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Imagining the Future of Jotería Studies as a Framework in the Field of Higher Education

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Abstract

Although research on queer Latinx/a/o college students has increased in recent years, only a few studies employ frameworks that originate from queer Latinx/a/o communities. To center ways of being and knowing rooted in queer Latinx/a/o experiences, this manuscript argues that educators, scholars, and practitioners interested in the study of higher education should mobilize Jotería Studies as a framework. In this manuscript, the authors offer an overview of Jotería Studies before discussing how Queer of Color frameworks have emerged in education. Following this foundation, the authors generate recommendations for how educators, researchers, and higher education professionals can use Jotería Studies to guide their work.

Keywords: higher education, Queer of Color, theoretical frameworks, Jotería Studies

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The study of the interconnections between race, ethnicity, and sexuality continues to become richer in the field of higher education with scholars increasingly exploring the lives and experiences of Queer Students of Color (QSOC) on college campuses (Duran, 2019). In examining these studies, it is evident to see that researchers made a concerted effort to push back against the reliance on samples of white students that once defined queer and trans scholarship in postsecondary education (Renn, 2010). Although formerly limited, the scholarship on queer Latinx/a/o college students considerably grew in the field of higher education in the 2010s (e.g., Duran & Pérez, 2017, 2019; Duran, Rodriguez, et al., 2019; Eaton & Rios, 2017; Garcia, 2015; Orozco & Perez-Felkner, 2018; Peña-Talamantes, 2013a, 2013b; Rios & Eaton, 2016; Tijerina Revilla, 2010). These studies shed a light on a number of different issues that queer Latinx/a/o individuals face within collegiate settings. Whether illustrating how self-authorship may differ for those at the intersections of these two identities (Orozco & Perez-Felkner, 2018) or examining the nature of familial relationships for these students (Duran & Pérez, 2017, 2019; Eaton & Rios, 2017; Rios & Eaton, 2016), the research on queer Latinx/a/o collegians expanded the ways that professionals in higher education understand and work with these individuals.

Albeit a positive development to see more scholarship about queer Latinx/a/o collegians, another pattern is clear that mirrors a consistent reality of queer and trans literature focused on postsecondary settings. Despite Renn's (2010) calling for the use of queer and trans frameworks in order to shape the study of higher education (including research on queer and trans people's experiences), the number of scholars employing these frameworks are few and far between (Duran et al., 2020). Namely, studies on queer Latinx/a/o college students regularly failed to use theories designed with queer Latinx/a/o individuals in mind with a few notable exceptions like Tijerina Revilla's (2009, 2010) work mobilizing queer/Chicana/Latina feminist epistemologies and Duran, Rodriguez, et al.'s (2019) scholarship using influences from Muñoz's (1999) disidentifications. As Duran, Jackson, et al. (2020) argued, the epistemological and theoretical foundations researchers use in studies on LGBTQ+ individuals in higher education have serious ramifications for how these populations are represented and the subsequent implications for practice. To investigate the lives of queer Latinx/a/o collegians without using explicitly queer Latinx/a/o theories, for instance, can lead to crises of representation and continue the whiteness, heteronormativity, and/or trans oppression that has defined queer and trans postsecondary research.

Therefore, this paper will imagine what it means to use Jotería Studies in pedagogy, research, and student affairs practice in higher education. Specifically, we locate Jotería Studies under the umbrella of queer Latinx/a/o theories and frameworks that can be meaningful to center queer Latinx/a/o experiences. As a growing body of research, Jotería Studies is uniquely situated to examine how racism, heterosexism, trans oppression, and settler colonialism manifest for queer Latinx/a/o communities (Hames-García, 2014) but can also be mobilized to challenge these systems in postsecondary settings broadly. Specifically, we contend that educators, scholars, and student affairs practitioners interested in transforming higher education contexts need to embrace the use of Jotería Studies (e.g., Alvarez Jr. & Estrada, 2019; Hames-García, 2014; Perez, 2014; Tijerina Revilla & Santillana, 2014) as an analytic to inform pedagogy, research, and practice.

We begin by offering a brief overview of Jotería Studies, discuss the emerging attention to Jotería in educational literature, and then describe specific recommendations for how it can be leveraged in higher education as a discipline. Although we focus on its use in pedagogy to align with this special issue, we also generate implications for higher education researchers and student affairs practitioners hoping to mobilize Jotería Studies. In doing so, we argue Jotería Studies works in expansive ways—as a research framework, a way to drive pedagogy, and a liberatory politic. Though Jotería Studies has always been needed in the discipline of higher education, we contend that the current sociopolitical climate in which queer Latinx/a/o lives and continues to come under attack by rhetoric in and outside of college campuses necessitates frameworks that interrogate these structures, while highlighting the resilience of these individuals.

An Overview of Jotería Studies

We find it important to provide an overview of Jotería Studies and trace its emergence in higher education scholarship. To begin, we acknowledge the way queer Latinx/a/o communities have historically been targeted through derogatory terms (e.g., joto, jota, maricón, and pato) that further perpetuate heteronormativity and homoantagonism. Despite the negative connotation carried by these words, including joto and jota, Jotería scholars, activists, and artists have reclaimed these terms to posit a form of resistance against heteronormative renderings of being Latinx/a/o (Alvarez Jr. & Estrada, 2019). Additionally, a distinction exists between Jotería and Jotería Studies. We define Jotería as an embodiment of marginalized sexual

or gender identifications. Jotería “is a political project that seeks to reconfigure historically and socially negative understandings of an identity that has been used in colonizing ways” (Bañales, 2014, p. 160), namely as it relates to racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual politics. Critical to this definition, Hames-García (2014) challenged the use of Jotería as a simple ascription to Latinx/a/o individuals “whose lives include dissident practices of sexuality and gender” (p. 139). For this reason, Jotería is also a production of personal and cultural politics that engage practices and processes that disrupt interlocking systems of oppression. In turn, Jotería Studies is the study of queer Latinx/a/o people’s realities that resist racist, heterosexist, patriarchal, and settler colonialist systems of power and oppression (Alvarez Jr. & Estrada, 2019; Hames-García, 2014). More specifically, Ochoa (2015) asserted Jotería Studies “continue the critical project of Chicana feminisms by destabilizing the hegemonic Chicano subject, usually imagined as male and heterosexual” (p. 188). Jotería Studies is an asset-based framework rooted in intersectionality and empowerment (Tijerina Revilla & Santillana, 2014). Jotería Studies propels a critical consciousness given the unique emphasis on individual and collective joy, love, and healing (Tijerina Revilla & Santillana, 2014).

The development of Jotería Studies is a response to the exclusionary practices toward queer Latinx/a/o individuals that permeated community and academic spaces (Tijerina Revilla, 2014). As such, the history of Jotería Studies traces back to the prominent work of lesbian and queer Chicanas and Latinas whose scholarship and activism names and theorizes the marginality of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality (Anzaldúa, 1987; Moraga, 1983; Pérez, 1999). Both Anzaldúa and Moraga explicitly named Jotería in their work. For example, Anzaldúa (1987) made the call to the Chicano/[Latino] community to “listen to their Jotería” (p. 85) and Moraga (1993) imagined a world she named as “Queer Aztlan” where Chicanos embrace “all its people, including its Jotería” (p. 147).

Furthermore, the prominence of Jotería Studies in the last two decades was then amplified in spaces like the Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship (AJAAS), “an organization dedicated to nurturing queer Latina/o, Chicana/o culture through practices that recognize the intimate relations of art, activism and scholarship” (Tijerina Revilla, 2014, p. 253). In 2014, several members of AJAAS contributed to a dossier on Jotería Studies in *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, which was curated and edited by Michael Hames-García. This dossier contained conceptual and empirical writings that moved Jotería Studies forward and offered

multiple ways of conceptualizing Jotería bodies and experiences. Furthermore, this dossier offered social and political methods of theorizing realities of marginalization and exclusion of Jotería, as well as Jotería Studies (Hames-García, 2014).

Furthermore, the academic genealogy of Jotería Studies traditionally finds its home through an interdisciplinary lens in the fields of Chicana/x/a/o and Latinx/a/o Studies, Ethnic Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Performance Studies (Hames-García, 2014; Pérez, 2014). Jotería Studies is an explicit analysis of structural oppression, similar to other theoretical considerations for Queer People of Color (QPOC) (i.e., Queer of Color Critique; Quare Theory). These methodological and analytical frameworks propel the necessity to interrogate the intersectional and material oppression of Queer People of Color (Ferguson, 2004; Duran, 2019). Most recently, scholars whose work focuses on Queer and Trans People of Color, particularly queer and trans Latinx/a/o people, embedded Jotería Studies in fields like media and cultural studies and communication studies (e.g., Alvarez Jr. & Estrada, 2019; Ochoa, 2015). Thus, the field of Jotería Studies continues to evolve and transform as it is taken up in academic fields, such as in the study of higher education.

Queer of Color and Jotería Studies in Education

Over the last two decades, the burgeoning research on Queer People of Color in education, specifically in higher education, provides a foundational analysis of narratives and experiences of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality within the educational system (Brockenbrough, 2015; Kumashiro, 2001). Furthermore, engaging issues of sexuality within research on People of Color has moved beyond hegemonic notions of racialized experiences. Scholars have posited frameworks to center Queer Students of Color in education, specifically the K-12 system (Brockenbrough, 2015; Kumashiro, 2001; McCready, 2004). Kumashiro (2001) offered multiple analyses accounting for “the intersections of racism and heterosexism” within education (p. 1). Similarly, Brockenbrough (2015) engaged a Queer of Color critique that asserts an agency for Queer of Color youth as a way for them “to perform identity, belonging, and resistance” through and within oppressive structures of education (p. 31). Beyond K-12, several scholars have examined the experiences of Queer Students of Color in higher education. Research on Queer College Students of Color often focuses on examining the way these individuals navigate multiple marginalized identities in higher education contexts, especially in co-curricular and curricular spaces (Duran, 2019; Patton & Simmons, 2008; Tijerina

Revilla, 2009, 2010). These studies have shown the ways that environments in postsecondary settings perpetuate racism and heterosexism, while at the same time highlighting the agency and resilience of Queer Students of Color.

Although this larger body of scholarship using Queer of Color perspectives is invaluable, engaging Jotería Studies and higher education as a site of analysis requires a commitment to challenging normative understandings of Latinx/a/o people specifically. As noted in the introduction, studies specific to queer Latinx/a/o individuals continue to rise and set the stage for Jotería Studies, albeit focused largely on undergraduate students. The scholarship on queer Latinx/a/o undergraduate students primarily discusses the experience of coming out (Duran & Pérez, 2017; Peña-Talamantes, 2013b), in addition to perceived support from family, peers, and faculty and staff (Duran & Pérez, 2019; Eaton & Rios, 2017; Rios & Eaton, 2016), sense of belonging on and off campus (Tijerina Revilla, 2009, 2010), navigating multiple marginalized identities (Peña-Talamantes, 2013a; Orozco & Perez-Felkner, 2018), and building queer Latinx/a/o kinships (Duran & Pérez, 2017). Although this research provides insight into the experiences of queer Latinx/a/o students, the theoretical frameworks used in these studies have often been through a non-queer Latinx/a/o lens with a few exceptions (see Duran, Rodriguez, et al., 2019; Orozco & Pérez-Felkner, 2018; Tijerina Revilla, 2009, 2010). Using this collective body of scholarship as a foundation, an opportunity exists to apply frameworks that better honor, give agency, and validate the lived realities of these individuals.

Research on queer Latinx/a/o college students rarely takes up the term Jotería or explicitly notes their contribution to the field of Jotería Studies. Alvarez Jr. & Estrada (2019) noted that some scholars may be uncomfortable naming their work as a part of Jotería Studies because of the contested and fraught nature of the term Jotería as a marker of social identity. Furthermore, research on queer Latinx/a/o students primarily centers the narratives and experiences of cisgender gay Latino men (Duran & Pérez, 2017, 2019; Eaton & Rios, 2017; Orozco & Perez-Felkner, 2018; Peña-Talamantes, 2013b; Rios & Eaton, 2016). Consequently, the majority of research on cisgender gay Latino men focuses on their coming out process and the challenges they face (Duran & Pérez, 2017, 2019; Eaton & Rios, 2017; Orozco & Perez-Felkner, 2018; Peña-Talamantes, 2013b; Rios & Eaton, 2016). Furthermore, centering cis gay Latino men in research that examines queer Latinx/a/o students reinforces structures of patriarchy, as well as trans oppression, and is a perpetuation of the challenges that arise when

cisgender gay men become the focus of discourse on gender and sexuality. As a response to this, Jotería Studies can further provide a theoretical and analytic comprehension that moves forward the scholarship and improved material realities of queer Latinx/a/o people in higher education.

Our Journey to Jotería Studies

Before proposing how higher education can benefit from Jotería Studies, we see it necessary to first name what Jotería Studies has offered us as scholars, practitioners, and people moving through postsecondary education settings. This naming of our stories and backgrounds exemplifies what is at the heart of Jotería Studies, the notion that the political is personal (Hames-García, 2014). It is because of these stories that we came to be in relationship with one another and imagined a world where higher education institutional agents centered Jotería Studies as a priority. However, we recognize how we gained access to Jotería Studies represents a form of academic privilege, necessitating a more widespread conversation about this analytic.

Antonio Duran

My journey to Jotería Studies has been both recent and long-lasting, leading me to a framework that has always been ingrained in my being. Notably, my scholarly journey began due to my interest in how Queer and Trans People of Color navigated collegiate settings, knowing that the founders of higher education institutions never created colleges and universities with these individuals in mind. The questions that I had percolating in my mind could not be answered with theories that similarly failed to consider the ways that heterosexism, trans oppression, and racism functioned in society. This in turn led me to intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and Queer of Color critique (Ferguson, 2004) that welcomed these curiosities. These frameworks both spoke to these ideas but also fell somewhat short of taking up my queer Latino ways of thinking/being.

These sentiments are what have brought me to Jotería Studies, challenging me to center queer Latinx/a/o people not only in highlighting their experiences but also by shedding light on their analytics. I now attend to Jotería Studies in my teaching by naming how my own subjectivities are deeply attached to my teaching philosophies. Specifically, I often assert how my queerness and Latino identity intersect in the ways that I interpret higher education systems. Moreover, I mobilize this framework in my research by showing how institutional structures minoritize queer Latinx/a/o individuals.

Roberto Orozco

My first interaction with Jotería and Jotería Studies came through my involvement with AJAAS in the fall of 2015. As the Director of the Center for Social Justice at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, I had the unique opportunity to accompany a delegation of students to the 2015 AJAAS conference. Additionally, the history of AJAAS has a unique connection with the center I directed, given the planning meetings that took place at the center during AJAAS's inception. As I continued to work with queer Latinx/a/o student activists on campus, I challenged myself to more intimately engage with research and practice that centered these students' experiences.

Consequently, I attend to Jotería Studies in my own work through my commitment to queer Latinx/a/o communities. I specifically rely on epistemologies and theories that I consider to be a part of a Jotería genealogy. For example, I use Anzaldúa's (2002) concept of *conocimiento* as a culturally congruent framework that examines the identity and consciousness development of queer Latinx/a/o people. Furthermore, my work with queer Latinx/a/o student activists has shifted my Jotería consciousness and informs my being and doing of Jotería and Jotería Studies. As a Joto and someone who engages in Jotería as an act of social, cultural, and political resistance and disruption, my own experience along with the community of Jotería as a site of analysis is a move towards a praxis of liberation.

Sergio Gonzalez

My understanding of Jotería has and continues to be an ever-evolving process that allows me to explore my past, to make meaning of my present, and guide my future. Jotería is how I am redefining what it means to be queer and Latinx/a/o. I have come to realize that my Joto-historia, or queerstory, is a counternarrative not fully embraced by the traditional form of queer theory. My existence within the walls of academia in my brown queer skin has become my resistance. Through Tijerina Revilla & Santillana's (2014) framework of Jotería Identity and Consciousness, I am able to understand what it means to be living, loving and surviving in a space like higher education (Tijerina Revilla & Santillana, 2014). Whether I am teaching a class or working with cultural centers, Jotería creates a space to innovate and build community interchangeably. Additionally, I see Jotería Studies informing the ways that I conduct research, trying to push back on normative qualitative methods and instead embrace a praxis grounded in *comunidad*.

The Potential of Jotería Studies for Higher Education

As mentioned in the introduction, when deployed with care and respect, Jotería Studies can be an analytic that can move the study of higher education environments and experiences forward because of its community-centered and liberatory nature. To offer readers examples of how scholars and practitioners leveraging Jotería Studies can accomplish this work, we find it necessary to highlight potential contributions to both practice and research. Specifically, we contend that educators and professionals can employ the framework to shape pedagogy and student affairs programming. We also argue that postsecondary education researchers can use Jotería Studies to interrogate how institutional structures minoritize queer Latinx/a/o individuals, to challenge ahistoricism on college campuses, and to shed a light on individuals' experiences of resistance and liberation.

Practice: Mobilizing Jotería Pedagogy

The lessons that one can learn from Jotería Studies translate into the classroom context. In fact, Alvarez Jr. (2014) wrote about the practice of Jotería pedagogy. In this article, Alvarez Jr. extends the work of queer pedagogues like Krywaczyk (2007) to envision what Jotería means as it relates to teaching. In particular, Alvarez Jr. constructs Jotería pedagogy to be an approach that “focuses on the heterogeneous lives and lived experiences of Jotería but also on the erasures and omissions of queer bodies of color” (p. 218). This focus appears throughout the curricular experiences—in the ways that people teach about content but also the ways in which queer Latinx/a/o pedagogues show up in the classroom to how they invite students to share about their stories.

Engaging a Jotería pedagogy invites educators to consider how they are integrating conversations about the intersecting systems that shape the material and social realities of queer and trans Latinx/a/o people. For example, the three authors of this manuscript are trained in the field of higher education. We understand how the organizational structures of higher education function and how they impact student development. As a part of graduate studies curriculum, a majority of higher education programs have some form of a diversity, equity, and social justice course. These classes generally challenge higher education professionals to consider the unique needs of minoritized student populations. However, the issue that some courses exhibit is that they separate weeks based on social identity groups without interrogating how a class on sexual minorities may unintentionally erase those who

also experience racism on a daily basis. In fact, this approach which involves seeing identities and oppression as discrete categories is common across various disciplines although it renders Queer of Color knowledge invisible by failing to recognize how structural oppression is interconnected (Aguilar-Hernández, 2020). Jotería Studies serves as a reminder to interrupt this practice by asking educators, administrators, and staff to initiate conversations about the intersectional forms of oppression facing the lives of queer Latinx/a/o individuals. In doing so, they can resist fragmenting the interconnections of identities and power that may manifest within the classroom.

However, beyond content, Jotería pedagogy would also serve as a pathway for conceptualizing issues of embodiment by recognizing that “our bodies and ourselves are lived legacies of colonialism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, sexism, and heterosexism” (Hames-García, 2014, p. 136). What this requires is an act of critical reflexivity on the part of the instructor to consider how their presence in the classroom space both functions as a perpetuation of privilege but also a marker of overcoming oppression. For those who identify as queer Latinx/a/o educators, for example, how is it that our appearance in the classroom pushes back on the overwhelming whiteness and heterosexism that demarcates the academy sphere? How is it that we share these stories and these realities with our students to expand their awareness or affirm their selves? For the three authors of this article, it means being clear with students about how our identities and our teaching are in a reciprocal relationship with one another. It is our Jotería that influences how we think about pedagogy, and our teaching shapes our Jotería. Similarly, it would also behoove instructors to engage students in the same type of exploration. In Alvarez Jr.’s (2014) formative article, for instance, they offer the example of how Spoken Wor(l)d Art Performance Activism (SWAPA) functions as a way for individuals to perform the practice of witnessing that allows them to reflect on their body, mind, and spirit. Thus, learning is not a disembodied experience but is intricately connected to who a person is and where they are situated within larger systems of power. Such moves push the consciousness of students into one that is aware, healing, and radical—all components of Jotería Studies.

Practice: Jotería Studies in Student Affairs Programming

In addition to shaping pedagogy, Jotería Studies can inform student affairs practice. Research shows that higher education scholars frequently acknowledge that student-centered

resources (e.g., campus centers, identity-focused centers) and campus environments play an important role in student learning experiences, opportunities, and outcomes (Mayhew et al., 2016). Thus, LGBTQ+ students need student services to support their academic careers (Pitcher et al., 2018), including those who identify as queer Latinx/a/o individuals. So, the question then becomes, what are student affairs practitioners doing to ensure queer Latinx/a/o students feel safe and supported on campus?

Student affairs as a field needs to begin critical discussions that critique the invisibility of queer Latinx/a/o students, as well as other Queers of Color within institutions, in research, and curricula. Jotería Studies can support programming by addressing the institutionalized racism that currently exists in affinity centers/cultural centers campus wide. This lens in turn will help create continuous accountability and assessment practices essential to reestablishing a more nuanced campus culture and climate inclusive of queer Latinx/a/o students. Furthermore, student affairs programming needs to challenge institutional practices that make no attempt to bring in critical discussions on multiple identities or their intersections, such as those pertaining to queer Latinx/a/o students. As Jotería Studies is not gender-specific or limited to a single ethnic group or form of sexual identity (Pérez, 2014), it can support the creation of intentional space designed from a queer Latinx/a/o student's perspective.

The narratives of queer Latinx/a/o students are essential when looking to decipher the interconnections between academic and social success together with persistence rates. Fine (2012) described that although LGBTQ+ students are present on campus across the country, very few institutions appear to be taking the appropriate measures such as developing centers, providing counseling, and refining curriculum to be more inclusive of LGBTQ+ topics necessary for the academic and personal success of LGBTQ+ students. The field of higher education has come to a point where it must reimagine the intent of programming and how it can bridge the gaps between academic and student affairs departments. Jotería and Jotería Studies develops a transformative pedagogy as it can be created to be physical by way of a cultural center, emotional by holding space to affirm one's voice and experience, and social by connecting students, faculty, and staff across departments and disciplines. Because of this, we affirm Pérez's (2014) argument that "Jotería voices and images materialize in multiple forms: cultural production, history, politics, and the everyday lives of individuals" (p. 145). Ultimately, Jotería Studies inherently resists the siloing that may happen with queer Latinx/a/o individuals'

experiences (i.e., separating social, academic, and cultural domains). As a result, those using Jotería Studies in higher education would see the benefit that is gained from collaborating with departments across campus in order to recognize how queer Latinx/a/o individuals are complex and require holistic attention.

Research: Critically Examining Institutional Structures

What Latinx/a/o students often find in colleges is a culture that is finely tuned to the needs and interests of a historically white student body, faculty, and staff (Naynaha, 2016). The research on sense of belonging and the experiences of queer white college students in higher education continues to be much more abundant than the research on the experiences of Queer College Students of Color (Strayhorn, 2019). When the search is limited to queer Latinx students across colleges and universities specifically, the lack of research is even more evident. The dearth of research and the increasing number of queer Latinx/a/o students pursuing college degrees warrants an increase in literature that can honor their voices and provide visibility. Jotería Studies creates a space that centers the Jotería subject as an arbiter of knowledge concerning social locations and uses their perspectives to understand how systems of oppression function (Pérez, 2014).

Jotería Studies can thus contribute to research projects in higher education that seek to understand how institutional structures disproportionately marginalize those who identify as queer *and* Latinx/a/o. This area of research is necessary because a majority of scholarship on queer and trans individuals in higher education has focused on students' experiences without interrogating how policies, practices, and structures at institutions create oppressive environments for these populations. What does exist for example in the realm of queer and trans student success frames this from a race-neutral perspective (e.g., Pitcher et al., 2018), not examining how racism might also frame the ways that institutions marginalize those who hold multiple minoritized identities. Because Jotería Studies centers the epistemic perspective of queer Latinx/a/o communities, it is a helpful framework to leverage to understand how structures at institutions can oppress these individuals, a task that we as authors are doing in our own work. Additionally, Jotería Studies may also be particularly meaningful in sites such as Hispanic-Serving Institutions that enroll large numbers of Latinx/a/o students because it can interrogate how a racialized institution can still (re)produce systemic inequity for those at the intersections of Latinx/a/o and queer identities.

Research: Ahistorical Nature of Queer Latinx/a/o Experiences in Higher Education

In addition to thinking about examining institutional structures themselves, *Jotería Studies* also challenges scholars to push back against the ahistorical nature of queer Latinx/a/o experiences in higher education settings. This is because *Jotería Studies* exists to not only conceptualize how systems like colonialism, racism, heterosexism, and trans oppression manifest in contemporary settings, but also, it reveals how these structures have existed historically (Gutierrez-Perez, 2015; Hames-García, 2014). Therefore, to engage with *Jotería Studies* in higher education involves wrestling with the racist and heterosexist histories of postsecondary settings (Graves, 2018; Museus et al., 2015).

In research studies on queer Latinx/a/o individuals, scholars frequently ask participants to describe the ways that systems of power operate on their college campuses in present-day times. For example, Peña-Talamantes's (2013b) exploration of how gay and lesbian Latina/o college students negotiate their identities across contexts (i.e., hometowns and college campuses) underscored the presence of heterosexism and racism at their institutions broadly and with support services specifically (e.g., LGBTQ centers). Although important insights, findings such as these beg the question of how historical legacies of minoritization also play a role in how students perceive their climates and understand their identities. With models of campus climate containing historical dimensions (e.g., Hurtado et al., 2012), it is imperative that researchers seek to understand how colleges and universities have not been mindful of attending to the unique realities of queer Latinx/a/o people and the ramifications of this fact. Thus, scholars should consider not only asking research participants about the ways that institutions marginalize queer Latinx/a/o identities and knowledges currently but also how those are tied to their understandings of how colleges and universities have functioned since their inception. Another way that *Jotería Studies* can challenge ahistoricism involves unearthing the stories of queer Latinx/a/o collegians that have always been present on campuses.

Though historians of higher education have made strides in bringing to light the ways that queer students have existed and resisted in these environments throughout the decades, these histories are overwhelmingly devoid of racial analyses (e.g., Graves, 2018). To this point, Gutierrez-Perez (2015) articulated, "as a marginalized community, *Jotería-historias* are often hidden, made invisible, and forgotten" (p. 94, emphasis in original). Though Gutierrez-Perez (2015) discussed their experiences in communication studies, this remains true in research

about higher education institutions broadly. Thus, Jotería Studies encourages higher education researchers to historicize in order to showcase how queer Latinx/a/o people have long been enacting agentic behaviors in oppressive college contexts. Such insights would be beneficial for increasing the consciousness of students, practitioners, and scholars alike about the experiences faced by those at the intersections of queerness and Latinx/a/o identities. Speaking to the potential of such scholarship to transform perspectives in higher education, Martínez (2011) described the following:

One need only to peruse the work of writers as diverse as Audre Lorde, and Gloria Anzaldúa, Ricardo Bracho and Essex Hemphill, among others, to see firsthand how resistance and enfranchisement have often been nurtured through narratives where identity and politics are written about from the perspective of queers of color. (p. 226)

These narratives would also locate the issues of racism, settler colonialism, trans oppression, and heterosexism in a historical trajectory in order to create action steps to interrupt the ways they are ingrained in the U.S. higher education system.

Research: Illuminating Narratives of Resistance and Liberation

At the center of Jotería Studies is the importance of narratives that center experiences of resistance and liberation for queer Latinx/a/o people in higher education. In essence, Jotería and Jotería Studies become necessary for several reasons. First, Jotería researchers have found that too often, queer Latinx/a/os and Chicanx/a/os and other Queer Communities of Color are pushed aside to the margins of society (Tijerina Revilla & Santillana, 2014). Furthermore, Jotería Studies reiterates how queer antagonism, patriarchy, and white supremacy are deeply embedded in academia and our communities; consequently, there is a lack of literature that speaks to the collective experiences of queer Latinx/a/o people (Tijerina Revilla & Santillana, 2014). Within higher education, Jotería Studies can be particularly meaningful as a framework to showcase not only how queer Latinx/a/o individuals navigate these systems but ultimately, how they thrive within these structures.

Scholarship on queer Latinx/a/o students in higher education has begun to highlight the narratives of resistance that come from negative experiences navigating their race, ethnicity, and sexuality. For example, Tijerina Revilla (2009) explored sexual identity in a Chicana/Latina student organization, Raza Womyn at UCLA, where a *Muxerista* vision of social justice centered the voices of Chicana Latina women. Tijerina Revilla (2009) stated, “By challenging and creating

spaces of resistance that create a different reality for fluid/Queer resisters, Raza Womyn created the space for radical transformation in the identity and politics of *muxeristas*” (p. 59). Moreover, Duran, Rodriguez, et al. (2019) investigated how five gay Latino college men engaged in love involved a complex negotiation of their environments and desires. In embracing their desires, these participants resisted heterosexist and racist norms, creating their own queer Latinx/a/o realities in the process. These examples communicate how scholars have started to slowly illustrate the resilience that comes with identifying as part of the queer Latinx/a/o community.

To make meaning of their intersecting identities, queer Latinx/a/o students find a way to be seen, which often times is shunned from the dominant narrative that is higher education today. Tijerina Revilla (2010) went on to illustrate strategies used by students to create not only safe spaces but also “counterspaces” of resistance within academia—that is, spaces in which they are actively resisting mainstream perspectives, particularly those that uphold white supremacist, imperialist, patriarchal, heteronormative, and citizenist ideologies (p. 39). Tijerina Revilla and Santillana’s (2014) *Jotería* identity and consciousness framework further provided ways that queer Latinx/a/o people engage in asset-based approaches to marginality. Critical Race Theory in Education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano, 1997), Chicana Feminist Epistemology (Bernal, 1998), and Tijerina Revilla’s (2004) *Muxerista* Framework can be seen as the foundational tools used to create a *Jotería* identity and consciousness, as they each acknowledge the ways that structural inequalities shape the lives of minoritized people while foregrounding their practices of resilience. With these foundations in mind, Tijerina Revilla & Santillana (2014) described *Jotería* identity and consciousness with the following terms: counterstories; heterosexism; queer; Latina/o/x; *Jotería*; brown; and queerstory (p. 178).

These terms are imperative to note as they reinforce empowerment, are intentionally radical and decolonial, as well as personify an oppositional consciousness (Pérez, 2014, p. 144). When queer Latinx/a/o individuals’ counterstories are shared, it is necessary to show the presence of “fun, laughter, and radical queer love” (Tijerina Revilla & Santillana, 2014, p. 174). Specifically, *Jotería* identity and consciousness pushes back against deficit narratives that queer Latinx/a/o people solely experience oppression and lack agency in the face of such structures. Instead, *Jotería* Studies as a praxis acknowledges how queer Latinx/a/o individuals resist, grow, transform, and ultimately belong to oneself. Thus, future research in higher education would

benefit from employing these Jotería Studies terms collectively as an organizing framework to center the liberatory potential that queer Latinx/a/o people actualize within postsecondary settings.

Conclusion

To open up the possibilities for liberatory consciousness and practices in the study of higher education means to articulate and resist the structures of oppression that are interwoven into the tapestries of the academy. Taking up this call, Jotería Studies functions as an analytic that not only centers the experiences of queer Latinx/a/o people but also pushes back against the very fibers of colonialism, racism, heterosexism, trans oppression, and more. Therefore, this article informs higher education educators, scholars, and student affairs practitioners to reflect on how Jotería Studies can serve to move their practice forward. Specifically, we argued that Jotería Studies has the potential to help faculty and staff understand intersectional struggles of oppression, as well as the practices of resistance that queer Latinx/a/o individuals exhibit. Queer Latinx/a/o individuals have always existed on college campuses, and we as authors assert that it is time for Jotería Studies to be taken up more substantially in the field of higher education.

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