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# Sorority and Fraternity Life Professionals' Perspectives on Challenges Faced by Culturally Based Sororities and Fraternities

Antonio Duran
*Florida International University*

Crystal E. Garcia
*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Hannah L. Reyes
*The Ohio State University*

# SORORITY AND FRATERNITY LIFE PROFESSIONALS' PERSPECTIVES ON CHALLENGES FACED BY CULTURALLY BASED SORORITIES AND FRATERNITIES

Antonio Duran, PhD., Crystal E. Garcia, PhD., Hannah L. Reyes

*Featuring the perspectives of 15 sorority and fraternity life (SFL) professionals, this qualitative study highlights the challenges culturally based sororities and fraternities face on college campuses. Guided by a framework grounded in concepts of organizational culture, findings revealed three issues that culturally based SFL organizations encounter: a predominant emphasis on historically white sororities and fraternities in SFL communities, a lack of human and financial capital, as well as inadequate advisor support and training. Implications for research and practice are offered.*

*Keywords: sororities; fraternities; professional preparation; advising; qualitative*

From their inception, sorority and fraternity life (SFL) organizations have perpetuated exclusionary practices, marginalizing racially minoritized individuals, women, and those from additional disenfranchised backgrounds (Gillon et al., 2019). Partially in response to oppressive clauses historically white sororities and fraternities (HWSFs) used to regulate membership, culturally based sororities and fraternities[1] (CBSFs) emerged (Torbenson & Parks, 2009). CBSFs represented a place for groups like Students of Color to reap the benefits of lifelong relationships, leadership opportunities, and siblinghood. Although CBSFs share a purpose of serving particular racial and ethnic identity groups, it is important to note that CBSFs each have unique founding purposes (see Torbenson & Parks, 2009 for expansive histories). For instance, Asian American-based sororities and fraternities founded in the early 1900s focused on empowering international (primarily Chinese) students to strengthen their home countries

when they returned while later waves attended to discrimination occurring within the U.S. context and pan-Asian empowerment (Dosono et al., 2020).

In contemporary times, CBSFs are frequently grouped on campuses within Multicultural Greek Councils (MGCs) and the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC; home to nine historically Black SFL organizations). Researchers consistently underscore the value of CBSFs in the lives of minoritized students (see Duran et al., 2021 for a comprehensive literature review), including having positive influences in their identity development (Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014; Garcia, 2020; Greyerbiehl & Mitchell, 2014; Orta et al., 2019), social connections (Garcia, 2020; Greyerbiehl & Mitchell, 2014; Shalka & Jones, 2015), and leadership outcomes (Mitchell et al., 2017). Though these organizations provide benefits to their members, little is known in published research about the challenges CBSFs encounter as they support minori-

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[1] Although we use the term "culturally based sororities and fraternities" in this manuscript, we want to recognize the critiques of this language including that it insinuates that other sororities and fraternities are not grounded in cultures of whiteness or that it conflates the various organizational types under this umbrella (Peñaranda et al., 2022).

tized individuals on today's campuses. One way to comprehend the realities that these organizations face is through the stories told by the campus-based professionals who support them.

Therefore, the purpose of this constructivist qualitative study was to understand the challenges CBSFs face from the perspectives of professionals who advise them. Given that campus-based SFL practitioners' positions are often seen as experts of the organizations they advise (Goodman & Templeton, 2021), we believed they could speak to how these groups function within broader higher education and SFL organizational cultures, our conceptual framework (e.g., Alvesson, 2011; Schein, 2004). Our research question was: How do sorority and fraternity life practitioners working with culturally based sororities and fraternities describe the challenges these organizations experience on college campuses? We assert that student affairs practitioners across functional areas would benefit from comprehending the barriers that these organizations face within higher education institutions, knowledge they would need in order to adequately support and advocate for CBSFs.

## Literature Review

Members of CBSFs join these organizations for various reasons, including: building familial bonds with other individuals, expanding networks within and beyond their campus community, and supporting their academic success (e.g., Arellano, 2020; Greyerbiehl & Mitchell, 2014). Additionally, they may choose to affiliate with these organizations for their commitment to Communities of Color, distinct membership recruitment and new member educational processes, lower costs to join CBSFs, and vast divergences in the types of organizational events CBSFs host (Arellano, 2020; Garcia, 2019; Minthorn & Youngbull, 2020).

Of note, race and ethnicity inform whether Students of Color find a sorority or fra-

ternity to call their home and also influence larger SFL communities in other ways. Specifically, race and racism have intricate ties with sorority and fraternity communities, shaping who is able to join and how individuals experience their membership (Gillon et al., 2019). Research findings have shown that members of NPHC organizations experience higher levels of surveillance and disciplinary actions than historically white organizations (Ray, 2013) and that members of HWSFs do not recognize CBSFs as part of SFL communities (Garcia, 2019). CBSFs thus have played an instrumental role in providing these students a space without these same hostilities that also affirm their racial/ethnic identities (Arellano, 2020; Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014; Tran & Chang, 2019). In particular, many prospective members gravitate toward these organizations because it offers them the chance to explore their racial/ethnic identities in manners that may not be happening elsewhere at their institution (Greyerbiehl & Mitchell, 2014) and in ways more welcoming than HWSFs.

Considering that CBSFs emerged with the expressed aims of cultural relevance and racial uplift (Gillon et al., 2019), SFL professionals should possess cultural competency and an understanding of greater racial inequities to effectively serve these organizations (Reyes et al, 2022; Strayhorn & McCall, 2012). The development of this competency oftentimes depends on people's own social identities and their SFL affiliations (Reyes et al., 2022). However, few known studies have examined the dynamics involved in advising CBSFs or how SFL professionals are prepared to engage with these nuances. The research that is available focuses on advising Black Greek-Letter Organizations (BGLOs), shedding light on considerations for practitioners working with NPHC organizations that also may be useful in the context of advising other CBSFs (e.g., Johnson et al., 2008; Parks & Spencer, 2013; Patton & Bonner, 2001; Strayhorn & McCall, 2012). Of note,

Johnson and colleagues (2008) asserted, "In general, campus administrations have failed to provide adequate support and structure for BGLOs. As a result, these organizations have been underadvised and poorly assisted" (p. 450). Consequently, to better serve CBSFs, additional research is needed about these organizations, especially from professionals who may or may not feel efficacious in supporting CBSFs or prepared to do so. Specifically, this present study came to be due to our interest in how sorority and fraternity life communities invest (or do not) in their CBSFs.

## Conceptual Framework

To frame this study, we drew on concepts related to organizational culture (e.g., Alvesson, 2011; Schein, 2004) to investigate how professionals and students work toward integrating CBSFs into larger campus communities. Specifically, Alvesson (2011) defined organizational culture as a way to understand symbolic commitments and decisions made within specific contexts. In particular, Schein (2004) asserted that three levels construct organizational culture: artifacts (the visual markers, processes, and behaviors in a group), espoused values (commitments named as important to the organization), and underlying assumptions (unnamed beliefs present within the setting). These levels are helpful as scholars attempt to identify potential incongruences that may exist among these three categories in educational settings. For instance, though an organization (in this case, higher education institutions and SFL offices) may profess a dedication to a specific group (e.g., CBSFs), this espoused commitment may not be represented in their behaviors and actions, known as artifacts. Therefore, utilizing these levels as part of our conceptual framework meant that we could articulate how artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions relevant to CBSFs aligned to create the contexts in which they operated.

## Study Design

We adopted a constructivist framework, which Creswell and Poth (2018) outlined as "[subjective meanings] formed through interactions with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (p. 24). Constructivism invites participants to name their own unique realities and allowed us as researchers to co-construct knowledge with them, meaning that the findings represent our shared understanding of CBSF challenges. We utilized a general qualitative interview-based design, borrowing elements from narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Researchers mobilizing narrative inquiry believe that people make meaning of their lives through stories and that scholars should be attentive to the times, places, and people that individuals reference relative to formative moments in their lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In this study, borrowing from narrative inquiry meant that we utilized many of the hallmarks from this tradition while humbly recognizing that we may have fallen short of fulfilling the promise of the methodology in all aspects of our study.

### Participant Recruitment and Selection

To select participants for this study, we engaged criterion and maximum variation sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, we sought participants who fit the following criteria: a) currently work as a SFL professional and b) work with culturally based SFL organizations (those typically within NPHC and MGC councils). We distributed flyers with this information via social media avenues including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. We had originally hoped for anywhere between 10 to 20 participants. Twenty-two individuals submitted their interest in participating by completing a demographic form about their identities, institutions, and practitioner journeys. From there, we followed principles of maximum variation sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018), diversifying the sample in terms of social identities, gradu-

**Table 1**

*Profile of Sorority and Fraternity Life Professionals (Self-Reported on a Demographic Form)*

| Participant Pseudonyms | Primary Advising Works | Affiliated with a CBSF? | Race/Ethnicity | Gender[1]/Pronouns | Sexuality |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alvaro | CBSFs (NPHC) | No | Mexican | Male; he/him | Gay |
| Amy | CBSFs (NPHC and MGC) & HWSFs | No | White/ Caucasian | Female; she/her | Heterosexual |
| Cecilia | CBSFs (NPHC and MGC) & HWSFs | No | White | Female; she/her | Straight |
| Christian | CBSFs (MGC) | Yes (Latinx/ o-Based | Latino | Male; he/him | Heterosexual |
| Declan | CBSFs (NPHC and MGC) & HWSFs | No | White | Male; he/him | Gay |
| Joanne | CBSFs (NPHC and MGC) & HWSFs | Yes (NPHC) | Black/African American | Woman; she/her | Heterosexual |
| JoJo | CBSFs (NPHC and MGC) | Yes (NPHC) | Black/African American | F; she/her | Heterosexual |
| Kaylee | CBSFs & HWSFs (NPHC and MGC) | Yes (Latinx/ a-Based | Bi-Racial (Black & White) | Cis-Female; she/her | Bisexual |
| Lisa | CBSFs (NPHC and MGC) & HWSFs | No | White | Female; she/her | Heterosexual |
| Marnie | CBSFs (NPHC) & HWSFs | No | White | Female; she/her | Heterosexual |
| Melody | CBSFs (NPHC and MGC) & HWSFs | Yes (Multi-cultural) | Mutiracial - Asian, Pacific Islander | Female; she/her | Straight |
| Robert | CBSFs (MGC) & HWSFs | No | Caucasian | Male; he/him | Bisexual |
| Taylor | CBSFs (NPHC and MGC) & HWSFs | Yes (Latinx/ a-Based | Black/African American | Female/Woman; she/her | Heterosexual |
| Tim | CBSFs (NPHC and MGC) | Yes (NPHC) | African American | Male; he/him | Heterosexual |
| Zane | CBSFs (NPHC and MGC) & HWSFs | No | White | Male; he/him | Gay |

[1] 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.

ate school backgrounds, professional experiences, and SFL affiliation. We selected ten individuals to participate that seemed balanced in terms of their social identities, backgrounds, and SFL affiliations, eventually adding five more after seeing diverging perspectives in participants' interviews. The total sample then came to be fifteen individuals. Although we were open to expanding the sample more, we completed the study when we started to hear patterns across participants' narratives and when we no longer heard negative cases, a sign of data saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In terms of participants' institution types, two worked at private institutions and all others worked in public universities; four of these institutions were primarily non-residential while all others were primarily or highly residential; two institutions were categorized as medium-sized institutions and all others were large. Four participants worked in SFL for one to three years (Cecilia, Christian, Robert, Taylor), three for four to five years (Joanne, Kaylee, Melody), five for six to eight years (Alvaro, Amy, Declan, Marnie, Zane), and three for nine or more years (JoJo, Lisa, Tim). See Table 1 for demographic information for the participants and of note, all individuals selected their own pseudonym.

**Data Collection**

After we selected participants, each individual engaged in multiple forms of data collection including two semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom (with all researchers present), lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. A common way to elicit stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), the interviews encouraged the professionals to share formative experiences in their career that influenced their relationship to CBSFs. For instance, we asked participants to discuss stories that captured their professional preparation to work with CBSFs, together with disclosing examples of when they saw CBSFs succeed and/or struggle on their campuses. This approach to asking ques-

tions honored our attempt to borrow elements from narrative inquiry as researchers seek to understand how participants make meaning of a chosen phenomenon through stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Additionally, the SFL professionals responded to reflection journals in between their first and second interview to allow time to reflect individually. The prompts motivated them to think about ideas that manifested in the initial interview while asking them to notice dynamics in their current/past work environments related to CBSFs; this consequently caused them to reflect on issues of organizational culture, our framework (Alvesson, 2011; Schein, 2004). In the second interview, we followed up with them on their journal responses.

To align with constructivist epistemology, we co-constructed knowledge with participants by regularly providing our own interpretations of what they were mentioning and our own perspectives on the topics that we were discussing. We then asked for their thoughts and clarifications. This practice meant that we could come to a common understanding of their experiences as SFL professionals. Of note, one participant, Melody, only completed the first interview due to time constraints. However, we did still include Melody's first interview within our larger data set and analyzed her stories alongside those of the other participants. Given that people often tell narratives in disconnected, non-chronological ways (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009), we believed that we could still make meaning of Melody's overall story arc with this one interview and draw insights from her comments.

**Data Analysis**

To start analysis, we referenced Gubrium and Holstein's (2009) argument that participants rarely tell stories in a linear fashion, leading to us develop chronological narratives for each individual in the study. These narratives were anywhere from 4-10 single-spaced pages and consisted of direct quotes from participants' interviews and their re-

flection journals, as well as researcher interpretations. We identified excerpts from the participants' stories that aligned with our research question and that were representative of their perspectives. From there, we reviewed the narratives, paying attention to the dimensions of narrative inquiry (i.e., temporal, contextual, and personal/social) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In particular, we individually read the narratives and annotated in the margins using these three components of narrative inquiry to provide structure to our qualitative analysis. We would denotate who were the substantial actors in the examples they provided (e.g., fellow SFL staff, students, senior-level administrators), write when in their careers they adopted particular views or practices (i.e., representing time), and note the specific settings they encountered situations (e.g., organization meetings, interpersonal interactions).

We also engaged in axial coding (Saldaña, 2016) to make meaning of the main concepts that appeared across participants' stories. In this stage of axial coding, we wrote memos where we would note how the participants stories were similar, but also distinct. We also took notes on how their narratives revealed larger issues related to organizational culture, our conceptual framework (Alvesson, 2011; Schein, 2004), and how the practitioners discussed these realities. These memos were important in helping us develop patterns that existed across their narratives. We then came together and discussed the codes that we generated, identifying the places where our interpretations converged and diverged. Through debriefing conversations following this coding, we then arrived at our major themes from the study using the lens provided by our conceptual framework as a guide. Our borrowing of narrative inquiry elements was rooted in the belief that narrative analysis takes many forms, including being able to theorize "across a number of cases by identifying common thematic elements across research participants" (Riess-man, 2008, p. 85).

**Trustworthiness**

To ensure the rigor of this study, we attended to four standards of trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Jones et al., 2014). We addressed credibility (drawing connections between the data and findings that emerge) and dependability (tracking steps in a research process) by writing memos throughout the study, as well as by keeping an audit trail. We then ensured confirmability, or the use of other individuals to affirm findings, by sending participants their narratives to solicit feedback. Six participants responded to this member-checking opportunity offering slight modifications or, in most cases, accepting the narrative in its entirety. Importantly, this practice meant that these professionals were agentic in the presentation of their stories, having the ability to co-construct knowledge by (dis)agreeing with the researchers' interpretations. Finally, we attempted to achieve transferability (providing readers the information necessary to translate insights to their contexts) by sharing as much detail as possible when writing our findings.

**Researcher Positionality**

We find it important to provide information about our positionalities that influenced how we approached this study. Our group consists of researchers who are not affiliated with culturally based SFL organizations, but the first two authors serve or have served as advisors to Latina/o-based groups. We recognize that our backgrounds mean that we are largely situated as outsiders to culturally based SFL groups, especially NPHC organizations. Our assumptions stem from the work that we have done to educate ourselves on these communities through in-depth reading, conversations with members, and engagement with professional organizations. Through this work, we have seen the potential that these groups have to support minoritized communities.

Nevertheless, we also recognize that we are not privy to the specifics of particular organizations' rituals and norms. To further explain our positionalities, we offer brief statements for the three authors. Relevant to this project, Antonio Duran advised a Latino-based fraternity but recognizes that he is not affiliated to a culturally based fraternity. Throughout this project, Antonio was reflective on how his experiences as an advisor shaped data collection and analysis, especially as someone who identifies as a Latino man himself and is passionate about uplifting minoritized communities. Namely, he has seen how these organizations create strong connections between their members, but how professionals and students overlook them.

To further explain our positionalities, Crystal E. Garcia, a Latina and white cisgender heterosexual woman, is affiliated with a historically white sorority and serves as an advisor for a Latina-based sorority. Her identities and connections to historically white and culturally based SFL organizations position her as an insider-outsider. She is particularly mindful of how she once lacked knowledge of culturally based SFL organizations, especially as an undergraduate student, but she since sought to gain knowledge of these groups as a result. Hannah L. Reyes is a cisgender, heterosexual Latina woman with no Greek affiliation who approaches this work with caution, commitment, and humility. As an interviewer, Hannah realizes the shortcomings that her outsider positionality affords her like potential initial wariness from participants. Namely, Hannah had to work through the biases she had of SFL that were in fact rooted in her perceptions of historically white SFL groups and not culturally based ones.

## Findings

When asked to discuss the status of CBSFs, SFL professionals noted that they face challenges related to their functioning and resources, reflecting several insights concerning the organizational culture of SFL offices (e.g., Alvesson, 2011; Schein, 2004). To begin, SFL practitioners described the emphasis placed on historically white SFL organizations that push CBSFs to the margins. Next, they named the lack of human and financial capital these groups receive, before then detailing inadequate advisor support and training. Below, we expand on these findings in greater detail using excerpts from the participants' interviews. Specifically, we highlight the perspectives of selected participants who offered comments that represented the insights provided by the professionals as a larger sample.

### Emphasis on Historically White SFL Organizations

Participants often reflected that campus community members, senior-level administrators, and fellow SFL staff members (representing actors in their narratives) typically treated CBSFs as an afterthought to HWSFs or did not consider them at all, showcasing an organizational preference to HWSFs. Their stories underscored the myriad ways HWSFs were given priority over CBSFs within SFL communities, larger campus populations, and SFL field practices. The subthemes within this finding included how students and staff were not knowledgeable of CBSFs, as well as how practices and policies in SFL offices were not considerate of the structures of CBSFs.

A primary way HWSFs were emphasized over CBSFs was through a pattern of erasure wherein participants explained that members of the campus community often failed to even recognize that CBSFs existed. For example, Joanne, an NPHC member, explained that her institution tended to be IFC/Panhellenic-centered, a dynamic that her student named as NPHC being a "stepchild" and MGC being the "long-lost cousin." Similarly, JoJo, also an NPHC member, recognized these patterns, describing them as a form of privilege for historically white organizations:

Sometimes, but by virtue of privilege of numbers, an IFC and Panhellenic per-

son can go through a four-year experience and not know other communities or councils exist. But by virtue, on the other side of it, your culture-based groups are forced to know IFC and Panhellenic exist.

Realizing these dynamics, JoJo pointed out the complexities of SFL professionals' work to cultivate connections among councils arguing, "you can't build community if you don't have the awareness of other communities [that] exist." Like JoJo, Declan, an IFC member, noticed this phenomenon at the institution he worked at and was troubled by the fact that the campus broadly did not recognize CBSFs and their histories within the institution: "We have two single letter NPHC chapters on my campus. And you know so we've had them for quite a long time. But when people think Fraternity and Sorority Life, they don't think of those organizations." Declan was not alone in his frustration at the failure of campus communities to recognize CBSFs. This erasure did not only extend from students, but also to campus administrators.

Amy, a Panhellenic member, shared that the lack of knowledge that upper administration displayed concerning CBSFs was especially salient. In her previous institution, she spent much of her time "educating administration on fraternity and sorority life as a whole." Contrary to her current position, most of the administration were members of HWSFs that failed to educate themselves about CBSFs: "Now I'm having to explain the differences between their experience and the culturally based experience." Amy further explained that this made it difficult to serve the unique needs of CBSFs and obtain the financial resources needed to support their initiatives. What is important to underscore with Amy's story, as well as those of other participants, is that senior-level administrators on their campuses typically exhibited comprehension of HWSFs, but were disparagingly less knowledgeable about CBSFs.

Additionally, participants' reflections re-

vealed how these organizations were subjected to inequitable practices, policies, and procedures. This meant that not only was there a privileging of HWSFs in the abstract, but that organizationally, SFL offices (a salient setting for many of their stories) operated in ways that negatively impacted CBSFs. One way this came to light in participants' experiences was by witnessing other SFL professionals espouse harmful rhetoric about CBSFs. Joanne shared such an observation:

It was just so frustrating almost every week hearing Panhellenic and IFC...affiliated professionals say "It's just so hard to work with my culturally based organizations. It's so difficult to like get them to do whatever, blah, blah." And I was like, you were also probably the Panhellenic president who didn't care to collaborate with this NPHC president…

Beyond a lack of relationship building with CBSF members, there were other notable manners SFL practitioners did not attend to these groups. Declan described his sensemaking about this field practice:

I think that I see identity and culturally based organizations in general as an afterthought of "Let's do all this programming for IFC and Panhellenic and let's shove identity organizations into that...a lot of these concepts translate." Maybe, but we cannot do it as an afterthought.

Unfortunately, these practices not only determined who was given consideration within communities and who was not, but also ways that HWSFs held levels of privilege that meant that they were reprimanded at lesser degrees than CBSFs. Christian, a Latino fraternity member, explained, "They're [Panhellenic and IFC] not getting in trouble for things that another organization got kicked off for." Christian attributed these disparities in punishment to wealth and social connections that HWSFs maintained:

Because they have lawyers, because they came in deep with, you know, their entire exec board, their national person,

their chapter advisor, their alumni advisor, and their lawyer… And their alum have a lot of money and, you know, if we kick a chapter off of campus, hey, maybe that's a million dollars donation that the institution is going to lose and we can't have that.

Christian recognized the privilege that historically white organizations possessed did not extend to CBSFs. As he observed, HWSFs knew how to play the game and CBSFs simply did not have the resources to do so. Though the specifics of such situations involving HWSFs and their social connections were not known, what is significant is that CBSF members and advisors perceived HWSF having certain advantages that were rarely extended to the culturally based SFL organizations.

**Lack of Human and Financial Capital**

As the practitioners illuminated challenges they faced in working with CBSFs, each suggested these issues to be tied to issues of human and financial capital, which relates to the processes and behaviors that define organizational artifacts (Schein, 2004). In particular, the lack of human and financial capital for CBSFs represented institutional disinvestment in these organizations. These were lessons that those who were affiliated with CBSFs learned during their undergraduate years, but that those who were members of historically white SFL groups did not gain until their time as professionals. Although these problems are omnipresent throughout the field of student affairs, what is unique about participants' stories are how they described these realities facing CBSFs disproportionately compared to HWSFs. In particular, patterns in this finding included the lack of resources for CBSFs, the lack of collaboration between counsils, issues in recruiting members, and the shortage of attention given by SFL professionals. For this finding, we find it helpful to divide the challenges into areas of financial capital and human capital, respectively.

Issues of financial capital manifested in numerous ways. One resounding challenge listed by nearly all participants was the lack of resources available for CBSFs and resulting inability for them to pay for programming endeavors. Connected to this idea, practitioners like Amy and Cecilia found larger funding sources to be contentious points for CBSFs. Amy, an NPHC advisor, noticed a lack of financial support for her groups, largely due to institutional policies:

All programming must be paid for either through the councils or our trust, which is funded by donations. While this is a barrier for all FSL programming, I feel this is a major barrier for our culturally based councils, as they don't have the financial means to pay for a lot of programs themselves.

Similarly, Cecilia, an MGC advisor, connected financial issues to the size of CBSFs:

they still want to do a lot of the same programming as the chapters that have, you know, 200 members that are charging 4,000 dollars a semester to be a part of and I'm like, you don't have that budget.

This challenge around funding, Cecilia mentioned, only made the neglected state of CBSFs more apparent. For CBSFs, a lack of funding meant no space to call their own. As Cecilia described, "And so that translates to a need to have designated space that is theirs."

Connected to both financial and human capital, practitioners including Alvaro, Tim, and Joanne mentioned the lack of collaboration across councils which limited opportunities to split programming costs, establish cross-council relationships, and gain resources outside of their respective council walls. JoJo, an NPHC advisor, spoke to this notion as she observed her students resisting collaboration to maintain their individuality:

[Better] things can be accomplished if we can work together as a collective we. And just because different doesn't mean bad. All the time, people want to assimilate to one, you know, monolithic group. Like oh, we're all the same. We're all fra-

ternities and sororities in it together.

For JoJo, diversity did not mean a melting pot but instead likened it to a salad where each component came together to make "a wonderful meal."

Throughout our analysis, we identified two other issues related to human capital. First, we describe challenges related to recruiting members, especially at PWIs. Marnie, a MGC advisor, initially contended with this concern as she described the near impossibility of NPHC expansion on her campus:

> [Our] fraternity men, were kind of like we already have a problem with our numbers so what would that be like if we brought another NPHC fraternity on… Their kind of mindset was like "There are already so few Black men on campus anyways and so… What does that mean for us?"

Through this sentiment, Marnie alludes to the difficulties of recruitment that would only be further exacerbated by the introduction of another NPHC organization. Practitioners identified the second issue as differences in privilege afforded to Panhellenic and IFC compared to CBSFs like staffing. Though participants like Amy and Lisa noted how they were the sole staff member for CBSFs, and sometimes in a graduate student capacity, others like Zane, a professional affiliated with an IFC fraternity, observed ways that SFL offices neglected CBSFs by straining the already limited staff working with them: "So one, they always pair it with something else. Because it's such a small population of students, they want to see something else happen."

Taylor, an MGC advisor, also suggested disparities in human and social capital to be evident in how staff and administrators perceive CBSFs: "Just because they don't have houses or don't have, you know, huge budgets and don't get those things doesn't... not make them fraternities and sororities." In this sentiment, Taylor succinctly presents the problematic assumptions that some staff and administration commonly engage

CBSFs with.

## Inadequate Advisor Support and Training

Finally, in the process of describing challenges that CBSFs face on college campuses, participants in this study implicated themselves. Specifically, this finding underscores how each SFL practitioner named the lack of support and training available for those who advise these organizations, together with the reality that CBSFs did not receive as much time and attention from professionals. These insights became clear as these professionals underwent their onboarding during their graduate assistantships or in their full-time roles, representing salient times in which these realities became evident. This pattern was tied to the organizational emphasis placed on HWSFs. For example, Kaylee, a practitioner affiliated with a Latina-based sorority, observed that her SFL colleagues have a lack of desire to learn about culturally based organizations. Reflecting upon past campus-based experiences, as well as those at professional conferences, Kaylee shared:

> [W]hen we're at the table and we're talking about it, I realize how little my colleagues know about working with our MGC and NPHC groups and it hurts because they deserve to have people come into those spaces that know something about them. It hurts to know that somebody could come in never having worked with them, never having read about them, and never have met a member of those organizations in their life.

In this statement, Kaylee captured the reality that those working with CBSFs may not have the knowledge necessary to support these organizations. Building upon these comments, individuals such as Cecilia, Christian, JoJo, and Robert mentioned the inadequate training that CBSF advisors receive and seek out. Robert, a member of a historically white fraternity, recalled how he was "kind of thrown into it, into figuring out what [CBSFs] provide in my own way."

He went on to share stories of how his Director of Student Life at the time only provided him with baseline knowledge about these organizations on topics like "stepping and strolling."

Additionally, participants like Cecilia, Joanne, JoJo, Kaylee, Marnie, and Melody called attention to the lack of time and energy that CBSFs receive, especially when SFL professionals attend to HWSFs as well. One example came through in Marnie's narrative as she discussed the challenges in advising both IFC and NPHC on her campus. As a member of a historically white sorority herself, Marnie was well aware of the issues that HWSFs face. She mentioned:

> [T]here are days where...I've spent all day putting out fires for IFC or like dealing with conduct which...you know, comes with the job…it's hard sometimes cause I have to take a step back and be like I have not checked in with my NPHC President all week because I've been dealing with this hazing incident.

Marnie acknowledged that this time distribution is not fair but that that are higher priority items as an SFL professional (e.g., handling hazing or alcohol instances), which meant the time she dedicated to the NPHC organizations was sacrificed. Melody, a member of a multicultural sorority, looked back on her undergraduate experiences to substantiate the ways SFL practitioners are inattentive to CBSFs. She shared the moments she had with her undergraduate advisor: "Like we always had that conversation and I'd always push like, why do you spend so much time with IFC and Panhellenic?" As Melody remarked, HWSFs were "just a little bit of troublemakers," a trend that she continues to notice as a professional which limits the attention that CBSFs acquire.

The shortage of attention culturally based SFL organizations receive from SFL professionals oftentimes led members to not trust campus-based practitioners, a phenomenon described by individuals like Amy, Cecilia, Christian, Joanne, Lisa, and Marnie. Specifically, participants commented on how there is a high degree of turnover in advisors working specifically with CBSFs, which caused problems of trust. For instance, Christian drew on his experiences as a member of a Latino-based fraternity to try to gain trust with the United Greek Council (akin to an MGC) on his campus when he started. Yet, he acknowledged why students were wary: "they just think to not trust or not invest time in the person in this position, because they're gonna be gone in a year… And so, you know, I've been telling them like I'm not going anywhere." Lisa, a member of a historically white sorority, shared a similar story when students involved in NPHC were resistant to her presence toward the beginning of their relationship: "I remember my first NPHC meeting, I was told by the NPHC Vice President that I was just another white woman who was going to leave them in a year." Lisa recalled having to have "so much strength…to not cry in that moment." What is important to take from these narratives, however, is that their students' initial distrust came from past experiences where they felt burnt by the recurring attrition of advisors.

## Discussion

Findings from this constructivist qualitative study reveal the challenges CBSFs encounter from the perspectives of professionals who advise them. Consequently, this project addresses a gap in the existing student affairs literature and has the potential to influence practice moving forward. For example, using an organizational culture framework (Alvesson, 2011) reveals how SFL communities implicitly and explicitly place focus on HWSFs, thus rendering CBSFs invisible. What is notable about this point is that members of CBSFs at historically white institutions may join these organizations because of the isolation and marginalization they experience on campuses (e.g., Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014); yet, they encounter similar challenges related to whiteness within SFL spaces. Importantly, we acknowledge that the issues that CBSFs

face will differ based on which specific councils they are affiliated with (e.g., those in NPHC versus groups in MGC).

The first theme from our research exemplifies this point by speaking to how SFL students and practitioners, as well as upper administrators, fail to acknowledge the presence of culturally based SFL organizations. This finding highlighted inconsistencies between espoused values and underlying assumptions of SFL (Schein, 2004). Though many SFL offices espouse to value diversity, what was implicitly communicated (i.e., the underlying assumptions) was that HWSFs are still privileged given their size, financial standing, and presence on campus. As JoJo named, CBSFs members frequently have to know about HWSFs but the same cannot be said in reverse. Moreover, practitioners themselves frequently do not make the effort to learn about these groups, a point raised by Joanne. These insights resemble the literature on CBSFs which underscores the erasure that they and their members experience at institutions (Garcia, 2019). Though past scholarship has shown that members of HWSFs do not recognize CBSFs as part of the SFL community (Garcia, 2019), our findings showcase that professionals themselves can engage in practices that communicates similar rhetoric. An issue then results when SFL practitioners use HSWFs as the standard to establish initiatives and policies, thus marginalizing CBSFs and perpetuating a harmful underlying assumption (Schein, 2004).

Although these organizations can be influential for various reasons, including affirming students' racial/ethnic identities (Arellano, 2020; Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014; Tran & Chang, 2019), they are not able to do so to the extent that they can given these limited resources, which represent artifacts in an organization. From an organizational culture lens (Schein, 2004), though many SFL offices hold values that espouse to be committed to diversity and CBSFs, actions prove otherwise. As Cecilia mentioned, CBSFs want to function

and program in ways similar to historically white organizations, but they frequently do not have the number of members and the financial capital to do so. This reality, paired with Taylor's reflection that CBSFs may have less alumni support when compared to historically white SFL organizations, results in CBSFs possibly not reaching their ultimate potential.

Finally, the participants in this study named that many practitioners are not well-equipped to adequately support CBSFs – whether it be because of their training or how they prioritize their time. This is a finding that has been echoed in literature on advisors of BGLOs (e.g., Johnson et al., 2008; Patton & Bonner, 2001). Once again, organizationally, knowledge of and attention to CBSFs do not afford rewards to SFL professionals. As Kaylee mentioned in her stories, she is frequently surrounded by individuals working within SFL who have no understanding of the organizations they advise. Thus, what is visible in terms of the behaviors in these offices (i.e., part of artifacts in an organizational culture lens) is that professionals feel compelled to dedicate their time and energy to HWSFs, and not to CBSFs.

**Implications for Research and Practice**

In reflecting upon the participants' narratives, we see it necessary to offer implications for research and practice for those interested in uplifting the needs of culturally based groups, and SFL organizations specifically. When it comes to scholarship, there are several research questions that individuals can pursue moving forward. For instance, what was clear from participants' stories is that they perceived their colleagues or senior-level administrators to have limited understandings of CBSFs, which in turn influenced the challenges that CBSFs faced organizationally. Therefore, researchers can further examine how those who advise HWSFs come to learn about CBSFs and what their relationship is to these organizations in terms of the time and

energy they may devote to them. The same can be explored when it comes to senior-level student affairs officers on campus.

Moreover, one of the themes from this project showcased the lack of advisor preparation and training for those working with CBSFs. What scholars can examine is how those who work with CBSFs experience pay, responsibilities, trainings, and professional development differently compared to their counterparts who serve exclusively IFC/Panhellenic councils. Such studies would be beneficial to potentially engaging in needed organizational change within SFL offices. Additionally, though not the focus of this project, those who possess the knowledge of CBSFs may not be adequately rewarded in terms of their compensation and career advancement, which could cause them to depart from the field. Thus, future researchers should explore how organizational culture that devalues CBSFs also affects professionals, adding to the larger conversation of SFL practitioner attrition (see Goodman & McKeown, 2020; Koepsell & Stillman, 2016).

When it comes to practice, we offer recommendations specific to the three findings of this study. We target these implications toward campus-based SFL professionals, practitioners in other student affairs functional areas, as well as senior-level administrators. First, student affairs practitioners should learn more about the origins and evolutions of culturally based sororities, referencing texts like that of Garcia and Duran (2021), Sasso et al. (2019), as well as Torbenson and Parks (2009). This implication applies specifically to senior student affairs administrators, echoing Amy's belief that these individuals lack knowledge about these sororities and fraternities. Senior-level administrators who have SFL in their portfolio should read relevant books on CBSFs, together with attending institutes and conference presentations about these organizations. Furthermore, they should make it an active practice to have listening tours with members of CBSFs and the profession-

als who advise them. This could involve asking these individuals to come prepared with concerns and ways that the larger student affairs division can support them. Additionally, those working in SFL positions should reevaluate their practices to conduct an audit on who they serve. For instance, are the requirements that they make for programming attentive to the needs of CBSFs? Are the expectations that SFL practitioners have for size of chapters or for events that organizations put on reasonable for CBSFs? These are but a couple of questions that SFL professionals should consider as they work with CBSFs on their campuses. One concrete way that SFL professionals regularly assess their practices, which could also apply in these scenarios, is to use outside consultants who have a specific background in CBSFs. When these changes are effectively made, organizational culture surrounding CBSFs can shift in a positive manner.

These questions are pertinent given the lack of financial and human capital that these CBSFs experience, an insight offered by participants. SFL practitioners should work to help these organizations fundraise to pay for initiatives. In these instances, professionals can use the already-existing relationships that undergraduate chapters have with graduate chapters or with their (inter)national organizations. This inevitably will require practitioners to work on their relationships with the (inter)national organizations and non-campus-based advisors. Similarly, these professionals should assist CBSFs in recruitment efforts, providing them with assistance to market their organizations both digitally and via in-person means; these artifacts (Schein, 2004) can be instrumental to getting individuals to join. Finally, CBSF advisors could encourage HWSFs to partner on events since they may have more financial and human capital at their disposal, echoing JoJo's notion that CBSFs could benefit from collaborations. However, this responsibility should not only be that of SFL offices, but student affairs practitioners across functional ar-

eas who can also support the uplifting of CBSFs on their campuses.

Finally, SFL practitioners should make more efforts to engage in professional development opportunities to gain this comprehension around CBSFs. For instance, individuals should turn to SFL professional associations to learn about these organizations, in addition to referencing texts like those noted above. Additionally, directors of SFL offices or the SSAOs who oversee CBSF advisors must offer proper onboarding and continual reflection for those who work with these SFL organizations. This onboarding should include reading contemporary scholarship on CBSFs, as well as providing history on these organizations, both from an (inter)national level but also a campus-based one. Furthermore, SFL office directors and SSAOs should initiate conversations with CBSF advisors who are advising historically white SFL organizations about how they are spending their time and if there needs to be organizational restructuring to allow for better attention toward CBSFs.

## Conclusion

Though CBSFs play a monumental role in the lives of students from historically minoritized backgrounds (e.g., Arellano, 2020; Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014), findings indicate that these organizations encounter numerous challenges on college campuses. Importantly, these concerns are indicative of issues with larger organizational cultures in which CBSFs are erased and disregarded. Although SFL offices may profess to attend to culturally based SFL organizations, an espoused value (Schein, 2004), their actions suggest otherwise. Student affairs educators would benefit from listening to these stories as they seek to support individuals who hold minoritized identities and the groups designed to assist them in higher education settings.

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## Author Biographies

**Antonio Duran, Ph.D.** (he/him) is an Assistant Professor in the Higher Education program at Florida International University. Antonio's research agenda involves using critical and poststructural frameworks to complicate understandings of student development, experiences, and success for minoritized populations. Antonio is particularly interested in how culturally based sororities and fraternities create spaces for those with multiple minoritized identities.

**Crystal Garcia, Ph.D.** (she/her) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research critically examines the mechanisms by which racially minoritized college students experience campus environments, specifically focusing on campus climates and the role of student affairs in student experiences. Dr. Garcia is a member of Chi Omega Fraternity and serves as a chapter advisor for Kappa Delta Chi Sorority, Incorporated at Auburn University.

**Hannah Reyes** (she/her) is a doctoral student in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Program at The Ohio State University. Prior to pursuing her doctoral degree, Hannah was a practitioner working in multicultural affairs. Her department, as well as the organizations she advised, worked closely with the Multicultural Greek Council for programming and involvement efforts. These collaborations directly influence her research interest to center the experiences of minoritized students and practitioners, including those involved with culturally based sororities and fraternities.