

CULTIVATING CHINGONA POWER: A STUDY ON THE CHINGONA
IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

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Mujeres across the country are claiming the Chingona identity and using it to cultivate their Chingona strength, feel empowered, and live for their own approval. A Chingona in this newly reclaimed use means a woman who embodies confidence, acceptance of self, reclamation of sexuality, *siguiendo le adelante por su propio camino sin importarle lo que digan los demás*, rejects social and cultural norms/expectations of women, and uses her strengths to empower and uplift others. Through the reclamation of this identity, these mujeres are moving beyond being *hijas de la chingada* to being Chingonas. This research showcases the Chingona identity through interviews and photo elicitation with nine participants to get an in-depth view of how participants make sense of their identity. This research highlights the reasons why this identity is being claimed, what it takes to be a Chingona, and the challenges faced when claiming this identity. Participants navigate the multiple identities and cultures they hold through the creation of their Chingona identity, and are able to break past challenges, barriers, norms, and expectations. Through this identity, Chingonas are being empowered to be the best version of themselves, are supporting and uplifting each other, and serving as role models for their community.

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INTRODUCTION

Being a Chingona is being able to choose how you want to be defined, not how society says that you need to be defined. So, the labels that I put on myself is because I chose them, especially Chingona. Meaning, I can go through so many things in life and I can still be powerful and I can still be a Chingona; strong, empowered, vocal, and stand up for things and injustices that I don't agree with. Chingona is really much a part of my identity, it's something that I'm proud of (Lupe).

Recently, the term Chingona has been reclaimed by Latinas across the country who are challenging gender and racial norms in white dominate culture and within their own ethnic cultures. Chingonas are reclaiming the word as a term of empowerment that represents an attitude and embodiment of confidence, acceptance of self, reclamation of sexuality, *siguiendo le adelante por su propio camino sin importarle lo que digan los demás*, a rejection of the social and cultural norms/expectations of women, and a claiming of the sisterhood that comes with empowering and uplifting each other. This reclamation and transformation is important to study as it demonstrates the power of Latina women and the emergence of a new, powerful identity. With more visibility available through social media and online apparel shops, it is easier to see more women identifying as Chingonas. Chingonas can be seen on social media claiming this identity as their own, selling products via social media and online shops like Etsy with the word Chingona being available on many items, and wearing and using Chingona shirts, bags, stickers, etc. The growth of this identity is important to recognize and research, since it is a public display of empowerment. The term Chingona is a transformation of the idea of being a *hija de la chingada* (daughter of the fucked one) which was used as a slur, into

using the term as a self-affirmation of power. Although the term Chingona is still controversial and not always recognized in its new use, it is important to understand that Chingonas are making it their own regardless of those who oppose it.

As someone who identifies as a Chingona, this research is particularly important to me. Growing up, I had many women that were supportive role models in my life, ranging from my mom, sisters, and abuelita, to mentors from community programs. My mom, sisters, and abuelita have always played a big role in my life and were there for me to lean on as role models of strong independent women. My grandmother is someone I look up to because of her independence and ability to thrive through challenging life situations. My mother, having made the long journey to the U.S., worked very hard to make sure we had everything we needed. My sisters are each strong and independent women who continue to be women I can lean on for support and empowerment.

My participation in Girls Today Women Tomorrow (GTWT) was instrumental in my life and provided me with many Chingona mentors. GTWT is a leadership mentoring program for young girls in the Boyle Heights area that provides leadership opportunities, mentoring, encouragement, empowerment, and much more. Throughout my participation in this program I was mentored by amazing women who put a lot of effort into supporting those of us in the program. Through the program, I built strong relationships with other women, I built a stronger bond with my mother, grew my self-esteem, and much more. I also began to consider pursuing a college degree, I had amazing mentors that I still look up to today. In my youth, I was not a confident person, it was not until my fourth semester in college that I began to gain a true confidence in myself and began to

recognize that I could accomplish anything I put my time and energy into. During my young adult life is when I began to harness my Chingona power and understand what it really meant to me, as well as the history of the word and how it has been used. Just as I began to uncover what being a Chingona means, we must also uncover it here before moving on to the research.

While a theory section is presented later, I want to present some of the main concepts that are crucial to understanding the research topic. The first word that is necessary to understand is Chingona; and it's important to not only understand the word but the identity and meaning behind it. Although later in the thesis the participant's voices will provide an in-depth understanding of what it means to be a Chingona, an explanation here provides a working draft of this most important term. The word chingona, chingar, and its other forms, has typically been used to describe men in a positive way, such as cool or bad ass, or can mean "to fuck." As I noted earlier, the term Chingona has been used as a negative statement against women. In its newly reclaimed use, Chingona means a strong, resilient, and powerful woman who lives for her own approval. She is not only empowered, but she empowers and inspires those around her. In my work, I will be connecting the Chingona identity to Anzaldúa's (1987) work around Borderlands as related to not only physical space, but a space of identity.

In the next section, we will explore theories that relate to identity, power, intersectionality and multiracial feminism. Following this, I turn to discussing methods. Then I present my findings in three sections, Pero Why, Así Se Hace, and Chingona

Sounds Poquito Fuerte. Finally, I discuss the implications of this work, and further issues that should be explored.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Being a Chingona is an identity that grows out of a process of empowerment. While there is no theory that directly addresses this specific process, there are several theories that help us understand issues of identity and resistance. The first section of the literature review is related to multiracial feminism, mainly focusing on the concepts of intersectionality and difference, so that we can understand participants in all their complexity. I draw on multiracial feminist theory from Collins (1998), Combahee River Collective (1977), Crenshaw (1989), hooks (1984), Hurtado (1989), Lorde (1984), Taylor (2012), and Zinn and Dill (1996). In addition to multiracial feminism, theories of identity construction related to race and ethnicity are relevant in understanding the Chingona identity. For the purpose of using the most relevant identity theory and research that applies to Chingonas, I draw on the work of Hurtado (1997), Hurtado et al. (1994), Tatum (1997), and Vera and De Los Santos (2005). These authors build on the work of important prior identity theories such as William Cross's racial identity development (Tatum 1997), Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (Hurtado 1997; Hurtado, Gurin, and Peng 1994), and Oppositional and Racial/Ethnic Identity theories (Tatum 1997). The further exploration of these theories by Hurtado (1997), Hurtado et al. (1994), Tatum (1997), and Vera and De Los Santos (2005) bring to light the importance of situating racial/ethnic groups within their cultural, historical, and structural contexts to better understand their identities, as well as the various intersecting parts of their identities aside from their race/ethnicity (e.g. gender, sexuality, age, class, etc.). Authors like Hurtado (1997)

develop theory that helps us better understand the unique intersecting identities of people and their cultural, historical and structural contexts that shape their identity. Then, I have a section dedicated to Chicana Feminism, focusing on the Chicana experience and struggle. Finally, we move into a section on Chingona background, drawing on Chicana feminist theory to understand the Chicana identity, the history of the word Chigona, its meaning, and connection to identity.

Multiracial Feminism

Multiracial feminism has, and is built on, a rich history of feminist struggles that are important to understand; however, for this research I will focus on concepts within multiracial feminism that relate to and contribute to my study. If you would like a more in depth review of multiracial feminism, please refer to *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (hooks 1984), *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Lorde 1984), and *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Taylor 2012). Multiracial feminism arose out of the work of women of color who offered a more holistic approach to feminism than that which arose primarily out of white perspectives; it is intentional in its acknowledgment and centering of black women and other women of color. Crenshaw (1989) argues that when you center black women's experiences and oppressions you will be acknowledging a group that is often over looked and which experiences various levels of oppression because of their intersecting identities. This centering will provide the ability to reach and improve the experiences of more women, whereas a focus on women "in general" misses many experiences and oppressions because there is no

acknowledgement of the way unique oppressions are created based on intersecting experiences. Multiracial feminists, and specifically black feminists, are the focus of the literature used in this section. Within this we will be covering concepts that are most relevant to the Chingona experience, such as intersectionality, recognizing difference, and empowerment.

Intersectionality offers us a view of how various identities and group memberships cross over and combine to create unique experiences and oppressions (Crenshaw 1989). This is important in understanding the Chingona identity as all participants in this research hold various identities that make their experiences of oppression different from others. “People experience race, class, gender, and sexuality differently depending upon their social locations in the structures of race, class, gender, and sexuality” (Zinn and Dill 1996:26-327). Chingonas hold identities and statuses built on family immigration, citizenship status, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and more, that have created the unique norms, expectations, and obstacles they encounter. Further, all participants share different experiences based off their unique identities, for example some participants recognize that they experience race differently as they are white passing. The focus on intersectionality allows us to see the oppression that Chingonas face is not only related to gender nor only related to race, but a combination of those identities and statuses they hold. Crenshaw (1991) argued that feminist theory created largely by white women assumed that all women had the same experience and did not recognize the important experiential differences that women of color faced based on their race, as well as other dimensions of their identity. Since each person will experience

different forms of oppression based on the various dimensions of their identities, it is importance to recognize that various groups of people will have differing experiences of oppression, and this often means that we must recognize difference in order to see how identity might affect experience (hooks 1984). When we recognize difference, we're able to see how everyone's intersectional identities are experienced differently. For example, while all the participants in this research claim the identity of being a Chingona, not all participants share the same group memberships, they all have different experience depending on the specific geographic regions their families are from, their culture, their location in the US, sexuality, skin color, gender identity, etc. The participants were very self-aware of how the different aspects of their identities affect them and those who are white passing went so far as to recognize the role that this plays in their experiences, privileges, and oppressions. Some participants recognized the role of being mixed race or their own familial culture plays in their life experience and how they embody the Chingona identity. For this reason, it is vital to understand the concept of intersectionality as it relates to the oppressions experienced by participants and how each participant will be different with no single unifying Latina, female, Chingona, etc. experience.

Collins (1998), hooks (1984), Lorde (1984), and Zinn and Dill (1996) identify the importance of recognizing difference when it comes to individual experiences. It can be tempting and easy to fall into thinking that all women of color, or all Chicanas, have the same experience, but this is far from the truth. Although there may be a connection between experiences, everyone's specific group memberships, identities, privileges, oppressions, etc. are shaped by and experienced differently depending on location, time

history, family, etc. Even if we use intersectionality and multiracial feminism as tools to better understand oppression and individual experience, they should not be homogenized. This understanding that individual experience is not universal regardless of group membership is critical for understanding this study's participants' identities and how they individually must craft their own meaning within the various identities and oppressions they hold. The importance of recognizing difference is explained by hooks (1984), "when we begin our communication by focusing on individual experiences, we found them to be varied even among those of us who shared common ethnic backgrounds. We learned that these differences mean we have no monolithic experiences we can identify as the 'Chicana experience,' 'Black experience,' etc." (hooks 1984:55). Similarly, Lorde (1984) explains that society has instilled a rejection of difference between humans that does not allow for mutual understanding or the ability to see difference as equal. Instead difference is usually dealt with by being ignored, copied, or destroyed.

As members of such an economy, we have all been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate. But we have no patterns for relating across our human differences as equals. (Lorde 1984:115)

On the other side of recognizing difference, group memberships can also help build coalitions and what hooks (1984) called sisterhood. What hooks defines as sisterhood is women being united by shared interests, strengths, resources, and beliefs. Sisterhood requires that there is understanding and acceptance across differences of race, beliefs, cultures, religions, etc., as well as a focus on individual experience, learning about each other cultural codes, recognizing needs, and learning about one another,

without a need to focus on a shared oppression. It is necessary to learn to build bonds with one another by overcoming alienation and unlearning some of the socializations and judgments we have. Chingona participants in this research recognize the need to build each other up and have a sisterhood or coalition of Chingonas that support, empower, and build each other up. Similarly hooks (1984) and Taylor (2012) recognize the need for this sisterhood as a way to build coalitions and build each other politically. Having strong connections with other Chingonas by empowering and uplifting each other is an important aspect of the Chingona identity. Since this identity is crafted by each participant, it is important to understand racial-ethnic identity development. In the next section I will address literature related to racial-ethnic identity development that connects to the Chingona identity.

Racial-Ethnic Identity Development

While identity development has been explored by many, and various theories exist about how humans develop their identities, there has little development of identity theories that are specific to racial and ethnic identity that are intersectional and consider all aspects of the social categories to which a person may belong. Tatum (1997) focuses specifically on racial identity, while Hurtado (1997), Hurtado et al. (1994), and Vera and De Los Santos (2005) are considering multiple social categories in addition to race and ethnicity, such as gender, sexuality, immigration, etc. Tatum (1997), focuses on racial and oppositional identity development, building on the work of William Cross' racial identity development theory.

Tatum (1997) discusses how racial and oppositional identity develops, and she brings to light the negative impact that media, stereotypes, and dominant group images have on people of color, as well as the impact that positive images and messages about culture and racial identity can have. Tatum (1997) uses oppositional identity to describe an identity formed by people of color who reject white dominant culture. Oppositional identity is often critiqued for the ways it has been used by other theorists in negative ways to explain why people of color don't "succeed" in white culture because they are assumed to hold the "wrong" values. This is not the way oppositional identity is being used by Tatum (1997), instead she recognizes that oppositional identity can be a positive identity when positive media, role models, and active conversations about race are present. Positive images and role models can allow for more positive racial identity development, allowing for negotiation of group identities in a positive way. For Chingonas, when we think of their identity as being oppositional, then we can see that they are rejecting white dominant culture, as well as some of the oppressive parts of their own cultures, including gender roles, and in white culture the racial roles and stereotypes. This is important in the context of Chingonas as all of them discussed their role models, and some touched upon the issues of lack of representation and positive role models. Further the Chingona can be seen as a positive oppositional identity that has had positive effects on the participant's lives. This is similar to how Tatum (1997) discusses the impact that positive images and role models can have on creating more positive oppositional identities as opposed to negative media images and role models. "Dominant group images, media, stereotypes impact racial identity development, but having positive

cultural images and messages about racial identity reduces the impact” (p. 215). Tatum (1997) discusses that there are various stages of exploration of racial, ethnic, and cultural identity that people go through, but this exploration is not in a straight line, instead the exploration is cyclical. Even if racial identity feels resolved it can still change later in life and move towards a less resolved identity needing to be explored more. It is important to recognize how exploration of racial, ethnic, and cultural identity is cyclical since all participants in the Chingona identity research are adults and have adopted this identity. Hurtado’s (1997) work similarly discusses the ways that there can be positive negotiations with identity, except that Hurtado (1997) goes further to recognize that there is negotiation of multiple group identities while Tatum (1997) focuses only on racial identities.

Hurtado (1997) proposes a social engagement model to study multiple group identities and their role in cultural transformations. Hurtado (1997) recognizes that past theories on social identity and assimilation/acculturation frameworks are not intersectional enough to provide an accurate and comprehensive approach. Using her social engagement model allows for participants to define a phenomenon rather than comparing groups. This is important in recognizing that participants will have their own definitions and understandings, we will not always share the same understanding, and when we base our comparisons on the dominant group, we are not allowing ourselves to fully understand and value our participants. She recognizes that when it comes to racial identity, being white is not seen as a group membership that is part of identity, meaning that whites see themselves as “non-racial.” Similarly, Tatum (1997) also states that white

children, unlike black children, are not seen in terms of race, while black children must think of this early on because of their experiences of being racialized. Hurtado (1997) uses Tajfel's concept of the problematic versus unproblematic groups to explain that problematic groups, which include those who are part of racial groups other than white, are forced to adopt race as a large part of their identity. Hurtado (1997) notes that there has been no focus on recognizing that white males also have a racial and gender group, instead the lack of naming whiteness and maleness is seen as normative and positions all others as the alternative experience. Further, Hurtado (1997) recognizes that when it comes to multiple group identities like gender, class, ethnicity, race, and sexuality the importance of each and relationship between these varies depending on the social sphere. "The significance and relationship between these different social identities varies from social sphere to social sphere. In some circumstances one particular group membership or set of memberships may be more important than others" (Hurtado 1997:319). While Hurtado (1997) recognizes that social identity can vary depending on social spheres, Hurtado et al. (1994) take this further in acknowledging that historical and structural context should also be considered when it comes to identity.

Hurtado et al. (1994) argues that it is necessary to consider historical and structural context when discussing identity. This is especially relevant when it comes to immigrant communities as their immigration is set within specific time periods, history, political context, etc. – these along with the culture, traditions, stories, and memories that are passed down will affect the identity of the person as well as their children. Hurtado et al. (1994) shows us a prime example of this when she discusses the difference that these

factors play when some people from Mexican decent chose to identify as Mexican Americans while others identity as Chicano. “Historical and structural differences between first and later generations of Mexican descendants should affect the complexity and types of social categorizations and social comparisons they are subjected to, and thus the structure and content of their social identities” (Hurtado et al. 1994:132). This focus on social structure is important to remember as it provides the context in which individual identities are crafted.

Later theorists (Vera and De Los Santos 2005) continued to emphasize the role of historical and structural contexts in identity development. They also developed a more intersectional approach than Tatum (1997) that recognizes that people hold multiple identities and can do so in a positive way. While Tatum (1997) does recognize that there can be positive oppositional identities created through exposure to various positive media images and role models, there is no focus on how identities intersect and the ways the historical and structural context play. Both Vera and De Los Santos (2005) and Hurtado (1997) discuss the ways that multiple group identities are navigated and negotiated; they recognize that specific groups have found ways to navigate identity and point to the work of Chicana feminists like Anzaldúa (1987) to show the ways in which Chicanas have successfully navigated multiple identities.

Chicana Feminism

The Chicano movement of the 1960’s to 1970’s is important for understanding the reclamation of the word Chingona. Through examining the Chicana experience in the

Chicano and feminist movements, we can better understand the need and experiences that brought about Chicana feminist theory, which sets the stage for engaging in understanding the experience of women who identify as Chingonas. Chicana feminist theory arose in the late 1960's and grew from the Chicano Movement and Women's Liberation Movement. Chicana feminism can be seen within the framework of Chicano studies, cultural studies, and feminism, but it is very distinct from these. Chicana feminism grew out of the need for an intersectional understanding of issues related to culture, gender, and sexuality (Garcia, 1998). The Women's Liberation Movement and Chicano Movement that continued after the Civil Rights Movement put Chicanas in a position to feel they had to choose between the movements as they were not able to bring race related issues into the feminist movement and gender into the Chicano movement, which ultimately excluded them from both (Garcia, 1998). This section will explore the Chicano movement, the role of Chicanas in the movement, the feminist movement as it relates to the experience of Chicanas, and Chicana Feminism.

The Chicano movement was a cultural and nationalist movement that grew from the Mexican-American experience of discrimination and oppression in the US (Gutiérrez, 2011). Mexican-Americans chose to reclaim the term Chicano to represent the recognition of being US Americans who are also Mexican, while at the same time many use the term Chicano to also recognize their indigenous roots and return to the ancestral home of Aztlán - which would include a large part of the U.S (Mendoza, 2000).

The Chicano movement addressed various aspects of injustices and inequality affecting Chicanos across the nation. Worker rights, education, and civil rights were

addressed through the movement and the political activism of the time brought about many changes, groups, and organizations through which Chicanos could organize their efforts. Worker rights during this time were addressed through farm worker activism, most notably through the formation of the Farm Workers United organization (Mendoza, 2000). During the time, farm workers gathered to protest and boycott the companies which employed them due to the poor working conditions, worker safety, compensation, lack of healthcare and legal protection. Another aspect of the Chicano movement was student activism. In 1968 Chicano students in East Los Angeles brought attention to their unequal educational experience and conditions through walkouts, marches, and protests. Students sought to bring attention and changes to the schools' culture, curriculum, and teachers that were not reflective of the Chicano student culture or history, as well as the need for bilingual education and improvement to the poor conditions of the schools (Gutiérrez 2011). Further, many students worked to create student organizations that addressed Chicano issues and needs in California and Texas, such as United Mexican American Students (UMAS), Mexican American Youth Association (MAYA) in California, and the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), the Brown Berets, and across college campuses Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MECHA) (Gutiérrez 2011). Some of these youth led organization such as the Brown Berets were not only activist groups, but worked to create changes in their community through creating opportunities such as free community clinics (Herrera, 2015). Other aspects of the Chicano movement also include anti-war protests, political activism such as through

La Raza Unida, and civil rights activism through organizations such as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) (Gutiérrez 2011).

During the Chicano movement, participation and leadership roles were filled by men and women passionate about their goals. Although the Chicano movement had high participation from both men and women, the focal point of the movement was male centered. Many of the leadership positions in the Chicano movement were filled with both men and women, but most of the higher positions were occupied by men and thus men received most of the recognition. One example of overlooked leadership is Gloria Arellanes who was part of the Brown Berets group. During her participation in the group, Arellanes occupied the position of minister of finance and correspondence, which was unique since women were not given higher positions within the group (Herrera 2015). Arellanes explains that although she was directing a clinic and had the position of clinic director, her voice was often ignored amongst the male leadership and she had to push for her voice to be heard (Herrera 2015). Many other women share similar experiences where their voices were either not valued or their roles were not recognized. One popular example of the Chicano movement male leadership is Cesar Chavez. Although Chavez was an important part of the movement, key women leaders in the same farmworker movement were left out or forgot, such as Dolores Huerta who played an important role in the national farmworkers movement along with Chavez. Another challenge that was faced by some women in the movement was their intersectional perspective. Many Chicanas brought attention to issues related to gender and attempted to address gender issues as part of the movement. However, they were often met with disapproval and the

sentiment that there needed to be unity amongst Chicanos and that there was no room to address gender issues (Zavella 1989). Not only were gender issues ignored by the Chicano movement, but they were often replicated and unaddressed within the movement itself. Ahmed (2017) recognizes that women are taught and expected to take up less space in many ways, including physically, emotionally, through their personality, participation, and thoughts. This analysis can be extended to the experience that Chicanas had during the Chicano movement where they were not given much space or recognized in higher leadership positions and as Arellanes shared, she had to make space for herself and even then, it was dismissed at times (Herrera 2015). Further, Ahmed's (2017) concept of a "feminist killjoy" and "willfulness" also extend to the experience of Chicanas who had to constantly navigate calling out and bringing up issues that were important to them. 'Feminist killjoy' is what some call women who advocate for various feminist issues such as gender inequalities, these women are seen by others as removing the fun out of situation, comments, jokes, etc. and taking things too seriously. 'Willfulness' is a recognition of the constant perseverance and strength it takes for the continuation of this type of work – it encompasses a feeling of always being open and ready to take on gender, racial, etc. issues in the workplace, home, and in social settings. Even when the recognition of intersectional issues was shut down for Chicanas, they continued to be willful and do the ongoing work.

While it is true that the unity of La Raza is the basic foundation of the Chicano movement, when Chicano men talk about maintaining La Familia and the 'cultural heritage' of La Raza, they are in fact talking about maintaining the age-old concept of keeping the woman barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen. On the basis of the subordination of women, there can be no real unity. . . . The only real

unity between men and women is the unity forged in the course of struggle against their oppression. And it is by supporting, rather than opposing, the struggles of women, that Chicanos and Chicanas can genuinely unite (Vidal 1971).

Chicanas not only had a challenging relationship within the Chicano movement, but they were further isolated from the feminist movement at the time. During the Chicano movement, the second wave of feminism was occurring. Although some Chicanas were bringing up issues related to gender and race, they were not aligned with the white-centric feminist movement. Many shared the sentiment that they did not relate to feminism because of its focus on gender without any acknowledgment to ethnicity, race, etc. “During a time when white feminists were recognizing the tyranny of the traditional family. Chicana activists were celebrating the unity of traditional Chicano families. Moreover, at a time when white feminists were demanding reproductive rights, including the right to abortions, Chicana activists were fighting forced sterilizations and defending the right to bear children” (Zavella 1989). Chicanas had to fight for rights and against injustices that feminism took for granted and that the Chicano movement did not support. Both movements put Chicanas in a difficult situation where they were being asked to put their own rights aside in order to benefit and move the movement forward. Chicanas had to push forward to create their own movement and theories, and out of this grew Chicana Feminism (Hurtado 2009).

Chicanas have had various struggles with the multiple cultures of which they are a part. Chicana Feminism grew out of these struggles and began the empowerment of women who have long been abused, objectified, and disvalued (Roth 2003). The

Women's Liberation Movement did not want to put any focus on race and as such, Chicanas were not able to bring racial and cultural issues to the movement, ultimately making them choose between issues for which they wanted to fight. At the same time, the Chicano movement was also highly activity, but it would not take up any women's issues. The Chicano movement saw Chicanas as traitors of their culture and on the side of white women when they attempted to bring gender issues into the movement. Both the Women's Liberation Movement and the Chicano movement put Chicanas in a position where they had to choose for which issue to fight; neither movement was willing to be inclusive of the other issues Chicanas faced (Zavela 1989). This set the stage for Chicanas to find a more inclusive space for themselves to be able to recognize the various exclusions and oppressions they face, thus creating Chicana Feminism. The Combahee River Collective (1977) discussed the similar challenges they faced when coming together as a group that did not align with white feminism and was too radical amongst liberal black women and male organizations. Both Chicanas and the Combahee River Collective (1977) had to create their own groups, space, community, and theory- they had to do the important and on-going work that Ahmed (2017) identifies, keeping their willfulness at the center of their being. The following statement by Anzaldua and Moraga, captures the struggles and efforts of Chicana feminists:

“A theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives-our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings-all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity. Here, we attempt to bridge the contradictions in our experience:

We are the colored in a white feminist movement.

We are the feminists among the people of our culture.

We are often the lesbians among the straight.

We do this bridging by naming our selves and by telling our stories in our own words (Anzaldúa and Moraga 1983:19).

Chicana Feminism brings forth the experiences of Chicanas and their oppression, it recognizes historical context and culture that shapes the expectations and treatment of Chicanas. It also recognizes the various cultures that intersect, as well as the border dichotomy that affects Chicanas. One well known Chicana feminist, Gloria Anzaldúa, is well known in her field for her co-editing of the book, along with Cherrie Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1983). Most notably, Anzaldúa is known for her theorizing of the Chicana experience in her book *Borderland/La Frontera: The New Mestiza Consciousness* (1987). In this important text, Anzaldúa provides historical and cultural context that provide understanding of Chicana oppression, experience, and mentality through her explanations of borderlands, *mujer mala*, *Malinalli*, and *mestiza consciousness*. These concepts also provide a place for understanding Chicanas agency and restrictions upon it and structural forces affecting Chicanas. They also can be used to understand contemporary identities like Chingona.

Chingona Background

As my research shows, Chingonas live in the borderlands. I use Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of borderlands to ground my understanding of how borderlands are navigated as it relates to my research participants and the multidimensional identities that they are engaging. Anzaldúa (1987) describes the borderland as, "... a vague and undetermined place crated by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a

constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants” (p. 25). The concept of borderlands recognizes that Chicanas hold multiple contradictory spaces within cultures, gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, language, expectation, and norms. There are multiple positions and identities being held within these that often do not mix together or offer resolution. Anzaldúa describes what it feels like to navigate the borderland, “alienated from her mother culture, “alien” in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self. Petrified, she can’t respond, her face caught between *los intersticios*, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits” (1987:42). These borderlands are always being navigated and present a crossroads wherein a new mixed identity must be negotiated that incorporates all these multiple aspects and spaces. This applies to Chingonas, they must navigate their own multiple identities while creating a new way to engage their borderlands by crafting this new aspect of their identity. For this reason, it is important to understand borderlands, how they are constantly being navigated as a space, history, culture, and identity. While participants navigate their identities, and embody being a Chingona, they are therein living at the borderlands and creating their own crossroads.

Anzaldúa (1987) describes the historical context and roles that cultural and religious figures play in the Mexican culture, these include Malinalli, la Llorona, and la Virgen de Guadalupe. To understand the historical perception of women in Mexico and Chicana culture, we must specifically consider Malinalli as she pertains to the Chingona identity. Malinalli is regarded as a traitor and prostitute who is to blame for the demise of the Aztec Empire. Anzaldúa (1987) describes how blame for colonization is put upon her

and how she is portrayed as “la Chingada” (*the fucked one*). Malinalli can be understood to represent the indigenous side within all Mexicans, the brown skin and female gender as a reminder of the betrayal of her people. The most famous writing with mention of Malinalli is in the work of Octavio Paz (1950), a famous Mexican poet. Paz (1950) writes about the significance of Malinalli in the role of the conquest of Mexico and the creation of the mestizo. He describes her as representing an indigenous woman who betrays her people and children through sexual relations. Malinalli is known under various names including, Malintzin, Malinche, and Doña Mariana, in the following quote the references to her vary. "It is true that she gave herself voluntarily to the conquistador, but he forgot her as soon as her usefulness was over. Doña Marina becomes a figure representing the Indian women who were fascinated, violated or seduced by the Spaniards. And as a small boy will not forgive his mother if she abandons him to search for his father, the Mexican people have not forgiven La Malinche for her betrayal" (Paz 1950:86). In this description, Paz clearly shows the negative representation and blame that gets put onto Malinalli.

Anzaldúa (1987) suggests that the portrayal of Malinalli is indicative of the self-hate and disliking of anything that represents being an indigenous woman. She also represents the cultural norms and expectations put onto women including silence, servitude, sexual objectification, and sexual shame. The connections that Anzaldúa (1987) makes between Malinalli and the meaning behind it provides a clear insight as to why the word Chingona is now being reclaimed by mujeres. Anzaldúa and other Chicana writers recognize that the telling of la Malinche as a betrayer is clearly an oppression of women's sexuality and patriarchal thought rather than her own doings.

Anzaldúa's (1987) work provides a historical context that helps explain the structural forces that affect Chicanas. There are many structural forces within culture that affect Chicanas, such as normative expectations, the built environment, and geography. Within the U.S., Mexico, and Chicano cultures, there are many values and norms that are placed upon and expected of Chicanas. Anzaldúa (1987) recognizes these cultural norms and values, and that the repercussion of not meeting these is that one is deemed a mala mujer, or a "bad woman." To be deemed a mala mujer is to not follow the behavior expected of Chicanas including being a docile woman, quiet, repressed sexuality, and domestic. Chicanas are expected to be docile, this means that they do as they are told, do not question authority, and are submissive. Similarly, Chicanas are expected to stay quiet, to not bring up issues they have, to speak in a calm voice, and in social settings, Chicanas are expected to limit their discussion to gossip. Specific to U.S. culture, Chicanas are expected to speak English to fit into the U.S. culture and the education system, and they should not speak Spanish outside of their homes. Further, for all cultures (U.S., Mexican, Chicano) women in general are expected to keep personal matters of the home private, meaning that domestic violence and sexual assault should remain hidden. Similarly, Chicanas are expected not to discuss sexuality and should refrain from sexual behaviors outside of marriage. Many of these cultural expectations of Chicanas are similar for non-Chicana women in the U.S., but it is important to recognize that Chicanas have multilayered cultural structures placed upon them due to the norms and values coming from multiple cultures, which reinforce these even more deeply. Because of these issues,

most of these cultural expectations of women can also be extended into the built environment.

The cultural structures placed on Chicanas can be extended to the built environment and geography as well. Chicanas are culturally seen as family women, belonging in the home and the home's role is a structural restriction on Chicanas in multiple ways; it is a space where they are expected to spend most of their time as seen through the cultural norms of Mexico, the U.S., and Chicano culture. Although this restriction and expectation of it is changing, Chicanas continue to experience this pressure. At another level, the home is also reinforced due to the U.S.-Mexico border and immigration. For many Chicanas, the home is a place they may be restricted to due to fear of deportation and separation from their families. When it comes to geography, Chicanas have culturally been removed from their geographic origins and connection to the environment through a loss of their indigenous roots in Mexico. As Anzaldúa (1987) discussed in her history of *Malinalli*, the indigenous side of Chicanas was repressed and culturally displaced with the colonization of Mexico. McKittrick's (2006) concept of geography is useful in understanding the Chicana experience. Geography in this context should be examined through the physical displacement that continues to occur due to colonization, the border and borderlands, and the indigenous female body. Although the indigenous aspect of Chicana culture has been repressed for many years, Chicano/a culture has attempted to revitalize this relationship with geography and become more connected with the natural environment through the reclamation of indigenous roots (Córdova, 1998).

Considering the two concepts of *mujer mala* and “*la Chingada*,” it is easy to see the difficulty of existing as a Chicana. Additionally, Chicanas must exist within and consider their indigenous roots, Mexican culture, Chicana culture, and U.S. culture; considering these together is what Anzaldúa (1987) calls ‘*mestiza consciousness*.’ The Mestiza must live within the imposed values and norms from these various aspects of her individual and cultural experience, and these do not always agree or align with one another, navigating borderlands. Mestiza consciousness is a recognition that the Mestiza must learn to navigate the mixture of these cultural expectations that often objectify and betray her. The mestiza must make the most of her situation, using her agency and cultural experience to embrace herself, recognize her objectification, and exist in a way that breaks the oppressive norms imposed on her. The Mestiza consciousness provided by Anzaldúa (1987) is in line with the Chingona identity as those who claim it recognize the multilayered identities they hold and the significance of them. Further, borrowing from McKittrick’s (2006) geography, we can understand the Mestiza body and consciousness as a site of geography that has been transformed and holds the history of pre-colonization, ongoing colonization, and two cultures and countries that compliment and oppose one another. Geography also includes more than place and space, it includes territory, land possession, public property, and body possession. When McKittrick (2006) discusses body, she is referring to the racial-sexual body of black women that is reproductively and sexually available. This means that the body is also a place of existence that not only has experiences and knowledge within place and space, but it itself is a place and space. The implication of this is that the body is a place that is

subjected to domination and resistance while at the same time has geographical experiences— the body is both a physical thing that can be experienced and dominated while at the same time being a body that is inhabited by a real person who has knowledge and experiences that are specific to location. This extends to the Chicana body which was transformed through colonization and became a place of domination to be kept within a home, while at the same time being a place of knowledge and resistance. Further extending this to the Chingona identity, it is clear that women's bodies and minds are geographies that have been subject to domination and are central to resistance.

The work of Anzaldúa (1987) can be used to understand the current reclamation of the word Chingona as a part of identity for Chicana women and Latinas. Using Anzaldúa's (1987) understanding of Malinalli as “la Chingada,” the Chingona identity can be seen as a direct recognition of Malinalli in a literal and conceptual sense. Chingona identity is reclaiming Malinalli in the literal sense through the use of the word “chingada” as a form of empowerment, thus calling themselves Chingonas. Further, Chicanas may be cursed at when getting “in trouble,” often being called “hija de la chingada” (*daughter of the fucked one*), a direct reference to Malinalli. This is the experience that many women have with the word chingona being used in a negative way. Using the representation of Malinalli, we can further understand the Chingona identity as a recognition of indigenous roots. Although not all who identify as Chingona have or share the same indigenous culture, there is a common connection between those identifying as Chingona through language, such as the use of spelling. For example, the “correct” spelling of Chingona is Chingona, but those who are working towards

recognizing their roots use the letter “X” (Xingona) to show that they are aware of their indigenous roots and original Nahuatl language. The connection to the indigenous Nahuatl language is related to Chicanas and their Mexica ancestry, which provides a foundation for the work of Anzaldúa (1987) and Chicana feminism. Although the Chingona identity is often understood within the context of a specific culture (Chicana culture), it is inclusive to Latinas who are not Chicanas as well. While the culture for non-Chicana Latinas may be different than many Chicanas, the word Chingona is inclusive because of the struggles that Latina women share. Like the many struggles that Malinalli represents, the Chingona identity recognizes the struggles and works to speak out and change them.

As we move forward with understanding the Chingona identity through the interviews with participants, keep in mind the concepts of intersectionality and borderlands. It is important to understand the individual experiences and identities that each participant comes with and the ways in which they are balancing multiple identities and creating this new Chingona identity as a result. Through this newly crafted identity they can denounce expectations and find balance within their often-contradicting identities.

METHODS

The purpose of this research is to understand the Chingona identity. Women who identify as Chingona were interviewed to better understand what it means to be a Chingona, how this identity has gained popularity, and who is identifying with this identity. Chingonas have had various struggles with the multiple cultures to which they belong. The empowerment of Chingona women that has grown out of Chicana Feminism has brought more and more women to denounce societal and cultural expectations and embrace the Chingona identity. In this study, I investigated two main questions about the Chingona identity; 1. How do women who identify as Chingona define what it means to be a Chingona and 2. Why have they claimed this identity. Prior to beginning this research, I applied to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at my university and was granted approval to conduct this research. The IRB approval number for my research is, IRB 17-171, approval was granted on April 2, 2018.

To answer my research questions, I used feminist methodologies (Hesse-Biber 2014) in the research process and analysis, as well as grounded theory during the analysis. Feminist methodologies allow the voices and stories of the group being interviewed to emerge as the focus of the research. This is important as this methodology recognizes that marginalized communities do not have their stories and voices at the center of most research (Hesse-Biber 2014). Using feminist methodologies also allows for the researcher to engage in a process of reflexivity including the recognition of our personal bias. Understanding biases is important to this methodology so that one can

connect to the research at a deeper level, while also allowing for the researcher to be self-aware of how to navigate the biases they hold. In my case, this has allowed for me to have a deep and personal relationship with the research topic, while also allowing me to see how my worldview may affect the research process, for example I recognize that I have a connection to this topic and ideas about what being a Chingona means to me. This allows me to have a better understanding of the topic and connection to my participants, but also pushes me to recognize that I should be aware and reflexive to make sure I am being receptive to what my participants are trying to convey and not what I believe it should be. Further, feminist methodologies call for a more mutual and engaged participant-researcher relationship that recognizes and deescalates the power dynamics that are encountered, so that participants can fully engage and this may lead to a more in depth interview. Once interviews were completed, they were transcribed and I used grounded theory (Hesse-Biber 2014) to code each transcription. I read through each interview transcript and looked for naturally occurring themes. This meant that the participants voices emerged through the codes that were created, rather than me imposing my own categories on the interviews.

To investigate the research questions, nine women ages 18 and over who identify as Chingona were invited to participate in this study to discuss their identity. I found participants primarily through their public identification as Chingonas on social media such as Instagram and Facebook. There is a significant presence of those who identify as Chingona on social media, which has allowed Chingonas to create a community. Given this presence and community I used social media to recruit possible participants through

purposive and snowball sampling, meaning that I began by selecting my participants based on the what I was looking for (purposive), such as Latinas who are publicly displaying being a Chingona on social media, who had popular and/or active social media accounts, or who attended events related to being Chignonas. For the snowball sampling, I asked participants to refer me to friends or acquaintances who they identified as Chingonas and thought would be a good fit for this research.

I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the use of photo-elicitation with each of the nine participants. Most interviews were conducted over the phone due to the location of participants and were 60-90 minutes long. I asked interviewees to provide me with photos which we used during the interviews to elicit discussion. Photo elicitation is a useful method as it allows participants to share images and convey what is most important to them; the photos are used to create a comprehensive understanding of the participant's experiences. All participants were asked to take 2-10 photos that answer or convey their feelings about the following questions; 1) What does being a Chingona mean to you? 2) how has claiming this identity affected your life or sense of self? Participants sent the photos to the researcher prior to the interview and the photos were used during the interview to facilitate discussion regarding the questions and other thoughts participants wanted to share.

Harper (2002), argues that photo elicitation is useful as a technique especially when comparing visual information versus verbal information. People can recognize and process visual information faster when using photo elicitation, it also allows the researcher a richer understanding of what the participant is trying to convey. This is

important as identity is complex and multifaceted. While many photo-elicitation studies are comprised mostly of photographs, other mediums are also utilized, such as cartoon, graffiti, video, etc. (Harper, 2002). There were also findings that suggested a “sharpened memory and reduced misunderstandings” when photo-elicitation was utilized. This concluded that participants could communicate more clearly when photographs were used (Harper, 2002). Harper (2002) also finds that the use of photo elicitation can assist in bridging differences between cultures. Further, Ortega-Alcazar and Dyck (2011) find that photo-elicitation has the ability of reducing power imbalances between the researcher and participant by allowing active participation from the research participant and negotiation and understanding of what is being portrayed. This style of participant engagement is in alignment with my use of feminist methodologies for this research. The use of photo-elicitation interviews allows participants to visually show the researchers the ways that the Chingona identity is embodied by participants.

A total of nine participants were interviewed for this research. All nine participants identify as women and were between the ages of 22 and 40. Eight out of the nine participants lived in California, with one living in Nebraska. Of the eight participants living in California; one lives in Humboldt County, three live in Sacramento, two live in the Bay Area, and two live in Southern California. All participants came from families who had recent family immigration into the U.S. meaning that they, their parents, or grandparents had been born in another country prior to residing in the U.S. The countries of origin for participants and their families were mainly from Mexico and

El Salvador. Below are introductions to all the Chingonas who participated in this research.

Blanca is a 40-year-old who lives in the Los Angeles area of California. She is originally from New Mexico. Blanca is a singer who performs Latin hip-hop music. Her stage name is Blanca La Chingona.

Cori is a 30-year-old who grew up in Michigan. Currently Cori lives in Eureka, CA where she does racial equity and nonprofit work. Cori loves to read and is a writer.

Danielle is a 35-year-old from San Diego, CA. She currently lives in Sacramento where she is a licensed therapist who received her Master's degree from Sacramento State University. She is one of the creators of the Latinx Podcast, Nopal Kweenz.

Elsa is a 22-year-old who grew up in the Bay area of CA. She is an activist and student leader. She attended Santa Rosa Junior College where she was active in the Mujeres Xingonas club. She is now a student at University of California Berkeley who is majoring in sociology with a minor in ethnic studies.

Jasmine is a 28-year-old from Southern California. She currently lives in Sacramento, CA where she works as a therapist. She is one of the creators of the Nopal Kweenz Podcast.

Julia is a 33-year-old from the Chicago suburbs. Currently she lives in Omaha, Nebraska where she owns her own businesses. Julia has various jewelry and apparel brands and has a Chingona specific store on Instagram called Soy Chingona.

Lupe is a 29-year-old and currently resides in Sacramento, CA. Lupe grew up in Southern California and is one of the creators of the Latinx Podcast, Nopal Kweenz.

Ruby is a 38-year-old from San Francisco, CA. She is a member of the San Francisco Lowrider Council, she is the only woman out of 12 members. Ruby is also a member of the Califas Car Club, which she helped start along with her family and friends.

Yvette is a 26-year-old who lives in Pico Rivera, CA. Yvette is a student studying Child Development at California State University Los Angeles, she will be graduating May 2020.

Each interview was closely read and analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of the Chingona identity, how participants make sense of their Chingona identity, and the impacts of adopting this identity. Each participant chose to use their real identity for this research to display their authentic selves, they have all expressed how this identity has positively impacted their lives and they want others to know about this so that they may also be empowered.

DATA ANALYSIS

The themes in the analysis were developed from what the participants shared by using grounded theory to code their interviews line by line. Three main themes were found, with subcategories within each theme: Pero Why, Así Se Hace, and Chingona Sounds Poquito Fuerte. These themes demonstrate why participants are claiming this identity, how they are claiming it, and the challenges they encounter. The information found in these themes help paint a clear picture of what the Chingona identity is and begins to lay out a common definition and understanding of this identity. Pero Why is the first theme I present where I discuss the reasons Chingonas are claiming this identity. This section includes the following categories; role models and representation, reclaiming, and self-empowerment. The theme Así Se Hace highlights the attributes and characteristics of being a Chingona, this theme includes the following categories: resilience, empowering and helping others, speaking up, and authentic self. The focus of the final theme, Chingona Sounds Poquito Fuerte, are the challenges that participants face in claiming the Chingona identity, as well as the way in which they have been able to break norms.

Pero Why

The women in my study came to claim Chingona identity for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways. The themes that arose out of the interviews include role models and representation, reclaiming, and self-empowerment.

Roles models and representation



Figure 1. Cori shares a photo of her bisabuela Margarita and discusses the connection they shared even through a language barrier.

All participants discussed the roles models that they had while growing up and the specific characteristics and values that they received from them. Participants recognize the important influence that their role models had on them, specifically in regards to them being able to eventually harness their Chingona identity. Many participants also discussed the sacrifices and role their families played in their upbringing and in harnessing the Chingona identity. Cori describes the deep connection she feels to her family members who were role models for her growing up. The connection Cori shares with them is where she draws her strength from and helps support her in being able to harness her Chingona identity. This description highlights the importance that family plays for Cori, an idea that was expressed by all participants.

There is something that is alive in the connection from great grandma to grandma to my aunts to me that I just feel really strongly and my dad too and my abuelo. I love them a lot and I just I don't know, I feel like that is the line that I draw a lot of my strength from. And that's what I feel most connected to I feel like they have

protected me and reach out for me and cared for me in ways that I wouldn't have survived without (Cori).

Like Cori, Julia shared that she draws on her connection to her family to harness the Chingona identity. Julia said that her mother and grandmother were her main role models growing up, and in the quote below she recognizes the lineage of Chingonas that she comes from. Julia shares, “. . . I’m a Chingona like my mother and her mother before her . . .”



Figure 2. Jasmine shares a photo of her and her mother at Jasmine’s wedding. She explains that her mother provided her with support and empowerment during that important moment, as well as hard work and consistency throughout her life.

Jasmine states that her mom is one of her role models. She recognizes that her mother has made many sacrifices for her family, taking note of her hard work, and all the opportunities she made for herself.

... My mom came to California as a teenager, she escaped the civil war in El Salvador. So, even though she would only share these stories here and there, it’s just like, wow you’ve gave up a lot for me to live here and to start your family

here. Giving up a lot of things and then also just hustling to make stuff happen, making your opportunities happen for you (Jasmine).

Ruby explains that her parents are her role models and have taught her how to not allow herself to be defined by others. She shares that they came to the U.S. for a better life and encountered many struggles, but through it all they persevered and thrived.

I come from Mexican immigrant parents who came to California for a better life. Just like millions of people do. They struggled, fought, and worked hard to give my 4 sisters and I a better life. Though through it all they never showed it. Their pride and perseverance kept them going. Throughout the years my sisters and I didn't make it easy on them. Still they kept their head high and kept it moving. That right there showed me to never let anyone or anything define you and who you are or want to be (Ruby).



Figure 3. Ruby shares a photo from 1970 of her parents sitting on their '58 Chevy.

While all participants recognize the importance of role models and fellow Chingonas, some participants also recognize the lack of representation of women of color in the media or as positive role models in mainstream cultures. The lack of representation is what influences some of the participants to be Chingonas, so that they can be the positive role models that youth of color need. This can be seen in the following quote from Danielle:

I just didn't see a lot of Mexican women taking on powerful roles in movies or in the media. I mean, when we had Selena I lived in Texas, that was amazing. I was 9 or 10 when she was peaking in her career and stuff. We just didn't have a lot of good role models . . . Yeah, 'cause that really struck a chord with me about just not having that when I was little, so I really didn't have that representation. So now I get to be that or claim that I myself have had some successes in my life and other people have too. I watch Latinas kick ass and do these wonderful things, I think that's the purpose.

Danielle's feelings about the importance of representation is in line with the research presented by Tatum (1997) on being able to create positive oppositional identities. Part of creating and claiming this identity as powerful and positive is reclaiming it from negative interpretation.

Reclaiming

For some participants, identifying as a Chingona was an act of reclamation of being a strong powerful woman, one who asserts herself rather than only living for others. Five out of the nine participants discussed how they are reclaiming this identity. Participants expressed that the reclamation is multidimensional, a reclamation of the word, participants' bodies, empowerment, and rights. The participants discuss the ways in which they have been oppressed, objectified, and devalued – yet through being able to reclaim this identity they have been able to take control of their lives and stand up for themselves in a deep way. Elsa discusses the various ways that mujeres have been treated and oppressed, as well as how she is no longer accepting this and is reclaiming the use of the word Chingona. For Elsa, this is an act of reclamation at many levels, it is not just a reclamation of the word, but of herself. Similarly, for Lupe this is more than an act of reclaiming a word, but it is also an act of reclaiming herself and her rights.

Now we're reclaiming that and we're saying, we've been as mujeres, we've been called everything. We've been told there's things we can't do, there's things that we should do and that we need to do and we're still at the end of the day, oppressed. Or dammed if we do or dammed if we don't. So now we're taking that. We're now taking that name and applying it to ourselves as we see fit (Elsa).

So for me it was different, for me I was like, 'No, I'm going to be empowered and I'm going to be, unfucked.' I'm going to use this term as like I'm unfucking myself because I'm standing up for my rights as a woman, I'm standing up as a person of color (Lupe).



Figure 4. Lupe shares a photo of herself that I interpret as her showing confidence and strength.

For Julia and Blanca, reclaiming the word offers a way to take back their rights as well and embrace another side of the word where they are no longer objects to the word or act of chingar, but instead are using it to be empowered subjects.

I know the term is used differently and other parts of Latin America, like you know, Chingona is somebody who likes to fuck and is looked down upon. So, I'm embracing the badass side of it, the positives (Julia).

Pues como decian, nos chingaba where we come from. So used to que nos chingaran and we're standing up for it, switching it around (Blanca).



Figure 5. Blanca shares the photo that is used as the cover of one of her songs. She shares that this photo shows her confidence and was used to showcase her Mexican ancestry.

Self-empowerment

All participants expressed that they received self-empowerment from the Chingona identity, for many this was expressed through feeling powerful, confident, and strong. The participants recognize that claiming the Chingona identity helped them feel empowered and harness the attributes that they already have that make them Chingonas. During each interview, all participants were asked when they began to identify as Chingonas, from this question they were all able to recall the moment when they began to identify as Chingonas. Many participants shared a similarity in their stories, which is that once they recognized the Chingona in themselves or began to claim the identity, they became more confident. For Yvette, claiming the Chingona identity is empowering,

especially when others can recognize it in her. She describes that she does not tell others that she claims this identity, instead she allows others to see it in her and take notice of this through her actions.

It's really empowering. I don't just go up to people and tell them, 'I'm a Chingona', but I prove it. You know, you have to show it, so you don't have to say it yourself. You let other people say it themselves and then you are like, 'Yes, because I did it' (Yvette).

For Jasmine, the empowerment she felt when claiming the Chingona identity was something that took over her life and mindset in a positive way. Similarly, Ruby also recalls the moment she claimed the Chingona identity. She describes how it also took over her life in a deep way, empowering her, allowing her to be confident internally and physically.

I think it is empowering, it's kind of like when you speak something over your life and then you embrace it even more. Something that you strive for more, as opposed to, I want to be that. It's like no, I am that and I'm going to continue being that (Jasmine).

It was just like, I woke up, you know it's me, and I own it. I think everyone has that Chingona in them, it's just you have to dig deeper and find it. And once you know and you own it, no one can stop you. You feel proud, you could hold your head up so high (Ruby).

Later, Ruby shares more on her memory of when she began claiming the Chingona identity. She explains that she named her car, including the license plates, Xingona. This helped her feel Chingona and others began to recognize her this way too.

I didn't start saying, 'I'm a chingona,' until I would have to say when I got my car. You know, when I got my boom. It's just like, I woke up, I just took on the whole state of mind where I just felt Chingona. When you're in that car you hold your head up high like you know, I'm a badass and I don't care who knows it, I

know it. When I got the name for my car, I mean for Xingona, right away everyone started calling me Chingona (Ruby).



Figure 6. Ruby shares a photo of herself in her car, Xingona.

Blanca also describes feeling confident when claiming the Chingona identity. On challenging days, she reminds herself that she is a Chingona and that she can do anything with her inner power and strength. Like Ruby, Blanca describes that this strength and Chingona power as something that all women have.

It makes me feel good and confident as well, I know that I have something to live up to. I know that no matter what I do you have to remember, pues soy chingona. I have to, even on my bad days put myself in chingona mode. I think the strength within us. That's the most important thing to me, any woman whatever they're going through, whatever job they have, whatever life has put in front of them they're going to do it con poder, con fuerza, be able to get through whatever that they are confronted with, with strength. Move forward no matter what it is (Blanca).



Figure 7. Blanca shares that this photo is one of her logos. She loves it because it shows her strength.

Jasmine, Ruby, and Blanca describe the empowerment from claiming the Chingona power as an unstoppable force that doesn't allow anything to get in their way. All of the participants noted how empowering this identity was for them as they navigate the world. This is a key aspect of claiming this identity.

Así Se Hace

This section describes *how* to be a Chingona; it includes the Chingona characteristics that are displayed by those claiming the identity. All participants contributed to these themes even though they were all hesitant to make a strict description as they recognize that everyone is different and can harness their Chingona power in ways that are complimentary to them. The participants were very aware of not homogenizing experiences as discussed earlier by Zinn and Dill (1996), hooks (1984), and Lorde (1984), but in the end participants were able to name some Chingona attributes

and behaviors. Ruby describes for us why she was hesitant to name specific attributes that Chingonas have. Ruby state, “You might have the look of a badass and this and that but hey the girl sitting next to you could be looking like a square and she can be chingona as fuck you know” Although this sentiment was shared by all participants, they also recognized that there are behaviors or attributes that Chingonas display and these are important to their identities. The themes that came up most frequently include, resilience, empowering and helping others, speaking up, and living for your own approval.

Resilience



Figure 8. Nopal photo by Cori.

Eight out of nine participants discussed the importance of resilience when it comes to claiming the Chingona identity. It is important to recognize that the adversities faced by participants are due to their specific intersectional identities, each participant describes the ways that they are resilient and how they have overcome adversities. The quotes presented in this section are describing the ways in which their Chingona identity allows for them to be resilient and come out of any situation still being strong. Cori describes her identity using her connection to desert plants as a metaphor for how she is

perceived, treated, and the adversities she faces as a biracial woman. She uses the exterior looks of a desert plant as being perceived to be scary, just as she may be perceived as “prickly” or intimidating, while she actually has a lot of love and loyalty, amongst many other amazing traits. Due to the way that women of color are perceived by society, we are not able to see or experience their full scope and the reality of who they are outside of stereotypes. She also uses this metaphor to explain that on the inside of the plant, which can be understood as her sense of self, she has everything she needs to survive the adversities she faces and be resilient just like the dessert plants, and ultimately, she knows what is best for her to survive and thrive.

I've always, since a very early age, before I really even started thinking or understanding my multiple cultural identity stuff, I identified with desert plants because they're resilient and they are not approachable. They're a little scary from the outside, but inside they're full of all the nutrients that you need and they live in these climates that can be so scary to people that don't know how to survive them, but they're surviving and thriving and that's what they're meant to do. And I think if you get to know me I'm not a prickly person, I can be a very loving loyal person. I also feel like people that don't know me this might be the first thing we experience is the cactus. And I think part of it is also, just like, strength is not normalized in women or in white culture or it's just not something that you want to be or should be. Resilient and strong sometimes means you have to have your guard up (Cori).

Yvette describes Chingonas as people who are resilient and move forward in the face of adversity. Yvette shares, “There's just people who know that they can keep moving forward, who know that they're capable of doing better for themselves and the ones that they love. To stay strong, to be resilient, that's being a chingona.”



Figure 9. Yvette shares her most Chingona experience was when she gave birth to her son.

Lupe shares the significance of a tattoo she has that represents overcoming a traumatic event in her life. She shares that this is what being a Chingona is, being able to overcome traumatic experiences and find empowerment within. Although she does not use the word resilience, the sentiment can be understood as a description of what it means to be resilient. Lupe shares, “That is being a Chingona to me, it’s going through something really fucked up in life and still coming out and saying I’m still a badass.”

Empowering & helping others

Another theme that came up when describing the Chingona identity was empowering and helping others, all nine participants identified this as something that is necessary for being a Chingona and that they make sure to actively do so. Participants describe the various ways that they empower and help others, some examples include the empowerment or motivational piece of encouraging others to be Chingonas, helping the community via work choice or volunteering, and showing up to show support towards the community at marches and rallies. It is clear that Chingonas understand the importance of

supporting one another in positive ways that allow them to uplift one another and keep on pushing to be the best version of themselves. During her interview, Ruby discussed the ways people can bring each other down by speaking negatively of others or attempting to impact others in negative ways, but in the quote below, she explains that Chingonas do not fall into this and instead help each other out. Ruby discusses the importance of supporting and uplifting other women, and describes the notion of allowing someone to walk besides you as an equal. Ruby states, “. . . help the homegirl out, don't keep throwing shit, help the homegirl out you know. Let her walk right with you, not behind you.”



Figure 10. Ruby share a photo of herself with some women involved in Lowrider/Car clubs and shows. They spoke at a Middle School as part of a panel on women who are Lowriders.

Julia shares that for her, it is important to empower others to become Chingonas by letting them know that they can be Chingonas, feel empowered, and be their authentic selves. She wears shirts that say ‘Chingona’ on them not only to acknowledge that she is

a Chingona, but in the hopes of making it visible to others so that they may also feel the same power.

Once you embrace it that's when you let others know that it's okay to be a Chingona, and be badass, and be yourself. It's important to spread it. When I wear a shirt that says 'Chingona', I mean yeah, I'm acknowledging that I'm a Chingona, but it's mostly for people to see it, you know what I mean. I want my neighbors to see it, I want the women around me to see it (Julia).

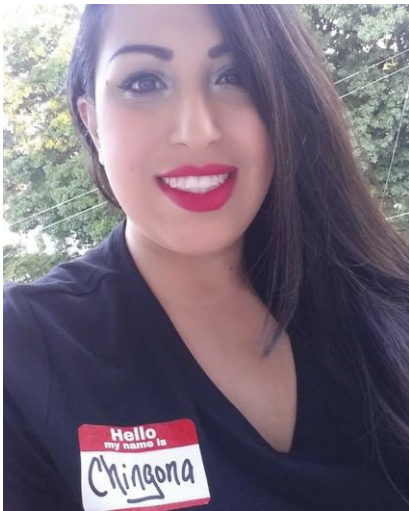


Figure 11. Julia shares a photo of herself displaying her Chingona identity.

Elsa expresses the importance of serving her comunidad. She supports her community by attending marches, rallies, walkouts, and various events. During her interview, Elsa was asked what being a Chingona means to her, she responded "My first point that I would mention is serving comunidad."



Figure 12. Elsa shares a photo of herself at march in support of immigrants.

Speaking up

Eight out of nine participants discussed various ways they use their voices to speak up for themselves and other. Participants described various encounters where they had to make their voices heard when facing injustices. Many participants acknowledge the power and the opportunity they have when using their voices, to call things out or speak up for themselves and others. When asked about how claiming the Chingona identity has affected her life or sense of self, Lupe describes the transition she experienced as she got older, she recognizes that her voice has value and power to speak up when something problematic is happening. She explains that she will speak out when people are being racist, homophobic, or when any injustice is happening. She has come to realize that when presented with injustice, choosing to stay quiet is to stay complicit, so she does her part in speaking out because she does not accept injustice. Lupe shares that, although a person she is addressing or calling out may not agree or like what she is saying, she will still speak up when people are around her or in her space.

I think that as I got older, I found, specifically now in my life, I think I'm more confident as a Latinx woman. I'm just like, I kinda have more of a title like, you know what? I'm too powerful to stay quiet. I'm going to call shit out and I don't care if you think I'm problematic. I'm going to call your ass out if I think you're being racist or if your being transphobic or if you're making comments that are unnecessary. I think I'm more in that place in my life where I'm like, silence is acceptance, and I'm not accepting this shit. So, I'm going to speak up and I'm going to put you in your place and if you don't like it then that's okay, you can move on with your life, but if you're in my space I will call you out on the things you are doing (Lupe).

Like Lupe, for Cori it is important to speak up when injustice is happening. When she uses the word power, this can be understood as norms, bias, injustice, unfair laws, workplace policy, or anything that holds power over another. Cori state, "I mean to me this is the speaking truth to power." For Danielle, speaking out for herself and others is an important aspect of her identity, she recognizes the bravery it takes to do this. She stands up for her own needs and the students she works with at her job. Danielle shares, "... we keep the integrity of what we do and that means I have to be brave. That I have to stand up for what I need, I have to stand up for what my students need, and a lot of that takes bravery."



Figure 13. Danielle shares a photo of herself at the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) conference where she presented on the work she does and how she stands up for the needs of her students.

Living for your own approval

All participants discussed how living for their own approval is crucial to being a Chingona. Participants described this in many ways including being their authentic self, caring for and focusing on themselves, following their own path, and being their true selves regardless of what others and society expect. Julia describes that for her, being a chingona means that she is living for her own approval. She describes doing this by focusing on herself and making sure she is happy and taken care of so that she can share this with others.

Being a Chingona means I'm going back to the line of living for my own approval, you know, that's what being a Chingona means at the end of the day. Just embracing yourself and living, it sounds like being self-happy, and you have to be happy in order to make others happy and spread goodness. If I'm going to

be a miserable person it's going to be harder for me to help others. So, being a Chingona means living for your own approval and when you're living for your own approval, you live to work towards your dreams and be yourself. I feel like you are a happier person and you're able to do more (Julia).



Figure 14. Elsa shares a photo of her body and discusses the way that claiming the Chingona identity has empowered her to love herself, love her body, be proud of how she looks, and have nalgona pride.

Taking care of yourself and being proud of who you are was also discussed by others. Elsa shares that she internalized criticisms she received from family, regarding her body, weight, and male attention. Later in her life she was able to move away from the internalization of the criticism she received to embracing her body without needing permission from anyone. Elsa looks up to Beyonce, who she sees as someone that is confident with her body and does not seek approval.

Being proud of how I look and being happy in my skin and being able to say that I went from again internalizing all those criticisms from my mom or my dad, like I'm too fat or asking for attention from boys or from men. What I'm wearing is pictured as, going from that, internalizing that in an unhealthy way, to literally I walk around now and I just I tell myself all the time I'm literally Beyonce. I just sound really selfish like a 180, but I don't know. That's why I looked up to Beyonce when I was younger because she was always that embodiment of the confident mujer who didn't need anyone's permission to be herself and to feel comfortable in her skin. She expressed that physically and all that (Elsa).

Danielle also talked about the power of embracing your authentic self. She explains that there is always a lot of noise going on, which earlier she describes as expectations, labels, etc. She suggests that it is important to be able to look past this and instead focus on being your authentic self. Danielle does acknowledge that being authentic takes bravery, time, and work, but that this is what it means to be a Chingona. She explains that once a person can focus on themselves and live authentically, they have been able to manifest the Chingona identity.

And the bottom line you have a lot of noise, to just mute all of that, and listen to yourself, and just be authentic that takes in itself bravery, focus, dedication, commitment and I think that's what the essence of chingona really is. And so, people who identify as chingona, I would hope have embraced that they're not afraid to just make all of that mute and focus on themselves, and what they really want because, once you can do that you can live authentically. And to live authentically does take bravery, but if you could do all that I think you've embodied what a chingona is (Danielle).

Blanca uses slightly different language to share a similar idea of living for your own approval and being authentic - she uses the language of being one's "best self." She shares that Chingonas not only want to be their best self, but also want that for others. She states that it is important not to allow other people's opinions to influence you, instead making sure to take care of your mind and self. She explains that in the end, Chingonas want to be their best self, as well as wanting those around them to be their best.

But no matter what anybody says you can't let stuff affect you, you know what I mean. You gotta keep your mind right, you got to keep yourself right, you got to keep that in check first before you can share it or help anybody else. Because a Chingona I think ultimately, we all want to be the best, and I think we all want everybody around us to be the best (Blanca).

Cori describes the way that society suppresses a lot of the empowering characteristics of Chingonas, such as confidence. She explains that it isn't the behavior or attitude that is bad, but that seeing these traits are scary for people who aren't used to it. She recognizes that much of what she is told she shouldn't be is what gives her power and strength.

To me the chingona identity is a lot about the stuff in me that society has tried to squash. I don't know, just like fire, truth telling, being direct and not prickly, and that's just stupid, I mean it's just that's not really true, right. Like it's not that, it's confidence in a person is scary or knowing what you're doing and that you can do it is scary. A lot of times it's like, this is a thing that I've been told I can't be or shouldn't be or should squash, and it's like no, this is the thing that gives me power and strength (Cori).

All participants shared the importance of living for their own approval, but each used different language to express this. While some discussed the importance of being happy with themselves and their own bodies, others described this as embracing yourself, and being your authentic self. Although each of them use various words to describe living for their own approval, it all fits within the idea of ignoring what society, family, friends, etc. expect of you and doing what you want to do and what you know is best for yourself. As Cori described above, it's about doing what give you strength and power even when it's the things that you are told you can't or shouldn't be.

Chingona Sounds Poquito Fuerte

This section of the findings is themed around the difficulties of being a Chingona. Participants discussed the many challenges they face as Chingonas and the ways in which they are able to break norms. This section was named based off a story that Julia shared

about a conversation she had with her grandmother, the conversation perfectly captures both the challenges and ways that Chingona are able to break the norms. Julia shares that when her grandmother was reminded that Julia has a Chingona brand of products she sells, her grandmother responded that the word was little too rough sounding. Julia explained to her grandmother that men are able to use the word to describe themselves and that they, as women should be able to use it to describe themselves as well. After a moment of thinking, Julia's grandmother agrees that as women they should also be able to use this word and that they are Chingonas.

I just had a conversation with her last year and my aunt reminded her that I have the Chingona brand, my grandma forgets things you know. And my grandma is like, 'Chingona sounds poquito fuerte' you know she was a little deterring, and I was like, 'okay, then why can men say that they sound like Chingones' and why can't we say, we are Chingona?' Then she stopped and said, 'You know what? you are right, you are right we are Chingonas, we can say it too' (Julia).

Challenges



Figure 15. Elsa shares a photo of her holding up a Mujeres Xingonas sign for her school club during a march.

All participants discuss the challenges associated with being a Chingona. These challenges are specifically centered around the use of the word and claiming the identity publicly, although other challenges will be discussed in the next section under breaking barriers. Challenges discussed in this section are about the ways in which the use of the word is still not accepted when women are using it to describe themselves, as well as the ways in which people don't understand what it means for women to be claiming this identity. Both Elsa and Ruby share how family members did not accept or understand the way they were using the word Chingona. Both describe how parents would not understand why it was being said or used. For Elsa, her father did not understand why she

would be related to an organization that uses this word as its name and was concerned that no good could come from it. Similarly, for Ruby, her parents questioned why she would use the word and they would interpret it as something bad.

At home however, I am talking again from my experience, it's a very difficult story. My dad specifically told me more than once, whenever he would see that I came home with a flyer with Mujeres Chingonas club name on it, he would say, 'what in the world are you doing being involved with this organization? Chingona, nothing good can come from a name like that' (Elsa).

At the same time because you know my parents are older Mexicans, so it's funny cuz back then like you said, it was like, 'ahhh, ay no porque dices eso.' It was like oh my god, it's such a bad word (Ruby).

This experience of being challenged for using the language of Chingona was also experienced by others. For example, Julia has experienced many challenges when starting and maintain her Chingona brand online shop called, Soy Chingona. The challenges she experienced came in many forms, from family members who did not understand or support the brand, people trying to bring it down, to men cringing when they see her wearing a Chingona shirt. In this quote, Julia shares an experience she had when she gave her friend some Soy Chingona merchandise. After giving her friend a Soy Chingona t-shirt, her friend had to return it when her male partner said it was vulgar. Julia describes her frustration with this experience and shares that her friend was sad about having to return the shirt. For Julia, this type of experience is very difficult and upsetting, feeling that women are returning it because they feel they are not allowed to wear it.

I'm like, this is the mother of your children, all she wanted was a shirt, let her have a shirt. She's raising your 3 kids you know, she has a full-time job. She deserves to have this shirt, but he's like, 'it's vulgar' or something and it's like, she was really sad and she actually returned it to me. She was really sad about it and that's very very hard. When I see people trying to stop people from wearing

chingona attire, that's one of the toughest things, especially if they accept it and return it because of that reason. It makes me really sad, that's a really hard thing for me to see, because their like, 'I can't wear this because I'm not allowed to' (Julia).



Figure 16. Julia shares a photo of her merchandise from her store Soy Chingona.

Another Chingona who experiences being “disciplined” for her use of the term is Blanca La Chingona. Blanca La Chingona is a musician who performs at various events where she often encounters challenges with her name having to be changed on flyers or bleeped out on the radio because it is seen as vulgar. Blanca describes having to make the decision to either stick to her name or to change it due to the challenge of it being bleeped or removed. She recognizes that some people interpret it in a negative way, but she decided to stand by her name in hopes that people can understand what it means to her. She continues to work around not only having her name being bleeped out during radio interviews but as well as her followers having difficulty finding her music when they cannot make out the second half of her stage name.

So, it's like I had a choice I guess to run with it or not cuz I could have changed it, but I just feel like it has a negative image up and some people out there that think of it as negative and I'm not going to shy away from it because I'm not

representing whatever negativity that they think that it is. So, to me, I'm gonna hold on to my name, going to represent it, going to let people know what Chingona is, let people know what it represents. When we do the radio interview I guess because they think it's a bad word, they said it's a bad word on the radio they have to bleep it out. It's kind of like, how am I supposed to know that when they go to iTunes or whatever they got to kind of figure it out (Blanca).



Figure 17. Blanca La Chingona performing her music.

Breaking norms

All participants described the societal norms and barriers that they have challenged and broken through. All participants discussed these norms and barriers related to gender and being Latinx. Lupe describes her experience growing up and the Latina gender norms that she was raised around. She explains that growing up she questioned and was against the Latina gender specific roles that were expected of her. She always believed that there was more to her identity than the expectations and roles she was being asked to fulfil.

“I would probably say, my whole life because I noticed growing up as a kid I never fit in to that Latino role identified as this gender female like, ‘oh no, you have to be in the kitchen, you have to do this, you have to cook, you have to look the image.’ I remember just growing up always being against, always questioning everything, always putting up a fight, always defending everything. So, I always

kinda didn't fit into that typical kind of cookie cutter, I guess, image that I was suppose to be as a Latina. And I always remember saying 'No, I think there's more to me than that,' or 'I could be more,' or 'There's more to this identity then what I'm being raised to believe' (Lupe).

For Lupe, pushing beyond what was expected of her is an important part of claiming her Chingona identity. Similar ideas were shared by Yvette. During her interview, she shared her experience as a woman in the army and later discusses the challenges to being a Chingona. In this quote Yvette was asked, 'are there any challenges to being a Chingona?' She describes the challenges of being a woman, acknowledging that women are still not viewed equally as a man. She states that there are different expectations for women and that they must work harder and in some ways prove their capabilities. Although this is a challenge, she describes the empowerment that she receives, especially when it is recognized that women are capable of doing the same things as a man.

Hell yeah, I think so! I think that being a woman in general or identifying as a woman in general is hard for some people, because people don't look at you the same as you look at a man. They don't expect the same thing from you, they have to work harder, so you have to prove yourself more to people, you have to show them that you're capable of doing these things. But then I think that's also empowering for women because then you do those things and then they're like, 'Wow, a woman did that.' Hell yeah we did that! That's pretty empowering. It's harder for women in general to be a woman (Yvette).



Figure 18. Yvette shares a photo of herself during her time in the Army. She explains that during her time in the military she had to prove herself and be more independent, which helped her feel more Chingona.

Yvette shared this picture to show herself doing something that is usually associated with being a man and something that she excelled at, even though people didn't think that she would. Jasmine shares that she has seen a shift in culture where women are no longer allowing themselves to be put in a subordinate position, they are able to be independent and do more without having the help of a man. She states that women recognize that they can be equal to men.

It's really cool to see a shift in in culture like that, where women, we're like, ey we're not gonna get blamed anymore, and we can do whatever we want to do, and we can have a career, we can go to college, we can do all these things. I don't need a man to do it, I'm not saying men are horrible either. I think it's finally a time where it's just like, hey we can be equals (Jasmine).



Figure 19. Jasmine shares a photo of her graduation. She explains a feeling of accomplishment and recognizes the barriers she overcame.

Like Yvette, Jasmine shared this picture to show a huge accomplishment, and to show herself in a powerful position. Both are calling attention to moving into their own power and moving beyond imposed barriers.

In her interview Danielle also discussed breaking past barriers. She notes that she and her family have had many achievement and were able to break past societal barriers. She acknowledges the low numbers of Latinx students graduating from higher education and recognizes that she overcame this. She achieved so much, managing to break past barriers and norms.

. . . when I realized all the things that I was able to accomplish and my family was able to accomplish against all the dynamics of our society, which we can see now still Latinos graduating from college, you know is like one in ten, and it gets even less at the masters or you know higher ed for secondary degree. And then I just realized, 'oh gosh I'm doing it, I didn't let myself subscribe to any barriers or challenges or take on any assigned roles or labels. I totally just said F all that and I just kept going (Danielle).

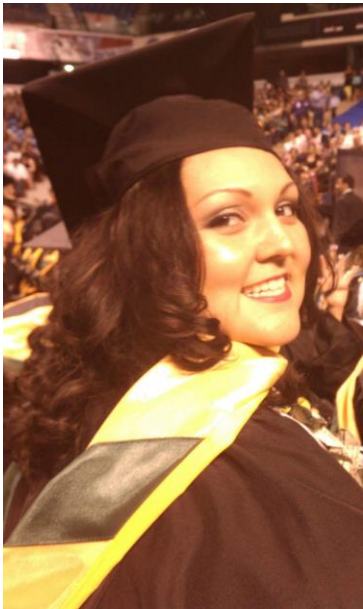


Figure 20. Danielle shares a photo of her graduation. She describes experience with having to put herself through grad school and figuring it out on her own.

Chingonas may face many barriers and challenges, but they are able to overcome them and break past societal norms. The strength and power they hold is channeled through their Chingona identity with all the amazing attributes and characteristics they possess. Through these interviews, participants shared why they are claiming the Chingona identity and the empowerment they are getting from it. The participants showed the ways in which they cultivate their Chingona power to focus on their resilience, empowering and helping others, speaking up for themselves and other, and making sure to always living for their own approval. The openness and honesty from participants allowed for us to work together to gain a deeper understanding of the Chingona identity.

DISCUSSION

The Chingona identity is an act of resistance in not only the reclamation of the word, but in the attitudes that are being portrayed that display an act of resistance. Those who identify as Chingonas are embracing and outwardly going against cultural expectations and norms that would keep them quiet and submissive. They use their sharp tongues and embrace their willfulness. To be a Chingona is an act of willfulness and resistance, it is rejecting the need to take up less space, and “unlocking the door of our own resistance” (Ahmed, 2017; 31). The participants all engaged in conversations about being a Chingona as going against social norms, following your own path, and not submitting to the pressure to fulfil social and cultural norms. All participants discuss their independence and empowerment through this identity. Through this identity, women are finding individual empowerment, and the sentiment of empowering and uplifting one another is prominent throughout the interviews. All participants discuss the importance of support and empowering the Chingona power within other women to spread the ability to go against norms and live full lives. Although to be a Chingona is an identity, similar to Chicana feminism, there is a lot of activism happening among the participants even if not as a movement. A form of resistance that all participants engaged in was through various forms of activism. The type of activism amongst participants includes art, empowerment, decolonization of mental health, and community based activism through various organizations. This type of activism relates to the identity politics the Combahee River Collective (1977) discussed. Identity politics as a way of engaging in activism seems to

be in line with those who participated in my thesis interviews. Although this was not a direct conversation we had, everyone who participated engages in activism that is relevant to their own identity and is aligned with the Chingona aspect of their identities.

Through the interviews with nine Chingonas, I was able to find out why the participants are reclaiming this word and identity, how to be a Chingona, and the challenges they face. Based off the interviews with the participants, I found that some of the reasons behind claiming this identity are to be role models and ensure that there are positive role models in the community for Latinx youth. This connects to Tatum's (1997) discussion about the importance of positive role models in creating positive oppositional identities. In a sense, the Chingona identity can be understood as a positive oppositional identity. The participants were aware of the impact that positive role models have on creating positive identity and were explicit about the importance of being a Chingona and providing positive role models for young girls. Participants discussion of their own role models uncovered the ways that people in their lives influenced them and in turn the values and characteristics they now carry into their own identities. For many, being a Chingona was a way to reclaim so much of their identity and selves. Participants who discussed this made it clear they were not only reclaiming the word, but their bodies, their rights, culture, language, and selves. Lastly, Chingonas are identifying with this term because it provides them with self-empowerment. Through the use of this identity, they have empowered themselves to be able to harness their chingona power and all the attitudes and attributes that they identified that Chingona have.

Through the empowerment that participants find in claiming the Chingona identity, they are able to bring into focus the behaviors and attributes that Chingonas display. The most identified characteristics of Chingonas include resilience, empowering and helping others, speaking up, and embodying an authentic self. Resilience is an important aspect of being a Chingona as there are many challenges, barriers, and hardships Chingonas face and must overcome. Another critical aspect of being a Chingona is the ability to empower and help others. All participants discussed the ways that they empower and help others, as well as recognizing the importance of doing this not only for family and loved ones, but the community at large. This shared sentiment of needing to empower others is like the discussion of sisterhood that hooks (1984) provides.

This feeling of sisterhood amongst Chingonas is clear, it was not only about helping others, but making sure to help others feel empowered, feel like Chingonas themselves, and to connect with others based off their strengths. Another important aspect of being a Chingona is the ability to speaking up for yourself and others. Since identifying as a Chingona is a recognition of intersecting identities and oppression, it is also a place where in the face of injustice Chingonas will speak out to make sure they and others are not being oppressed, treated unfairly, or discriminated against. This feeling of sisterhood can also be seen when participants discussing standing up for others and in their descriptions, they are discussing ways that they are making sure that there is understanding and acceptance of people across differences. Expressing one's values was another importance aspect of being a Chingona, both in speaking up for themselves and

others. Lastly, another critical piece of being a Chingona is being your authentic self. Because this identity is being crafted as a way to engage the various aspects of participant's identities, it is important that Chingonas are not only authentic, but focus on themselves, and follow their own path.

Through this research, I was able to identify some of the many difficulties faced by Chingonas. These difficulties include challenges in their daily life and the ways that they are able to break through barriers. The challenges that are faced by Chingonas are centered around the use of the word around family, in public, and when it intertwined with employment. When the word Chingona is used by participants to describe themselves or others with family and loved ones, there is often a reaction of confusion and misunderstanding around the way it is being used, as well as negative reactions for its use being applied to women in an empowering way. Further, some participants who use Chingona as part of their brand will encounter various issues such as their name not being displayed, being bleeped out during radio interviews, merchandise being returned to them, and general negative feedback for the use of Chingona. Amongst Combahee River Collective (1977) members who participated in the interviews for the book by Taylor (2012), there was a shared sentiment around feeling too radical and the significance that finding community had. Relating this to the Chingona identity, more women are using social media platforms to build community around this identity. Although the Chingona identity is different than the circumstances under which the Combahee River Collective (1977) made their famous statement, the sentiment of feeling too radical or not being understood and the significance of finding that community amongst each other is similar.

For Chingonas there can often be a misunderstanding amongst family, friends and society at large not understanding why they choose to use the word or still feeling that it is not appropriate. There also have not been many ways that Chingonas are able to share and connect through this identity since many people still oppose or misunderstand it.

Further, Chingonas have many societal barriers and norms that they work hard to break through. The barriers and norms discussed by participants were mainly related to their intersectional gendered and Latinx identities. Participants also shared the ways in which they can break through the many barriers they encounter and the norms they denounce. This section of the findings showcased the ways that the participant's multiple identities can sometimes contradict one another. For example, while Chingonas can happily claim this new identity they also have to face the implications of what it means to go against familial expectations of gender norms. Through the challenges and breaking barriers section of the findings we can understand this as the borderlands (Anzaldúa 1987) where the participants navigate barriers, norms, expectations, and challenges coming from their multiple identities and cultures. Their ability to craft this new Chingona identity can be seen as a crossroads where they are crafting their mestiza consciousness.

This research was done to showcase the power and importance of the Chingona identity. Although I was not able to find any other academic text specific to Chingonas, it is important for this identity to be known, understood, and researched. This research expands thinking about Latinx identity, how Latinx women are working to build each other up, and how norms, expectations, stereotypes, and oppressions are being shifted.

This research provides work that highlights an aspect of identity that is centered around empowerment that is defined by the participants. In most research, Latinx identity is researched based on aspects related to success, assimilation, or lack of these, while this work provides examples of how identities are being navigated in positive ways. This work adds a concrete study to how the Chingona identity is created and defined by those who identify as Chingona. Although I gathered much information about the Chingona identity, more exploration of this identity needs to be conducted. I was not able to find any research on Chingonas; while this was challenging, it brought to light a new place where more work can be done. Research around positive and empowering identities of Latinx and people of color in general is needed. I hope that there is further exploration around how Chingonas craft their own identities, and other explorations that offer a way to showcase this.

After reflecting upon the research process and outcomes, I have come to realize that there are some changes I would make for future research. Based on my understanding of Chingona identity, reclaiming sexuality is an important aspect of being a Chingona, yet I did not ask about this. Future research needs to ask questions around sexuality so that this aspect of being a Chingona can be documented and understood. I did not interview any Afro-Latinas, non-Latin women of color, trans women, and people who are gender nonconforming. One participant shared during the interview the importance of making sure that Afro-Latinas and black women are included in this and it reinforces the sentiment I shared. For future research, I would make sure to include these populations, as they are also identifying with this identity and it is critical to include

everyone who is contributing to this identity. One of the ways I ended up not having as diverse of a participant pool as I would have wanted was because I only reached out to people who publicly used Chingona on their social media, which limited my search for participants. In the future, I would not only reach out to those publicly claiming this identity, but those who are publicly discussing or expressing aspects of the Chingonas identity. This would broaden who I interviewed and would give me more access to women who were in the midst of developing their Chingona identity.

In conclusion – being a Chingona is an act of power and resistance. It's an effort to reclaim the power of being Latinx and female and a badass. I hope that others continue this research and write more about our struggles and how we create and use our power. Being able to interview fellow Chingonas was an amazing experience, I was able to experience the vulnerability, strength, resilience, and amazing work done by these Chingonas. Through these Chingonas, I have learned so much and I hope that this research helps others learn just as much and feel empowered.

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