

TOWARDS A (R)EVOLUTIONARY M.E.CH.A: INTERSECTIONALITY, DIVERSITY,
AND THE QUEERING OF XICANISM@

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (M.E.Ch.A), one of the oldest organizations of the Chicano movement. History shows that M.E.Ch.A has been able to reflect on itself and change accordingly; thus, it has been able to stay alive due to internal debates from the 1960s to the 1990s. In the 1960s, male, heterosexual Mexicans dominated the Chicano movement. In the 1980s, Xicanas challenged them to look past their privileges into more intersectional, inclusive identities. My research question is: in 2013, how do Californian MEChistAs view themselves, their political consciousness, and their social justice work?

MEChistAs view themselves as an inclusive, diverse, and progressive organization. Chican@/Xican@ is a political identity and ideology that includes women, queers, and non-Mexicans. Women and queers took leadership of the organization, which shows that the revised historical documents made a difference. However, M.E.Ch.A continues a Mexican-centric organization that isolates Central Americans, South Americans, and Afro-Latin@s. M.E.Ch.A has changed since the 1960s in many ways, but the work continues. M.E.Ch.A still needs to address several internal debates as an organization, such as: Aztlán's meanings, community versus campus organizing, generational gaps, and working with social organizations. Despite these debates, M.E.Ch.A has survived.

Using 22 in-depth interviews with contemporary MEChistAs in California from 10 different universities, I examined the identities and politics of M.E.Ch.A activists. I enact Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collin's standpoint theory to guide the research and apply third world feminism and ideology/utopia theories to analyze the ideas and concepts of the MEChistAs.

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Dedication

My dedication is to Movimiento Estudiantil Xican@ de Aztlán. In particular, M.E.X.A. de SJSU (San Jose State University MEXistAs) ignited my passion for social justice and liberation, which grew throughout this study. This is also dedicated to San Francisco and Hayward, the neighborhoods that I grew up in, because I would not have my consciousness without all my struggles and successes.

Preface

My first contact with M.E.Ch.A was at an annual high school conference, Raza Day, where San Jose State M.E.X.A members, also discussed as MEChistAs, taught youth about culture, politics, unity, and higher education and empowered students to assist their communities. From them, I learned how to resist oppression and build community support for political action. As an undergraduate, my comrades encouraged my M.E.X.A chapter to expand the meaning of Chicano identity from one defined as male, Mexican, and heterosexual to one that cared about diverse groups and communities. As a Central American, I was encouraged to push for recognition of transnational issues, such as the Iran-Contra scandal in Nicaragua. As a woman, they encouraged me to hold leadership positions. My colleagues elected female and male co-chairs and organized regional and statewide queer awareness workshops. Was my chapter unique? Alternatively, did other M.E.Ch.A chapters also adopt this approach to identity, ideology, and politics? My research question is: in 2013, how do Californian MEChistAs view themselves, their political consciousness, and their social justice work?

As an organization, M.E.Ch.A has not always promoted acceptance and equality as its political goals. The literature suggests that early chapters of M.E.Ch.A produced politics dominated by heterosexual Mexican males. Recently, M.E.Ch.A research shows that they have revised their documents to honor and acknowledge women, queer, and non-Mexicans. This study examines how today MEChistAs view themselves in terms of identity, ideology, and politics.

My research will contribute to multiple aspects of sociology. First, it will contribute to the sociological literature of M.E.Ch.A, of which there is only one. Second, it will use standpoint theory and intersectional exploration to analyze M.E.Ch.A. It will contribute to an

understanding of identity, race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation within social movements. Third, it will help Chicana/o organizers to understand the history and ideas of their organization as a social movement.¹ Fourth, it will examine the role that students have played in changing higher education and in their communities, which will help university administrators and Latina/o students understand political change within these institutions. Lastly, my research will add to Chicano/a studies scholarly work because most prior research ends in 1999.

In order to begin understanding M.E.Ch.A as a social phenomenon, we must first understand M.E.Ch.A's historical context within the Chicano movement. My literature review focuses on M.E.Ch.A's definition and recent changes, its concerns with sexism, its queer issues, and the rise of the Central and South American population in California. I will then describe theories to analyze the social movement that relies on standpoint theory, third world feminism, and ideology/utopia analysis. I will discuss the qualitative methodology that I used to answer my questions. Lastly, I will discuss my findings from the interviews.

¹ Throughout this paper, I will refer to the original components of the 1960s as Chicano to respect its historical origins. However, I will refer to the rest as Chicana/os in order to write inclusively. Toward the end, I use Chican@/Xican@ as an inclusive term, which I expand in the results section.

Chapter 1 - Historical Context

This section focuses on the history of the Chicano movement in the 1960s. Before the 1960s, it is crucial to understand the relationship between Chicana/os and their land. Colonialist invaded, but no conquered indigenous tribes of the Americas because of resistance. Thus, Indigenous people remain closely associated with their land. Chicana/os and Latina/os have a mixed heritage with Indigenous, Spanish, and African ancestry (Acuña, 1974). Some people accept it and some deny it; it is a complicated relationship because of internalized racism and colonialism. Mexico and the United States also have a long history ending with the United States taking the northern part of what used to be sovereign Mexico (Moraga, 2011). Ultimately, the American policy of manifest destiny, while benefiting a growing America, did not take into account multiple perspectives, as advanced by Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collins. Most academia ignores the perspectives of Indigenous people, paving the way for future discrimination and racism. People of color faced overt and covert racism on a daily basis. The Ku Klux Klan, Texas Rangers, nativists, and, later, minutemen terrorized people of color (Acuña, 2010). Immigration policies were strict toward Mexicans, yet they exploited them in guest worker programs. People of color faced massive poverty, segregation, and the military draft (Acuña, 2010). These existing conditions, fueled by the civil rights era, ignited the Chicano movement. Chicana/os felt empowered to fight for a cause they could believe in.

I will begin by discussing the meaning of the term Chicano. In March 1969, Chicana/o students met in Denver for the First National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference and adopted the identity “Chicano/a” (Acuña, 2011). This was partly in response to the Black Power movement, which had worked for a change in identity from “Negro” to “Black” (Acuña, 2011). Originally, the term Chicana/o was derogatory, but the activists used it as a “badge of honor,” so

they could reach out to “the most exploited sector of the U.S. Mexican community” (Acuña, 2010).

The 1960s exploded with social action and resistance among oppressed groups. The Chicano movement during 1965-1975 in California was comprised of multiple ideologies. The movement consisted of student and non-student organizations that wanted to advance the Mexican community (Correa, 2010). I divide this section into different subdivisions of the Chicano movement. I begin with the farm workers movement since it usually represents the Chicano movement. I continue with La Raza Unida Partido-- one of the least known elements of the movement--, which opposed the two-party system. Later on, I describe the youth component of the Chicano movement when high school students in Los Angeles walked out of their schools with concrete demands. I also address the college student involvement in the Chicano movement as they fought for higher education, ethnic studies, and an increase in faculty of color. Another aspect of the Chicano movement was its collaboration with other communities of color. I continue with another less known topic, which is the leftist tendency of Chicana/os in the movement. I explain another aspect of the left in the Chicano movement, the Brown Berets. Finally, I discuss the role that women and Chicana feminism played during the Chicano movement and how they challenged male dominance.

Farm Workers’ Movement

The most well known aspect of the Chicano movement is the farm workers’ movement with Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. Cesar Chavez focused on “nonviolent militancy” and dedicated his life to social justice (Mariscal, 2004). Frequently, he was in jail and fasted in order to rally his supporters (Acuña, 2010 & Mariscal, 2004). However, this was not the only farm

workers movement; Mexican Americans led another farm worker movement the decade before, although it was unsuccessful.

It began on September 8, 1965 with the Filipino farm workers voting to go on strike. A week later, the United Farm Workers (UFW) voted to join them (Acuña, 2010). The UFW organized attempts to bring about structural change to the decision-making processes (Goodwin, 2009). The UFW had an Alinsky-style community organization based on securing union contracts and program services and social activities (Goodwin, 2009). They used massive agricultural strikes, boycotts aided by organized labor, and political demands supported by the liberal community (Goodwin, 2009). The political environment showed that the government divided their views over the farm workers' policies and mass support in the UFW. The end of the guest worker program, also known as the bracero program, strengthened the union's position (Acuña, 2010). Their boycotts became national and international causes that received support from organized labor and liberal organizations, such as civil rights groups, churches, and foundations (Goodwin, 2010). This massive support affected the farm workers' movement because, according to the Social Movement Reader, "143 actions were organized by farmworker insurgents and 71% of them were concrete in character" (Goodwin, 2010; 327). Thus, they were successful. The UFW had over a hundred contracts signed, wages increased by a third, and union hiring halls were in operation in every major agriculture area in California (Goodwin, 2010).

However, there are other views about the UFW and Cesar Chavez. While the UFW made great strides in the agriculture area, Carlos Muñoz argues that "in fact, Chavez has been and remains the leader of a labor movement and later a union struggle that was never an integral part of the Chicano movement" (Muñoz, 1989; 7). This is because the UFW did not support

nationalism or neo-separatism. Chavez said that he did not consider himself “a Chicano leader, but the organizer of a union representing a multiracial constituency of rank-and-file workers” (Muñoz, 1989; 7 & Mariscal, 2004). Chavez and the UFW dedicated their support to the Democratic Party, even though there were other political parties in need of their support. People also criticized Chavez because he was against undocumented workers and advocated for a closed border policy (Mariscal, 2004). Yet, Mariscal (2004) claims the “UFW indirectly assisted in the formation of a more radical Chicana/o identity that ended up challenging U.S. capitalism.” Even though Cesar Chavez did not self-identify as a Chicano leader, his presence created a space and environment that allowed Chicana/o consciousness to grow. Therefore, he is still crucial to the Chicano movement. Overall, Cesar Chavez has been the face of the Chicano movement, yet the UFW did not support other areas of the movement.

La Raza Unida Partido (LRUP)

Another aspect of the Chicano movement was the creation of a third party known as La Raza Unida Partido. In 1970, there were 2.5 million Mexicans in California (Navarro, 2000). Communities saw the Democratic Party as the “party of the poor,” but Mexicans were victims of gerrymandering, disenfranchisement, and powerlessness (Acuña, 1972). The rise of consciousness in the civil rights era made Chicana/o activists critical of the nation’s liberal capitalist system and the two-party system (Acuña, 2010). LRUP was an affirmation of the Chicana/o self-determination (Acuña, 1972). Their fight was about the failure of California to adequately represent the Chicana/o community. The major concern of LRUP organizers was to get LRUP on the ballot as an official party (Muñoz, 2011). It spread throughout many states and won many local elections.

It began in 1969 when there was a conference at California State University, Hayward, and there was a divide in politics; some wanted Cesar Chavez to run for governor, as a Democrat while others wanted a new political party based on Chicano nationalism (Muñoz, 2011). According to Muñoz in *Youth, Identity, and Power*, Cesar Chavez never supported the La Raza Unida Partido (7). This created a conflict between organizations and organizers. Moreover, the politics in California were different because the LRUP did not solely focus on Mexicans, but also Central and Southern Americans (Muñoz, 2011). All of these dynamics made LRUP different from other states. LRUP had bases from Southern California in San Diego and Los Angeles to the Valley in Stockton and San Bernardino to Northern California in the Bay Area and Sacramento (Navarro, 2000). LRUP also had college students organizing with them and sharing information, and they were able to learn from each other (Muñoz, 2011).

Yet, LRUP had major issues. California LRUP was not as organized as Texas and did not have as many dedicated members for a strong power base (Navarro, 2000). According to Navarro, LRUP was also spending too much time on ideology instead of organizing the streets (Navarro, 2000). LRUP in California was different in that some members were Marxists, who believed that it was a revolutionary party for all oppressed people, while others saw LRUP as exclusively for Chicana/os (Navarro, 2000). Ultimately, with only 35,000 registrants, LRUP failed in becoming an official party. They lacked finance and organization (Navarro, 2000). There were also structural barriers. Overall, California had restrictive laws that activists could not overcome (Navarro, 2000). The biggest impact that they made was that Mexicans started running as Democrats to get representation for their community (Navarro, 2000). LRUP allowed Mexicans and other Latinos to question the two-party system and fight for the government representation they deserve.

High School Youth

Chicana/os' youth involvement made this era unique to any other time. Chicana/o students in East Los Angeles were up to 96% Latina/os and they had an over 50% high school dropout rate (Acuña, 2010). High school students designed strategy sessions and discussions in preparation for walkouts. They walked out of their classrooms in protest to maltreatment because of the color of their skin. In March 1968, nearly 10,000 Chicana/o students walked out of five different Los Angeles high schools: Lincoln, Roosevelt, Garfield, Wilson, and Belmont (Acuña, 2010 & Solórzano, Bernal, 309). According to Muñoz (1989), "it represented the first major mass protest ever taken by Mexican Americans and this was the entrance of Mexican youth into the 1960s movement" (xi). This was a pivotal point in history for the Chicano movement. The students demanded the dismissal of racist teachers, the creation of Chicana/o curriculum, and more programs for low-skilled jobs (Acuña, 2010 & Solórzano, Bernal, 309). They also wanted the freedom to speak Spanish in schools (Muñoz, 1989).

These walkouts did not come without a price. Police inflicted violence on high school students in order to suppress the movement, and many of the organizers faced charges with conspiracy to commit misdemeanors (Acuña, 2010). The walkouts increased student and community consciousness. Mobilization increased due to the persecution of the organizers, L.A. 13, who were 13 organizers unjustly arrested (Blackwell, 2010). Young women and men led this movement (Blackwell, 2010). It had a huge leadership and participation by the Brown Berets, which I expand on them in another section. The blowouts in L.A. led to other walkouts all over the southwest United States.

Youth came out in the thousands and were finally a central role in the movement, challenging the system and those in power (Muñoz, 1989). Los Angeles students brought

national attention to Chicana/o issues in education (Acuña, 1974). Acuña (2010) argues that for the first time, Chicana/os learned that they had the power to disrupt the system by walking out of meetings sponsored by the federal government, out of school, and away from the Democratic Party. Their political involvement reflected concern for themselves and their community. According to Solórzano & Bernal (2001), Chicana/os organized a transformative resistance by opposing stereotypes and making change through the education system. Even though youth did not participate in the farm workers' movement, Cesar Chavez and the rank-and-file workers also inspired high school students (Muñoz, 1989).

Their goals for a better future motivated students. The high school Chicana/o student movement cannot be forgotten because it inspired a student movement that fought for broader social and political equality. Walkouts also occurred throughout California as a valid tactic for social change. In addition, the Chicano movement grew as high school activism spread to colleges.

College Students

As Chicana/os increased their enrollment in higher education, they were able to use their education to contribute to the movement. The blowouts in Los Angeles pushed Chicana/os to go to college and even participate in the movement; consequently, Chicana/os began to enroll in college in significant numbers after the walkouts (Acuña, 2010). With the higher Chicana/o population, the Educational Opportunity Program supported Chicana/os with financial aid and tutoring (Acuña, 2010).

During the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, Chicana/os adopted *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* and *El Plan de Santa Bárbara*, which advocated for nationalism and self-determination (Muñoz, 1989). Within a month, student leaders all over California founded El

Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (M.E.Ch.A), which became the largest student organization in the Chicano movement and spread across colleges in the Southwest (Muñoz, 1989). Organizations such as the Mexican American Youth Organization, Mexican American Student Association, Mexican American Student Confederation, and the League of United Latin American Citizens merged into one as a symbol of unity (Muñoz, 1989 & Acuña, 1979 & 2010). I discuss M.E.Ch.A in-depth in chapter two. *El Plan de Santa Bárbara* allowed the rise of Chicana/o studies.

M.E.Ch.A was key in establishing Mexican American/Chicana/o studies in California and throughout the nation (Acuña, 2010). They had four main goals: one, to create and share new knowledge about the Chicana/o community; two, to correct old academic knowledge; three, to apply research knowledge to improve the Chicana/o community; four, to support the cultural resistance; and five, to support social change through social justice (Macías, 2012). Through this space, they questioned “truth” and “objectivity” because they misrepresented the Chicana/o community (Macías, 2012). Overall, Chicana/o Studies pushed for an increase in Latina/o student admission, Chicana/o studies, Chicana/o faculty, and financial aid (Acuña, 2010). Between 1968 and 1973, institutions of higher learning in California established more than 50 programs (Acuña, 2010). Within this struggle, there was a division over what to name these programs; some wanted Mexican American Studies, others wanted Chicana/o Studies, and others wanted Raza Studies (Muñoz, 1989). By 1972, the M.E.Ch.A leadership criticized even Chicana/o Studies faculty for “lacking commitment to the goals of the student movement” (Muñoz, 1989; 158). Yet, M.E.Ch.A had its own problems within the organization.

Women in M.E.Ch.A fought for their voice and space, but they hit a wall of resistance from men in the organization. According to Blackwell (2010),

Women were not seen as the real political subjects of the movement but as auxiliary members with gendered division of labor. Women were discouraged from taking leadership roles and were undermined, and women felt that the sexual politics of the movement were counterproductive to their full participation and treated them as sexual objects (65).

This struggle also occurred in Chicana/o Studies (Blackwell, 2010). Chicana/o studies went from race, class, and culture in the 1980s to race, class, and gender/sexuality in the 1990s (Macías, 2012). Women were a huge faction of the Chicano movement and challenged their own movement. I expand further on women's involvement in other areas of the Chicano in a different section.

Another aspect of the college student section of the Chicano movement consists of graduation ceremonies. At San Jose State University, 200 graduating Chicana/o students walked out of their commencement ceremony, denouncing the university's lack of commitment to the Mexican American community and the inadequate cultural and diversity training of their professionals (Muñoz, 1989). This event, carried out by mostly members of M.E.Ch.A, led to the creation of the first Chicano Commencement in the United States. San Francisco State University soon did the same. It spread all over the country (Muñoz, 1989). San Jose State University also had the country's first Mexican American Studies program (Rodríguez, 1995). In sum, the Chicana/o organizations, centers, departments, and institutions served the needs of the community and students.

Cross Cultural Unity

Chicana/os in the Chicano movement also did work with other movements during the Civil Rights Era. In the 1950s, the Community Service Organization trained UFW. They saw themselves as part of a greater movement for multiracial unity and did not identify themselves as part of the Chicano movement (Muñoz, 1989).

There are also unity movements such as the Third World Liberation Front (Blackwell, 23). Students went across racial/ethnic lines to organize around a greater cause. Chicana/o students collaborated with the black student movement and Students for Democratic Society (Acuña, 2010). According to Muñoz (1989), Mexican American students joined Black students in a strike demanding a school of ethnic studies. This was the first time that Mexicans and other third world students united to create a political organization. There was also a series of third world student confrontations in the Bay Area and at University of California-Berkeley, which led to the formation of another Third World Liberation Front and a student strike (Muñoz, 1989). Their goals were to expose the university's lack of commitment to meeting the educational needs of third world people, create a Third World College with Black Studies, Raza studies, and Asian studies, open resources for the community, and increase admission of third world peoples and poor working class whites (Muñoz, 1989).

Rodríguez (1995) agrees that the Chicano movement involved united activists of diverse origins and agendas. For example, Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez was seriously involved in the Civil Rights Movement, where she participated in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Black Panther Party, and Chicana/o work in New Mexico with *El Grito Del Norte*, an internationalist woman run newspaper (Acuña, 308). She was one of many multiracial coalition organizers. Daniel de Los Reyes was a Black Beret, who also worked with Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee as a teenager. Furthermore, many Chicana/os worked with Native American organizations in the Red Power movement, such as the American Indian Movement, to help organize the Trail of Broken Treaties (Acuña, 2010). Politicized Chicana/o students became involved in issues such as the Vietnam War (Acuña, 2010 & Muñoz, 1989). Brown Berets organized the Chicano Moratorium, an anti-war protest, which I discussed in

another section. Women of color in these organizations critiqued sexism in nationalism and civil rights movements, and the racism in the women's liberation movement (Muñoz, 1989). These are examples of a transnational form of solidarity and internationalism that challenged capitalism and imperialism (Muñoz, 1989). Chicana/os did not just want the betterment of their own race, but also fought for the betterment of all oppressed communities.

Leftists

Marxism also influenced the Chicano movement, yet it does not get as much attention because of the anticommunism climate in the United States. The Cuban revolution's success in 1959 marked a point in Chicano leftism, where "a Latino nation did not bow to U.S. demands and attracted a wide range of Chicano/a youth" (Mariscal, 2002). Moreover, the death of Ernesto "Che" Guevara in 1967 ignited Chicana/o youth and they made him an icon (Mariscal, 2002). It was a radicalization process for students and community members all over the Southwest. Mariscal (2002) argues that the Chicano movement as nationalist, separatist, and reactionary. Yet, there has been Marxist-inspired thought and ideology from Chicana/o socialists and union members; therefore, it is not an anomaly (Mariscal, 2002). Acuña (2011) agrees with Mariscal in that "the Marxist critique of capitalism was popular" during this time. Therefore, it was common for organizers to have exposure to leftists. Furthermore, Blackwell (2010) concurs, "the new left movement in the 1960s needed a new special attention to the pivotal role that Mexicans and Chicanas played" (49). Chicana/os in the left organizations also shaped their movement.

However, there was some conflict between the ideologies. It was difficult for some people because "socialism and communism were white systems" until Cuba made them complex (Muñoz, 1989; 65). Nationalists believed that Marxists undermined the question of identity (Acuña, 2010). Since white men created and theorized these systems, it reminded people of

color of white dominance and privilege. On the other hand, it forced writers and challengers to distinguish between “white” communism and Cuban, African, Chinese, and Vietnamese communism (Mariscal, 2002; 62). Furthermore, Chicana/o authors began to argue that communism, “familyism”, or tribalism is not foreign to Chicana/os because it goes back to their indigenous roots (Mariscal, 2002). Marxists argued that revolutionary transformation could not happen just based on race, sex, sexual orientation, or age, unless it is with an economic perspective (Acuña, 2010). Both perspectives contributed insightful concepts and helped each other grow.

This revolutionary nationalism grew in the Southwest. For example, in the Mission District of San Francisco, they created a pan-Latino organization with strong anti-imperialist elements (Mariscal, 2002). Socialist Worker Party (SWP) and other radical groups had Chicana/o Trotskyists (Mariscal, 2002). Some aspects of LRUP and M.E.Ch.A were highly influenced by Marxists (Muñoz, 1989). LRUP criticized Cesar Chavez and the UFW for endorsing the Democratic Party and calling Kennedy “their president” by stating, “they are doing a disservice and misleading the people” (Mariscal, 2004). LRUP challenged the two-party system dominated by capitalism and imperialism. Some M.E.Ch.A members with Marxist ideology criticized M.E.Ch.A for not being an effective organization because of its bureaucracy and for being a reactionary group (Mariscal, 2002). Thus, leftists influenced these aspects of the movement.

In the Los Angeles area, local activists formed *Centro de Acción Social Autonomo-Hermandad General de Trabajadores* (CASA). They provided social services and legal defense to Latina/o workers (Licón, 2009). Their members peaked into the thousands in the mid-1970s, but it slowed down when they organized reading study groups to learn about revolutionary

theory (Licón, 2009). “They advocated trans-national workers’ unity and defended undocumented immigrants” (Licón, 2009). They had an overt presence in M.E.Ch.A because they would quote CASA’s catch phrases (Licón, 2009). CASA had a large presence in Southern California within the Chicano movement.

Chicanas were also part of the left movement. Women were educated in history, revolutions, and theory. There were Xicana feminists, such as Anna Nieto Gomez, that argued, “Marxist-Leninist ideology and women’s history of socialist countries offer a clear analysis as to the function and division of the sex roles and of racism” (Mariscal, 2002; 64). For some Xicanas, it offered a holistic view of oppression. Xicanas were able to connect the oppression of patriarchy to imperialism (Acuña, 2010). They understood the interconnection between economics, race, and gender in the United States (Blackwell, 2010). Chicana feminism is a Marxist view of economic justice (Blackwell, 2010). Additionally, SWP offered safe spaces for Xicanas to challenge patriarchy and heterosexism; it was a training ground for Chicana labor organizers (Acuña, 2010).

The new movement in the 1960s expanded into different aspects. For instance, the Brown Berets also had Marxist tendencies with their antiwar agenda emphasized the war at home faced by the working class people of color and they made “a close analogy between the plight of the Chicano and the Vietnamese peasant” (Mariscal, 2002; 67). They could take a political stand against imperialism, colonization, and economic depredation. Unions were also impactful. According to Acuña (2010), Chicana/o trade union leaders were a key aspect of the organizing in their communities. Overall, the leftists made the rest of the Chicano movement recognize the meaning of liberation and shaped Chicana/o issues and their agenda (Acuña, 2010). The leftists

within the Chicano movement often are not acknowledged because in the United States, it is taboo being a socialist or communist, yet it should not be ignored.

Brown Berets

Another aspect of the Chicano movement, the Brown Berets, has to do with nationalism and militancy. The Brown Berets rose in the community to fight against police brutality. At first, they were known as Young Citizens for Community Action and they focused on “alert patrol” until they became more militant (Acuña, 1974 & Correa, 2010). By early 1968, students from the East Los Angeles walkouts formed the Brown Berets and their goal was to put an end to the discrimination and other injustices suffered by Chicana/o students (Acuña, 2010). They also dealt with issues of Chicano community needs for food, housing, employment, and education (Acuña, 2010). Some of the Brown Berets even established free clinics and free breakfast programs (Acuña, 2010).

Many people compared the Brown Berets with the Black Panther Party because they were both paramilitary and had similar organizational structures (Acuña, 1974). However, the Brown Berets were much younger and included high school dropouts and street gang members. They were not strong Marxists, and they did not receive any financial support from liberal organizations (Acuña, 1974). According to Muñoz (1989), “the Brown Berets played a significant role in bringing street youth into the Chicano movement” (85). With street youth’s life experiences, it politicized them, so the Brown Berets were able to recruit them. Their street culture influenced their ideas. According to Acuña (1974), “the Brown Berets is one of the few Chicano organizations advocating physical measures to defend the Chicano community’s rights” (231). The Brown Berets, similar to the Black Panther Party, were ready to bear arms to defend their community against the police.

The police constantly harassed the Brown Berets because they believed that the Brown Berets were capable of overthrowing the government. The police raided, infiltrated, and slandered them (Acuña, 2010). According to Acuña (2010), the Brown Berets were a “threat to national security of the United States” (305). Their experience in the barrios and with the police shaped their ideology. More Chicana/os joined the Brown Berets as awareness of police brutality increased (Acuña, 1974). Ultimately, police brutality resulted in protests (Acuña, 2010). The state repression led to COINTELPRO infiltrations, government programs that purposefully sent spies to political organizations (Correa, 2010). Even with all the resistance they encountered from the police, Brown Berets spread to Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Washington, although these chapters were relatively small (Acuña, 2010). The Brown Berets were more influential than any other organization because of the fear by the government, and it forcibly shut the Brown Berets down.

The Brown Berets formed the National Chicano Moratorium Committee and held their first demonstration in December 1969 (Acuña, 2010). The main themes were the Vietnam War, U.S. imperialism, and Mexican American deaths (Correa, 2010). On August 1970, they held the first national protest in Los Angeles, where people from all over the United States arrived (Correa, 2010). According to Acuña (2010) and Correa (2010), there were 30,000 participants. It was a peaceful march and demonstration, until the police attacked the Chicano Moratorium (Muñoz, 1989). Some protestors fought back and it blew out of proportion. Stories alleged “the police trapped men, women, and children and caused pain with clubs (Acuña, 2010; 313). Estimated over 1,200 police officers conducted massive arrests filled with maltreatment (Acuña, 2010). Deputies even killed a 15-year-old boy at Laguna Park and two other people (Acuña, 2010 & Muñoz, 1989). The police repression ruined a peaceful event with peaceful goals. This

course of action by the police was common against anything the Brown Berets organized. State repression was one of the main reasons for its demise.

However, the machismo within the Brown Berets was also an issue. Women participated and contributed to the Brown Berets. They were extremely dedicated to Chicano Moratorium (Acuña, 2010). For example, Gloria Arellanes was the Minister of Finance and Correspondence of the Brown Berets, and she was crucial in creating and maintaining the Brown Berets' newspaper, *La Causa* (Acuña, 2010). Andrea Sanchez organized free medical clinics with the help and management of other Chicanas (Acuña, 2010). However, the clinic created conflict over control, and some women left the organization (Acuña, 2010). According to Blackwell (2010), "the women broke with the Berets and formed *Las Adelitas de Aztlán* to protest the ways their labor was appropriated and went unrecognized in running the Free Clinic in East Los Angeles" (36). This indicates that many women were unhappy and unappreciated as Brown Berets. These women created their own space to reconceptualize nationalism with gender consciousness because of the gendered division of labor in the movement (Blackwell, 2010 & Correa, 2010). Chicanas were dedicated to the movement, but the sexism in the Brown Berets pushed Chicanas into creating their own organizations. Correa (2010) believes that systems of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and classism, contributed to the end of the Brown Berets. Sexism was common for women who wanted to be part of the Chicano movement and led to the rise of Chicana feminism.

Chicana Feminism

Women have had important leadership positions in the movement, yet most of the time they are not the ones remembered. Blackwell (2010) states that Chicano history is based around "epic male heroes and it is not because Chicanas were not critical actors and leaders, but that the

conceptual frames of social movement scholars have made them invisible” (29). As people reflect about the 1960s in history, political science, or ethnic studies courses, the instructors who only focus on male figures in Chicano history are perpetuating the same systems of oppression that Chicanas have been fighting. Some people argue that the Chicano movement was male-dominated, which is true, but at the same time, that argument justifies the continued oversight of Chicanas in history; therefore, it is important to acknowledge them. There are probably dozens or more women who contributed to the Chicano movement whose work have not been acknowledged. This section will recognize some of these important women.

Dolores Huerta, co-founder and vice president of the UFW, has been the most well known woman in the Chicano movement (Acuña, 2010). Her contribution in organizing and leading strikes is substantive. Women such as Julia Luna Mount and Celia Luna de Rodriguez have also done extremely important work in the antiwar and Chicano movements with no recognition (Acuña, 2010). In addition, Mount’s daughter Tania was a main leader in the 1968 East Los Angeles school walkouts (Acuña, 2010). Elizabeth “Betita” Martinez helped build intersectionality and multi-nationalism with all of her work with the Black civil rights and Chicano movements (Acuña, 2010). From the unity section, she led the women-run newspaper with Enriqueta Vasquez, who wrote about women’s liberation within the Chicano movement (Acuña, 2010). Moreover, women wrote about U.S. militarism, interventions in Vietnam and Latin America, the Catholic Church, racism, and sexism (Acuña, 2010). Other women wrote about their experiences in academia. For instance, Dorinda Moreno published her own journal, *Las Cucharachas*. She also published an anthology and wrote in the newspaper *La Razon Mestiza* (Acuña, 2010). Chicana activism increased in the seventies, when middle class Chicanas were professionals and activists that wrote and attended conferences; they were able to

define their own political culture (Acuña, 2010 & Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). Yet, this should undermine the difficulties that Chicanas faced.

Throughout this chapter, there were descriptions of internal struggles between women and men in the Chicano movement. M.E.Ch.A struggled in particular because men's discrimination toward their sisters has been well documented. M.E.Ch.A's struggle is in chapter two. In another example, women in the Brown Berets, challenged men within their organization and eventually some women were so discontent that they created their own organization. Women also struggled with sexism within the LRUP. Over half of LRUP members were women (Muñoz, 1989), but this did not prevent discrimination. Martha Cotera criticized the LRUP, yet decided to work within the structure to change it (Acuña, 2010). She was not successful in bringing equality to LRUP. According to Muñoz (1989), LRUP believed that "racism is considered more central to the struggle for third world women's equality than sexism" (105). Simultaneously, LRUP "acknowledged that women were, as a whole, considered an oppressed group in the United States (Muñoz, 1989; 106). This was a huge problem because women were forced to relegate their gender identity and place racial identity first.

Another issue was that men tended to dominate the conversations on ideologies, social issues, and goals (Muñoz, 1989). Women, in the LRUP, created their own party to deal with women's issues called La Federación de Mujeres del Partido Raza Unida because of sexism (Muñoz, 1989). Their statement was: "We do not view men as the enemy but the system as being the oppressor. Our struggle is not a battle of the sexes but a common struggle for true liberation" (Muñoz, 1989; 117).

Historically, the Chicano movement was male-dominated movement with no women's involvement, yet this perspective overlooks the women who fought for their voice during and

after the movement. Even the idea of *carnalismo* (brotherhood) has been an exclusively masculine concept (Blackwell, 2010). As a result, Chicanas attempted to find their own sisterhood. Chicanas attended different conferences to discuss the “Chicana question.” In May 1971, over 600 Chicanas from 23 states went to La Conferencia de Mujeres por La Raza (Acuña, 2010). Half of the women walked out of the conference in protest because they believe the YWCA, the sponsor of the conference, were elitist and bureaucratic (Acuña, 2010). The other half of the women that stayed argued that the women that left were antifeminists, loyalists, and cultural nationalists. Chicanas faced their own internal struggle within the Chicana feminist ideology. Some Chicanas were “loyalists” because they supported men; on the other hand, there were other women who believed Chicano men and women could work together (Blackwell, 2010).

Throughout the Chicano movement, women struggled whether to stay in the Chicano movement or create their own movement. Some women decided that joining different organizations would be better. For example, many women joined the SWP since they were open to questioning both sexism and racism (Blackwell, 2010). On the other hand, other women thought creating their own organization would be the best solution. They built their own women’s caucus (Acuña, 2010). Moreover, according to Blackwell (2010), the Hijas de Cuauhtemoc were the first and the most influential Latina feminist organization that “forged an autonomous space for women’s political participation and challenged the gendered confines of Chicano cultural nationalism within campus and community politics and later in Chicana studies” (1). Women also formed other groups. Las Chicanas de Aztlán was an informal rap group of Chicana activists from Long Beach State University. According to Blackwell (201), “they named how the racial and economic oppression and educational inequality had gendered

and sexual differences that influences their lives as Chicanas, but were not addressed by the Chicano student movement” (44). They believed in providing support and encouragement for other Chicanas (Blackwell, 2010). Overall, through these experiences, women created a network of Chicanas that advocated for feminist issues within the Chicana community and for all.

Sexism was not limited to the Chicano movement. During the civil rights era, Black women struggled with men in Black nationalistic organizations and struggled with white women in the feminist, student, anti-war, and revolutionary movements (Accomando, 2008). Audre Lorde (1984) critiqued nationalism as an old structure of oppression and called for a new ideology without those same problematic ideas of capitalism and patriarchy. bell hooks (1989) examined the civil rights era from an “interlocking system of domination” perspective, which viewed identities as multiple and oppression as systematic (Accomando, 2008). Patricia Hill Collins (2004) argued that women of color saw lives as interconnected in varied ways. Women of color experience unique struggles and consciousness in an oppressive world (Brush Stewart, 1999).

M.E.Ch.A is one of the organizations that survived the civil rights era. I joined M.E.Ch.A in 2010 at San Jose State University because I wanted to be a part of a political organization. I felt that other organizations at San Jose State University were not doing enough community activism. Everyone I met in M.E.Ch.A was militant and interesting. They opened my eyes to political and social issues. I became aware of my identities partly because of M.E.Ch.A. My experience was so positive that I wanted to continue my work with M.E.Ch.A as a graduate student through research. My investigation will explore M.E.Ch.A’s present form. My research question is: in 2013, how do Californian MEChistAs view themselves, their political consciousness, and their social justice work? M.E.Ch.A has created a durable student

organization. This research is an attempt to show how M.E.Ch.A moves forward in creating social change.

Chapter 2 - M.E.Ch.A

This literature review focuses on M.E.Ch.A's definitions, structure, and recent research done by scholars. It elaborates on M.E.Ch.A's documented issues with sexism. It also addresses M.E.Ch.A's issues with queer politics and the rise of Xicanisma. Finally, it discusses the rise of Central and South American populations and M.E.Ch.A's attempts at inclusion and pan-ethnic identity in California.

What is M.E.Ch.A?

The letters in M.E.Ch.A reflect a challenge to power. *Movimiento* signifies a social movement. *Estudiantil* focuses on students creating, sustaining, and mobilizing the organization. *Chicano* identifies with oppressed communities that experience similar struggles. *Aztlán* refers to the birthplace of Aztecs, which affirms their Indigenous heritage (Muñoz, 1989). According to Acuña (2010), “the new name meant a change in the direction of the student movement to a commitment to confront the established order and no longer did students use integrationist methods.”

Over time, Aztlán has meant many things to different people, and these will be discussed in-depth in chapter five. It has three original meanings in the Chicano movement: one, it represents its origin, the Southwestern United States of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado; two, it is a unifying notion of a nation and a symbol of self-determination; three, it is reclaiming an indigenous past (Macías, 2010 & Valle, 1996). Licón (2009) states that Aztlán became a battle cry for Chicana/os that connected them to their land and ancestry. Valle (1996) states that Aztlán became the titles of newspapers, journals, and newsletters. While this is a physical space in the Southwest of the United States, it is also a mystical and spiritual space.

M.E.Ch.A began in the universities as vessels of resistance and communication. With their new space in higher education, Chicana/os began to network and organize. During the *National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference*, they adopted *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* as a plan for nationalism and an autonomous movement (Muñoz, 1989). The plan was “a revolutionary plan that promulgated the term Chicano/a as a symbol of resistance” (Acuña, 2010 & Sarabia & Price 2011). *El Plan de Santa Bárbara* established guidelines for M.E.Ch.A to educate Latina/os.

Each M.E.Ch.A had their own autonomous chapter, within which they had the right to decide internal affairs by chapter voting. It has a “bottom up” democratic structure (Valle, 1996). They were responsible for their local campus and community, and it was a “broad and non-central organizational structure” (Licón, 2009). In 1994, M.E.Ch.A established a national structure of ten regions: Alta Califas Norte, Alta Califas Sur, Centro Califaztlan, Pacific Northwest, Miclampa Cihuatlampa, Calpulli Montanas de Norte, South East Tejaztlán, Centro Aztlán, Tierra Mid-Atl, and Este Aztlán (Valenzuela, 2011). These regions had an annual conference to create a plan for national issues (Valenzuela, 2011).

Their structures include central, regional, state, and national meetings. California has have three regions: Norte, Central, and Sur (Valenzuela, 2011). They have bi-annual conferences, where they have to get funds from the university or by having fundraisers (Valenzuela, 2011). These conferences last for three days, Friday through Sunday, where they have workshops and gender caucuses (Valenzuela, 2011). It ends with “resolution circle”, where they decide which chapter is going to host next semester and vote on any position papers, statewide political actions, and changes in their documents (Valenzuela, 2011).

M.E.Ch.A had many different committees such as academic retention, campus affairs, internal, external, fundraiser, and political (Valle, 1996). Each chapter was able to organize based on what is going on in its community, such as demographics, racial climate, and political activities. This strategy ensured “a wide range of goals, tactics, and actions,” where some chapters had little communication to the greater structure (Licón, 2009). Some M.E.Ch.A chapters organized political campaigns to help win elections (Licón, 2009). While other chapters worked with local political organizations, such as Brown Berets, Black Student Union, Students for Justice for Palestine, and La Familia. MEChistAs learned, worked, organized, studied, and socialized on a daily basis.

M.E.Ch.A became the largest student organization in the Chicano movement and stretched across colleges in the Southwest (Muñoz, 1989). With both documents mentioned above, M.E.Ch.A commenced self-determination for the liberation of Chicano/as. Today, M.E.Ch.A is the oldest surviving student organization from the 1960s (Muñoz, 1989). It has more chapters than it did in the 1960s, and is active on most major campuses nationwide. By the 1990s, MEChistAs encountered a different political and culture climate than their precursors (Valle, 1996). According to Maria Valle (1996), the 1980s push for individualism also influenced Latina/o students, including MEChistAs.

Maria Eva Valle (1996) studied M.E.Ch.A at Arizona State University. Her study was a comparison of members involved with M.E.Ch.A from 1969-1971 and from 1989-1994, and she focused on experience, culture, politics, identities, and activities. M.E.Ch.A’s definition fits into a social movement because it is “collectivity acting with certain continuity to promote or resist changes in the society” (Valle, 1996). By using social movement theory, Valle (1996) states that M.E.Ch.A is a linear movement because it is a formal organization, and it is a fluid movement

because it has changed throughout time when MEChistAs leave and graduate every four to five years. Valle also implements resource mobilization by discussing the Chicano movement's use of university funds as incentives to create change and becoming institutionalized. Valle claims, "M.E.Ch.A becomes an institution within the university encompassed under the rubric of cultural diversity" (16). Valle found that the changing demographics along with the lack of social movement in the 1990s made M.E.Ch.A de Arizona State less militant, less ideologically dogmatic, and more accepting of diversity (Valle, 1996). M.E.Ch.A has ideological pluralism that encompasses diverse philosophies, attitudes, strategies, and demands that ultimately "diffuse the student movement, creating a lack of ideological and political continuity" (Valle, 1996: 131). Valle (1996) argues that the university has institutionalized M.E.Ch.A and the individualistic politics of Reaganomics, causing a shift away from its original goals and values, and that MEChistAs are more concerned with upward mobility than creating radical change.

Licón (2009) also studied M.E.Ch.A from 1967-1999 in California by analyzing several M.E.Ch.A and Chicana/o Youth conferences. Licón (2009) argues that MEChistAs worked closely with adult mentors and leaders, and they were more likely to be full-time organizers. M.E.Ch.A supported the UFW, LRUP, Brown Berets, and Chicano Press Association (Licón, 2009). Licón also states that Chicano identities and labels have shifted over time, reflecting their barrios and campuses. From 1972-1992, M.E.Ch.A experienced a challenge to its previous nationalistic ideology from Marxist-Leninists with CASA and August Twenty-ninth Movement (ATM), and there were internal struggles throughout M.E.Ch.A (Licón, 2009). Later on, League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS) infiltrated M.E.Ch.A, which dominated its politics. This led to M.E.Ch.A policies and reforms designed to prevent that from happening again (Licón, 2009). In the mid-1990s, M.E.Ch.A revised *El Plan de Santa Bárbara* and Philosophy of M.E.Ch.A to

prevent infiltration, and was hesitant thereafter to work with other organizations (Licón, 2009). With the rise of women critiques, it was revised again.

Monica Valenzuela also researched M.E.Ch.A from 1969-2010 in Southern California by analyzing historical documents, primary and secondary sources, and interviews. Brotherhood and patriarchal family was the foundation of El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán, which influenced women to internalize sexism (Valenzuela, 2011). *El Plan de Santa Bárbara* was the inception of Chicana/o Studies and M.E.Ch.A. While some of the rhetoric seems violent, Valenzuela argues that contextualization is crucial to understand the racism and discrimination of the 1960s. Valenzuela (2011) argues, “once M.E.Ch.A became a formal organization, it evolved through stages or re-evaluation and change” (41). They kept evolving their position as different generations joined M.E.Ch.A through the changes in historical documents (Valenzuela, 2011). She states that the infiltration by LRS forced M.E.Ch.A to look at their organization and reevaluate itself to change its position on class, sex, sexual orientation, and ethnicity (Valenzuela, 2011).

Sexism in M.E.Ch.A

Historically, men in M.E.Ch.A discriminated against women (Blackwell, 2011). While M.E.Ch.A passed a resolution about women’s leadership roles in the organization, women still played secondary roles, such as secretaries and assistants (Muñoz, 1989). In 1969, there was a dispute over Anna Nieto Gómez winning the presidency of M.E.Ch.A. Some men openly refused representation by a woman (Blackwell, 2011). Women marginalized their gender identity to place their racial identity first, which created a division between Xicana “loyalists” and “traitors.” Throughout Chicano organizations, women faced discrimination. M.E.Ch.A was just one of the many organizations that perpetuated sexism.

Sexism manifested in multiple ways. It was both overt and covert. In the latter, men dominated the conversations concerning ideologies, social issues, and goals (Muñoz, 1989). Many Xicanas did not attack their brothers, but they wanted them to understand that women's oppression was just as important. Blackwell argues that marginalization for Xicanas occurred on three levels. First, Xicanas were in marginalized and gendered positions, such as secretarial work, for which they garnered no recognition or acknowledgement. Second, they were pushed out of leadership roles and forced into servitude for the movement. Third, Xicanas were sexual objects and expected to make themselves sexually available to men in the movement (Blackwell, 2011). They also faced internal struggles with other Xicanas in the Chicano movement.

Women were indecisive about the Chicano movement. Some women who decided to join different organizations were "traitors." Some Xicanas joined the Socialist Workers' Party because the organization challenged both sexism and racism (Correa, 2010). Other women created their own organizations. Other Xicanas, known as "loyalists," stayed in their Chicano organization to change it from within. Xicanas in M.E.Ch.A did both. While some women focused their time and energy on the development of their own feminist organization (Muñoz, 1989), others built their own women's caucus within M.E.Ch.A (Acuña, 2010). Women created a Xicana network that advocated for feminist issues within the Xicana community.

At UCLA, women split from M.E.Ch.A and founded an organization called Raza Womyn (Revilla, 2005). This was a response to the sexism and homophobia within M.E.Ch.A, where many men did not want women to have their own talking circles or separate meetings (Revilla, 2005). In 1979, Raza Womyn was an organization and received university recognition in 1981 (Revilla, 2005). Raza Womyn did not want non-Mexican Latinas feeling excluded, so it was called Raza, unlike Chicana, because they did not want to be Mexican-centric (Revilla, 2005).

They decided on Womyn with a “y” to evoke a feminist perspective (Revilla, 2005). Even though Raza Womyn concentrated on support and advocacy, they felt tokenized and excluded by other organizations (Revilla, 2005). They were “militant, anti-racists, anti-classists, and anti-sexist, where it made many people felt threatened” (Revilla, 2005). Later, in the 1990s, Raza Womyn and M.E.Ch.A reconnected to work on youth conferences (Revilla, 2005).

The Chicano and Women’s movement did not welcome most “feminist”-Xicanas. They stressed the interconnection of race, gender, and class (Valle, 1996). This conflict between the “traitors” and “loyalists” pushed some women out of M.E.Ch.A. Xicanas reacted strongly against the patriarchy in the Chicano movement. Xicanas such as Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Ana Castillo, along with more contemporary authors such as Alicia Gaspar De Alba, Maylei Blackwell, and Irene Blea, started writing their own analyses. Xicana professors played a crucial role in the 1990s in challenging gender norms and fostering community activism (Licón, 2009). These scholars are widely read among ethnic studies and Chicana/o students.

In the 1980s, M.E.Ch.A changed its Chicano acronym to Chicano/a (Macías, 2012). In 1999, Alta Califas Norte took charge of updating the Philosophy of M.E.Ch.A and *El Plan de Santa Bárbara* to “reflect the contributions and equality of women and sexual minorities, the growing ethnic diversity of Chicana/o activists, and the prominence of indigenismo in M.E.Ch.A” (Licón, 2009). It directly stated: “In the spirit of our past and for the spirit of our future, M.E.Ch.A will not condone, tolerate, or perpetuate sexism” (Valenzuela, 2011: 55) According to Valenzuela (2011), these changes from 1986, 1989, 1992, 1996, and 1999 made statements on Chicana/o ideology, LGBT² community, Chicanas, and non-Mexican descent. Today, from my experience, most M.E.Ch.A organizations have female and male co-chairs,

² Philosophy Papers of M.E.Ch.A refers queer community as LGBT.

encouraging female leadership. For example, the first National Chair of M.E.Ch.A was a queer Xicana, Elisa Huerta. Then, in 2012 M.E.Ch.A changed it again to Chican@ to indicate the multi-dimensional identity of its members. In 2013, National M.E.Ch.A has suggested that all chapters have a gender and sexuality chair. These changes demonstrate the shifts in inclusivity that has occurred throughout M.E.Ch.A.

Queer Issues in M.E.Ch.A

Queer refers to people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual/Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual.³ It is an umbrella term. It has a political connotation and is “connected to a social political movement against sexual subordination (Revilla, 2005). The Latina community also uses lesbiana, jota, two-spirited, or tortillera (Revilla, 2005). Lesbiana has to do with the Spanish language and Latina culture. Jota was a derogatory term and now is a term of empowerment (Revilla, 2005). Tortillera refers to tortilla factories filled with women, and was a derogatory term that was reclaimed (Revilla, 2005).

In the late 1980s-1990s, Xicanas wrote about new ways to incorporate identity politics. Cherrie Moraga wrote *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color (1981)* from her position as a Xicana, feminist, and lesbian. In reaction to heterosexism and patriarchy, Moraga stated, “What was right about Chicano nationalism was its commitment to preserving the integrity of the Chicano people...what was wrong about Chicano nationalism was its institutionalized heterosexism, its inbred sexism, and its lack of a cohesive national political strategy” (Moraga, 1993). Moraga understood the strengths and weaknesses of the Chicano movement (Accomando, 2008). She envisioned “Queer Aztlán, a Chicano homeland that could

³ I will also speak of queer studies and queer theory as Xicana scholar activists have retaken the word as empowerment. However, I will also use the word LGBTQIA, which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and Allies.

embrace all its people, including its *jotería* [historical pejorative term for gay people]” (Moraga, 1993). Queer Aztlán embraces difference and multiplicity (Accomando, 2008). Since Queer Aztlán’s inception, other Xicana activist scholars have adopted the concept.

In the mid-1990s, M.E.Ch.A kicked out a woman named Gina because she came out as a lesbian to the chapter, and she was “deleted from M.E.Ch.A history as the co-founder of the Raza Youth Conference” (Revilla, 2005). In 1996, Raza Womyn and La Familia recommended a workshop called “Queer Aztlán,” but M.E.Ch.A denied it because La Familia had spoken out about M.E.Ch.A’s homophobic and sexist tendencies (Revilla, 2005). During that time, M.E.Ch.A had some openly queer members and so believed that it was not homophobic (Revilla, 2005). Even though M.E.Ch.A had queers, many believed M.E.Ch.A was tokenizing those members as “proof” that they were not homophobic (Revilla, 2005). La Familia did not do the presentation, and they protested against the conference (Revilla, 2005). The majority of queers left M.E.Ch.A, while others “had better experiences” (Revilla, 2005).

In the early 1990s, M.E.Ch.A de CSUN established Queer Latinos Unido, which was a subcommittee of their chapter (Licón, 2009). They fought against homophobia and for an accepting space of queer identities, and they connected homophobia to racism and colonialism (Licón, 2009). This shows that M.E.Ch.A was attempting to grow and learn from their comrades. The rise of AIDS influenced M.E.Ch.A’s involvement because M.E.Ch.A wanted to educate the Chicana/o community about these issues (Licón, 2009). M.E.Ch.A began to hold anti-homophobia workshops and talking circles (Licón, 2009). According to Valenzuela (2011), Alta Califas Aztlán addressed homophobia in the Philosophy Papers of M.E.Ch.A writing:

Understanding that homophobia exists in our community, M.E.Ch.A must undertake the task of educating ourselves to put a stop to homophobic remarks in our organization. Being that there are Chicana/os who are of the LGBT community who must work to provide a safe environment in M.E.Ch.A. Therefore, M.E.Ch.A will not tolerate

disrespectful comments to LGBT members, as they are a vital part of our Chicano/a community. Our LGBT community is very important asset not only in the growth of M.E.Ch.A, but also provides strength and unity between our MEChistAs (61).

This shows that M.E.Ch.A had changed its perspective on queer folks of color. The M.E.Ch.A rhetoric of Xicanismo, and Aztlán was becoming sexually inclusive (Licón, 2009).

Gloria Anzaldúa wrote *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1999) as a material view of the borders, which created the new mestizo (mixed) consciousness. There is a physical line between the U.S. and Mexico border, but there are also psychological, sexual, and spiritual borders that emerge from the two cultures (Anzaldúa, 1999). Women of color and other minority groups constantly confront these cultural conflicts and border crossings. Other Xicana scholars have also expanded the mestizo consciousness and applied it to Aztlán. It is not just a paradigm or theory; it is a place, a homeland (Accomando, 2008). This new Aztlán nation would embrace racial diversity, human sexuality, and expression of gender; thus, it would not be limited and restricted (Accomando, 2008). Queer Aztlán was a creation of a new Chicano movement.

Moraga (1993) and Anzaldúa (1981 & 1999) are known as the creators of the founding texts of Xicana feminism (Watts, 2004). Their ideas drew from indigenous knowledge to understand their space and belonging. Xicana feminists reapplied the indigenous concept of *two-spirit*, which suggests that certain people have two spirits inside them. Two-spirits have a special role in the community and the movement (Accomando, 2008). In Western society, they are known as LGBTQIA. Most two-spirit concepts were lost after colonialism and imperialism (Accomando, 2008). Xicana feminists held on to these positive views of queerness from their indigenous roots and transformed these views into a liberation tool for Aztlán utopia. Xicanisma inserted queer issues and dialogue into Chicana/o lives to foster acceptance and alliances.

Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) also believes that Xicana identity includes the broader Latina/o identities (Watts, 2004). The reconstruction of Aztlán includes women and queers, but also Afro-Latina/os and Central and South Americans. Anzaldúa sees Aztlán “as a new geographical, spiritual, and intellectual homeland for border crossers of all races and ethnicities, while still perpetuating its mythic status as a location of Chicano identity” (Watts, 2004). The idea of Aztlán shifted to inclusivity and liberation for all oppressed groups instead of remaining limited to heterosexual, Mexican males (Valenzuela, 2011). Xicanas and queers successfully pushed M.E.Ch.A to change through their documents and actions.

Diverse Latina/o Population

In the 1960s, higher education was a crucial factor in social mobility in the United States. After the 1960s, in part due to affirmative action, there was an increase in Latina/o students in higher education. The rise of Latina/o students in higher education allowed M.E.Ch.A’s membership and other Latina/o organizations to flourish in California. Most literature uses the broad term *Latinos* or *Hispanics*, but most people assume the Mexican American experience in the United States. About 58.5 to 66.1 percent of the Latina/o population is of Mexican origin (Torres, 2004). Yet, the Latina/o population is diverse. Some parts of California, such as San Francisco and Los Angeles, were home to Central and South Americans earlier than the rest of California (Muñoz, 1989, Stoltz Chinchilla, 2009 & Torres-Saillant, 2007).

By the 1980s, new groups began immigrating from Central and South America (Acuña, 2010 & Licón, 2009). There were wars and military actions in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Panama that forced refugees to seek asylum in the United States (Torres, 2004 & Torres-Saillant, 2007). Three to four million Central Americans escaped their violent regimes (Arias, 2003). Sanctuary movements occurred around big cities in the United States that

advocated for Central Americans and challenged U.S. government involvement in Central America (Stoltz Chinchilla, 2009). By 1983, there were 45 Sanctuary churches and 600 Sanctuary groups (Stoltz Chinchilla, 2009). Central Americans were a part of the activism (Stoltz Chinchilla, 2009), which widened knowledge and consciousness about Central Americans.

By 2000, Central and South Americans represented 14.5 percent of the Latina/o population in the U.S. (Torres, 2004). Central and South Americans living in the U.S. had different experiences than Mexican Americans. Central and South Americans were more likely to go to community college than universities and were less likely to attain a Bachelor's degree (Torres, 2004). This is why it is crucial not to put all Latina/os into the same category (Torres-Saillant, 2007). Central and South Americans and Mexican Americans did share a common group identity (Torres, 2004), yet different ethnicities had different immigration stories (Torres, 2004 & Arias, 2003).

Some Central and South Americans had a sense of "false belonging" and avoided Chicano organizations (Yarbrough, 2009). Some Central and South Americans felt marginalized within an already oppressed group because people force the Mexican identity on them (Yarbrough, 2009). Historically, many M.E.Ch.A chapters believed that M.E.Ch.A was only for Mexicans (Valenzuela, 2011). There was a huge conflict in 1999 at the Phoenix Community College National M.E.Ch.A Conference because Californian chapters believed non-Mexicans should be included, while other chapters did not. The California chapters won enough support (Valenzuela, 2011). Nevertheless, some Central and South Americans created their own organizations (Acuña, 2010). For example, California State University-Northridge has its own

Central American organization called Central American Alliance for United Student Action (CAUSA) (Licón, 2009).

The children of immigrants from Central and South America began utilizing their access to higher education in the early 2000s, which diversified M.E.Ch.A's membership. Central and South American students turned to student organizations to build community. Some Central and South Americans joined Chicana/o organizations such as M.E.Ch.A and believed that Aztlán included them (Arias, 2003). In the 1970s, M.E.Ch.A embraced Latin American immigrants as a part of their community and their struggle (Licón, 2009 & Valenzuela, 2011), expanding beyond just Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

The indigenous roots of Xicanisma created an opening for the critique of U.S. involvement in Central and South America. Xicana/o identity understands that all Latina/os experience the same struggle of colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism (Stoltz Chinchilla, 2009). Xicanisma advocates for transnational identity and unity, and has formed a space for inclusion. In the 1990s, M.E.Ch.A switched their focus from 1848 to 1492 to signify the year of colonization on all indigenous peoples (Licón, 2009). According to Mariscal (2005), Chicana/o solidarity with indigenous peoples of Latin America allowed a transnational view, community, and people (Licón, 2009). The focus was cultural/indigenous nationalism instead of Chicano nationalism (Licón, 2009). This demographic shift forced M.E.Ch.A to evolve from a Mexican-only organization to an inclusive, Pan-Latina/o organization, and was an important part of the process of decolonization for MEChistAs.

Chicano refers to a specific time in history, where the demographics were primarily Mexican and Mexican American (Macías, 2012). It focuses on traditional, "old school" Chicanismo (Rios, 2008), which signifies political awareness and activity in one's community

and community self-determination. The contemporary Xicano, Xicana, and Xican@ refer to more recent Xicanismo ideas and ideals (Rios, 2008). This identity was born from the globalization era, which led to transnational politics (Rios, 2008). For the first time, Xican@ incorporates multidimensional and intersecting identities of race, class, sex, and sexual orientation (Rios, 2008). X signifies the connections to indigenous roots and movements (Rios, 2008). Xican@s also allow Central and South Americans in the movement (Rios, 2008). Moreover, Xicanismo emphasizes the goal of decolonizing themselves (Macías, 2012) through politics that concentrate on alliance, unity, and coalition building (Rios, 2008). Raza is also another encompassing term that includes Mexican, Central and South Americans, and Afro-Latina/os (Licón, 2009).

Conclusion

How do Californian MEChistAs view themselves, their political consciousness, and their social justice work? What do Chicano and Aztlán mean to them? What political ideas do they embrace and advance? How are their identities shaped by their past experiences? Xicanas wrote and developed ideas regarding all these issues within the Chicano movement. Xicanisma was powerful and directly related to Xicanas' and queers' experiences. Their writings were accessible and relatable to other women of color, queers, and Central and South Americans. Xicanas allowed people to understand history and current events. Xicanisma's element of indigenous connection enabled people to experience a different historical world that allowed them to create new and humane ways of relating and rebuilding community.

The purpose of my investigation is to understand how MEChistAs' identity and politics have changed within the structure and literature. Do Xicana's experiences with their sexual orientation, ethnicity, class, spirituality, or ability influence the Chicana/o identity and ideology?

Do society and social trends affect identity and politics? Have the revised historical documents of *El Plan de Santa Bárbara* and Philosophy of M.E.Ch.A changed how people feel about women, queers, and Central and South Americans? I posit that Xicana/o identity now transcends borders more than ever before because of the drastic changes in demographics. In this study, I interview 22 M.E.Ch.A members in California.

History shows that M.E.Ch.A has been able to reflect upon itself and change accordingly; thus, it has been able to stay alive. National M.E.Ch.A has changed its name twice from Chicano to Chicana/o to Chican@. It has also structurally encouraged all M.E.Ch.A chapters to have female and male co-chairs as well as a gender and sexuality chair. Revised historical documents include and honor women, queers, and ethnic diversity. M.E.Ch.A took on a broader view of colonization that begins in 1492 rather than 1848; it began to focus on indigenismo and decolonization. These changes show the shifts that occurred within M.E.Ch.A since the 1960s.

Does M.E.Ch.A reflect these organizational changes? What does M.E.Ch.A focus on? I will explore how the entry of women and people from different communities, domestic and foreign, changed the identity and politics of M.E.Ch.A in California. I will interview MEChistAs, who have been active since 2008, to learn about their politics and what influences their political views.

My goal is to make a critical analysis of student identity politics of M.E.Ch.A. Throughout my project, I am going to use my experiences in M.E.Ch.A as an integral part of the analysis. Moreover, I am going to make arguments and suggestions based on the interviews in hopes that MEChistAs will read this and reflect on the findings.

Chapter 3 - Theoretical Framework

Materialism, consumerism, capitalism, neo-liberalism, and white hegemony consume the post-modern world as the dominant ideologies. Chicana/os construct unique identities and ideologies because these factors influence their experiences. I will draw from multiple theories, such as third world feminism and ideology/utopia theory, to explain M.E.Ch.A's politics. Through these paradigms, I will gain an understanding of identity, politics, and ideology.

Standpoint Theory

Feminist theory focuses on women's struggles with class, education, religion, race, and sexual orientation. Dorothy Smith discussed standpoint theory, which proposes that knowledge depends upon a person's position in society. Smith argued that objectivity is not real, no one can have the same standpoint, and standpoints cannot be taken for granted (Applerouth & Edles, 2007). Smith also described bifurcation consciousness, which refers to living in separate worlds, where one is dominant and the other is subordinate (Applerouth & Edles, 2007). Women experience a division between two worlds.

Patricia Hill Collins concentrated on black feminism, insider/outsider, epistemology, and matrix of domination. Black feminism focuses Black women's experiences, dialectical relationship in the United States, essential contributions of intellectuals, and the importance of change and social justice (Collins, 1986). Collins applied standpoint theory to experiences of women of color. Black women have an insider perspective because they work within the system, but they remain "outsider" because they are Black women. This new concept enriched the academic perspective in sociology (Collins, 1986). Epistemology is the philosophical study of how people know what they know, and Collins applied how epistemology influences social

status (Collins, 1986). Patricia Hill Collins states: “White males have long been the dominant group in sociology, and the sociological worldview understandably reflect the concerns of this group of practitioners” (1986; 26). The victors write history and institutions sway education and propaganda in their favor. Matrix of domination proposes that people’s positions in society have multiple standpoints, which is similar to intersectionality (Applerouth & Edles, 2007). Poor Black women have the clear view of oppression (Collins, 1986). Collins applied it to different identities, which made standpoint theory more relatable. This insider and outsider perspective inspires an alternative way of seeing the world.

Standpoint theory allows my experience with M.E.Ch.A to be a part of my research. I am an insider to this research because I was involved with M.E.Ch.A at SJSU, but I am also an outsider to M.E.Ch.A because I graduated and no longer in the organization. I also discuss this in the methodology chapter. Standpoint theory also allows MEChistAs’ stories and experiences to be a center point of the investigation. They are able to explain their identities and stories in the interlocking systems of oppression. My research founds on a post-modern narrative. It is the only theory that accepts my experience as a valid component of the research. MEChistAs standpoints within the Chicano movement, ideas, and experiences give them members a unique perspective. Through Smith and Collins’s standpoint theory, I can describe M.E.Ch.A’s identity and politics.

Third World Feminism

Third world feminism gave rise to an oppositional, critical consciousness inspired by “race, sex, national, economic, cultural, and social hierarchies that marked the twentieth century” (Sandoval, 2000). It created a space in which people could transform dominant and oppressive powers into resistance and change (Sandoval, 2000). According to Sandoval, hegemonic

feminism and social movement theory identified four forms of consciousness that have been the most effective in postmodern societies; Sandoval contributed a fifth form of differential consciousness (2000). Although the first four forms inspired new social feminist theory, they ultimately operated within an oppressive hierarchy.

Sandoval argued that the first consciousness is *equal-rights*, or the idea that all humans are created equally, which is a form of liberalism (Sandoval, 2000). The second consciousness form is the *revolutionary* form, which sees fundamental restructuring as the only form of real change, such as the goals of the Black Panthers and Brown Berets (Sandoval, 2000). The third consciousness is the *supremacist*, which argues that certain people are on a superior evolutionary level and can hold more social power, which is seen in some nationalistic movements or loyalist types (Sandoval, 2000). The fourth consciousness is *separatist*, which fights to protect and organize differences in a separatist social order, such as the ideals of Aztlán (Sandoval, 2000). Sandoval argues that all of the first four consciousness levels alone perpetuate the same oppressive hierarchies.

The fifth and unspoken consciousness is *differential consciousness*. As a dialectical reaction to the white women's liberation movement, third world feminism arose. Gloria Anzaldúa called it "weaving between and among" ideologies (Anzaldúa, 1999). Feminists of color were able to shift through all of these ideas as part of a differential consciousness (Sandoval, 2000). Consequently, third world feminists built a new ideology based on strategic subjectivity with flexibility (Sandoval, 2000). Differential consciousness appears in different forms from Black, Chicana, Asian, and Indigenous scholars. These survival tactics exhibited by women of color endow them with a unique perspective.

Women of color experience the world from a different lens; for that reason, it is crucial to understand intersectionality of identities. Crenshaw (2005) states that women of color have a unique placement within the margins. This unique placement impacts identity politics because organizations usually ignore difference between intragroup identities (Crenshaw, 2005). Feminist and anti-racist politics have mutually marginalized each other; this proves Xicanas' experiences discussed in the previous sections, where men of color focused on race and women focused on gender. Both groups overlooked their privileged identity and focused on their oppressed identity; inherently, they marginalized women of color. Crenshaw (2005) argued that men of color fight racism because they want the same power that white men possess to control women. For that reason, intersectionality frames identities through multi-dimensions, where it brings a louder voice to women of color and other intersectional minorities in their daily lives and in politics.

Differential consciousness gave activists a new way to organize against injustice. The fifth form of consciousness allowed a new, effective space for activists. Sandoval (2000) stated, "Differential consciousness and social movement comprise a specific methodology that can be used as a compass for self-consciously organizing resistance, identity, praxis, and coalition under contemporary U.S., late-capitalist cultural conditions." Differential consciousness challenged the dominant forms of consciousness.

Sandoval explained that differential consciousness is both a method and a theory. This methodology demands self-reflectivity, where it is crucial to analyze and reflect upon ourselves. Through that process, scholars and activists can avoid past mistakes. Buechler agrees that oppositional consciousness creates a culture in which radical politics become more open to women (2011). Oppositional consciousness remains within feminism, race, ethnicity, sex, sexual

orientation, and marginality studies as a shared method and theory (Sandoval, 2000). Overall, this oppositional consciousness has implications for social movements today.

Third world feminist theory explained the ideology of M.E.Ch.A in the 1960s: Chicano identity became a focus; people had to choose between identities. In other words, essentialism was necessary during that time, when women had to choose a main identity. Sexism went unchallenged. The analytical tools were not sophisticated enough to expose it. For example, there were Chicano organizations that were liberal and tried to reform the state, such as La Raza Unida Party. The Brown Berets adhered to a revolutionary and separatist consciousness in the Chicano movement. During the civil rights era, ideologies put forth were relevant at the time and served a purpose. Today, new ideas challenge previous notions. Oppositional consciousness holds that previous ideologies prevalent in the 1960s cannot stand-alone.

Oppositional consciousness may explain how and why women of color finally began to build formal theories in the 1980s. This evolution of thought, theory, and methodology explains how M.E.Ch.A now features women's leadership, a discussion of queer issues, and the addressing of concerns of members from diverse nationalities in Latin America. The Chicano ideology has been transformed into a new Xican@ ideology. Xicanas persuaded M.E.Ch.A to be more inclusive. Ideas and experiences of Xicanas have influenced how MEChistAs identify as well as their politics.

Third world feminism explains the evolution of identity, radical politics, theory, and methodology. It explains identity politics as resistance and reveals women of color's experiences in the U.S. However, more explanation is required to explain how ideology spreads and whether ideology actually creates change in society.

Ideology and Utopia

Karl Mannheim describes the power of ideology, when used by the ruling class, to hold up the hierarchical status quo. Mannheim founded the sociology of knowledge, which argues that interests and purposes depend on the social group and its perspective (Mannheim, 1948). Thus, knowledge and ideas maintain or transform social order. According to Mannheim, ideology "conceals the present by attempting to comprehend it in terms of the past," while utopia "transcends the present and is oriented towards the future" (Mannheim, 1948). Utopia breaks with reality and with the existing social order, showing a dialectical relationship between utopian ideas and the existing order (Mannheim, 1948). The difference between ideological and utopian ideas depends on the subjective point of view (Mannheim, 1948). Thus, relativism is crucial in his theoretical framework.

Moreover, Mannheim understands that there are phases in history because concepts and thoughts adjust during times and their meanings are changed (Mannheim, 1948). Vocabulary and definitions change over time, depending on standpoint and conditions (Mannheim, 1948). Mannheim discusses "wish thinking," when humans seek refuge in their creativity, which transcends their reality (Mannheim, 1948). It gives people a way to reject hegemony (Mannheim, 1948).

The Chicano movement contains unique ideologies and utopian ideas. Xicana consciousness encouraged different discourse regarding space. People of color and queer communities rejected old myths. They rejected stereotypes and thought more about their collective future. Women of color and queer folks hoped for and wrote about a better future for oppressed communities. While living in a white supremacist, patriarchal, and homophobic society, they rejected these notions and created their own lives of liberation. Utopia transcends

ideas about the future and these ideas influenced the youth organizers for M.E.Ch.A. It still may only be a hopeful idea for the future, but university students reading these ideas changed their ideology to be more inclusive. Utopia is not just an ideology; it includes ideas about an equitable future. Utopian ideas become principles and goals.

Immanuel Wallerstein also wrote about utopia as a new set of ideas and beliefs leading to the creation of a different way of living that challenged the status quo. Wallerstein connected utopia with the history of Marxism. Marx and More created utopia as a criticism of capitalism in the hopes of building a human alternative to capitalism and destruction (Wallerstein, 1986). He described orthodox Marxism as the first era of utopia, but when political parties used it, it died as a utopia and became an ideology (Wallerstein, 1986). Therefore, according to Wallerstein, utopia became impractical and an ideological deception. Wallerstein argues that Marx taught ideas are links to social movements (Wallerstein, 1986).

In the modern society, utopia meant something different than it did for Marxists in the past. Wallerstein stated, “To create utopia, it was necessary to do more than describe utopia” (1986). Academia wanted rational and efficacious means of scientific analysis; thus, they rejected utopia as ideology (Wallerstein, 1986). Wallerstein called it a second wave of utopia. The third and present wave has no name and is “social science as interpretation of process” (Wallerstein, 1986). This wave revisits utopia and becomes an object of reflection (Wallerstein, 1986). Consequently, Wallerstein defined utopia as accepting contradictions and removing material inequality; utopia builds a better existing reality (Wallerstein, 1986).

Wallerstein shows the importance of utopia as an ideal and an ideology for M.E.Ch.A organizers. Xicanas challenged the capitalism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, and oppression that impacted humans. They told stories of people and women of color. Mexican American

studies, Chicana/os studies, and ethnic studies applied Xicanas' writings in their classes. It touched students because their writings spoke to their struggles and hopes. Xicanas and women of color scholar activists encouraged reflection and critical thinking as a process to reach the goal of utopia. While Xicanas wrote about a utopian society, ideas have real consequences. They prompted M.E.Ch.A's members to become more conscious and inclusive. Therefore, Xicanas changed the present day movement. Today, it is a powerful tool of hope and action.

Michael Foucault wrote about new power beliefs and culture. Foucault described utopia as "sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society" (Foucault, 1986). In other words, utopia is not a real place; it is more of an idea, an unreal space (Foucault, 1986). Foucault also argued that there are heterotopias, which are real sites found and represented within culture (Foucault, 1986). Therefore, heterotopias do exist in reality, such as honeymoons for newlyweds (Foucault, 1986). Utopias and heterotopias connect the real objects in society with ideas and reflections. They are the opposite of each other; yet, they mirror each other (Foucault, 1986).

Foucault's concept of utopia explains Xicanas' ideas. During the 1960s, Aztlán was the original Chicano utopia and seen as a brotherhood. The foundation of the Chicano movement consisted of the mystical and spiritual space of Aztlán. However, it is also a heterotopia because it is located in the southwest of the U.S. Aztlán is a mixture of utopia and heterotopia. Has the idea and definition of Aztlán as a utopia changed? Aztlán is still a key component of M.E.Ch.A. Xicana scholars established a new definition of Aztlán, where the utopia has new meanings. Queer Aztlán hopes for change and justice for the Chicana/o communities. New Aztlán understands the need for a space for intersectionality.

Ideology and utopia analysis explains the expansion of oppositional consciousness. Queer Aztlán is a utopian ideal that promotes a safe space of liberation for oppressed people, including women and queer individuals, who historically were excluded from the Chicano movement. The hope for utopia is a powerful tool for change. More importantly, combining the utopian force with social trends and demographic shifts may have serious implications that are far beyond our current line of thinking.

Third world feminism explains the ideological shift for Xicanas through historical context. Ideology and Utopia theory explain the spread of Xicanisma in the Latina/o and Chicana/o communities. Women, queer, and Central and South Americans changed the internal dynamics of M.E.Ch.A and, along with other social movements in the U.S., allowed space for consciousness and larger social acceptance of identities. Together, these theories create a web that may explain the social phenomena of M.E.Ch.A's identity and politics.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach because it required listening to MEChistAs' stories and opinions. Throughout this process, I remained open and listened to participants' experiences. Thus, I used semi-structured interviews to analyze thematic subjects. This approach allows researchers to look past personal experiences and truly understand the other person's opinions (Esterberg 2002). I looked for patterns and overlapping categories in my interviews with college students in order to find reoccurring themes and experiences. Historically marginalized groups "have not always had the opportunity to tell their own stories" (Esterberg, 2002). In-depth interviews create the space in which to do so.

In this research, it is also important to point out my perspective as a part of the methodology. I am an alumna MEChistA from San Jose State University, so I am an insider to M.E.Ch.A. I had to be respectful and humble to all the M.E.Ch.A members because MEChistAs knew who I was, and I was representing M.E.X.A de SJSU⁴ since they recommended me to other chapters. I am able to reflect on my time with my chapter similar to participant observation research. Rosaldo (1993) argues that subjectivity is equal to other social analysis, and it is not of more or less value than researchers who are engaged in insider researcher because it enables a unique perspective. Social analysis cannot be neutral because all observers have prejudices and they cannot detach themselves from their research, even objective research (Rosaldo, 1993).

Through this perspective, I am using standpoint theory, but I would also like to discuss how intellectuals of color have historically positioned themselves strategically within the academy (Smith, 2012). Smith argues that indigenous researchers becoming active participants in their own communities is a benefit. Insiders have to live with the consequences of their

⁴ The San Jose State University chapter spells their name as *Movimiento Estudiantil Xicana/o de Aztlán*.

processes for the communities they are in and researching (Smith, 2012). I am also an outsider because I am a graduate student, and I do not live in the Chicana/o community. Patricia Hill Collins discusses that an “outsider within status” offers both sociological trainings and cultural experiences, and both are valid sources of knowledge (1986; 29-30). Many other scholars have agreed with this notion. As Linda Smith suggests, I was ethical, reflective, and critical as an outsider. Outsiders have to engage critically in the quality and richness of the data (Smith, 2012). She argues that it is possible to do great research as an insider and outsider. Rosaldo (1993) agrees that in critiquing objectivism, it enables social analysts to become social critics, shedding a new light on research. With these methodologies, I conducted my research in order to understand my experience in M.E.Ch.A, but more importantly to understand MEChistAs identity and politics.

Participants were asked for demographic information, a description of their M.E.Ch.A chapter, their definition of Chicano ideology, a description of their political views, a description of what influences their political views, their personal goals for the movement, and any other related information that may come up during the course of the interview. The questionnaire is in appendix B. This study did not focus on reliving traumatic events or past abuse, but about understanding current identity formation and its empowerment to create social movements.

The research subjects' public, political views about contemporary United States politics and their experiences as M.E.Ch.A activists were documented. Thus, M.E.Ch.A continues to contribute to history. To protect MEChistAs, I asked them only about their public, political views, not about their personal or private lives. I did not ask or inquire about things that may embarrass them or subject them to ridicule or risk. I recorded only political discussions in which the participants participate voluntarily. I gave MEChistAs the opportunity to go "on-the-record"

and "off-the-record" and keep their comments anonymous and their identity confidential. People know that these are M.E.Ch.A's comments and perspectives by their quotes. Moreover, if participants engaged in personal attacks or said things that could offend other participants, I treated their comments as anonymous, without attribution.

Materials

I audio-recorded and transcribed the interviews, so I will have an accurate record for the duration of this paper. MEChistAs filled out an informational sheet with self-identification demographic questions. On that sheet, I took notes throughout the interviews to record key themes and patterns.

Procedures

From my previous involvement with M.E.Ch.A as an undergraduate, I have a rapport with San Jose State University M.E.X.A. Through SJSU MEXistAs, I used a snowball sample to interview other MEChistAs from the Bay Area. I also contacted chapters via campus websites and Facebook. Active chapters have Facebook friends, pages, and groups. Through social networks, I messaged groups to see who would be interested in participating.

The participants chose both time and location of the interviews based on their availability. I met with MEChistAs at my house, their houses, coffee shops, libraries, and Chicano studies department offices. Thirteen interviews were in person. Nine interviews were via Skype. All of the Skype interviews were from members who live long distance from the Bay Area in California.

All participants gave their informed consent before the interview and gave me permission to go on and off the record at any point during the interview. I audio-recorded the interviews and

stored the tapes in a locked file cabinet. All the audio-recordings were destroyed after the completion of the research. I did not continue to conduct more interviews than collected because there was saturation of the information. At a certain point, I would continue to get the same results. Kansas State University's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board has approved this study.

Participants

I interviewed 22 Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán members, who have been active in California ranging from 2008 to 2013. There were 12 women and 10 men interviewed. The interviews ranged from 35 to 90 minutes. They were all current college students or recent college graduates, who ranged from 18 to 30 years olds. No race or ethnicity was intentionally excluded. However, M.E.Ch.A is a student organization of color; hence, most of the participants will be students of color. All participants had Mexican ancestry. Only one member was mixed with Peruvian. All MEChistAs except two were first generation in the United States and/or in the university. All participants held or are currently holding a position on the MESA Directiva. Majors consist of Chican@ studies, sociology, anthropology, ethnic studies, Spanish, human development, political science, psychology, biology, policy planning, history, liberal studies, film & TV production, and criminal justice. This study contained 10 chapters in California from San José State University, California State University: East Bay, California State University: San Marcos, California State University: Northridge, University of California: Berkeley, University of California: Davis, Chico State University, University of California: Irvine, Woodland City College, and University of Southern California.

During the initial interview, while participants wrote, read, and signed the consent form, I took notes about the interview environment. I took particular interest in what participants were

wearing or carrying for the interview. I did not ask the members to wear anything specific; it was a casual interview. During Skype interviews, the environment was more difficult to analyze. These interviews were also more impersonal and awkward. This may be because I did not know the members personally or because of the impersonality of a Skype interview. I could see a limited amount of background through the computer camera, where a few members had posters, pictures, or flags hanging.

Most members, even some from the Skype interviews, wore M.E.X.A., Aztlán, political, cultural, or social justice shirts. Generally, the women carried purses filled with colorful cultural patterns. The locations had cultural and political images. When we met on campus, the locations were filled with Chican@, Aztlán, Black, Asian, and Indigenous images, murals, paintings, and pictures. For example, common images were of Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, Las Adelitas, and Mexican symbols. Other spaces had images of Malcolm X, W.E.B DuBois, Phillip Vera Cruz, Brown Berets, and anti-war messages. Participants valued political, cultural, and social propaganda, whether it is overt or covert. This illustrates that M.E.Ch.A's politics were an essential aspects of their lives.

Chapter 5 - Results and Discussions

This chapter contains 11 patterns from my 22 interviews. I have divided the chapter into four main categories and then subdivisions within that. First, I discuss identity politics, which describe the demographic changes and politics with regard to sex, sexual orientation, and nationality within M.E.Ch.A. Next, I analyze M.E.Ch.A's politics and ideologies with regard to Xicanismo, Aztlán, and autonomous chapters. Then, I examine conflicts over organizing tactics, generational member gaps, and Greek and social organizations on campuses. Finally, I review MEChistAs' views about the future of the organization.

Identity Politics

In this section, I will discuss the demographics of M.E.Ch.A chapters in California and how these demographics have shaped their politics. Gender, sexual orientation, and nationality were the most salient aspects of identity to emerge from the interviews.

Mujeres versus Hombres

In general, I found that females make up a majority of members in M.E.Ch.A chapters. The gradual growth of women in the organization is remarkable because for many years, male MEChistAs excluded and marginalized women. Two MEChistAs stated they had a roughly even number of men and women in their chapter. For the most part, women outnumbered men in the organization and have taken leadership roles. These accomplishments are mostly the product of women's struggles and scholars' critiques within the organization. Men's unwillingness to participate in an organization where females make up a majority has also played a role in this shift.

This raises an important question for M.E.Ch.A: where did all the men go? Some MEChistAs have alluded to the fact that Greek organizations and other nonpolitical organizations have become serious competitors to M.E.Ch.A by successfully recruiting men of color who would have otherwise joined M.E.Ch.A. Ruben Martin is a first-generation MEChistA from the San Fernando Valley, who majors in Biological Studies, and identifies as a Chicano. I really enjoyed talking to him because he offered a different perspective since he came from the “hard” sciences. Conducting the interview via Skype made the interview less personal. He is a junior at UC Irvine and has been a member and served as an officer in M.E.Ch.A. He described the dynamics of his chapter: “Women mostly dominate our space. Most of our brown men tend to go to the multicultural fraternities, so not a lot of them stick with us.” The shifting demographics at the universities caused by the increased enrollment of students of color, has forced organizations of color (including fraternities and sororities) that have historically only focused on select minorities, to become more multicultural.

This shift has meant an increase in the recruitment of Chicana/o students. Jazel Flores is a MEChistA from Southeast Los Angeles. She attends UC Berkeley, majors in ethnic studies and legal studies, and identifies as a queer Xican@.⁵ She agrees that many Chicano men have joined other organizations. She grew up around gangs, which were a part of her neighborhood, friends, and family. Her personality was vibrant and amazing and showed she cared about the community and the hood. I truly enjoyed her stories and experiences because I was also around gangs. This will be her second year in M.E.Ch.A and she is the co-chair of her chapter at UC

⁵ For all MEChistA, I indicate how they identify. Each may identify differently, and consequently some begin with *Ch* and end with an *a* or an *o*, while others begin with *X* and end with an *@* sign. I will expand on the differences in the following sections.

Berkeley. Before that, she was on the education committee in charge of internal learning. She agrees with this perspective:

So, it's always been more women than men. Unfortunately, most of our men who visit our space ended up in frats or social organizations. Since I have been here, it has always been more mujeres than men.

Where women make up a majority of the members, some men would rather join other organizations. Historically, M.E.Ch.A has deep tensions with multicultural Greek organizations, an issue I expand further in M.E.Ch.A Conflicts.

Many social and cultural organizations on campus identify themselves as nonpolitical. Some MEChistAs argue that men have joined other organizations because they provide apolitical activities, especially partying and drinking. Men of color may subconsciously avoid politics and politically conscious women that challenge these activities and the behaviors associated with them. Eddie Rivero grew up in Eastside San Jose and graduated from UC Berkeley in ethnic studies and development studies. He was forced to attend a high school on the other side of town to receive a better education. He said that he was not able to establish a strong cultural understanding because of this. He joined M.E.Ch.A in college and experienced a serious realization about the world and his identity. Now, he identifies as Mexican and Xicano, and came to the interview with an Aztlán shirt and a Junot Díaz book. He believes that being a MEChistA is a lifestyle, not a hobby, and that M.E.Ch.A politics and ideas will follow him for the rest of his life. He offered this perspective on why he thought male Chicanos are not joining M.E.Ch.A:

I wrote my undergraduate ethnic studies on Chicano masculinity because not a lot of heterosexual men participate in activism. So, I really wanted to deconstruct that and why that is the case. My conclusion was that we're reproducing the media images on how success is defined based on the European model of manhood. Success means having many women, being dominant, and strongest. That's what it means to be a man in this society, sadly. We need to redefine and reconstruct what manhood means based on

indigenous societies; then, maybe our men could realize that honor and responsibilities is what manhood should be. Not sex with women and being powerful. So, that's why when guys getting on campus, they join these party organizations that are apolitical because they can fulfill the European model of manhood. M.E.Ch.A doesn't appeal to them because that's not what success is.

Rivero argues that society and media have portrayed men of color and their manhood based on a social life, not a political life. As a result, the number of men in M.E.Ch.A has decreased, while the number of female MEChistAs has increased. Nevertheless, other issues might explain this dichotomy.

Institutional factors may also be affecting men's participation. Men of color have not been entering the university at the same rate as women. High schools encourage them to follow other paths instead of universities. Susie Amezcua was born in the United States, moved to Mexico, and came back to the United States, where she grew up in Fillmore, California. She majors in Sociology and minors in Chicana/o studies and identifies herself as a queer Chicana. Her parents were farm workers and she understands the sacrifices her parents made for her and her family. Susie's older sisters exposed her to M.E.Ch.A in high school. She participated in M.E.Ch.A for three years, first as a general member, then as a Raza Youth coordinator, and now as internal chair. When I interviewed her, she had *Día de los Muertos* art with rainbows hanging on the wall in the background. Susie had a valuable perspective as a queer Xicana. She argued that the decline of men was a product of changed demographics in higher education:

I think that has to do with the demographics of the campus because there are less hombres every year, which means more mujeres in college and more mujeres in organizations. Then, there are more mujeres in positions than hombres; we really need to figure out what's going on with our men.

Amezcua expressed genuine concern about the declining number of men of color in higher education. The number of Black, Latino, and Native American men in prisons is disproportionately higher than the number of imprisoned White men. Many MEChistAs said

that the prison industrial complex is a huge issue within their community, funneling men of color from schools to prisons, and adversely affecting their participation in the university and politics.

Although women have assumed leadership positions in M.E.Ch.A, it has been at the expense of their male counterparts. Therefore, the numerical dominance of women in the organization may not be as wonderful as many people thought. It means that an important part of the community is missing. This is not what Xicanas fought for—the goal of unity and rising together. If a part of the group is gone, then we are all still oppressed. The organization might reflect on how to improve participation by both women and men together.

Queer Issues

I found that there has been a significant rise in the number of people who identify as queer in M.E.Ch.A, compared to the 1960s. Queers have also taken leadership positions. Many chapters hold queer workshops, which has made other members more conscious of queer issues, and they have adopted gender neutral and non-conforming language and pronouns. For example, many members said they do not say “you guys” anymore because it purposefully excludes women from the discussion. Also, as discussed in the literature review, many members use Chicana@/Xicana@ with the @ symbol as a gender inclusive term rather than the original “Chicano.” Many chapters have created gender and sexuality chairs, and many chapters in California established them before the National M.E.Ch.A suggested it.

Queer MEChistAs said that M.E.Ch.A and Xicanism@ have played a role in their discovery of their own sexual consciousness and have helped them understand and accept their queer identity. Susie Amezcua described how Xicanisma/o impacted her life: “When I started learning about Chicanismo, I became okay with who I am. That is when I started identifying as Chicana and embracing my queer identity. So, I’m a queer Chicana.” M.E.Ch.A helped her

process her queer identity. Calling herself a ‘queer Chicana’ signaled an understanding of intersectional politics. M.E.Ch.A allows expression for identities in their full complexity, with all their multifaceted characteristics. Unlike the 1960s, MEChistAs no longer have to choose between their identities. Amezcua is both a Chicana and queer, and both are crucial dimensions to understanding her experiences.

Danny Santana-Hernandez agrees with Amezcua about his queer identity. Santana-Hernandez graduated from California State University-Northridge (CSUN) in history and Chicana/o studies. He has been one of the most prominent members of M.E.Ch.A at CSUN and is well known and respected by members in other chapters around Alta Califas Norte. His mother is from Jalisco, Mexico, and was politically active. He grew up in southeast Los Angeles and around gangs. He is passionate and empowered by his background. When I interviewed him, he had many art displays in the background with indigenous and queer images along with his graduation cap. He offered a unique perspective as a working-class, queer MEChistA. He described how important Aztlán was to him and his queer identity:

We must take care of ourselves. For me, it means being comfortable with my sexuality. I used to be embarrassed that I grew up in a very poor neighborhood. Now, it’s a part of my identity and I’m proud it. So, it means being committed to social justice and being aware of your identities.

Today, M.E.Ch.A promotes intersectional politics. Members have become aware of all their identities within the organization. M.E.Ch.A also educates heterosexual members about queer issues.

I also found that many MEChistAs came into the organization without knowing anything about LGBTQIA issues. Some members were even homophobic, but M.E.Ch.A taught them about queer issues. Susana Tapia grew up in Los Angeles and belonged to M.E.Ch.A chapters in high school, community college, and at San Jose State University (SJSU). She majors in

anthropology and minors in Mexican American studies, and identifies as Xicana. She is a first generation college graduate. Her sisters are key to her organizing and activism because she wants to create a better world for them. She came to the interview at the Martin Luther King, Jr. library at SJSU wearing an indigenous cloth purse. Because of being involved in three different chapters, she was able to offer a different perspective about the differences within M.E.Ch.A. I interviewed her in the fifth floor of the library, a floor decorated with murals and art in dedication to ethnic studies. She describes how M.E.X.A. de SJSU affected her: “That’s how this chapter influenced me. The knowledge I have about LGBTQIA and other identities come from this chapter.” The organizations’ queer workshops and talks established a learning environment, and persuaded members to become advocates for queer issues.

For some members, M.E.Ch.A provided their first exposure to LGBTQIA individuals. Carlos Olivares moved to the United States in 2001. He is in his second year at California State University-San Marcos and majors in Psychology. He was relatively new to the organization compared to most of the other MEChistAs. He identifies himself as Mexican and Chicano, but he has always been politically conscious. Right now, he does not hold any positions within his chapter or broader organization, but he hopes to change that in the near future. He describes how M.E.Ch.A influenced his life and education: “I learned about gender equality and LGBTQIA equality, which I thought was pretty cool. It was my first exposure to those issues. M.E.Ch.A opened my eyes.”

Although M.E.Ch.A provides queer education, queer MEChistAs have critiqued M.E.Ch.A. I found that queer members did not want to be tokenized. Having queer members or

a gender and sexuality chair did not mean that M.E.Ch.A was perfect when it came to queer issues. Jazel Flores, as a queer muxer⁶ and Xican@, argued that M.E.Ch.A still needed to grow:

So, moving past the Chicano aesthetics of the 60s, we got stuck there. We got the race politics down. We got the class politics down. I'm tired of reminding them about women of color and queers; it should be down by now. We can't get stuck on race and class.

Flores evaluated how M.E.Ch.A understood race and class politics, yet marginalized gender and sexual orientation. She argued that M.E.Ch.A needed to continue moving forward with its intersectional politics. M.E.Ch.A should not use queers to illustrate that it is a progressive and radical organization. The heterosexual members need to fight harder against their own sexuality privileges. Queer MEChistAs have argued that the organization needs more discussion, workshops, and talking circles about all aspects of queerness. M.E.Ch.A cannot be a genuine ally by only using neutral language and "safe spaces" because ally-ship also means political action.

M.E.Ch.A needs to be an active advocate for queer issues, such as gay marriage, employment, and social acceptance. Many members support these issues and call themselves allies, but M.E.Ch.A as an organization does not focus on queer problems. They typically work with campus and local queer or color organizations in coalitions to educate the campus, but they are not following through with their communities outside of academia on these issues. This is a difficult line to cross because M.E.Ch.A cannot be true advocates by just being conscious of their language. Many queer members were conflicted about M.E.Ch.A's involvement in queer politics. Heterosexual members did not want to overstep their boundaries in speaking for them. As MEChistAs, they must question whether they are being good allies to their queer comrades.

⁶ Jazel Flores spelled *mujer* with an *x*.

Mexican Centricity

Diversity and inclusivity are ideals valued by M.E.Ch.A members. Having women and queer students in positions of leadership has helped advance knowledge on gender and sexual orientation of M.E.Ch.A members. However, the organization has yet to become more diverse and inclusive in terms of ethnic and national issues. Gabriel Rodriguez is from Fresno, California, and majors in sociology with a concentration in community change at SJSU. He is a first-generation college student and identifies himself as a queer Mexican American and Chicano. He was the chapter's co-chair in 2012 and had previously been the internal chair of that chapter. He came to his interview at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library wearing a M.E.Ch.A Raza Day t-shirt. He described M.E.Ch.A's conflict with inclusivity and diversity:

We can say we promote diversity and inclusivity, but because of our name that includes Chicana/o and is in Spanish. It pushes away a lot of people. They're scared that you have to speak Spanish and that you have to be Mexican. Even though, we might really want to be diverse and include people. Because of our name and when people think when they see the name, we can't be inclusive.

The fact that M.E.Ch.A has Chican@/Xican@ in the name of the organization makes it difficult for people with other ethnic or national identities to join M.E.Ch.A. The community already established a Mexican-American centric perspective about Chican@s/Xican@s.

Although the organization revised its documents to remove the Mexican centric bias and move toward more pan-Latin@ politics, Mexican and Mexican Americans still make up a majority of M.E.Ch.A's membership, despite the fact that the Latin@ population in California has increased and is very diverse, including Central Americans, South Americans, and Afro-Latin@s. Smaller M.E.Ch.A chapters with ten or less claimed they had zero or one Central Americans. The diversity increased, however, as chapters grew. Monica Nunez grew up in Mira Loma, California and attended California State University-East Bay. Her parents came through

Reagan's amnesty in the 1990s and she grew up in a semi-liberal Catholic home. She identifies as a first-generation college student and as Mexican. She moved here from southern California without family support. She said that members of her chapter took an issue with the M.E.Ch.A. sweatshirt:

We had an issue with that because a Central American [member] did not want to wear the M.E.Ch.A. sweatshirt because it had the eagle and [said] that's too Mexican focused. I told them I'm sorry about that [but] there's nothing we can do unless we vote for a new sweatshirt and keeping this one also because this is the national logo. We can't change it.

Some Central Americans have problems with M.E.Ch.A.'s Mexican centricity, and they point to the organization's use of Mexican symbols, colors, or flags. Nevertheless, the majority of MEChistAs are not willing to abandon the organization's Mexican heritage. Every member I interviewed is of Mexican ancestry. I was not actively searching for Central American members of M.E.Ch.A, but they were hard to come by. Members' determination to cling to the organization's Mexican symbols may be a barrier to increasing diversity.

M.E.Ch.A. also has a hard time retaining non-Mexican members, who often go to one or two meetings, and then leave. They prefer to join other organizations in Central American or South American identities. Despite the formal change in language at the organizational level, the hesitant membership has not always followed suit, leading to stagnation in growth and diversification.

Although M.E.Ch.A.'s push for inclusivity and diversity, others disagree and want M.E.Ch.A. exclusively for Mexicans and Mexican Americans. There are some MEChistAs and Chicana/o activists that believe inclusivity and diversity is harmful to the movement, and argues that this has contributed to M.E.Ch.A. being less militant and less organized. Juan Guzman attends Chico State University and majors in criminal justice and minors in Chicana/o studies. He grew up in Pacoima, California and joined M.E.Ch.A. out of culture shock caused by the lack

of diversity at the university and in the surrounding community. During our interview via Skype, the connection was weak and the audio recorder malfunctioned, so we did another interview a month later. He wore a *la causa* and Aztlán t-shirt in the second interview, where he offered critical, unique points of view. At first, he was a general member, and then became an officer. Recently, he has stepped back to participate as a general member. He is a community organizer working around the issues of gangs and police brutality. He is in a National Brown Beret organization and identifies himself as a Chicano nationalist:

It's an "anyone is welcomed environment," but I really don't like that. The reason I don't like that is because when you start becoming so inclusive and letting all these people into the organization, it starts to lose the message. It loses the direction and the goals because your organization has become so inclusive.

Although he was the only MEChistA I interviewed, who argued that M.E.Ch.A was too inclusive, this is not unique perspective. I have heard this point of view from *veteranos* (M.E.Ch.A veterans). Maria Eva Valle (1996) also made this argument. However, most members do not agree that intersectional politics is a problem or that it makes M.E.Ch.A less militant or less goal-oriented.

By using standpoint theory, I will describe my own experiences and opinions as a woman of color to add to this discussion. My experience with M.E.Ch.A was different because it does align with the revised historical documents. I am Nicaragüenese and my chapter included Mexican, Tongan, White, bi-racial, and South American ethnicities. We focused on multiracial and cross-cultural issues as an organization, reflecting the organization's revised documents. My time in M.E.Ch.A helped me to develop my identity as a Xicana. My chapter at SJSU was organized and militant, and intersectional politics permeated the actions and discussions of members. However, this experience might have been the exception. Based on the interviews,

M.E.Ch.A has not improved in terms of ethnic diversity. Ethnic diversity continues to be an issue for many chapters.

Overall, I found that M.E.Ch.A has progressed with women and queer politics compared to the 1960s, reflecting organizational evolution and growth. Unlike other Chicano organizations, M.E.Ch.A continues to be relevant because of its reflexive and reflective qualities. Yet, it is still struggling to recruit non-Mexican members. Standpoint theory allows MEChistAs to voice their opinions and critique their own organization. Marco Arizpe grew up in Edinburg, Texas, one of the poorer counties in the United States, and graduated from the University of Southern California. He majored in film and TV production. His mother was a MEChistA as an undergraduate and is now a district attorney. She encouraged him to become a MEChistA. His interview focused on his mother's experience and how it influenced him, stating that he "was standing on shoulders of giants." He was involved all four years; he was a general member, a historian twice, and an internal chair. He argues that M.E.Ch.A should become more diverse and inclusive:

Multiple viewpoints are always necessary because M.E.Ch.A has always been a group that deals with multiple issues. So, you need everyone with multiple eyes and ears to get a good understanding of what's going on in the world and addressing the right topics. There's an African proverb "if you want to travel fast then go alone, but if you want to travel far, then go in a group" so we'll get much further with more people.

M.E.Ch.A has not been able to relate to large sectors of the Latin@ population. Although M.E.Ch.A's foundations are of Mexican American origin, it should make a greater effort to include other groups. Diversifying its membership would help M.E.Ch.A regain strength, not only in numbers, but in influence as well.

M.E.Ch.A Politics

In this section, I will discuss M.E.Ch.A's politics and ideology. Previous research has shown that the idea of Chicanoism/Xicanismo has evolved from the 1960s. The data here supports this research and finds that the meaning of Aztlán has changed since the 1960s. I also found that M.E.Ch.A contains many philosophies and organizes around many different issues, supporting past research.

Chicanos, Xicana/os, and Xican@s

As stated in the historical context and literature review, in the 1960s, the word Chicano identified with Mexican and Mexican Americans. It focused mainly on heterosexual Mexicans and Mexican American men, and marginalized other identities. However, it has come to mean something different. In 2013, MEChistAs define "Chicano" in a new way. Chicano@/Xicano@ is now a political ideology and identity, mainly used to describe a person who is politically active and connected to their indigenous roots. Today, people with different ethnic and national identities can describe themselves as a Chicano@/Xicano@ because it is not a country or place. Montze is the newest co-chair of M.E.Ch.X.A at UC Berkeley (UCB). She is from Santa Ana and majors in integrative biology and ethnic studies. She grew up as an undocumented resident along with other family members, which greatly impacted her view on the world and politics. M.E.Ch.A assisted her in conceptualizing her life experiences with racism, classism, and homophobia. She works on campus at the multicultural center. For the interview, she wore a cultural shirt. She identifies as an undocumented Xicana. She described her identity and how it has changed over time:

I identify as a Chicana because my family is not from here, but when you put into terms with Aztlán, we are all from here. It was a process to identify with the Ch because I have to connect with that history. That's why I like to identify with a Xicana with an X

because that encompasses the politics that are going here and now with transnational movements. It's more inclusive. Our M.E.Ch.A uses an X. Plus, that shows that we're not just about Mexican Americans; it's about all those Latin@s in the struggle. I don't like to associate Chicana with ethnicity because a black woman that's gone through these struggles could be a Xicana. Chicanismo is more of a political identity not so much an ethnicity. We need a lot of race unity.

Montze describes each stage of her identity and how it has changed, and even explains the meaning of each term. There is a difference between Mexican, Chicanas/os, and Xican@s. Mexican refers to a country of origin and its culture. *Ch* refers to the traditional view of Chicano from the 1960s about political consciousness. Xicana with an *X* relates to transnational identities. UC Berkeley and SJSU changed the name to have an X in agreement with transnational politics. They hope to attract Latin@s from all backgrounds. Throughout the interviews, when I asked MEChistAs how they identified, if they said "Chicano," I had to ask more questions. I asked them if they spelled it with a *Ch* or *X* and with *a*, *o*, or *@* sign. Although it may seem irrelevant, it means something to MEChistAs. Gloria Anzaldúa calls this "mestizo consciousness," where colonized communities understand the dichotomy of Western dominance and their homelands. While Anzaldúa and Moraga were not MEChistAs, they have influenced M.E.Ch.A. MEChistAs usually major or minor in Chicano@ studies and it exposes MEChistAs to Xicanisma. In the university, they are privileged to explore new pedagogies. Only M.E.X.A. de SJSU, M.E.Ch.X.A de UCB, and M.E.Ch.A de CSUN were well versed with Xicana authors that some of them used Xicana feminists in their meetings. Most of the other MEChistAs have not read any of their works and others recognized their names but have not read their works. Xicanisma has influenced ideas and activism within M.E.Ch.A, particularly in certain chapters.

This is how M.E.Ch.A established the importance of layering and complex identities. Throughout each M.E.Ch.A generation, members were able to reinvent themselves through their

identity politics. Montze argues that being a Chicana/Xicana signifies a political identity, so that a Black woman can identify as a Xicana. She connects the “Latina/o” struggle across racial lines because the different races experience similar systems of oppression. MEChistAs are able to use their differential consciousness to understand all aspects of the Chicano movement and how it has changed.

I found that MEChistAs viewed Xicana/o as an ideology. Identities are names or labels that people of color use as tools of empowerment. Chicanismo/Xicanisma is an ideology as well as an identity because it has principles and concepts behind it. It is about connection to the community and creating social change in the world. Andrea Hernandez is from Santa Barbara, California, where she identified as a Chicana in high school when she learned about the Chicano movement. She now attends Chico State, majors in liberal studies, and minors in Chicana/o studies and Spanish. During her interview via Skype, I noticed political and cultural books in the background. She lives with her family, and her mother interrupted the interview a few times to ask her questions in Spanish. She joined M.E.Ch.A in high school and in college, where she took positions as community outreach, ethnic studies chair, public relations, and now as external affairs. She sees community work as important and stresses the importance of cross-racial identities: “I do strongly believe that it’s an ideology more than an ethnic background and anyone can identify as a Chican@. Afro Chican@, Asian Chican@, or whatever they want because it’s evolved since the sixties.” Xicanisma/o is not simply about ethnic identities or race. A member of any oppressed community can identify with it. For that, Xican@ has become not just a political identity but also an ideology.

Most MEChistAs contextualize the word “Chicano.” I found that, originally, White racists used the term Chicano to degrade people of Mexican descent. In the 1960s, however,

people reclaimed the term and used it proudly. Only some members realized that “Chicano” was problematic because it was narrow, exclusive, and oppressive to other identities within the community. Michelle Vasquez is from Los Angeles and studies at University of California-Irvine. She majors in political science and Chicana/o studies, and identifies as Chicana. She is first generation in the United States, and her family is close to their indigenous roots, where other students picked on her because she had *Indio* (Indian) features such as darker skin. She first saw M.E.Ch.A during a May Day rally in downtown Los Angeles. Later, she became student government representative, internal affairs chair, and now she is the National M.E.Ch.A Communication Coordinator. In her interview, she came across as a passionate activist that loved M.E.Ch.A. She also pointed out how the terms Chicano, Xicana, and Xican@ have changed:

Throughout the years, it has been changing. In the ‘80s, we had Xicana. Now, we have a LGBTQIA identity with Xican@ with an @ so it’s queer friendly. It’s going through changes, which is good because it should be constantly moving and reinventing itself.

Vasquez acknowledges that M.E.Ch.A has had to change in order to remain relevant. She describes the reasoning for the @ sign, which shows queer inclusivity in M.E.Ch.A. That is why it is important for M.E.Ch.A to reinvent itself and include others.

The majority of MEChistAs agree that Chican@/Xican@ encompasses all oppressed communities. This is where Sandoval’s differential consciousness becomes important because these theoretical ideas help with organizing tactics for coalition and multicultural building.

Steven Payan grew up in Woodland and attended Woodland Community College. He studies Political Science and identifies as a Chicano. I interviewed him at his house, which had Chicano, Cesar Chavez, and Brown Berets posters. He offered detailed insight into M.E.Ch.A’s historical documents. Before the interview, he had a phone interview with KPFA Free Speech

Radio station about an upcoming event. He is an extremely well known and honored activist in the community. He is also a part of an autonomous Brown Berets chapter in Sacramento. In M.E.Ch.A, he served as a secretary and co-chair. These are his comments on the struggle to change the name and meaning of a “Chicano” organization:

Collectively, the National M.E.Ch.A had a 10-year debate on the name change from Chicano to Chican@, where the latter was inclusive. It took so long because we were focused on so many other issues and others just didn’t want to hear it. In my opinion, it was secondary because the name Chicano is inclusive. I didn’t really care what it was called, but I would have preferred Chicanista because it would have focused on feminine pronoun.

Payan describes the struggles of changing the National M.E.Ch.A. He did not see it as a crucial debate, and he would have preferred “Chicanista.” The Xican@ definition has not been learned by the wider audience such as average Latina/os in the community and at the university, unless they take an ethnic studies course. Unless Latina/os who are not of Mexican descent start taking ethnic studies courses, M.E.Ch.A will continue to isolate different ethnicities. Third world feminism has been at the forefront of critiques and has impacted M.E.Ch.A to evolve because MEChistAs read these scholars in their university courses.

The first time I heard these definitions was in my first Statewide M.E.Ch.A conference at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo. That was the moment that I became a Chicana. For the first time, I understood my homeland’s politics and problems along with the internal struggle in the United States for my family and me. I have experienced the problem; when I go to Nicaragua, people see me as a “gringa.” However, in the United States people see me as an outsider, as “illegal,” and as a criminal. Throughout my time with M.E.Ch.A, my identity has evolved from Latina to Nicaragüenese to Chicana to Afro-Xican@. These have evolved with my political understanding. In middle school, I was Latina, where I knew that I was different because of the color of my skin. In high school, I was Nicaragüenese because I did not fit in with Mexican

students that were from a different culture. In college, I became a political activist based on Chicano ideas. By my graduating year in college, I understood that I have indigenous and African ancestry, and I questioned sexuality and sexual orientation.

Aztlán

Aztlán is a complicated concept to explain to non-M.E.Ch.A members; even MEChistAs or Chicana/o activists grapple with it. There are many perspectives of Aztlán. For this section, I found many definitions of Aztlán. Historically, Aztlán refers to the stolen land by the Spanish from the indigenous people and then by the United States from Mexico and its indigenous people. A civil war for liberation in self-defense against the historic institutionalized racism would reclaim Aztlán. This was one exception to my interviews. Juan Guzman de Chico State argued for a historical definition of Aztlán. As he sees it,

M.E.Ch.As usually see Aztlán as a state of mind, neo-mystical place. It's here, but it's not here. That's what I used to think as well. Now that I've been with the National Brown Berets, which they have always, been more of a militant organization. I've been able to learn that Brown Berets has more of a conceptual form of Aztlán. We don't want to take back Aztlán and give it to Mexico. It's ridiculous because we're not from Mexico. We're Chicanos. We hope to take back Aztlán, but to make it our own sovereign nation.

Guzman recognized that his view is different from most MEChistAs. His participation in the Brown Berets has changed his view of Aztlán. He argues that Aztlán is a physical place that can be reclaimed, though not by Mexico, but by Mexican Americans who do not have a country of their own. Guzman and the Brown Berets would establish a sovereign and self-sustaining state in this place.

A minority of MEChistAs sees it from this perspective, but I found that these members do not generally believe that reclaiming Aztlán is possible. Many MEChistAs do not want to assume that Chicana/os in the 1960s viewed Aztlán in this way. I found that they do not want to

romanticize the past. Today, most MEChistAs believe that Aztlán is not a place, but a philosophical space or a state of consciousness. Michael Singh is one of them. He grew up in Woodland, California and graduated from UC Berkeley in ethnic studies. He is a second generation in the United States and saw many injustices in his community and family. His interview via Skype was powerful because he was knowledgeable about M.E.Ch.A and third world feminism. He believes that M.E.Ch.A has been a force for theory and practice. When Singh started his undergraduate program at Berkeley, there was no M.E.Ch.A chapter because of internal conflicts years before. He found other like-minded students on campus and re-founded it. Since then, he has held many officer positions. He identified himself as Xicano and explained what Aztlán means to him:

It's more of the consciousness of the space you occupy and the history of that space. I understand the history of colonialism in the Southwest and I'm against that. However, in moving forward and how that relates now, I don't think it's productive to consider it territorial.

Most MEChistAs do not believe that Aztlán is a place anymore. Its attainment can occur through building consciousness and awareness. People build it wherever they are in day-to-day activities. According to this new definition, we can all create Aztlán in our lives. It is an ideal of equality, equity, and liberation. Mannheim regards this as the dialectical relationship between principles and goals and the future. In terms of M.E.Ch.A, Xicanisma/o is the principles and goals of intersectional and decolonial politics. Aztlán is the equitable future and spaces that MEChistAs envision.

Most MEChistAs believe attainment of Aztlán occurs through other methods. Michael Singh from M.E.Ch.X.A de UCB explained how people can attain Aztlán:

We attain it through love and strength because we need to hold good energy in the space. We have to love each other. We have to diversify what activism means, but I don't think

we reoccupy the land. I would say love, but that's very difficult because everyone has their own definitions of what it is.

From this perspective, reclaiming Aztlán is not about reclaiming land. It is about reconstructing what society means and how it functions. It pushes people to think outside of traditional norms.

Steven Payan offered his perspective on the debate about Aztlán:

We are the caretakers of this land. Indigenous people understand that there is no ownership of land. We cannot say this is our land; that's the western way of thinking. When we die it's going to go back to the people, but it was never the people's to begin with; we are just feeding off of the fruits of the planet. We have an exchange, but somewhere it gets lost in translation of Aztlán and ownership of land...we do want power to the people. This a nation ran by and for the people; then, we should be able to govern ourselves. The people on that land know how to best govern themselves democratically, where no one will feel disenfranchised. The food, land, and resources need to sustain everyone on that land.

Some MEChistAs do not believe in borders because they are problematic. Reclaiming Aztlán, in the physical sense, perpetuates the idea that land can be owned and that borders are real. He challenges the idea of reclaiming land as a Western idea. Aztlán does not belong to us because it belongs to the future children of this land. It is for the people that work the land. It brings up Guzman's idea of sovereign nation, but critiques it as a Western concept. It is about the liberation and self-determination for oppressed communities. This is all about deconstructing those traditional ideas.

I found that it holds a special place to all M.E.Ch.A activists and organizers. Karina Alvarado grew up in Van Nuys, California, attended University of California-Davis, and majored in Sociology and Spanish. She is a first generation college student and identifies herself as a feminist, queer Chicana@. For this interview, we met at the Chicana/o department. She found M.E.Ch.A during *semana de la raza* (week of Latin@s) that occurs in contrast to the Greek Rush Week. She said that M.E.Ch.A felt like her second family and it was a part of her survival. Her interview gave me an understanding of her as a feminist, queer MEChistA. She has been

external affairs chair, cultural chair, and now is the Raza Empowerment Conference chair. She described the meaning of Aztlán:

Aztlán is a mythical home, a place where I feel safe to voice my opinions and be myself. It's wherever I go because Aztlán is in your heart. If I'm anywhere, I want to feel at home and I want to feel at peace, then I think of Aztlán. It's in me.

She describes it as her home, her heart, and her voice. It is bigger than a place, an ideology, or a definition. It has different meanings for everyone. It is similar to Foucault's idea of utopia. It is something that is real to them and they are fighting for Aztlán in their own ways, but it is not yet realized.

MEChistAs use Aztlán as motivation to keep on fighting for social justice. Most of them gave up on reclaiming Aztlán. They do not believe that Xican@s will have land to call their own. Some MEChistAs question the idea of "owning," calling it colonial language. The majority of them believe in creating smaller versions of utopia in their homes, universities, and communities. It occurs through unity, love, and education. This is a long and personal debate. MEChistAs all have their own ideas of what Aztlán is, where it is, who is included in it, and how to attain it.

Activism

Different M.E.Ch.A chapters focus on different issues. I found that most chapters concentrate on educating middle and high school students. They want to increase the representation of students of color in higher education. They usually hold conferences where they have workshops, classes, speakers, and concerts for youth. Some chapters have mentoring programs with middle and high schools, including after-school programs and ethnic studies courses. M.E.Ch.A chapters have also organized against the budget cuts in California, and

advocated on behalf of ethnic studies departments and their campuses. Overall, they have united to change education in California.

I discovered that these efforts vary from chapter to chapter. Some chapters concentrate on issues such as immigration, prisons, Palestine, queer rights, sweatshops, and workers' rights. Certain M.E.Ch.A chapters are better than others are when it comes to intersectional politics. Chapters at SJSU, CSUN, and UCB have had panels about queer students of color and how their experiences are different. They have organized internal discussions and discussions open to the public about intersectional identities. It is a crucial aspect of these M.E.Ch.A chapters, which shows that encouraging discussion of intersectionality can be compatible with militant and effective organizing. M.E.Ch.A is an example of how other M.E.Ch.A chapters can and should organize because, unlike it did in the 1960s, it does not force members to ignore aspects of their identities.

M.E.Ch.A has not perfected this yet. There is not any real consistency or organization. M.E.Ch.A chapters usually organized around five basic principles, which are: accessibility to higher education; improvement of K-12 and community college; anti-war; and gender & sexuality. They all also adopt different tactics and strategies, such as protests, rallies, campaigns, workshops, education, petitions, walkouts, banner drops, and hunger strikes.

MESA directiva (executive board) decides most issues and problems. The MESA makes overall decisions and then lets the general body vote on two or three options. However, smaller chapters usually make overall decisions with all the MEChistAs, not just the MESA. They also have different subcommittees in M.E.Ch.A. Current events in the world also influence the chapters. M.E.Ch.A organizes based on what has recently occurred in a given chapter's area.

For example, if its campus had a racial slur painted on the wall, the M.E.Ch.A chapter would likely organize an action in response.

In general, M.E.Ch.A has advocated for accessible education both for K-12 and in the university. Different chapters employ different strategies and tactics. M.E.Ch.A activism is different at every university because they all have different issues to focus on.

Autonomous Chapters

According to the National M.E.Ch.A and its constitution, each chapter is autonomous and does not have to follow the rules of other chapters. This is good because chapters can follow their own instincts and organize according to their local conditions. If M.E.Ch.A becomes too dogmatic or bureaucratic, each chapter commands its own politics and follows its own path, but this is bad because each chapter can do whatever it wants. Although chapters are becoming more diverse, inclusive, and progressive, some chapters can stick to old practices. Chapters can be classist, sexist, racist, and heterosexist, and no one can do anything about it.

Miguel Pimentel is from Hayward, California, and is the first in his family to graduate from college at California State University-East Bay in ethnic studies and Spanish. He immigrated to the United States when he was 11 years old because of financial difficulties. For the interview, we met at the Hayward Public Library, which had many people and families. Miguel was co-chair during his second year. He explained his identities as Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicano. He identified as an activist and said that not all chapters are diverse and inclusive: “I think it depends on the chapter if they want to follow the actual guidelines of their constitution or if they’re open to other people. I think my chapter promotes diversity and inclusivity.” Throughout my interviews, I found that much depends on the chapter. Most MEChistAs mentioned this during their interviews. Danny Santana-Hernandez agreed with

Miguel about autonomous chapters. He said there are problems with having autonomous chapters all over California that are not connected to the M.E.Ch.A structure:

The hard part of M.E.Ch.A being autonomous because we have to deal with issues like that. We found a list of all the M.E.Ch.A chapters in the area and we asked them to change their names if they didn't adopt M.E.Ch.A's new anti-homophobic stances. Some complied, others did not and just told us to buzz off. It's a bad reflection on us.

He states that some "M.E.Ch.As" did understand the structure while others did not care. Thus, some chapters may give all other M.E.Ch.A chapters a bad name and representation.

Autonomous chapters create two main problems. First, M.E.Ch.A ends up with multiple philosophies. Because all chapters are autonomous, I discovered that there is little consistency in their political ideologies. MEChistAs are democrats, Chicano nationalists, Marxists, feminists, socialists, decolonialists, transnationalists, and others who did not want to identify as practicing ideology. Consequently, there is no continuity, which can create factions within the organization. On the other hand, it also means that there are multiple perspectives, which shows that growth and dialogue is possible and needed within the organization. This all depends on the chapter and how they manage the different ideologies. Juan Guzman explained why more MEChistAs should embrace Chicano nationalism as the dominant ideology:

People used to promote and talk about Chicano nationalism. Nowadays, people don't like nationalism and it has a negative connotation. They see it as communism or socialism. We have to prioritize the issues that our *raza* [Chicanos] face first. We're being so inclusive with all these other things at once that we can't move forward. If we had more MEChistAs embrace Chicano nationalism, then we could make actual change. The purpose of M.E.Ch.A isn't being served anymore.

Guzman's comments reflect the reality of Chicano nationalism today. His comments show that the historical limitations of Chicano nationalism, namely its sexist, homophobic, and Mexican-centric prejudices, continue to permeate and influence this vein of thought within M.E.Ch.A. Although I agree with Guzman on the need for reevaluation and general redirection of

M.E.Ch.A, I do not believe that Chicano nationalism can provide a viable framework for advancing the organization or the movement in general.

Second, I found that M.E.Ch.A focuses on various political, social, and cultural issues. Again, all chapters have the right to concentrate on issues based on local conditions. MEChistAs organize around issues stated above. While education, prisons, and queer politics came up the most, the issues were not limited to those. This is good for M.E.Ch.A because they are able to triumph around different issues in the state and the country. Nonetheless, many chapters are not in contact with other chapters, so many of them do not learn from each other. This is a problem because chapters do not cooperate when it would make them more effective. There is no stability to accomplish goals as they did during the 1960s. Michelle Vasquez explains why M.E.Ch.A needs to develop a more coherent organization:

We don't have a united goal that we want to accomplish. Our chapter, regional, and even Nationals, there hasn't been an actual movimiento. We haven't physically put in the work toward something. We need a purpose. Right now, we're just doing and acting without purpose.

Her opinion was that M.E.Ch.A needs the organization and needs to adopt one common goal. If all the chapters would adopt the same goals, then they might be more successful.

The findings reflect that Chicano@/Xicano@ and Aztlán has a set definition for most MEChistAs, which is different from 1960s MEChistAs. The interviews reveal that their political philosophies, tactics, and strategies are different chapter to chapter in California. Thus, even though M.E.Ch.A is strong and evolved around the ideas of Chicano@/Xicano@, it has multiple philosophies in every chapter and this creates ineffective and incoherent organizing and politics among M.E.Ch.A chapters.

Valle (1996) argued that an increased, diversified membership creates fragmentation and ideological ambiguity. However, despite the fact that the Chicano movement has a history of

sectarianism, this is not the root cause of the current lack of leadership found both at the national and statewide levels of the organization. Inclusive, diverse, or intersectional politics is not the problem, but instead by the influences of patriarchal and homophobic ideas prevalent within the movement since the 1960s. Although M.E.Ch.A has core, fundamental values, these values originated during a time when M.E.Ch.A functioned as the student wing of the Chicano movement as a whole. The current dynamics have changed. M.E.Ch.A has become more inclusive as it has expanded its base in the universities and non-Chicano communities. Its core values and goals must reflect this change. The leadership of the organization must put forth a strong set of goals that reflect the needs of its members in order for them to organize effectively.

M.E.Ch.A Conflicts

This section discusses M.E.Ch.A conflicts identified by the members. First, they struggled with each other about whether to engage in community or campus organizing. Many MEChistAs were passionate about doing community work or engaging in university politics. Second, contrasting with previous research, M.E.Ch.A members wrestled with differences between new and older MEChistAs and alumnae MEChistAs. Lastly, MEChistAs expressed hostility toward Greek organizations a view that has a long history.

Comunidad versus Universidad

The biggest issue that arose between M.E.Ch.A members was whether they should engage in community or campus organizing. Certain MEChistAs focused on community needs, such as workers' rights, labor issues, immigration, prisons, and other non-university issues. Cassandra Lepe was one of them. She is from Los Angeles, attends Woodland Community College, and majors in sociology. Her parents are from Mexico, and she grew up around people

of color and Raza culture. She was extremely in tune with her identity as a woman of color and described many oppressions she has faced. She identifies as Chicana and is an established and well-known community organizer. M.E.Ch.A has motivated her and led her to become an *Aztec danzante* (dancer). She was co-chair at Woodland Community College. She defended the importance of community organizing for other MEChistAs:

My vision is being more involved in the community than on campus. I think that most of us are campus centric because we're so into or academics so sometimes we lose touch with our communities. I feel like a lot of the struggle is in the community right now.

She argued that community organizing keeps MEChistAs grounded in their politics and connected to the people who need them most. She argued that MEChistAs should not become "armchair intellectuals." Steven Payan and Juan Guzman agreed with her:

M.E.Ch.A is supposed to be in the community, not on campuses. They are only supposed to use the campus as a resource to get the community engaged. I think many organizers have the tunnel vision of working on the campus because they have so much to focus on. People get too focused on finding themselves, but they can't because they are not connected to their community. -Steven Payan,

M.E.Ch.A should focus minimally on university politics. It's a privilege to be a Chicano and going to a university. They should be fighting for ethnic studies, faculty, and staff of color, and accessibility and retention of students of color. They can't just do that because they aren't in the community. It's about always doing stuff on campus and doing community work. -Juan Guzman

They argued that the organization needs to focus on helping the community, and that people who concentrate on campus politics become isolated, disengaged, and elitist. Juan Guzman pushed it further by stating that MEChistAs need to do it all: they should be involved on campus and in the community, but place an emphasis on community organizing.

Other MEChistAs wanted to focus this energy on campus politics. They argued that M.E.Ch.A originally was dedicated to campus issues and politics. Danny Santana-Hernandez

argued that MEChistAs should to focus on university politics, especially with ethnic studies, accessibility, and increasing the representation of students of color:

I wish that M.E.Ch.A would be more involved with the ethnic studies fight. Chapters at the regional, state, and national level should be tackling this because M.E.Ch.A was founded on bringing Chicano studies. There are national debates going on about ethnic studies and I'm troubled by the fact that M.E.Ch.A isn't active in it. Chicano studies and ethnic studies were born together out of *El Plan de Santa Bárbara*. We have to remember that. I'm also troubled by the fact that M.E.Ch.A isn't more involved with the budget cuts issues because we were also founded on bringing more students of color to the university.

Santana-Hernandez and others believe M.E.Ch.A was founded on education and needs to continue that legacy. Their goal should be to increase the number of students of color in higher education and in ethnic studies programs.

Some MEChistAs argued that in the 1960s, the Chicano movement had many organizations working in the community, such as the United Farm Workers, Brown Berets, and La Raza Unida Partido. Because most of those organizations have disappeared, M.E.Ch.A has to take up all of these other issues. Now, they argue that MEChistAs are obliged to their community and the university. This is difficult, however, because many MEChistA students are students and workers, which challenge MEChistAs to find time for political activism. It has been difficult for M.E.Ch.A to resolve this conflict because each perspective is quite passionate about where the organization should concentrate its efforts.

Most MEChistAs suggest finding a balance and doing both. However, I have heard and observed that this makes MEChistAs burn out easier and lose members faster. As a M.E.Ch.A member, I always encouraged M.E.Ch.A to be more community orientated. I grew up in a community filled with violence, gangs, drugs, racism, sexism, and classism. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) came into my house and stole my uncles from me, deporting them to Nicaragua. Community issues were at the heart of my activism because of strong connection

to my neighborhood and family. I was in M.E.Ch.A for two years and I never read the historical documents. I read them this year for my thesis, and they focus on higher education and ethnic studies. These interviews have also made me realize that many MEChistAs are overworked and spread thin. I remember I felt like this at SJSU, but I thought it was because we had a small chapter. This was not true; all chapters are experiencing activism fatigue. Broader community issues spread MEChistAs thin, which makes it a less durable organization. It might be best to pick one or two issues and work on them. This might allow M.E.Ch.A to focus on certain issues and have more successes.

I think that M.E.Ch.A needs to refocus on university issues of ethnic studies and education accessibility through a decolonial/transnational framework. M.E.Ch.A was often the sole organization on campus that kept Chicana/o studies alive and forged a space for them to become scholars (Valenzuela, 2011). M.E.Ch.A should continue living up to this legacy. By focusing on ethnic studies, it will encourage intersectional politics because scholar-activists write about their experiences as queer Xicanas. It will also help M.E.Ch.A stay connected to the community by continuing to work with high schools and allow multiracial and cross-cultural coalition building, because this issues runs across all identities. Our stories need to be told in the universities because our experiences are legitimate. Adjusting the direction of M.E.Ch.A toward expanding and retaining ethnic studies all over the nation will lead to bigger goals, such as community involvement and state and national politics. M.E.Ch.A needs to go back to its roots based on a student-centered framework. This will make it stronger.

More importantly, MEChistAs are community members and they do not usually detach themselves from their communities by going to college. It is an interconnected cycle. *El Plan de Santa Bárbara*, in the section Organizing and Instituting Chicano Programs on Campus, states

that the ultimate goal was to develop a Universidad de La Raza or Universidad Autonoma de Aztlán (Valenzuela, 2011). This is a realistic vision and goal for MEChistAs. In the last forty years, M.E.Ch.A has graduated so many Xican@s. They are valuable in this movement. They can be staff, administration, and faculty. Communities need autonomous spaces to learn about all disciplines from the Xican@ perspective. Ultimately, M.E.Ch.A can push forward the idea of establishing Xican@ universities all over the country. This will allow M.E.Ch.A to flourish and skyrocket back into a social movement.

Older MEChistAs versus Newer MEChistAs

Another issue that came up many times in the interviews was the division between older MEChistAs and newer MEChistAs. Licón (2009) argued that MEChistAs were closely connected with their elders, but I did not find that to be true. Many MEChistAs described their struggles with generational differences.

First, I found that new members are relatively new to activism and politics. Their ideas and opinions usually have not fully formed yet. They tend to recite the founding documents because they have barely started learning Chicanismo. New members also tend to offend older members because of their language and outdated politics. They do not understand gender-neutral language and may subconsciously offend other members. This occurs usually with queer MEChistAs because some members were not exposed to queer issues.

Second, I learned that newer members also tend to have issues with older MEChistAs. The main problem is that the older members knew each other and made newer members feel isolated. These cliques prevent new and old members from bonding with each other. Older members tend to have self-developed ideas and more organizing experience. This is a divide

between the generations. Carlos Olivares from California State University-San Marcos explained the problem he had noticed within this chapter and region:

The fact that elders are not welcomed is a big concern. The fact that older mentees are not welcomed is a problem. It's problematic to alienate people who want to help our chapter and the community. M.E.Ch.A isn't about that. Our chapter is weak right now because of this division. The idea is "once a MEChistA, always a MEChistA" so we need to be open to all members.

There is a conflict between different generations of MEChistAs. Yet, many MEChistAs want to bridge that gap. They certainly need unity between all the members. The saying "once a MEChistA, always a MEChistA" signifies that MEChistA politics are important and remain over time. That is why it is so important to have unity within the organization. Susie Amezcua agreed with Carlos that M.E.Ch.A needs a better transition system: "It's bad that there's a lack of transitioning between older and newer members. There's a lot of new MEChistAs, but there's not a lot of older MEChistAs guiding us and having dialogues." More importantly, older members should be passing down their knowledge, advice, and experience to newer members. There needs to be a better transition system between M.E.Ch.A generations. Older members need to mentor incoming MEChistAs. Internal educations and discussions should always continue to create educated, conscious MEChistAs, which would help close the generational gap.

Finally, I found that there was a division between active MEChistAs and alumnae MEChistAs. The saying "once a MEChistA, always a MEChistA" does not actually mean that alumnae remain actively involved with M.E.Ch.A chapters. In reality, once they are gone, they do not usually come back because they do not have voting privileges. I found that alumnae members come back to meetings to give advice or ask for help on their events. Usually, this makes new members feel like they are stepping on their toes. Eddie Rivero de M.E.Ch.X.A of

University of California-Berkeley suggests a solution for after MEChistAs graduate and leave their chapter:

My concerns/critiques of M.E.Ch.A are that it needs to develop a better alumni connection. After all, M.E.Ch.A in my eyes is supposed to train students to become community organizers in the future as well as to bring a Xican@ studies perspective to their respective career fields. As a result, MEChXistAs should ideally become a part of a community and they could help bridge that gap between the universities and the community. Unfortunately, I feel that a lot of MEChXistAs graduate and see organizing as a thing that you only do in college. We need alumni to continue to organize, as Chicanismo is a life philosophy, not just a college philosophy.

M.E.Ch.A trains activists, organizers, and humans to improve their communities. Graduates need an organization or a system that connects university and community. Alumni MEChistAs, who are employed, have money need to continue to support their brothers and sisters. When alumni MEChistAs come back, they need to make sure not to overstep their bounds. Active and new members should listen to their points of view through constructive communication and an adequate M.E.Ch.A alumnae program.

Social versus Political Organizations

Historically, M.E.Ch.A and Greek organizations have been at odds. During the 1970s, there was an increase in the numbers of Chicana/o students participating in Greek organizations, yet these organizations did little to represent students of color (Valle, 1996). In the early 1990s, UCLA's Theta Xi made a handbook with a song called "Lupe," which described raping an eight-year-old Latina (Licón, 2009). In 1992, CSUN's Zeta Beta Tau fraternity organized an offensive "Mexican" themed party, which referred to "Lupe" (Licón, 2009). In 1993, two men from Theta Xi fraternity at UC Davis assaulted and tormented a Latina by carving "wetback" into her arms and legs (Licón, 2009). M.E.Ch.A fought against this racist, sexist assault, which was the first time that M.E.Ch.A did intersectional work at CSUN and UC Davis. In 2001, at University of

Southern California, a white female from a sorority became student body president and worked to prevent multicultural organizations from having offices on campus; this effort was unsuccessful (Revilla, 2005).

According to Revilla (2005), sororities and fraternities dominated student government and organizations until the 1980s. Members of Greek organizations usually come from privileged backgrounds (Revilla, 2005). Most of the time, MEChistAs viewed Greek organizations as competitors, because both fought for funds, members, and attention. Moreover, M.E.Ch.A lost potential recruits to other Hispanic organizations on campus and M.E.Ch.A could no longer claim to be the organizational voice of the Chican@ community on campus (Valle, 1996). Overall, M.E.Ch.A and Greek organizations have a hostile history based on “political views, beliefs, and actions” (Licón, 2009).

The biggest problem with M.E.Ch.A occurs with Greek organizations, including Latino, Latina, and multi-cultural organizations. According to Licón (2009), in the 1990s, Latina/o fraternities and sororities sprung up. This reminded MEChistAs of what past fraternities had done to the Chican@ community and they reacted with disdain. MEChistAs felt that Chican@ students had betrayed them by joining Greek organizations, which had attacked their communities. They wanted Latin@s to join M.E.Ch.A instead because it promoted a family, sisterhood, and brotherhood. M.E.Ch.A usually does not work with Greek organizations because they see them as elitist and apolitical. MEChistAs objected to the Greeks’ emphasis on parties and assimilation. M.E.Ch.A opposed almost everything Greek organizations supported. This history has followed M.E.Ch.A and Greek organizations, and both organizations equally do not like or work with each other.

I found that many members today do not like Greek organizations. They blame them for taking Latin@s from M.E.Ch.A and feel they are a bad influence on Chican@ community. Andrea Hernandez from Chico State suggested some reasons that Latina/os join Greek organizations instead of M.E.Ch.A: “Then, a lot of Latinos end up joining Greek organizations because, sometimes because they don’t like the politicalness of M.E.Ch.A or for other personal reasons.” Being political is not a good thing. This goes back to Eddie Rivero’s comment about Chicano manhood and the Western idea of it. Latina/os gravitate to other Greek organizations in order to assimilate and conform to parties and drugs. M.E.Ch.A has also struggled with other social organizations for the same reasons. M.E.Ch.A’s emphasis on political action turns off many prospective members.

Despite their acrimonious history, some M.E.Ch.A chapters work with multicultural Greek organizations. This usually occurs on smaller campuses. Karina Casillas is one of the MEChistAs who works with Greek organizations. She grew up in Santa Ana, California, graduated from the University of Southern California, and majored in policy planning and American ethnic studies. She identifies herself as Latina and is part Peruvian and Mexican. She is a first-generation, low-income student of color. Her family always stressed the importance of community and education, which led her to her pursuit of higher education and public policy. During the Skype interview, she called in from the library and presented good stories and experiences. Her chapter was small and unique. She described her involvement with Greek organizations on her campus and the difficulties other MEChistAs gave her chapter for doing so:

Many chapters aren’t open to working with Greek organizations. USC Greeks were different than other campuses because they would throw politically, culturally, and socially aware events and we would support them. That’s why our chapter allows Greeks, but I know most M.E.Ch.A chapters aren’t like us. They’ll make fun of M.E.Ch.A who have Greeks in them.

Sadly, M.E.Ch.A chapters that work with Greeks get negative comments from other M.E.Ch.A chapters, which have created internal conflicts between chapters. The Greek organizations also do the same community work. MEChistAs who work with Greeks argue that M.E.Ch.A should work with any organization, even Greek organizations, that supports them and stands for the betterment of la Raza. Therefore, it leads some MEChistAs to believe that M.E.Ch.A is not inclusive because they are pushing out certain people.

Other Greek organizations continue to hold events that are racist, sexist, and classist. This shows that the M.E.Ch.A, as an organization, shapes MEChistAs politics. For that reason, many M.E.Ch.A chapters do not associate with any Greek organizations. This raises the question: What is the harm of collaborating with Greek organizations of color that share the same mission and goals for their communities? Should these organizations collaborate despite their history?

M.E.Ch.A Vision

MEChistAs organize for their communities. They find it rewarding to work with their communities to accomplish goals. I found that participants enjoyed working with community. Martha Gil is from Lake Elsinore, California, attends California State University-San Marcos, and majors in biology. She grew up with liberal parents, who went to college in Mexico and became lawyers. She struggled to accept her culture in high school, but that changed in college. Her family exposed her to M.E.Ch.A and she saw them at a May Day rally. M.E.Ch.A is like a second family to her. During the Skype interview, she called in from her father's tire shop. This was her first year in M.E.Ch.A and she said that she wanted more involvement and dialogue with MEChistAs. She described how M.E.Ch.A changed her life and why she related to the community:

Before joining M.E.Ch.A, I did not embrace [my culture] at all. It made me feel a lot closer to my roots. It made me more conscious and aware about how bad it still is for us, other minorities, and around the world. I love the community and support. It gave me such a great feeling of community and it made me feel comfortable with being an activist. I wouldn't call myself an activist, but the feeling of community makes it worth it.

MEChistAs said they love to create political, social, and cultural consciousness within their families, friends, and communities. Susie Tapia agreed that community work was important: "I saw the youth in LA talk about the issues of equality. That is cool to me because I introduced them to social justice issues. It's rewarding because they're gaining consciousness and it's apart of our influence." Community and consciousness was key to their organizing. I found that MEChistAs enjoyed seeing their communities change. Overwhelmingly, MEChistAs saw themselves growing and learning because of their activism. They said it gave them more confidence and self-esteem.

Abrahan Tapia is from South Central Los Angeles, attends University of California-Davis, and majors in psychology. His parents are from Mexico, and he is a first-generation college student. He never thought about college as an option because his high school did not encourage it. He started as a Raza Day Youth Conference volunteer and later joined M.E.Ch.A because they work with inner city high schools. He was confident and proud, and identified as a Chicano feminist. During the interview, he wore a t-shirt with the solidarity fist, the words "educate", and "protest" were on it. Last year, he was external chair of his chapter. He described how M.E.Ch.A influenced him:

M.E.Ch.A has provided a different narrative about political views in the United States. I always hear about assimilation into the greater US and White culture, but M.E.Ch.A advocates for self-empowerment and indigenous identity, which is usually suppressed. M.E.Ch.A educates me to embrace indigenous culture and other indigenous cultures.

M.E.Ch.A is not like other organizations because it is not about networking, assimilating, and getting employment. It teaches its MEChistAs the skills they need to survive and remain true to themselves. Karina Alvarado described the rewards she got from being in M.E.Ch.A:

Acceptance of how I am because I didn't accept myself. Then, accepting who others are because I stopped assuming people's identities and ideologies were. Also, it brought out my personality. I used to be a very shy person and now people cannot shut me up, which is good and bad. It has taught me to navigate the system. Activism continues to give me fire to fight for what my community deserves.

This also goes back to Karina's identity as a queer Xicana. M.E.Ch.A created a space for her to become self-aware and accepted. It also shaped her personality. Many members said that M.E.Ch.A helped them overcome their shyness. Overall, I found that MEChistAs have had a positive experience.

MEChistAs had hopes and dreams for their organization that they have committed to for years. They wanted to continue the struggle. I discovered that they wanted to spread knowledge and consciousness for all oppressed communities. Moreover, they wanted the movement to become stronger and united in moving forward for change. Gabe Rodriguez explained his vision for the future of M.E.Ch.A:

I would want the movement to be inclusive of all other movements, where we are more conscious about what materials we are using, whether they are eco-friendly and what kind of language are we using, whether that be queer friendly and inclusive. That's where I see the movement going, where it includes other movements. Hopefully, that we're going to create a safe space, where everyone is able to reach their full potential and conscious about everything else that's going on.

Inclusivity and intersectional politics is a part of M.E.Ch.A's future. Some wanted M.E.Ch.A to address its internal conflicts before engaging in community and campus struggles. Montze described her vision of the future for M.E.Ch.A:

We can still get a lot of M.E.Ch.As in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. We need more educating. M.E.Ch.A should be a space where we teach different ways about racism. In the near future, I would hope that all the M.E.Ch.As do

come about, but that we're also on the same page. It's important that we're all working toward the same goal. We have to be open to change. We can change the constitution. We need to embrace ambiguity. Don't be afraid of change.

She wanted M.E.Ch.A to expand to all aspects of education, not just colleges. Moreover, I found that many MEChistAs wanted unity and cohesiveness. Others wanted M.E.Ch.A to become a strong national and worldwide movement. Many MEChistAs said that they wanted M.E.Ch.A to be as it was in the 1960s again, when it was powerful and influential. Ruben Martin is one of the many MEChistAs who wanted the organization to go back to the 1960s when it was more radical, political movement. He described his vision for the future of M.E.Ch.A:

I want it to be feared by the government again. In the '60s and '70s, the FBI actually had to infiltrate because we were actually doing shit in the community. I want it to be like that again. I want it to be more than a social org. We had our peak and it went down. I want it to be relevant and strong again.

Overall, I found that Californian MEChistAs wanted organizational strength and unity so that they could strike the institution with fear. Back in the 1960s, COINTELPRO infiltrated Chicano organizations and other militant organizations. MEChistAs saw this as a badge of honor. Many of them wanted to see the organization feared by the government. They saw it as M.E.Ch.A doing its job.

MEChistAs focus on current events and what is going on that they did not think about where M.E.Ch.A is going or where it should go. Historically, M.E.Ch.A has had deep roots in activism and politics that will likely continue. Nevertheless, it is up to the members and community to keep the fight going. Marco Arizpe shared this interesting thought about his experience as a member:

As we see with GOP, it's hard for groups to progress with the times and they often lose popularity and die. Like any organism, if it doesn't evolve then it will perish; that's what M.E.Ch.A does. It's been around for 40+ years, so it's made its changes and moved with the times to survive.

Arizpe's comment sums up my belief that M.E.Ch.A has survived and thrived because it has been able to reinvent itself. M.E.Ch.A is just like any other organization. If it is going to continue another 40 plus years, its members will need to consider current critiques and reconstruct the organization so it can continue to work with communities around the world. If M.E.Ch.A had not changed, it might have died like the rest of the Chicano movement. Honestly, if M.E.Ch.A had not changed, I would not have joined the organization.

I found 11 patterns with 22 MEChistAs interviews. I found that there are more women in M.E.Ch.A, but participants questioned whether it was a positive accomplishment. There are more queers in M.E.Ch.A, but queer MEChistAs challenge heterosexual members for their privileges. There has been no racial/ethnic/nationality improvement. MEChistAs must ask themselves how they can change that reality given that they have already changed the Mexican-centricity on paper. Considering my experiences, I was not expecting this, because M.E.X.A de SJSU was always trying to focus more on transnational politics and less on Mexican-centric ideas.

Chican@/Xican@ encompasses all ethnicities because it is a political identity. This explains third world feminists' perspective on differential consciousness because MEChistAs comprehend how Chicano/Chicana/Xican@ identities have evolved throughout time and they critiqued oppression from different point of views. This also shows Xicanisma/o as the intersectional politics and principles for M.E.Ch.A as an ideology. Aztlán is also supposed to include different ethnicities. Aztlán is a state of consciousness and a philosophy to improve all oppressed communities. Despite this, it still has not impacted the demographics of MEChistAs involved. Aztlán is the utopia, according to Mannheim, Wallerstein, and Foucault, which all oppressed communities are struggling to achieve in their daily lives and community spaces.

All M.E.Ch.A chapters are autonomous, which may have influenced how certain chapters act or portray themselves. They can all work on different topics and address them in various ways. Overall, M.E.Ch.A must question itself in order to recruit and attract more members from all identities. On the other hand, M.E.Ch.A experiences internal and external conflicts regarding what to organize (community or campus), how to communicate with other MEChistAs, and who to organize with (social or political organizations). In order to move forward, M.E.Ch.A needs to resolve these internal struggles.

MEChistAs feel rewarded by the community, university, and even personally on many different levels. It educates and works with community, particularly with middle and high school students. MEChistAs aim to create change on the local level, and they want to see that change and how it influences the community. I found that they enjoy seeing other MEChistAs and students come into political and social consciousness. More importantly, M.E.Ch.A helps its members become empowered, educated, and strong community leaders. I discovered that MEChistAs want M.E.Ch.A to remain a powerful and influential organization. Yet, MEChistAs also want one day for M.E.Ch.A to not exist because only then would it mean that M.E.Ch.A has done its job for the community.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion and Implications

M.E.Ch.A has a complicated, but beautiful history from its origins in the 1960s and throughout its growth and evolution in the 1980s and 1990s. Chicana/os fought and resisted oppression during the Civil Rights era. They battled for farm workers' rights, attempted to create change as a political third party, fought for high school students' rights, university programs, cross-cultural politics, class warfare, and helped stop the Vietnam war and police brutality in their communities. Chicanas also challenged Chicanos' male and heterosexual privileges. Xicanas fought for inclusion in the Chicana/o movement and persuaded M.E.Ch.A to change its politics and principles that supported male privilege. Historically, M.E.Ch.A discriminated against women and openly queer individuals, but the founders of Xicanisma wrote books and articles about the internal conflicts within the Chicano movement and broadened the idea of what it meant to be Chican@/Xican@ to include women and queer identities. Central Americans, South Americans, and Afro-Latin@s entered M.E.Ch.A, helping the organization to evolve from a Mexican-only organization into an inclusive, Pan-Latina/o organization.

In California, M.E.Ch.A revised *El Plan de Santa Bárbara* and Philosophy Papers to include women, queers, and different indigenous groups and nationalities. By viewing and changing its philosophy, M.E.Ch.A has been able to survive as a relevant organization. National M.E.Ch.A has twice changed its name from Chicano to Chicana/o and then to Chican@. M.E.Ch.A adopted a broader view of colonization by changing its historical focus from 1848 to 1492; it now emphasized *indigenismo* and decolonization. M.E.Ch.A has revised its documents to include and honor women, queer communities, and ethnic diversity, which demonstrate the shifts that have occurred within M.E.Ch.A since the 1960s. Past research has argued that some M.E.Ch.As have become less militant and dogmatic, yet more inclusive and diverse. Valle

(1996) found that M.E.Ch.A is a linear and fluid organization because it is permanent, but also changes its politics; my research found the same because members' agency within the organization shaped M.E.Ch.A and it shaped members' identities. My research question is: in 2013, how do Californian MEChistAs view themselves, their political consciousness, and their social justice work?

MEChistAs view themselves as an inclusive, diverse, and progressive organization. Chicana@/Xicana@ is a political identity and ideology that includes women, queers, and non-Mexicans. Women and queers took lead of the organization, which shows the revised historical documents made a difference. Yet, M.E.Ch.A continues to be a Mexican-centric organization that isolates Central Americans, South Americans, and Afro-Latin@s. M.E.Ch.A has changed since the 1960s in many ways, but still needs work. They have several internal debates about Aztlán's meaning, community versus campus organizing, generational gaps, and working with social organizations that need resolutions. Despite the intensity of the debates, M.E.Ch.A has survived.

Every decade M.E.Ch.A has reinvented itself. Its politics have changed, shifted, and evolved from the 1960s. The fluidity has helped to open up M.E.Ch.A to more potential recruits than before. Old concepts and ideas have new definitions in an attempt to attract more members. Unlike other Chicano organizations, the youth chose to organize in a new setting—at the university institution. This aspect has not been my primary focus, but it is a valid point to discuss. M.E.Ch.A is a registered, permanent, and durable organization that enjoys a constant pool of potential members because of the constant flux of university students. Compared to other Chicano organizations, M.E.Ch.A does not have to actively search for members in the community because Chicana/o students usually seek out M.E.Ch.A on their campuses.

M.E.Ch.A has provided a space in the university for students of color to organize and for the value of ethnic studies to be explored and supported. M.E.Ch.A has filled a demand for political space within the university setting.

Third world feminism was the foundation for the identity politics section. Intersectionality was a common theme among the MEChistAs I interviewed. They viewed all of their identities as crucial parts of who they are and hated having to choose their most important identity. For them, identity was layered and complex. As Sandoval argues, MEChistAs shifted between levels of consciousness. They understood the Chicano movement and different political strategies and tactics. Xicanisma has sparked change M.E.Ch.A's ideas and politics because MEChistAs are in the university learning about Xicana authors in Chican@ Studies and ethnic studies. Yet, there were many M.E.Ch.A members with little to no knowledge about Xicana feminists. Ideology and Utopia theory was crucial to understanding Chican@/Xican@ and Aztlán. MEChistAs view the former as an integral ideology for the organization. It is a political term that incorporates principles of community and organizing with Aztlán as the goal. Although most members did not want to reclaim the physical land, MEChistAs fought for Aztlán in their homes, meetings, communities, departments, and universities.

My findings surprised me in a few ways. I was surprised that most MEChistAs did not consider a female majority within M.E.Ch.A to be progress. It is good to see women breaking gender norms and being political, yet many MEChistAs saw the lack of male involvement as a serious concern. This concern helped to challenge the idea that more female members and women in leadership roles are good ideals for the organization. MEChistAs wanted a balance in male and female membership. Having only experienced a diverse chapter at SJSU, I was also surprised that M.E.Ch.A remains a majority Mexican and Mexican American organization. I

believe that my chapter appreciated the diversity and used it to hold creative transnational events on campus. The idea of Aztlán as a state of consciousness also took me by surprise. As a MEChistA, I always viewed Aztlán as physical land that needed to be reclaimed in the name of Xican@s. Interviewing MEChistAs exposed me to this different perspective. MEChistAs changed my opinion about many aspects of Xicanism@ that as a member I had not considered.

In moving forward, my recommendation is that MEChistAs focus on reconceptualization and reevaluation of the ideological framework and goals of the organization. The increasing diversity resulting from demographic changes should be harnessed and utilized as a catalyst for fundamental, ideological change. Race politics helped to shape the idea of the ‘Chicano’ through a narrow conceptualization that focused solely on the Mexican, heterosexual male. It forced those that did not fit this paradigm to build a hierarchy of identities.

As a working class, heterosexual woman of color, who has experienced Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, I understand the importance of intersectionality. These facets of my identity helped to shape my personality, just as they shaped the MEChistAs interviewed for this study. The movement, just like those that comprise it, is very complex. We must use these complexities to our advantage in M.E.Ch.A by using them as a magnet to recruit those who have not joined other organizations or who were pushed out of them because of their identities. M.E.Ch.A must set an example of how to successfully implement intersectional politics and by extension become more militant, addressing one of the major critiques against the current state of the organization. A viable path to these changes lies in implementing a decolonial/transnational framework and getting involved in the fight for ethnic studies in high schools and universities. This will allow cross cultural/multiracial organizing and queer politics, which are imperative aspects of M.E.Ch.A chapters on many campuses.

Moreover, M.E.Ch.A has to create an environment on all university campuses that fosters involvement with our families and communities; we must always stay connected with the community. Continuing to organize youth through youth-oriented conferences, helps M.E.Ch.A not only reach out to vulnerable youth in middle and high schools, but also keeps the organization connected to the community. Although there are myriad issues affecting the Chican@ & Latin@ populations, focusing on a small numbers of issues will avoid the pitfalls of overstretching organizational capacity.

In moving forward with M.E.Ch.A research, it could focus on an in-depth historical comparative project between each generation of M.E.Ch.A chapters in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. In addition, certain M.E.Ch.A chapters can be case studies for intersectional politics, such as M.E.X.A. de SJSU, M.E.Ch.X.A de UCB, and M.E.Ch.A de CSUN. Research on M.E.Ch.As from different region other than California, such as Pacific Northwest, Miclampa Cihuatlampa, Calpulli Montanas de Norte, South East Tejaztlán, Centro Aztlán, Tierra Mid-Atl, and Este Aztlán still needs research. Historical comparatives, longitude researches, case studies, and regional comparatives are yet to be acknowledged. It is important because they have different political climates, influx of demographics, and legacies.

As a participant observer, I was both an insider and outside to this project. I enacted standpoint theory as one of the theoretical frameworks and methodology for this thesis. Complete objectivity was difficult as I balanced the line as a graduated MEChistA and as a M.E.Ch.A researcher. I am passionate about the substantive qualities of this research; I want the organization to thrive, improve, and effect change.

M.E.Ch.A research is crucial to understanding the experiences, struggles, and stories of students of color. M.E.Ch.A is a supportive safety network for the growing number of students

of color that are getting into higher education. M.E.Ch.A is a progressive and inclusive organization to help students of color maneuver the institution and have cultural and political competency. It provides a space to critically think about social, cultural, and political issues. In return, M.E.Ch.A provides youth an alternative to gangs, drugs, and prisons. Sociology and social movement literature needs more research, such as this, to understand student activists' identities of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation within their political activities.

My research contributes to previous work by Valle (1996), Licón (2001), and Valenzuela (2011) on M.E.Ch.A and Chican@/Xican@ scholarly work, including research that focused on M.E.Ch.A in Arizona up to 1996, M.E.Ch.A in California up to 1999, and M.E.Ch.A in Southern California up to 2010, respectively. My thesis adds to this research by analyzing M.E.Ch.As from all over California in 2013. My background as a former MEChistA has given me a perspective as an insider that was an advantage for getting MEChistAs to speak frankly and openly about internal M.E.Ch.A politics.

My research suggests that some of the past literature does not apply to current M.E.Ch.A chapters in California. These chapters have remained militant despite their diversity and inclusivity of intersectional politics. For that reason, they struggle with understanding the critiques from alumnae MEChistAs who stand against these politics. In enacting standpoint theory, my advice to MEChistAs and the movement as a whole is to focus on a decolonial/transnational framework to fight for ethnic studies in high schools and universities. M.E.X.A. de SJSU, M.E.Ch.X.A de UCB, and M.E.Ch.A de CSUN are examples of the successful application of this framework. This framework also lessens the workload of organizers and can lead to the establishment of a powerful and influential movement with international scope.

Since the 1960s, M.E.Ch.A has been a powerful force for change in the Southwest and beyond. When I joined M.E.Ch.A as an undergraduate, I never imagined how it would change my life. It has become of a part of my soul and lifestyle. M.E.Ch.A provides even more than what current members imagine, beyond writings and books, but also a vision of resistance, empowerment, and self-determination *para la comunidad* (for the community). M.E.Ch.A cannot limit itself to the internal debates and fade away like the rest of the Chican@ movement. Through militant intersectional politics, M.E.Ch.A has all the heart and motivation to establish *Universidad de La Raza or Universidad Autonoma de Aztlán* all over the country, securing every student's access to ethnic studies in their schools. The intersectional political action seeks to end all oppression in the social sphere for the next generation of activists and community organizers who will seek social justice across national boundaries. M.E.Ch.A, with all its invested stakeholders, must continue until they are no longer needed. Indeed, these studies prove that *union hace la fuerza* - unity is our strength!

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Appendix A - IRB Consent Form

Project Title: From Past to Present: M.E.Ch.A Politics in California

Approval Date Of Project: March 2013

Expiration Date Of Project: May 2014

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Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this investigation is to understand contemporary MEChistAs. I am interested in MEChistAs' identity and political views of themselves and their organization. Therefore, the purpose is to interview current M.E.Ch.A members and find out what their experiences, ideas, identities, and politics. The questions asked throughout the interview will involve basic demographics, a description of their M.E.Ch.A chapter, their definition of Chicano ideology, a description of their political views, what influences their political views, their personal goals of the movement, and any other related information that may come up during the course of the interview.

Possible Risks:

1. Embarrassment
2. They may say something that hurts someone else's feelings
3. They may be ostracized or purged from the group if people disagree with their views
4. They may lose their jobs if they express views that offend others

Reducing Risks:

1. To protect the confidentiality of the respondents who wish to remain anonymous, I will use pseudonyms in any reportings of the data and field notes when respondents indicate they would like to be "off-the-record."
2. In both "on-the-record" and "off-the-record" interviews, informed consent tapes and transcriptions will remain separate. I will also be the only person who has access to interview data and the consent forms.
3. I will only interview adults who voluntarily participate in public venues, where they speak on public topics, and I will not interview minors.
4. I will give them the opportunity to 1- go "on-the-record" if and when they so choose; 2-when the interview is completed, allow them to go "off-the-record" and keep the comments anonymous and their identity confidential.
5. If people engage in personal attacks or say things that offend other participants, I will treat them as anonymous, without attribution.

6. To protect people, I will ask them only about their public, political views, not about their personal or private lives. I will not ask or inquire about things that may embarrass them or subject them to ridicule or risk.
7. I will record only political discussions in which the participants participate voluntarily and by choice.
8. At any time participants will have the choice to terminate the interview or refuse to answer any questions.
9. If they want to be anonymous, I will be careful not to ridicule them by identifying characteristic descriptions about their age, race, sex, weight, manner, fashion, etc.

Possible Benefits:

1. The research subjects' public, political views about contemporary United States politics and their experiences as a M.E.Ch.A activist may give them a chance to learn something more about themselves than they knew before entering this study. Thus, being interviewed may offer subjects a time to reflect on personal experiences and feelings that drew them into the Chicano/a movement, to advocate for a broader cause.
2. Respondents' participation in this study will also contribute to the study of sex, race, class, sexual orientation, political sociology, and social change, in terms of how it occurs and the M.E.Ch.Anisms that drive it.
3. This study will contribute to a better public understanding of people who participate in democratic and identity politics.
4. This study will contribute to a better public understanding of M.E.Ch.A members.
5. This study will benefit sociological theory and the study of social movements and collective behavior.
6. Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan has had an important political impact on the policies in California and in the U.S.
7. The benefit will contribute to a better understanding of these political developments just described, on the individual and public levels.

Terms of Participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form. (Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant)

Appendix B - Questionnaire

Demographics

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself and how you identify? For example, family background, childhood, important stories, etc.
2. What was your journey to college?
3. How does your life story relate to M.E.Ch.A and your activism?

M.E.Ch.A

1. Can you tell me about your involvement with M.E.Ch.A? First contact, first meeting, why did you join, your roles, etc.?
2. How has M.E.Ch.A influenced you?
3. What are the demographics of your M.E.Ch.A chapter? Does your M.E.Ch.A chapter look different than when you first join it? If so, how has it changed? How do you feel about those changes?
4. What social justice issues has your M.E.Ch.A chapter focused on?
5. What strategies and tactics does your M.E.Ch.A chapter concentrate on?
6. What influences your chapter's politics?

Aztlán

1. What did "Aztlán" mean?
2. What does Aztlán mean to you?
3. How do you attain Aztlán?
4. What did "Chicano" mean in the 1960s? What does it mean now?

Views

1. What's your most important identity? Why is that?
2. How does your identity impact the type of politics your involved in?
3. What is your political philosophy and what influences it?
4. What are important issues in society today?
5. Have you had or heard of experiences with sexism and homophobia in M.E.Ch.A? Why?
6. Do you believe that M.E.Ch.A promotes diversity and inclusivity? Why or why not?
7. How does your chapter make M.E.Ch.A a safe space for all identities?
8. What role do women, LGBT, and Central & South Americans play in M.E.Ch.A?

Closing Questions

1. What are the most rewarding aspects of your activism?
2. What are your concerns or critiques of M.E.Ch.A?
3. What's your vision for the future of M.E.Ch.A?
4. How would you continue your M.E.Ch.A work as alumnae?
5. Anything else you would like to add? Advice for future MEChistAs?