ASSISTING FIRST GENERATION, LOW-INCOME STUDENTS FROM UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS WITH THEIR TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO A FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTION

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We the undersigned, certify that we read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the lack of guidance and struggles of first-generation, low-income students from underserved populations (FGLISUP). I will use previous research and literature as the groundwork for my research as I explore options that admissions representatives from Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University and Washington State University can use to better serve FGLISUP. This study will use the grounded theory method and the cultural studies theory to better understand this population. This study was conducted using conversational interviews that involved a total of 12 participants, for which six were female and the other six were male. The interviews consisted of six open-ended questions. The participants were encouraged to provide interviewers with as much detail as they wanted to provide regarding their transition and services available to them through the university for guidance during that period of time. The conversational interviews and data were collected for three weeks in accord to fall recruitment scheduling for admissions representatives. The goal of this study was to understand the challenges FGLISUP faced and address them by providing solutions and resources.

Keywords: Transition, First Generation, Low-income, Grounded Theory Method, Cultural Studies Theory
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION
   IMPORTANCE OF STUDY
   STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
   DEFINITION OF TERMS
   ORGANIZATION OF REMAINING CHAPTERS

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE
   CHALLENGES
   PURPOSE OF STUDY

CHAPTER 3: SCOPE OF METHODOLOGY
   THE SCOPE OF THE THESIS
   DATA ANALYSIS
   VALIDITY
   RELIABILITY

CHAPTER 4: THE STUDY
   INTRODUCTION
   RESULTS OF THE STUDY
   DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS
   LIMITATIONS OF THE THESIS
   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH
   CONCLUSION

REFERENCES
APPENDIX

A: Interview Questionnaire

C: Eastern Washington University First time, First-Year Student Enrollment

D: Central Washington University Enrollment Record
Chapter 1: Introduction

Importance of the Study

More first-generation, low-income students from underserved populations (FGLISUP) are attending community colleges and universities as they pursue their academic goals (Putnam & Thompson, 2006). However, this transition creates uncertainty and conflict. Many FGLISUP do not have family members who could provide them with advice and mentoring concerning how the university works (Everett, 2105). These students need resources as they prepare to transition from high school into a university setting. Working in higher education as a regional admissions representative has motivated me to learn more on the issues FGLISUP are facing, especially during the pressing time between high graduation and fall enrollment for the university. It is during these times that most if not all have little to no access to an academic representative for guidance.

Statement of Purpose

This study was conducted in order to understand FGLISUP and the challenges they face especially during the summer time when they have little to no access to resources. The areas of concern or struggle for FGLISUP will be used to understand and improve access to resources by looking closely at the role of an admissions officer and providing insight on how admissions representatives can better serve this population of students.

Definition of Terms

First-Generation refers to a student whose parents had not obtained a postsecondary degree (Everett, 2015, p. 52).

Low-income refers to poverty thresholds by size of family and number of children provided by the United States Census (2015).
Transition refers to “an event or non-event [that] results in a change in assumption about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behavior and relationship,” (Wang, 2014, p. 66).

**Organization of Remaining Chapters**

Chapter 2 focuses on previous research and literature while reviewing data provided from these studies as it pertains to FGLISUP. Grounded theory method by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, and Stuart Hall’s cultural theory are used to support the data and research surrounding the transition of FGLISUP to a four-year institution. Chapter 3 reviews the scope and the methodology of the study and introduces the methods used to conduct the conversational interviews. Chapter 4 showcases the findings from the study, including the specific results and themes from the interviews. Chapter 5 addresses the limitations of this study and makes recommendations for future research pertaining to FGLISUP and learning to better serve them in higher education.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Universities and colleges are noticing a rise in the number of first-generation, low-income students who come from underserved populations (Putnam & Thompson, 2006, p. 121). Many researchers have developed synonymous definitions for what constitutes first-generation students; however, for this particular study we will use the definition from Hsiao and Mitchell. They defined first-generation students as the first in their families to attend college (Petty, 2014, p. 257).

“The Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 is largely responsible for this significant increase in the amount of first-generation college students currently enrolled in higher education. The goal of the HEA was to expand opportunities for postsecondary education to low-income, first-generation, and minority students” (Tate, 2013, p. 79).

As the number of first-generation, low-income students from underserved populations (FGLISUP) increases, researchers have conducted various studies to learn how to better serve and understand this population. Throughout the studies, researchers have learned more about their demographics, challenges, both academic and personal, as well as their motivation for pursuing a degree, but little research has focused on the transition itself from high school to a university.

Review of literature

Studies show that many FGLISUP are “more likely to be older, married, have children, employed, attend college less than full time, and are less involved in college activities,” (Petty, 2014, p. 258). Many FGLISUP also “bear the unfortunate title of low-income due to the fact that their parents are not college graduates and their earning potential is minimal,” (Petty, 2014, p. 258). And about 18% of the FGLISUP population speaks a language other than English, with
foreign-born individuals representing 11% of that population (Census 2000 Brief, 2003, Burroughs, 2008, p. 290). As the number of FGLISUP increases so are the efforts of numerous colleges and universities to “identify, recruit, retain, graduate and track the professional success of students who are the first in their families to attend college,” (Tucker, 2014, p. 24). However, there are many challenges that these FGLISUP experience as they pursue their education and degree.

Challenges

**Remedial Courses.** FGLISUP are “more likely to arrive academically unprepared for the rigors of college and to require remediation before they can start earning college credit,” (Mangan, 2015, p. 3). They also have lower SAT scores compared to those students whose parents had some college experience (Orbe & Groscurth, 2004, p. 41). Also, Riehl (1994) and others (Prospero, 2007) suggested FGLISUP were more likely to doubt their academic abilities (Woosley & Shepler, 2011, p. 703). Because of placement into these remedial courses and lower test scores, many FGLISUP are also being turned down from attending directing to a university.

**Process of Selection.** Universities ‘attempt to provide a rational means of selecting persons in order that the most able and motivated persons are sorted into the highest status position,’ (Jury, Smeding & Darnon, 2015, p. 2). This in return makes it harder for FGLISUP to receive admission into the universities they are applying to. “It seems that the function of selection consistently acts in favor of high social-class students and at the disadvantage of low social-class students,” (Jury, Smeding & Darnon, 2015, p. 2). Due to this, community colleges have become the institutions of choice for many individuals’ primarily first-generation students. “The open admissions policy of the American community college has provided access for various types of nontraditional students, many of whom might not attend college otherwise.
However, this policy has resulted in lower retention and transfer rates than those of four-year counterparts,” (Everett, 2015, p. 55).

Retention. “With 60% of high school students arriving at community colleges needing at least one developmental course, the problems related to retention and student success clearly begin before they enroll in college courses (Everett, 2015). Numerous studies have also suggested that first-generations college students are at higher risk of dropping out of college than their non-first generation counterparts and are also less likely to persist and less likely to graduate (Woosley & Shepler, 2011).

Also, a longitudinal study from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that “among the 12th graders who enrolled in postsecondary education, 46% had obtained a Bachelor’s degree or higher within eight years, but only 24% of first-generation students completed a Bachelor’s degree or higher within eight years,” (Woosley & Shepler, 2011, p. 701).

First-generation. As FGLISUP they are challenged with “straddling two cultures and must come to grips with the fact that they are breaking rather than continuing family traditions by being the first in their family to attend college,” (Tate, 203, p. 83). Moreover, one major challenge that FGLISUP encounter is the ability to function and thrive in two opposite worlds (Petty, 2014, p. 258).

Many of FGLISUP are influenced by a family member to pursue or not pursue their education. FGLISUP deal with their family’s opinions on whether or not to go to college as well as if they should work to support the family. Many participants follow their family’s advice; others challenge it (Gibbons & Woodside, 2014). Given the cultural focus on family and attending to others, going to college to pursue one’s own path may be fraught with more conflict for first-generation and ethnic minority students because of clashing cultural norms and values.
(Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). “Roots, family identity, community identity, and lifelong friends are part of the dialectal pull these students face. Culture shock forces them into isolation,” (Lowery & Pacheco, 2011, p. 59).

_Low-income._ “The majority of first-generation college students are from low socio-economic backgrounds. For instance, 50% of high school graduates in 2008 came from households making less than $50,000 per year, and 16% came from households making less than $20,000 a year,” (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014, p. 45). In other words, these FGLISUP lack social capital related to being successful in higher education because they are not able to acquire that knowledge from their parents (Soria & Stebleton, 2012). Also, many of these FGLISUP lack the financial resources to pay for their education so many are forced to work longer hours at their jobs (Mangan, 2015) in order to afford tuition and living costs.

In spite of these challenges many FGLISUP are choosing to go to colleges and universities in hopes of fulfilling the goals and dreams that their parents did not have the chance to attain (Gordon, 2002). Indeed, many FGLISUP are often guided by interdependent reasons for attending college such as giving back to their community or being a role model for their family (Stephens, Townsend, Markus & Phillips, 2012). Some parents also “told their children that it was their responsibility to show others that they could succeed despite the obstacles their family went through,” (Wang, 2014, p. 280).

Researchers suggest that as more FGLISUP make the decision to enroll into higher education they are increasingly realizing that they are at a disadvantage when it comes to preparing for, paying for and participating in college, “but with this realization, they are becoming more knowledgeable of the personal, social, and academic abilities needed to succeed in college,” (Olive, 2008, p. 379).
Purpose of Study

Based on the review of literature and research findings, FGLISUP may perceive “their skills and abilities as less developed than other students, are less successful academically in their first semester of college, have lower degree aspirations and lower first-year retention rates than their peers and have lower self-esteem,” (Putman & Thompson, 2006, p. 124). These are some of the many reasons that FGLISUP opt to “delay college attendance, start their postsecondary education at a two-year institution, and attend college part-time or sporadically,” (Green, 2006, p. 22).

Since many FGLISUP lack the resources, skills, and knowledge needed for applying and making a decision on a university, we need to focus on what we can do as admissions representatives to facilitate the transition. As admissions representatives, we should never underestimate what a brave and intimidating leap FGLISUP are taking when choosing to attend a university. “Helping them succeed is a fundamental responsibility, and requires as much dedication and planning on our part as students are pledging on theirs,” (Sancore & Palumbo, 2015, p. 5). “These young people have much to contribute both to their universities and colleges and to their society. It is important that ways be found to enable them to do so,” (Young, 1970, p. 24).

We can enable them by assisting them with the transition that takes place in between summer of their high school graduation and the start of their fall enrollment as a university student. Transition is referred to as “an event or non-event [that] results in a change in assumption about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behavior and relationship,” (Wang, 2014, p. 66). Using that definition for the purpose of our
study, going away to a university is often the first step for FGLISUP to achieve a higher social class. However, this transition to a university “creates uncertainty and conflict because it highlights economic and cultural discrepancies between the working-class home environment and the middle-class university environment,” (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015, p. 420).

FGLISUP “remarked that the transition from high school to college was a more significant role change for them than continuing-generation students because their parents lacked previous experience with a similar transition,” (Wang, 2014, p. 77). This transition is complicated by “a highly interrelated, web-like series of family, interpersonal, academic, and organization pulls and pushes,” (Wang, 2012, p. 337).

If we all continue to perceive of FGLISUP as that they are at-risk and are likely to fail, then we are not prepared to help them (Hao, 2011). “We need to be willing to involve ourselves in the places where success gets defined for young people, like k-12 schooling, churches, clubs, jobs, and the many other places where young people form their attitudes about success,” (McCurrie, 2009, p. 47).

We will use the grounded theory method of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss to find an overlapping theme throughout this study as I point out the main concerns or challenges of FGLISUP based on the information provided from this study, (Scott, 2009). Once I learn more about their concerns and struggles, I will be able focus on finding alternatives or solutions that admissions representatives can use to better serve FGLISUP. I will also be using the cultural studies theory of Stuart Hall to better understand this population, as we look deeper into their resources and communities. Cultural studies uses dominant ideologies defined by Hall as “the mental frameworks---the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the representation---which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of,
define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works,” (Griffin, 2012, p. 344). By learning more about how these ideologies affect FGLISUP we can change the discourse we use and aim to provide them with the necessary resources needed to make their transition as seamless as possible while setting them up for success. “Choosing success in how we understand and support first-generation students can yield truly transformative outcomes. It restructures our perspectives such that success is no longer the exception to the supposed rule, but rather the expectation,” (Macias, 2013, p. 20). The purpose of using this theory “is to empower people who live on the margins of society, people who have little to day in the direction of their lives and who are scrambling to survive,” (Griffen, 2012, p. 345).
CHAPTER THREE: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Scope

For this study we are including a total of 12 interviewees. The interviewees will be first-generation, low-income students from underserved populations (FGLISUP). 6 of which will be freshman females from the participating universities and the other 6 will be freshman males. This study will provide a narrow breadth of work due to the size of the study sample. It will be specific to the Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla and Whitman counties. This study can be replicated for other counties.

Significance

The purpose of this study is to learn more about this population of students before we can focus on ways to better serve them and their needs taking into account their resources (access to computers, access to internet, location, etc.). Using Grounded theory by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, I will use a theory grounded on the data provided from this study to acknowledge the repeating concern or theme of these FGLISUP as I explore options to resolve their concerns, (Scott, 2009). It will also help us understand the dominant ideologies surrounding FGLISUP using the cultural studies theory of Stuart Hall. This in return will help us change the discourse we use as we aim to better serve FGLISUP. This study will also help us understand this group of students, as they prepare to transition from high school and hopefully later on help with retention at the university as well. This study will mainly focus on FGLISFUP from the following Washington counties: Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla and Whitman.

Research Questions
RQ 1: Does the role of an admissions representative need to transform itself to include being an academic support for these students during and after their transition from high school into a four-year institution?

RQ 2: Taking into account the limited resources (access to computers, location, internet speed, etc), How can admissions representatives serve as a resource for FGLISUP and prepare them with the necessary knowledge and skills to pursue their academic goals?

**Methodology**

This study is designed to use conversational interviews and data reports from the universities that mainly serve these counties: Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University, and Washington State University. This study will compare and connect any variables that may come up that can benefit FGLISUP transition from high school as well as give admissions representatives a deeper understanding of this population.

**Data Gathering**

**Participants.**

**Interviewers.** Interviewers consist of three members of the admissions department from the following four-year institutions: Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University and Washington State University. The interviewers will be provided with an explanation of the study and a set of questions that they will be using for the interviews they will be conducting. The interview questions provided to the interviewer can be found under the instrument section.

**Interviewees.** The interviewees will be four randomly selected incoming freshman from each of the following four-year institutions: Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University and Washington State University. They must meet the following criteria of (1) first-
generation meaning neither one of their parents attended a college or university, (2) Low-income background according to the United States Census Bureau poverty threshold, and (3) attended a high school within the Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla or Whitman counties. Two male and two females in their first quarter/semester will be randomly selected in order to provide a well-rounded understanding of their experience as they transitioned from high school to a four-year institution. Each of the interviewees will be informed about the purpose of the study and asked specific questions in a conversational interview.

**Informed Consent**

**Director of Admissions.** Permission to conduct the study will be obtained from each Director of Admissions from the participant institutions as well as permission to work with one of their admissions representatives from the partnering institutions. They will be provided a complete explanation of the study and its purpose. If they agree to allow their admissions representative to participate, they will be approached and asked to participate as an interviewer.

**Interviewers.** Once an interviewer has agreed to participate in this study, they will be asked to run a report of incoming freshman meeting the study criteria and randomly select two male and two female students from that report. They will be provided with the questions for the study and given the opportunity to not participate in this study at that time. If they agree to participate after all the information has been provided to them, they will be given a copy of the results if they desire at the end of the study.

**Interviewees.** Interviewees will be approached and asked to participate in the study in order to better understand their transition from high school into a four-year institution. Interviewees will be assured that their responses to the study will be used for this study only. Those who agree to participate will be asked to sign an informed consent form.


**Instruments**

**Incoming Freshman Admissions Report.** The report will measure how many freshman are first generation, low-income students.

**Study Questions.** Each interviewer will be given the following set of questions to ask the interviewees:

1. Did you receive a high school visit from Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University or Washington State University?

2. What support did you receive from any of the admission representatives from these universities as you made your transition?

3. What kind of support would you have liked to receive from the admissions representatives?

4. Who helped you figure out the deadlines and registration dates during the summer before your transition to the university?

5. What kind of services were available during the summer after your high school graduation? (i.e. access to a counselor/advisor).

6. What did you struggle with the most during the transition from your high school graduation going into your freshman year the university?

**Sample.** Data gathering will continue until 12 conversational interviews have been completed, four from each participant four-year institution.

**Data Analysis**

The data provided from these conversational interviews will be analyzed by looking for repeating themes in responses based on the findings from the interviews. Once those themes are
apparent we will look for the dominant ideologies among these FGLISUP as well as those ideologies surrounding them in their universities.

We will then interpret these findings using cultural studies theory to better understand FGLISUP and how we can help them with a seamless transition especially during the pressing time between summer of high school graduation and fall of enrollment as university students.

Validity

Based on the responses from the interviews, we will measure what services worked for these FGLISUP during the transition, what did not and what could have been done to help with the transition.

The measurements from these responses should provide an insight into what is working and what needs to be improved on since that period of time is when they have the least amount of access to teachers and counselors due to it being the summer after their graduation. It should also help admissions representatives create programs or visits for future assistance to FGLISUP.

Reliability

This study can be repeated in other states, and universities to understand the FGLISUP in their areas. If followed directly, others should be able to get similar or closely related responses. Due to the small study sample it will only provide a narrow understanding of that population within the counties studied. It is recommended for future research to increase the sample size to understand the FGLISUP in a broader sense as they yield more responses that can be used to better understand how we can better serve them by helping them with a seamless as possible transition from high school to a university.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE STUDY

Introduction

Conversational interviews were conducted with a total of 12 FGLISUP currently attending Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University or Washington State University. These three universities admit many FGLISUP from the Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla and Whitman counties. For the school year 2016-2017, Eastern Washington University announced they admitted 1,697 first-time first-year students. Out of those students 48.4% were first generation students. From those 48.4%, 23.3% were considered Pell Grant eligible, which is “generally associated with low income status,” (EWU, 2016). Central Washington University announced they admitted 1,908 first-year students. 92% of these students are from Washington, (CWU, 2016). And Washington State University announced they admitted 3,991 incoming freshman for Fall 2016 and out of those admitted 36% were considered first generation students and 65% were from these counties.

We asked 12 students, 4 from each university, if they would be interested in participating in this study. Each Student participated in a conversational interview that included six questions.

Results of the Study

The study revealed guidance to be the main theme throughout the interviews whether it was present or missing from the university, being provided by friends and family, or learning to be resourceful on their own.

Out of those interviewed, 67% said they received a university visit at the high school and 33% said they did not. 67% said they did not receive any guidance from an admissions representative while the other 33% said they did.
67% of these students also reported that they did not receive guidance from the university when transitioning, while 42% of those who did not receive university guidance reported that they relied on family and friends for information. Participant 7 mentioned, “My older brother helped me. He was already attending the university.” While the other 25% found information on their own.

Chart A: Students Who Received University Guidance During High School

Chart B: Source of Guidance From Those Who Did Not Have University Guidance
After asking about the source of their support, 83% reported that they would have liked to receive more guidance from the university throughout the transition.

When asked about summer services that helped with the transition, 75% said there were no summer services to help with their transition. Participant 1 mentioned, “I had many friends already attending the school so they were the ones helping me navigate it and figure out what I needed to do to make sure I was applying and turning in my information before the deadlines.”

While the other 25% reported they received services during the summer from their university. These students mentioned the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) from their university, followed up with them during the summer as they transitioned to the university making sure they were signing up for orientation, registration and meeting up with their academic advisors. Participant 4 mentioned,

“CAMP helped me with that since the very beginning. I didn’t even know about CAMP until I got a call from them telling me to apply. From that point on they emailed me for orientation and kept me up to date on registration dates.”
As these students transitioned, 58% reported that they struggled adjusting to the university during the transition, while 25% struggled with deadlines before and during the transition. The other 17% reported that they struggled with leaving their families behind.

Chart D: Struggled with During the Transition
In response to RQ 1, I identified the need to transform the role of an admissions representative due to the responses of these students. There is a high number of FGLISUP who are not receiving the proper guidance beginning with their senior year of high school going into the start of their freshman year at these universities. Only 33% were able to receive the necessary help and guidance needed for a smooth transition from high school to a university.

In order for these universities to be serious about student retention, the universities should recognize the origin of the challenges these students face, (Petty, 2014). Currently, FGLISUP are lacking the guidance, as the charts reflect, needed to get into a university with a seamless transition as possible. FGLISUP have to rely more on people who they know are currently attending these universities such as friends and family instead of having a direct contact at the university. Admissions representatives need to acknowledge these challenges and search for innovative solutions that will help close that disconnect during the pressing time between summer and fall of enrollment as university students.
In response to RQ 2 and taking into account the challenges that most these FGLISUP experience, admissions representative can better serve as a resource by becoming more accessible during the summer transition. This would give FGLISUP the opportunity to have access to the knowledge needed to pursue their academic goals. This could be done through coffee visits with students or organizing events, for example, for students to attend during that summer in their home towns so they can learn more about what their transition will look like and what they need to have completed before the transition. Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University, and Washington State University currently have regional admissions representatives for these schools that could easily work with these students, as I am one of these regionals. The fact that we live in or close by to these counties makes it more accessible for us to provide such services for this population of students. Wang mentioned, “students’ success in responding to transition depends on the resources they have at their disposal, specifically how adequate these resources are in helping them manage the challenges that are embedded in the transition,” (2014, p. 281). So it is up to admissions representatives, especially regionals, to provide these resources for FGLISUP as they transition into these three universities.

Discussion

In summary, this study allowed me to identify the need for guidance between high school graduation and fall enrollment for FGLISUP. FGLISUP, from the Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla and Whitman counties, discussed the lack of guidance and their struggles as they transitioned as university students at Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University or Washington State University. Though some were fortunate to be in CAMP and had the guidance needed, the majority lacked it.
The majority of FGLISUP are trying to figure out how to transition from high school to a four-year institution with little or no help. By applying the Cultural Studies theory of Stuart Hall and Grounded theory, we can see how these FGLISUP are trying to make sense of their transition as they try to figure out the university demands and environment. The ideology of these FGLISUP as they pursue their goals in higher education does not just revolve on the lack of resources that they have had during the transition but also on the struggles they have experienced. The transition to one of these three universities has been a tough one where many have had to rely on current university students or sought out information on their own. Very few have experienced a seamless transition based on the facts grounded from this theory. These beliefs and experiences need to change especially for those students whose parents and friends have no experience with higher education. As admissions representatives we need to more effective ways to change the discourse we have been using and aim to provide FGLISUP with the necessary resources needed to make their transition as seamless as possible while setting them up for success as they pursue their goals.

FGLISUP are clearly in need and are scrambling to get guidance. Acknowledging the limitations that FGLISUP face is the first step in changing the discourse and ideology. Then, we, as admissions representatives need to figure out what are we going to do about it? We need to set up a plan revolving around the summer before this important and life-changing transition. Once we have a plan, we need to act on it and get in contact with these FGLISUP so we can assist them by providing them with resources. As soon as these services are provided, we will hopefully see a decrease in the struggles reported by FGLISUP with adjusting to the university and keeping up with university deadlines. This would in return help us accomplish our goal of providing our FGLISUP with a seamless transition as possible.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Limitations

My attempt for this study was to produce outstanding research that would make significant contributions to the study of FGLISUP in higher education; however, limitations were inevitable. One limitation of this research was the time period of my research. The study was conducted at the same time as fall recruitment for admissions representatives for Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University, and Washington State University. What that means is that most, if not all, admissions representatives are out on the road recruiting for weeks at a time. This made it extremely difficult to get a hold of the admissions representatives I was hoping to collaborate with and help with the interview process. Being that I am also one of these admissions representatives, it complicated things a little more. Admissions representatives gave me a list of names and numbers to contact for interviews that they were unable to conduct due to recruitment.

Another limitation was the lack of information on how many of the incoming freshman class belonged to the counties of my study due to the fact that everyone was out of their office for recruitment. I ended up researching the enrollment reports in order to get them in a timely manner due to our admissions recruitment schedules. I was able to find county information for Eastern Washington University and Washington State University but not for Central Washington University.

Another limitation was the small sample size. This study only captures the experiences and ideologies of a very specific and small group of FGLISUP. As such, further research is necessary in order to continue learning more about different approaches that admissions representatives could use to better serve FGLISUP.
Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study reflect the need of future research. Future research is necessary in order to continue examining diverse voices of FGLISUP with a larger sample size. The larger the sample size the greater the understanding of the challenges they are currently experiencing as they transition from high school. Future research could also look into the possibility of expanding the length of the study to include the beginning of FGLISUP senior year and follow them through the fall enrollment at the university. This would provide us with information on how we, as admissions representatives, can better serve FGLISUP starting with the application process through enrollment. Additionally, this research could extend to students attending a variety of universities. Hopefully, the results of future research will yield information that will allow admissions representatives to impact the lives of even the poorest students in class to pursue their goals in higher education regardless of their demographic and income.

Conclusion

It is vital to point out that the purpose of using Cultural Theory “is to empower people who live on the margins of society, people who have little today in the direction of their lives and who are scrambling to survive,” (Griffen, 2012, p. 345). While the purpose of Grounded Theory is to find how a concern can be resolved or processed, (Scott, 2009). These two theories acknowledge that there are issues beyond our capacity to gain complete understanding of the phenomenon of FGLISUP. As admissions representatives, it is our duty to provide as many resources as possible to help all our students, especially FGLISUP, transition from high school to fall of their university enrollment. So the more we learn about FGLISUP and their challenges, the better we can serve them. And even though we do not have a complete understanding and
faced limitations within this study, I feel this research has given voice to the current freshman population of FGLISUP, thereby laying the groundwork for future research endeavors.
Resources

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Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire

**Questions for First Generation Students**

*This study is intended to understand your transition from high school to a four-year institution especially during the summer of the transition. The results will hopefully help admissions representatives better understand your experience and us it better serve this population of students during this transition.*

1. Did you receive a high school visit from Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University or Washington State University?

2. What support did you receive from any of the admission representatives from these universities as you made your transition?

3. What kind of support would you have liked to receive from the admissions representatives?

4. Who helped you figure out deadlines and registration dates during the summer before your transition to the university?

5. What kind of services were available for you during the summer after your high school graduation? Who provided these services? (i.e. advising, access to a counselor, etc.)

6. What did you struggle with the most during that transition from your high school graduation to your freshman year at the university?
Appendix B: Eastern Washington University Undergraduate Percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All Pell</th>
<th>All First Gen</th>
<th>All UnderRep</th>
<th>All Pell + First Gen</th>
<th>All Pell + UnderRep</th>
<th>All UnderRep + First Gen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2010</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
Underrepresented race includes all except white, unknown and non-resident foreign students.
First generation status is self-reported by students and is defined as neither parent earning a 4-year degree.
Pell data reflect Pell grants received, which is generally associated with low family income status. Not all students who are eligible for Pell accept or receive Pell grants.
Running Start and English Language Institute students not included in undergraduate counts.
Data source: CEN224
Appendix C: Eastern Washington University First time, First-Year Student Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2016</th>
<th>Fall 2015</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-Time</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>848</td>
<td>859</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part-Time</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,697</td>
<td>1,711</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>1,486</td>
<td>1,572</td>
<td>1,512</td>
<td>1,545</td>
<td>1,469</td>
<td>1,509</td>
<td>1,335</td>
<td>1,451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Common Data Set
Central Washington University is reporting a 15 percent increase in first-year fall enrollment, setting a new all-time record.

The new mark comes on the heels of a record 21 percent increase in first-year students last year. This year, 1,908 first-year students are enrolled, up from 1,654 last fall.

Overall, a total of 10,559 state-funded undergraduates are taking CWU classes during the 2016-17 academic year.

“We believe the strong growth is due to the appeal of small classes, excellence in teaching, and Central’s commitment to creating a welcoming campus climate for people from all walks of life,” noted Sharon O’Hare, CWU vice president of enrollment management.

Fall enrollment also marked a record for students of color, who comprised 33.8 percent of the first-year class. Hispanic students are the largest single ethnic group at 17 percent. Growth among first-year Hispanic students has increased by 161 percent since 2009, while overall Hispanic student enrollment is up 16 percent during that same time period.

“It’s especially exciting to see the continued growth in students of color choosing CWU,” said O’Hare. “A commitment to opening the doors of higher education to all students will always be part of Central’s DNA.”
CWU sets first-year enrollment record
Published on Central Washington University
(http://www.cwu.edu)

CWU also enrolled a higher number of women than ever this fall—6,195, or about 52 percent of the student body. Among freshman, 160 more women are enrolled at CWU this fall than a year ago.

For 2016, about 92 percent of first-year students are from Washington. More than 72 percent are western Washington residents; including nearly as many from King County as from all central and eastern Washington counties combined.

O'Hare said CWU’s growing reputation for value has been fueled by recognition of The Economist and Forbes. CWU also has garnered recognition by several organizations recently for inclusiveness.

Last month, CWU was recognized as one of just 14 schools as a “national role model” for its commitment to diversity by Minority Access, Inc. For the last two years, Central has also earned the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award from INSIGHT Into Diversity.

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Source URL: http://www.cwu.edu/cwu-sets-first-year-enrollment-record