles in higher education.

Another unpublished dissertation (Brown, 2019) focuses on the leadership practices of university presidents who are also artists. The study found that creativity, empathy, and artistic practices such as collaboration and performance are critical to their success (Brown, 2019). It assumes that artists possess the trait of creativity that others can harness—in this, it is like other studies that conceptualize creative leadership as the application of specific creative skills or abilities. Of the eight participants interviewed, only one was a writer (a playwright), and the others were practitioners of disciplines that are arguably as much craft as art—six musicians and one theater director. Notably, only one of the participants was a woman, and all came from backgrounds that inherited considerable social, economic, and cultural capital, thereby limiting the study's applicability to the challenges that people of color face in both the arts and academia.

By contrast, the present study focuses on the lived experiences of Latina poets as leaders to understand the relationship between artistic practice and leadership practice in the higher education context. It attempts to fill a gap in higher education leadership studies by focusing on a non-white set of women.

Statement of the Problem

This study addresses the underrepresentation of Latinas in higher education leadership roles. It focuses on one group of leaders, Latina poets, to explore their leadership practices. Exploration of their experiences can inform the study of leadership practice, leadership practices of Latinas who aspire to leadership roles, and expand the study of creativity in leadership.

Over the last several decades, Latin@ enrollment in higher education institutions has increased steadily from less than half a million students in 1980 to 3.7 million in 2020, rising from 4% of total students enrolled to 20% (Mora, 2022). Latinas have experienced greater success, with their college degree attainment surpassing that of Latinos (Anthony et al., 2021). However, their representation in leadership positions has not increased in proportion. Latinas are underrepresented in formal and informal leadership positions in the academy, both as faculty and in administrative and executive positions (Muñoz, 2009). The result is a leadership vacuum as people retire from higher education leadership positions (Brown, 2019; Muñoz, 2009). This vacuum presents the potential for creatives, and Latinas especially, to fill critical roles in the future.

Benefits and Significance of the Study

This study intends to broaden the focus of leadership studies. It is easy to find educational research that focuses on the wisdom of business leaders or business-minded managers (Faulkner, 2009). Artists, writers, and other creatives have unique ways of experiencing and making meaning in the world (Faulkner, 2009; Mullen, 2022). They are also continuously changing the world through art that builds compassion, spurs new insights, uncovers forgotten stories, and explores new ways of preparing for the future. Some people who are leading this effort are creative Latinas. This study takes artists and writers seriously and provides support for future research. Knowledge of artists' experiences can help inform policy (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Higher education institutions still struggle to accept Latin@s as part of their communities (De Luca & Escoto, 2012). Even as universities have become more ethnically diverse, barriers to recruitment and retention continue to negatively impact the representation of Latin@s on faculty rosters, especially in tenure-track positions (Rodríguez et al., 2016; Salinas et al., 2020). Paula

Moya (2002) recounts how a college Dean asked her—an applicant for an English position whose doctorate and research background were in English—whether she would be comfortable teaching in English, thus revealing his ignorance about her work and cultural background. Understanding the experiences of creative Latina leaders can contribute to helping academia become more reflective of the nation it serves (Moya, 2002). The experience of Latina creatives can help inform educational policy and provide strategies for Latina students who desire to become educational leaders.

Limitations of the Study

Like most interpretive phenomenological studies, this study focuses only on a few individuals. Like most qualitative research, its applicability is limited. In addition, the study does not distinguish between Latinas of different ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds. This may elide important differences. For example, a Latina with a family history in Cuba, whose parents migrated as political exiles, may have a much different orientation towards leadership and may have access to much more cultural and social capital than a Latina born in Mexico whose formative childhood years were shaped by crushing poverty and constant violence.

Another limitation is the study's focus on poets alone. Poetry is one art form, and although it may share traits with other art forms, it is possible to learn different lessons and draw different conclusions from higher education leaders who practice such things as painting or dance. Researchers who change or narrow their study focus to other forms may encounter different findings.

Definition of Key Terms

Creative Writer

Creative writers work on textual and written materials to communicate through their art (Harper, 2010). They write poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, and other texts. The set of creative writers may also include performance artists who work from texts (such as spoken word poets and slam poets), visual artists who meld word and text, and many others. Creative writers are customarily seen as being able to teach in the academy and other settings (Saraniero, 2004), but leadership studies rarely focus on their unique practices and how they can inform leadership practice. However, there are examples of accomplished leaders in higher education who are also accomplished creative writers.

Latin@ / Latina

Following Soto (2010), I use Latin@ instead of the more common term Hispanic to refer to Latinas and Latinos. I also use the arroba (@) to address the intersectional and complicating impulse to uncover lived realities veiled by a dominant Western epistemology that ignores the body (Soto, 2010). Soto writes, "I like the way the nonalphabetic symbol for 'at' disrupts our desire for intelligibility, our desire for a quick and certain visual register of a gendered body" (Soto, 2010, p. 2).

Self-identification was used to establish a participant pool with the caveat that the definition of Latina, like all definitions, is porous and malleable. At the same time, communities define membership. The first aspect of the term reflects freedom of self-identification. The second prevents disingenuous solidarity. Because of the potential to limit the sample size and to unnecessarily foreclose interesting data, this study did not require identity verification beyond self-identification in the selection process. The term 'Latina' is both broad (concerns of Latinas

who also identify as Mexican, for instance, may not be the same as those who also identify as Boricua) but narrow (most Latinas have a familial background connected in some way to Latin America).

Latinas' work in the academy is implicated by their intersectional membership—Latinas are often from immigrant families, Spanish language speakers, mothers, business owners, of various phenotypes, members of various cultures and subcultures, and so on (Gonzales et al., 2013). They possess all their traits all the time (Gonzales et al., 2013). As some scholars have argued, these identities are imbricated with each other and not necessarily capable of being separated—for instance, a Latina who is both a mother and a professor is not necessarily each of those things individually. However, her identity may arise from the unique relationship between mothering and teaching (Riviera, 2022). In some cases, the issue of membership—whether one has a right to call themselves 'Latina'—is the central problem in an academic's story of membership in the academy (Gonzales et al., 2013).

As the literature review describes, Latinas continue to be underrepresented and marginalized in academic spaces at most levels of leadership. Although they have made gains in representation for as long as they have served as objects of study, and have outperformed Latinos based on various indicators of achievement, they are disproportionately underrepresented. The irony is that they are often very qualified, or overqualified, to lead by any objective standard. Given that reality, it was unwarranted to demand participant classifications that are too exclusive.

Leader/Leadership

In this study, the participants described their leadership practices without external definitions or prompting about what leadership should be. How the term leader has been defined has not always been innocent of ontological and axiological commitments to which participants may not subscribe (Morley, 2013). For instance, in the U.S., the term has often been gendered and associated with white men (Bierema, 2016). By contrast, women have often been seen as unfit to lead complex organizations or to provide the extensive work and time commitment necessary for success (Bierema, 2016).

Research has shown that when people think of the term 'leader,' they associate it with whites and see whites as more effective leaders than ethnic minorities (Rosette et al., 2008). This link is supported by implicit bias (Gündemir et al., 2014) and revealed by tests that indirectly find an association, even when direct methods (such as self-reporting) do not (Petsko et al., 2023). Other researchers have found that people who conceptualize their god as a white male, such as some Christians, also find white males more fit for leadership (Roberts et al., 2020).

When women and ethnic minorities in leadership positions advocate for diversity, they are seen as less competent than their white male peers (Hekman et al., 2017). When they attempt to increase diversity, they are judged as stereotypes trying to advance their own low-status social groups. However, white men do not experience the same penalty when trying to diversify (Hekman et al., 2017). By contrast, minorities who do not advocate for diversification are seen as highly competent (Hekman et al., 2017). There is thus a social premium for minority leaders to refrain from helping their fellow minorities become leaders themselves. Given this research, it is unsurprising that people of color lead only 4% of all Fortune 500 companies and women lead 4%, although the two categories are not mutually exclusive (Gino, 2017).

As copious research has revealed, leadership in higher education can possess many dimensions. Eddy and VanDerLinden (2006) describe the common use of the terms servant leadership, transformative leadership, inclusive leadership, and team leadership by higher education leaders. Clearly, formal managerial, administrative, and executive positions and roles have a leadership aspect (Bennis, 2009). However, the terms manager, administrator, director, chair, executive, and many other titles are not synonymous with the term leader. In the higher education bureaucracy, a leadership position is one in which there is some influence over a person, project, or program beyond the individual, whether that influence is formally or informally granted. Leadership roles include serving as a department head or directing a research center. The idea of leadership in these capacities is consistent with related concepts such as administering and managing (Bryman, 2008). This study's initial participant pool was comprised of persons holding these types of formal leadership roles in higher education.

At the same time, a fundamental idea of leadership is that it is primarily about influencing others' behavior (Bryman, 2008). Formal authority is easy enough to discover in a person's formal job title. A leader, instead, can be seen as a set of characteristics rather than a list of job functions, tasks, or responsibilities. Hence, a person with formal responsibility may not necessarily be a leader unless they also display traits such as collegiality, collaboration, transformation (Black, 2015), the ability to influence others (Northouse, 2007), and many more. Leadership exists within higher levels of an institutional hierarchy and throughout the organization in various positions and functions (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006).

Given this complexity of leadership, informal leadership roles not necessarily associated with a specific job title usually associated with leadership positions were not foreclosed in the

participant selection process, and participants fleshed out their leadership conceptions as part of the interview process.

Poet

A poet is someone who writes or performs poetry. Poetry can be defined as verbal expression in varied forms that is not prose, from the rhyming and rhythm-rich lines of children's books (Hopkins, 2015), to semantic exercises (Galef, 2011), to the skillful deployment of sounds rich in meaning (Attridge, 1995), to the combination of text and image found in visual poetry (Bohn, 2010), among many others. The participant pool included poets who have published books and whose work has appeared in published journals and anthologies. The initial participant pool was determined because the participants had identified as poets by writing books of poetry, publishing poetry in journals, performing poetry, and engaging in various poetry-making activities.

Research Questions

The following served as research questions for this study:

Q1. How do Latina poets who are higher education leaders apply their artistic practices, if any, to their leadership practices?

Q2. How do specific elements of artistic practice, if any, inform or influence higher education leadership activities of Latina poets?

The first question responds to that strand of the literature review that explores how artists use their artistic practices in their leadership practices. The second question regards the application of particular skills or other art-creating elements to leadership.

Positionality Statement

I grew up in economic poverty in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. I am the youngest of seven siblings, the third in my family to graduate high school, and the first to attend college. My father obtained a 4th-grade education, and my mother reached the 11th grade. For most of their lives, they were migrant farmworkers and laborers, eventually retiring as a custodian and cashier, respectively. They experienced their lives, as I do, in the literal and metaphorical space Gloria Anzaldúa called nepantla (Anzaldúa, 2012)—neither entirely Mexican nor American, but of and from the borderlands.

Because of their guidance and role modeling, I can now live a relatively comfortable life. I have had numerous educational opportunities available to me. I have earned several degrees and am now a university administrator. I can explore my interests in urban planning, writing, and education without worrying about whether I will have enough money to feed my family. I have the freedom to write poetry, which is my creative passion. My writings explore the intersection of the natural and built environments, culture, and history in the U.S./Mexico borderlands. My current writing projects, which include collections of poetry, visual poetry, and lyric essays, center on the nature of urban constructions and border violence. I have received several fellowships, grants, and awards to support these and other projects.

Completing the present study will allow me to pursue administrative roles of increasing responsibility and impact at colleges or universities. At the same time, I intend to continue engaging in socially productive research that centers on marginalized voices.

I am interested in Latinas as study participants for many reasons. The book *Wise Latinas: Writers on Higher Education*, edited by Jennifer De Leon (2014), was the first work that forced me to confront the many struggles Latina academics and administrative leaders encounter in

academia. Although Latinas are often superlatively prepared to be scholars, researchers, academics, and leaders, they are still marginalized in numerous ways; this is reflected in their relatively lower salaries, lack of professional security, and lack of representation in the academy. Lorgia Garcia Peña's (2022) autobiographical *Community as Rebellion* brilliantly dissects the pain and trauma inflicted by colonialist institutions of higher education on Latina professors. The effects also extend to Latina undergraduates and graduate students.

I am motivated to highlight Latinas' leadership excellence and important knowledge that might be learned from their experiences. I have been most strongly influenced by Latinas—my mother, four sisters, partner, teachers and professors, friends, work supervisors, and, most recently, my radiant daughter. Latinas have been my biggest supporters, and I am called to repay the gifts I have been generously given.

At the same time, I am aware that my research may be influenced by patriarchal attitudes and behaviors of which I may not be immediately conscious. By naming my potential privileges as a white-presenting straight man, I hope to avoid and stem the perpetuation of the marginalizing, misogynistic, infantilizing, and damaging tendencies of the higher education system (Morley, 2013) of which I am a part.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review will cover two research areas germane to the present study. First, it will describe the current state of Latinas in higher education leadership positions, which relates to Latin@s in general, both as employees and students. Second, it will discuss research about creativity and its relationship to leadership.

Latina Leaders in Higher Education

Latinas are underrepresented in all categories of leadership positions, whether as faculty (Gonzales et al., 2013; Reyes, 2005; Rodríguez et al., 2015) or in administrative and executive positions (León & Nevarez, 2007; Savala, 2014). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only about 2% of full-time professors are Latinas, and only about 3% are professors, associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, or lecturers (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). As of 2021, only about 3% of higher education institution chief executives were Latinas (Mora, 2023). At the same time, Latinas comprise over 9% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Patton (2016), citing National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data, observes that white men and women continue to dominate leadership positions at colleges and universities—they constitute approximately 80% of the professors at the highest levels (Patton, 2016). At the other extreme, as of 2020, there were only 2,000 Latina professors in the United States (Flores, 2020).

Although mere representation does not indicate progress (Morley, 2013), it can serve as a valuable measure of inequity.

A recent study by professors at the University of Texas at Austin uncovered what may be commonplace at many universities: at Texas' flagship university, not only were Latinas the lowest-paid demographic among faculty and administrators, but there was also not a single Latina who held the position of dean, vice dean, associate dean, or assistant dean out of a total of 130 such positions (Independent Equity Committee, 2019). Of the 318 department chairs and center/institute director positions available, only four were helmed by Latinas, and none held the top post at a research center whose primary purpose was not the study or engagement of Latin@s (Independent Equity Committee, 2019). By contrast, 12% of UT Austin students are Latinas (Independent Equity Committee, 2019).

This underrepresentation, along with the lack of institutional support cited by Garcia-Peña (2022), is not necessarily restricted to non-Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) (Gonzales et al., 2013). HSIs may mirror Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in their treatment of Latina leaders. For instance, Latinas may experience difficulty obtaining tenure at these schools. They may feel the same institutional indifference to their perceptions of inequality as at non-HSIs (Urrieta et al., 2015). One reason for this equivalence is that the HSI designation does not mean that an institution was founded specifically for advancing Latin@s; this contrasts with the origins of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Gonzales et al., 2013).

Although Latinas are accomplished scholars, researchers, and academics, they are still devalued in numerous ways and are continually confronted with barriers that may impede their success: this is reflected in their relatively lower salaries and lack of job security (Reyes, 2005). They are frequent targets of microaggressions, have their subject matter authority questioned by

fellow faculty and students, and experience outright hostility to their authority (De Leon, 2014; Flores, 2020; Lincoln & Stanley, 2021). In one example, a professor recounts how she was mistaken as a service worker by her colleagues and treated with less respect, revealing their negative assumptions both about her appearance and service workers (Ortega-Liston & Soto, 2014).

Even when they reach the highest leadership levels, such as serving as presidents of community colleges or universities, their right to serve as leaders is challenged with demands to continually prove their ability (Barceló, 2014; Muñoz, 2009). Moreover, their decision-making is undermined by other Latinas who question their commitment to solidarity and by non-Latin@s who allege favoritism (Muñoz, 2009). Barceló (2014) recounts how she was assailed by accusations of incompetence as a college president and fought a campus environment where some Latinas would question the value of other Latinas' work, even when the two groups were ostensibly friends and worked in the same scholarly fields. She argues that the academic culture in which these Latinas worked was designed to pit them against each other for access to limited resources (Barceló, 2014). The same system tolerates the racism and sexism Latinas routinely experience in their personal interactions (Alarcón & Bettez, 2017; Balderrama et al., 2004; Flores, 2020; Núñez et al., 2015).

As scholars with diverse backgrounds, skills, talents, and allegiances, Latinas inhabit different cultural and political spaces (Segura, 2003) with demands that pull their attention in different directions. Castillo-Garsow (2012-2013) calls the Latina academic's ability to speak the idiom of the different contexts she inhabits an "arsenal of voices" (p. 5). As outcasts in academia, Latinas often function as agents provocateurs (Segura, 2003)—questioning the system

and challenging accepted ways of moving within that system. As a result, they are often targeted for harassment and discrimination.

Working within a system that was not created to foster their success, Latina leaders can remain socially isolated, sometimes being the only people of color in their departments or among executive leadership, even at Hispanic Serving Institutions (Eiden-Dillow & Best, 2022; Gonzales et al., 2013; Muñoz, 2009). They experience burnout and lower job satisfaction rates than their non-Latina peers (Balderrama et al., 2004). As they advance through the organizational hierarchy, their presence is sometimes considered inapposite, or they lose the strong connection to their previously held values (Eiden-Dillow & Best, 2022). Eiden-Dillow and Best (2022) describe how a Latina in a high-level administrative position lamented that she had lost her radical and activist identity.

Latina leaders also experience tokenization—assumed to represent all Latin@s or people of color, with their representation purposely limited to specific tasks or functions within a department (Eiden-Dillow & Best, 2022; Gonzales et al., 2013; Muñoz, 2009). They are marginalized, stereotyped, and thought capable of doing only one kind of scholarship, usually related to Latin@ or Latin-American studies (Gonzales et al., 2013).

Higher education's emphasis on prestige work, such as publication of scholarship in well-known and influential journals, simultaneously devalues the critical work many Latinas perform for their communities, such as teaching and service (Gonzales et al., 2013; Flores, 2020). It also devalues areas of inquiry where Latin@s are more likely to achieve doctorates, such as education and public administration (Balderrama et al., 2004; Savala, 2014). Ironically, as Latinas' work is marginalized and devalued, they perform critical and essential work for the academy that then exacerbates their condition—Balderrama et al. (2004) describe a typical case of a Latina who

teaches with a significant course load, engages in numerous service activities, and nevertheless experiences a lower level of job satisfaction compared to her white peers. This phenomenon is not exclusive to Latinas, as other women disproportionately engage in service activities compared to men (Guarino & Borden, 2017). In her story of the racism she experienced when working at Harvard, Garcia-Peña (2022) recounts how her countless hours of student mentorship, service on committees, teaching excellence, and advocacy were significantly discounted in her tenure review process even as persons of color (not coincidentally) performed the majority of this kind of work at the university.

Latinas' work in higher education is influenced by their intersectional memberships (Gonzales et al., 2013). For some Latinas, intersectional memberships can serve as sources of success by providing key values, prompting self-awareness, and serving as bases for support networks (Montas-Hunter, 2012). However, Latinas cannot be pigeonholed into their various identities (a characteristic of colonialist thinking). They must be apprehended as complex webs of commitments, allegiances, expressions, and other ontological implications (Velez, 2019).

Latinas must often balance their desire for advancement within the academy with external pressures such as raising a family or caring for older parents (Balderrama et al., 2004; Savala, 2014). This balancing of multiple identities occurs against cultural and institutional forces that expect Latinas to weigh their families over careers or to put aside their aspirations for their children and spouses (Espino et al., 2010). Flores (2020) recounts how she was confronted by family members in her native Rio Grande Valley of Texas who unfavorably contrasted her academic life to high school classmates raising families and holding more traditional jobs. As she later struggled with fertility treatments against the backdrop of her difficult career path in

academia, she was reminded of the cultural pressure to become a mother, adding stress to her life (Flores, 2020).

Latina leader experiences also mirror the felt experiences of other women leaders in higher education. Women of color in leadership positions also experience devaluation when their work is criticized more severely than white women's or when they are discouraged from seeking higher-level positions within academia (Hannum et al., 2015). In one study, interviews with women leaders uncovered over twenty different kinds of adversity experienced in the workplace, including gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and tokenism (Diehl, 2014). Although participants in that study shared similar stories of higher education's treatment of them, their strategies ranged from the positive (such as pride and empowerment that helped their careers) to negative (such as stress, lack of self-confidence, insecurity, and disillusionment that hindered their careers) (Diehl, 2014).

Similarly, Davis and Maldonado (2015) interviewed Black women leaders who felt their careers were hindered because of their race and gender (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). They reported numerous instances of microaggressions, discrimination, and harassment that left them feeling devalued (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

Gender-based attributional ambiguity, or the state where someone holding a leadership position cannot determine whether an experience occurred because of her gender or something else, has also been uncovered among women in academic deanships (Bower et al., 2019). Leaders who experience attributional ambiguity can suffer psychological stress as they attempt to resolve ambiguity, sometimes minimizing or refusing to accept microaggressions and discriminatory behavior to remain conciliatory toward others (Bower et al., 2019).

In the academic areas of science and technology, women attempting to move into leadership ranks often experience discrimination (for example, if they are pregnant) (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016). They are routinely targets of sexual harassment and are viewed as incompetent (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016). Women in these spaces feel marginalized as they are locked out of social networks composed exclusively of men (Howe-Walsh, 2016). As a result, their ability to advance in their careers, access to resources, and possibility for tenure are negatively affected (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016).

Latin@s in Higher Education

The experience of Latina leaders mirrors the experience of Latin@ students in higher education. Because there are proportionally fewer Latin@s enrolled in universities and graduate programs compared to the population of whites relative to their respective populations in the United States (Rodríguez et al., 2015), the sample of individuals who are positioned to serve in faculty or administrative positions is relatively small. Issues that negatively impede Latin@ student success directly affect the numbers and experiences of Latin@ leaders.

Recent analyses of Latin@ success in the United States have focused on their population growth and successful entry into higher education institutions. Latin@s of diverse backgrounds now inhabit spaces at the nation's most prestigious higher education institutions. However, even as Latin@ students have made great strides in educational achievement, they still have many educational, personal, and professional obstacles to overcome and trail other ethnic groups and whites in socioeconomic measures of success (Brown et al., 2003; Kwan et al., 2018). For example, Darder and Torres (2014) state that by 2050, Latin@s will comprise about 30% of the U.S. population, yet most economic wealth will continue to be concentrated among whites. This wealth disparity results in educational disparity—about 40% of all Latin@s do not graduate high

school, and they are twice as likely as white students not to meet standardized test requirements (Darder & Torres, 2014). Even today, a strong predictor of success for the average ethnic minority in the United States is not a university education but parental socioeconomic status (Balderrama et al., 2004; Berkowtiz et al., 2017; Li et al., 2021).

Discrimination in various forms is a common stressor experienced by Latin@s that interferes with academic performance (Flink, 2018; Jackson, 2014). The persistence of microaggressions by people in positions of authority who target Latin@s as undeserving of attending college or being incapable of succeeding there has been implicated as an obstacle to success starting in primary and secondary schools (Cerezo et al., 2013; Rolón-Dow, 2022). One study found that Latin@s who perceive themselves to be in hostile academic environments are more likely to suffer from academic underachievement (Cole & Espinoza, 2008).

Another study based at a majority-white university found that 60% of its Latin@ undergraduate students reported having experienced at least three instances of microaggressions or other acts of racism during their enrollment (Gutiérrez et al., 2019). Other researchers have found that 69% of graduate students reported having experienced microaggressions while enrolled at their institutions (Gutiérrez et al., 2019).

A systematic review of the literature by Ogunyemi et al. (2020) found microinsults to be reported by more than 82% of the Black and Latin@ students surveyed, and negative coping mechanisms included alcohol use and disengagement. Smith et al. (2016) describe the constant barrage of discrimination experienced by Black male students on college campuses as racial battle fatigue, calling attention to the negative psychological toll existing in such spaces takes on a student.

Some scholars have argued that due to the factors above, among others, the higher education system is purposely exclusionary. On this view, higher education continues to perpetuate its historical legacy as a preparatory vessel of domination for white, wealthy men from which minorities, women of color, and the working class are excluded (Balderrama et al., 2004).

Given the obstacles hindering their progress, how do Latin@s achieve any success in higher education contexts? As Yosso (2005) points out in explaining her anti-deficit approach, Latin@s often have access to sources of capital that drive achievement, such as hopeful orientations towards the future, knowledge of more than one language, cultural knowledge centered around the family, community bonds, institutional knowledge shared with the community, and a willingness to resist injustices.

Latin@s who see themselves solely as individuals, or believe they alone are responsible for their own success without reference to a support community, have a more difficult time achieving academic success than others who are more socially connected to peers and cultural networks (Estrada & Jimenez, 2018; Gloria et al., 2009). Similarly, Latin@s who can insulate themselves (as far as that is possible) from racism, alienation, and other adverse effects of white institutions through social groups can obtain better academic outcomes than those who do not (Brooms et al., 2018). This phenomenon has been observed even in adolescence, where Latin@s with supportive peer networks develop better coping mechanisms to stressors than those who do not have access to social support (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005).

Pérez and Taylor (2016) speak to a related concept of 'logradores,' or high-achieving Latin@ students, as possessors of cultural capital (such as family ties and linguistic skills, among others) that allow them to thrive in discouraging postsecondary environments. The most

successful Latinas create cultural capital when supported by mentors, peer networks, and professional organizations that serve as role models and provide positive affirmation (Montas-Hunter, 2012; Ortega-Liston & Soto, 2014; Pérez & Taylor, 2016).

At elite institutions, high-achieving Latin@s with resistant orientations to the majority culture fare as well in their academic performance as those with accommodationist or assimilative perspectives who do not advocate strong ethnic pride (Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2009). This resistance comes in the form of allegiances to student organizations such as those advocating for progressive political causes (Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2009), suggesting that positive cultural allegiance, as well as strong attachment to certain values, is associated with positive academic results as well as professional success (Montas-Hunter, 2012). On the other hand, Latin@s without strong cultural ties fare comparatively poorly academically (Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2009).

At other institutions, the lack of campus diversity spurs Latin@s to more strongly identify with their ethnicities, conferring a salubrious effect on their academic achievement through at least their first two years of college (Torres, 2003).

Moreover, the importance of mentors in the psychological well-being of university students is a strong factor in what has been called mattering or the self's realization of someone's importance to other people (Flett et al., 2019). Similarly, non-hierarchical mentoring, where faculty of equal rank mentor one another, has also benefited Latinas (Alarcón & Bettez, 2017). One reason Latinas have succeeded when they have, even in hostile higher education environments, is because they have access to the kind of community cultural wealth and strategies that Yosso and these other researchers describe. Strong parental involvement and

encouragement are also strong predictors of higher education success and belie the stereotypical belief that Latin@ parents do not value education (Arellano & Padilla, 1996).

Similarly, Guzmán's (2012) concept of the *guerrera* spirit highlights the sense of positive self-agency in Latinas. It uses the metaphor of the warrior spirit who invokes resistance and resilience while disrupting deficit discourses (Guzmán, 2012). Guzmán identifies mothering in the home as an educational tool for creative, positive self-agency in Latina girls (Guzmán, 2012). Mothering countermands racist discourses by using plática, cuentos, and consejos (Guzmán, 2012). The result of mothering is a decolonial imaginary that provides both mothers and daughters ways to re-create the daily lived experiences of marginalization so that they become sites of regeneration (Guzmán, 2012). This then informs their success.

Artistic Skills and Leadership

This section of the literature review addresses two main lines of thinking regarding the connection between art practice and leadership. The first is how art can be used to inform leadership. The second is how artists themselves can be leaders. The first line assumes that there are elements of art practice—skills, techniques, and ways of thinking or being—that can be used by anyone to lead. The second one assumes that artists themselves can serve as great leaders. In the first approach, the leader does not have to be an artist. Instead, the leader uses creative skills, practices, and ways of knowing. In the second approach, the artist uses the skills developed in their artistic practice to improve their leadership practice. For example, the famous poet Pablo Neruda was also a diplomat (Bleiker, 1999). Another influential poet, Wallace Stevens, was an insurance executive (Stevens, 2008).

One finding of creative leadership research is that leaders can benefit from artistic study as a mode of inquiry that informs how they make sense of their world and connection to others

(De Ciantis, 1996; Faulkner, 2009; Rodgers et al., 2010). The arts can encourage a creative atmosphere in the workplace that promotes collaboration and adaptability. An effective leader can use what they learn in artistic observation to pay close attention to the interpersonal behaviors of their team, adjusting their communication to accommodate how their directives are being perceived. For example, Xing and Liu (2015) interviewed managers at Chinese business firms who used poems to inform their leadership practices. The managers were not themselves poets but applied their appreciation of poetic texts in their leadership. They found that poetry can be used as a communication tool to help leaders develop the skills to express their vision (Xing & Liu, 2015). It can serve as a source of inspiration, generate rules of behavior, and be used to influence the behavior of others (Xing & Liu, 2015). Similarly, Challen (2020) found that poetry advanced leadership skills by fostering empathy and a sense of trust and compassion, as well as improving reflective thinking.

Other researchers link poetry to empathy and a greater ability to communicate (Grisham, 2006). Leaders who read and analyze poetry seriously are likelier to engage in the socially transformative work characteristic of leadership that builds community (Challen, 2020). Other art-making practices can work in similar ways. Brenner (2014) describes drawing exercises that center on the meaning of conflict can encourage conversation. Creating artwork, whether one is an artist or not, can encourage associative thinking, improve interpersonal skills, and promote adaptability in changing business environments (Brenner, 2014).

Another relevant aspect of creative leadership is metaphor, where relations are constructed between perceived objects or states of affairs (De Ciantis, 1996). Metaphor is a common tool used by poets and other creative writers. A leader skilled in metaphor is better situated to create, interpret, and use meaning in their work (De Ciantis, 1996; Grisham, 2006).

They can imagine themselves and their leadership context in ways that allow them to construct and fulfill a vision (Barrett & Lindbeck, 2022; Jenlink, 2015). A leader skilled in metaphor imagines themselves in a subjunctive space where they can ask important questions about how they and their community can jointly derive meaning from their situation (Jenlink, 2015). Take the example of a leader who can tell a story about the interpersonal relationships occurring in their workplace. Perhaps they want to improve relations because they see a lack of teamwork. In wanting to change this environment, the leader refers to the workplace as a racetrack. The leader contrasts this vision with the idea of a community garden. In the racetrack, everyone is a competitor and out for themselves. However, in the community garden, people help each other freely to grow healthy fruits and vegetables that benefit everyone. The creative leader uses what Bolman and Deal (2017) call the symbolic frame to establish a shared narrative that imparts meaning to the organization. The narrative is rich in metaphor, allusion, symbols, and values the artist synthesizes into a source of community connection.

The use of metaphor can be seen as part of a skill set that some scholars have called the field of aesthetic judgment. Using aesthetic judgment, a leader makes sense of the world's complexity and provides an explanatory narrative framework to the organization (Woodward & Funk, 2010). Aesthetic judgment also includes a sense of embodiment—the ability to discern how action is necessary to achieve organizational aims and the ability to obtain buy-in from stakeholders to achieve those aims (Guillet de Monthoux et. al., 2007).

Artistic practice also uses visioning to achieve the artist's aims (Cadenhead & Fischer, 2000). An artist envisions what they want to achieve and then can put it into practice, whether that end product is like a painting or a song. Similarly, leaders in other contexts must be able to establish and communicate a vision to be effective (Cadenhead & Fischer, 2000).

Compositionality is another quality artists have that can be transferred into leadership skills in other contexts (Cadenhead & Fischer, 2000). This trait allows the artist to analyze a situation that will be artistically interpreted (Cadenhead & Fischer, 2000). For instance, an artist might experience a stroll through a nature preserve and then take what they have experienced to write a sonnet. The composition is the sonnet. Similarly, a leader must understand their operating context and work towards creating an effective organization (Cadenhead & Fischer, 2000). Whereas the poet uses material such as vocabulary, meter, rhyme, and image, the leader in an organizational context uses human resources (Cadenhead & Fischer, 2000).

Darmer and Grisoni (2011) identify several approaches in the research literature regarding the role of poetry and management: poetry improves organizational performance or the manager's understanding of the organization, fosters creativity, serves as inspiration, and helps spur research. These benefits accrue to anyone who reads and understands poetry. Although Darmer and Grisoni discuss managers, their research can apply equally to leaders in general.

Those who write poetry might be described as applying certain practical skills when they craft their work. Craft refers to those skills and techniques art-makers use to arrive at a creative end product (Taylor, 2012). A non-poet may be able to use these skills in contexts other than poetry. Leadership is one such context.

For instance, writing poetry may be helpful for learning to express one's thoughts and emotions (Cronin & Hawthorne, 2019). In a study by King (2001), students who wrote about their life goals experienced positive health benefits for months after writing. A leader working in a stressful environment could similarly use poetry to combat the negative mental toll they experience there.

Leaders taught how to craft poems with content they care about (such as career aspirations) can also learn to reflect on their professional practice (Cronin & Hawthorne, 2019). People who reflect on the kind of ideal leader they would like to become are more likely to be motivated to engage in behaviors that contribute to the realization (Jennings et al., 2021). Similarly, leaders who positively reflect on their activities also develop a better self-image (Lanaj et al., 2023). When self-reflection is coupled with critical analysis of one's values and knowledge, it can also help improve leadership practice (Wu & Crocco, 2019). Poetry's characteristic succinctness and association with emotion might make it an easy tool for these purposes. Poetry is as familiar as a grocery shopping list or instructions for a new electronic device. It can be as brief as a few lines but capture the intensity necessary to discover self-truths that motivate change.

Even if leaders do not use art in their leadership practice, they can create a creative working environment in several ways. For example, research has supported the link between leaders who hold firm ethical values and prioritize teamwork and subsequent creativity among team members (Tu et al., 2019). Team members feel safe to explore creative ways to tackle problems when they feel leadership supports their experimentation (Tu et al., 2019). Leaders who allow their team members to take ownership of organizational problems while appreciating employee efforts and providing an intellectually stimulating environment so that they can construct creative solutions also promote creative leadership (Wang et al., 2014).

These approaches to creative leadership share the assumption that leadership can be creative by considering elements of artistic practice in the leadership context. They do not necessarily assume the leader is an artist.

Artists as Leaders

Other scholars have interpreted creative leadership to mean something different than applying artistic skills in creative leadership (Taylor, 2012). This area of research has sought to uncover the qualities that creatives themselves (visual artists, writers, and others) bring to leadership positions.

One claim is that artists have a unique way of apprehending the world around them owing to their sensitive perceptual ability (Cadenhead & Fischer, 2000). An artist's experience differs from others because they express themselves differently than non-artists. Where a non-artist might see haystacks in a field as haystacks in a field, the artist might experience them as a series of colors interacting with sound or might translate the experience into figurative language such as metonymy (the field as a farmer) or musical notes (the field as a tone poem). Adler (2015) describes this perception as the ability to see things closely enough to find beauty in the world. Szostak and Sułkowski (2021) argue that an artist's creativity derives from the way they can juggle paradoxical thinking. This ability is not necessarily accessible to non-artists.

Saraniero (2004) identifies several ways that teaching artists, or artists who teach, may be valuable leaders to arts organizations. For example, they have strong community connections and could improve how an organization determines community needs (Saraniero, 2004). They can also translate the organization's aesthetic into a language the community understands (Saraniero, 2004). When they take on leadership roles, teaching artists are also excellent facilitators and problem-solvers—they excel in teaching others to solve problems for themselves (Saraniero, 2004). Instead of only dictating work to their subordinates, they engage in thoughtful consideration and encourage others in the organization to do the same to achieve organizational aims (Saraniero, 2004).

Saraniero's observations of teaching artists as leaders underscore that one essential function of leadership may be the ability to teach others. That is, leaders are teachers. Moreover, formal authority is not necessary to change an organization. Artists do not have to possess institutional power to bring about change. Creativity helps the artist envision how change can take place (Saraniero, 2004).

Woodward and Funk (2010) argue that the positivist rational model of leadership that has been ascendant since the beginning of leadership studies is inadequate to deal with the complexities and uncertainty of the modern world against a backdrop of massive and unexpected upheavals like 9/11 and financial crises—it expects leaders to work from a command and control mindset. However, the world cannot be controlled under old rules and styles of leadership: "The demand placed on leaders is to make sense of complex and ambiguous situations so that action can be taken even in circumstances of extreme uncertainty" (Woodward & Funk, 2010, p. 297).

They suggest that the field of aesthetics can provide innovative tools to manage and lead organizations in their complex operating environments effectively. Artists such as poets are skilled in using aesthetic processes—knowledge processes grounded upon bodily and sensorial experience to create meaning (Faulkner, 2009; Woodward & Funk, 2010). The leader uses the aesthetic process to create multiple possible fictions to make sense of the leadership environment and carve a path forward (Woodward & Funk, 2010). This is a qualitative process, not a quantitative one, and features the following characteristics: embodied action, where leadership is as much about use of the senses (perception) as about the intellect; and narrative, where a mix of sensuous knowledge with empirical and cultural knowledge informs practice and where new narratives replace the old and allow the organization to maneuver through complexity: "leaders

need to create and present new, original narratives, conscious works of fiction that are plausible enough to act as a basis for confident judgment and action" (Woodward & Funk, 2010, p. 299).

Woodward and Funk (2010) also suggest that traditional leadership theories assume that the study of leadership can yield specific objective characteristics that leaders should have. These characteristics can then be taught to others to produce effective leaders. Leadership is seen as an external quality that an individual can learn. However, this approach is inadequate since a leader can never be taught the entire universe of individual skills that would allow them to address every situation requiring action in a complex operating environment. However, an artist accessing their creativity can endlessly generate solutions. In an aesthetically informed hermeneutic approach to leadership, leadership is not necessarily seen as a behavioral phenomenon where individuals can be trained to act in ways that are characteristic of leaders; instead, leadership is a hermeneutic process that asks questions, engages others, and continuously tries to create meaning (Woodward & Funk, 2010). It is also reflective and corrective, returning to itself to ask how meaning-making processes can be improved. Leadership is seen as a "constantly emergent, interpretive act" (Woodward & Funk, 2010, p. 301). Leaders constantly focus on themselves to ask questions about the acts they perform, their relations with others, and their meaning-making practices. Leaders trained in this way constantly interact with their teams, understand that meaning is developed jointly through that interaction, and engage in constant dialogue with them. They use a trusting, communal, generative space to explore and creatively think through the operating environment. In this space, the leader's background informs different possibilities to arrive at new fictions through the joint work of the group (Woodward & Funk, 2010). The space can be filled with tension owing to the novelty of the possibilities considered, but it is also a psychologically exciting place to be (Woodward & Funk,

2010). The team is not a bystander in this space but a participant as the artist-leader guides the group.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized phenomenology as its research approach. Phenomenologists seek to explore a single concept or idea. In this case, the concept is creative leadership practice in higher education informed by the artistic practices of Latina poets.

Creswell and Poth (2017) describe phenomenology as a qualitative research approach that attempts to understand participant experiences or phenomena. The primary underlying assumption of this approach is that the researcher engages in an inductive process where participants are asked to describe their lived experiences and the researcher arrives at an understanding of the experience's essential features (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Finlay, 2012).

Researchers use two major phenomenological approaches with distinct methodologies: descriptive phenomenology and interpretive, or hermeneutic, phenomenology. The former was the original approach described by Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. As with hermeneutic phenomenology, this approach is characterized by a researcher's attempt to describe a participant's experience. However, in descriptive phenomenology, the researcher's preconceptions, judgments, and biases are bracketed (in a process called epoché) so as not to interfere with the understanding of participant experience (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). The intent of epoché is to apprehend the experience as it is, with the assumption

that experience can be analyzed apart from any judgment or preconception of both the participant and the researcher (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015).

On the other hand, hermeneutic phenomenologists, influenced by Heidegger, do not believe a researcher can assume an objective vantage point through which to analyze experience (Garza, 2007; Lopez & Willis, 2004). That is, the task of epoché is to bracket the researcher's experience only insofar as it makes known, as far as one can, the researcher's situatedness. The researcher attempts to understand the core of the experience and is thus fully aware of how they are situated as a researcher in relation to the participant and the world. Nullification of one's situatedness is neither necessary nor useful; it may not even be possible: in Gadamer's terms, neither extinction nor neutrality (2004) is necessary.

Interpretive phenomenologists note that experiences are inseparable from the intentionality of their experiencers (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). This intentionality, or conscious directedness of perception, uncovers a specific meaning of the experience for the individual (Garza, 2007). That participants construct meaning from their experiences means that investigation of those experiences is inextricable from the meanings joined to them (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). It is the task of the researcher to both describe and interpret: meaning is derived from this process between the researcher and participant (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Finlay, 2012; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015).

Another difference between descriptive and interpretive phenomenology is that the former assumes it is possible to derive an essence of experience from participant accounts (Lopez & Willis, 2004). The process is inductive as several participant accounts are used to derive one or more common features of the experience. Performed in the context of bracketing, this experience is supposed to be free of the researcher's biases and interpretive prejudices

(Lopez & Willis, 2004). Interpretive phenomenologists, on the other hand, do not necessarily believe that there can be an essence of an experience free of context (Lopez & Willis, 2004). As the researcher describes the experience described to her, she is aware of her own background experiences, knowledge, beliefs, dispositions, and assumptions; however, realizing those biases segregates her self-experience from the experience described by the participants. This segregation does not mean that the researcher's life context is deracinated from the research process since that context provides the inescapable lens through which interpretation occurs (Finlay, 2012). Neither does the researcher necessarily essentialize the experience. Each experience is relative to the experiencer, but the experience may nevertheless serve to inform other experiences, assist others as they encounter similar experiences, or provide knowledge and wisdom that can be applied elsewhere.

The present study uses hermeneutic phenomenology as its basis. Ontologically, the claim that epoché is possible, as described by descriptive phenomenologists, is problematic (Peoples, 2022). The process by which bracketing occurs seems to be prima facie impossible since the researcher applying epoché would cease to be that particular researcher without their beliefs, assumptions, and other contextual allegiances. The conclusions drawn from data analysis would not be the researcher's but an attempt at a universal conclusion, shorn of context. Whether this conclusion would be beneficial, useful, or applicable to other contexts is dubious. Perhaps the core of qualitative inquiry is its contextual and embedded nature—both the researcher and the target of research are epistemically connected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Moreover, in the context of this study a descriptive phenomenology would appear to be inconsistent with the intersectional nature of the study participants who are Latinas and also mothers, scholars, immigrants, and embrace manifold identities. Their experiences cannot be

inductively scrubbed of these intersectional imbrications without sacrificing something of their personhood. Nor would the participants assent to a research process that sought to ignore their social, political, and historical situatedness, which allow them to assign meaning to their experiences. It is important to note here that epoché is not only a researcher-directed act but also a participant-directed act. As the researcher performs bracketing, they also attempt to exclude conceptual connections they might possess with the participants.

Descriptive phenomenology is also inconsistent with the practical demands of the dissertation proposal, such as including a literature review and a theoretical framework. Some descriptive researchers have argued that theory should be bracketed in a descriptive phenomenological study (or should not be adopted at the outset but only later in the discussion stage) since knowledge obtained there would generate bias (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015; Vagle, 2018). They have also argued that a literature review should not be performed for the same reason. Nevertheless, a literature review is required for the present study.

Interpretive phenomenology is also better suited to research that seeks to be applied to multiple contexts (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). In this case, research generated about the experiences of Latinas, when adequately contextualized, can serve as sources of knowledge for Latinas similarly situated and who aspire to be higher education leaders. A Latina who discovers parallels in her experience to participant experiences can better understand how she might benefit from the research.

Lastly, hermeneutic phenomenology is ideally suited for a study focusing on poets. Poetry often focuses on mundane features of everyday life but finds special elements worth writing about (Van Manen, 2016). When describing the lived experience of a poet, the researcher should take advantage of the context that the poet has used to shape their aesthetic orientation to

the world (Van Manen, 2016). Moreover, the researcher should bring to bear their background to analyze and interpret the complexity of the poet's experience. Robert Frost once said writing poetry without form is like playing tennis without a net (Hilbert, 2011). Similarly, using descriptive phenomenology to study the lived experiences of poets is like watching tennis with a blindfold.

Another aspect of research design is validity. Following Vagle (2018), validity in a qualitative study is roughly synonymous with terms such as trustworthiness and credibility. Morse (2015) equates this with rigor in their attempt to update Gruba and Lincoln's historic formulation from the 1980's (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness was therefore established through the following ways.

Internal validity, or the confidence that findings correspond to the phenomenon under study (Beck, 2021; Morse, 2015), was established through extensive engagement with participants, participant data, and thick description (Morse, 2015). The semi-structured interviews lasted one hour as a baseline duration but were not limited to that time to allow for more data collection if necessary.

Triangulation, which seeks to support claims made in the research findings by citing the repetition appearing in two or more data sources, was also used (Vagle, 2018). This study used triangulation by accessing two primary sources of data: participant interviews and participant creative work (if applicable and allowed). Participants were also asked to provide a creative writing response to a prompt during the interview, but none chose to submit their work. The prompt, which could have been completed after the interview session, asked the participants to write about the relationship between their work as a poet and their work as a higher education leader in any form, whether textual, visual, or in some other creative medium.

Member checking was also included by allowing participants to check the accuracy of the data collected and the analysis of that data (Bazeley, 2021). Participants were presented with interview transcripts and allowed to make edits to reflect their understanding of meaning (Potts & Brown, 2005).

External validity, or the extent to which conclusions are plausible (Pereira, 2012) and can be applied to other contexts (Beck, 2021; Morse, 2015) was established by meticulous record-keeping and careful documentation through researcher notes. An ongoing journal containing the researcher's thoughts and reflections, including any examined biases, started when the university's Internal Review Board approved the proposal.

In addition, the researcher engaged in positional reflexivity by making his connection to the study apparent so that both participants and external observers could judge whether his background interfered with the methodology, including data collection and analysis. Some researchers recommend sharing this statement at the study's outset (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The researcher provided this personal statement to all participants as part of the invitation. The researcher did not engage in epoché as described by descriptive phenomenologists in any stage of the research process, including data collection or analysis, but described his positionality to allow external readers to draw conclusions about the study's validity.

Theoretical Framework

Phenomenology always uses philosophical phenomenology as its primary theoretical framework (Peoples, 2021). All stages of the project were informed by an emphasis on lived experience. Lived experience is actually experienced by a participant—it is the sum of those features of existing in the world that a person perceives and attributes meaning through in their

life (Frechette et al., 2020). This differs from experiences one hears about secondhand or imagines, and excludes feelings or attitudes about the experience that play no role in interpretation (Peoples, 2021). Moreover, experience may not be readily available for description by the participant—the researcher's task is to uncover authenticity that may have been obscured by time, memory, or other factors (Frechette et al., 2020).

In addition to interpretive phenomenology, the study was informed by two theoretical bases—one is a broad theory concerning the nature of reality and the basic structure of society (decoloniality). The other concerns the attributes of individuals and the relationships they have formed with others (community cultural capital). However, these theories were not used in the initial analysis of participant phenomena, as some researchers have warned against (Peoples, 2022; Vagle, 2018). Consistent with descriptivist concerns that too much theory can introduce bias into interpreting participant phenomena (theory should be bracketed along with everything else), the researcher remained open to the revisability of theory and using abduction to replace it with something that better explained the data. However, it was ultimately unnecessary to displace the two theories as explanatory frameworks.

Latin American and U.S. theories of decoloniality were used to inform data analysis and frame the study findings. Conceptually, decoloniality takes many forms (Bhambra et al., 2018), but at its core, it is composed of ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological orientations that attempt to decenter colonialist and modernist domination (Castro-Gómez, 2008). It is an orientation grounded in the action of the colonized against colonialist power (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Under decolonial theory, relationships (and not subjects) are primary ontological constituents (Wilson, 2008). Positivist ontology, which includes being independence, the possibility of objective knowledge, the primacy of hard sciences, and the possibility of

objectivity, is conceptually supplanted. In its place is an ontology of interconnectedness (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Minich, 2020) that redefines the subject/object relation and re-evaluates who would otherwise count as a person with experiences capable of study and being studied. It displaces the standard of the straight, white European male as the sole subject capable of accessing or creating knowledge. The study acknowledges the Latina poet administrator as a source of truth and wisdom by applying decoloniality.

Decoloniality takes embodied reality seriously—"the flesh" described by Cherrie Moraga (1983)—by privileging the lives of subjugated peoples and the actual consequences of colonialist thinking on their bodies. Consequently, it assumes the inextricable operation of race and historical material conditions connected to race upon lived experience.

Decoloniality also takes the axiological consequences of colonialism seriously by confronting environmental destruction, engaging in inquiry about various forms of displacement, and questioning the extractive capitalism that supplies the engine of Western economic systems (Gómez-Barris, 2017). It rejects the link between economic prosperity and capitalism, and questions neoliberalism's unwavering impulse toward the accumulation of capital and incessant commodification (Gonzales & Shotton, 2022).

It also rejects the idea of an ordered society built on religious exploitation. It takes the partnership between economic exploitation, religion, and racism seriously. Instead, it counters racist systems with love (Sandoval, 2000) and places value in the existence and productions of Black, Brown, and other exploited peoples of color. It embraces a universal language built on the everyday experience of oppression (Pérez, 1999; Sandoval, 2000).

Similarly, it rejects the signification schemes of the West—aesthetic and otherwise (Calvo-Quirós, 2014). It rejects common American standards of beauty and excellence, re-

centers the bodies of the oppressed and an aesthetics of the strange and excluded, and questions heteronormativity (Calvo-Quirós, 2014). Consequently, it propounds psychological, emotional, and cognitive liminality (Anzaldúa, 2015).

A last component of decoloniality is the belief in the necessity of connecting action to theory. All theory in decolonial theory is action theory because it aims to reshape the world's actual social, economic, and material conditions. In this respect, it is like other critical theories such as critical race theory; however, the concept of decoloniality stems from the lived experience of colonized peoples. One important feature that separates decoloniality from other theories of oppression or liberation (Medina, 2013) is that its discursive foundation supervenes on colonialism.

Decoloniality is relevant in the present study owing to its focus on Latinas. Most of the Latin@ community shares a common colonized and colonialized origin. Moreover, the university itself can be seen as an instance of coloniality—it reproduces the power structures and incorporates the assumptions of coloniality from the society at large (Cordova, 1998; Tegama, 2023).

Malagón et al. (2021) are scholars who have analyzed their own academic experiences through the lens of decoloniality. As Chicana professors with various intersectional commitments, they identify various means by which coloniality-influenced norms such as cutthroat competition, zero-sum merit, and a denial of the common good continue to dominate how success is defined in academia (Malagón et al., 2021). As an alternative form of normativity, they offer a decolonial paradigm based on critical race feminism that allows them to maintain their ethical commitments in their work within the academy (Malagón et al., 2021). The basis of their ethical practice is a term they borrow from Derrick Bell—"advancing

relationships"—to signify the importance of active interaction with others as the basis for creating communities (Malagón et al., 2021, p. 80). The present study aims to identify other ways of decolonial thinking found in poet leaders that can be used to inform leadership practice.

Table 1: Common Elements of Latin American and U.S. Theories of Decoloniality

Element	Description
Ontology	Reality is seen fundamentally as relationships, often built out of oppressive structures, the interconnectedness of all living things
Epistemology	Knowledge and access to knowledge is subjective
Axiology	Concerned for embodied people and the environment
Methodology	Questioning accepted truths of capitalism and neoliberalism, countering with love, action theory

The theoretical framework that addresses individual characteristics and relationships is Yosso's model of community cultural capital. Unlike deficit notions of cultural capital, such as Bourdieu's (Bourdieu, 1977), that seek to explain why some individuals do not succeed in the dominant white middle-class culture by making reference to what people of color lack (such as knowledge of mores and customs), Yosso's community cultural capital model posits several attributes that people of color possess which contributes, or can contribute, to their success (Yosso, 2005). Also, unlike other theories of social capital that address the experiences of minority students and their connections with institutional agents such as teachers (Stanton-Salazar, 1997), Yosso draws on the richness of critical race theory to address the systemic racism inherent in the nation's dominant white culture. Yosso's epistemology embraces the experience and knowledge of people of color, such as Latinas from diverse backgrounds (Yosso, 2005).

Latinas possess several forms of knowledge, as shown below.

Table 2: Yosso's Community Cultural Capital

Form of Capital	Description
Aspirational	Ability to hope for a better future, even in the face of obstacles Example: Latin@ families' expectation that their children will obtain a degree even if they live in poverty
Linguistic	Ability to communicate in several languages socially and intellectually Example: A Latin@ student who understands and engages in different social circles and speaks different versions of Spanish or indigenous languages
Familial	Cultural knowledges passed down from/within the family Example: A Latin@ student's respect for the environment stemming from familial stories of being in nature
Social	People and community resources Example: Mutual aid societies
Navigational	Ability to navigate through social institutions Example: High-achieving Latin@ teenagers who learn how to file tax returns and assist their parents.
Resistant	Knowledges that allow someone to challenge inequality Example: A Latin@ faculty member's knowledge of unionizing learned from her migrant farmworker mother, who was a member of the United Farmworkers

The participants in this study were expected to display some or all of these forms of community cultural capital. The research uncovered how this capital has shaped their artistic and leadership practices.

Research Questions

The following served as research questions for this study.

Q1. How do Latina poets who are higher education leaders apply their artistic practices, if any, to their leadership practices?

Q2. How do specific elements of artistic practice, if any, inform or influence higher education leadership activities of Latina poets?

The first question responds to that strand of the literature that explores how artists use their artistic practices in their leadership practices. The second question regards using skills or other elements learned in art to leadership. Both questions ask about the authentic lived experiences of the study participants. In some cases, it was possible that a participant had not previously considered their artistic practices, leadership practices, or any aspect of either, or they may not have considered themselves to employ any deliberative practices. Another possibility is that they may never have written about the connection between their artistic and leadership practices. The data collection process in these cases was a technique through which such connections were discovered or elaborated.

Participants

This study's participants were self-identifying Latina poets who also hold or have held formal or informal leadership positions at institutions of higher education (universities or colleges) in the United States. HSIs were not specifically targeted, but participants worked at both HSIs and PWIs and public and private institutions. Identification was established through their own personal pronouncements, such as university biographies and professional websites.

The initial target participant number was three, sufficient to thoroughly explain a phenomenon (Giorgi, 2008). However, since the goal was to generalize from that phenomenon to other cases, a larger sample size was targeted (Finlay, 2012; Morse, 2015). Convenience sampling was used initially. The initial four participants were Latina poets who work as leaders in higher education institutions and are known to the researcher. Snowball sampling widened the participant pool by asking the initial participants for recommendations. The goal was to study participant phenomena thoroughly (Vagle, 2018). The final sample size was five, enough to achieve saturation and accurately describe the phenomenon (Bazeley, 2021).

To avoid the issue of paternalism in assigning new names to participants in order to preserve anonymity or possibly introduce avoidable trauma by asking the participants to create their own pseudonyms (Itzik &Walsh, 2023), participants were randomly assigned a non-descriptive codename (Heaton, 2022). Moreover, to limit the possibility of deductive disclosure, their characteristics are described with greater generality than might be customary for a qualitative study, given the very small sample size. As the literature review describes, very few Latinas are in higher education leadership roles. According to Patricia Mullaney-Loss, a Social Science Analyst in the Office of Research & Analysis at the National Endowment for the Arts, only 6.9% of adults in the United States say they have written creatively in the past 12 months (P. Mullaney-Loss, personal correspondence, January, 2024). Given these small numbers, the likelihood of deductive disclosure becomes greater without extra care to anonymize participant characteristics. Some participants were justifiably adamant about ensuring their anonymity, given the honesty with which they provided answers to the interview questions and the likelihood that they would be harassed by coworkers and their livelihoods threatened if their identities were to become known. Participant descriptions are meant to contextualize participant experience while also preserving precious anonymity.

Table 3: Participant Summary Table

Code Name	Primary Data Source	Additional Data Source	Self-identification	Position(s)	Affiliation	Education
A	Interview	Poetry Collection	Chicana/Latina	Assistant Professor, Program Director	Public State University	Doctorate in the Humanities
B	Interview	None	Chicana/Latina	Professor, Chair, Director	Private Liberal Arts College	Doctorate in Education
C	Interview	Poetry (unpublished)	Chicana/Latina	Director, Chair	Public State University	N/A
D	Interview	Poetry Collection Testimonios	Chicana/Latina	Professor, Chair, Director, Dean	Private Liberal Arts College	Doctorate in the Humanities
E	Interview	None	Queer Chicana/ Cubana	Various leadership positions	Public State University	N/A

Participant A identifies as Chicana/Latina. She is an assistant professor at a public state university. She earned a doctorate in the humanities and has served as a program director at a community college. Beyond the university, she has held leadership roles in various community organizations, including some dedicated solely to the literary arts and women's advocacy. She has published several collections of poetry.

Participant B identifies as Chicana/Latina and served as a professor at a private liberal arts college. She earned a doctorate in education and has served in several administrative leadership roles at higher education institutions, including as Chair and Director. She has also served in leadership roles outside her institutions, including in professional societies related to her discipline. She has participated in numerous educational, social justice, and literary arts organizations outside academia. She has published several poetry collections, stories, and other creative works.

Participant C identifies as Chicana/Latina and directs a special program at a public state university. Previously, she was a department chair in the social sciences. She has published

poems, stories, essays, and other creative works in creative writing journals and has received numerous honors for her creative writing, mentorship, and teaching.

Participant D identifies as Chicana/Latina and serves as a professor at a private liberal arts college. She earned a doctorate in the humanities and has served in several administrative leadership roles at higher education institutions, including public and private universities, over several decades, including Chair of a department and Dean. She has also served in leadership roles outside her institutions, including in professional societies relating to her discipline. Outside of academia, she has founded several nonprofit groups (including those focused on literary arts) and published collections of poetry, stories, and other creative works.

Participant E identifies as a queer Chicana/Cubana. She has held leadership positions at a public state university. She is currently working on a terminal degree in the fine arts. She has published poetry collections, essays, stories, and other creative writing.

A participant invitation letter that includes the researcher positionality statement is included in the appendices.

Data Collection and Research Site

Data was collected in two ways. A semi-structured interview (one per person) with a small set of questions to initiate conversation and a writing prompt was used as the primary data collection method. None of the participants decided to submit a reply to the writing prompt. Interviews are a standard data collection format used in phenomenology and reveal narratives of participant lived experience (Bazeley, 2021; Van Manen, 2016). In addition, and with permission, the participants' poetry, poetics, and metapoetry (writing about one's own poetry) were used as data sources. Two participants referenced previously published material, and one provided unpublished pre-written material.

Because of geographic distance and ease of scheduling, interviews were held online via Zoom software and audio was recorded and then transcribed through that platform. One participant requested to be interviewed via email over two days, during which the initial interview questions were posed, and the participant answered follow-up questions from the researcher in a back-and-forth exchange. Otherwise, all interviews lasted approximately one hour, and the data generated during this time was sufficient to not require any follow-up interviews. The participants had full access to the researcher's transcripts of their interviews to validate the accuracy of what had been transcribed.

Participant data collected through interviews was anonymized to preserve confidentiality and limit deductive disclosure, or the ability to deduce a participant's identity based on rich description (Kaiser, 2009). However, ensuring anonymity is more difficult with published writing. The following steps were taken to preserve anonymity in that case.

Member-checking was used to confirm if participants desired to allow their writings, specific instances, analysis, and discussion of their writing to be used in the research. Research can be used even if deductive disclosure is possible when participants are allowed to consent to research when a sincere attempt is made for anonymity (Sieber, 1992). With modern investigative techniques bolstered by artificial intelligence available to anyone savvy and determined enough to make an effort at discovery, it is likely that total anonymity is not even possible.

No direct quotations from published material were used. Instead, descriptions of the writing were used. Because poetry is a creative endeavor, it is not possible to paraphrase a poetic text without loss of meaning; it is, however, possible to describe a poetic text to summarize its information.

For example, take the opening stanza from the poem “My Papa’s Waltz” by Theodore Roethke, which describes the speaker’s relationship with an abusive alcoholic father:

“The whiskey on your breath

Could make a small boy dizzy;

But I hung on like death:

Such waltzing was not easy” (Roethke, 1961).

A paraphrase of this stanza would miss the poem's formal structure, which requires several lines to become apparent. The playfulness of the rhyme and slant rhyme would not be visible. Moreover, the figurative language would be lost—the speaker is not referencing an actual waltz here, but physical abuse. However, if this poem were autobiographical, or Roethke himself agreed that it could be used to triangulate some other data point, then the stanza could be used as evidentiary support for a deduction to bolster a claim for an emergent theme in the data. For example, the researcher could cite it as part of a theme where the victim handled abuse by creating an aesthetic experience from their pain. To maintain anonymity, the researcher would not directly quote the poem but could write something such as “In a piece written about their parent, Participant A turns the experience of being physically abused into an aesthetic performance.”

Finally, the titles of participant works were not used, and any references are general in nature. The researcher preserved the exact reference details but did not mention them in the reference list.

Instrumentation

The following was the set of interview questions used during the interview. Additional questions were asked as follow-ups or if they were generated organically during each session.

The goal was to derive a sense of participant experience to uncover the phenomenon. Therefore, questions about feelings, emotions, or reactions were not posed (Peoples, 2022).

The questions were developed from a draft set of questions that were then piloted with two individuals who were not participants—one is a Latina poet who holds a Ph.D. and serves as an instructor at a community college. The other is a Latina poet and playwright currently enrolled as an MFA student in creative writing. Piloting interview questions allows the interviewer to practice their delivery, refine questions, and plan for additional lines of inquiry (Majid et al., 2017). Practicing the interview with Latina poets also introduced scrutiny to ensure that interview questions were not in some way indecorous and that they were adequately written to address the research questions.

1. How would you describe your poetry/creative work and yourself as a poet?
2. How would you describe your poetic practice, or the way you approach the creation of poetic work?
3. How have your experiences effected how you define leadership?
4. What is your leadership practice in the higher education context in which you work?
5. How do you situate yourself as a Latina in the higher education context?
6. Can you share any writing that you've done which would help answer the same questions or provide more background and context? Can you provide references to published work?
7. Are there other Latina poets you consider to be leaders in higher education contexts?
8. As an additional means of studying participant experience, a writing prompt will be used: write about the relationship between your work as a poet and work as a higher education leader. This can be in any form, whether it is textual, visual, or in some other creative

medium. It does not have to be completed during the interview session and may be submitted afterward or omitted entirely.

Data Analysis Process

After data was collected, it was organized into text packets corresponding to each participant. Data consisted of responses to interview questions and creative material produced by the participants, if any. Interview data was transcribed using the transcription function in Zoom and checked for errors. Breath stops, nonverbal pauses, filler, and unintelligible interjections were removed since they do not affect meaning (Peoples, 2021). After that, the steps recommended by Bazeley (2021) for phenomenological research were used for thematic analysis.

The goal of the analysis was to arrive at an understanding of the experience of being a Latina poet/ higher education leader. This involved obtaining an understanding of each participant's specific experience and then inductively arriving at a sense of the experience itself (Bazeley, 2021). In addition, the goal was to move beyond a simple description of the phenomenon to an understanding of that phenomenon (Bazeley, 2021).

The first step in the analysis was to read the entirety of each text packet to obtain a sense of the whole (Peoples, 2021). After that, analysis broke apart the transcript to arrive at a level of meaning that was then re-assembled to construct a more comprehensive meaning description. A table was created to facilitate thematic analysis. All data was recorded in the table, even if specific statements seemed to initially contradict others (Bazeley, 2021). The table represented a comprehensive and honest presentation of participant data.

The table contained a leftmost column in which cells containing natural meaning units were placed. Natural meaning units are statements from the transcript reflecting participation

description of experience (Bazeley, 2021). The experience in these meaning units is in the form of a single characteristic of that experience (Peoples, 2021). For example, a meaning unit in a study investigating the experiences of nonprofit workers in Texas might be something like the following: “Whatever assignment I was given, I was always the one who had to ask permission to get anything—supplies, personal leave, etc. This was totally different than when I oversaw setting my own schedules at my old company.”.

The next column to the right in the table contained the central theme of the natural meaning statement without any researcher interpretation (Bazeley, 2021). A sample of a central theme under the study referenced in the previous paragraph might be: “Participants experienced less power or freedom to undertake certain tasks in their nonprofit agency versus the private company where they had previously worked.”.

The last column to the furthest right contained the thematic code that captures the statement's essence (Bazeley, 2021). An example of this would be “agency loss” or “loss of power in a nonprofit context.”

Similar codes were grouped together into thematic clusters, which constituted what is labeled an emergent theme (Bazeley, 2021; Peoples, 2021). For example, the term “disempowerment” would constitute the theme for the aforementioned thematic code. The description of this theme references information from other columns to provide evidentiary support and create a discussion filled with rich description (Bazeley, 2021).

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Participants

Background information derived from each participant's interview helps frame the study findings by providing rich description. Below is a description of each participant based on their responses to the interview questions.

Participant A: Starting With the Community

> So instead of coming into a space and thinking, this is what I'm going to do and this is my grand vision, is asking people what is it that you want? What is it that you see? How can I help you? And that's always where I start, starting with the community . . . . I always use the approach of how can I help, what can I do to help you? What can I do to make this vision be real for you while still trying to figure out what do I know already that can help me do this. – Participant A

Although she has been writing her entire life, Participant A cites her participation in Chicana feminist organizations about twenty years ago as the impetus for her identification as a poet. This was when she started to seriously share her poetry with others and embrace the label of a political poet who wrote about things meaningful to herself and her community. During that time, she found a mentor, a well-known Chicana poet, who modeled how to balance personal and familial history in her writings with larger political themes.

Throughout her career, inside and outside higher education, Participant A has made activism and writing (academic and creative) her twin priorities. She sees her academic writing and creative writing as extensions of each other, each allowing her to say things that the other cannot, thereby enriching the way she experiences her world. She has worked extensively with women who have survived violence and sexual assault and has written about her experiences in that vocation in her creative work.

Participant A looks back fondly on her time as a PhD student, but she was treated as a token in her MFA program. She was the lone Chicana in the program and was often asked to explain her background in her work:

> Sometimes it felt like I had to explain everything about myself. That was always a very uncomfortable space, to meet people from other parts of the country who had never seen a Chicana or never encountered one. And they're talking about Chicana literature like they've never heard of it, like this is the first time there anybody's ever said this.

In one instance, a creative writing professor thought it necessary to deliver a primer on Chicana literature before discussing Participant A's writing in a workshop. The professor did not do this for any other student's work.

Participant A decided on a career in academia partially because of her desire for financially stable employment, something she would not have necessarily experienced in the nonprofit setting she adores. However, as an administrator and faculty member, Participant A continues to experience the same sense of tokenism she experienced as a student, usually because Latina underrepresentation is so pronounced in her discipline:

> But there are still moments when I feel like I walk into a space, you know, in higher education that people are not expecting to see me. You know, they're very surprised. So I always find that really interesting and then the conversations become very guarded at that point, like, oh, there's a person of color who's entered the room. I always find that strange until I look at a department and I realize, well, there's not that many, right?

Participant B: The Third Universe

"My normal is the reality of there being two different cognitive linguistic universes. And then there's the third universe made of that fusion. And I'm from that third universe." – Participant B

Participant B does not possess an academic background in creative writing. She took one creative writing course in college and stated that her education in this area was acquired via a nontraditional route, or "back door entrance," aligned with her work in the Chicano Movement and community and cultural activism. She writes, "my poetry and myself were born de la comunidad, de la gente, and from a heritage of storytellers that goes back centuries". She counts the "viejitos" (elders) and "cuentistas" (storytellers) who lacked any formal schooling as her most significant teachers. Between her undergraduate and her first graduate degree, she engaged in extensive fieldwork collecting and transcribing the stories of Mexican Americans in her home city. These stories have served as the basis for many of her creative works.

Participant B attended public schools in a Southwest city where speaking Spanish was punished. The idea that she was a lazy student whose highest educational level might only be attending (not graduating) high school was drummed into her by the white teachers and administrators who controlled the school system in a city that was primarily comprised of

Mexican Americans. These beliefs were reinforced by the media, where Mexican Americans were depicted as criminals or lazy, sleeping under giant sombreros and waking only enough to mutter "si señor." As a result, she has become very suspect of boundaries—of labels and categories that others might want to place on her and her writing. She has written extensively in multiple genres and in cross-genre formats (such as writing that intertwines poetry, prose, and dramatic performance) while freely translanguaging—using her linguistic skills to easily move between languages (Vogel & Garcia, 2017)—and drawing on bicultural resources such as traditional images and metaphors.

The oppression she felt in public schools continued to be experienced in different forms when she entered a career in academia. As a teacher, she would lose jobs to less qualified white applicants or Chicanos. Applicants with fewer educational credentials, teaching experience, and publishing credits would win appointments she desired. When she was hired for a position, she would routinely experience racism and sexism as the only person of color or woman in a department. Her compensation was at the bottom of the pay scale. She described one teaching job where males in the department (most of the faculty) would question the frequency with which she dined at the school cafeteria, sitting in phalanx at a table as she passed by with her meals, implying that she was undeserving of the luxury while they had to eat the cold lunches their wives had packed:

> I was doing tremendous amounts of work. They would say things and it might be things like, you know, I go to the snack bar to grab a hamburger and a fries in these long days. I'm a single person. I don't see my apartment until late at night, so I run into the snack bar. You know, it's not horrible when you're twenty-two to grab a hamburger and fries, right? And here's

> these guys, all the old white guys sitting at the table together, and they're all staring at me. Feeling like they're entitled and I'm like an intruder or something. I'm not sitting down with them. I'm just passing by their table. And they've all got their little lunch boxes that their wives have packed. And they look at me and they say it must be nice to be able to afford to buy in the snack bar every day.

As an administrator, she contended with outright sexism or racism as others sabotaged her advancement by falsely claiming she was a bad worker or stating to anyone who would listen that she was hired only because of her race and gender. Resources such as Post-It Notes were denied to her when she asked for them. As a Director of a Mexican American Studies Center, she commanded only nominal respect—she was poorly paid relative to her colleagues and her department was underfunded to the point that she served in custodial, counseling, and other roles to allow the Center to function. Nevertheless, her dedication, which included working from dawn until late at night and producing a voluminous body of academic and creative work, finally allowed her to realize the falsity of the laziness myth she had internalized since her youth.

Now that she is Professor Emerita, Participant B does not have to worry about the same kinds of directly harmful behavior she experienced in higher education. However, she does worry that her books might be banned or that someone might decide to inflict violence upon her because of what she has written. She believes the nation sees Mexican Americans as the other: "Mexican Americans are still seen as the enemies, the conquered people that we were in the Mexican American War." However, she remains undeterred in her mission to write about her culture and its people: "I am compelled to speak the truth no matter what the consequences are."

Participant C: Poetry as Existence

Participant C writes poetry to understand the world around her. She uses creative writing to think and feel through how she exists as a person in the world and to situate herself in what sometimes seems like chaos. Poetry also allows her to experience the world's various joys and traumas. Writing is not necessarily a form of therapy, resistance, or empowerment, although it can be all of those. Instead, it allows her to find dignity and see herself as more than a victim in the flawed system of higher education. An essential part of the Latina leadership/poet experience for Participant C is about the effects of whiteness in the institutions she inhabits and working towards equity, either in her writing or her leadership.

Poetry is also intimately tied with community organizing as a way to give voice to others, protest, and advocate. Earlier in her life, she was more concerned with the technical aspects of poetry and form, but she has since expanded her writing practice to include documentation of her experience as a Chicana, embracing pronouncement over implication and less worried about craft and revision. Her sense of what poetry should be includes active engagement of community members to tell their own stories and, in the process, create a collective, shared narrative of struggle and empowerment.

As a leader in higher education, Participant C has expressed some regret at the career she has chosen. However, she did not see a financially viable path in another line of work:

> In my experience, academia is full of competitive, self-absorbed faculty. I wish it weren't so. But in the end, the thing that matters most is how many publications and university grants you can cite. Student success is secondary. That has always been the system. Honestly, I wouldn't have joined academia at all if I didn't have so many student loans to pay off. I

would have rather worked in the community. But the student loan debt forced me into a job with "security."

Working at a public university, she has experienced numerous instances of microaggressions and felt the effects of institutional racism, leading to bouts of depression and thoughts of leaving academia. She describes academia as a place filled with deep inequities that make it difficult for Chicanas to succeed. She believes that as a Chicana, she is presumed to be incompetent not only by white men and women but other people of color.

Her service and administrative work have also been, at times, appropriated and unacknowledged. She has seen how labor is unevenly distributed, echoing García-Peña's observations at Harvard of seeing Latinas disproportionately take on important but undervalued activities such as student mentorship and dissertation committee work. She believes that unless she tries to trumpet her work and achievements, she will remain invisible. However, documentation is a painstaking, laborious process that takes time away from her work and family. Nor does it automatically lead to recognition since poetry can often be devalued. She has thus been doubly punished—for being a Chicana and then forced to justify her value to an audience that only conferred respect when she obtained a formal leadership position and had obtained a certain level of social capital within the institution.

As a director of a special program, she was expected to improve performance metrics while putting long hours (often over 80-hour weeks) into her work, even as her white counterparts in other departments had time to invest in their research with few other commitments. Being ideally situated, they seldom assisted her efforts to improve student conditions, preferring instead to stifle her efforts by complaining about her work to the administration (even as she won institutional awards). Those hectoring voices were sometimes

supported by Latinas whose commitments to equity on the page did not affect their behavior in reality. She witnessed how those Latinas advanced in their careers even as they treated other Latinas poorly.

She has continued to work at a frenetic pace because she desires to see her students thrive and achieve some sense of equity at her institution. However, she experiences burnout and is often filled with doubt about whether her work is making a difference. Nevertheless, she is spurred on by the belief that "to be a witness and not say anything" perpetuates the values of the supremacist system in which she works.

Participant D: Border Spiritual

Participant D describes herself as a Chicana feminist and says the essence of her creative work can be summarized in two words: border and spiritual. Her writing employs what she calls a borderlands aesthetic with a spiritual sensibility. She does not conceive of the spiritual as necessarily religious but as having some connection to a higher power:

> I have an underlying ritual, it's not even conscious, but I believe that writers have a direct link to a higher consciousness, especially when you're in the zone . . . and we're more like conduits for higher knowledge—I don't want to use hierarchical—but a deeper sense of our life on earth as spiritual beings.

Participant D was the first in her family to attend college. Her high school counselor once encouraged her to aim for a secretarial job and foreclosed the possibility of college as out of her reach. However, she knew she was capable of more complex roles and worked hard to move through institutional hierarchies towards positions of more responsibility.

Participant D cites her commitment to the working-class community in which she grew up as an important reason she has dedicated herself to student success through various higher educational administrative roles for decades. Although her life no longer mirrors their experiences as it once did, her work is for and about the Latina community. However, as much as her positions opened up possibilities for her career and helped the community, they were also very challenging. The physical consequences of the stress she experienced forced her to move away from administration and instead focus on teaching:

> I realized that I didn't want to do that for a living. I didn't want to do that every day. And it was a difficult decision because administration is very difficult. It's very challenging. It's all of that. But you have opportunities. And I really enjoyed the opportunities that it offered. And how much I could get done for community and for students. On the other hand, I started getting migraines. There were all kinds of physical consequences to the job that I did not like. And I realized that I did not want to be in administration.

She describes several major intersecting obstacles to success she has encountered in higher education. One was geographical—she grew up on the United States/Mexico border. Because the area was educationally underserved and resource-poor, she wanted to teach in her community. However, as a teacher, she felt isolated from the larger academic world. She was constantly tired and had little spare time for creative writing. At one point, she contemplated leaving academia altogether but was brought back by the realization that she had always been a teacher.

Another obstacle was being Chicana in a discipline where there were few Chicanas. When she received her doctorate, there were only a handful of Latinas/Chicanas with PhDs in the

nation and very few in her discipline. She did not attend a school like Berkeley, which she stated would have bestowed credibility on her. Throughout her career, she has constantly fought to have her ideas taken seriously, even as a full professor. At the same time, she has benefitted from several Latina mentors in her life. From those who encouraged her to apply to graduate schools to those who later encouraged her to seek out teaching and administrative positions, mentors and champions were constantly pushing her to achieve her milestones.

The last major obstacle was sexism. Sexism led to self-devaluation. She describes her upbringing as intellectually limiting:

> My parents encouraged education but certainly not too much opinion and too much being on your own and going outside of the norm. There were certain parameters. And you couldn't go beyond that as a female, as a Mexicana, as a daughter. There were restrictions. Whether we acknowledge it or not, they impact who we are. And now I know that. I didn't know that when I was twenty-five.

During her interview, she recounted numerous examples of the sexism and harassment she has experienced throughout her education and career. In one case that occurred when she was enrolled in an undergraduate course, a Chicano student recycled one of her ideas and received praise from the male professor who had dismissed the same idea when she had mentioned it. She has since learned not to hold back in similar situations and speak up to correct slights.

Importantly, Participant D says the concept of sentipensante can describe her leadership style. She credits Laura I. Rendón's book *Sentipensante (Thinking/Feeling) Pedagogy* for introducing her to the concept:

> human beings are not just thinkers or feelers, it's sentipensante, together, so that it has a more holistic approach. To care for both people's feelings—I mean we are feeling beings whether we acknowledge it or not—as well as the mental, the thinking, the intellectual.

Rendón (2009) describes sentipensante as the amalgam of heart and mind, intuiting and thinking. It informs a pedagogy based on such concepts as harmony, liberation, and social justice (Rendón, 2009). Consequently, this view is in direct opposition to the positivism of Cartesianism, which posits only a thinking self as the fundamental constituent of knowledge (Scruton, 1995). It is like participatory pedagogy or constructivism, where there is a rejection of objectivity, and knowledge is a subjective co-created experience between learners and teachers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). It also appears to be kin to critical pedagogy in its emphasis on social justice and liberation since it would seem to allow the development of what Freire called a critical consciousness whose goal is the state where oppressed peoples could become subjects of history and not its objects (Freire, 2017). Sentipensante pedagogy also includes a spiritual component, by which Rendón means a spiritual practice (Rendón, 2009). It is important to note that this is not a religious practice but a recognition of altered states of consciousness that can inform discovery. This component is actively decolonialist because it speaks against the distinction between a ‘right’ way of knowing and a ‘wrong’ way of not knowing—of rejecting scientistic epistemology as the sole truth.

Participant E: Poet and Process

Participant E sees poetry as a vocation. She engages in the kind of creative writing Anzaldúa called autohistoria-teoría—creating and claiming knowledge out of the examination of the self (Pitts, 2016). Her writing, which extends beyond poetry and includes essays, creative

nonfiction, and librettos, allows her to be in a constant process of embodied exploration, revision, and discovery.

Participant E's commitment to Latina students stems from her background. Her mother was an immigrant. Both of her parents obtained GEDs, but she is the first in her family to attend college. When she first applied to college after high school, she gained admission to prestigious schools but could not afford to attend. She struggled academically at the school she ultimately selected and left without completing a degree. Many years later, she enrolled at another school primarily because her ultimate goal was to obtain an MFA in creative writing, and she recognized the Bachelor's degree as a necessary stepping stone. While attending school, she juggled a job while raising a child and working full-time. She attributes the support of other Latinas, such as one key advisor, with helping her complete her education and gain admission to a graduate program.

Participant E has enjoyed being a leader in higher education at an HSI. She saw her role as an administrator as critical to the success of both students and faculty: "I search for those who . . . understand who we are helping and not just in terms of students but the community at large and the family and everyone who is behind that student". However, excelling in her work meant that she was constantly called on to perform duties not listed in her job description with no extra pay. She took on work that should have been handled by faculty, such as writing and submitting grants, overseeing graduate assistants, or hiring staff. When she sought redress from her supervisors, she was given assurances that her workload would be appropriately balanced, but conditions did not change.

As an administrator, she has also experienced sexism. One department chair, whom she considered otherwise well-meaning, once asked her to talk with a student assistant who had

come to their office in distress after a sexual assault. The supervisor was adept at handling the policy and procedural aspects of the situation but assumed that Participant E was better suited to communicate with the student on an emotional level because she was a woman.

Participant E hopes to enroll in a Ph.D. program but is concerned about the current attacks on DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives on college campuses. She worries about being able to talk freely not only about race but also about intersectional concerns regarding gender and religion, among other important topics. The stifling of what some consider to be unacceptable speech directly challenges her right to express herself fully, and she is committed more than ever to writing.

Themes

Several themes emerged from the analysis of participant data. They are presented in the following table and subsequently discussed. Note that the middle column of Table 4 shows the strongest correspondence between the theme and interview question but does not exclude the application of a specific interview question to a theme. For example, theme 1, border negation, may have drawn some support from an answer for question 3 in one participant's interview. Most interview question responses apply to more than one theme when considered generally, but the links, as shown in the table, become stronger when analyzing actual participant responses.

Table 4: Summary of Emergent Themes

Theme	Interview Question	Research Question
Border Negation	1, 2	Both
Foundational Values	3, 4, 5	Both
Othered Leadership	3, 4	Both
Importance of Community	3, 5	Both
Writing as Necessity	1, 2	Both

In addition, responses to questions 6 and 8 could have applied to several themes and provided background context that helped to create a narrative that supported the themes. Question 7 was not a content question but identified additional possible participants.

As indicated in the following exploration of the findings, some data was generated by participant writings (either previously published work or previously written unpublished work). None of the participants submitted a response to the writing prompt. However, enough data was generated from the interview that the additional data generated from the prompt would likely have served to illustrate the interview data rather than provide new insights.

Border Negation

Part of the experience of being a Latina poet and a higher education leader is the negation of borders. The term 'negation' is used to signify the way the participants cross both literal and metaphorical borders in their writing and leadership practices. If nepantla is the state of in-betweenness, of being neither metaphorically here nor there (Anzaldúa, 2012), then the notion of border negation is being here and there, but having the capability of operating in several different spaces at once, like a bilocating saint.

Participant D writes in a poem in one of her published collections, when speaking about her identity as a poet, scholar, academic, administrator, and community activist, that her 'I' is a multitude of persons doing a multitude of things (Collection D., n.d.). Participants are comfortable inhabiting multiple identities and transgressing norms that others may want to apply to them as Latinas.

Participant B stated "I was raised close enough to the border to where I disliked the whole concept of borders. And I wanted the freedom to skip back and forth on both sides of the border with one foot falling on either side." She was referring here to a geographic border, but,

as her interview made clear, her life has been filled with instances where she has subverted social expectations to craft a unique life.

Similarly, Participant A spoke at length about her various allegiances to different academic disciplines she was compelled to explore—the creative writing for which she received an MFA, her doctorate in a discipline that was not writing or English, and her advocacy work which was later reflected in her creative writing:

> But I think that's kind of where I see myself now. It's like these things are all intertwined now. . . . All those things are always in conversation with each other and I remain committed to focusing on issues that I think are important to write about. Those are just choices I made for myself and I don't really expect others to do the same thing. It's just what I did for myself and what made most sense.

All participants write not only poetry but in other genres as well. Writing does not exist in silos for them, and there are no distinct boundaries between one kind of creative writing and another. Because of this, the term 'poetry' for them is an expansive expression, not simply writing of a specific form (for example, of such things as sonnets or blank verse). It is instead political expression, polemic, and prayer, among others. Participant B illuminated this concept:

> I respect the traditional teachings about genres, but I don't pay attention to them in my own creation because I feel that they were invented by humans, not God-given and therefore I feel that it is our right and responsibility as writers and especially as poets to explore all facets of creativity, to create new genres. To create fusions between genres and languages and cognitive concepts.

Border negation is also expressed as the willingness to cross borders in the work they perform outside of creative writing. Most participants have served not only as administrators and writers but also as teachers and community leaders. They have multiple priorities demanding their attention, and the work of each is as important as the others. Several participants not only wrote across multiple academic disciplines but also worked on projects for multiple departments. As evidence of navigational capital, this facility of moving across disciplines allowed the participants to serve students in multiple projects and programs.

Lastly, participants are unwilling to write solely in one language. In possession of linguistic capital, they are comfortable moving between Spanish and English in their work, both in their texts and in the way they interact in the workplace. The usefulness of translanguaging represents a necessity for Participant B, who uses whatever tools at her disposal to communicate her message: “I reserve the right to translanguage even when it comes to writing. So it's not just translanguaging. It's transcribing. Or transwriting. It's switching between the voices that are needed to be heard at the time they need to be heard.” As with Participant C’s unwillingness to allow institutional racism to oust her from academia, Participant B’s unabashed use of both Spanish and English in her writings is an instance of the use of resistant capital.

Bilingualism also represents dedication to the people participants serve. All but one participant indicated that they used Spanish both in their higher education work and their creative work. Participant A’s commitment to maintaining her Spanish proficiency reveals an axiological commitment to deepen her connection with her community. Proficiency allows her to converse with students in ways that would serve them, just as Participant B needs to use Spanish to express her necessary truths. Participant D has published several works in Spanish and has worked closely with Latina undergraduates who speak in Spanish. Speaking in English would be

less productive in those contexts. Similarly, Participant A said she often uses Spanish when speaking to students who she knows are more comfortable speaking of complex ideas in Spanish. To her, the skill of speaking both languages is something she tried hard to retain in order to continue being an effective communicator. Although her ability to speak Spanish may not be necessary for her formal academic writing, it is her commitment to others that motivates her to maintain proficiency:

> Holding on to my ability to speak Spanish which a lot of my students now speak to me in Spanish in class. And because I know that what they're trying to say is very complicated. It's like I want to tell you something very complicated and I can only tell you in Spanish, right? So I go ahead and allow that and I usually just translate for students who are not bilingual. Most of them are but in the instance that they're not because they know that they're really struggling to say something like really interesting but they can't say it yet in English.

The use of multiple languages allows the participants to form more meaningful connections with higher education students, especially those from Latin@ backgrounds who speak Spanish at home. It also allows the participants to retain a connection to their home communities and families who speak Spanish. This connection is valuable for preserving a sense of motivation in the face of hostile university environments and to excel in those environments to become a leader. Participant B expressed this view:

> That ability to balance different sides, to be the other, to be the outside person or the person that's between the groups because you're bilingual and bicultural and you're able to serve as an interpreter . . . . So I came from a

> long heritage of bilingual bicultural biliteracy which even though my family wasn't rich, it put them in a position, not of power but of being able to serve the community. A position of leadership, I guess, is what it would be.

The primary decolonialist impulse in border negation is ontological. Participants refuse to label themselves or be labeled as just one kind of writer or as engaging in only one vocation. They are comfortable being many different things at once—embracing multiple identities with multiple demands on their time. They are generators of knowledge as their leadership activity is inextricably linked with their various identities. This finding is consistent with the discussion in the literature review about other Latina leaders in higher education (Gonzales et al., 2013; Velez, 2019). Moreover, these identities are not distinct per se—they all contribute to participants' conception of themselves as writers and leaders in such a way that they not only supervene on their being, but are necessary to it. The concept of border negation can be compared to an ombre color field as opposed to a color field that is stratified—in the former, it is difficult to pick out one shade of color from the rest, but in the latter the task is easy.

Foundational Values

A second theme that emerged from data analysis is that participants' work as both poets and higher education leaders is grounded in a system of similar foundational values. These values are reflected in how and what they choose to write about and in their leadership behaviors. Their values function as a kind of social and resistant capital that is shared with others in their community. In decolonialist terms, value is an orientation about what the participants find important and orients behavior so that they can live by the values they espouse; foremost among these values is a concern for people not as abstract entities but as actual embodied members of participants' communities.

Participant B noted that her values were derived from her upbringing among society's lower socioeconomic class. She referred to her Mexican ancestry as a source of education for how community members should collaborate and view themselves as equals:

> But in this area we are the descendants of the native peoples of this area, mixed in with everybody else and their values were gentleness and compassion and kindness and collaboration and I think those indigenous values plus the indigenous values in the Mexican lower class influence that sense of collaboration, of community, that awareness of community.

The community she describes is not solely the one she inherited but includes others who are yoked together by collaboration, kindness, and compassion.

Participant C also mentioned the values of generosity and kindness as elements of leadership:

> Leadership is generosity. Support. Erring on generosity. . .Treating colleagues with kindness. Not being a manager, but aiming for equity in everything possible. Helping students. Asking them to remind you if you forget to follow up. Being open to suggestions and feedback.

Participant B described how her familial ancestors were comfortable doing many kinds of work, from cleaning houses to picking crops in the field. They comfortably interacted with people of various backgrounds. As an administrator, she is comfortable meeting and talking with everyone on campus, from executives to students.

Similarly, Participant C shared the following sentiment which emphasizes the value of gender and racial equity in her work: "We will always reach for it and never settle until it feels right." This concern for equity appears as the subject matter of her poems and in the effort she

places as an administrator into programs that benefit the least advantaged students, even at the cost of her own physical, spiritual, and mental well-being in an unjust higher education context: "The Latina in all of this is someone who has experienced gender and racial inequity and therefore my advocacy for other people of color and women is important to me because I want to see things actually improve."

Participant D echoed this idea: "Especially in academia, I try very consciously, with my Chicana students, to value and to affirm who they are, what they're doing, and that their voice matters."

Another value is authenticity, or being true to oneself. As a form of resistant capital, this value allows the participants to push back on demands made of them by their institutions. Participant D described this concern when talking about who is important in her writing: "I sit with a piece for a long time, longer than I ever have really sometimes, couple of years. But I really consider: am I telling the truth here or how close to the truth can I get? What am I holding back as an individual, as a human?" The participants do not believe that they can serve the values of community or equity without being authentic.

Participant B also stated that she adheres to the Aztec belief that poetry must be truthful, and she is willing to write what she believes is true despite the potential for negative consequences. This concern is also reflected in Participant C's evolution from focusing on the formal aspects of poetry to poetry as a tool for social action—her poetry is not as concerned with the truths imparted to her about what poetry should or should not be, but expressing the truth of inequity and injustice in society.

Othered Leadership

All participants practice othered leadership—that is, leadership that places the needs and interests of others on the same footing as the needs and interests of the participants themselves. It uses social capital with the intent to improve the lives of everyone with whom the leader works. The participants practiced othered leadership when they exercised empathy or put themselves into the roles of the people they were working with to carefully consider the needs of each individual:

> And I think what really helped was figuring out the different people that you're working with. And how to build on the strength that you see within them rather than trying to treat them all exactly the same . . . . I realized you have to really think about what you have, with the team of people that you have or the group of people you're working with and figure out what their strengths are and then really build on each person's strength as best as you can. Supporting the decisions that they make that you feel are going to be helpful in their own careers. (Participant A)

Inclusivity, or including others into leadership decisions and practices, is also a key element of othered leadership. Participant E stated that idea in the following way:

> I want as many voices as possible. I want everyone to have all the information that they need. Because if not, people are making choices based on some sort of fear or some sort of rush, and they don't know how the other components fit together. I really love working in groups, especially where there are projects where you have to really kind of divide things up and you can check in."

Similarly, Participant C stated that “leadership is learning from the community and activists. It is providing platforms for the more marginalized to share their voices.”

A necessary component of othered leadership is not only the decolonialist idea of embracing an ontology where others possess just as much value as oneself, but also fighting to ensure their equal status with others. The result is joint ownership of the working environment. As Participant E put it,

> So everywhere that I can, I look for like-minded individuals. We don't just think similarly, but they have the openness to say, here's what I can bring to the table and here's what I still need. But how can we work together to create something.

Participant C also discussed this view when describing her effort to combat institutional racism. She believes students and the community are exploited. That is the reason she has dedicated her career to ending that exploitation by making small changes where she can. Her effort includes students and the community of activists, writers, and others as a fundamental component.

Participant D contextualized this work in the sense of developing and implementing a shared vision:

> So my, quote, leadership was to kind of organize a group that fulfilled the need that I think most people didn't even know was there. And that I think is a hallmark or a characteristic. So a leader is visionary. And can see what's needed. And works and organizes to get that done.

Empathy was also an element of shared leadership and involves listening seriously to others and their needs and then collaborating with them to achieve shared goals. As Participant B

stated, “the leader is the one that is most effective at a collaborative leadership. That knows how to listen to everybody and help guide directions, not make directions, but guide the direction that will benefit the community at large.” Leadership requires a commitment to the interpretation of what is important to others when they may not be able to articulate it. It also requires the balancing of needs and priorities, with the needs of the nominal leader carrying the same, and not more, weight as other members of the community. Because of this, othered leadership is decolonialist: it is non-hierarchical and othered leaders prefer to generate knowledge as a collaborative enterprise:

> So I said, I don't care about hierarchy. I am not a person who judges my success by how high I go. I'm a person who judges my success by how much I get done. Doesn't matter to me what the title is, what matters is how much can I get done. (Participant B)

For Participant E othered leadership meant tailoring her efforts to those who most needed it:

> I can't help but identify with my students. So it's easy for me to kind of offer that kind of individualized customer service. Because the bulk of the students that I've worked with in my capacity in higher education it's been Latinas especially who have needed the support, who have often been the first in their generation to be in an academic space like that. I want to support them and I also recognize I think that we speak a similar language and come from similar spaces. So I can see what they're going through.

Lastly, Participant B mentioned an unknown, or othered, energy and power as the source of both artistry and leadership:

> Oh, and the sense of feeling very fortunate, very blessed that you were allowed to be the vessel through which this concept of the universe flowed. That's how I see artistic creation. That's also how I see leadership. You are not the position. You are in the position, which is like being the vessel. And the energy and the power and the leadership flows through you and through everybody else. It's a collaborative. It's a universe. It's not a single egotistical human being with all their accomplishments.

Participant D alluded to this idea when she mentioned how poets are often recipients of the proverbial flash of inspiration. Although this idea might be conceptually linked to the problematic one that only certain people have access to a special kind of insight, the emphasis on serving others instead indicates that the participants believe that anyone could potentially have access to the same source of energy, power, or inspiration. This source is not connected to the ego but is othered in the sense that the leader recognizes they are not simply an ego. As Participant E put it, the position of leadership is like being a "vessel" where one is open to different viewpoints and has an internal conversation about what actions to take as a leader.

Importance of Community

Another theme that emerged from participant interviews was the importance of community. Conceptually, forming and maintaining a community is a foundational value, but it is also described as the importance that certain members of the community have had on participants' success. This theme reflects the importance of relationships (part of a decolonialist ontology), as well as social and familial capital that is generated by and stems from other people.

Participants talked about important people in their lives who assisted them in some way, imparted wisdom, or provided a source of emotional support. Participant C, for instance,

mentioned how she is a member of a support group of Latina writers who encourage each other in their careers. Participant B mentioned how her close-knit group of Chicana academics was critical in encouraging her to apply for job openings:

> And the next year the college's women's studies committee, which was made of tenured women from across campus because there were no tenured women in women's studies, opened up two tenure track positions. Again the Chicanas, like I had at the previous colleges, they were like andale, they opened up this, you ought to apply. The Chicana community was very tight, very supportive and they were saying, hey, you should apply for this. And so I applied for the position and I got it.

For Participant E, women of color have been especially supportive of her work or helped guide her. She recalled how one Latina advisor helped her graduate by showing her how to properly address course requirements. Because she has been a recipient of encouragement, she recapitulates with others:

> So I think that oftentimes I can identify with Latinas more than those who are in charge. Just because I've been in that space. I have benefited even within my work. Within higher education, I've benefited from women of all kind of ethnic backgrounds who are incredibly supportive.

The presence of champions was also critically important. Champions from the Latina community provided specific opportunities for mentorship to the participants, promoted them and their work, or otherwise provided a source of encouragement. Participant C cited a new supervisor as a champion who, unlike a previous leader, took her interest in equity seriously: "It

has been enormously helpful to have a supervisor who cares about equity as well. . . . [without them] it is less likely I would have achieved anything related to equity so far."

Participant D also mentioned how important her champions were in her education. One of them invited her to enroll in their graduate program. Others informed her of jobs and encouraged her to apply. They helped her navigate higher education corridors and advocated on her behalf. Now she does the same for other Latinas:

> And so the other part of that is how do you pass that on to other Chicanas and Latinas and I've always been an advocate and a mentor, I guess I could use that word. . . . So I think just being there. Taking the time. And it doesn't stop, like with my PhD students, I try not to just stop when they finish. But to keep supporting and apollando and just being there for them as they go through academic rituals and, and stages.

Perhaps the most important champions have been participant families, especially mothers. In a published testimonio, Participant D credits the mothers in her life as critical components in shaping who she is (Anthology D., n.d.). Participant A cited one of her collections of poetry (Collection A, n.d.) as emblematic of her experiences as a Latina poet. In one semi-autobiographical poem, the speaker ruminates on the impact her mother has had on her life and career choices. In one stanza, the speaker recalls how her mother transported her away from abusive relatives. As the speaker flees in the family car, she recalls the senses that were activated by the trip—looking at the nearby plants, smelling the peculiar air—and understands how her mother's courageous act has planted the kernel of her own future work inside her. During the interview, Participant A expanded on her mother's importance:

> And so all those things are about that, but maybe what's not clear sometimes is that my mother's always been this person who pushed education a lot. So that was another thing too, like she really pushed me to do well in school, pushed me to do all these things, pushed me to really focus on my ability to write and think. Even though we didn't have much, books was always something that she never denied me.

Writing as Necessity

The last theme to emerge from the research is writing as a necessity. Although all participants identify as poets, none of them identify solely as poets and they write freely in many genres. This multi-genre approach allows them to use different tools to express themselves, exercising aspirational, linguistic, and resistant capital. Aspirational, because writing allows them to imagine ways they might be better teachers, writers, and leaders. Linguistic because it uses their gifts as writers. Resistant because it responds to the struggles of the academy in positive ways that allow them to continue thriving.

They see the act of writing as necessary for their leadership in two respects. First, poetry and other forms of writing serve to help them make meaning out of their work in their leadership context. Writing allows the participants to make sense of things happening around them and to them. It also allows them to situate themselves and find worth in the knowledge that is generated from their experiences. This is vitally important because each participant experienced higher education as, at least in part, a system of racism or sexism. Participant C best exemplifies how writing is crucial to making sense of the world:

> I have always written to better understand and explore my thoughts, feelings, and imagination. That has not changed from the start in childhood.

> And I have always experienced whiteness as a constant factor of existence where I grew up and after. In some ways it has better prepared me for academia, but like many folks I had a long road to learning about structures of power though it was always clear growing up: white people had more money, more power, more everything. And they didn't always like or accept us. That we always had to prove ourselves.

She sees poetry as a "way of living" that helps her to understand her "life and the world around me."

Participant E also sees poetry as a necessary way to make meaning. Her writing is a way of "excavating" and "digging" through her experiences until she arrives at what she calls a "crystal" of understanding. Through this process, she is present in the moment and can adequately react to her experiences.

Participant D also spoke of poetry as a way to make meaning. She spoke of how she has sometimes needed to get away from the hubbub of her work life to spend time at secluded retreats where she focuses solely on her writing, "being there and really looking into my heart" to arrive at meaning and then deciding on an important life action. At one such retreat, she decided to attend graduate school instead of attending law school.

Second, writing serves an emotional, spiritual, or psychological calming function. It serves as a useful tool in a leadership role when there are many demands for time, high-stress levels, and conflict. For Participant A, writing poetry is a way to set aside time to carefully contemplate her experience and perhaps find a different way of thinking about a problem:

> I suppose the intuitive part is that what I would think is the quiet part of myself, like paying attention and listening. I think probably really key to

> that, I don't think I'm a person who makes impulsive decisions. I always pay attention to what is said and think about it and then decide on what to do next. And I think probably poetry is a lot of about that, right? Taking something and thinking about it, processing it, and then deciding what to do with that information. Like how do I shape this? What do I think? Sometimes even just one poem, right? How do I approach this? What do I think about this?

Participant E uses poetry in the same way. She does not see leadership as quick decision-making or hierarchical. Rather, a leader takes the time to carefully consider a problem before deciding on a course of action. Poetry has allowed her to sit with these problems. In this sense, it is a decision-making tool because it requires methodical, slow, careful consideration of a topic. The context for this decision-making introduces a sense of tranquility to the otherwise hectic environment a leader must negotiate in higher education:

> I have learned, maybe through the process of writing, or maybe they've kind of come up together, this sense of like if you put in as much of the infrastructure as you can and if you give everyone all the information that they need, then you can work in a way where there isn't that kind of chaos.

Participant C calls poetry a coping mechanism and a way to ground her experience in foundational values. When the systemic injustices Participant C experiences become too much to bear, she turns to poetry for affirmation, to make the decolonialist move of affirming that what she creates and the work she performs have value. Writing poetry allows the leader to cope because it is a way of affirming that despite how marginalized a Latina is, despite how tiny the system makes her feel, she exists.

In a similar move, Participant D calls poetry “expiation”: “It's almost to expiate what's going on and to just get it out.” Expiation in this sense does not mean that Participant D believes she has done anything wrong and requires atonement. Rather, it affirms that as a spiritual being, she needs poetry to find some sense of peace.

Writing as necessity involves several decolonial maneuvers. It allows the participants to define themselves as writing, thinking, and sensing beings. As they write, they confirm themselves as centers of experience, existing even despite feeling that they either do not or cannot exist in leadership spaces. It uncovers a privileged space to knowledge that is self-generated. It also contradicts positivist models of leadership that value rational, deductive thinking as the sole source of leadership decisions. Instead, their writing is proof that creativity can serve as the basis for leadership.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Importance of the Findings

Confirmation of Latina Leader Experiences

The findings suggest that Latina poets experience many of the same difficulties and obstacles as other Latina higher education leaders who are not creative writers. For one, participants confirmed research showing Latina underrepresentation at their institutions, and they sometimes were the only Latinas in their departments or leadership roles (Eiden-Dillow & Best, 2022; Gonzales et al., 2013). Despite their successes in creative writing and their chosen academic disciplines, they felt devalued throughout their educational, teaching, and administrative careers, echoing the same devaluation many other Latinas in leadership roles have felt (Eiden-Dillow & Best, 2022; Ortega-Liston & Soto, 2014). They were sometimes treated as tokens, or their work and knowledge were deemed less important than others (Gonzales et al., 2013; Lincoln & Stanley, 2021). Working at an HSI did not mitigate the feeling of minimization, and in several cases, the perpetrators of microaggressions and hostility were themselves Latin@s. This echoes the experiences of Latinas at HSIs described in other research, where marginalization of Latina identity and minimization of Latina scholarship were not uncommon (Gonzales et al., 2013). One participant described burnout and feeling depressed as a result of working at her institution, and another participant described how she left administration altogether.

Despite this state of affairs, participants have served as successful leaders in their organizations. Their othered leadership has likely contributed to this success. By putting the needs of others ahead of theirs, participants have exercised the values they hold important and formed communities at their institutions and beyond. As in servant leadership, the goal of othered leadership is to invest in others by focusing on their development and fulfillment (Shonk, 2024). However, since none of the participants used the word 'servant' (which carries a negative connotation) to describe their views of leadership, it is not accurate to call their leadership style servant leadership, but the two concepts are related. Rather, othered leadership can be seen as an application of social capital or forming relationships with people and community resources for mutual benefit.

Nor is othered leadership synonymous with transformational leadership or people-focused leadership (Dodson, 2022). The important distinction is a decolonialist orientation to leadership. Participants spoke about their community in strong relational terms—as part of the same metaphysical referent as themselves. By contrast, a transformational model sees a leader as inspiring or capable of creating an environment where a non-leader is capable of positive advancement (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006). However, othered leadership, as practiced by the participants, identified others with themselves (the leader). The leading action is action taken by the community under a shared vision.

Reviewing the relation of the study's two research questions in the context of the themes uncovered through data analysis provides additional reasons why participants have been successful leaders. The second question is treated first.

Research Question 2

The second research question was, *How do specific elements of artistic practice, if any, inform or influence higher education leadership activities of Latina poets?* This question was influenced by the area of the literature review that described how specific elements of artistic practice could be used by leaders, whether they were themselves artists or not.

Apart from the themes explored as emerging in response to the first research question, there were no other specific elements of artistic practice that informed participant leadership practices. This is not altogether surprising because the participants did not speak about the technical or craft aspects of writing. For instance, the participants did not mention that writing poetry in form prepared them for the communication aspects of their leadership or that practice with composing elegies allowed them to better empathize with team members. The literature hinted alluded to the ways poets might have used similar strategies. However, only one participant mentioned attention to craft but dismissed it as a concern whose importance she had outgrown. Rather, the consensus conception of poetry and other forms of writing seemed to be more broad and focused on giving voice to values.

Research Question 1

The first research question was, *How do Latina poets who are higher education leaders apply their artistic practices, if any, to their leadership practices?* This question stemmed from that area of the literature regarding how artists practice leadership.

The Latina poets in this study used two main strategies from their writing to inform their leadership practice. The theme of border negation captured the way the participants work across boundaries, refusing to be pigeonholed into one type of writing or identity. Carrying this border negation into their academic lives, they often worked across disciplines, performed many

different kinds of work in the university setting, served as both administrators and teachers, and combined their higher education work with community service outside the academy. The strategy of border negation allowed the participants to negotiate their successes across complex organizational backgrounds and manage their multiple identities to be successful.

It is important to stress that the participants are very successful in their various roles. Although they did not provide summaries of their achievements (perhaps out of a sense of humility), a search of their publicly available biographies reveals the important impact they have had on other writers, students, and their communities. To preserve anonymity, it is impossible to recount their accolades here. Many people who work in higher education juggle multiple priorities. Moreover, as the literature review described, Latina leaders often have several demands on their time, including those stemming from their various intersectional identities and the power structures those identities grate against (Gonzales et al., 2013). The participants were no different. However, their degree of success marks them as unique.

Another strategy the participants used was treating writing as a necessity. Writing was seen as a necessary constituent of participant lives and served two main functions that carried into their leadership roles—it allowed participants to make meaning out of their work as higher education leaders, and it also served a calming or peace-making function. Both functions were critical as a way to address the harms they had experienced in the academy.

Making meaning served the role of cultivating their aesthetic judgment (Woodward & Funk, 2010). It allowed them to find the positive aspects of their situations and highlight the importance of their roles (the 'mattering' of Flett et al., 2019). It allowed them to make sense of their work lives and to contextualize their work to find importance in it. The calming function allowed them time to recover from stresses and take time to think about themselves in the safe

space of words. It created a space of their own where they could obtain a modicum of peace away from the business of their work environments.

The Importance of Values and Community

Community was important to participants as a support mechanism. Participants recounted how their careers were aided by champions, their mothers, and fellow Latinas. All stated that part of their current leadership practice is enlarging their community as they help students be successful. As other Latina higher education leaders have done in other contexts, the participants consciously sought to build strong relationships with other Latinas (Malagón et al., 2021).

For participants, both writing and leadership (whether in higher education or elsewhere) derived from a set of shared values. Holding and exercising these values is analytically antecedent to the way poetry and leadership are practiced. Figure 1 expresses the relationship between foundational values and activities in participant lives. The directional arrows in the figure denote influence. Since values are foundational, they influence how participants live their lives. Each sphere of activity, from creative writing to community leadership, influences the others.

Holding certain values has often been seen as an essential element of leadership. The previously mentioned concept of servant leadership is built on assumptions about the high value that should be placed on people and the obligations owed to those in the leader's sphere of influence. Burns (in Ciulla, 2014) states that ethical virtues are often seen as necessary components of transactional leadership and contrasts morals as components of transformational leadership. Whether the term ethics or morals is used to describe the principles involved, values provide a foundation that guides leadership behavior.

Participants did not express either an overt or implied allegiance to any particular approach to normative ethics—the justifications and reasoning behind the ethical decisions that are commonly deployed by leaders every day (Driver, 2009). Rather, they hold allegiances to specific values such as equity, authenticity, and community. Virtues are also implicit in the themes of border negation, othered leadership, and the importance of community (especially when expressed as concern for others). The mix of such values is where uniqueness is present.

The idea of racial and gender equity, for instance, is both a deontological concern (about rights) and a utilitarian concern (about minimizing the pain caused by discrimination). Allegiance to values often held by the poor, such as modesty and sincerity, would seem to suggest a kind of virtue framework or a consequentialist concern about how to best ensure one's health. Sentipensante seems to discard a positivist value framework altogether but still retains the importance of thinking (rationality). Rather than stumbling into incoherence, the mix is emblematic of feeling comfortable in complexity.

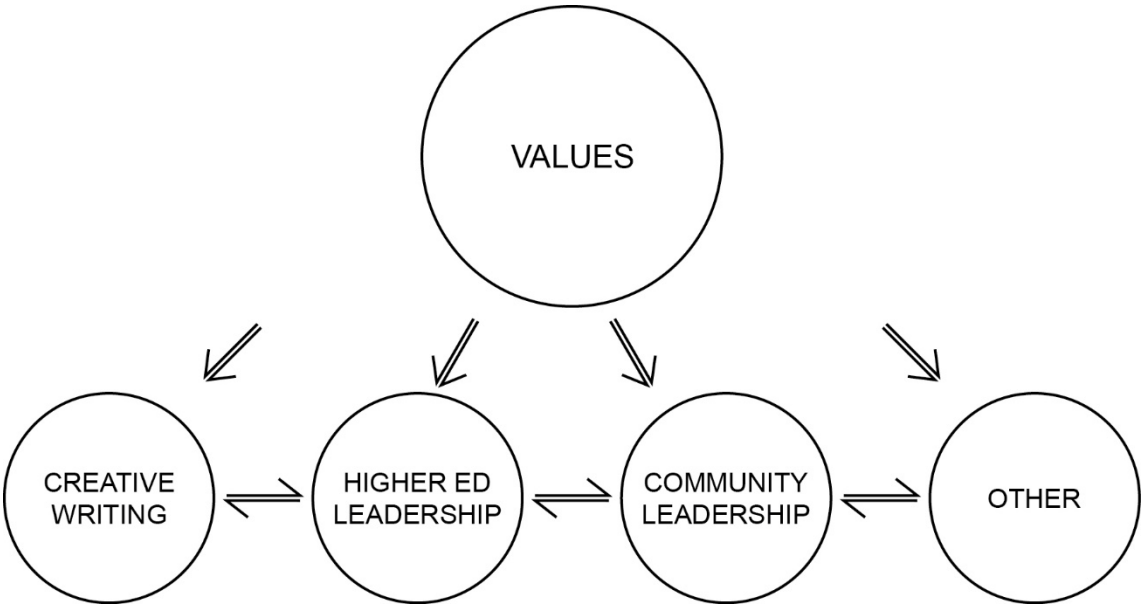

Figure 1: The Importance of Values

Implications for Practice

For poets and writers who are current higher education leaders and who already possess a well-developed value system that guides their practice, this study suggests some previously unconsidered functions of writing that may assist or inform their work, namely the meaning-making and calming functions. It also suggests that community connection can be an important factor in further success.

For a current poet/writer/leader who does not currently have those connections, it suggests that forming them may be salubrious for their leadership practice. Similarly, if they do not currently practice othered leadership, it stresses the importance of this kind of leadership over competing styles. A poet who is currently not experiencing success in an administrative role—who may be feeling disconnected from their team or having trouble motivating it—might question whether they are placing their team members first in their decision-making process. Previous research has supported the link between the importance leaders attribute to their team members by practicing their values and fostering an open space for experimentation and the creativity those team members subsequently display (Tu et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2014).

For poets who work in higher education who are not currently higher education leaders but who desire to be, the study suggests that in addition to those implications for current poet leaders, they think carefully about the way they may be unnecessarily keeping their poetic life from influencing their work life. Higher education work does not need to be placed in a silo that is untouched by a leader's commitments to their avocations, secondary vocations, or community work. These different focus areas in a person's life can influence each other. They should ask themselves whether there is something to be gained for themselves and their communities by

blurring the clear distinctions between the work they do as poets and the work they do in higher education.

Participants' values imply that anyone can write poetry and use it to inform their leadership practice, help in meaning-creation, and serve a calming function. For non-poets who are not currently leaders, the study asks whether taking on an artistic practice might lead to some benefit to their future leadership practice. Even people who are not artistically inclined may find utility in the meaning-making and calming functions of writing described in this study. Non-poets who are already leaders would also benefit from artistic exploration. Recall the four-frame leadership model of Bolman and Deal (2017) mentioned in the literature review. This model claims that leaders adopt interpretive orientations to their work that subsequently influence their practice; the best leaders learn to incorporate both efficiency-oriented leadership practice and relationship-oriented practice (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Writing helps a leader to develop the symbolic frame by allowing an opportunity to create meaning for the leaders themselves and their team. As it contributes to the organizational narrative and binds the team together with a shared mythos, it encourages the development of the human resources frame. Leaders who find it easier to peer through the structural frame (based on rules and policies) or political frame (based on the distribution of power) may find that including the practice of writing may help them improve their facility with the symbolic and human resources frames.

Latinas and Latin@s would benefit in any of the ways described, but for those groups, the study provides decolonialist reasons for investing in new leadership practices. For Latin@s who have little economic or social capital, the community cultural capital model suggests that strategies such as border negation are ways in which to leverage access to existing resources to succeed.

For that class of younger Latinas who are just starting their postsecondary journeys, the study supports the view that it is possible to practice an art or to be creative with as much vigor as a practical career and at the same time become successful leaders. Writing from foundational values within and for a community can have positive effects on their leadership practice. At the same time, the Latina poet, writer, or artist who has not before considered a practical career in higher education or who has not considered herself a leader should take heart that she has access to artistic tools that can become useful if she wishes to take on a leadership mantle.

Implications for Future Studies

One future study that is suggested by the present study is to develop an intervention based on the findings. Such an intervention might introduce the creation of poetry (as opposed to the simple reading or studying of poetry) to Latin@ administrators to determine if their leadership improves or is positively impacted in another way. The participants in that case would be people who have no or very little experience with drafting creative works. A study that is wider in scope might target not just poets or writers but also other creatives, such as visual artists.

A similar study would widen the field and include consideration of other people of color or non-minority writers. In this study, all participants were Chicanas, and only one was also a non-Chicana Latina. One reason they may have shared similar foundational values is their shared cultural background. However, a different background might yield different conclusions.

Practicing othered leadership may also be correlated with more creativity among team members, although future research is needed in this area as well. The present study was qualitative, but quantitative or mixed-methods studies could widen the participant base and use tools such as surveys to obtain data. Such a study might start by collecting attitudes about

othered leadership for quantitative analysis and then exploring the implications of the data through qualitative methods such as focus groups.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER

[The mode of delivery was email.]

Subject: Invitation to Participate in Dissertation Research

Date

Dear [Participant Name]:

I am currently a student in the Doctorate in Educational Leadership program with a concentration in higher education at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. I have passed my dissertation proposal defense and received clearance from the Institutional Review Board to collect data. I am conducting a research study on the experiences of poets who identify as Latinas and who hold or have held formal or informal leadership positions (such as executives, administrators, managers, chairs, and directors) at institutions of higher education in the United States. I am inviting you to serve as a participant in this study.

The research will involve an interview of about one hour regarding your lived experiences as both a Latina poet and a higher education leader. The results of the research, to be presented in my dissertation, can be used to expand leadership theory and practice.

The study will involve a live, sit-down interview through Zoom, TEAMS, or other online platform of your choosing. I will ask some pre-prepared questions, but additional questions and the direction of the conversation can diverge based on our engagement, with your permission. The goal is to arrive at an understanding of your lived experiences. In addition to the interview questions, I will also present a writing prompt covering the same topic. You may choose not to participate in this prompt and you do not have to complete it during the interview session.

If you choose to participate in this study, I would also like to use your creative work as another data source. I am familiar with some of your work but ask that you identify specific work that may be germane to the research topic. Or you may choose not to allow any work to be used at all. If you do allow use, I will attempt to anonymize the content to prevent your identification by avoiding direct quotes, summarizing the content, and using images in place of word text to limit searchability.

The interview can be conducted in your own home or a place of your own choosing since it will take place online. I ask that you select a space that is comfortable, quiet, safe, equipped with the necessary software and hardware to capture data, connected reliably to the internet, and private. I

ask that you dedicate at least one hour to the interview. I will conduct the interview in a private office at my university behind a locked, closed door during non-business hours to minimize the risk that anyone except you and I will hear the conversation. The office will be quiet, safe, equipped with the necessary software and hardware to capture data (including a secondary recording device), connected reliably to the internet, and preserve your anonymity in a private space.

If I feel it is necessary to explore your responses in more depth, and with your permission, a follow-up interview may be useful. After the interview(s), I will share the transcript(s) with you to ensure accuracy. I will then analyze all data collected using standard phenomenological techniques to arrive at an understanding of the experience of being a Latina poet and higher education leader. Based on this analysis, I will develop a discussion of that understanding. I will share a draft with you prior to drawing final conclusions and recommendations. You have the right to correct any misapprehension of your data or to withdraw it from consideration completely.

I know you may have several questions or reservations about this study. I would be happy to talk with you more in-depth. In the interest of building relational trust, I have also included a researcher positionality statement below.

I hope that you agree to participate. If you do, please reply to this email and I will send you a consent form which I can review with you carefully. After you have signed the form, I will work with you to schedule a convenient time for the interview. Even after acceptance, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Positionality Statement

I am a Chican@ poet who grew up in economic poverty in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. I am the youngest of seven siblings, the third in my family to graduate high school, and the first to attend college. My father obtained a 4th grade education and my mother reached the 11th grade. For most of their lives they were migrant farmworkers and laborers, eventually retiring as a custodian and cashier, respectively. They experienced their lives, as I do, in both the literal and metaphorical space Gloria Anzaldúa called nepantla (Anzaldúa, 2012)—neither fully Mexican or American, but of and from the borderlands.

Because of their guidance and role modeling, I am now able to live a relatively comfortable life. I have had numerous educational opportunities available to me, including enrollment in a prestigious law school (which I left after one year) and in a doctoral program in philosophy (enrollment in which lasted a semester). I have been able to earn an MA, MFA, and MPA, and am now a university administrator. I have the time to write creatively and the opportunity to explore a life of the mind without worrying about whether I'll have enough money to feed my family. In my writings I primarily explore the intersection of the natural and built environments, culture, and history in the U.S./Mexico borderlands. My current creative writing projects, which include collections of poetry, visual poetry, and lyric essays, center on the nature of urban constructions and border violence. I have been blessed with several fellowships, grants, and awards to support these and other projects.

Completion of the present study will allow me to obtain a doctorate and continue my pursuit of administrative roles with increasing responsibility at a college or university. At the same time, I intend to continue engaging in socially productive research and poetry that centers marginalized voices.

I am interested in Latinas as study participants for many reasons. The book *Wise Latinas: Writers on Higher Education*, edited by Jennifer De Leon (2014), was the first work that forced me to confront the many struggles that Latina academics and administrative leaders encounter in academia. Although Latinas are often superlatively qualified to be scholars, researchers, academics, and leaders, they are still marginalized in numerous ways: this is reflected in their relatively lower salaries, lack of professional security, and lack of representation in the academy. Lorgia Garcia Peña's (2022) autobiographical *Community as Rebellion* brilliantly dissects the pain and trauma inflicted by colonialist institutions of higher education on Latina professors. The situation is little different for Latina undergraduates and graduate students.

I'm motivated by what I see as an unjust lack of representation and a need to both highlight the leadership excellence of Latinas and important knowledge that might be learned from their experiences. I have been most strongly influenced in my life by Latinas—my mother, my four sisters, my partner, my teachers and professors, friends, work supervisors and, most recently, my radiant daughter. Latinas have been my biggest supporters and I am called to repay the gifts I have been so generously given.

At the same time, I am aware that my research may be influenced by patriarchal ways of being that I may not be conscious of. By naming my own potential privileges as a white-presenting straight man, I hope to avoid the marginalizing, misogynistic, infantilizing, and damaging tendencies of the higher education system (Morley, 2013) of which I am a part and stem their perpetuation as much as I can.

I appreciate your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Rodney Gomez
Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program
Higher Education Concentration
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
[phone number]
rodney.gomez@utrgv.edu

References

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APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS

Study Title: A Phenomenological Study of Latina Poets as Leaders at Higher Education Institutions

Principal Investigator of Research Project:	Rodney Gomez	Telephone: (956) 793-3495 Email: rodney.gomez@utrgv.edu
Faculty Advisory:	Dr. Hilda Silva	Email: hilda.silva@utrgv.edu

Key points you should know

- I am inviting you to participate in an interview as part of a research study I am conducting. Your participation is voluntary. This means it is up to you and only you to decide if you want to be in the study. Even if you decide to join the study, you are free to leave at any time if you change your mind.
- Please take your time and ask to have any words or information that you do not understand explained to you. I want to make sure that you understand the purpose of the research study and interview before you decide if you want to consent to participate.
- I am performing this study because I want to learn about your lived experiences as a Latina poet who holds or has held a leadership position at an institution of higher education in the United States. Please note that your participation is completely voluntary and will not impact your current or future relationship with me or the institution where I am a student, UTRGV.
- Why are you being asked to be in this study?
    - You are a self-identified Latina poet who holds or has held a leadership position at an institution of higher education in the United States.
- Once you agree to be in this research study:

- I would like to record an interview with you through Zoom, Teams, or another online conference program of your choosing about your lived experiences.
- I would also like to collect your response to a writing prompt as part of the interview. You are not obligated in any way to respond to this prompt or to complete it within the interview time.
- With your permission and assistance, I would also like to identify and use your published work related to this study. You are not obligated in any way to allow use of any of your writings.

- By agreeing to participate, you are consenting to allow me to audio and video record the interview through an online conferencing program. The interview should take about 1 hour. Audio and video-recording sessions will not be publicized in that format; only a transcribed (written) format may be published. In addition, if I discover findings from your initial personal interview that might warrant further exploration, I will reach out to you to ask you to consider participating in a follow-up interview. You are not obligated in any way to participate in a follow-up interview.

- Can you be harmed by being in this study?
  - The study involves no greater risk than what you would ordinarily encounter in daily life. However, if you experience a negative emotional response from participation in the focus group interview, I will refer you to the UTRGV Counseling and Training Clinic which provides services free of charge.
  - There are minimal risks to your personal information, privacy and confidentiality. Your participation in this research will be confidential. Since I am recording a video through an online conferencing program, I will be able to identify you. I will assign a pseudonym (fictitious name) to identify you in any data collected or presented. All data for this study will be stored in a One Drive vault that requires both a password and a passcode to access, and two-factor identification if the computer used to access is not recognized.
  - If I learn something new and important while doing this study that would likely affect whether you would want to be in the study, I will immediately contact you to let you know what I have learned.
- What are the financial costs of being in the study?
  - There are no costs associated with this study.
- Will you get anything for participating in the interview?
  - There is no financial benefit to participation.
- What other choices do you have if you decide not to be in the study?
  - You are free to decide not to participate in this study at any time without penalty.

- Could you be taken out of the study?
    - You will be removed from the study if you let me know that you no longer wish to participate in the study.

Can the information we collect be used for other studies?

If the data I collect is presented or published, your identity will be removed and replaced with a pseudonym. The information you gave me may be used for future research by me but will not be provided to any other researcher; I will not contact you to sign another consent form if I decide to do this.

What happens if I say no or change my mind?

- You can say you do not want to be in the study now or if you change your mind later, you can stop participating at any time without penalty.
- No one will treat your differently. You will not be penalized in any way.

How will my privacy be protected?

- Your data will only be accessible to me and no one else will know your name or information.
- Even though I will make efforts to keep your information private, I cannot guarantee confidentiality because it is always possible that someone could deduce who are from the information you have provided.
- I will use results from the study for my dissertation and, possibly, future research publications and presentations. No published reports or presentations will identify you directly. It is important to mention that although confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, I will make every effort to protect your confidentiality.
- If it is possible that your participation in this study might reveal behavior that must be reported according to state law (e.g., abuse, intent to harm self or others). Disclosure of such information will be reported to the extent required by law.

Who to contact for research related questions?

For questions about this study or to report any problems you experience because of being in this study, contact Rodney Gomez at Rodney.gomez@utrgv.edu or (956) 793-3495.

Who to contact regarding your rights as a participant?

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protections (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) 665-3598 or irb@utrgv.edu.

Electronic Signature

By checking the space corresponding to agree below, you consent to participate in this study. The researcher will contact you to schedule an interview. If you check the space corresponding to disagree you are indicating that you do not wish to participate in the study and no further communication will occur.

___ Agree

___ Disagree

Name:

Email Address:

Signature:

VITA

Rodney Gomez is a first-generation college student raised by working-class Mexican-American parents. He earned a Bachelor of Arts from Yale University, a Master of Arts in philosophy from Arizona State University, and a Master of Fine Arts, Master of Public Affairs, and Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership in May 2024 with a concentration in Higher Education from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, where he received the inaugural College of Fine Arts Alumnus Award. He currently serves as Executive Director of Parking and Transportation Services at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and holds certifications in urban planning (AICP, CNU-A), project management (PMP), and campus auxiliary services (CASP).

He is a member of the Macondo Writers Workshop and served as the 2020-2021 McAllen, Texas Poet Laureate. He is the author of the poetry collections *Arsenal with Praise Song*, recipient of the Helen C. Smith Memorial Award for best book of poetry from the Texas Institute of Letters and recipient of the Writers' League of Texas Book Award; and *Geographic Tongue*, winner of the Pleiades Press Visual Poetry Series. His *chapbook Mouth Filled With Night* was awarded the Drinking Gourd Prize from Northwestern University. Among his other writing honors include an Academy of American Poets Poet Laureate Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship, and a Mellon Arts & Practitioner Fellowship. He can be contacted at rodneyxgomez@gmail.com.