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What About the "Others"? Addressing Class-Based Microaggressions and Supporting FGLI Students at Penn

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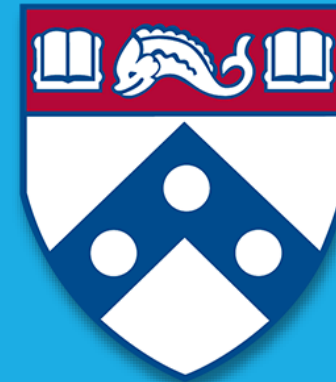
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What About The “Others”?
Addressing Class-Based Microaggression and Supporting
FGLI Students at Penn.

Hatef Alavi
February 13, 2020



Who Are FGLI students?

(Gibbons and Woodside, 2014; Hicks, 2003; Prospero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007)

- **Variation in definitions**
 - Any student...
 - Who is first in the family to attend a higher education institution
 - Who is first in the family to complete a baccalaureate degree in the U.S.
 - Whose parent has attended a higher education institution, but has not completed a four-year degree
 - Whose parent has received a four-year degree from another country
 - Who may be unfamiliar with knowledge on the culture of higher education and/or ways to navigate the culture

Statistical Overview

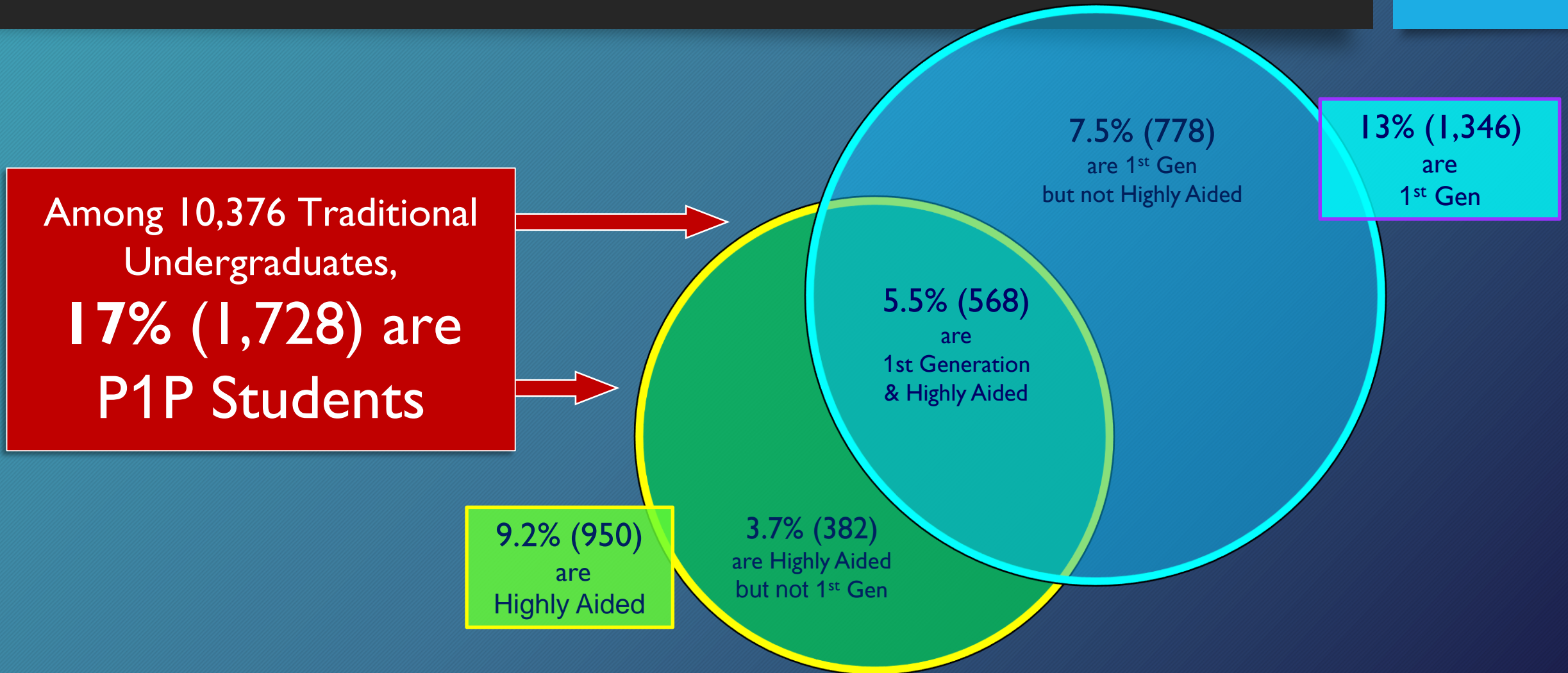
(Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Hebert, 2018; Schwartz, Kanchewa, Rhodes, Howdy, Stark, Horn, Parness, & Spencer, 2018)

- Between 1993-2000, 22% of total college population identified as first-gen.
- Between 1992-2000, 43% of first-gen students left college without a degree.
- In 2018, 50% of all college students identified as first-gen, and nearly 34% of first-gen students attended a four-year institution.
- 71% of first-gen students are likely to withdraw from college during their first year compared to their non first-gen counterparts.
- 48% of first-gen students are on track to graduate in 4-years compared to 66% of non first-gen students.
- First-gen students are less likely to have a mentor, and first-gen minorities are far less likely to identify a professor as a mentor.

Characteristics of FGLI Students

- Most FGLI students feel pressure to succeed
- Most FGLI students lack familiarity with higher education system
- Most FGLI students have family and job responsibility that competes with academics
- Most FGLI students experience financial barriers
- Most FGLI students come from a different racial/ethnic backgrounds
- Most FGLI students are proud of their identity(s)
- Most FGLI students have a great and admirable work ethic
- Most FGLI students resilient, opportunistic, humble, and selfless
- Most FGLI students are goal oriented, motivated, and independent
- Supporting FGLI Students

Demographics - UPenn



Office of Penn First Plus



- Promote practices that center inclusive pedagogy and holistic advising
- Invite/encourage review of policies and procedures that tax students' bandwidth
- Streamline communications to FGLI students
- Expand access to impactful programming and resources
- Promote more diverse narratives re: what it means to be "successful" at Penn
- Reduce financial barriers to all aspects of the Penn experience

P1P Ambassador Training

- ***Goal/Purpose***

- To enhance knowledge and create awareness around topics that have great impact on FGLI students, their college transition, academic success, and sense of belonging

- ***The planning committee***

- School of Nursing, School of Arts and Sciences, School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Wharton, SRFS, GIC, & P1P Graduate Student

- ***Topics***

- First-Generation and/or Lower Income Students (FGLI)
- **Class-Based Microaggressions**
- College Mentoring
- Holistic Academic Advising
- Strength and Growth-Mindset

Definitions

- **Social class** —

- *A term that defines socioeconomic status or a dimension of the self that is rooted in objective material resources such as income, education, or occupational prestige* (Cattaneo, Yi Chan, Shor, Gebhard, & Elshabassi, 2019; Langhout, Drake, & Rosselli, 2009).

- **Classism** —

- *“Discrimination based on social class, where people with less social class status are treated in ways that serve to exclude, devalue, discount, and separate them based on that status”* (Langhout et al., 2009, p. 167).

- **Microaggression**

- *“Everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate group membership”* (Gary, Johnson, Kish-Gephart, & Tilton, 2018, p. 39).
- *Incidents of discrimination that individuals from marginalized or underserved groups (low income people, people of color, women, members of LGBTQIA+, undocumented people, etc.) experience on college campuses as they relate to students’ social class identities* (Locke & Trolan, 2018).

Types of Microaggressions

(Locke & Trolan, 2018; Gray, Johnson, Kish-Gephart, & Tilton, 2018)

Microinsults

- Unconscious verbal/nonverbal interactions, remarks, or environmental cues that convey rudeness, insensitivity, and insults that degrade a person's heritage, identity, or ability
- EX: Asking a colleague of color how he/she got his/her job.

Microassaults

- Consciously perpetrated behaviors that discriminate through obvious or hidden expression.
- EX: Name calling, invoking images of the marginalized as lazy, stupid, and illiterate, groping a co-worker/colleague and laughing it off as a joke.

Microinvalidations

- Comments or behaviors that dismiss or nullify thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and experiences of a person/group
- EX: Colorblindness (failing to admit class or racial differences exist).

Three Types of Microaggressions

Class-Based Microaggressions

(Locke & Trolan, 2018)

- Exposes and reinforces the status quo
- Creates norms and values for middle and upper-income students, but diminishes it for lower-income students (*Ex: College Access*)
 - These biases, norms, and costumes create policies and practices that include some while “othering” the marginalized student population
- Class-based microaggressions impact on students
 - Not good enough to be in college
 - Poor academic performance
 - Hard time adjusting to their social environment
 - Lack of sense of belonging and community
 - Mental and emotional distress
 - Higher attrition rate

5 Class-based microaggressions

(Fleenor, 2016)

The Silencer

The “Me too”

The Gaslight

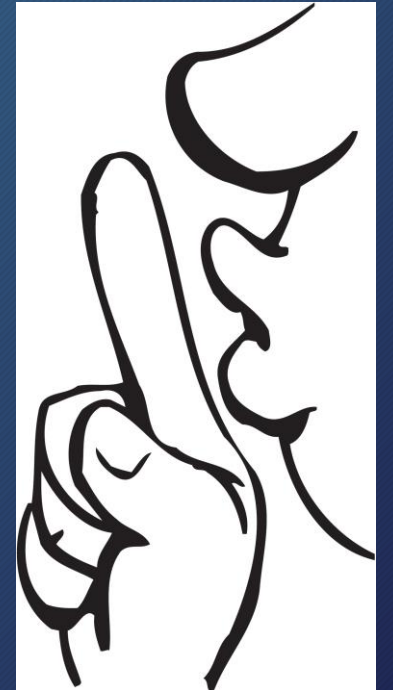
The
“Helpful”
Correction

The Pity
Party

The Silencer

(Fleenor, 2016)

- Disrupts the conversation, re-centers it on the person with privilege, and communicates it to the person from the lower class “we don’t want to hear it.”
- Advice
 - LISTEN to the person who is willing to share a vulnerable moment with you.



The “Me too”er

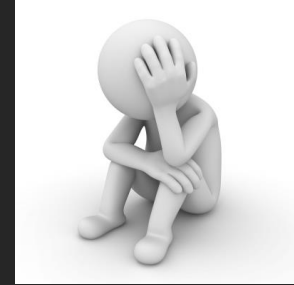
(Fleenor, 2016)

- When you have found someone who gets it through storytelling, but then you realize they do not get you at all.
- Advice
 - If you cannot relate, do not try to relate. Accept that you cannot relate to everything or everyone’s experiences. Instead feel appreciated that someone is sharing their story with you.



The Gaslighter

(Fleenor, 2016)



- The process whereby a person, usually a woman, is made to feel that she is “crazy” for thinking something is wrong.
- Disproving someone’s experience and/or changing the conversation to focus on how the gaslighter is the one who is “hurt” by the other person’s comments.
- Advice
 - Don’t make others feel like their experiences are invalid. You don’t have to see it, believe it, or approve it for an experience to be true.

The “Helpful Correction”

(Fleenor, 2016)

WRONG!

- “Super helpful”
- Correcting one’s grammar, accent, or syntax.

- Advice
 - Correcting grammar is not always the answer, especially if you are correcting someone publicly.
 - Intent vs. Impact

The Pity Party

(Fleenor, 2016)

- Feeling bad for someone or offering to pay for something when someone says they can't afford it.
- Advice
 - If you ask someone to join and they say they can't afford the flight, you offer to pay for it, and they decline, then it's time to back off. They are okay with who they are and how much money they have. Please don't make them feel guilty for prioritizing how they spend it.

The Impact of Class-Based Microaggressions on FGLI Students

(Covarrubias, Romero, Trivelli, 2015 Langhout et al., 2009)

- You are different than us
- lack of sense of belonging and intelligence
- Work more hours and study less to financially support themselves and their families
- Higher stress level and anxiety
- Experience survivor's guilt
- Experience family achievement guilt
- Makes students feel unworthy and devalued
- Have lower campus engagement
- Feel marginalized, invalidated, devalued, alienated, and intimidated
- Achieve lower grades
- Have lower retention and graduation rates

Addressing Class-Based Microaggressions

(Locke & Trolan, 2018)

- **Self-examination and recognition of our own prejudice**
 - Be aware of your own values, biases, and assumptions
 - Be reflexive on assumptions and biases about students from low-SES backgrounds
- **Educating students about microaggressions**
 - Impact of microaggressions on their overall well-being and academic performance
 - Advocacy and allyship
- **Examining the campus climate**
 - Conduct a SWOT analysis on your departmental policies and practices for microaggressions and how it could be negatively influencing experiences of all students, particularly FGLI students
 - Identify best and inclusive practices that can improve the experiences of FGLI students

Addressing Class-Based Microaggressions

(Locke & Trolan, 2018)

- **Countering class-based microaggressions with microprogressions**
 - Microprogressions refer to small and common acts or experiences that serve to challenge and to eliminate biases, stereotypes, and discrimination through advocacy and support
 - EX: Increasing social capital and educating FGLI students and their families on navigating the college environment
 - Being inclusive with policies and guidelines that impact FGLI students' overall success
- **Acknowledging your privilege that impact it has on students who are less privileged**
 - Intent VS. Impact
 - The language that is being used
 - Framing of your message from an asset based

Access and Retention

Application

Logged on
spreadsheet

Review

VPUL invites student
to meet (0-5 days)

SFS simultaneously
reviews package,
updates spreadsheet

Meeting

Most students
who comply meet
within 5 days

40-60 minutes

Discussion

Explain
SIS, grant purpose,
Options
Other funding
sources

Big picture
conversation

Referral

Most students
recommended to
connect with SFS, if not
already

Decision

Committee meets
weekly to discuss
each application

Determine if
student is eligible
for P1P or Alumni
Groups funding

Resolution

Student receives
VPUL grant (via
SFS) or laptop,
letter

Student referred to SFS/
other funding sources;

Student needs additional
meetings/financial literacy/
budgeting assistance



EMERGENCY AND OPPORTUNITY FUND

Aug 2019- Dec 2019, 135 STUDENT APPLICATIONS



100 TRADITIONAL UNDERGRADUATES

33 GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

2 LPS UNDERGRADUATES



22% INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

TYPES OF REQUESTS

Professional development or extracurricular activity: 37

Laptops: 29

General needs/living expenses:

24 Medical/health: 19

Clothing: 16

Funding to travel to family/home:

12 School supplies or books: 6

Additional fees on student's bill: 5

Funds for summer programs, study abroad, or internship: 4

Academic advancement: 4

Group Discussion

- What advice would you give to a student who is experiencing microaggressions?
- What are some ways that you may have addressed class-based microaggressions or microaggressions in general?
- What are your own implicit biases toward first-generation lower income students? What actions will you take/have you taken to address your biases?
- **Students: How would you address someone with microaggressive behavior? What would be some of your reservations behind addressing this issue with a faculty/staff?**

Thank
you

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