

6-15-2021

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Recommended Citation

Torres, Theresa "Transformational Resistant Leadership: "María For Congress"," *Journal of Hispanic / Latino Theology*. Vol. 23 : No. 1 , Article 7. (2021) :93-129
Available at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/jhlt/vol23/iss1/7>

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Transformational Resistant Leadership: “María for Congress”

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Before I met political activist “María,”¹ I encountered throughout the city numerous political billboards posted with the words “María for Congress.” As a newcomer to this city in the southwest, I was intrigued. Who is María? Why did the ads only say “María?” When is the election? I later learned the election had been held in May, four months before I arrived. María had lost the election. The ubiquitous billboards spoke of the importance of her candidacy. I asked Jose, one of my professors at the time, “Why were these billboards still up? Why did they only say ‘María?’” Jose replied, “María’s campaign offered hope and vision to nuestra gente. For them, ‘María’ represents all Latina/os, AND María García is a much-beloved Latina state legislator who needs no introduction nor last name. María’s vision and hope from her campaign are still alive. María remains our leader.

Had María won her Congressional campaign, I later realized, this amazing woman would never have touched my life nor been my mentor, and my life would have been quite different. María is an inspiring and challenging social justice leader, whose leadership I present as a case study for my theoretical framework on Latina leadership. When I met María in the course of applying for an internship with her in 1992, I already had dedicated myself to work for justice.

¹ The name “María” is ubiquitous in Spanish-speaking countries and is a metaphor for Latinas in general. Throughout this article, I have used pseudonyms, changed specific details, and not included the names of locations and organizations for the protection of privacy. “María” was the main informant throughout the article. I met with “María” five times, beginning in 2008, and through these conversational interviews, came to know her life’s work of service and leadership as an advocate for *nuestra gente*. She read the final version of this article and agreed with the quotes and descriptions, with only minor changes.

Maria gave me the requisite tools for such work and the ability to accept the struggle and challenges that are a natural part of this journey. Her notable social justice leadership is a significant reason why I am researching and writing on Latina leadership to give new social justice leaders—Latinas, women of color, and women in general—an opportunity to learn from the wisdom of experienced Latina leaders whose lives may be a pathway for them.

This case study contributes to my Transformational Resistant (TR) leadership theory. My work on this TR leadership model involves and builds on personal interviews as well as my ethnographic research on the actions and lives of grass-roots Latina leaders, beginning with María. In a previous article, "Transformational Resistant Leadership in Kansas City: A Study of Chicana Activism," I mapped out the TR leadership framework that included my original preliminary research.² The research included interviews with and an ethnographic study of four Latina leaders, previous literature on the concept of transformational resistance, and *mestiza* consciousness.³ Based on a study I had conducted on a Chicana activist from the Midwest, the 2019 article's findings and analyses included my current scholarship on Latina leaders and was the basis for the development of this TR leadership theory and model.

TR leaders are advocates for social justice; seek solidarity with people of color; create coalitions; rely on multi-level means of support; maneuver in and around binary thinking and borders; endure personal sacrifice; and experience both the oppression they struggle

² Theresa Torres, "Transformational Resistant Leadership in Kansas City: A Study of Chicana Activism," *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social*, 19, no. 1 (2019): 118-14.

³ See Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Chicana Resistance and Grassroots Leadership: Providing Alternative History to 1968 East Los Angeles Blowouts" (PhD. diss., University of California Los Angeles, 1997) and Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987).

to overcome and acrimony perpetrated against them for attempting to upend the status quo.⁴

The present case study of María illustrates a number of the distinctive qualities of TR leaders, one of which is the resilience they demonstrate in the face of multiple challenges. To further the ongoing construction TR leadership theory, I engage the research from this case study for a detailed qualitative analysis and synthesis of María's leadership and action. This framework will be checked, critiqued, and developed later with additional cases in an upcoming book. The following research questions are the general questions related to TR leadership theory that will be applied to María's case:

- What is the leaders' self-awareness of their identities, personal qualities, strengths, and limits that sustain and potentially weaken Latina activist leadership in the long term?
- How do Latina leaders develop resilience to combat the struggles of intersectional discrimination and systemic oppression?
- What role does Latina leaders' spirituality play in developing and sustaining TR leadership social justice activism?
- How can this theory be the foundation for a model of TR leadership's new leaders?

These questions are a central part of the development of a theoretical framework for TR leadership that I will address in this article, focusing specifically on the case of María.

In the next section, "Meeting María," I briefly introduce María and situate the context of my internship with María in 1992, my interview meetings with her from 2008 to 2010, ethnographic notes during my participant observation of her leadership activities (2008-2010), and the reasons for her selection as the main informant in regard to the development of TR

⁴ Torres, "Transformational Resistant Leadership in Kansas City," 120.

leadership. The third section, “Literature Review,” addresses the multi-disciplinary scholarship that aids in the analysis and construction of TR leadership theory. In the fourth section, “Method and Theory,” I present the various methods and theories employed to carefully analyze María’s interviews and my ethnographic notes. I have interrogated the data concerning the previous scholarship on Latina leadership. This section details the process of data collection (interviews and ethnographic research). The methods employed for the development of the research analysis integrate the key findings from my earlier work, “Transformational Resistant Leadership in Kansas City.”⁵ The fifth section, “Findings and Discussion,” documents key data findings with an analysis of the critical concepts for further developments within my TR leadership theory and model. The final section, “Conclusion,” presents new insights from this case study with additional questions for future research and application for implementing the TR leadership model.

Meeting María: An Advocate for Justice

After her campaign loss in 1991, María spent several months winding down the campaign and thanking her many supporters. She gathered her papers from her time as a state legislator and delivered them to her new office at a women's center on a local university campus. María accepted an invitation for a semester as a visiting fellow at the school of government at a university in Boston. When she returned to her own city, her life was no longer that of a very public figure who had served in the state legislature for ten years and she was without a job or work on a degree for the first time in over thirty years. I observed her process through this significant transition.

⁵ See n. 2 above.

In 1992, in our initial interview to set up my internship, María said she was grateful for the opportunity to have an intern and the time to work more collaboratively with her Latina leadership group, *Las Amigas Unidas*. María also shared with me her vision and personal mission for social justice. She asked me a number of questions about myself, including why I wanted to work with her and what I hoped to learn. We found a similarity in our personal missions to work for social justice, particularly with working-class families and immigrants.

María had created the leadership group from her support system of Latinas inclusive of multiple generations of women. These women included her mentees and the many volunteers who had worked with her over the previous ten years. The leadership group, *Las Amigas Unidas*, annually sponsored a regional conference for Latinas, from students to senior citizens, that was open to all who wished to attend. The conference program included keynote events and workshops, which always included topics that specifically addressed issues for working-class women and those living in poverty in addition to offerings of interest for all Latinas. The four tracks of the conference were self-improvement, family support, local community involvement, and activism at the city, state, national, and global levels.

I worked alongside María and other Latina leaders in preparation for their annual *Latinas Amigas Unidas* conference. We followed María's participatory leadership style while planning the agenda for the annual event. When she created the organization and the annual event during her early years as a politician, María sought to assist women, predominantly poor and working-class Latinas, to find opportunities for self-care, family support, community building, activism, and networking. In collaboration with *Las Amigas Unidas*, María worked out a plan that included presentations in both Spanish and English with such topics as immigration, unemployment, and access to resources; the events always included free child care.

During my time as María's intern, I realized I had a mentor on whom I could call for guidance and support long after my internship ended. She offered inspirational and sustained leadership to her community. As one reporter wrote about María, María may have lost the campaign, but she did not lose the support for her issues. These concerns included advocacy for the protection of clean water, justice for immigrants, inclusion and educational equity, and accountability and transparency in government and healthcare, to name a few. I wanted to further my development as a social justice advocate; María showed me the pathway for doing such work through her leadership development and mentoring process. María's leadership and development of new leaders informed my theory of TR leadership, and she is the inspiration for this article and for ongoing research projects on TR leadership. In "Transformational Resistant Leadership in Kansas City," my description of TR leadership included initial findings and analysis from María's case study completed before my research on the Chicana activist:

TR leadership has the following attributes: 1) advocates for equity and social justice; 2) is guided by a critical awareness of institutional intersectional racism, sexism, and classism; 3) collaborates and builds coalitions with others; 4) relies on multi-level support systems, specifically personal support systems; 5) necessitates personal sacrifice; 6) withstands both oppression and confrontation while struggling to disrupt unjust systems and 7) requires a *mestiza* consciousness.⁶

While the above explication of TR leadership illuminates what is meant by TR leadership theory, the foundation and identity formation presented above do not offer a rich description of how these are lived within a specific context. The following sections of this essay will address

⁶ Torres, "Transformational Resistant Leadership in Kansas City," 126.

these more fully. To aid in the understanding of TR leadership, I illustrate the new developments of this leadership theory from the following case study.

Literature Review

This section presents the multi-disciplinary literature I have engaged in the development of TR leadership theory. These sources utilize scholarship on Latina and ethnic leadership, a *Latinidad* world-view inclusive of Latinx and Latina epistemologies, LatCrit theory,⁷ and their related concepts. The methodological and theoretical approaches were initially informed by two Latina scholars, Ada María Isasi Díaz and Yolanda Tarango. Isasi-Díaz succinctly addressed her approach in an article and in her books, Isasi-Díaz and Tarango's *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* and Isasi-Díaz's *En la Lucha: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology*.⁸ She employed a meta-ethnologic approach to engaging participants in their interviews. Thus, *mujerista* theology brings forth Latinas' voices not merely as sole individuals, but from within a communal setting, so that the sense of Latinas' wisdom comes to the fore within a dynamic dialogue. Isasi-Díaz and Tarango engaged in long periods of discussions with the participants in

⁷ LatCrit theory, sometimes spelled Latcrit theory, is a descriptor for Latin@ critical race theory. LatCrit, according to the website of the LatCrit organization, which understands itself as an intellectual and social community, "is a group of legal scholars working in critical legal studies, feminist legal theory, critical race theory, critical race feminism, Asian American scholarship and queer theory. . . . LatCrit theorists aim to center Latinas/os, multiple internal diversities and to situate Latinas/os in larger inter-group frameworks, both domestically and globally, to promote social justice awareness and activism." See <https://latcrit.org/> and <https://latcrit.org/about-latcrit/>.

⁸ Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz, "Defining Our 'Proyecto Histórico': 'Mujerista' Strategies for Liberation," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 9, nos. 1-2 (1993): 17–28; Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women, Prophetic Voice in the Church* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

their interviews for the development of a framework on Latina theology of ethics and \ used lengthy portions of these interviews within their book.

The Latinas interviewed by Isasi-Díaz and Tarango were grass-roots leaders who daily faced the challenges of systemic oppression while developing their resistance and ethical frameworks. This methodological approach to collecting the narratives of Latinas with their voices intact is a critical contribution to theology. By gathering the women's contributions from within the context of a communal dialogue, Isasi-Díaz and Tarango's research is inclusive of the grass-roots Latinas' liberatory struggles and ethical frameworks. Isasi-Díaz and Tarango called their research a liberatory project for the development of a *mujerista* theology based on the lives of Latinas. Isasi-Díaz's concept of *en la lucha* (in the struggle) adds value and meaning to the TR leadership theory, as we will see later in this case study.⁹ These initial works guided my methodological development with the additional concept of *en la lucha* for the development of the theory of TR leadership.

Dolores Delgado Bernal's research on Chicana high school activists analyzes gendered and grass-roots Chicana leadership, addressing the activists' resistance to the power structure within their schools.¹⁰ Delgado Bernal describes the students' activities as "transformational resistance," a concept she has further developed with David Solórzano.¹¹ Solórzano and Delgado Bernal's analysis of prior research on civil rights resistance movements of the 1960s noted that

⁹ Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, *Hispanic Women, Prophetic Voice in the Church*; Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha*.

¹⁰ Delgado Bernal, "Chicana Resistance and Grassroots Leadership."

¹¹ Daniel G. Solórzano and Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Examining Transformational Resistance Through a Critical Race and Latcrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context," *Urban Education* 36 (2001): 308-342.

research's—and its analysis's—myopic perspective. That research focused on “the self-defeating resistance of working-class students without acknowledging and studying other forms of resistance that may lead to social transformation,” whereas Solorzano and Delgado Bernal's definition of “transformational resistance [is] framed within the tenets of a CRT and LatCrit framework [that] allows one to look at resistance among Students of Color that is political, collective, conscious, and motivated by a sense that individual and social change is possible.”¹² Delgado Bernal's initial research on leadership sought to address the absence of Chicana leaders from historical accounts of the Chicano 1968 student walkouts. The Chicana activists' leadership in the walkouts was not only absent in articles and books; their gendered styles of leadership were also ignored, since these did not fit the standard male definitions of leadership. Solórzano and Delgado Bernal's research examines Chicanas' gendered leadership and their social consciousness, developed through mentoring they received from college students who, in turn, learned from adult mentors. This training enabled these young leaders to work for more equitable and inclusive schools with more Latinx teachers and for culturally sensitive public school systems.

Studying a cohort of undergraduate Native American scholars at Ivy League universities, Bryan Brayboy also used the concept of transformational resistance to understand the struggles these scholars endured to maintain their identities within the dominant culture.¹³ Later, the scholars returned to the reservation to serve their Native American communities. Brayboy's research revealed the impact on his participants of dealing with the systemic trauma of isolation

¹² Solórzano and Delgado Bernal, “Examining Transformational Resistance,” 310, 320.

¹³ Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, “Transformational Resistance and Social Justice: American Indians and Ivy League Universities,” *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (2005): 193-211.

from their Native communities that resulted in psychological and cultural harm and of the sacrifices they endured in their efforts to be of service to the Native American community. While Delgado Bernal's, Solórzano's, and Brayboy's research applied transformational resistance to the context of education, this approach can work equally well in relation to struggles for resistance for social justice, as noted in "Transformational Resistant Leadership in Kansas City," about a Chicana activist who led a fight against the mayor.

Along with the concept of transformational resistance, Anzaldúa's concept of *mestiza* consciousness aptly addresses Latinas' ambiguous status of being from the border of multiple contexts and realities: culture, language, and sexuality. Anzaldúa, like María, grew up not far from the border with Mexico and lived within the duality of being a part of the United States, yet not a part of the dominant culture. A *mestiza* consciousness of their binary positionality—a liminal space—has been thrust upon the lives of Latinas, yet it also offers crucial insight into their struggles to maintain a *Latinidad* world-view of the unity of reality.

Other Latina and Chicana scholars—Mary Pardo, Carol Hardy-Fanta, Josephine Mendez-Negrete—have studied Latina leaders' activism and address the importance of gender and power in the study of leadership.¹⁴ Researching the significant role of Latina political activism as well as gendered leadership, other scholars—Milagros Peña, Michelle Téllez, and Theresa

¹⁴ Mary Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists: Identity and Resistance in Two Los Angeles Communities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Carol Hardy-Fanta, *Latina Politics, Latino Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Josephine Méndez-Negrete, "Awareness, Consciousness, and Resistance: Raced, Classed, and Gendered Leadership Interactions in Milagro County, California," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 20, no. 1 (1999): 25-44.

Delgadillo—illuminate the oft-ignored gendered Latina approaches to resistance and the promotion of political power and social justice aims.¹⁵

Underlying this scholarship on TR leadership theory is a Latinx epistemology. While Theologian María Pilar Aquino acknowledges the diverse composition of the Latinx communities and their dynamic sociocultural, historical, and political contexts, she argues that these diverse contexts do not erase a shared Latinx epistemology. Aquino argues that these diverse Latinx groups share the following perspective, born of historical realities:

- (a) It was born out of a double conquest—first European, and then European-American;
- (b) it is articulated religiously and culturally by popular Catholicism; (c) it is marked by a history of struggles for socioeconomic, political, and intellectual emancipation as well as by struggles for self-determination, for liberation, and for human dignity; (d) it is immersed in an adverse social context which is also diverse and conflictive; (e) it bears ethical and religious values that defend the dignity of the human person in community, although it also reproduces patriarchal modes in human relations; and (f) it demonstrates an extraordinary wealth of resistance, joy, and hope.¹⁶

Aquino’s description of these six shared qualities of the diverse Latinx communities reflects the marginal character of the communities as well as their agency amid their experiences of

¹⁵ Milagros Peña, *Latina Activists Across Borders: Women’s Grassroots Organizing in Mexico and Texas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Michelle Téllez, “Community of Struggle: Gender, Violence, and Resistance on the US/Mexico Border,” *Gender and Society* 22, no. 5 (2008): 545-67; Theresa Delgadillo and Janet Weaver, “Work, Coalition, and Advocacy: Latinas Leading in the Midwest,” in *The Latina/o Midwest Reader*, ed. Omar Valerio Jiménez, Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez, and Claire Fox (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 236-250.

¹⁶ María Pilar Aquino, “Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology: Toward an Intercultural Theology for the Third Millennium,” in *From the Heart of Our People*, ed. Orlando Espín and Miguel Díaz, 6-48 (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999), 20-21.

colonialism and religious, cultural, political, and economic dominance while each of these communities maintains a stance of resistance, joy, and hope.

In addition to employing a Latinx epistemology, a Latina feminist epistemology challenges the binary vision within white feminism. During second-wave feminism, the existing system of inequality, cultural hegemony, and class dominance was rarely critiqued except by women of color, who began to challenge white feminists for their hegemonic views that feminism—really white feminism—stands for all women while failing to address the multiple factors that continue to oppress millions of women, particularly women of color. Theologian Nancy Pineda-Madrid persuasively addresses this reality:

These epistemologies judge the scientific approach to knowledge as “contaminated” only by virtue of its “social biases against women.” This contamination can be remedied by “incorporating more feminist women and problematics into research enterprises.”¹⁷ But ultimately, these epistemologies leave the mechanics and politics of knowledge production largely unchallenged . . . Only who has a seat at the game table is called into question. The commitments of these epistemologies imply that when “reason” and rationality are used well, they ultimately lead everyone to reliable and unbiased knowledge.¹⁸

Latina feminist epistemology necessarily focuses on understanding the multiple realities that make up Latinas' lives—gender, race, class, sexuality, immigration status—and analyzes those

¹⁷ Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁸ Nancy Pineda-Madrid, “Notes Toward a ChicanaFeminist Epistemology (And Why It Is Important for Latina Feminist Theologies),” in *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*, ed. María Pilar Aquino, Daísy Machado, and Jeanette Rodríguez (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 241-66.

epistemologies that do not acknowledge the complexities of women's lives. Pineda-Madrid, among many others, maintains that these differences are significant and emphasizes the need for a Latina feminist epistemology that includes Latinas' perspectives, experiences, realities, and voices.

Pineda-Madrid explains that the creation and validation of knowledge, which are essential aspects of any epistemology, necessarily include the ability to employ one's knowledge and ultimately affect their own humanization. In other words, unless people are empowered to employ their own epistemology—their ways of knowing—they will find themselves being defined by others and used for the benefit of others to their own detriment.¹⁹ The validation of Latinas' experiences of discrimination, because of their intersectionality, is an important part of any inclusive and liberating epistemology. A Latina epistemology contributes to the overall development of Latinas since it promotes their voices, agency, resistance, and survival. Therefore, Latina feminist epistemology addresses the central meaning of all issues that are relevant not only for Latinas' self-understandings but also for the development of Latinx theology and spirituality, because this epistemology needs to be grounded in the lived realities and understandings of the people.

Method and Theory

Along with the various research methodologies (Isasi-Díaz and Tarango), epistemologies (Aquino and Pineda-Madrid), and theoretical concepts (Delgado Bernal, Solórzano, and Brayboy) presented in the literature review, I employ grounded theory as described by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin in *The Basics of Qualitative Research*.²⁰ Grounded theory is the

¹⁹ Pineda-Madrid, "Notes Toward a Chicana Feminist Epistemology."

²⁰ Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998).

foundational methodology for final analysis and synthesis of data collection. In turn, this methodology provides an analytic framework for the placement of differing types of data for analysis and interpretation towards the development of theory based on the lives of people and not on mere abstractions. It is particularly well suited to a mixed-methods approach to interpreting qualitative data alongside any relevant quantitative data. Grounded theory also allows for the analysis and synthesis of heterogeneous data coming from the complex and evolving phenomena of human life, by placing this data into meaningful categories that reveal relationships and directions for further interpretation as well as allowing for insights into human relations.

In the grounded theory methodology, the researcher adopts a systematized approach to the development of theory based on quantitative data (if studied) and qualitative data. This approach utilizes coding techniques to select specific events, actions, and circumstances for study and for the development of categories. After collecting relevant data, scholars code the data by placing them into meaningful categories based on themes that have emerged in the microanalysis of data texts.²¹ The texts come from the transcription of data from video- or audio-tapes (of rituals, interviews, or other events) or from a written description of data from participant observation notes. Grounded theory methodology employs a systematic coding and diagramming of data that allows for the recognition of concepts and their relationships. These steps allow the researcher to notice the dynamic processes in evidence rather than isolated individuals whose stories are removed from their contexts and relationships. The steps are also a necessary strategy for the emergence of theories based on the interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data.

²¹ Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*.

From these data, along with insights from Latina and other scholars used in my earlier works on this subject, I employ grounded theory to construct a TR leadership theory and model. This grounded theory approach, while not used by Isasi-Díaz and Tarango in their development of *mujerista* theology and ethics, has characteristics that are similar to their methodology. Both methodologies focus on illuminating and bringing forth the voices of Latinas engaged in the world. In TR leadership, the focus is on social justice leadership, and Isasi-Díaz and Tarango developed *mujerista* theology focused on developing an ethical-theological foundation from the lives of Latinas. Informed by a *mujerista* methodological approach that was inclusive of ethnographic research and interviews, I selected grounded theory because the systematic approach to the data and analysis were similar, and since this approach also synthesizes the analysis for the construction of theory based on the lives of people within the context of the complexities of daily life.

In developing TR leadership theory, I began with a data collection based on a small pool of Latina leaders who were engaged in social justice leadership and who have exhibited resilience while addressing the spiritual foundation that enhanced and supported their resilience. My ethnographic notes and interviews included María. This initial research enabled the development of central questions for more extensive data collection. During this data collection and analysis, I encountered a Chicana grass-roots activist in my community who was leading a major campaign to oust an anti-immigrant member of the Minuteman organization who had been appointed to the city's Parks Board by a newly elected mayor. This Chicana leader's experience became a case study applying a framework for TR leadership that had developed from the initial research project on Latina leaders and from the analysis of the leadership of the local Chicana

activist. From this case study, I created the framework for TR leadership and included additional developments from the case study.²²

I had already completed interviews, ethnographic research on leadership data for María as well as several other leaders. This first round of my initial research data and analysis involved a preliminary focus group that allowed me to hone the questions and the direction of the research that was later applied to a larger group. This initial framework started toward a construct of TR leadership development with a specific focus on critical challenges that Latinas face as they develop social justice leadership skills. The following section on María's leadership will address these key critical points that highlight the struggles of TR leadership. These include the types of strategies to be used for the development of resilience and a solid spiritual foundation as well as the enhancement of self-care and support systems. The case study of the Chicana activist had illuminated the need for a strong system of support and the impact of gendered leadership.

Findings and Discussion

*If we do not know where we have been, we cannot know where we are going. Simply said, our world has gotten very complicated. A good way to keep our composure about us is to anchor ourselves in our history, both individually and as a community. We must understand that we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. It is only through this understanding that we each will know how much we need to do so that someday others will be able to say the same about us.*²³

--María

²² Theresa L. Torres, *The Paradox of Latina Religious Leadership in the Catholic Church: Las Guadalupanas of Kansas City* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

²³ María, interview with Theresa Torres, 2010.

This section presents a case for a theory of Transformational Resistant leadership and this theory's foundational principles, using the story of María. The ongoing development of this theory is grounded in a method that employs Latina grassroots leaders' experiences as the basis for creating a leadership theory that is critical of and resistant to oppressive systems. My intention in creating TR leadership theory is to identify and develop TR leaders who work to transform such systems of inequality into liberating systems that enable new forms of leadership and equity and include all people.

As I noted at the beginning of this article, my initial research on TR leadership began with my research into María's leadership based on her actions for social justice. This initial analysis was the foundation for the development of the theory, and I applied the initial findings to an outline for an analysis of a Chicana activist in my article "Transformational Resistant Leadership in Kansas City." Based on insights from the first article, this case study contributes additional principles to the theory by its further interrogation of the data from María's story. One caveat from this case study: while María exemplifies most, if not all, of the critical principles of this theory, her story relies heavily on her Catholic background and Latinx Catholicism. Future cases and case studies will not necessarily focus on their subjects' being Catholic or part of any religious organization. Although spirituality is a core attribute of this theory, this case study does not rely on a particular religion; not everyone lives their spirituality in the same way or is dependent upon a particular religious expression.

We now turn to the data and findings of TR leadership through the case study of María. Transformational Resistant leaders exhibit the following four principles and their characteristics. They have a persistence for social justice, rely on and sustain their engagement with *la*

comunidad, maintain a collectivist perspective, and prevail in these commitments through ongoing personal integration and spirituality that supports their resilience.

- Persistence for Social Justice:
 - Commitment to social justice analysis and liberatory activism.
 - Confronts oppression for *nuestra gente*.
 - Mentors new leaders.
 - Accepts the sacrifices of leadership.
- Engagement with La Comunidad:
 - Networks and collaborates with multiple groups.
 - Mentors new leaders.
 - Relies on a strong personal support system.
- Collectivist Perspective:
 - Employs Latinx and Latina epistemologies.
 - Promotes and employs liberatory activism.
 - Communal goals for the greater good.
 - *Latinidad* world-view.
- Integration and Resilience:
 - Displays and promotes ethical and social justice values.
 - Creates and maintains spirituality and self-healing.
 - Develops and engages in self-care practices.

María's quotation at the beginning of this section reminds me of the many times she would teach people by telling a story. This quotation speaks of the clarity of identity and personal integrity grounded in the lessons María learned as a child, which remain central to her

TR leadership. María said, “We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us” and she has patterned her life direction on their examples.²⁴ Her stories included examples of her early family life and her family’s wisdom and values. During the Mexican Revolution, María’s parents’ *familias* came to the US as sharecroppers and everyone, including the children, harvested cotton and other crops. For María and other Latina/os, *familia* is more than one’s nuclear family: *familia* includes the extended family of *abuelas y abuelos*, *tias y tios*, and *primas y primos*, who work together while sharing hardships, family values, religious faith and rituals, good times, and celebrations. Her parents’ *familias* worked on adjoining ranches and her parents met while working in the fields and came to know each other at a nearby Catholic country school run by Catholic sisters. The two families became close friends, sharing many Mexican and Catholic celebrations such as *Diez y Seis de Septiembre* (Sixteenth of September) and *Acostada del Niño* (putting the baby Jesus to bed), which was celebrated for more than eighty years in María’s family’s tradition. María’s parents were twenty-eight when they married in the small community where they met. Eventually, her family left the ranch before María was born. After several moves, they settled in the southwestern city where many of *la familia* lived.

María’s father was adept at farm work and ranching; these skills were superfluous in an urban center. With support from his *familia*, he found steady work in construction, but with low pay. María’s mother lovingly cared for their six children and their small home, cooking, cleaning, and hand washing and ironing the clothes for the family. María’s parents’ loving devotion to each other was evident in the way they treated one another and extended this devotion to their children. Collectively the family shared what limited resources they had and were willing to make sacrifices for each other, since these bore the promise of a better future.

²⁴ María, interview with Torres, July 2008.

Through their trying times, María's parents' optimism and faith were the motivation behind the persistence and sacrifice of sending their children to Catholic schools. Being Catholic was central to María's life and she saw her Catholic teachers as good people who worked and struggled and helped to develop their students into being good people who were compassionate toward others, particularly those who have less.

My family was loving and compassionate. I saw their hardships to meet the needs of the family, and I took on responsibilities as a young girl; I wanted to help. [As I grew] when things were tough at school, I did not tell my parents—I dealt with situations that were wrong, difficult, or bad. When someone hurt me, which was at school, I figured out that if I were hurt, then if I did something good for someone else, I would feel good, and that would take away the hurt. I was taught to believe that God wants you to do good, so when I helped others that would remove move the hurt. I must have been six or seven when I figured that out. I learned to have a lot of compassion for people. All of my life, I wanted to be helpful. The biggest admonitions from my parents were “to study hard and learn.” When we finished, we were ‘to help our neighbor; it was your obligation, particularly [to] those who had less than you. Getting a good education means to be of service to others.’²⁵

In addition to her parents' admonitions, the Sunday sermons at Mass reminded María and her siblings that a good education was important, as well as a pathway for service to *la comunidad*. Her *familia*, religious faith, and surrounding culture taught her many essential values of service and dignity as she grew into a young woman and continued to live these values and to

²⁵ María, interview with Torres, July 2008.

share with others. This foundation gave María a clear sense of identity and led to her mission and to strong social justice leadership.

Tied to the importance of *la familia*, honoring those who have sacrificed on our behalf, María's father stressed the importance of the *dignidad* (dignity) of each person no matter their circumstances. María remembered: "At home, I was respected; my words, my opinion merited something. This [treatment] was the same for all members of the family."²⁶ María explained that her parents taught her how to live a life confident in her dignity and self-worth since *la dignidad* is central to knowing one's place in society.

We are people of dignity. This value was very important growing up because the world is not always fair. I had bad experience as a child; some people are just plain mean.

However, I was not going to change myself. These bad experiences did not change that. My family had taught me that I was a valuable person. I was not going to change. When I was in grade school, I would tell my father: "They told me that I was ugly." My father would ask: "Are you ugly?" "No!" He replied. "Those are lies." He taught us to be true to ourselves and not let the words and actions of others change us.²⁷

While María was successful in school, her father would not compliment her. He wanted her to be humble and explained that being prideful might cause his daughter to think of herself not as an equal but above others. These early lessons are the core values of TR leadership based on the clarity of identity and the basis for finding a purpose in one's life.

²⁶ María, interview with Torres, July 2008.

²⁷ María, interview with Torres, July 2008.

One “should always respect *la dignidad* of the other, not judge them” and “We are all children of God. It is not right to judge anyone as inferior.”²⁸ María’s parents’ words remained with her. *La familia* shared their burdens and joys as they worked together in the fields of the ranch and later when they lived in the city. Focus on knowing one’s dignity and self-respect grounded María’s self-assurance while always tempered by her awareness that she was to treat the other the same way, with dignity and respect. Knowing one’s dignity and self-assurance are also critical principles that TR leaders need in order to deal with the challenges of leadership.

Although she was the second oldest child, María was the leader in her family. Throughout her life, her leadership included caring for all of her siblings based on the values of *familia*. As a young child she witnessed the poor treatment of her parents by the sisters at her Catholic elementary school. María promised herself that she would do her best to protect herself and her siblings from the sisters and school bullies. After María told her parents about a classmate who brought a large mattress pin and daily poked her until she bled, María’s mother went to see the teacher, but the sister dismissed their complaint, and the poking continued. Recognizing that her parents endured the indignities of dismissal, María noted the indifference the sisters gave her family in comparison to the respect that well-dressed Mexican-American and Anglo families received. Later, María realized that the sisters, who were Mexican and Mexican-American, had unknowingly internalized the oppression of being discriminated against for being Mexican and poor. Hence the sisters replicated this same oppression within their work with the students’ families. María understood why the sisters had unfairly treated her family and forgave them, but from these challenges, María became the protector of her family.

²⁸ María, interviews with Torres, June 2010 and June 2012.

As a child and later as an adolescent, María carried the concerns of her family. Her Catholic high school teachers (sisters in a different religious order from her elementary school sisters) supported María. They witnessed her curiosity, challenged her intellectual growth, and promoted her budding leadership. When she graduated from high school, María chose not to go to college, but rather to help support the family. The sisters were surprised that she did not plan to attend college. María explained the importance of financially assisting her family but added that she would take night classes. The sisters offered her a scholarship, but she declined unless she could use it to help her family. When each of her brothers and sisters graduated from high school, María's salary helped pay for the family's needs so that her siblings only had to pay for college and not contribute to family expenses.

Years later, María's father honored her much needed support by calling her his St. Simon of Cyrene, the man who helped Jesus carry his cross. Not seeing her work for the family as a sacrifice, María instead called this her mission, something she had begun in grade school, thus becoming an adult at an early age. These sacrifices were the means by which she opened her eyes to injustice. As she served the public during her employment in non-profit agencies and government services, María witnessed the injustice endured by people of color, women, immigrants, and poor and working-class people. From this reality, María began the process for change that empowered her development from a personal mission to *la comunidad* to what would become her TR leadership as she worked for social justice and against oppression.

In one of her first jobs, María served homeless people and others living in poverty. Since the program was for a Protestant church, María asked her parish priest if it was all right to work for a church that was not Catholic. He told her no, saying that it would cause scandal. María decided that the work she would do was a vital service to poor people and that they needed

someone who spoke Spanish, so she “followed her heart” and took the job.²⁹ Later, María worked in a city office where she typed up the birth certificates and marriage certificates for couples not having proper documentation, particularly Spanish-speaking couples. She saw that many of the families were not married and suggested they might want to get married, which dispelled the couples’ assumptions that they could not afford to get married by a judge. She told the couples that it was free, so they got married. María saw that she helped these young families and realized that although they were not getting married in the Catholic Church, it was not her place to judge them but rather to help them. As a TR Leader, María’s purpose was to be of service and not to focus on the “correct way” of acting that judged people’s lives. Instead, she turned to her ethical values, and the wisdom she had learned early on that she was to be of service to people.

María’s jobs working for social justice came from the years she observed and followed the examples of her elders, particularly her father and mother. Seeking to end discrimination, she first stood up for her family. Later, she recognized that the class differences, race, and ethnicity were also the basis for discrimination and racism more broadly. María recognized that larger forces pushed against *la dignidad* of people, and thus began a journey that led to political leadership. María’s application of the principles of endurance, respect, and dignity meant that she did not have the right to join a group “by facilitating action,” with a mindset to impose her “faith, values, and rules.”³⁰ Likewise, María valued helping people in their critical times in their lives, “Today, as we look at the treatment of immigrants, [our nation previously] supposedly valued

²⁹ María, interview with Torres, June 2012.

³⁰ María, interview with Torres, 2010.

keeping the family together by honoring their relationships. However, the family and the values I learned are the bigger rules that we see today in our government.”³¹ Over the years I have observed María in action, she has always remained active in immigrant rights and in supporting the working class in her district and state, part of her commitment to social justice as a TR Leader.

María’s strong advocacy continues as she remains faithful to her mission of service to her people, especially the poor. A social justice leader must be the source of strength for the group. María explained, “³² You may not wish it; this role may be thrust upon you. With strength can come much joy, but it always comes with sorrow.” María was then and continues to be circumspect about the sorrows she has experienced and continues her unwavering commitment. In so doing, María reveals her TR leadership through her acceptance of the sacrifice that comes from fighting oppression:

The secret is that there is no greater joy than service when you help serve and assist others just because you want to do so. Over time there is a collection of joy that you get and receive. It is a joyful thing to serve. Even losing can be a joy. Sometimes we lose every time we go to the state legislature. Every time you go there, you take the hits for the people. Not until you get plenty of hits on their behalf, only *then* [María’s emphasis] can you bond with them. Only then can you say you are there on behalf of the people. I did not realize how much I say that!³³

³¹ María, interview with Torres, 2010.

³² María, interview with Torres, 2010.

³³ María, interview with Torres, 2010.

María's TR leadership commitment to service also grew out of her understanding of *la familia*, one that was grounded in *la fe de la casa*, popular Catholicism, and based on the faith nurtured in the home and by some people in the churches.

A lot of my faith is based on the Catholic faith in which I was raised even though there were times in my family history where there were no priests around. What I learned about justice, respect, generosity, compassion and patience were values that survived in my family and were handed down from generation to generation. My grandparents did not have a church nearby in many periods of their lives. In those times when there was no church or priest around, the parents read the Bible beginning to end to their children. That is how they learned these values. They celebrated rituals at home and in community even when they were out in the country. The devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe was always present. The celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas was major and joyful. They commemorated the Passion of Jesus during Holy Week which included the *Pésame* (offering condolences before a statue of Mary) on Good Friday and the resurrection of Jesus celebrated on Easter Sunday. When I was a little girl, I would offer flowers to Mary during the month of May. All this popular religiosity was handed down to me and became part of my life; it fed my soul as a little girl and as a young woman. It remains part of me.³⁴

The strong faith of María's ancestors and the celebrations that bonded her to God and community, *la familia*, and the jobs where she served *la comunidad* were among the most substantial ties that María retained as a political leader while holding office. These ties and networks were the foundation for her campaigns and elections: these were the people who

³⁴ María, interview with Torres, 2010.

worked tirelessly for her many elections to the state legislature and for her run for Congress. These collaborations and networks of local supporters and developing leaders under María's tutelage gave rise to a host of solid social justice leaders who carried on María's TR leadership, with its gendered leadership style. Such leadership was central to her method of gathering her supporters who were built on long-standing relations of more than twenty years of work in the community. As a result of María's gendered leadership, she reaped a strong support system that included multiple networking systems that came together to support her leadership during times of her elections and her work for issues related to *la comunidad's* concerns, e.g., affordable housing, immigrant rights, day care, environmental concerns, and parent education programs.

As her intern and over the years I went to visit her, I watched María challenge local, regional, and national leaders on behalf of *la comunidad*. While she stood strong making her stance for social justice, she was never alone in her fight. She had a solid base of support, which she had developed over her years of service, and its members were always present at public events with her, vocally supporting her as she sustained many attacks. This critical attribute is of primary importance for TR leaders, who understand that without a substantial support system, leaders can lose their sense of purpose and direction.³⁵

Recognizing María's strength and commitment to social justice, I sought to learn more about how she sustained this foundation. She and I discussed our spiritual practices and the challenge of finding time for prayer in the midst of being active in service to one's community. Recalling our previous conversations, I asked her to explain what her spiritual practices were during her most active period as well as her current practices. In the course of the interview, María explained the ways she maintained her spirituality. During her last years in office and her

³⁵ Torres, "Transformational Resistant Leadership in Kansas City."

last major political campaign, María regularly worked eighty hours a week with meetings and campaign visits and never gave the impression of being tired, although the work must have been exhausting. This energy, María said, was something she received from the people, her supporters.³⁶ During those busy years of political office, María nourished her spirituality by listening to audiotapes from a collection of Thomas Merton's talks for young novice monks. Merton, a Cistercian monk, wrote numerous books on how to live a spiritual life amid a chaotic world in need of justice and peace. His words resonated with María, sustained her daily encounters with people, and empowered her *spirituality* throughout the blur of her activities. Thus, María's spirituality grounded her with a firm foundation for resiliency, an essential attribute for TR leaders.

Later, in reviewing my notes, I realized that María had already shown me another one of her long-standing spiritual practices. Whenever I have visited her, as we walked through her beautiful flower garden, she would tell me about her plants. The quiet time in her garden enabled her to center herself while she nurtured her many plants. She especially loved the roses that had been also part of her mother's garden. María's mother shared her love of nature with her when she was a young girl. As high school student, María loved her biology classes and would share what she learned each day with her mother. These plants nurtured and sustained her spirituality and her connection to the earth. Today, María's love of nature remains a testimony to the connection she has always fought for, as she advocates to maintain the purity of the water of her city and other aspects of our care for the earth. Whenever we drive through her city and into the country, María notes the beauty of nature and our responsibility to care for the earth.

³⁶ María, interview with Torres, 2008.

Through the busiest times of her life, María has found creative ways to integrate this spirituality and has centered herself within the source of energy and life around her. Her spirituality has enabled her to live an integrated life of service, prayer, and justice. Through these times of reflection, María has returned to the wisdom and faith of *la familia* that sustained her through the challenges of life. María resonates with Merton because his wisdom cut through the unnecessary burdens that people and society place upon us. This reminds her of the wisdom she received from *la familia* and her Catholic religious education, both of which have taught her to respect the dignity of each person; these values are also central to her resiliency and integrated life as a TR Leader.

María's TR leadership continues to be present in her many current activities and in her wise ability to accurately assess the struggles she faces while maintaining her active life. Whenever I came to visit, María was always involved in a community issue. Yet she took time to keep a journal and to read from the writings of other women of color, and she shared the wisdom from these authors. She introduced me to the works of Gloria Anzaldúa, including *Borderlands/La Frontera*, a powerful book that changed my life, and *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras*, an anthology of women of color edited by Anzaldúa that illustrates the power and prophetic voices of women who work for equity and justice.³⁷ María particularly resonated with the description of Anzaldúa's "mestiza consciousness." María selected for me this passage from Anzaldúa's work:

The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo

³⁷ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*; Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., *Making Faces, Making Soul, Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1991).

point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality; she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad, and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else.³⁸

María explicates her identification with Anzaldúa's non-binary view of being in the world, a *Latinidad* worldview that embraces ambiguity and offers the promise of an inclusive way of living.

Gloria Anzaldúa's words sounded so familiar; I felt like I had known her all my life.

While she was writing these words, I was walking into the public arena. We were living very different lives, yet her words were like balm, affirming my Mexican-indigenous self. Fresh in my mind was my experience in the public arena where male authority reigns and where the words of women of color are dismissed, where being a proud brown woman speaking truth to power was seen as dangerous, threatening the status quo... Her words were a great blessing and a reminder of how much my soul needed rest.³⁹

As her intern, although I had worked with her closely for several months, I did not know the extent of María's pain over the loss of her election. In one of our interviews, María explained that the sorrow was not just hers; it was the pain of *la comunidad*, which had relied on her leadership. When she and I would go out, many of her supporters would come to her and speak about their sadness and loss.

First of all, if one lives a safe life, never taking risks, you won't be hurt. But, if you give your heart in the community, you will be hurt. I can say that I have had a death in my life.

³⁸ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 79.

³⁹ María, interview with Torres, 2012.

There were dark moments. I had an image of me hanging on a cliff, and it being very painful. It became more and more painful. I was unwilling to leave things behind me, to forget about what hurts that I have. I am hanging onto it, this world, and it is too scary to let go. I was praying, and I had a vision of God telling me to let go. I felt as if someone was bouncing on my fingers, so I have to let go and face a future that I do not know.⁴⁰

María explained later that the feeling of “hanging on a cliff” and refusing to let go was her struggle with the sorrow and grief she was carrying. The loss was not only hers; it included the people she worked with on her campaign as well as her supporters. These experiences bonded María with *la comunidad*, who looked to her as their leader and relied on her advocacy for justice, particularly working-class people and immigrants. Being a TR Leader means that one has to pay the price of leadership, and that includes accepting sacrifice, including sorrow and grief over losses. María called this bonding “a willingness to take the hits for the people.”⁴¹

Even while María struggled with the sexism and institutionalism in the Catholic Church, she was supported by the grounding she received from her *familia* and the Catholic faith of her childhood. These, and her reliance on her spirituality, enabled her to continue her work for *la comunidad*. María explained that as a young woman she studied Catholic social teachings and the Vatican II documents, particularly those that defined the role of the laity. Later she studied and applied Isasi-Díaz’s *Mujerista Theology* to support her and enrich her spirituality.⁴² As a colleague and friend of Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, María read their works and identified with being

⁴⁰ María, interview with Torres, June 2012.

⁴¹ María, interview with Torres, June 2012.

⁴² Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*.

en la lucha (in the struggle for *la comunidad*), which is an attribute of TR leadership as well.

These were her foundations and are the reasons she remains a Catholic.

To me, being Catholic is being Mexican and being the daughter of Poncho, granddaughter of Susanna, daughter of Cecilia, and just being María. You know there is no way that I am leaving because that is *my* Church. A lot of my faith [was based upon] the Catholic faith. Even what I learned about the issues of justice, respect, generosity, compassion, and patience came from Catholicism, particularly Catholic Social Teaching. All those virtues survived in my family even through years when there was no priest or church around. All of this taught me my values, rituals, and faith.⁴³

We also discussed the fact that some of Maria's friends had left the Catholic Church and no longer wanted to have anything to do with the institution. Among their reasons were the Catholic Church's sexism, rule-based orientation, harsh treatment of homosexuals, pedophilia scandal and cover-up, and single-issue focus on abortion rather than other life issues, such as systemic poverty, racial injustice, immigrant rights, and the death penalty. While María was conflicted about the Church's stance on those same issues, she understood her friends' reasons for leaving, but she was still clear on her need to remain in the Church.

During her campaign for Congress, Maria's local Catholic Church leaders, including some priests who had been her supporters and even her local bishop, who had originally encouraged her to run, did not publicly support her campaign. We discussed again the feelings of betrayal that she had spoken of with me earlier. I asked her, "What helps you stay in the Church? What I remember you telling me when I was your intern [was], 'I am the Church so how can the

⁴³ María, interview with Torres, July 2008

Church be taken away from me?’’ María affirmed our earlier discussion and summed up her point succinctly: “Yes, it is part of me. No one can take this from me.”⁴⁴ What María received from her Catholic faith and the faith of *la familia* were the sources of strength that enabled her to continue her advocacy; they were not based on the Church’s institutional structure and leadership.

When I was having a challenging time carrying out issues addressing social justice, and there were many, what kept me going was what I describe as personal integrity. When I talk about this, it is not the idea that I am a saint, that I have always done the right thing, or that I am better than other people. No! Personal integrity is tied back to who I am and trying to do my best. It is being faithful to and respecting who you are. This is how you honor those who came before you and taught you so much. They did the best they could. We must do the same.⁴⁵

María’s conflicts with the Church do not negate her heritage or her faith. She believes she is “standing on the shoulders of those who came before us.” Living the values and faith she learned from her family and that she gained from her spirituality have been the basis for her resiliency in times of difficulty.

In a discussion about her faithfulness to her commitments to her TR leadership, María shared an apt description of remaining faithful to her leadership commitment. Thus, I end with these inspiring words of María and her application of Isasi-Díaz’s concept of *en la lucha*:

⁴⁴ María, interview with Torres, July 2008.

⁴⁵ María, interview with Torres, July 2008.

God is in the struggle, *en la lucha*. You know that you are not going to win sometimes, but that does not matter. This is the work of service. I plant the tomatoes. I have to water them, not too much, provide some sun, not too much, and then it is up to them to produce tomatoes. I have done my work. It is not about the final effect; it is about the *process of doing and being with others en la lucha*. This is what I had eyes to see and ears to hear from the early lessons of poverty from my childhood. It was a privilege to be able to understand this. We can't do it all, but sometimes we can do something. We are taught to be faithful, not effective. We are not the ones in charge. We serve.⁴⁶

Conclusion

In summary, one of the core aspects of TR leadership is a *Latinidad* worldview, is present within all of the principles of TR leadership. This worldview is the recognition of the unity of the past and present working for the future: we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us—the legacy and presence of *familia*, of other social justice leaders, of *las comunidades* of support in the present and in the past. This is the unity of working collectively for social justice through the sacrifice involved *en la lucha*, with *la comunidad*, for the future. Collectively, TR leaders work toward the ongoing creation of a more inclusive, non-binary world of the new *mestiza* consciousness. The wisdom and insights of all TR leaders need to be clearly grounded in a keen sense of identity that can withstand the challenges and sacrifices of leadership. TR leadership is empowered through clarity of purpose in being social justice-minded and practicing TR leadership in service for *la comunidad*. A *Latinidad* world-view involves an inclusive understanding that embraces diversity and unity while challenging oppression that seeks to tear apart this unity. The complexity of leadership grounded in a *Latinidad* worldview means that, as

⁴⁶ María, interview with Torres, June 2010.

such, TR leaders must purposely engage in healing and spiritual practices to maintain their commitments on the journey through continuous integration of the self in ongoing efforts for resiliency.

María's story of leadership has been the basis for the construction and ongoing development of essential principles of TR leadership theory, but the building of a TR leadership theory is not over. Additional examples from interviews and ethnographic research with other Latina leaders are part of an ongoing project that I will be address in a future book on TR leadership. This book will include the lives of ten Latina leaders selected on the basis of the core principles and resiliency that I presented in this article. Future research on this subject will provide opportunities for a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of TR leadership theory. This future research can also provide us with insights for developing new leaders over the long haul of carrying out the work of social justice. This work is not completed in one lifetime. Instead, as María says in a paraphrase of a well-known saying, "We plant the seeds that one day others will harvest."⁴⁷ The labor of TR leadership is not completed in one lifetime, nor is this work completed by one leader alone. Still, the work is often, paradoxically, a lonely journey, as each TR leader bears the challenges of resistance and sacrifices in the struggle against oppression with *nuestra gente*.

This article leaves to be addressed by future research projects questions that arose in the course of completing this study and could not be explored adequately in a single article. An additional attribute briefly noted in the case study of María is that of being a channel of support

⁴⁷ María, interview with Torres, June 2010; Bishop Ken Untener, "Prophets of a Future Not Our Own," United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, February 7, 2021, <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/prophets-of-a-future-not-our-own>. This quotation is from a homily written by Saginaw, MI Bishop Ken Untener and often wrongly attributed to Archbishop Oscar Romero. The entire passage is available online.

for others. The energy, healing, and physical presence of support and acknowledgment that comes from such leadership is empowering. What, then, is required to be this channel? These experiences also raise a related question: Does being such a channel mean one is a TR leader? Or is being this channel a gift that may not be given to all leaders?

That last question also brings up another relevant point, one that I noted in my 2019 article on the Chicana activist. Not every TR leader has all of the TR leadership principles and characteristics. Leadership is complex and leaders differ in their various characteristics, approaches, and methods. Yet some principles are foundational and are required in the lives of those who wish to be TR leaders. Determining these core principles is a central aspect of the ongoing research into TR leadership that will be addressed in my upcoming book. Another salient point for future study is the enhancement of resiliency as a TR leader. Below are further questions for the research and analysis. Addressing these questions will include the research analysis other Latina scholars have addressed related to the foundational principles and characteristics of this leadership theory.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ These include:

Lillian Comas-Díaz, “Comadres: The Healing Power of a Female Bond,” *Women & Therapy* 36, nos. 1-2 (2013): 62-75. Lillian Comas-Díaz, “Latina Feminist Psychology: Testimonio, Borderlands Theory, and Embodied Psychology,” in *Latina Psychologists: Thriving in a Cultural Borderland*, ed. Lillian Comas-Díaz and Carmen Inoa Vazquez (Abingdon, Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2018), 3–14.

Theresa Delgadillo, “Work, Coalition, and Advocacy: Latina Leading in the Midwest,” in *Latina/os in the Midwest Reader*, ed. Omar Valerio Jiménez, Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez, and Claire Fox, 236-250 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2017).

Moneika DiPierro, Paula J. Fite, and Michelle Johnson-Motoyama “The Role of Religion and Spirituality in the Association between Hope and Anxiety in a Sample of Latino Youth,” *Child & Youth Care Forum* 47 (1) (2018): 101–14.

Olivia M. Espín, “Spiritual Power and the Mundane World: Hispanic Female Healers in Urban U.S. Communities,” in *Latina Realities: Essays on Healing, Migration, and Sexuality*, 157–68, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

- What are the ways that social justice leaders maintain and build resilience?
 - How do TR leaders continue the growth and healing through the difficulties of leadership?
 - In what ways do TR leaders' relationships support and empower their leadership?
- What experiences are common among the leaders?
- Is the process of being in the Dark Night, the time of darkness, sorrow, and grief, one of their shared experiences and what is the impact of religion and spirituality?
 - How do leaders find their direction through the Dark Night?
 - What role does spirituality play in navigating the Dark Night?
- Is being a channel or source of support and empowerment for empowering part of the role of TR leadership, or is channeling a gift that may not be a common experience for TR leaders?

I look forward to addressing these questions in my book-in-process on TR leadership theory and a TR model for building future leaders.

Oliva M. Espín, "Maps of Memory," in *Latina Psychologists: Thriving in a Cultural Borderland*, 179–93 (Abingdon, Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2018).

Josephine Méndez-Negrete, *Activist Leaders of San José: En sus Proprias Voces* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2020).

Milagros Peña and Lisa M. Frehill, "Latina Religious Practice: Analyzing Cultural Dimensions in Measures of Religiosity," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no. 4 (1998): 620–635.