

# Academic Retention: The role of the League of United American Citizens (LULAC) in providing academic support to first generation Latina college students

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# Grand Tour Research Question



How does LULAC support the academic resiliency and retention of Latina students in higher education?

# Research-based domains



How does LULAC provide **social support** for its Latina members?

How does LULAC provide **cultural stability** for its Latina members?

What **financial assistance** does LULAC provide for its Latina members?

What **leadership opportunities** does LULAC provide for its Latina members?

# Participants

- ✧ Latinas who are first generation college students (n=6)
- ✧ Attend a north Texas community college with multiple campuses
- ✧ Member of a LULAC chapter
- ✧ Latinas range in age from 18-23







# Research Design

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- ✧ One observation of a 90-minute LULAC meeting
- ✧ One 90-minute focus group
- ✧ Four 60-minute individual interviews



# Research Methodology

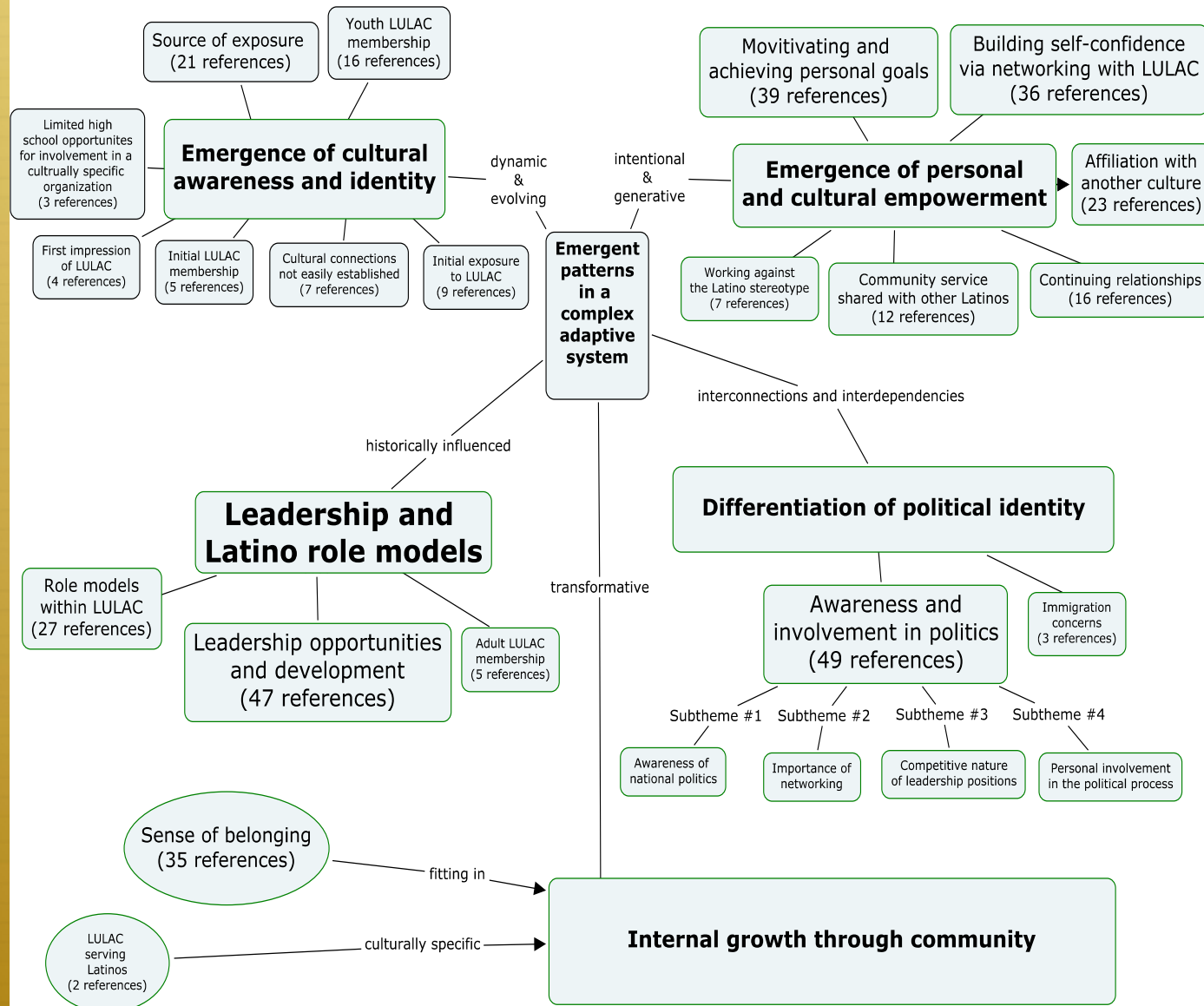
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## ✧ Grounded Theory

Coded using NVivo 9

✧ Complex Adaptive Systems

# The Dialectical Nature of Five Emergent Themes of First Generation College Latinas and Their Involvement in LULAC: How their involvement in LULAC self-organizes into sustainable academic resiliency



# Data Processing & Interpretation

- ✦ Focus group status
- ✦ Individual interview status
- 1) NVivo open coding via free nodes and tree nodes
- 2) Another run of the data via critical research questions on colored index cards



# Confirming research questions



1. What is unique about this group? Why?
2. What are the major lessons learned with these data and this group?
3. What new things did I learn?
4. What in this research can be applied to other settings, populations, and studies?
5. What will those who read and study the findings of this study find most interesting and relevant?
6. Where are the gaps? What are the unanswered questions?

# 10 unique characteristics



1. First-generation college student in her family.
2. Exhibited strong self-efficacy.
3. Spoke of the importance of belonging in the educational environment.
4. Spoke of how they perceived themselves as “fitting in” through LULAC.
5. Strong internal belief of her own ability and internal voice. However, all talked of being “shy and quiet.”
6. Motivated to excel academically despite range of obstacles.
7. Optimistic about making a difference in their own life and in the life of others.
8. Aspired to complete a minimum of a bachelor’s degree. Four of the six indicated they planned to complete post baccalaureate degrees.
9. Interested in politics and the importance of social justice.
10. Indicated her family placed a great value on education.

# Major Lessons Learned



1. Distance from her native culture
2. Struggles of cultural identity in middle and high school
3. LULAC empowers Latinas
4. Peer-to-peer connections with like minded individuals in a culturally specific environment was empowering
5. LULAC involvement provides opportunities that may be less accessible or available in other organizations/communities
6. Constant fluidity of give and take, service to others and service to self
7. Networking strengthens and builds up Latinas perception of self and Latino culture

# Major Lessons Learned



8. Development skills accelerate at a fast pace
9. Transference of leadership skills is likely to occur
10. Latina LULAC leaders seek advice from a larger contingency (e.g., local, state, regional, national, and internationally leaders)
11. Political awareness increases and personal political involvement is highly likely
12. Personal risk-taking and real world problem solving occurs
13. Provides a sense of belonging in a positive Latino community
14. Desire exists to be a role model for others to follow



# Seven New Things Learned



1. This group of Latinas are constantly working against a negative Latino stereotype.
2. This group of Latinas are amazed and in awe of motivated, successful, and driven Latinos.
3. Financial support did not appear to be a significant factor regarding the resiliency of these Latinas.
4. Personal and cultural empowerment exponentially increases with multiple interactions in LULAC.
5. The self-confidence escalates as individuals become more comfortable in the organization, participate in events, and take on leadership roles.
6. The historical role of successful Latinos providing support and serving Latinas is empowering to all involved . These interactions cross generations of Latinos.
7. This group of Latinas clarify and voice their own opinions through participation and leadership in LULAC.

# Research Goals



- ✧ To interpret and analyze the overlapping emergent themes of first generation Latinas involved in a culturally specific organization such as LULAC.
- ✧ To identify the unique circumstances of these Latinas.
- ✧ To synthesize the experiences of the Latinas with a culturally specific organization such as LULAC to share with other Latinas, the broader Latino community, and with individuals from culturally specific backgrounds.
- ✧ To identify future research possibilities.

# Communities Possibly Interested in This Research

1. Colleges and universities
2. LULAC officials and members



3. Culturally specific organizations similar to LULAC
4. College going Latinas and Latinos
5. Parents of Latinas and Latinas

# Unanswered Questions

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1. When Latinas are vocal and voice their opinions, desires, hopes and dreams, **what factors contribute to their willingness to vocalize and demonstrate their own potential and ability levels to a larger audience (outside of their culture)?**
2. What contributes to Latinas and how they quietly communicate in a classroom setting?
3. How are Latinas approached, taught, and coached in educational settings? Is the approach significantly different from other females from other cultures?





# Personal Insights regarding Qualitative Research



Crafting a research question requires **focused thought** regarding research design & methodology, theoretical constructs, philosophy, and acumen regarding the IRB process.

Research is a **perpetual process** requiring deep reflection, tenacity, and adaptability.

Qualitative research is **time intensive** requiring large chunks of time to process the data (e.g., coding and interrogating).

Qualitative research takes time as the you as the researcher are in **continual interaction with the text** (e.g, the words from interviews, focus groups, etc).

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