COMPETENCE AND CHALLENGES: SORORITY AND FRATERNITY LIFE PROFESSIONALS' PREPARATION TO ADVISE CULTURALLY-BASED SFL ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

This qualitative narrative inquiry examined the professional preparation of sorority and fraternity (SFL) professionals working with culturally-based sororities and fraternities. Using narratives drawn from 15 professionals and guided by our conceptual framework, we unpacked important findings in terms of ways participants referenced their limited educational experiences, how they navigated learning within the confines of their professional roles, and distinctions in the value that professional associations and networks offered them. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

Keywords: sororities, fraternities, culturally-based, student affairs, professional preparation

Working within sorority and fraternity life (SFL)[1] as a campus-based professional, or an SFL advisor, is multifaceted and requires these individuals to be attuned to the needs of students within local chapters, (inter)national sorority and fraternity leadership, and the campus community (CAS, 2019). Guiding documents such as the ACPA/NASPA Professional Competencies (ACPA & NASPA, 2015), the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS, 2019), and the Association for Fraternity/Sorority Advisors Core Competencies (Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors [AFA], 2018) address much of the work required of campus-based professionals. AFA (2018) identified five foundational areas of working as an SFL professional, including understanding the various levels of governance that SFL organizations must adhere to (i.e., local, state, and national laws, campus policies, stakeholders, etc.), knowledge of fraternity/sorority systems, ensuring student safety, supporting student learning, and effective program administration. Importantly, competency documents also highlight the importance of recognizing and affirming students' diverse identities. For instance, "Working Across Differences" is among the professional skills AFA (2018) identified that ensure SFL professionals "excel in their positions" (p. 4). AFA went on to describe this skill as entailing "Embracing our differences," "Facilitating interactions across differences," and "Advocating for inclusive policies, practices, and learning environments" (p. 8). Although professional associations recognize the importance of addressing social justice and equity within SFL, doing so presents unique challenges as these communities have long wrestled with dynamics involving issues of race and racism (Garcia & Shirley, 2019).

Media outlets such as the news and social media offer many individuals outside of SFL insight into recurring racialized events within SFL communities. A recent manifestation of this trend was the "Abolish Greek Life" movement that began circulating in the summer of 2020, drawing national attention to the problematic ways issues around race/ethnicity appear in historically white sororities and fraternities (HWSFs) (Lautrup, 2020). Though people outside of sorority and fraternity communities are privy to these racial dynamics as reported in the media, few of these outlets inform audiences that SFL communities often include culturally-based sororities and fraternities (CBSFs) that have their own distinct traditions and founding purposes (Parks, 2008; Torbenson & Parks, 2009). CBSFs encompass a plethora of identity-based groups, including historically Asian American, Black, Latinx/a/o, Multicultural, and Native American sororities and fraternities.

CBSFs and HWSFs share broad commonalities such as selective membership processes, engaging in leadership development, and committing to philanthropic work (Garcia & Duran, 2021). However, these organizations diverge in their structure, principles, and how they center these values within their organizational aims (Arellano, 2020; Garcia, 2019). Perhaps most distinctly from HWSFs, CBSFs were founded to affirm and lift up Communities of Color (Parks, 2008; Torbenson & Parks, 2009). Although the SFL field broadly recognizes the need for competencies in diversity and inclusion to effectively engage in this work (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, 2018; CAS, 2019), it is less clear how SFL professionals are equipped with the multicultural competence (Pope et al., 2019) needed to serve CBSFs. Multicultural competence is "the awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions that are needed to work effectively across cultural groups and to work with complex multicultural and social justice issues" (Pope et al., 2019, p. xx). Notably, multicultural competence not only entails having the ability to work with individuals that are different from oneself but also with those who share so-

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[1] Although the field largely uses the term fraternity and sorority life (FSL), throughout the text, we are intentional in ordering sororities before fraternities to disrupt the patriarchal positioning of men's organizations ahead of women's

cial identities (Pope et al., 2019).

 In general, little empirical work has explored the professional preparation of SFL professionals with few exceptions (Goodman & Templeton, 2021; McClendon, 2019; Williams, 2020). A few notable studies began to unpack the nuances of working with CBSFs, particularly in the context of advising the nine historically Black sororities and fraternities that make up the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC; Johnson et al., 2008; Parks & Spencer, 2013; Patton & Bonner, 2001; Strayhorn & McCall, 2012). However, less focus attends to the professional preparation individuals received to advise all identity-based organizations including those categorized into a Multicultural Greek Council (MGC). This study thus intervenes into this scholarship by focusing on the following question: How do sorority and fraternity life professionals describe the preparation they receive and seek out in order to advise culturally-based sororities and fraternities?

Literature Review

 To build the foundation for our study, we explored literature on student affairs professionals' professional preparation, as well as the scholarship on SFL practitioners who work with CBSFs. To begin, scholars studying what prepares student affairs practitioners to engage in their work have pointed to several influences, including graduate programs and professional associations. Research has frequently underscored the role that higher education/student affairs graduate preparation programs play in helping to inform how individuals see their roles in the field (Hirschy et al., 2015; Liddell et al., 2014; Lombardi & Mather, 2016; Perez, 2016a, 2016b). This scholarship indicates how graduate programs help shed light on the competencies and standards associated with the profession (Liddell, 2014), in addition to providing them the experiences that bolster their confidence to work in different functional areas (Lombardi & Mather, 2016). Moreover, graduate preparation programs help shape practitioners' professional identities (Hirschy et al., 2015, Perez, 2016a, 2016b).

 Scholars have also presented how professional associations play a major role in preparing practitioners to engage in their work (Duran & Allen, 2020; Haley et al., 2015; Janosik et al., 2006). For example, Duran and Allen's (2020) study on graduate students and new professionals revealed how associations improved participants' learning orientation. Through the professional development opportunities available, participants came to see lifelong learning as a need in the profession. Others have echoed these claims, mentioning how associations can be socializing agents for professionals by providing them the chance to learn from fellow practitioners in ways that may not be as readily accessible on their individual campuses (Janosik et al., 2006). Importantly, this scholarship addresses the preparation of student affairs educators broadly, with limited literature examining SFL professionals' experiences specifically. In fact, research on campus-based sorority and fraternity life practitioners is few and far between (see McClendon, 2019; Williams, 2020, for exceptions), suggesting a necessity for future research, especially for those working with CBSFs.

 What does exist specific to advising culturally-based sororities and fraternities is a small body of scholarship on the role of the Black Greek-letter Organization (BGLO) advisor (Johnson et al., 2008; Parks & Spencer, 2013; Patton & Bonner, 2001; Strayhorn & McCall, 2012). Albeit an earlier perspective on BGLOs, Johnson et al.'s (2008) argument that BGLOs are frequently advised without much attention to the nuances of these organizations is a finding that was affirmed in later scholarship. This claim was echoed in the work of Parks and Spencer (2013), who examined how student affairs professionals should think about hazing and civic liability for BGLOs. They noted that many professionals do not have the knowledge (i.e., history, understanding of culture, and awareness of contemporary topics) to help BGLOs nav-

igate the nuances of these issues. Core to this literature is the lack of professional preparation that advisors who work with BGLOs receive, especially as it relates to their cultural awareness. As a notable intervention into this claim, Strayhorn and McCall's (2012) research using survey data from 71 BGLO advisors revealed that education level significantly predicted cultural awareness. Specifically, those with graduate degrees had more cultural awareness that translated to advising BGLOs than those without. These findings may suggest how differences in one's professional preparation, such as knowledge gained through graduate education, may affect one's ability to support SFL organizations like BGLOs.

Though the scholarship above centered exclusively on BGLOs, the need to examine CBSFs (inclusive of BGLOs) is high due to the beneficial influences they have. Culturally-based sororities and fraternities can have significant positive effects on members, including serving as a space to explore their race/ethnic identities (Arellano, 2020; Garcia, 2020; Orta et al., 2019), improving their connections across their institution (Patton et al., 2011), as well as bolstering their academic performance and capital (Orta et al., 2019). However, a dearth of research exists about how professionals learn to support these organizations on college campuses. It is by recognizing this gap in scholarship and in practice that we, as scholars, entered this study.

Conceptual Framework

We relied on literature that spoke to ways individuals are socialized into their professional roles, specifically using Perez's (2016a) Conceptual Model of Professional Socialization Within Graduate Preparation Programs. Although this model was intended to examine individuals' preparation through graduate programs to work in the field of student affairs broadly, the model ultimately speaks to larger issues of socialization within the field. As a result, we recognized its utility in ex-

amining how the SFL pros in this study were prepared to have the skills and knowledge necessary to work with CBSFs.

Importantly, the model specifies that individuals enter graduate programs with unique identities and experiences that inform how they make sense of these environments and the content discussed within them. Perez (2016a) suggests that student affairs graduate professional socialization occurs through an array of cultural contexts, including individual, institutional, functional area, professional, and national. Student affairs graduate preparation experiences are at the center of this socialization process, and within it, coursework and fieldwork are central. Ideally, there is a strong alignment between coursework and fieldwork as this continuity leads to "desired outcomes of student affairs preparation programs" (p. 46). However, in cases when fieldwork experiences and coursework do not align, this discontinuity can create dissonance that requires individuals to engage in sensemaking.

Study Design

For this project, we ascribed to a constructivist approach. By using constructivism, we highlighted the notion that the creation of knowledge is dependent upon "the interactivity between researcher and researched [and] ...in the teaching and learning process between the two" (Lincoln, 1990, p. 78). As such, we sought to co-construct knowledge alongside the participants by presenting their stories as unique, subjective realities. To honor our constructivist epistemology, we utilized a narrative inquiry methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) wherein we created individual participant narratives to use in data analysis as we looked across participants' experiences. Narrative researchers attempt to understand how individuals make meaning of a particular phenomenon by asking them to reflect upon formative events, individuals, and sensemaking. Privileging the participants' experiences allowed us to build the "stories

lived and told" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20) through collaborative interpretation.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

We relied on criterion and maximum variation sampling to secure participants for this study (Patton, 2015). We distributed our call for participants through social media and student affairs listservs, including our personal social media accounts, the NASPA Fraternity and Sorority Life Knowledge Community's Facebook page, and the ACPA Commission for Professional Preparation's CSP Talk listserv, noting that participants should meet the following criteria: a) currently work as an SFL professional and b) work directly with culturally-based SFL organizations (those typically within NPHC and MGC councils). Twenty-two individuals expressed interest in the study and completed a demographic form. Based on our use of maximum variation sampling, we were intentional in selecting 15 participants with diverse identities that varied in terms of their sorority/fraternity affiliations as well as educational and professional experiences. We thanked those that were not selected for their interest, shared our rationale for not selecting them for the study, and noted that we hoped to include them in future iterations of the study. Table 1 shares details regarding participants' identities and experiences.

Data Collection

Each participant engaged in two semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 60-90 minutes, each conducted online via Zoom with all three researchers (except in rare circumstances when a researcher had a conflict). The first interview focused on learning about participants' journeys within SFL communities, particularly around graduate preparation experiences as well as their direct work with CBSFs. Questions aligned with Perez's (2016a) model and unpacked participants' salient identities and experiences as well as questions that targeted their experiences within multiple contexts including institutional and grad prep programs, functional areas, and professional organizations at local and (inter)national levels. Examples of questions included, "What type of preparation did you receive to work with culturally-based sororities and fraternities?" and "what were some defining moments or lessons that you (have) gained from your graduate preparation program that you apply to your practice?" To align with narrative inquiry, we asked them to offer stories and events that exemplified their comments. After the first interview, we provided participants with journal reflection prompts to complete and send back prior to their second interview. These prompts included: "How did the first interview reveal certain ideas or concepts that you had not yet thought about?" and "after the first interview, what interactions/experiences are you now noticing as it relates to your preparation to work with culturally-based sororities and fraternities?" We continued our conversation on participants' work with CBSFs, challenges they faced in their role, and their professional preparation during the second interview while incorporating specific follow-up questions based on participants' journal responses. We asked that participants share these with us at least a week in advance so we could have time to review them and construct questions; however, due to scheduling restraints, some participants submitted these later, though the researchers followed the same review and construction process. One participant, Melody, was unable to continue with the project after the first interview due to conflicts in her schedule.

Data Analysis

To attend to our epistemology, conceptual framework, and methodology, we began analysis as a full team of researchers by constructing narratives for each participant that presented their stories in a chronological fashion. By restorying the transcripts with attention to time, place, and scene (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), we were able

to get a sense of each participant's formative moments as students, members of SFL organizations, and/or SFL practitioners. Narratives ranged anywhere from 4-10 single-spaced pages and consisted of direct quotes that reflected participants' stories as well as interpretations made by the researchers. Once these narratives were formed, each researcher individually engaged in axial coding (Saldaña, 2016). The team then reconvened to discuss the significant codes that largely appeared across the participants' stories. Recurring codes that emerged through debriefing conversations were then identified as central themes.

Trustworthiness and Positionality

We took several measures to enhance the trustworthiness of this research. We collected ample data through two interviews, demographic forms, and journal responses to construct "rich, thick stories" (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 96) for each participant. Additionally, we practiced dependability (Jones et al., 2014) by charting our research process and constructing memos throughout the study. As research team members, we checked our interpretations of data among one another and offered participants the opportunity to review their narratives as an effort to ensure confirmability (Jones et al., 2014). Of the 15 participants, six responded to the opportunity, all of whom either approved the narrative as it was written or offered small edits. We did not have participants review the full results of this study. Finally, we were attentive to our positionality throughout the research process. Namely, the authors were attentive to how their positionalities informed their choices, including what questions they asked, perhaps what questions they did not think to ask, how they perceived participants' narratives and more.

Garcia is a Latina and white cisgender woman that is a member of a historically white sorority and serves as a volunteer faculty advisor for a Latina based sorority. Serving as a faculty advisor involves attending weekly chapter meetings, monthly meetings with the campus Multicultural Greek Council, meetings as needed with the campus-based professional that oversees the sorority, and attendance/involvement in chapter and council functions as possible. Additionally, much of her research has unpacked problematic ways CBSFs are positioned within SFL communities. Therefore, she recognized that she came into the project with perceptions of SFL informed by her undergraduate membership, post-graduate involvement in SFL, and role as a researcher. Garcia was intentional in reminding herself that she has not worked professionally in SFL or experienced the intricacies of this work and was, therefore, also an outsider to this research in a significant way.

Reyes is a Latina and Indigenous woman without affiliation with culturally-based SFL organizations. Due to this outsider positioning, she was cognizant of the responsibility she has to CSBSFs and SFL broadly to approach this work with goodwill and openness. The main experiences that informed her questions were her frequent collaborations with CBSFs on her campuses as an undergraduate and graduate student. These engagements allowed her to see how these organizations functioned and were situated within the larger institution.

Duran entered into this project taking into account his role as a graduate program faculty member, as well as his status as someone not affiliated with a culturally-based SFL organization but who serves as a faculty advisor to a Latinx/o-based fraternity. During data collection and analysis, Duran was interested in learning about how conversations of working with these organizations are scaffolded according to affiliation and social identities. In particular, he drew upon his knowledge as someone who has read thoroughly about CBSFs and who has attended SFL professional conferences when asking questions.

Findings

The narratives offered by the SFL professionals in this study revealed significant influenc-

es that these individuals named as informing their socialization and professional development. These influences were not universally beneficial, however, and tended to be contingent upon institutional contexts, social identities, and affiliation status. We attend to these realities as we cover the three main themes that were reflected across participant stories: referencing (limited) educational experiences, learning within the confines of professional roles, as well as the differential role of professional associations and networks.

Referencing (Limited) Educational Experiences

Participants often referred to their SFL involvement as undergraduate students and/or graduate students. We find it important to note here that while many participants were affiliated with Greek organizations as undergraduate members, we only address formalized administrative or programmatic SFL experiences in this particular section. For a few participants like Kaylee, undergraduate involvement was serendipitous and spurred thoughts like "this [job] is actually a thing." Melody, affiliated with a multicultural sorority, echoed this sentiment as she reflected on her time as an undergraduate intern for the Student Life office and told her supervisor, "I'm going to take your job eventually." For Melody, that experience allowed her to see the inner workings she otherwise could not see as a new member.

Moving beyond undergraduate experiences, the extent to which participants felt their graduate programs prepared them to work professionally in SFL varied largely. Many participants reflected on ways their programs helped to increase their awareness of issues pertaining to diversity and inclusion broadly. For instance, Zane recalled:

> In the higher ed program, they talked about the concept of social justice...I mean, it was very, again, they were generalists and so there wasn't any opportunity to really explore that...they would introduce a concept, but then you were on your own to figure out how that

worked.

Essentially Zane shared that while he was exposed to theories and concepts, it was rare that conversations were explicitly tied to practice—particularly in thinking about how issues arise in contexts such as SFL broadly or CBSFs more specifically.

Participants described how: SFL was presented in their programs, these programs did or did not foster practical skills, and mentors and supervisors supported their endeavors. In terms of attentiveness to SFL, participants such as Kaylee, Melody, and Taylor described how graduate preparatory programs painted SFL in a negative way or only offered a brief, vague history like, "here's how men's organizations started. Here's how women's organizations started." For participants like Kaylee, an SFL professional affiliated with a Latina-based sorority, a lack of discussions focused specifically on SFL was apparent throughout her program's curriculum:

> Even when I got to my own practicum experience with Fraternity and Sorority Life and had to write about it in a paper, I know my feedback when I was writing it was, make this as broad as possible. We [the instructor] don't want to talk about the specifics. And so I think there was just a don't talk about it and we'll just accept what you can talk about.

Due to some programs' omission of SFL (whether intentional or not), participants like JoJo, Kaylee, and Cecilia found themselves working across different functional areas and applying their skillsets to their practitioner role. For JoJo, affiliated with a CBSF, there was always a lesson to be added to her practitioner toolbox, even if the job was not directly related to SFL because, "no matter what type of professional development of career that I've done, it had a component of fraternalism attached to it."

In terms of practical skills, there was an apparent divide for participants who were able to ap-

ply a theory to practice approach in their graduate preparatory programs versus those missing valuable experiences like assistantships. Christian, an SFL professional affiliated with a Latino fraternity, emphasized his assistantship as a "theory-to-practice" component of his graduate program and how it made him a better practitioner:

> I think it was really big because I know that there are other programs out there that don't have assistantships that are research-based or whatever. And so I think being given the opportunity to work with the students that I did in grad school, I think really got me prepared for almost like everything.

Unlike Christian, Robert, affiliated with an Interfraternity Council (IFC) organization, found these opportunities to be lacking in his own experience, instead saying:

> [Graduate preparatory programs are] so focused on the development and these theories and the logistics behind all of this that we don't necessarily talk a lot about the students themselves...and then we go out into a position and then we put them into action and we lose a sense of the student's identity in that process.

Juxtaposing these two experiences, it was apparent that not all graduate preparation programs equally prepared the participants to work with CBSFs.

Lastly, within their programs, some participants attributed their mentors' and supervisors' involvement as a vital component of their preparation. For participants like Joanne, Lisa, and Tim, these individuals were often sources of "real talks" and reality checks that everything will not "be all right simply because you researched that from afar." Instead, Lisa, affiliated with a Panhellenic (NPC) sorority, recounted her personal and professional growth during her graduate program because of her supervisor's sincere guidance: "[She] made me like become part of [SFL]. She also, you know, explained the importance of going to events

and supporting students...she really taught me the importance of showing up." As Lisa elaborated, her supervisor helped her to grow from a "a very naïve person" to a competent SFL practitioner.

Learning within the Confines of Professional Roles

There were several notable ways participants enhanced their knowledge and skills working with CBSFs within the confines of their full-time professional roles. Though onboarding is one way individuals often learn more about their particular contexts, participant narratives revealed that the majority of participants did not receive much, if any, formalized onboarding regarding their work with CBSFs. For further context, as indicated in Table 1, some participants were solely responsible for overseeing CBSFs while others were expected to split their time among HWSFs and CBSFs, though participants often recognized that they were unable to do so evenly as HWSFs typically took more of their time. Tim, an NPHC fraternity member, shared, most of his onboarding was about "getting to know the university" rather than learning more about the sororities and fraternities he oversaw. Joanne, affiliated with a NPHC sorority, was provided ample support through funding for workshops and other professional development opportunities, however upon deeper reflection she realized those opportunities were not about culturally-based organizations. Instead, "it's been focused on Panhellenic and IFC or just larger fraternal movement conversations." Aligning with this dynamic, Kaylee recognized that the overemphasis on NPC sororities in onboarding detracted from her focus on CBSFs:

> The majority of my onboarding that I did receive was around NPC groups and the time-intense work that had to go into their work, the penalties that resulted from not completing them, and the scope of extra eyes surveying all that I did. I think this added stress of perfection created a barrier to working with the identity-based groups who don't have penalties, added levels

of surveying, or, in all honesty, significance to the administration at the institution.

Kaylee, a member of a Panhellenic sorority, was one among several participants that reflected on lessons they learned about how work with historically white organizations was prioritized over CBSFs. Cecilia likewise experienced frustration with being "in this field when we're going to continue to privilege IFC and Panhellenic even when we maybe don't even realize that's what's happening."

Although most participants did not receive a structured onboarding experience, a few shared that there were ways their colleagues offered insights that supported their ability to serve CBSFs. Declan's supervisor met with him bi-weekly during which, "we would spend a few minutes during that time specifically talking about the culturally-based organizations on our campus and just her kind of imparting wisdom that she learned." These conversations included everyday knowledge as well as "the historical context" and significance of having single letter chapters on their campus. Declan, an IFC affiliated professional, was thankful that his supervisor not only shared these nuances with him, but did so in a nonjudgmental way about what he "should" already know.

One approach participants embraced in supplementing absent onboarding was relying on information they learned from students. However this process was not easy for all participants. Some, like Amy, experienced initial pushback from students who felt disenfranchised from previous SFL professionals. Yet, other participants shared ways they expanded their knowledge base through conversations with students. Conversations were helpful to Robert, whose CBSF advising came with a steep learning curve: "I don't know why you stroll. I don't know why you have 12 principles. I don't know any of these things. So what I really started to do, I had monthly meetings with my presidents." Through these meetings, Robert expanded his understanding of the norms and

processes for CBSFs. Even though Christian was affiliated with a Latinx-based fraternity, as the umbrella advisor for all multicultural Greek organizations he recognized, "I don't know a lot about NAPA." He worked with students sharing, "I'm going to be straight up with all of you. I don't know a lot about Asian identified Greek organizations, but I'm here to learn. I'm perfectly fine being vulnerable and asking questions."

Others discussed their hesitation to ask questions from students directly, but instead tried to find other means to do so. For instance, by following chapter social media sites, Taylor, a member of Latina based sorority, was able to learn the terminology chapters used and gain insight to their traditions and events. Joanne shared that in advising MGC organizations, she wanted to create "an environment where they didn't have to feel like they were constantly having to teach" because as an NPHC member, "I know how it felt, feeling like you always had to teach someone something else." In this instance, Joanne was deliberate in "at least being respectful of them to do some research on my own," such as learning why one of the MGC organizations used Spanish names for officer positions.

Another aspect of participants' experiences in learning within the confines of their roles was their need to navigate political dynamics while on the job. For most, it was clear that higher-level administrators had very little if any understanding of CBSFs. Connected to these political dynamics, participants often reflected that an important part of their learning was in strategizing how and when to advocate for CBSFs. Many participants recognized a plethora of ways IFC and Panhellenic organizations were privileged over NPHC and MGC groups, which as Cecilia, affiliated with a historically white sorority, noted could feel "really overwhelming." Pushing for changes was not easy, and participants often had to learn that there were limits to what they could do. As Cecilia described, "I can be a really loud person in a lot of rooms, but I would probably still never change every single pol-

icy that relates to fraternity and sorority students, no matter how long I were to stay." One example included a policy where arrests and citations were tracked for various student groups, including sororities and fraternities, which disproportionately affected CBSFs because they were substantially smaller than HWSFs:

> Whether or not you get a sanction is based off of the percentage of your chapter that is found arrested or cited. So our chapters with you know 150, 200 members in order for them to reach [that] percent of their membership, probably not gonna happen…Our chapters of five can reach [that] percent fairly easily…So you're automatically putting them on sanction where another chapter maybe be able to get three times as many members as that arrested or cited and never have to face that same sanction that chapter had to face.

Cecilia further explained, "I look at the amount of policies that should probably be changed in some way, shape, or form to be more equitable and it's probably every single one of them in some way, shape or form."

Like Cecilia, Taylor reflected that she had to learn how to strike a balance between advocating for students and being a "good" colleague:

> I want to go to bat for my students but at the end of the day, like I want to be held in good, like high regard with my colleagues. And I don't want to be seen as the troublemaker and I want to keep my job.

Ultimately like other participants, Taylor struggled with finding this balance.

Differential Role of Professional Associations and Networks

Finally, each participant described professional associations and networks as a key player in preparing to oversee CBSFs as part of their full-time SFL professional roles. However, the extent to which individuals describe learning substantially from professional organizations differed

based on social identities, as well as people's affiliation with sororities and fraternities. One example of a person who benefitted greatly from associations was Cecilia, who identified as a white woman. Looking back on her experiences, Cecilia admitted that "I very much entered [SFL] from the IFC and Panhellenic perspective." However, when she found herself professionally working across all four councils, Cecilia looked for all the resources she could. In particular, she mentioned that she had a group of "other…white identifying individuals who I know are working well either on diversity and inclusion efforts broadly or specifically for culturally-based organizations." This group that she met through professional associations like AFA proved to be quite helpful she had to talk to someone to answer questions such as: "Hey, this is what I'm struggling with or this is what I'm thinking or like, this is what I want to do. Like, what do you all think? In your experience?" For Cecilia, attending association conferences allowed her access to individuals who were in a similar position in advising organizations as a white practitioner.

However, other practitioners like Amy, Declan, Joanne, Kaylee, and Taylor had critiques of professional associations naming that they heavily leaned toward providing resources for non-CBSF-affiliated professionals (those that are looking for very basic knowledge regarding CBSFs) or that they have a sole focus on historically white SFL organizations. For example, Joanne described her reactions to a popular institute designed to prepare individuals to work with CBSFs:

> …when you read the description of that program, it is very much so focused on…the Panhellenic/IFC ex-president of their council, who's now the professional staff member, who now has to work with these culturally-based organizations and I need to go to a crash course for a weekend to learn how to work with them.

Though beneficial for some, Joanne shared that it was "not really appealing to someone who

is a [CBSF] member." Taylor, a practitioner, affiliated with a multicultural sorority, spoke about her perceptions of SFL associations and conferences as not paying adequate attention to preparing professionals to work with CBSFs. Namely, she saw organizations like AFA and others from the perspective coming from her own "undergraduate experience and advisement experience of being on the backburner, of being the afterthought." The presentations she saw did not push individuals to think about their roles critically, instead simply suggested the following: "Definitely a sense of let's be placating to their needs and the things that they want. Students often have this perspective and I have this perspective as well." Much like Taylor, other professionals – especially those affiliated with a CBSF – named how associations and their members needed to do a better job of preparing practitioners of the nuances in advising CBSFs.

In addition to discussing the roles of professional associations, SFL practitioners described networks they located outside of professional associations that provided them the knowledge to support CBSFs. Participants such as Declan, JoJo, and Melody shared stories of connecting with professionals in their local area or around particular topics that in turn made them more prepared to work with the chapters on their campuses. For instance, JoJo, a professional who was a part of an NPHC sorority, named how she was involved with a group of SFL professionals who also were affiliated with CBSFs. Fundamentally, this collective affirmed her own experiences as a Black/African American woman in SFL. However, beyond helping her in this personal way, this group also served as a space for her to work through issues in her advising of NPHC and MGC chapters. For example, she discussed how the group had discussed how to support NPHC: "So how do we operate an entity that's not a governing body, but operates as a governing body?" Additionally, speaking with her fellow professionals allowed her to examine her shortcomings, such as not knowing the nuances that may exist between different types of groups

in the MGC (e.g., South Asian organizations versus Latinx/a/o-based). She summarized this connection to other professionals as follows: "I think this is an affirming space and we could just be but also it's a professional development in that space as well." In this comment, JoJo captured the importance of communities such as these.

Like JoJo, Declan, a practitioner affiliated with an LGBTQ+ fraternity, also benefited from similar relationships with individuals who were in the local area. Namely, Declan struggled initially as someone who did not know much about CBSFs other than what he had seen in his undergraduate years. He even shared that he "didn't want to be that person" who admitted these shortcomings. However, Declan and colleagues from institutions across the city made the decision to create a coalition where they would meet monthly. In these meetings, they would discuss the issues that their NPHC community faced, which was especially beneficial because they could "work very closely together and have the cultural competency of the [city] area." Across participants' stories, mentions of networks such as these seemed invaluable to their preparation to advise CBSFs.

Discussion and Implications

Participants' narratives underscored the need for specialized expertise in working with culturally-based sororities and fraternities since advising these organizations is distinct from historically white groups. Additionally, our findings showed that participants often felt unprepared to navigate these nuances, largely reaffirming previous work that showed BGLO advisors frequently lacked an understanding of organizational nuances (Johnson et al., 2008). These findings highlight the need for additional professional preparation opportunities specifically targeted at working with CBSFs. This section will interweave a discussion of findings from this study alongside implications for practice and research.

As Perez's (2016a) framework specifies, so-

cialization by way of graduate programs primarily consists of coursework and fieldwork. Graduate preparation programs offered general pieces regarding participants' future work in student affairs and, for some, discussions on diversity, equity, and inclusion. However, by and large, participants did not report much, if any, content that was targeted to working within SFL—and even less with NPHC and MGC sororities and fraternities specifically. We realize that higher education and student affairs graduate programs are not intended to focus exclusively on preparing individuals to work in SFL; however, it is important to question where students in these programs learn nuanced information about their particular functional areas. The absence of these conversations in their coursework meant that a large amount of what they learned about working with CBSFs was in fieldwork or within their professional roles.

More often, participants learned about the nuances of SFL within fieldwork experiences through assistantships and other similar opportunities. However, if they did not directly work with CBSFs, they typically did not have opportunities to learn about the complexities of serving these groups. Thus it was perhaps unsurprising that some participants like Christian felt a strong sense of continuity (Perez, 2016a) among the theory pieces of his graduate program and practical experiences through his assistantship. Contrastingly, participants like Robert experienced discontinuity between these experiences.

Participants' narratives additionally revealed that their graduate preparation programs often contributed to how they viewed their professional identities (Hirschy et al., 2015; Perez, 2016a, 2016b) in terms of how prepared they felt to work with CBSFs. However, grad prep programs were perhaps less useful in fully equipping participants with the multicultural competence needed for this work (Pope et al., 2019). More specifically, participants often reflected on opportunities they had in coursework to increase their knowledge and awareness of issues pertaining to diversity but less

so on developing skills and the ability to translate knowledge into action. This came to light as participants navigated ways their individual identities influenced their professional roles, specifically working with CBSFs.

Like Amy, several participants shared unexpected ways they had to prove themselves to students because past SFL professionals were not reliable sources of support or because students expressed skepticism about working with advisors with different identities/affiliations. Notably, these dynamics were not only salient for white participants advising Students of Color. However, they were also a challenge Advisors of Color faced in working with Students of Color that did not share their racial/ethnic identity or were part of the same sorority/fraternity umbrella. Joanne was one notable participant that fell into this camp. As a Black woman that was a member of an NPHC sorority, she was aware of ways People of Color were tokenized and often expected to "teach" others about themselves, which was why she was intentional in learning about the CBSFs she oversaw on her own. These findings underscored the importance of multicultural competence in advising MGC and NPHC organizations that not only centers on how to work across racial differences but also with those that share identities (Pope et al., 2019). Future research can further unpack the role of individual identity in advising SFL groups.

These findings carry important implications to ensure SFL practitioners are equipped with the professional development opportunities they need to effectively serve CBSFs. To begin, educators in graduate preparation programs should consider ways they are intentional in attending to the continuity (Perez, 2016a) of programs and field experiences. Faculty should regularly engage in conversations with student affairs supervisors, including SFL offices, about what students learn through coursework and how these pieces inform their work within assistantships and internships. Ideally, these groups should work together to ensure opportunities are given to students to develop

their multicultural competence (Pope et al., 2019). Faculty can look across the curriculum to ensure students are exposed to conversations regarding a wide array of functional areas on multiple occasions and have opportunities to engage in individual learning through papers and projects focused on their areas of interest. When instructors engage students in learning about SFL, they should center culturally-based sororities and fraternities in these discussions, as these organizations are often at the margins or erased from such conversations.

Furthermore, programs must be more explicit in discussions of race, racism, and white supremacy in educating students about racial dynamics. Some programs have made greater strides in this regard than others, but this is an area deserving of continued attention for all programs. Since issues around race are intricately linked to SFL in myriad ways, professionals must be knowledgeable about these dynamics in order to effectively work in these spaces and serve CBSFs.

Another important piece of participants' socialization into their positions took place within the confines of their professional roles. Participants had to learn ways to navigate the politics concerning how CBSFs were prioritized (or not) within the practice and develop strategies to advocate for these organizations' and students' needs. SFL professionals and student affairs upper-level administration must engage in reflection regarding ways that organizations serving Students of Color are treated as well as how policies are created and reinforced that perpetuate harm to these groups. Moreover, incoming NPHC and MGC advisors must be provided onboarding opportunities that attend to institutional context and community nuances without having to rely on students to teach them these concepts. Pieces that would be useful to share include organizational terminology, (inter)national organizational history, background regarding umbrella associations if applicable, information regarding local alum chapters, chapter traditions, and chapter history. (Inter)national organizations can serve as important liaisons in

this regard; therefore, it is important that organizations maintain a system to track these contextual nuances and for campus-based professionals to work collaboratively with them in this effort. Future research can examine relationships between campus-based professionals and (inter)national CBSF leadership to gain a further understanding of how these stakeholders envision one another's work and what they can do to better support one another and student members.

Similar to other research (Duran & Allen, 2020; Janosik et al., 2006), we found that many participants expressed the importance of professional associations in developing their competencies in working with CBSFs. However, the extent to which these spaces were helpful was dependent on individual experience and identity. Participants that were members of MGC and NPHC organizations often found these trainings to be rudimentary, while these sessions more often benefitted members of HWSFs that did not possess this background knowledge. Similar to SFL offices, professional associations must be more intentional in centering conversations on CBSFs by offering developmental opportunities explicitly focused on these groups. Importantly, these opportunities should cater to individuals that already possess working knowledge of CBSFs in addition to those with little to no experience. Topics that extend beyond the CBSF 101 type trainings can include critically examining campus policies that may harm CBSFs, providing insight to ways to support CBSF members when campus and larger societal racist incidents occur, and exploring ways to support student's racial/ethnic identity development through CBSFs among others. Professional associations also have the opportunity to partner with (inter)national organization leadership to provide further insight to chapter needs. Future research can further unpack what CBSF members want and need from campus-based professionals. Findings would be vital in guiding these efforts.

Conclusion

This study offers insight into practices that may reinforce inequities that exist in sorority and fraternity communities and reaffirm anecdotal knowledge discussed in the field of SFL—that culturally-based sororities and fraternities are often not treated as central to the community. Perhaps providing professionals with more developmental opportunities that center the histories, purposes, and organizational nuances of CBSFs can be one step toward equitable practice in SFL. Professional preparation programs, SFL offices, (inter)national organizational leadership, and professional associations can all do more to center this work.

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Table 1

Sorority and Fraternity Life Professionals Demographic Information

Participant	Advising	Member of a CBSF?	Years advising CBSFs	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender[2]/ Pronouns	Institution type[3]
Alvaro	CBSFs & HWSFs	No	6-8	Mexican	Male; he/him	PWI
Amy	CBSFs & HWSFs	No	6-8	White/ Caucasian	Female; she/her	PWI
Cecilia	CBSFs & HWSFs	No	1-3	White	Cisgender Female; she/her	PWI
Christian	CBSFs	Yes	1-3	Latino	Male; he/him	PWI
Declan	CBSFs & HWSFs	No	6-8	White	Male; he/him	PWI
Joanne	CBSFs & HWSFs	Yes	4-5	Black/African American	Woman; she/her	MSI
JoJo	CBSFs	Yes	9+	Black/African American	F; she/her	PWI
Kaylee	CBSFs & HWSFs	Yes	4-5	Bi-Racial (Black & White)	Cis-Female; she/her	PWI
Lisa	CBSFs & HWSFs	No	9+	White	Female; she/her	PWI
Marnie	CBSFs & HWSFs	No	4-5	White	Female; she/her	PWI
Melody	CBSFs & HWSFs	Yes	4-5	Multiracial - Asian, Pacific Islander	Female; she/her	MSI
Robert	CBSFs & HWSFs	No	1-3	Caucasian	Male; he/him	MSI
Taylor	CBSFs & HWSFs	Yes	1-3	Black/African American	Female/Woman ; she/her	PWI
Tim	CBSFs	Yes	9+	African American	Male; he/him	MSI
Zane	CBSFs & HWSFs	No	6-8	White	Male; he/him	PWI

[2] Participants had the opportunity to write in their own gender identities. Although terms regarding gender and sex assigned at birth may be conflated in their responses, we include their direct language to honor their answers.

[3] PWI stands for predominantly white institution and MSI stands for minority serving institution