

Class Confessions: Analyzing the Voices of First-Generation Low-Income (FLI) College Students

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Introduction

“I’ll say I’m busy when *my friends* go out so I don’t feel *pressured to pay* for anything”

—Stanford Class Confessions, “#280

"It was until last week that I found out what a ‘safety net’ or a ‘trust fund’ are. No wonder, my family has never had them. Perhaps, *I am my family's safety net.*"

—Stanford Class Confessions, “#243

“I always had a *dream of getting into Stanford* [...] It’s my attitude and personality that changes the final results”

—Stanford Class Confessions, “#146

“As a first-generation college student, I feel *sadness* and *happiness*”

—Stanford Class Confessions, “#22

These anonymous posts are from the First-Generation Low-Income Partnership’s (FLIP) Facebook page, “Stanford Class Confessions.” Through this platform, students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds have the opportunity to express their true feelings and grievances about themselves, Stanford University, and/or anyone associated with the elite institution. Although the site welcomes students from all income brackets, the majority of posts on this site are from first-generation low-income (FLI) college students.

For some background, this FLIP public page is not unique to Stanford University. In fact, having a “Class Confessions” page is an opportunity that many elite, private universities (Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Princeton, Yale, etc.) provide for students to interact with (Class Confessions Central). This begs questions such as, “*Why* does the FLIP find it necessary to provide anonymous class confessions pages at these specific universities?,” “*Who* posts on these pages?,” and “*What* is expressed on these pages?” To answer these questions, we

need to first look into the FLI portion of FLIP. *Who* are ‘first-generation low-income’ (FLI) college students and *why* we should care about them?

FLI college students represent students who are the very first people in their family to go to college. Therefore, these students tend to come from low-income backgrounds. For these students, college is a way for them to better their family’s situation, earn a high-paying job, and seek higher status. Admission into four-year universities is often seen as a pinnacle moment in a FLI student’s life, a moment that says, “Your life will be changed forever. Your family’s life will be changed forever. You are going to college.” Yet, attending a university as a FLI student, as exciting as it sounds, does come with difficulties.

The necessity of having a class confessions page and the weight of going to college as a FLI student seems to show that FLI students have distinct experiences in comparison to ‘normal’ college students. However, current literature varies greatly in understanding this student population and in recommending FLI-specific resources for colleges to implement. On one hand, the majority of researchers report that FLI college students have difficulty socializing, dealing with mental health, and succeeding academically. Therefore, they recommend increased counseling (Covarrubias, 2015; Jenkins, 2013; Katrevich & Aruguete, 2017; Petty, 2014; Piorkowski, 1983). On the other hand, a minority group of researchers report that FLI college students do not have any more difficulty socializing, dealing with mental health, or succeeding academically than ‘normal’ college students. Therefore, they recommend increased peer mentoring and general outreach/support programs (Azmitia et al. 2018; Hébert, 2018; Tate, 2013). In an effort to better understand and locate the needs of this student population, this case study provides an analysis of Stanford’s Class Confessions page. Through this analysis, we should be able to find why FLIP provides this page, what FLI college students are saying on this page, and what conclusions we can draw about this student population’s identity and needs moving forward.

Literature Review

For decades, many researchers and social psychologists did not report on this FLI student population. However, with the passing of the Higher Education Act of 1965, increased financial aid, awareness of diversified needs, and educational resources were provided to allow more FLI college student enrollment. This act was reenacted multiple times and was finalized in 2008 (Tate, 2013). Perhaps due to these reenactments, the majority of literature available about FLI college student identity and needs was published in the early 2000s and 2010s. With this gap in time and the sudden spark of literature, it is very important to establish best practices when conducting studies on

a vulnerable population and identifying necessary resources for FLI college students.

With the rise of FLI college student enrollment came a surge of research and experiments being conducted on this ‘new,’ ‘minority,’ and ‘survivor’ student population by social psychologists and researchers. The *majority* of social psychologists and researchers reported that FLI college students are more likely to lack social skills and have issues with mental health. Therefore, they concluded that FLI college students are less likely to succeed (Covarrubias, 2015; Jenkins, 2013; Katrevich & Aruguete, 2017; Petty, 2014; Piorkowski, 1983). On a more extreme note, in “Survivor Guilt in the University Setting,” Geraldine Piorkowski suggests that FLI college students are similar to ‘survivors’ who feel guilt for being alive and well after natural disasters and death because they come from backgrounds in which they survived “alcoholism, drug abuse, mental illness, family violence, and criminal behavior among family members” (p. 620). With such harsh backgrounds, of course, “first-generation university students have significant emotional and psychosocial problems” that affect socialization and success (p. 6). Similarly, psychology professor Sharon Rae Jenkins describes FLI college students as having “less social support from family and friends, more single-event traumatic stress, less life satisfaction, and marginally more depression symptomatology than non-first-generation participants” (p. 129). With these findings, it is no wonder that the majority of the literature suggests more college counseling resources to ensure support socialization, mental health, and success (Covarrubias, 2015; Jenkins, 2013; Petty, 2014; Piorkowski, 1983).

It is interesting, however, that much of this scholarship was conducted using *quantitative methods*. For example, it is very compelling that social psychologists decide to use surveys or questionnaires (some with simple Likert scales of 1-7 questions) to draw these negative conclusions on the FLI college student population (Covarrubias, 2015; Jenkins, 2013; Katrevich & Aruguete, 2017; Petty, 2014; Piorkowski, 1983). Perhaps even more compelling is the way these surveys are conducted and named: “Health Behaviors and Coping” survey (Covarrubias, 2015, p. 2033), “Traumatic Events Questionnaire... Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptoms–Self Report survey... PTSD-checklist Specific” (Jenkins, 2013, p. 133-134), “Student Support Needs Survey” (Katrevich & Aruguete, 2017, p. 41), and “Stress Questionnaire” (Piorkowski, 1983, p. 620). Thus, the studies were framed using negatively connotated language (i.e. ‘coping,’ ‘traumatic,’ ‘depressive symptoms,’ ‘PTSD-checklist,’ ‘needs,’ and ‘stress’). Although participants may not have known the names of these questionnaires before taking them, it is still important to mention them as the researcher’s motives can be shown through their survey titles.

Concluding that FLI students are drastically impaired socially, mentally, and academically in comparison to non-FLI college students through quantitative studies may not show the whole story.

Interestingly, several social psychologists and researchers who use qualitative methods find almost the exact opposite results on FLI college students. Using methods such as interviews, open-ended survey questions, and longitudinal studies, these researchers find that FLI college students have active social lives and a sense of belonging, face no more mental health issues than non-FLI college students, and succeed academically (Azmitia et al., 2018; Hébert, 2018; Tate, 2013). In “‘Dropping Out is Not an Option’: How Educationally Resilient First-Generation Students See the Future” (2018), Margarita Azmitia, a psychology professor, conducted a longitudinal study using interviews and personal stories to examine FLI student identity and needs. Contrary to standard literature, Azmitia concluded that FLI college students do not have trouble with “identity development ... envisioning one’s future education, career, and goals in the contexts of family, friendships, and romantic relationships” (p. 91). Azmitia is not alone in her assessment. Similarly, Thomas Hébert in “An Examination of High-Achieving First-Generation College Students From Low-Income Backgrounds” (2018), states that FLI students are influenced by “internal locus of control, *above-average cognitive ability*, *strong work ethic*, *self-confidence*, *supportive teachers* ... high parental expectations” (p. 106, italics mine). These findings show that FLI college students socialize, have positive outlooks and mental health, and succeed academically. Hébert concludes that FLI college students are exceptional at socializing, dealing with mental health, and succeeding due to these strong positive influences; this hints at a positive difference between FLI college students and ‘normal’ college students. Therefore, these researchers recommend peer mentoring, outreach programs, and general support programs because FLI students do not have any of the extreme difficulties that the majority of researchers concluded (Azmitia et al., 2018; Hébert, 2018; Tate, 2013). Overall, it is unlikely that this student population has little (whether negative or positive) to no differences with non-FLI college students, as this group of scholars suggest; otherwise, there would be no reason to label these students, provide increased resources, or have any interest in this student population in the first place.

The literature on FLI college students seems to provide extremely varied results and uses many different methods of collecting data. Therefore, when universities try to provide the best representation and resources for FLI college students, it may be difficult to choose exactly what needs to be implemented or what is to be said about this student population when the research shows either huge impairments or little difference between FLI students and

other college-going students. This scholarship has not been wholly successful in showcasing the FLI college student story and the needs of this student population. For these reasons, it is important to add more FLI students' authentic voices to the discussion and to tell a more complete story about the FLI student experience.

Method

The remainder of this essay returns to our opening scene. Specifically, I analyze Stanford FLIP's Facebook page "Stanford Class Confessions." My aim here is to navigate the tensions in the FLI literature and, more practically, to describe the identities and needs of FLI college students. To do so, I use a method proposed by Daniel Solorzano and Tara Yasso in their article, "Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research." They define counter-storytelling as a "tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories," and although Solorzano and Yasso use it to study race around vulnerable populations in educational research, this framework can prove useful in challenging the majoritarian studies on a different vulnerable population: FLI college students (p. 32). Their framework is essential to this case study's analysis because FLI college students represent a minority (and vulnerable) population influenced heavily by socioeconomic status in academic settings due to systemic rules and conventions around education. In addition, Solorzano and Yasso's framework in the analysis of Stanford Class Confessions has the potential to bring about real change in institutions because they believe "stories can be used as theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical tools to challenge racism, sexism, and *classism* and work toward social justice" (p. 23, italics mine). As a first-generation and low-income student at Stanford University myself, following this framework's outline (gather, expose, analyze, and challenge) can help point out the gaps in the story and needs of FLI college students in a way that the current literature does not, and potentially identify areas for change in elite universities.

Gather. Along with conducting a literature review, to gather data on this vulnerable population safely and ethically, I used Stanford's Class Confessions page. By using a public page with over 200 anonymous posts, FLI college students are protected behind an anonymous number, creating a safe environment for counter-storytelling. Of the 285 posts, a random selection of 142 (roughly half) posts were chosen for further analysis.

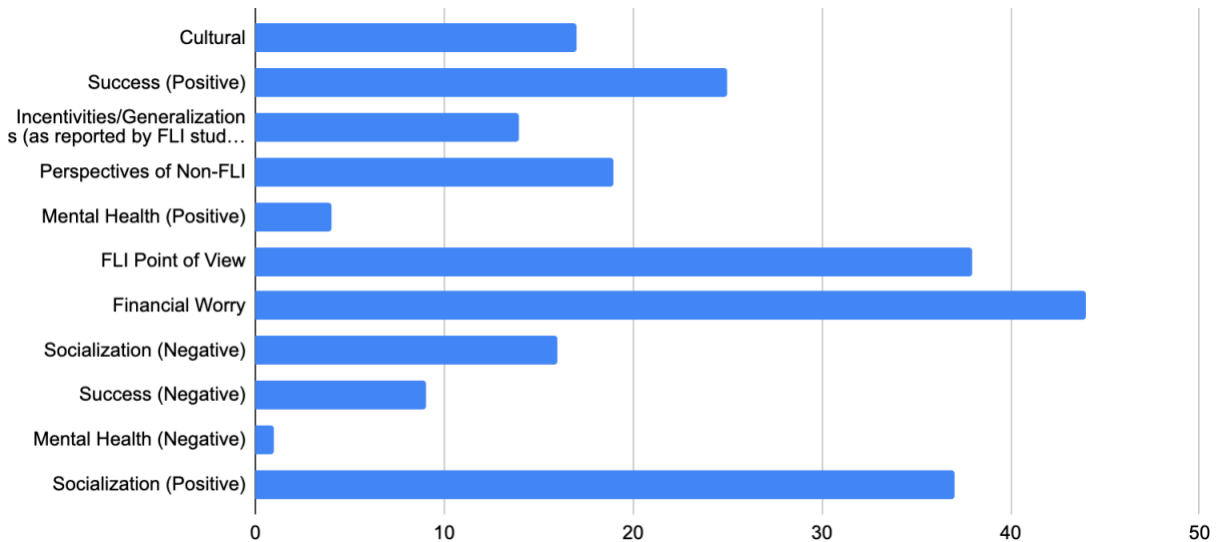
Expose. Using the grounded framework of counter-storytelling and qualitative coding, I then coded this random selection of posts. It is important to note that I alone coded these anonymous posts, although if resources allowed, I would have had a second, independent coder help in order to point out any discrepancies. This coding allowed for specific

words or phrases to emerge that begin to tell a story which aligns with the many sides of current literature. That is, I coded for themes that emerged from both the quantitative and qualitative literature to account for a more holistic and objective analytic process. For example, “Socialization,” “Mental Health,” or “Success” could be used as evidence supporting both the quantitative and qualitative research literature described earlier. These words and phrases were tallied and sorted into various categories. I then created other categories to point to any other themes from the literature or new themes expressed commonly in these anonymous posts, e.g., “Financial Worry,” “Perspectives of Non-FLI Students,” “FLI Point of View,” (see Table 1 in appendix).

In addition to coding words and themes, a simple word frequency count was conducted; though not analyzed greatly in this paper, it nonetheless provides increased support for the findings and analysis discussed later in this paper. Top words were: family, financial, income, parents, money, and work (see Table 2 in appendix).

Findings

FIGURE 1. Bar chart of major themes.



Notes: We separated some major subthemes into negative and positive to show both sides of the current literature. The chart only shows total numbers of posts out of the random sample of 142 posts that fit into each category; these are not percentages. Some posts could fit into multiple categories.

Discussion

As an attempt to add more FLI students' voices to the discussion about FLI student experience, the bulk of analysis will concentrate on the three major themes that the current literature points out: socialization, mental health, and success. However, I also added other recurrent themes such as financial worry, FLI point of view, and Non-FLI student perspectives, because these were themes that appeared in large numbers of posts.

Socialization

Analyze. According to current literature, one line of scholarship finds that FLI college students lack social skills, do not socialize, or lack family and friend connections (Covarrubias, 2015; Jenkins, 2013; Katrevich & Aruguete, 2017; Petty, 2014; Piorkowski, 1983), while the other side points to the opposite (Azmitia et al., 2018; Hébert, 2018; Tate, 2013). From the bar chart shown above, one can see that 'socialization' is broken down into two categories, negative and positive, to reflect both sides of the literature. Relating to negative socialization, 16 posts pointed towards FLI students' inability to relate to their "privileged friends" or the inability to make friends at all (leading to a feeling of exclusion), while 37 posts pointed towards positive socialization: friends, family, or joining communities. With these findings, one could expect that FLI students have both positive and negative experiences surrounding socialization, similar to what both sides of the literature show.

Challenge. When analyzing these posts, however, it seems that these situations are not as polarized as the current literature concludes. Many FLI college students express how much they love their friends and hanging out with them, while at the same time being unable to relate to their friends on many topics. For example, "#134 - ... I find that money has become a slightly *awkward* subject. *I can't talk about many aspects* of my lifestyle (what I buy, what I do) with *my friends* without making them feel uncomfortable" (Stanford Class Confessions, "#134 -Throughout high school...", italics mine). In this quote, we see that the student references their friends, but also the awkwardness felt when discussing certain subjects that their friends would not relate to. Many posts also point to close family connections, such as "#262 - ... Being low income sucked, but I'm privileged to have a family whose love I can truly feel... They gave me everything they could. I feel happy to do the same" (Stanford Class Confessions, "#262 - I hate..."). Here one could see that many students feel privileged not in a sense of financials, but rather in family connections.

These posts (and many others) demonstrate that FLI college students can make friends and maintain family connections, but at times may feel that they can't truly relate to some of their friends because of their and their family's background. If we consider FLI college student stories in regards to socialization, it seems that the

current literature does not talk about the holistic picture. Instead, both sides of the current literature describe FLI college student socialization with extreme positions, when research should focus more on discussing the nuances of FLI students' experiences.

Although there is not a consensus on whether or not FLI college students truly struggle with socialization, if some do require support, we would need to still find the best resources to aid them. The majority of scholars point to counseling services as a means of helping socialization; however, perhaps the less common suggestion of integrating general outreach programs would be more helpful as it provides ways for FLI college students to interact with peers (possibly other FLI college students), in a way that one-on-one counseling could not. As in the word socialization, one would think solutions that provide means for *socializing* would be suggested. In addition, perhaps more in-person programs like FLIP should be established amongst public universities, as well as private universities that do not have them, as another way for FLI college students to find each other and talk about such issues together in person, rather than using FLIP online confession groups. Although FLIP exists as an in-person program at Stanford University to allow these connections, this anonymous confessions page is still being used by students to express themselves rather than during in-person discussions with other FLI students. Thus, in-person groups and programs should continue to be established as students clearly have a need and desire for community. Overall, FLI college students seem to have strong social ties, so the majority of the literature may be exaggerating the extent to which most FLI students struggle to find social connections.

Mental Health

Analyze. One side of the current literature points towards extreme mental health impairments among FLI college students (Covarrubias, 2015; Jenkins, 2013; Katreovich & Aruguete, 2017; Petty, 2014; Piorkowski, 1983), while the other side points to the opposite (Azmitia et al., 2018; Hébert, 2018; Tate, 2013). From the bar chart previously shown, one can see that 'mental health' is broken down into two categories, negative and positive, to reflect the current divergence in the literature. In terms of negative mental health, one post pointed towards a FLI student's explicit expression of depression, sadness, negativity, worry, or anger, while 4 posts pointed towards positive mental health experiences—feelings of happiness, hope, and pride. Based on this limited sample, it seems that FLI students tend to feel more positively than negatively about mental health matters, which is unlike many current research findings. However, with just one analysis of the Stanford Class Confessions page, it is not safe to assume these feelings match across all FLI students across all elite institutions.

Challenge. When analyzing these posts, it seems that these

situations again are not as polarized as the current literature concludes. Many FLI college students express how they “feel *sadness* and *happiness*” (Stanford Class Confessions, “#22 - As a...”). In this post, the student references both sides of their feelings very explicitly. This suggests that FLI students’ emotional experiences are more nuanced than often claimed. As stated in the previous paragraph, the posts point towards an overall tendency of positivity, making it difficult to cast FLI college students as simply “hav[ing] significant emotional and psychosocial problems” or having no differences in comparison to other students like the current quantitative studies suggest (Piorkowski, 1983; Azmitia et al., 2018; Hébert, 2018; Tate, 2013). There is also evidence that points to extreme resilience and hope in other coded themes, and there is a small amount of evidence that points to worry (see Table 1 in appendix). For example, many FLI students report how their hopes and dreams are coming true (in the positive success category), while other FLI students express hurt and anger towards insensitive professors (the insensitivity/generalizations category). While both of these could relate to students’ mental health status, unless explicitly stated in their post, we did not use them to make generalizations about FLI students’ mental health on the whole.

Thus, it is important to note that posts which were reported in either of the mental health sub-themes were coded based on the explicit mention of mental health. For example, if a post solely expressed a positive or negative mental health status then it was coded, but if a post pointed towards having friends, having specific worries about success, etc., then it would be reported in other categories as stated above. In terms of solutions to mental health issues, many scholars suggest that college counselors “screen their first-generation student clients for PTSD symptoms as well as for both depression symptoms and life satisfaction” (Jenkins, 2013, p. 133). This may seem like an extreme suggestion considering that there are many more posts in the bar chart for ‘positive’ sub-themes in the bar chart compared to ‘negative’ sub-themes. However, claiming that FLI college students are exactly the same as normal college students in terms of mental health might also lead to inappropriate suggestions, because FLI college students do have different stress-inducers and worries that may be larger than those of normal college students (e.g., worrying about working to make enough money for themselves and family, familial hardships, discrimination based on class or race by other students and professors, etc.). Overall, it is important to remember that humans are complex and the topic of mental health is extremely complex. Much of the polarized literature could be overly hasty in making generalizations based on quantitative surveys or a few interviews. Although these confessions point towards a generally more positive outlook, more research should be done which takes a nuanced approach to FLI college students’ mental health.

Success

Analyze. One side of the current literature suggests that the FLI student population tends to be less successful, less confident in their academic abilities, or lacks the motivation that ‘normal’ student’s attain (Covarrubias, 2015; Jenkins, 2013; Katrevich & Aruguete, 2017; Petty, 2014; Piorkowski, 1983), while the other side points to the opposite (Azmitia et al., 2018; Hébert, 2018; Tate, 2013). In the bar chart shown above, ‘success’ is broken down into two categories, negative and positive, to reflect this divergence in the literature. For negative success, 9 posts pointed towards FLI students’ struggle to succeed when they could not focus on school because of other activities or during times when there are familial hardships, while 25 posts pointed towards the achievement of good grades, their own self-support, excitement to provide a great life for their family or future families, and the realization that their dreams may come true. With these findings, one can see that FLI students do feel positively and negatively, reflecting both sides of the literature.

Challenge. When analyzing these posts, however, it seems that these situations are not as polarized as the current literature concludes. For many FLI college students, they express how excited they are to achieve their dreams and eventually provide a great life for their family, while at the same time, being unable to focus on their academics because their family is struggling back at home. One student posted, “#243 - "It was until last week that I found out what a ‘safety net’ or a ‘trust fund’ are. No wonder, my family has never had them. Perhaps, I am my family's safety net.” Another student wrote, “#270 - ... how can I concentrate knowing that my father is in very poor health now, and knowing that my parents cannot afford to even rent out an apartment for long anymore” (Stanford Class Confessions, “#243 - It was...” and “#270 - I am...”). In these posts, FLI students refer to being their family’s safety net or worry about their family’s hardships. This idea of being responsible for providing a great life for one’s family is on one the hand exciting, but on the other hand could add an extra set of pressure that other non-FLI students may not have.

Many posts also point to outside activities affecting their success, such as “#119 - When I talk about my part-time job, I get reactions like ‘my parents made sure I wouldn't have to work during college so I can focus on classes’” (Stanford Class Confessions, “#119 - When I...”). Here, we see that many FLI college students report difficulty focusing on classes because they have to work part-time jobs. It appears that many FLI college students have the need and drive to succeed, but struggle more than non-FLI college students due to added pressure and the need to participate in necessary outside activities like jobs.

Again, these posts (and many others) show that FLI college students can succeed, but at times face added stressors that affect their ability to do so. Once again using counter-storytelling to examine FLI college

students in regards to success, it seems that the current literature does not tell the full story. Instead, both sides of the current literature discuss FLI college student success in extremes, when they should be analyzing the nuances of FLI college student success. While some scholars point to counseling services to help FLI college students succeed in college, perhaps the suggestion of peer mentoring may be more helpful in providing ways for FLI college students to find balance between their academics, hardships, and outside activities, as has been suggested by the minority group of researchers (Azmitia et al., 2018; Hébert, 2018; Tate, 2013).

Overall, FLI college students seem to be going to college for a reason: to succeed. However, they face added pressures that make realizing their dreams more difficult.

Additional Findings

The FLI college student experience is extremely complex and not as clear-cut as the two sides of current literature seem to point out. In addition to the nuances pointed out in the areas of socialization, mental health, and success, there were many other surprising themes worth noting.

Financial Worries

The largest theme reported by FLI college students (with 44 posts) is financial worry. It may seem obvious in the label “first-generation *low-income*,” that FLI college students are worried about money. Whether it is working multiple jobs to pay for necessities, pressure to pay to participate in social events, or a perceived need to choose lucrative majors, FLI college students have pointed out lack of money as being the largest factor affecting socialization, mental health, and success. Therefore, further research on increasing financial aid to equalize the playing field and decrease these pressures would prove useful in eliminating many students’ worries, especially at private elite universities where there are huge endowments and large socioeconomic gaps in the student population. For example, 17% of the student population at Stanford comes from families from the top 1% income bracket (families who made about \$630,000 or more per year), 66% of the student population comes from families in the top 5% income bracket (families who made about \$110,000 or more per year), and only 4% of the student population comes from the bottom 20% income bracket (families who made \$20,000 or less per year) (Buchanan and Aisch, 2017). This socioeconomic gap may be the reason for a large number of insensitive comments and generalizations made by professors and non-FLI students (14 posts) as described below.

FLI Point of View

Another large portion of the bar chart shows the theme of “FLI Point of View” with 38 posts. FLI college students, not surprisingly, point out how different the FLI college student perspective is in comparison to non-FLI student perspectives. These posts do so by expressing worry about others knowing their FLI identity, being proud of people knowing their FLI identity, others being shocked or confused about their point of views, feeling a need to prove ‘FLI-ness,’ or attempting to ‘fit in.’ For example, many FLI students embrace their identity by talking with friends or going to FLI events. In addition, many FLI students experience shock because they do not realize they are low-income until going to college (as it is normal for everyone in their hometowns to be of similar status). Many others feel that they must prove they are FLI to make friends with other FLI students, and some feel they need to work to buy expensive clothes so they will appear non-FLI. Again, with such a huge socioeconomic gap in the student population at Stanford University, it is not surprising that FLI students are focused on figuring out their position on campus. Therefore, future research on socialization, mental health, or success should take a nuanced approach to understanding FLI students’ points of view and how it relates to these themes.

Non-FLI Student Perspectives

The last interesting finding and portion of the chart that should be discussed is the number of anonymous posts from the non-FLI college student perspective, with 19 posts. While the majority of current literature points to the needs and identity of FLI students as being extremely different in comparison to the non-FLI college student, many non-FLI college students identify somewhat similar concerns and themes, such as worrying others will judge them for being extremely privileged (see Table 1 in appendix). In addition, the minority group of research suggests that FLI students are very similar to non-FLI students, but non-FLI students say otherwise, writing that they hope to be allies to FLI college students at such an elite university and face different experiences due to being privileged. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to consider allowing space for perspectives from non-FLI students in research on FLI students’ experiences. Further research comparing the two positions could yield interesting and important findings for university administration with respect to resource allocation, mental health support, and academic success and programming.

Conclusion

Overall, it is safe to say that the current polarized literature does not seem to tell the full story of the FLI college student experience, as it misses the nuances that thread the FLI student identity with the unique needs of FLI students. In addition, through analyzing these posts, we

can see the Class Confessions pages is one way to gain access to voices of FLI college students and those of non-FLI students, which reflect several major themes that have been discussed above.

These posts point to a lack of an authentic voice and full-bodied storytelling within the current literature, because contemporary work generally points to extreme impairments of FLI college students by using checklist surveys, or by stating that there is zero to little difference between FLI college students and other college students when using qualitative studies. Of course, much of this paper focuses on three themes commonly represented in current literature: socialization, mental health, and success. However, the data is available and provides an opportunity to discuss many of the other nuances briefly mentioned or not included in this paper, such as financial worry, FLI point of view, generalizations by others, non-FLI student perspectives, or even the cultural aspect of the FLI student population (since much of the FLI college student population is not only a minority financially, but minorities in terms of race and ethnicity). We can point to the extreme socioeconomic gap as an answer to why Class Confessions pages exist and why they tend to exist only at major private universities to begin with; there is less need for such a page at schools that have more equality in economic status, such as public universities and community colleges. In conclusion, it is safe to say that more research needs to be done on FLI college students to represent them in a better light and to determine the exact needs of the student population. In order to find this, we need to do more extensive qualitative research using frameworks such as counter-story to highlight the authentic voices of FLI college students.

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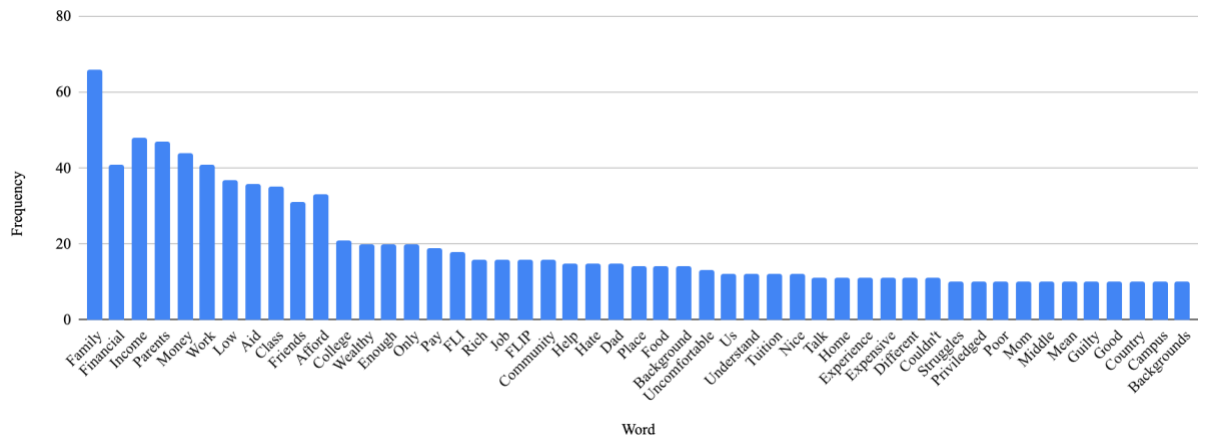
Appendix

TABLE 1. Themes and sub-themes.

Socialization	Success	FLI Point of View
<i>Positive</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends • Joining communities • Family connection 	<i>Positive</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excited about the future • Dreams of helping family/future children • Self-supporting • Great grades/Graduation • Dreams of going to college are coming true 	<i>Positive</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy • Proud • Hopeful
<i>Negative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to relate with 'privileged' students • Not able to make friends/exclusion 	<i>Negative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to focus on school due to financial responsibilities/extra studying • Familial hardships 	<i>Negative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Sadness • Negativity • Worry • Anger
FLI Point of View	Financial Worry	Insensitivities and Generalizations (as reported by FLI students)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worried about others knowing of FLI status • Proud/Indifferent about others knowing of FLI status • Proving FLIness • Confused about status/shocked by extreme wealth • Fitting in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying for social events/pressure to pay • Working multiple jobs • Choosing a lucrative major • Financial Status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insensitive comments and generalizations made by non-FLI students • Insensitive comments and generalizations made by professors • Unequal power dynamic between tutor/professor and student • “Looking poor”/“Looking FLI”
Perspectives of Non-FLI Students	Cultural	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allyship • Worried about others knowing of their 'privileged' status • Upset towards FLI status students ('We struggle too'/Discrimination against rich) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International status • Mentions of race/ethnicity • Culture shock 	

Notes: These themes and sub-themes were chosen after close evaluation of the anonymous confessions. A random selection of 142 (50%) of all confessions were chosen to be coded.

TABLE 2. Frequency of words.



Notes: We removed words such as “the,” “I,” “a,” etc. to show the true key words expressed through the anonymous confessions.

