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"This Was a White People's Game… They Were the Gatekeepers": Experiences of Fraternity/Sorority Professionals of Color

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"THIS WAS A WHITE PEOPLE'S GAME…THEY WERE THE GATEKEEPERS": EXPERIENCES OF FRATERNITY/SORORITY PROFESSIONALS OF COLOR

Aaron Thomas George

In this narrative inquiry, interviews from eight campus fraternity/sorority professionals who identify as people of color and who are members of culturally based fraternities and sororities were interviewed on how they experience their profession. Findings spoke to themes of guest in your own home, advocacy through presence, the complexity of representation matters, and turning burden into purpose. Overall participants spoke about caring deeply for their role given the challenges and obstacles that race and racism played and navigating systems and people that did not always value their experience.

Keywords: fraternity/sorority professionals, critical race theory, qualitative inquiry, narrative

In the third issue of 2019's *Perspectives* magazine, Veronica Moore, Black woman, member of Delta Sigma Theta, Sorority Inc, and 2014 to 2016 Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (AFA) president, wrote, "The challenges did not simply stop, however, when I received my first paycheck in fraternity/sorority life (FSL). The same things I encountered as a student regarding a successful transition I experienced as a woman of color in this profession" (King, et al., 2019, p. 15). The overall article, titled "Combating the Facebook Exit: Persistence and Career Longevity for Women of Color in Student Affairs," captured narratives of three Black women in student affairs, and Veronica's narrative specifically spoke to her experience as fraternity/sorority life (FSL) advisor. Her piece reflected on her experiences transitioning as an undergraduate and graduate student at predominantly white institutions; these included being labeled as an "angry Black woman" because of her assertive nature and difficulties finding a sense of community both in resources and people, such as where to get hair products and where Black people socialize. While not naming any explicit moments of racism from her years as a student in this piece, she as well as the other authors named how systems of oppression like racism and sexism played a role in shaping their experiences.

Veronica captured her experience in FSL as being "cumbersome to navigate systems of oppression, 'innocent' microaggressions, and environments unwelcoming to your presence and perspective" (King, et al., 2019, p. 15). Veronica's narrative illustrates an important point, which is that the systems of oppression she experienced as a student were also those she experienced as a professional, and that these systems

are endemic, traversing both time and the place that she experienced them. Moreover, her narrative represents what Critical Race theorists would identify as a counter narrative or counter story (Delgado, 1989). Veronica's account of her own story provides insight into how white supremacy is experienced by a professional of color in FSL.

This history of racism and exclusion in FSL is reflected in both an individual national organization's history as well as the history of the larger FSL communities that are created on campus (Gillon, et al., 2019; Torbenson, 2009). This history is evident when looking at the racial segregation that exists on today's college campuses (Park & Kim, 2013). Moreover, it is historically white fraternities and sororities that most FSL professionals come from (Goodman & McKeown, 2020). It is within this landscape that Veronica found herself navigating "innocent" microaggressions and behaviors born from a system of oppression. Considering the history of race and racism in FSL and it being a predominantly white field for campus FSL advisors, I wanted to know if the experiences in FSL advising like those Veronica had are shared among other professionals of color who are members of culturally based organizations. The purpose of this study was to explore other counter stories that exist within the FSL profession. Uplifting these counter stories is important because "stories, parables, chronicles, and narratives are powerful means for destroying mindsets" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2413). The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do campus fraternity/sorority professionals who are members of a culturally based fraternity or sorority and who identify as persons of color experience the profession of fraternity/sorority life advising?

2. What are their perceptions of how their race informs their experience as campus fraternity/sorority professionals?

3. What are their perceptions of how their membership in a culturally based fraternity or sorority informs their experience as a campus fraternity/sorority professional?

Relevant Literature

A critical race paradigm is crucial to situate the narratives of participants of color, but it also serves to ground the study in a social context that is informed by a racial history which is reproduced in contemporary contexts. Critical race theory (CRT) names that our history as a country needs to be reexamined through racial lenses to interrogate and expose systems and structures that disproportionately harm people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Higher education as an institution has a sordid and harmful history of white supremacy and racism, a history whose legacy can still be felt today (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Patton, 2016; Smith, et al., 2007). Patton (2016) went further to say that understanding racism/white supremacy on campus today starts with acknowledging higher education's racist past. Those who work at insti-

tutions of higher education, including student affairs practitioners, are part of the legacy of these harmful structures and may find themselves unknowingly perpetuating harmful practices.

The history of FSL is traced back to the creation of Phi Beta Kappa in 1776, and much like higher education at that time, it was reserved primarily for white men (Thelin 2017; Torbenson, 2009). As higher education institutions became more diverse post-Civil War, historically white fraternities and sororities maintained their racial homogeneity through membership clauses and on through recruitment practices, thus resulting in the proliferation of culturally based organizations (Gillon et al., 2019; Syrett, 2009). While white racial membership clauses came to an end, in part due to federal ruling of Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, and the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Hughey, 2010; Ross, 2015), fraternity and sorority communities still maintain one of the most racially segregated places on a college campus (Kim, et al., 2014; Park & Kim, 2013). Moreover, it is from this primarily and historically white undergraduate FSL community that most campus FSL advisors come from (Goodman & McKeown, 2020).

Professional Expectations

Working across differences, diversity, social justice, and inclusion are some of the terms that appear in the competency areas that the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (Wrona et al., 2018) and ACPA/NASPA (Eanes et al., 2015), respectively, named as areas that campus FSL professionals, who exist within the larger profession of student affairs, should have a working knowledge of. The CAS Standards for Fraternity and Sorority Advising Programs (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education [CAS], 2019) specifically has a section on access, equity, diversity, and inclusion that speaks to non-discrimination; the standards also address biases and processes that perpetuate systems of privilege and oppression. Furthermore, culturally competent advisors have been found to have better treatment of students, especially students of color (Strayhorn & McCall, 2012)such as Black Greek-letter organizations (BGLO. While these documents are great resources, they depend on the actions of individual professionals engaging with them. These professional documents are artifacts (Bonavia, 2006) that help inform a professional culture among those engaged in the profession of campus FSL advising; however, culture is more than just documents and includes policies and practices as well (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that the reason these messages of diversity, equity, and inclusion exists is to address inequities in the profession, namely practices and policies reflective of white supremacist ideologies.

Higher Education Professionals of Color

Nguyen and Duran (2018) studied the experiences of professionals of color in student affairs and found that these professionals had similar experiences to students of color and faculty of color in higher education student affairs (HESA) programs, being that they experienced microag-

gressions and challenges to their legitimacy causing racial battle fatigue (Harris & Linder, 2018; Hubain, et al., 2016; Patton & Catching, 2009). The following symptom of racial battle fatigue is then complicated by the conscious efforts needed by professionals of color to obtain and keep their jobs (Nguyen & Duran, 2018; Patton & Catching, 2009). Professionals of color had to wear a "white mask" to leverage whiteness to their benefit, such as denying that racism exists, accepting white standards as 'normal' in their practice, and even disassociating themselves from fellow colleagues of color (Nguyen & Duran, 2018). Sara Ahmed (2012) asserted that diversity officers who are people of color also often had to navigate white spaces by making decisions that were based on their survival in their position, in other words, to be able to keep their job, when speaking up on diversity issues. Moreover, the historic nature of institutions being rooted in whiteness creates an institutional memory and expectation of what the work should look like, or rather, that the purpose of the work is to maintain white standards (Ahmed, 2012).

Methodology and Framework

This study used a narrative inquiry to engage campus FSL professionals who are members of culturally based organizations and who identify as people of color to understand how they construct their reality by articulating their life experience as a campus FSL advisor (Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Reason, 2001). Using narrative inquiry epistemologically aligns with the idea that human beings live to tell stories to make meaning of their lives and how they experience the world (Reason, 2001). The narrative methodological approach works in a three dimensional space: the personal and social (interaction); past, present and future (continuity); and place (situation) (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). This was achieved through in-depth interviews that sought to understand the timeline of participants engagement with the FSL profession and the context of the environments to which their stories are connected.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) emerged from critical legal studies and examines how race and racism impact society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). More specifically "CRT can be a powerful explanatory tool for the sustained inequity that people of color experience," (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18). CRT as a methodological approach in higher education fits well given the history inequities that people of color have faced in the U.S. educational system (Ladson-Billings, 1998; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Patton, 2016). CRT's framework has multiple tenets that include the permanence of racism; counter-storytelling; interest convergence; intersectionality; whiteness as property; critique of liberalism; and commitment to social justice (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). For this study, I concentrated on the tenet of counter-storytelling, while acknowledging that other tenets presented themselves in the analysis of the data. "The use of counter-stories in analyzing higher education's

climate provides faculty, staff, and students of color a voice to tell their narratives involving marginalized experiences" (Hiraldo, 2010, p. 55). The experiences of people of color in education are often marginalized, overlooked, and omitted, and highlighting their narratives offer an understanding that counters the normative white experience (Ladson-Billings, 1998; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants were recruited from social media posts in Facebook groups such as the Fraternity and Sorority Research Collective, NASPA Fraternity and Sorority Knowledge Community, and the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors and had to fill out a Qualtrics form asking for pertinent information. Participants had to identify as a person of color, a member of a culturally based organization, and work as a campus FSL professional, as well as other demographic information shown in the table below. Twelve responses from came from the call for participants in which eight were selected that met all the requirements. Participants once selected participated in one 60–75-minute semi-structured interview that was conducted through Zoom.

The interview protocol was designed following a narrative approach that focused on eliciting stories from participants over their time as a campus FSL professional in the context of being a person of color and then as a member of a culturally based fraternity or sorority. Having questions that separated race and fraternal membership allowed for complexity in their narratives to be explored and to explicitly bring forth race to provide the context of a counter-story (CRT). Furthermore, I asked questions where respondents were able to comment on what it was like to engage with white professionals and to comment on how they believe their experiences in the profession are different from them. As Hubain, Allen, Harris, and Linder (2016) and Nguyen and Duran (2018) captured in their studies, the interactions and perceptions that people of color have with white people in the same context (classroom or workspace) inform their experience.

After transcribing and anonymizing the transcripts from each participant, I conducted two rounds of data analysis. Each interview transcript went through a first round of inductive coding using in vivo and conceptual codes, then the second round of coding was done to create categories which informed the themes of this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Trustworthiness of the study was addressed through the use purposeful sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) in that I sought participants to represent a diversity of fraternity/sorority membership, race, institution type, and geographic location. Member checks (Merriam, 1995) were also conducted in which each participant was emailed a copy of their particular transcript of the interview as well as a full copy of the findings for them to comment on the plausibility of my findings. Three participants responded stating that they agreed with the plausibility of my findings. Moreover, thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) was used in the articulation of themes and an audit trail (Lincoln

& Guba, 1986) was kept in which I used reflective memos to document my data collection and analysis processes. Lastly, this study was completed under the supervision of a faculty advisor in which I regularly discussed emergent themes and final findings.

Table 1

Participants Demographics

Participant Name	Race	Organizational Membership	Institution Type	Geographic Location	Years in the Profession
Terrence	Black/African American	NPHC	Large Public	Mid-Atlantic	3
Erika	Black/African American	NPHC	Medium Private	Midwest	3
Derek	Black/African American	NPHC	Large Public	Midwest	8
Tim	Black/African American	NHPC	Large Public	Southwest	11
Selena	Hispanic/Latinx	NALFO	Large Public	Southwest	4
Violeta	Hispanic/Latinx	NMGC	Large Public	Southeast	10
Denise	Multi/Biracial	NMGC	Small Private	Northeast	4
Luis	Multi/Biracial	NALFO	Large Private	Midwest	6

Positionality

As someone who is a member of a culturally based organization, a Latino Fraternity; who identifies as a person of color, Latino; and who worked as a campus FSL professional, I am intimately situated with this study. While I have not been a campus FSL professional for over eight years, I must accept that many of the challenges and issues that I have personally faced may no longer be as present, as organizations and professions evolve over time. The many incidents of marginalization and racism that I experienced in my tenure working in FSL were my own, and I am aware of and acknowledge that other people of color who are members of culturally based organizations engaged in campus FSL advising may not have such experiences. As someone who has experienced negative outcomes related to racism and marginalization in the profession of campus FSL advising, I am acutely aware of how this can manifest for individuals, but I am also more curious on whether these dynamics are persistent or endemic in the profession. While my positionality enabled for positive relationships to be formed with participants which reinforces a narrative methodology (Riessman, 2008), I was cognizant of my biases through the use of memos and then through the engagement of member checking to ensure that I am authentically re-presenting the narratives of my participants.

Findings and Interpretations

Participants' reflections revealed three interrelated themes that describe a counter-story to what it means to be a campus FSL professional of color who is a member of a culturally based fraternal organization. The first theme, Guest In Your Own Home, is reflective of a perceived and experienced lack of diversity within the profession of FSL advising and how this deficiency informs and re-creates environments that prioritize historically white fraternities and sororities. This created a context where I identified a sub-theme of Advocacy Through Presence, where participants found advocacy as a role of their work because of the space they now occupied as professionals. The second theme, The Complexity of Representation Matters, is reflective of the recognition that building relationships based on the representation they have through their identities as people of color and members of culturally based organizations is context-dependent on who is perceiving them. The third theme, Turning Burden into Purpose, is reflective of the burden participants experienced from racism in society, and how they used that experience as motivation to confront and address unfair policies and practices.

Guest In Your Own Home

All participants reflected an awareness that the field of professional FSL advisors is not diverse. Individual experiences at the undergraduate level might have had participants engage with a professional of color somewhere in student affairs, but when it came to finding a campus FSL professional who shared their identities as a person of color and/or member of a culturally based fraternal organization (CBFO), for many participants there was a lack of representation. As Luis stated, when he started his path to becoming a campus FSL professional, "I didn't even know we existed." Luis, like some other participants who worked for their national organization after their undergraduate years, commented that even as he traveled for his fraternity and worked with multiple campuses and multiple campus FSL professionals, he found only white campus FSL professionals. Derek commented that he did not see another campus FSL professional of color until he attended his first Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (AFA) annual meeting as a graduate student. This lack of representation, as experienced by the participants, translated to how a white narrative of FSL informs their professional experience. As Luis described,

> This was a white people's game and that was, they were the purveyors of the fraternity and sorority experience. They were the gatekeepers. They were the ones who set the parameters for groups too right? Because it manifested in polices, practices and norms that exists within IFC and PHA serving of the lens through which MGC, NPHC and other types of organizations were policed and policy'd. And so, I was just like, yeah, this isn't great.

An example of this white gatekeeping was noted by Luis and Terrance when they mentioned that when they gained advising experi-

ence for their campus's Panhellenic council (historically white sorori-ties), that more professional experiences became available to them with their job searches and advancement. In terms of policies and practices, Luis talked about confronting the push for their campus to have a policy on minimal chapter sizes, a policy he felt was pointed more towards CBFOs than the larger FSL community. Having a policy on a minimal chapter size and having Panhellenic sorority advising ex-perience are sensible at face value. However, they become sources of contention when it becomes, and expectation and you consider what types of organizations and people would most likely bump up against this practice.

When professional experiences are prioritized and institutional policies are informed by historically white organizations, it cannot be expected that everyone will feel represented or at home in FSL envi-ronments. This also reflects the Critical Race Theory (CRT) tenets of the permanence of racism and whiteness as property (Delgado & Stefan-cic, 2017), in that belonging to history of historically white fraternities and sororities as well as being white privileges you over people of col-or who are not, and that this can appear normal and natural to people (Ladson-Billing, 1998). However, once in these environments, partici-pants found that their positionality set them up to naturally advocate for CBFOs. The sub-theme of Guest In Your Own Home is Advocacy Through Presence.

Advocacy Through Presence

Denise named how her representation informs her advocacy and that this was an outcome of her CBFO affiliation. On speaking to the poli-cies that Luis referenced above, Denise said,

> Whereas our other FSA counterparts, they don't necessarily get it. And for them, it's a little bit of a struggle to really connect, really advocate, right, when we talk about some of the barriers that PWIs have on CBFOs, it's hard for them to advocate why they shouldn't have a minimum GPA, minimum requirement, right. So, our chap-ters are typically a little bit smaller, whereas the traditional white organizations are 50 plus, and so for them, they can hit that num-ber, but we can't necessarily hit that minimum requirement of five people, because it's a different, it's a different struggle.

Denise went on to say,

> I can't use this word enough, but like the advocacy, that's to the development of that organization and the members within that or-ganization, right. Like, we get the struggle, we get why your organi-zations were founded, we get the processes that were put in place, or are put in place to hopefully help you succeed.

Violeta also commented on the importance that being a CBFO mem-ber has had in advocacy by saying, "People that are members of MGC organizations in general, are an asset, because again, they're also serv-ing as a voice for the organizations that get forgotten and left behind."

Furthermore, the physical presence that the participants had enabled them to build relationships with their students to hear from them and advocate on their behalf. Luis said of his identities in his position that, "it's also incredibly helpful as a bridge builder for the students who see themselves in me." For Erika, even though she had a positive relationship with one of her white FSL advisors, it was the Black NPHC male FSA advisor whom she felt connected to. Erika said that he just "understood." That this understanding had to do with race and how he understood what it was like for Erika as a Black student on a predominantly white campus.

Participants talked about the need to navigate how they work among their white counterparts in their office as well as consider how their representation impacts their ability to connect and advocate for their students. This also speaks to the CRT tenet of interest convergence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), in that the participants' advocacy for CB-FOs required the participation and acceptance from white colleagues. However, merely existing as a person of color and as a member of a CBFO does not necessarily mean that the participants were able to connect with all students of color or all members of CBFOs.

The Complexity of Representation Matters

Having a shared CBFO identity with the students in the FSL community enabled the participants to use empathy as a way of building relationships. As Denise said of her relationships with students that she "gets it." This creates a strong relationship, one that Terrence described as being noticeable to students not in CBFOs,

> We bring something unique and so different, bringing in like, our perspectives, bringing in, you know, like our identities into our work, our students recognize that, and even with councils we're not a part of like, they can even see that you can help them you can help them be better.

However, the CBFO representation of the participants did not come without complexities, and participants found that context played a role in how students would see them to begin with.

Several of the NPHC affiliated participants commented, their personal affiliation became a focus point of how students perceived them. For Denise, her students thought that even though she is an advisor in the FSL office, she had an alternative agenda or bias to support her personal affiliated organization, she said,

> So a lot of students would ask, "Oh… you bringing this organization back on campus" or, "you know, you get it because you know, your sisters," and I'm like, Yeah, but also like I have FSA hat on. So let's talk about how we could meet halfway or meet in the middle. And so students would bring it up often.

For Luis it was not just that his students focused on his affiliation, but the combination with his race as well. When reflecting on his duties as

a campus FSL professional, he said,

> I think my Latinidad has definitely lent itself to people, particularly students who are affiliated with culturally Latinx groups feeling a lot more comfortable and cozying up to me, but it's also served as arguable some dissonance for students, especially in my role as an advisor where, you know, I, I have worked in support of IFC, PHC, of MGC, NPHC. And so often my MGC and NPHC students are just like, "I don't get how you can work with these groups" or "I don't understand why you continue to provide services and support to these organizations," "you should know right, like you live this experience like help me understand why you do it." And so I think that in moments like that, they rely not on not on my affiliation, but on like my race in my, my experiences of person of color, navigating predominately white spaces about why I can't show up the way that I do.

Luis also described how his race and CBFO affiliation became a point of contention when building relationships with his NPHC community.

> I think I'm being Black, being Latino, that that has been an interesting, I think, circumstance, because working for instance with like, NPHC… my Blackness wasn't what they put stock in, in my advising, because it wasn't, I wasn't, I wasn't affiliated with a historically Black fraternity.

For Denise, her racial representation was called into question by students, as was her identity as a biracial woman.

> I am a biracial woman, oftentimes, because they, from first glance, would think that I'm a Latina woman. And so, you know, I have to kind of correct them if, if it comes up and just let them know. But once I kind of let them know this, right, like, there are some folds and some students, right, that are like, Oh, well, you're not like full Black, so you don't may not understand my struggle, as a Black student or you know, my community. And then you know, you know, you have students that are like, Okay, well, you're not fully white. So you may not know my, you know, some of the challenges that I face or some of the things that I'm going through.

Participants recognized that representation does matter and that there is an overall positive impact that their presence has on their campus FSL communities and being able to advocate for CBFO and their student members. However, what they represent to students is determined by the perceptions that students have on their race and affiliation. Moreover, participants must also navigate all how they advocate for their CBFO communities among the larger FSL community and while maintaining a professional identity. This juggling of multiple types of relationships and personal goals gets even more complicated as these professionals navigate a racialized world and campus community.

Turning Burden into Purpose

The effects of national events, political discourse, and instances of racism that target racially minorized people do not stop at the edge of

a campus community when professionals of color come to work. Denise described the struggle it takes when trying to show up as a professional at work while also experiencing the emotional toll of life outside of work.

> You're watching these trials unfold. And it's like, you know, to be transparent, like I'm crying, and yet, I have a meeting to talk about how we can diversify, you know, our community in less than an hour, and I have to put, you know, my big girl pants on and be professional about it, and not put my emotions and personal emotions in my professional, you know, fields. And so that's exhausting. That's very draining, because now you have to juggle all of these different boxes. And really, it's hard, right?

Terrence and Derek brought up further aspects of just existing and navigating the world as a person of color and how this carries over into how they experience the profession of campus FSL professionals. Terrence commented,

> I think being Black, people automatically count you out. And I think it's just anything in like, here I am, like, I'm going into this white space. I'm saying I want to be a fraternity and sorority life advisor. And like, there's a lot of battles that you'd have to face. In that, and there's a lot of, um, there's a lot of turmoil, there's a lot of pain.

Derek reflected that needing to always perform at high levels in his work has not so much been informed by wanting to be an excellent professional but rather as a survival tactic he learned from his family to mitigate racism and judgment. He commented,

> So again, I've always not shown that fear. And I think, again, that goes back to just people of color upbringing to be like, you have to be on point for whatever, because you just never know who's gonna judge you.

Violeta and Luis also spoke on mentally forecasting and then preparing for how their race would be perceived by others when navigating how they experience work. Violeta said,

> When people first see me, they automatically have biases and assumptions of who I am or what my color represents. And then I have to, you know, either fulfill those, those prophecies or not, or dispel them, you know, so, it's work on me to help break down those walls that are, that I didn't build.

Luis, however, was sure to make the point that while others may have an issue with race, that problem is theirs alone, but at the same time he recognizes that he may still have to work with them.

> I don't think it's a hinderance to the work that we do. I think it's a, it can be a complicating factor for other people. That's not my problem. That's their problem. So, so that's kind of what I've had to learn how to, like, what are the tools in my toolkit and helping people to, to work with who I am and how I show up.

What Violeta and Luis are describing is a need to anticipate, strategize, and execute a collaborative approach to work simply based on their race. Moreover, Violeta continued to express this expectation that she also has to participate in her campus's DEI initiatives for it also aligns with her advocacy work. Terrence captured this sentiment as well, but by using the term "Black Tax" to represent the committees, working groups, or other initiatives that he is asked to participate in, something that he, Violeta, and Denise see as something they do not notice being expected of their white counterparts. Denise put it plainly,

> And so, when we talk about diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, when we talk about trainings and education, you know, it's sad, but we, they, my colleagues, my peers would look towards to us, right, to provide some of those educational opportunities.

The extra labor or "Black Tax," as Terrence put it, is exhausting for the participants because again it is not just extra time they schedule into their working hours, but it is the internal negotiations they consistently have to make in their interactions with others. This burden of constantly needing to negotiate work environments through their racial lens is a reflection of a work environment that centers whiteness. Ironically, the cause of their burden also fuels their sense of purpose, which is to challenge and disrupt how whiteness impacts their environment and confront those who uphold whiteness. Erika shared,

> Like I feel empowered to sit in a room full of white faces and be like, "Hey, listen here." right. So I'm a, I don't do white tears. I, that doesn't move me, I, I make sure to address that.

Erika attributed this empowerment as a lesson she learned from her parents in challenging people who put preconceived notions onto you. This also reflects what Derek said about how people of color were raised in a way that prepares them to interact in white environments. Moreover, participants were clear that their problem was with the systems that support whiteness and not white people themselves, as Erika went on to share an experience she had with a white colleague. "I said, but I'm not attacking you. I'm attacking the policies, and you have the power to change these policies." She went on in a humorous manner and said, "So I like doing that to people, causing chaos for white people." Luis and Derek also spoke to the need to address and respond to white people who perpetuate whiteness in their work.

> I don't know what it's like to be white. I know what the impacts of whiteness are. And so I can show up in that way. But if you're looking for somebody who's gonna like, make the white folks feel nice, that's not me. (Luis)

> "I can deal with the upfront white people shit all day, and that's fine with me." (Derek)

This confrontation of policies and the people who administer those polices are unaware that they do not consider the experiences of students of color or CBFOs, and so when this is pointed out it can seem

like a major disruption, even chaos. However, the purpose of confronting whiteness and those who uphold whiteness is to create more equitable practices that support all students. Tim summed this up nicely when he said,

> I think the fact that I noticed, I noticed the disparities and try and do something about them. A lot of times others are just like, "You know, hey, that's what it is." Okay, you know, I guess that's right. That's what it is. But how can we shape that and make that work for where we're at? Instead of just going ahead and being like, yep, that's it.

Tim is speaking to the concept that the profession of campus FSL advising has been and is currently being perpetuated by the same narrative and practices that center the experience of historically white organizations. He ~~has~~ found that his white counterparts are not only unaware of this, but that when he points it out, he is confronted with the idea that this is just how it is.

Discussion

This study of eight professionals of color who are members of CBFOs found that their counter-stories expose how the campus FSL profession centers whiteness and demonstrates that their experiences are often marginalized and overlooked (Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998) race continues to be untheorized (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, creating environments that they must navigate and mitigate to be able to do their job. Moreover, the racial battle fatigue that participants experienced from society at large continued as well as on campus (Gorski, 2019; Patton & Catching, 2009), helps us understand the normality of whiteness within the social fabric on campus. In turn, this provided an environment where participants, by their own choice (advocating for CBFOs) and in some instances were assigned extra labor (Black Tax) for doing diversity, equity, inclusion work (Garcia et al., 2021). The racial microaggressions experienced by participants was not just from the minimization of their experiences and identities, as King et al. (2009) described from experiences related to office and professional culture, but from the students these professionals served as well.

Nguyen and Duran (2018) defined whiteness as an ideology that both white and people of color can engage in and identified three themes in the experience of professionals of color in student affairs: minorities on display, internalized racism, and hope for the future. These are related to the findings of this study, but this study also identified an added complication of whiteness being performed through an organization as well as through people. The theme of Guest In Your Own Home points out that the lack of diversity within the profession of campus FSL advising exists in both the racial demographics of people and in organizational representation. Being a minority on display then becomes represented through both physical as well as organizational representation. However, the lack of diversity in organizational repre-

sentation allows whiteness to be perpetuated through organizational hegemony as well as through the people themselves. The white mask (Nguyen & Duran, 2018) can either represent whiteness as enacted through personal behaviors or now through organizational competency.

This was illustrated when Luis and Terrance commented that their experience with Panhellenic sororities provided them professional opportunities they would not have had before. In other words, professional acumen becomes associated with perpetuating and maintaining white standards (Ahmed, 2012). Moreover, this centering of historically white organizations within practice, policies, and even expectations of FSL professionals reflects what Duran, Garcia, and Reyes (2022) found when their participants described challenges that students in CBFOs face. Furthermore, it helps us understand that if FSL professionals minimize the experiences of CBFOs in the larger FSL community, then the professionals who come from these communities are then minoritized in the profession of FSL advising.

Participants of this study all spoke to engaging with support networks that consisted of other professionals of color, friends at their institutions, and even those outside of higher education to help them in self-care and professional identity development. Nguyen and Duran (2018) talked about this need in their framing for hope in the future and that kinship and power can be found in professionals of color sharing their counter-stories with each other for validation and understanding. However, I would also add the importance of sharing these counter-stories as a means of resistance capital (Yosso, 2005). Resistance capital is the sharing of strategies, skills, and knowledge that was gained through experiences of challenging inequity (Yosso, 2005). This would go a long way in building capacity among communities of color to be able to thrive and challenge systems informed by white supremacy and racism. This represents the CRT tenet of a commitment to social justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) by recognizing that not only does their presence matter, but they have an obligation and commitment to advocate for their minoritized students. However, the sustainability of oppositional behavior, or activist behavior, by the participants is not known.

Implications

The purpose of counter-stories in CRT is to be an exploratory tool to examine how race and racism impact society as experienced by people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Participants mentioned there being a lack of racial and organizational representation among professionals, which AFA's membership data confirms (Goodman & McKeown, 2020), and how this creates policy and environmental burdens that they had to navigate.

Implications for Practice

Hiring more campus FSL professionals of color who are members of

CBFOs seems on the surface to be a clear direction to help change the lack of representation experienced by the participants in FSL. This can first start by white campus FSL professionals who are members of historically white organizations starting to build positive relationships with students in their CBFO communities. Participants shared that they mostly did not have strong relationships with their campus FSL advisor. Garcia (2019) found that the Latina/o members experienced not just marginalization in the larger FSL community but from the white staff in the FSL office as well. While a piece of that feeling of marginalization was from the lack of racial and CBFO representation in the office, the other piece was not feeling like their experiences were understood or that the professionals in the FSL office engaged with them in meaningful ways.

Gatekeeping begins during the hiring process of campus FSL professionals. If the reason behind hiring people of color who are members of CBFOs is to specifically support students of color, then this sends a dangerous message among professionals seeking careers in campus FSL advising. Not all FSL communities are large enough or diverse enough to have a specific employee designated to work with CBFOs, thus the responsibility of CBFO advisement would become part of the overall portfolio of the campus advisor and be perceived as a "tacked on" experience (Whipple, et al., 1991); thus, limiting job opportunities for professionals of color who are members of CBFOs. Moreover, treating a CBFO community as a tacked-on advising responsibility delegitimizes the importance that their advisor and FSL office is culturally competent and reinforces a white normative understanding to FSL advising. Which might lead to what Garcia (2019) captured from students in Latino/a organizations and how they felt marginalized by the professionals in their FSL office. Lastly, if we only make space for professionals of color who are members of CBFOs as a CBFO advisor, this inherently tokenizes these professionals within the larger profession.

As Tim reflected on a statement that he heard from an upper administrator on efforts they made to support CBFOs on their campus,

"We care about the National Pan-Hellenic Council and the Multicultural Greek Council, hence, we hired Tim." And I'm like, wow, you know, like, okay, so you hired me to, um once again, and to keep the Black, the people of color at bay? Keep them quiet. That's why you hired me. That's pretty much what I took from that one statement.

Hiring people of color and members of CBFOs to support students of color and CBFOs on campus is important and representation does matter. However, when this becomes the only professional space for professionals of color and members of CBFOs to occupy, the sentiment behind this type of hiring reinforces the idea that CBFO experiences are not central to FSL advising overall (a tacked-on experience) and white FSL staff do not need to competently engage with their CBFO communities (marginalize the CBFO community). In essence, it pigeonholes campus FSL professionals who are members of CBFOs and who are people of color to be only hirable for advising CBFO communities.

Gatekeepers of campus FSL positions become those who acquiesce to the pigeonholing of FSL professionals who are members of CBFOs and who are people of color, both within the profession and those who hire them. Experiences related to being members of CBFOs should be held in the same regard and importance as those who are members of historically white organizations, so that a professional who only has experience with CBFOs is held in the same regard as someone who only has Interfraternity Council (IFC) or Panhellenic Council experience. Moreover, hiring and promotions should be based on professional competencies with special attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion, which the Fraternity and Sorority Advising Program CAS Standards (2019) call for. Size and scope is an important factor when understanding the equitable work load across an IFC advisor, Panhellenic, and then an MGC or NPHC advisor. However, when personal fraternal associations and in essence race, are directly linked with importance of work and who can do this work, it delegitimizes professional knowledge and competency. With a focus on professional competency, more professionals of color and members of CBFOs should be hired at all levels in an FSL office and not just to advise CBFOs.

Implications for Research

Several areas for future research were identified from this study. The first is that while the purpose of this study was centered on the CRT tenet of counter-stories, other tenets did appear within the findings, suggesting a need of further analysis and research to examine the profession of FSL advising with CRT. Given the lack of diversity within the profession of FSL advising and the challenges that this creates for professionals of color, sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2019) professionals who are members of CBFOs and who are people of color could provide insight into sustaining these professionals into the field. While Strayhorn's (2019) framework of sense of belonging is centered on undergraduate students of color and other minoritized identities, the framework consists of "perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, and the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the campus community or others on campus," (p. 4).

While participants found their purpose in the profession to address inequities, in advocating for their students, and lack of representation (racially and fraternity/sorority affiliation) within the profession, begs the question, how these professionals sense a feeling of belonging in the profession. It seems that their belongingness is rooted in service to others and less on a service unto themselves. In other words, does their sense of belonging depend on their ability to address inequities within the profession, or is there more to it? Moreover, what is the profession of campus FSL advising doing in creating a sense of belonging for professionals of color who are members of CBFOs? This framework can be used to explore sense of belonging within participants' roles on campus and/or their sense of belonging within the profession. Furthermore, the activist behavior of addressing inequities can lead to

burnout. Gorski (2019) found that activist burnout can be attributed to "(1) unbending commitments to social justice, (2) institutional and inter-personal resistance, and (3) tensions and conflicts among campus ac-tivists," (p. 8). An interesting research question would look into burnout among campus FSL professionals who identify as people of color and who are members of culturally based organizations.

Conclusion

To conclude I want to highlight a statement that Selena said during her interview, "We are rare to find, but I think when we come together, it's exciting." I could not agree more with Selena on how this study provides valuable insight into the profession of campus FSL advising. Their experiences are examples of resilience in environments that were not built for them or designed to sustain them, and yet still, their com-mitment to students is unwavering. They found that despite a lack of representation within the professional field of FSL advising, their pres-ence is more than being a representational figure but one of purpose to advocate and challenge professional norms that are counter to the experiences of CBFOs. While professional standards related to cultural competency, diversity, equity, and inclusion exist, the direct impact of these documents on the praxis of white professionals is called into question. Meanwhile, professionals like these participants are doing the critical work and advancing the profession of campus FSL advising to be more inclusive and supportive of students of color and CBFOs.

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