

Unrealistic Expectations: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Lived Experiences of Former
Campus-Based Fraternity/Sorority Advisors

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Abstract

The Great Resignation has brought a renewed national focus on job quit rates throughout the United States (Gittleman, 2022; Serenko, 2023). Researchers have explored why non-faculty higher education professionals leave the field of student affairs, but few recent studies have considered departure among functional area-specific professionals, with the exception of residence life and housing. Further, while there are studies on burnout, the field lacks research about how the day-to-day reality of fraternity/sorority advising (FSL work) impacts the quitting behaviors of fraternity/sorority advising professionals (FSAs).

This general qualitative study was rooted in the sensitizing concepts (Charmaz, 2003) of the weight of the work of FSAs, the complexity of the fraternity and sorority advising job, and the burn-through that exists in fraternity/sorority advising. Participants included nine former campus-based FSAs who left the field from January 2018-December 2023. Data were collected through participant interest forms and semi-structured Zoom interviews to answer the following research questions:

1. How do former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors describe their former FSA positions and work experiences?
2. What aspects of the fraternity/sorority advising position led to former campus-based FSAs' decisions to quit their campus-based role?

Thematic analysis and inductive coding methods were used to analyze the data. Findings included four major themes related to the experiences of former FSAs: unrealistic expectations, challenges that are specific to working in fraternity and sorority life, the impact of the campus environment, and lasting personal effects of the FSA experience. This study offers implications and recommendations for policy and practice, specifically around the areas of training and onboarding, employee well-being, and the resources that are necessary to support the work of FSAs. Further research should explore how various stakeholders define the value of fraternities and sororities and the prevalence and lasting impact of the student affairs practice of burning through and exhausting student affairs professionals for the sake of the college or university.

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General Audience Abstract

The Great Resignation has brought a renewed national focus on job quit rates throughout the United States (Gittleman, 2022; Serenko, 2023). In higher education, there is research on why non-faculty higher education professionals leave the field of student affairs, but few studies have focused on functional area-specific student affairs professionals, except in residence life and housing. Further, while there are studies on burnout in student affairs, there is limited research on the day-to-day reality of fraternity/sorority advising work (FSL work) and how this reality impacts the quitting behaviors of fraternity/sorority advising professionals (FSAs).

The purpose of this study was to explore how the complex nature of FSL work influenced the quitting behaviors of formerly campus-based fraternity/sorority professionals. Nine participants participated in a Zoom interview where they each shared details about their experiences as former FSAs, their ultimate decisions to leave campus-based work, and how their experiences and decisions to quit impacted their lives.

Findings from this study include four major themes related to the experiences of former FSAs: unrealistic expectations, challenges that are specific to working in fraternity and sorority life, the impact of the campus environment, and lasting personal effects of the FSA experience. This study offers implications and recommendations for policy, practice and further research that apply not only to fraternity and sorority advising, but also more broadly to student affairs.

Dedication

This dissertation, and my entire doctoral journey, is dedicated to my little bear, Arthur, and in memory of my sweet mama.

Mom, thanks for modeling the way and for showing me that women and moms can do hard things. I sure as hell wish you were here with me today, but I know you are watching from the best seat in the house.

Arthur, I love you all the way to Pluto. I was pregnant with you when I applied and enrolled in my very first class, so you've been with me every step of the way. I have never been a parent without also being a doctoral student. Every class, every paper, every late night and early morning. I've loved every minute of this journey with you and I hope that you've seen me model hard work and dedication and that it helps you know that you can do anything you set your mind to. I am so grateful and proud to be your mama and I am the luckiest.

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First, I want to take a minute to thank my nine participants for sharing their stories with me. I found our conversations to be powerful and I am grateful for the laughs, the tears, and all of the lessons learned. I am honored to raise your voices, and I am committed to continuing to share what we learned together in hopes of transforming this field. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The Great Resignation has brought a renewed national focus on job quit rates throughout the United States (Gittleman, 2022; Serenko, 2023). While other industries are only recently dealing with the challenges associated with higher employee turnover and labor shortages, the field of higher education, specifically non-faculty positions, has been experiencing an increase in employee quit rates since at least 2017, when the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) began tracking them (Bichsel et al., 2023). Studies on higher education employee attrition have found that employee well-being, supervisor support, and low salaries are the most impactful factors on employees' decision to leave higher education (ACPA Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Employment in Higher Education, 2022; Bichsel et al., 2023). Furthermore, it appears the trend of quitting is not decreasing. In a September 2023 report, CUPA-HR shared that 59% of participants studied indicated they were planning to leave their current positions within the next year (Bichsel et al., 2023).

One student affairs functional area that is experiencing this trend of employee attrition is fraternity and sorority life. Over 800 colleges and universities in the United States have fraternities and/or sororities on their campuses (North American Interfraternity Conference, 2021) and while each campus is structured differently, most campuses that host fraternity and sorority communities have professionals whose area of responsibility includes advising these organizations. Because of the complex job duties of fraternity/sorority advisors (FSAs), the role of the campus-based FSA is critical to not just the overall success of the fraternity and sorority community but also the health and safety of the members of those organizations. Considering the amount of impact campus-based FSAs have on the health and safety of fraternity and sorority communities, it is imperative that scholars and practitioners work together to identify strategies

to retain these professionals. In her study about the turnover of FSAs, Steiner (2020) advocated for increased support of FSAs at the university level and within professional associations as well as further research on the FSA experience.

Statement of the Problem

There is a growing body of research on why non-faculty higher education professionals leave the field of student affairs, but there is very little research on functional-area specific professionals outside of those people who work in residence life and housing. Further, while there are studies on burnout, there is limited research on how the day-to-day reality of fraternity/sorority advising impacts the quitting behaviors of those specific campus-based professionals. In order for colleges and universities to recruit and retain fraternity/sorority advisors, it is essential to learn more about why these people are leaving.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Participants in this study included former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors (FSAs) who had left their positions and campus-based work altogether between the dates of January 2018-December 2023. Data were collected through an online participant interest form and semi-structured Zoom interviews, which were conducted in January and February 2024. I used thematic analysis to analyze across the data and to develop the major findings of the study, which I detail in chapter four.

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore how the complex nature of FSL work influenced the quitting behaviors of formerly campus-based fraternity/sorority professionals. To fulfill this purpose, the following research questions guide this study:

1. How do former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors describe their former FSA positions and work experiences?

2. What aspects of the fraternity/sorority advising position led to former campus-based FSAs' decisions to quit their campus-based role?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several different constituencies, including the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors and campus-based administrators and personnel who supervise campus-based FSAs. Further, the findings of this study could provide context to faculty in graduate preparation programs to influence how graduate students and prospective FSAs are taught about this functional area and about fraternity/sorority advising positions.

The Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, which is the professional organization for FSAs, is dedicated to the professional development of its members (Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, 2023). With the concerning quit rate of FSAs, AFA administrators and members could use these findings to help shape their professional development and retention initiatives. Additionally, AFA could use these findings to elevate the importance of the challenges that come along with FSA work and advocate for increased support for these roles.

Campus-based administrators and other professionals who supervise FSAs could use the findings from this study to help identify ways to better train, develop and retain their FSAs. By learning more about the lived experiences of FSAs, supervisors can be better equipped to empathically support their team members. Both McKeown (2021) and Steiner (2020) recommend further research on burnout and employee turnover in fraternity/sorority life and in identifying ways to retain FSAs. Additionally, employee turnover is expensive! Direct and indirect costs involved with employee turnover include the costs associated with recruiting applicants, hiring and training costs for new employees, and also the cost of the loss of knowledge, relationships, productivity and experience that occurs when experienced

professionals leave their roles (Marshall et al., 2016). This study also has significance for future research in the areas of fraternity/sorority advising, the importance of support structures for high-pressure roles within higher education, and employee retention.

Delimitations

As is the case with all research, this study has some delimitations. The first delimitation involves the sample and how participants were recruited. I recruited participants by posting a public call for participants on Facebook. This post was shared widely by colleagues, but it is possible that there are many individuals who did not see the call for participants because they do not use Facebook, because they are not connected to the people or groups in which this post was shared, or for other reasons altogether. Additionally, this study featured the experiences of nine former campus-based FSAs and may not be representative of the experiences of all former FSAs.

The second delimitation is that I only included former FSAs who had left the campus-based environment altogether. This led to challenges in identifying potential participants since there is no Facebook group or list-serv for former FSAs. Additionally, there could be value in interviewing FSAs who have chosen to remain in their campus-based roles to learn more about the attributes of their jobs and work environments that cause them to stay. Finally, I excluded former FSAs who left their fraternity/sorority advising position but took other jobs on campus to isolate the campus-based FSA experience.

The third delimitation is the use of Zoom interviews for data collection. I selected individual interviews via Zoom to create the most comfortable environment possible for participants to share their experiences, but by using this method, I may have caused potential participants to feel uncomfortable or self-select out of participating in the study. Due to limited resources, I was unable to travel to conduct in-person interviews, but selected Zoom as the

interview platform as it had closed captioning and recording capabilities. Despite these delimitations, this study is still applicable to the field of fraternity/sorority advising and is relevant for use.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One is an overall introduction to the study, including the research questions and significance of the study. Chapter Two is a detailed summary of the literature that is relevant to the study. Chapter Three is a description of the methodology used in the study, and Chapter Four is a detailed summary of the findings of the study. The study ends with Chapter Five, which contains future recommendations for research and practice based on the findings of this study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

To initially explore the reasons behind the quitting decisions of former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors (FSAs), I examined the literature on employee retention and attrition and recommended retention strategies within student affairs altogether. Several themes emerged from this body of research, including the weight of burnout, the way that supervisor and institutional support impact an employee's decision to seek new employment, and the importance of graduate preparation programs.

To understand the work of fraternity/sorority advisors more fully, however, I also studied the history of fraternity and sorority life, the current state of fraternity and sorority life, and the nature of fraternity and sorority advising work across college and university campuses. Given the poorly understood nature of this topic, this is an exploratory inquiry. I framed this literature review as themes in relevant literature from which we can say that there are sensitizing concepts that I will carry into my study (Charmaz, 2003). By framing this study using sensitizing concepts, I was fully able to develop a deeper understanding of the literature surrounding the experiences of FSAs (Bowen, 2006). These themes include attrition from student affairs altogether, the challenges associated with fraternity and sorority life in modern society, and the complex nature of the role of fraternity/sorority advisors.

Employee Turnover in Higher Education and Student Affairs

Student Affairs

Student affairs is a profession within higher education that dates back to the first colleges and universities in the United States, when faculty were viewed *in loco parentis* (in place of the parent) and supervised students in and out of the classroom (Nuss, 2003). Over the years, student life and the relationship between faculty and students shifted and additional non-faculty positions

were created on campuses. Eventually, the philosophy of *in loco* parentis lessened, colleges and universities became more focused on developing the whole student, and students became more involved in extracurricular activities (Nuss, 2003). Throughout the years, as campus climates have changed and student and family expectations have changed, the roles of student affairs professionals have shifted, but the core principle of supporting the educational mission of the academic institution has remained the same (Nuss, 2003). Today, the field of student affairs is a dynamic and critical piece of college student learning, and it is comprised of many different functional areas. These functional areas vary from campus to campus, and they include such offices as housing and residence life, student conduct, health and wellness services, fraternity and sorority life, dining, career services, student activities, leadership development, and service and engagement.

The decision-making process for an individual to choose a career in student affairs varies greatly from one person to another. This is partly because student affairs is not an undergraduate major and most people identify it as a potential career while they are studying for careers in other fields. In a study of almost 1,000 student affairs professionals, McKeown (2021) stated that each student affairs professional has their own unique story as to how they found their way into student affairs where participants shared their “light bulb” moments of when they had transformational conversations with mentors or student affairs staff on their campus who helped them reflect on their experiences as college students and make the decision to pursue student affairs as a career. Because of impactful experiences as students, people decide to enter the field of student affairs to help shape the experiences of future generations of college students. Fortunately, McKeown (2022) found that 94% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they feel they can make a positive impact on students.

Attrition in Student Affairs

Despite the personal connection to their original motivation to enter the field of student affairs, and their indications of feeling as though they are impacting students, student affairs professionals are transitioning to new roles or leaving the field of higher education at an alarming rate, and have been for decades, citing the following as the main reasons for departure: job satisfaction, work environment, declining morale, and weak transition from graduate school to professional life (Marshall et al., 2016). Employee turnover is especially high within the first few years of employment in student affairs, with over 50% of student affairs professionals leaving the field during their first five years (Marshall et al., 2016).

Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in the number of student affairs professionals who transitioned into new roles or left higher education altogether, which prompted a renewed effort toward learning about the experiences of student affairs professionals and their decision-making process (ACPA Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Employment in Higher Education, 2022; National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 2022). The findings of these task forces identified themes that were in alignment with Marshall et al.'s 2016 reasons for job transitions but provided more current context. These themes included low salaries, poor supervision and/or institutional support, burnout, and the increasing weight of hidden responsibilities and expectations that were not well-communicated. The findings of these task forces are also reflected in Winfield and Paris's (2022) study on burnout and employees' intentions of leaving student affairs and higher education post-COVID-19.

Building on previous studies of burnout in student affairs, Anderson (2021) coined the term "burn through" as the institutional practice of burning through diversity workers who were tasked with the job of supporting minoritized students while also maintaining the university's

image. This study provided a shift from viewing burnout at the individual level to looking at more macro systems of colleges and universities burning through professionals who were supporting students despite low resources and increased responsibilities. Anderson (2021) further highlighted how institutions respond to employee burnout by recommending individual self-care actions or improvement techniques, but by shifting the focus from the individual to the institution, more systemic change can occur. For this change to occur, Anderson recommended further research on burn through in student affairs and within functional areas that support traditionally marginalized students.

Low Salary

Not surprisingly, low salaries are a key factor in student affairs professionals' decisions to leave their positions. In a survey of current student affairs practitioners, 88% of survey respondents indicated that salaries and/or compensation packages are not competitive for the experience and education required of student affairs positions (NASPA, 2022). To make matters worse, not only are salaries and compensation packages lacking, but as institutions have chosen to eliminate positions or not fill vacated positions, workload has increased for people who have remained in their roles and they are not being compensated for the extra work they are taking on due to the reduction in staff (Winfield & Paris, 2022).

Poor Supervision and Lack of Institutional Support

A recurring theme in studies regarding student affairs attrition is the impact of poor supervision and lack of institutional support in the decision for employees to quit their jobs. In their 2022 study, NASPA found that 81% of respondents indicated feeling underappreciated or undervalued by the institution and that these feelings would ultimately lead to quitting decisions by most respondents. Furthermore, Winfield and Paris (2022) noted that their participants shared

concerns about campus leadership not being connected or aware of the challenges experienced by “front-line workers” (p. 21) in student affairs or how those challenges impact the day-to-day realities, particularly related to increased workload post-pandemic. This disconnect made participants feel as though decisions were being made and policies were being implemented without any consideration for their experiences or the impact of high-level decisions on all who work at the institution.

Burnout and Lack of Work/Life Balance

Many studies have been conducted on the effects of burnout on employee well-being and retention, but it is important to note that not all stress and symptoms of burnout come directly from working in student affairs. Winfield and Paris (2022) noted that their participants recognized the additional outside stress and burnout caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and their concerns for general health and well-being.

Unfortunately, there is a growing body of research involving burnout among student affairs professionals, and the research shows a growing prevalence of burnout and its normalcy in the field (Steiner, 2020; Winfield & Paris, 2022). In their 2022 survey of members, NASPA found that 84% of survey respondents think that individuals are leaving higher education because of increased stress and additional crisis response workload. While burnout within higher education and student affairs has been a known issue for several years, the COVID-19 pandemic has only added to the additional workload encountered by student affairs professionals. Post-pandemic elimination of campus-based roles and consolidation of positions has caused many offices to be short-staffed, and this has led to increased burnout and stress among those who have stayed (Winfield & Paris, 2022).

Hidden Responsibilities

When surveyed, 68% of current student affairs professionals think that individuals leave the field because of the number of “hidden responsibilities” that are not transparent in job descriptions or communicated clearly by supervisors (NASPA, 2022). Often, these hidden responsibilities are disguised by bullet points such as “other duties as assigned” in job descriptions or postings, but post-pandemic employees are feeling this weight in a different fashion. As colleges and universities are reducing personnel either as an attempt to save money or due to labor shortages, student affairs professionals are having to absorb responsibilities that come from those vacancies without giving up any of their existing workload, and they are not seeing salary or benefits increases in exchange for the extra work (Winfield & Paris, 2022).

Kimball et al. (2023) conducted a grounded theory analysis of the external pressures felt by student affairs professionals. These participants shared the additional time and effort it takes when they have to explain their work to external stakeholders, the weight of unrealistic expectations of accountability and efficiency that are often set by administrators or stakeholders who are not knowledgeable in the operations of their roles, and the additional demands that are placed on them due to new laws and policies, especially related to crisis response and risk management (Kimball et al., 2023). While this study examined pressures felt by student affairs professionals as a whole, more research is needed to learn more about the experiences of student affairs professionals within specific functional areas before they get to the point of deciding to leave their respective roles or higher education altogether.

Importance of Graduate Preparation Programs

Few studies have been done on the implementation or success of strategies directly related to retaining student affairs professionals, however in response to the alarming rate at

which new professionals leave the field of student affairs, much attention has been placed on the importance of graduate preparation programs and how new employees are transitioned into their student affairs professional positions. While academic curriculum and experiential learning opportunities are two foundational pieces of the graduate experience, Perez and Haley (2021) noted the integral role supervisors play in the professional socialization of graduate students and that supervisors should be well-versed and appropriately resourced in order to best support the development of their graduate students.

In response to their 2022 report, NASPA also made some clear recommendations for administrators and higher education program faculty to implement to enhance the graduate preparation program experience for aspiring student affairs professionals. Highlights from those recommendations include the following: revising curriculum to include real-world experiential learning opportunities; emphasizing the importance of basic professional development and career readiness skill development; interweaving social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the graduate curriculum and experiential learning opportunities; and providing opportunities for graduate students to practice making data-driven decisions or using data to inform daily work. By focusing on graduate preparation programs, faculty members and administrators can help future student affairs professionals more accurately understand the profession and build the necessary skillsets and knowledge bases to help them feel more prepared and confident for their first post-master's professional role.

Fraternity and Sorority Life

The history of fraternities and sororities has been well documented, with the first edition of *American College Fraternities: A Descriptive Analysis of the Society System in the Colleges of the United States* published in 1879 by William Raimond Baird. The first fraternity in the United

States, Phi Beta Kappa, was founded on December 5, 1776 at the College of William and Mary in Virginia (Ockerbloom, 1991). Phi Beta Kappa formed as a selective, secret literary society, which soon spread to include chapters at Yale and Harvard in 1779. Membership in those societies was reflective of enrollment demographics in higher education at the time, and members were wealthy, white men. These societies eventually led to the first fraternity, the Kappa Alpha Society, in 1827. The first sorority, the Adelpi society, was formed at Wesleyan College as the Adelpian Society, with the founder, 16-year old Eugenia Tucker, stating she wanted to “influence her friends to join her in forming an association for improvement” (*Alpha Delta Pi History*, 2023). Over time, and despite several instances of anti-fraternity rules and legal obstacles, students continued to create new organizations and chapters, which eventually evolved into the social networking groups we know on college campuses today (Sasso et al., 2019).

Culturally-based fraternities and sororities began to form in the early twentieth century as a way for non-white students to build support networks and to support one another through their college years and beyond. The first Black fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., was founded at Cornell University in 1906, and the first Black sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., was founded at Howard University in 1908. Ultimately, nine fraternities and sororities were founded and became the member organizations of the “Divine Nine” or the National Panhellenic Council. In the late 20th century, additional culturally-based organizations were founded to meet the needs of Latino/a students, Asian Pacific Islander Desi American students. As of 2023, there are over 60 culturally-based fraternities and sororities in the United States (National APIDA Panhellenic Association, n.d.; National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations, n.d.; National Multicultural Greek Council, n.d.). Today, over 800 colleges and universities in the

United States have fraternities and/or sororities on their campuses and they encompass over 750,000 undergraduate members (North American Interfraternity Conference, 2021).

An underlying challenge of researching the fraternity and sorority experience is the difficulty in separating what outcomes are impacted by a member's experience in the organization from their natural, predisposed development or their college experience outside of fraternity or sorority membership (Hevel & Bureau, 2014). Previous researchers have noted that students who join fraternities and sororities tend to come from affluent, White backgrounds and these identities already impact their experiences and involvement on campus (Bowman & Holmes, 2017). Additionally, for many years, research on the fraternity and sorority experience was limited – either intentionally or unintentionally – by leaders in the fraternity/sorority community who did not want negative outcomes of membership to be made public (Barber et al., 2020; Hevel et al., 2014). Despite these challenges, it is still imperative that researchers learn about the actual lived experiences of fraternity and sorority members to better understand the value of these organizations.

Benefits of Fraternity and Sorority Life to its Members

Since their inception, fraternities and sororities have proven that these organizations have the potential to provide great value to their members. While the value has changed over the past 150 years, these groups continue to serve individual students, alumni, communities, and campuses in significant ways. In fact, 84% of fraternity and sorority members surveyed indicated they would join their fraternity or sorority if they had the chance to do it again (Gallup, 2021).

Well-Being

In their study of 10,000 alumni, which included over 3,000 fraternity and sorority members, Gallup (2021) found that 69% of fraternity/sorority alumni answered questions in a

way that indicated they were thriving as compared to 54% of their unaffiliated peers. Gallup defines thriving as “wellbeing that is strong, consistent and progressing” (p. 16). Recent studies have found significant mental health and well-being benefits for fraternity and sorority members. Building on previous research that suggested fraternity and sorority membership may lead to lower levels of depression, in a study of 41,302 students nationwide, Grace et al. (2022) found that sorority members reported significantly higher psychological well-being scores and lower depression scores than their unaffiliated peers. Similarly, in a 2022 report by the Postsecondary Education Research Center at the University of Tennessee Knoxville, researchers found higher well-being scores and lower depression scores among fraternity members.

Leadership and Campus Involvement

An additional benefit of fraternity and sorority membership is increased involvement on members’ respective campuses. Fraternity men and sorority women report higher levels of campus engagement, volunteering and they report higher levels of confidence in themselves as leaders (Pike, 2020; Postsecondary Education Research Center, 2022; Routon & Walker, 2014). Further, in their study on socially responsible leadership, which considered values-based leadership, Hevel et al. (2018) found that fraternity or sorority membership had a significant positive effect on college students’ socially responsible leadership. This study supported previous literature on how the fraternity or sorority experience enhances leadership skills for college-aged students.

Academic Performance

While there have been multiple studies regarding membership in fraternities and sororities and the impact on students’ academic performance, the findings have been mixed regarding the impact of membership. In 2014, Routon and Walker analyzed data collected from

103,292 respondents from the Higher Education Research Institute's Cooperative Institutional Research Program, a longitudinal study where students are surveyed their freshman and senior years. This study has been referenced as one of the most significant academic studies regarding organizational membership. Fraternity men reported slightly lower GPAs than their non-Greek counterparts, but sorority women were found to have higher GPAs than unaffiliated women (Bowman & Holmes, 2017; Routon & Walker, 2014). Both fraternity and sorority members were found to graduate on time at a rate that was five percentage points higher than unaffiliated students (Routon & Walker, 2014). Despite Routon and Walker's findings, more recent studies have found that fraternity and sorority membership was directly related to affiliated students' lower academic performance than their non-Greek peers, with men displaying a larger difference in GPA (Even & Smith, 2022; Pike, 2020).

Outside of GPA, researchers have noted several other indicators of academic performance where fraternity and sorority members perform higher than their unaffiliated peers. For example, Pike (2020) and Gallup (2021) found that fraternity and sorority members were more likely to participate in high-impact learning experiences that build relationships with faculty, such as study abroad or undergraduate research.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Bystander Intervention

Researchers have found value in fraternity and sorority membership as it relates to members' confidence in stopping sexual violence and implementing bystander intervention behaviors. In a study of almost 1,200 college students, Riggs and Yoshimura (2023) found that members of fraternities and sororities were significantly more willing to engage in bystander intervention tactics to prevent sexual assault than students who were not members of these groups.

Career Readiness and Networking

The potential benefits of fraternity and sorority membership are not limited to the undergraduate experience. In a study of over 10,000 people who had graduated from college within the past 15 years, Gallup (2021) found that alumni who were affiliated with a fraternity or sorority felt more prepared for life after college and that they secured jobs more quickly after graduation than their unaffiliated peers. In fact, 51% of affiliated alumni indicated that they had their first job within two months of graduating from college as compared to 36% of unaffiliated alumni (p.8).

Community Service and Philanthropy

A shared value throughout fraternities and sororities, regardless of when or how they were founded, is commitment to philanthropy and serving the greater community. In a study of 23,593 students from 43 universities, Burkhard and Timpf (2021) found that fraternity and sorority members are more likely to complete volunteering or community service and they also indicated that they felt like an important part of a larger community more than their unaffiliated peers.

Benefits of Fraternity and Sorority Life to Colleges and Universities

While membership in a fraternity or sorority can have demonstrated benefits for individual members, there are also potential benefits for the host institutions. For decades, researchers have articulated how colleges and universities benefit from having fraternities and sororities on their campuses. Astin (1977) found that fraternity and sorority members were more satisfied with their undergraduate experience, instructors, and institution itself than students who were non-members. Because of this, fraternity and sorority members displayed higher levels of persistence in college than their unaffiliated peers (Astin, 1977). This research was further

supported in multiple studies, including a longitudinal study which indicated that fraternity and sorority members were twenty percent more likely to graduate from college (Bowman & Holmes, 2017; Nelson et al., 2006; Routon & Walker, 2014). Pike (2020) found that fraternity and sorority members were more satisfied with their college experience. Even as recently as 2022, the Postsecondary Education Research Center at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, found that fraternity members reported feelings of being more connected to their campus than their unaffiliated peers and they indicated higher intentions of persisting all the way to graduation (Postsecondary Education Research Center, 2022). Researchers continue to demonstrate to higher education administrators the significant benefits to hosting fraternities and sororities on their campus as these opportunities for involvement led to higher retention and graduation rates.

Because members of fraternities and sororities indicate higher levels of satisfaction with their college experience, it is reasonable to assume that these college graduates go on to become satisfied alumni who ultimately support their colleges and universities as donors. Recent studies have shown that members of fraternities and sororities reported a higher feeling of affinity for their alma mater than their unaffiliated peers and demonstrated a higher level of emotional attachment, and indicated that they are more likely than non-members to donate to their alma maters (Gallup, 2021; Gallup & Purdue University, 2014).

Negative Experiences and Outcomes of the Fraternity/Sorority Experience

While many students experience the benefits of the fraternity and sorority experience, and many colleges and universities benefit from having more engaged alumni, there are numerous drawbacks to these organizations and individual student experiences can vary greatly. The value of fraternities and sororities is being questioned even more as incidents involving

hazing, alcohol and substance abuse, racism and sexual violence are at the forefront of the media surrounding fraternities and sororities.

Exclusion and Racism

Fraternities and sororities are exclusive by design; even from the beginning, these were secret societies and not everyone was invited to be a member. Even though there are culturally-based fraternities and sororities, the fraternity/sorority experience still feels exclusive to many. Pike (2020) found that being non-white or being a first-generation student significantly increased the odds that a student would not join a fraternity or sorority (p.17).

Rooted in exclusion, fraternities and sororities have historically been a system of oppression and harm for some members and non-members alike, particularly to students of color. Bureau et al. (2021) noted that members of culturally-based fraternities and sororities experience isolation and have demonstrated less access to campus and community resources than their historically white fraternal peers. Furthermore, historically white fraternities and sororities have, for years, been featured in the headlines as having racist ties or behaviors, and the impact and publicity of these has only heightened since the 2020 murder of George Floyd and the “Abolish Greek Life” movement that followed. Abolish Greek Life was started by a group of students at Vanderbilt University who were frustrated and disgusted by their organizations’ lack of response to the murder of George Floyd and the movement that followed (Lautrup, 2020).

High-Risk Behaviors

For many, fraternities and sororities have become synonymous with binge drinking and the misuse of alcohol and other drugs. The relationship between fraternity/sorority membership and alcohol misuse has been studied for decades in attempt to learn more about the social behaviors of members of these organizations to help provide resources and preventative

programming. In an often-cited NASPA study by Wechsler et al. (2009), found that 86 percent of fraternity house residents engaged in binge drinking as compared to 45 percent of non-fraternity men.

Fraternity and sorority members do not only misuse alcohol, but they are also more likely to misuse illegal drugs. In a study of almost 5,000 undergraduate students, Baker et al. (2023) found that fraternity and sorority members are more likely to report misusing a prescription stimulant drug due to self-reported higher academic pressure and different social norms than their unaffiliated peers.

Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence

For years, research has centered on sexual assault and relationship violence in the fraternity and sorority community. In a study of over 800 students, Barnes et al. (2021) found that both fraternity members and sorority members reported higher rates of sexual harassment and sexual assault than their unaffiliated peers. This study also found that fraternity men are more likely to commit sexual violence, which builds on previous studies that indicated fraternity men were three times higher than non-member to commit rape (Barnes et al., 2021; Foubert et al., 2007). Additional research has linked an increase in power as well as male privilege and control of spaces, particularly fraternity houses where there are often events with alcohol, and power has been identified as one of the root causes of sexual violence (Seabrook & Ward, 2019).

The Role of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors

The campus-based fraternity/sorority advisor is a professional faculty or staff member whose primary responsibilities include providing guidance and advising to fraternity and/or sorority chapters, governing councils, and individual student leaders who are affiliated with the fraternity/sorority community on their campus. While specific job responsibilities may vary from

campus to campus, these professionals typically work within a functional area in the student affairs unit on campus.

While all functional areas within student affairs are vital to the success and well-being of college students, each functional area comes with its own challenges. The role of fraternity/sorority advisors is exceptionally complex. FSA roles typically include a wide variety of responsibilities, including but not limited to housing, conduct, leadership development, programming, student organization advising, assessment, health and wellness, diversity and inclusion, hazing prevention, budgeting, alumni and family relations, and liaison to inter/national organizations (Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, 2020b; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2020; Hendricks & Whittier, 2019). Further, FSA roles are particularly multifaceted as they support students and oversee many responsibilities while also juggling the tension between the benefits and the negatives of the fraternity and sorority experience as described in the previous section. To add to the challenges faced by FSAs, CUPA-HR (2023) found that FSAs are often paid less than comparable positions in other functional areas within student affairs. Moreover, as the severity and occurrence of hazing cases, sexual violence, and alcohol and drug misuse is increasing, these areas of responsibility are only adding to the stress and workload of FSAs. Unfortunately, this stress and heavy workload leads to a very high turnover of FSAs. In 2020, 45.9% of the campus-based members of AFA had been in their position under one year (Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, 2020a).

Demographics of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors

The Association of Fraternity and Sorority Advisors (AFA) was formed in 1976 as the professional organization for campus-based and inter/national headquarters-based staff to come together to promote the fraternity and sorority experience and to grow as professional

fraternity/sorority advisors (Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, 2023). While not all FSAs are members of AFA, this is the most comprehensive grouping of fraternity/sorority professionals and is therefore the most accurate data source available to gauge the demographics of the fraternity/sorority advising profession.

AFA tracks membership data each year and conducts periodic membership surveys to gather additional data on its members. Of particular note is the decline in professional members of AFA since 2019. Of the 848 professional members in fall 2023, 573 self-identified as campus-based professional members (V. Williams, personal communication, October 9, 2023). This is a decrease from the overall membership of 1,001 professional members in the 2022-23 year and the 1,092 professional members and 751 campus-based members in 2019-2020 (Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, 2020a). This decrease in membership may be due, in part, to decreased funding for professional development, but is significant and should be researched further.

Complexity of the Role of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors

While the specifics of each campus-based FSA position vary based on the campus and community it serves, one trend is true for all fraternity/sorority advisors: their roles are complex and challenging, even on their best days. To make matters more challenging, approximately half of their members surveyed in the 2019 AFA Institutional Survey indicated that they were the only full-time fraternity/sorority advisor on their campus. Overwhelmingly, when surveyed, FSAs report the heavy weight of being the face of the entire fraternity and sorority life community on campus, and of being expected to be experts in all things related to fraternity and sorority life (Hendricks & Whittier, 2019). In a study on perceived expertise in fraternity and sorority advising, Goodman and Templeton (2021) also noted the expectation that FSAs are

experts on all things related to all types of fraternities and sororities but FSAs themselves are unsure that this expertise is even possible.

As stated in the AFA Code of Professional Responsibility, the complexity of the role of a fraternity/sorority advisor not only involves technical skill and ability, but also requires knowledge of relevant legal policies and the policies/procedures of the organizations you work with (Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, 2020b). When we pair this with the expectation that even entry-level FSAs are expected to “do the work of multiple functional areas” and the importance of understanding the complexity and diversity of the campus and FSL community in order to create community programming and policies that are inclusive of each campus, to say that FSA roles are complex is an understatement (Goodman & Templeton, 2021).

Additional Job Responsibilities Related to Current Trends

While fraternity/sorority advisors are tasked with many daily responsibilities, FSAs are responsible for actively working to develop responsible leaders and fostering a climate of social responsibility (Banks & Archibald, 2020; Hevel et al., 2014). Unfortunately, this often includes responding to unexpected phone calls or incidents occurring on campus. This crisis response, while somewhat expected due to the nature of the work and of working with college students in general, can create additional stress and workload for FSAs. In fact, Steiner (2020) found that many participants felt overwhelmed by their FSA role and that the additional challenges surrounding nationally publicized hazing incidents, student deaths, and high-risk alcohol incidents added to this sense of overwhelm, especially as FSAs may feel pressure to create the necessary changes needed in fraternity and sorority life.

One of the most publicized and dangerous areas of high-risk behaviors that occurs in fraternity and sorority life is hazing. While hazing is not limited to fraternity and sorority

members, fraternity/sorority advisors are often viewed as the hazing experts on campus and end up providing hazing prevention and investigation services to the entire campus body. The necessity for hazing prevention work is only increasing as these incidents are becoming more prevalent on campuses and more states are adopting anti-hazing legislation. In a study on college students' attitudes surrounding hazing, Allan et al. (2019) discuss the importance of the necessity for continuous hazing prevention workshops and trainings that are ongoing and campus-wide, including students, parents, alumni, and faculty/staff. To further supplement anti-hazing trainings and workshops, social norming and anti-hazing marketing campaigns based on institutional-specific facts and stories are critical to shifting the campus-culture surrounding hazing (Allan et al., 2019; Berkowitz, 2009). Because of FSA's perceived expertise with anti-hazing work, the development and implementation of these marketing campaigns and programs often fall to fraternity/sorority advisors to plan and deliver campus-wide, regardless of their formal training in curriculum development, large-scale training, or marketing and communications.

Coupled with creating and implementing anti-hazing trainings and marketing campaigns, campus-based professionals are often tasked with tracking hazing reports, assembling teams and conducting hazing investigations, and tracking and assessing the prevalence of hazing incidents on their campus and the effectiveness of their hazing prevention efforts (Allan et al., 2019). In addition to responding to crises involving hazing, fraternity/sorority advisors are often asked to provide leadership and guidance in diversity, equity, and inclusion, particularly due to the structures of oppression and exclusion that are melded into the fabric of fraternities and sororities. Minthorn et al. (2022) recommended that fraternity/sorority advisors should not just provide educational programming and workshops, but they should also evaluate their current communities and policies to evaluate where there may be systems of racism and colonialism that

are exclusive to Indigenous students and to identify possible areas of community growth to create spaces for more students. Relatedly, Bureau et al. (2021) recommended that FSAs be mindful of the social class inequities that are created by FSL systems and be open to advocating for change- knowing that not all students have the same access to financial and social resources. It is important to note that researchers warn administrators and fraternity/sorority professionals to be mindful of how DEI work impacts persons of color, citing the “Black Tax” of extra work related to DEI initiatives that falls on persons of color, which refers to stated and implied expectations of persons of color to carry additional workloads as they related to DEI and educating their white peers (George, 2023).

Experiences of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors

As the responsibilities associated with serving as a fraternity/sorority advisor become more complex and the severity and frequency of incidents involving fraternity and sorority members increases and is more publicized, researchers have begun to study the lived experiences of FSAs. The literature focuses on a lack of formal training and onboarding, FSAs feeling burned out by their jobs, and on the experiences of FSAs who are persons of color.

Lack of Formal Training

A significant theme that has emerged from the existing literature on fraternity/sorority advising is the lack of formal training or onboarding for new professionals. Williams (2020) found that, among the professionals she interviewed, most reported that their training specific to fraternity/sorority advising came from outside volunteer roles and advice from peers rather than from their supervisor or institution. New professionals recognized the importance of building expertise in fraternity and sorority life and also shared the pressure they felt as new professionals to be continuously learning more while juggling many responsibilities and working at a rapid

pace (Goodman & Templeton, 2021). Further research is needed in order to better understand the training and onboarding experiences of fraternity/sorority advisors and how that impacts their experiences in their respective roles.

Burnout

Unfortunately, most research that exists around fraternity/sorority advising identifies burnout as a main theme of FSAs. Steiner (2020) studied fraternity/sorority advisors who chose to stay in the field and found that burnout is normalized and expected in the work and that FSAs feel as though they are expected to just deal with it as opposed to actively finding solutions to work against burnout. Steiner (2020) also noted that FSAs experiencing burnout struggled to focus and be “present at work,” and that fraternity/sorority advising became burdensome and unmanageable due to the expectations of supervisors and external stakeholders (p.56) In that same study, Steiner found that fraternity/sorority advisors want to feel like they are making an impact and when they do not see desired change in the fraternity/sorority community they work with, that leads to frustration and burnout. This lack of change may come from uninterested students and alumni or poor institutional support, but both seem to influence the level of burnout experienced by campus-based FSAs. In a complimentary study conducted by Williams (2020), who interviewed participants who had left fraternity and sorority advising altogether, when asked if they would return to the role if given the opportunity, many said no and attributed the “work schedule and inability to live what felt like a normal life to the reason they would not return to the functional area” (Williams, 2020). Relatedly, an emerging theme in the literature surrounding attrition in fraternity/sorority advising is values incongruence, the phenomenon that occurs when FSAs realize their personal values no longer align with the values of the organizations or communities they support. Both Williams (2020) and Steiner (2020) found that FSAs ultimately

began to apply for outside employment when they realized they no longer believed in the work they were doing or they no longer enjoyed doing the work.

Experiences of FSAs who are People of Color

There is a growing body of research on the experiences of FSAs who are people of color. In their 2020 membership report, AFA noted that most FSAs who are affiliated with a fraternity or sorority are members of historically white organizations (Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, 2020a). The impact of this whiteness in the FSA community impacts students and professionals alike. In a study of campus-based professionals who were members of culturally-based organizations (CBFOs) and persons of color, George (2023) labeled the impact of this on persons of color as feeling as though they were a “Guest in their Own Home” (p. 71), stating that often FSL policies and norms are shaped around the historic needs and benefits of historically-white fraternities and sororities and that this created an environment that was not representative of or home-like for people of color or members of CBFOs. This was echoed in Goodman and Templeton’s (2021) study, where their participants identified the importance of creating policies and procedures that are inclusive of all types of organizations.

George (2023) also noted that the FSAs who participated in their study recognized the importance of their physical presence and representation in their FSA role for the students they served. Further, one of George’s (2023) participants described what they called the “Black Tax” (p. 75) of working in fraternity and sorority life as person of color, defining the Black Tax as the exhausting amount of additional labor, effort, and time they are asked to commit to programming and initiatives centered around DEI solely because of their race.

Recommendations for Retaining Campus-based Fraternity/Sorority Advisors

There is limited research on the factors that should be considered when promoting employee retention within fraternity/sorority advising. One thing is abundantly clear from the research: at their core, despite all of the challenges they face, FSAs report a deep connection to their work and feel as though there is important work to be done with fraternities and sororities (McKeown, 2021; Steiner, 2020; Williams, 2020). Additionally, 95.3% of AFA members indicated they were affiliated with a fraternity or sorority (Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, 2020a). This deep, personal connection should be researched further to help identify strategies for administrators and supervisors to implement to increase retention in FSAs.

Several researchers have made recent recommendations for executive-level campus leadership to consider to prevent attrition from FSA roles. Steiner (2020) recommended that campuses evaluate their FSA positions and elevate them from entry-level to mid-level whenever possible. This is based on the high attrition rates in the first few years of employment, and these higher-level positions may also attract more experienced professionals who have further developed the skills necessary to handle the complex responsibilities that accompany the FSA position. McKeown (2021) recommended creating more FSA positions altogether to create more opportunities for interested new professionals while also reducing the workload for all FSAs. McKeown (2021) also recommends increasing FSA salaries to more accurately reflect the skillset and responsibilities involved in fraternity/sorority work and to help retain talented professionals.

Role of Supervisor and Institutional Support

In alignment with previous studies on student affairs professionals, fraternity/sorority advisors have indicated how they are more motivated to stay in their current position if they feel

a higher level investment from higher level administration on the fraternity and sorority community and that strong supervisors contribute to the overall retention of FSAs (Williams, 2020). Due to the complex nature of the fraternity/sorority advising position and the high turnover rate, more research is necessary to more fully understand the reasons FSAs choose to leave their positions. This study will gather data from participants' lived experiences as former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors to gain a more thorough understanding of the impact of the nature of campus-based FSA work.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature that was most relevant to this study on topics including student affairs attrition and identified the need for more research on employee retention within the functional areas of student affairs. I followed that with research on the history of fraternity and sorority life, and the benefits and negative experiences associate with fraternity and sorority membership. I then described the research surrounding the campus-based fraternity/sorority advisor position and the complex requirements of those roles. I concluded my review of the literature with factors that may impact FSA retention in campus-based roles and the need for increased focus on employee retention.

Through completing this literature review, I have identified the following three key sensitizing concepts which shape the design and methodology of my study: *complexity of the job of a fraternity/sorority advisor*, *weight of the work of working with fraternity/sorority students*, and *burn through*. I will describe my methodology, research design, sampling, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this general qualitative descriptive study is to explore how the complex nature of FSL work influenced the quitting behaviors of formerly campus-based fraternity/sorority professionals. I selected a general qualitative approach to allow for the theoretical and analytical flexibility I desired in order for the data to provide a clear, accurate, and detailed understanding of the experiences of my participants without theoretical restriction (Catalano & Perez, 2023). For the conceptual framework, I have framed this study using Blumer's (1969) sensitizing concepts to provide direction for organizing the study and collecting and analyzing the data. By using sensitizing concepts, I was able to build upon previous studies while also maintaining flexibility with my design in order to research the reality of the participants' experiences without having to ask specific questions or interpret their responses according to a specific theory, which allowed for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Addelson, 1994; Flemmen, 2018). According to Blumer (1969), "whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look" (p.148). After reviewing the literature, I identified the following as sensitizing concepts to guide my study: *complexity of the job of a fraternity/sorority advisor*, *weight of the work of working with fraternity/sorority students*, and *burn through*. While the origin of burning through comes from Anderson's 2021 study on how institutions burn through diversity workers, I believe that the shift from the individual frame of burnout to the institutional frame of burn through provides a more accurate description of what happens to some professionals in student affairs and specifically in fraternity and sorority life. With those three sensitizing concepts in mind, the following research questions guided this study:

1. How do former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors describe their former FSA positions and work experiences?
2. What aspects of the fraternity/sorority advising position led to former campus-based FSAs' decisions to quit their campus-based role?

Thematic Analysis

To fulfill the purpose of this general qualitative study, I employed thematic analysis which allowed me to amplify the voices of nine former FSAs and explore how they made sense of their own lived experiences without being theoretically bound (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using thematic analysis and the established sensitizing concepts to guide my methods and data analysis allowed me to uplift the individual voices of the participants of the study while also using my own lived experiences and knowledge of the subject area to aid me in identifying themes across all the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As such, it is important for me to pause before describing my methods and data analysis procedures to reflect on my positionality as the researcher in this qualitative study.

Role of the Researcher

I am an unlikely and highly critical, yet very proud sorority woman. As a kid, I remember my mom talking about her days in college. Both of my parents were non-traditional college students who transferred from community college and worked full-time while they were full-time students. Because she was working and paying her own way, mom talked about the party animal sorority women who were her suitemates and how she enjoyed living with them, but they were never serious about school and mocked her for her commitment to her studies. While she talked about them with great affection, she also told me that I would never be allowed to join a sorority. When I was fortunate enough to go to Roanoke College for my undergraduate

education, also paying my own way, I made a very public announcement to my entire residence hall floor that I would not be caught dead joining a sorority and we created our own “anti-sorority” which we affectionately named “F.U.” While F.U. was just a small group of my hallmates, they were some of my first true friends who were women. Growing up, and still to this day, my closest friends have always been men. I struggled to make connections with other girls as a child and teenager and struggled to maintain friendships. But these women, my friends in “F.U.” showed me how powerful, healthy, and supportive friendships between women could be. Ironically, because of the bonds I formed with the women in the basement of Bartlett Hall over our initial shared disinterest in sororities, I began to explore other women’s organizations at Roanoke and eventually decided to join my sorority, Alpha Sigma Alpha, in the spring of my sophomore year.

While I enjoyed my two years of membership as a collegiate member of Alpha Sigma Alpha, my alumna and volunteer experiences post-graduation have been transformational in my development as a woman and as a higher education professional and scholar. I have been fortunate enough to volunteer for my sorority and for several fraternities since 2006, and it is through these experiences that I have built life-long networks of support and I have seen the true beauty of the fraternity and sorority experience. I believe in the power of the fraternity and sorority experience when it is done well, but I also believe that many organizations and campuses are struggling. I know that it takes a significant amount of commitment and support from students, alumni, and institutions to enable fraternity and sorority communities to reach their potential and to provide the positive experiences that I believe in.

In 2018, I had the incredible honor of being hired as an Assistant Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life for one of the largest fraternity and sorority communities in the United States.

This professional role was the most fulfilling work I have ever done, and it was also the most challenging. While I felt like the university and local community were very supportive of our fraternity and sorority community, the amount of work and the constant worry of “am I doing enough to help them keep themselves safe?” and thoughts of “I hope I don’t get any calls from the hospital this weekend” were overpowering for me at times.

In 2022, I had the opportunity to leave my full-time professional role as an FSA to finish my Ph.D. While I was grateful to be in the position to become a full-time student, I was saddened to leave the work that meant so much to me- I felt like I was abandoning my students and giving up on advocating for an experience that I believed in so deeply. These mixed feelings and my continued belief in the fraternity and sorority experience prompted me to shift my research interests on to learning more about fraternities and sororities and the professionals who support them. I believe that my lived experiences as a sorority woman and a former campus-based FSA position me in a unique place from which I can uplift the voices of my participants and draw from their shared experiences.

Sample Selection

For the purposes of this study, I used purposeful, deliberative sampling (Creswell, 2013; Braun & Clarke, 2006). To be eligible for the study, participants needed to meet three criteria. First, participants needed to have served in a campus-based fraternity/sorority advising role as a full-time professional. Because FSA positions are structured differently on various campuses, I clarified that fraternity/sorority advising needed to be at least 80% of their functional responsibility in their campus-based role to isolate participants whose job duties were primarily related to fraternity/sorority advising and to minimize the potential impact of other functional area responsibilities on their work experiences.

Second, participants must have left their campus-based role since January 2018. I purposefully selected this time frame because I wanted participants to be able to recall specific details of their campus-based experiences that may fade from memory after being gone for more than five years, and I also wanted a timeframe that spanned pre-and post-COVID pandemic.

Third, participants must have left campus-based work altogether. Participants were eligible to participate in the study if they sought new employment at inter/national headquarters, in private industry, K-12 education, public service or consulting work, but I intentionally selected participants who had left campus-based roles altogether. People who shifted into different roles within higher education were not eligible to participate in this study.

Sample selection was conducted in a few ways, including social media recruitment, and seeking recommendations from current fraternity/sorority life professionals. First, I posted a public, sharable call for participants on Facebook and I asked that my post be shared through relevant groups and online communities. Since I realized that some former fraternity/sorority advisors would not be members of Facebook or may not see my post, I also sought recommendations for potential participant contact information.

I created two separate introductory emails to potential participants; one was to potential participants who responded directly to my social media announcements (see Appendix A) and the other was to potential participants who were recommended to me by others (see Appendix B). In these emails, I provided a brief introduction to my study and my methodology, my contact information, and I asked them to fill out a participant interest form (see Appendix C) if they were interested in participating. I sent these emails on a rolling basis as soon as I received responses on Facebook or responses to my emails.

The participant interest form (see Appendix C) was conducted via QuestionPro and it included 22 questions. The first section of questions were demographic questions including race, ethnicity, gender, age, fraternity/sorority affiliation, and number of years' experience working with fraternities and sororities. The second section of questions focused on the potential participants' previous campus-based FSA role. These questions included institutional information as well as details regarding the FSA position and fraternity/sorority community composition. The final section of questions asked about employment immediately following the campus-based FSA position.

Once potential participants submitted the participant interest form, I emailed them within 24 hours to confirm whether or not they were eligible to participate in my study (see Appendix D). For those who were not eligible, I thanked them for their time and for completing the survey. For the participants who were eligible, I sent them an email that outlined the next steps and provided information for scheduling their Zoom interview.

Ultimately, 15 potential participants completed the pre-screening survey and I identified 11 of those respondents to be eligible to participate in the study. After inviting the 11 eligible participants, I conducted Zoom interviews with nine participants (n=9).

Description of the Sample

The nine participants came from varied backgrounds and educational experiences and basic demographic information is shown in Table 1. All nine participants indicated that they worked as fraternity/sorority advisors for at least five years, and all participants were between the ages of 30-44 at the time of their interview. Participants worked in varying types of institutions as FSAs, including large and small private institutions and public institutions throughout the United States and schools that are classified as PWIs, HSIs, and MSIs.

Participants also shared that upon leaving their FSA positions, they went to a variety of new types of employment. Three participants took jobs in private industry or business not related to higher education, three participants went to work for fraternity or sorority headquarters for organizations they were not members of, two went to work for non-profit organizations not related to higher education, and one went into a consulting job related to fraternity and sorority life.

Table 1

Participant Profiles (n=9)

Pseudonym	Personal Affiliation	Gender	Race	Years of professional experience in FSL
Ashlyn	NPC Sorority	Female	White	More than 10
Bruce	NIC Affiliated/Aligned Fraternity	Male	White	5-7
Darwin	NIC Affiliated/Aligned Fraternity	Male	White	5-7
Dorothy	NPC Sorority	Female	White	7-10
Elizabeth	NPC Sorority	Female	Mixed race	More than 10
Ella	Local Sorority	Female	White	More than 10
Maggie	NPC Sorority	Female	White	More than 10
Rebecca	NPHC Sorority	Female	Black/African American	5-7
Roberto	NIC Affiliated/Aligned Fraternity	Male	Latino	More than 10

Note. Participants were asked to provide their gender and race using an open-ended text box in the participant interest form.

Data Collection

I used semi-structured interviews to collect the data from my participants because it allowed me the flexibility that was necessary to discover the unique experiences of each participant (Sandelowski, 2000). I created an interview guide based on the sensitizing concepts I derived from the literature, but the use of semi-structured interviews allowed me to listen intently

to each participants' answers to the pre-determined interview questions and then ask individualized follow up questions as appropriate to gain more understanding of specific answers.

Interview Guide (Appendix E)

In alignment with general qualitative descriptive research (Catalano & Perez, 2023), I developed an interview guide that contained 11 questions on a broad array of topics that included participants' journeys into their FSA position, the training and onboarding they received, descriptions of job responsibilities, and ultimately what prompted their decision to leave the campus-based position. I piloted my interview guide with two former FSAs who did not qualify for my study due to the time elapsed since they had served in their campus-based roles. After piloting the protocol, I made a few minor adjustments to my interview guide, specifically to the order in which I asked questions. I also made the decision to attach a copy of the interview guide to the interview confirmation email to allow participants to review the questions in advance if they so chose.

Interview Procedures

Before collecting data, I received IRB approval from Virginia Tech, my home institution. I provided a copy of the IRB Approval, Appendix F, to each participant when I sent the email confirming the day and time of their interview as well as a copy of the interview guide. I conducted interviews using the Zoom videoconferencing platform. By using this online platform instead of travelling for in person interviews, I was able to minimize costs while also giving participants the most flexibility with time and selecting a location that was most comfortable for them (Creswell, 2013). Using Zoom also allowed me to enable closed captioning for participants to make the interview more accessible.

Once I identified which participants were eligible for my study, I emailed them to schedule their Zoom interview. I scheduled each interview for 90 minutes to allow enough time for the participants to share their lived experiences as campus-based FSAs. Each interview took a different amount of time, and they ranged from 31 minutes to one hour and 50 minutes in length.

At the scheduled time for each interview, I began the interview with a brief introduction and then asked the participant for their verbal permission to record the Zoom. Once they agreed, I began the Zoom recording and started with my official introduction and followed the interview protocol. As a backup to the Zoom recording, I also used an audio recording app on my cell phone to record each interview.

Throughout each interview, I followed the interview guide and listened intently to each participants' responses, making minimal observational notes as we were talking. As participants responded to the established interview questions, I also followed up with probing questions when I felt those would help me better understand how each participant was making sense of their specific experiences.

At the end of each interview, I thanked each participant for participating in my study. I informed them that they would receive a copy of the transcript of their interview within two weeks and that they would have the opportunity to provide feedback on their transcript if they wished. I also shared with the participants the methods I would use to share the results of my study and I gave them my contact information if they had any questions regarding the study.

Immediately following each interview, I uploaded a copy of the video recording to Rev.com for transcription. Once I received the transcript for each interview back from Rev.com, I downloaded and hand-checked each transcript before sending a copy of each transcript via

email to each participant for their review. I asked each participant to respond via email within one week with any feedback.

Data Security

Electronic copies of Zoom interview recordings, interview transcripts, observational memos, and coding and analysis notes were saved on a password-protected laptop computer. Printed transcripts were saved in a locked file cabinet in my home office. Electronic informed consent and pre-screening surveys that contained participant identifying information including names and pseudonyms were saved separately from the recordings and transcripts. All electronic files were also backed up in a password-protected Dropbox folder.

Data Analysis

Interview Transcripts

Immediately following each interview, I uploaded a copy of the video recording to Rev.com for transcription. Once I received the transcript for each interview, I then re-watched each interview while reviewing the transcript to check for accuracy and correct for any errors in the digital transcription. Once I had finished editing the transcripts, I sent each transcript to the participant and asked them to review the transcript and submit any edits or changes within one week. Two participants responded with requests to de-identify a previous institution using a different name, but I received no additional edits.

Analysis

Data analysis was driven by the established sensitizing concepts and using thematic analysis and inductive coding methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2021). A crucial facet to thematic analysis is to evaluate across all transcripts to identify themes across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I began with each transcript by reading the transcript completely and making

initial comments in the margin about language, body language, and my interviewer's observations of the participant's responses. After reviewing my initial comments, I began to develop emergent codes that were based on both the data and my interpretation of the participant's responses to the questions. As anticipated with any thematic analysis study, there were initially a very high number of codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once I established the codes within each transcript, I reviewed the codes from that transcript and began to use similarities in the themes to cluster them into groups (Saldaña, 2021). I created a table of these thematic groupings for each transcript and included columns for the subtheme/grouping, direct quotes from the transcript, and a third column for my observations and initial interpretations (see Table 2). When I was satisfied with the groupings for the transcript, I then moved to the next participant's transcript and began analysis from the beginning step of reading and making initial notes. I used the subthemes from the previous transcript to help me identify themes that existed across the data and continued to make notes, including noting similarities and differences across all transcripts. As I created new subthemes for a transcript, I went back to any previous transcripts to identify if any data aligned with the new subtheme.

Table 2***Participant Codes and Subthemes***

Subtheme/Category	Codes	Direct Quotes and notes
Unrealistic expectations	Working overtime	“I was working during my maternity leave because there was just nobody else to do the work...FSL still has to happen.”-Maggie
	Feeling overwhelmed	“It was just very overwhelming. Just feeling like that all the time panicked me and I would think ‘why am I not doing something right now.’”-Maggie

After analyzing all nine transcripts individually and across the entire data set, I used a thematic concept map to group the subthemes into major themes and related subthemes along with direct quotes and notations of which’ participants contributed to the theme. Once I finalized the cross-review of all the transcripts, I identified the following major themes from the data, which I will detail in-depth in chapter four: (a) *unrealistic expectations*, (b) *challenges specific to working in fraternity and sorority life* (c) *impact of the campus environment*, and (d) *lasting personal effects of the FSA experience*.

Trustworthiness

Because of my unique positionality in relation to this study, trustworthiness was a priority for me throughout the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained trustworthiness as establishing legitimacy and making research understandable by considering four key components in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. As a scholar who deeply understood the work of FSAs and was uniquely situated as an embedded member of

this community of practice without currently working in the field, it was critical for me to acknowledge my experiences and biases while also documenting my research process and verifying the findings in order to make this study relevant for other practitioners and scholars.

Credibility

Credibility within a qualitative study is the alignment between what participants say and how it is represented by the researcher (Nowell et al., 2017). To address credibility within my study, I employed two techniques: member checking and triangulation. For the member checking, once I had compiled the table of themes for each participant, I shared the unique table with all each individual participant and asked them to check for accuracy (Creswell, 2013). I did not receive any feedback from member checking. In addition to member checking, I also used data triangulation, in which a theme was only identified as a master theme if it emerged from 3 or more participants (Patton, 1999).

Transferability

Throughout the data analysis and findings process, I have done my best to provide rich, descriptive data and interpretations so that readers can more fully understand the study and make informed decisions as to whether this study applies to their specific situation (Nowell et al., 2017) Further, to aid in increasing transferability, I have also provided detailed information about the delimitations and limitations of this study.

Dependability

The key to dependability in qualitative research is how well readers can understand the steps taken throughout the research process (Nowell et al., 2017). Throughout every step of the design, data collection, and data analysis, I maintained a researcher's journal where I kept an audit trail of the decisions I made regarding the design and implementation of my study and what

influenced that decision. As a part of my journal, I also maintained a reflexive journal to keep track of my experiences throughout the process.

Confirmability

According to Nowell et al. (2017), confirmability occurs when a study achieves credibility, transferability, and dependability. To further promote confirmability, I have intentionally included details about the decisions behind my study design and data analysis throughout the entirety of this study.

Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how the complex nature of FSL work influenced the quitting behaviors of formerly campus-based fraternity/sorority professionals. To fulfill this purpose, the following research questions guided this study: (1) How do former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors describe their former FSA positions and work experiences, and (2) What aspects of the fraternity/sorority advising position led to former campus-based FSAs' decisions to quit their campus-based role?

This chapter includes a summary of the findings that emerged from semi-structured interviews with the nine study participants about their lived experiences. Because the two research questions are so directly related, the overall findings are organized by themes and sub-themes, which are organized in Table 3. Each theme and subtheme is supported by direct quotations from participants, and these quotations are excerpts from the full transcripts of our interviews, which served as the unit of analysis for the study.

Findings

I asked the nine participants various questions about their work experience as FSAs and their decisions to quit those jobs through semi-structured interviews. Four main themes emerged from the analysis of the data: (a) *unrealistic expectations*, (b) *challenges specific to working in fraternity and sorority life*, (c) *impact of the campus environment*, and (d) *lasting personal effects of the FSA experience*. The four themes and subsequent sub-themes are organized in Table 3 and described in detail in the remainder of this chapter.

Table 3***Themes and Subthemes***

Theme	Subthemes
<i>Unrealistic expectations</i>	Lack of onboarding and training Disconnect between expectations and reality of the job Working overtime Overwhelming workload Serving as the “face” of FSL Burnout
<i>Challenges specific to working in fraternity and sorority life</i>	High-pressure work Lack of accountability Working with affiliated alumni and national organizations Negative impact of men’s fraternities
<i>Impact of the campus environment on FSAs</i>	Challenges facing student affairs Lack of understanding and respect for fraternity and sorority life “other duties as assigned”
<i>Lasting personal effects of the FSA experience</i>	Impact on physical and mental health Life trajectory Impacts on family life

Unrealistic Expectations

The theme of *unrealistic expectations* was a dominant and recurring theme throughout the analysis of all nine transcripts. Within this theme, six subthemes emerged: (a) *lack of onboarding and training*, (b) *disconnect between expectations and reality of the job*, (c) *working overtime*, (d) *overwhelming workload*, (e) *serving as the “face” of FSL*, and (f) *burnout*. This theme provides insight to both research questions and serves as the backbone of all the findings, as the subsequent themes and subthemes are all related to the *unrealistic expectations* that participants experienced in their roles and how those expectations impacted their work and their

decisions to quit their jobs. Speaking generally about the *unrealistic expectations* they faced, Ashlyn and Linda shared their overall reflections on what was expected of them. Ashlyn stated, “The expectations were ridiculous...this is a crisis.” Similarly, with a heavy sigh and tears in her eyes, Linda shared, “It just very much felt like the expectations were unreasonable, and that I wasn’t a human being.”

Lack of onboarding and training

All nine participants identified a lack of training or onboarding when they first started in their FSA roles and the challenges that arose from their lack of training. Multiple participants had experienced this lack of training at multiple institutions as they had served as FSAs at different schools. Maggie, Dorothy, and Rebecca described their onboarding as “trial by fire.” Ashlyn shared a similar onboarding experience:

My supervisor told me “We’re just going to throw you in the pool and it will be up to you to learn how to swim. So either you are going to find out that you either learn how to swim or you’re going to drown” ...that’s intense, but I found it to be true.

Multiple participants shared that they felt like they were expected to know everything and that their supervisors assumed they didn’t need any training related to fraternity and sorority advising. Linda shared the following about her onboarding experience:

There was not a whole lot of “Let’s help you be successful and be prepared in this position.” It was how to get your health insurance done, what does office culture look like, and here’s who you need to find when you need to schedule a room.

Similarly, Ella stated, “There was no training in terms of fraternity and sorority advising. I came in and I was expected to be the expert...I had to teach myself everything.” Maggie shared,

“There was no onboarding. It was just hope for the best and figure it out...I showed up. That was my onboarding.”

Both Darwin and Bruce worked at their undergraduate alma maters, and they believed that some of their lack of training and onboarding may have been due to assumptions they knew how to advise their communities based on their undergraduate experience alone. Darwin shared, “I think there were a lot of things where it was just kind of assumed that I was already privy to.”

Relatedly, Bruce stated:

My training was non-existent. My supervisor just told me to “Do whatever you feel is necessary as long as it provides or it kind of goes along with the institution’s mission and doesn’t get us in trouble.”

Several participants noted the additional work and responsibility created by their lack of training and onboarding and the impact that had on them as they transitioned into their positions. With a deep sigh as she reflected on her onboarding, Dorothy shared, “training wise, a lot of it was learning as I go. It was very, very difficult.” When asked about his onboarding and training in his FSA position, Roberto scoffed as he told me his “onboarding was really rough because it didn’t really exist.”

In reflecting on her professional experiences throughout student affairs, Ashlyn identified a potential lack of appropriate onboarding throughout the field and not just isolated to fraternity and sorority advising when she noted:

I don’t think in general higher ed or fraternity/sorority life specifically does a great job of onboarding folks into professional roles as they transition out of grad school, but I will say I felt pretty prepared to deal with whatever would come my way because of what I was tasked to handle often on my own during grad school.

Disconnect between expectations and reality of the FSA job

All participants reflected on how their undergraduate experiences and membership in fraternities and sororities influenced their decisions to become FSAs. Several participants shared how those undergraduate experiences shaped their expectations of the FSA role and how those expectations did not match with the reality of the FSA job. Roberto shared that the FSA position “was worse than I could have ever imagined.”

Ashlyn, Linda, and Maggie shared more about how their expectations didn’t align with the day-to-day reality of the work itself, and they reflected on their romanticized perceptions of working in fraternity and sorority life. Ashlyn explained:

You have this promise of changing student lives and being a mentor to folks, and you spend all this time and energy and money learning about student experiences, and then you are talking about campus policy and you’re like, this isn’t exactly what I had in mind when I went into this role.

Similarly, Linda shared “I think everybody thinks it’s rainbows and cupcakes and glitter and boas, and it is, but that’s also while you’re cleaning up all the other crap that they’re doing.”

Maggie described her experiences and stated:

I never realized the bullshit that campus folks [FSAs] dealt with...I didn’t realize the amount of crap that they deal with every day...and the fact that they also put on this happy face and welcome you into their office.

Working overtime

All nine participants shared great detail about what Dorothy phrased as the “24/7” nature of fraternity and sorority advising and the amount of work and hours that were expected of them as FSAs. Dorothy went on to share what her supervisor had told her on her first day about

fraternity and sorority advising, highlighting the underlying expectation that she work more based on her love of the work itself:

This field is unforgiving, and when you do this work, you're going to get the most of it. You're going to have to go above your hourly allotment each week. And when you do, it's for the love of the game.

Dorothy and Darwin were also quick to point out what they perceived to be differences between FSL and some of the other functional units within student affairs. Dorothy stated about her perspective and how she felt it differed from her peers, bluntly:

It never ends. Fraternity and sorority advising is a young person's game because that expectation does not exist in the Disability Services office. It doesn't exist in orientation. It doesn't exist in the Multicultural Center.

In addition to noting the long hours each week, Darwin reflected on the year-long requirements of FSA work:

I go from recruitment to officer training to putting out fires in the spring to now we're right back into orientation season. I don't really have time off to decompress like many other colleagues do.

Several participants reflected on the number of hours they worked each week due to the quantity of work itself and juggling the administrative responsibilities with being present at meetings and programs to support their students. Roberto shared, "there was a lot of weekend work...and I was in the office 'til 9:00 PM...and things going on after hours." Rebecca asked, "who else is going to do it? All of the work just has to get done so I would stay late or get up early to do emails...the work doesn't really get done in the day because of all of the other stuff."

Dorothy and Bruce shared further insight to the demanding hours of the work, with Bruce sharing:

I would work constantly, and some of those would be 12-to-18-hour days of just being there because my director was like, “Oh, well, Bruce is good for it. He’ll take care of it.” I would be there until 1:30 in the morning...and then see you tomorrow bright and early at 8:00 AM...I was working 50-60 hours a week at minimum, constantly on call, never really getting to take vacations except for the summer. My last two summers there, I had saved up so much PTO that I was able to take three weeks off at a time...but between the months of August to the end of May, I never took vacations, I never took breaks because I had to be there for the students.

Dorothy added:

I think the thing that is just the most grueling of this is...and truly, I know that I should say those other things are hard, this is the most grueling aspect of the job. You have to be where the students are when they are there, which means that you have time to have time to do your administrative work, and you have to be at events that are happening at 9:00 PM on campus...and then be back at work at 8:00 the next morning.

A few participants further reflected on how the never-ending work and the expectations for time impacted their lives outside of work. Through tears, Maggie shared, “I was working during my maternity leave because there was just nobody else to do the work...FSL still has to happen.” Linda, also through teary eyes, stated:

Our supervisors didn’t know what people were dealing with at home, and it didn’t matter, because they expected us to do what they thought needed to be done, when they thought it needed to be done. There was just no consideration for anybody’s outside

schedules... You cease to exist as a person. You are just a staff member. And you are here for whatever we need, whenever we need it, and you are expected to respond without asking questions. That was so overwhelming to me.

In reflecting on the amount of work and the hours she was putting in, Ashlyn noted the impact on her students and her staff, and how her actions may have further normalized overworking when she noted “It creates this cycle, though, because my staff saw me do that. I saw my supervisor doing that. My students probably saw my staff doing that.”

Overwhelming workload

In addition to the *unrealistic expectation* of working long hours, all nine participants also reflected on the overwhelming quantity and nature of their work as FSAs and balancing their administrative responsibilities with being present for their students. When asked if she ever felt overwhelmed, Ella shared, “Yes, Every day. Well, first of all, it’s a job that is so reactive...and there’s just so many things all at once.” Similarly, Roberto said that he felt “overwhelmed all the time because I was drowning in the work,” and Rebecca shared she felt like she was expected to “be everywhere and attend all of the events,” which she simply could not do.

Dorothy, Darwin and Ashlyn reflected on the ever-changing and never-ending work associated with fraternity and sorority life. Dorothy outlined some of the challenges when she said she had to juggle:

Expectations from university leadership to “Do more, do more, but also we probably won’t be able to return the same funding level to you next year. We also would like for you to do these three impossible things: create peace within the fraternities and sororities, create a high-functioning academically achieving sorority and fraternity community, and build houses on campus. Then on top of that, be able to maintain the relationships with

the students, advise the councils, supervise the graduate assistants, do the day-to-day tasks that are required. Then maybe at some point you can eat lunch and breathe.

Darwin further explained:

There's always the tension of here's the work at hand, but then here's all the other stuff. Here's the thing I'm mission-critical for, I'm the only one who can do this, and there's other things to continually pull at your attention and pull for your time. And it can be overwhelming.

In talking about the additional stress that came along with the big national trends including highly publicized hazing deaths and the Abolish Greek Life movement coupled with the day-to-day expectations and worries, Ashlyn shared:

It was all of these big, big questions, big worries, big anxieties coupled with the day-to-day minutia of checking people in for an event and putting a tablecloth on a table at a recruitment thing and everything in between. It was like there was no limit, I guess, to the expectations. It was like, get it done. Just do it. And that was overwhelming.

Bruce noted how a lack of understanding of fraternity and sorority life across campus added to his workload and the impact that had on him:

They told me "You're just going to get more stuff because we don't understand Greek life. We don't understand the conduct piece, we don't understand all of those things." So they added more on and finally at the end, the last year and a half in my role, I would have something every single night...with sometimes expected work on the weekends...It ended up being overwhelming, but I was like, "who else is going to do it? I've got to be the one."

Several participants further shared how their inability to meet the overwhelming expectations and workload impacted them. When thinking about the amount of work, Maggie shared, “It was just very overwhelming. Just feeling like that all the time panicked me and I would think ‘why am I not doing something right now.’” Relatedly, Linda also shared:

No matter what we did, it wasn’t good enough. It wasn’t enough. We could always be doing more. It’s never enough. You feel like you’re working constantly, and you’re exhausted.

As she thought about her workload, Ashlyn recalled:

I don’t know that overwhelmed is the word I would use. Well, I would, but not in my responsibilities. I felt overwhelmed by my schedule and by my time commitment to my work, which led to burnout. I felt ill-equipped for my responsibilities. I felt like I was constantly asked to do things because people thought I was the expert.”

In reflecting on her overwhelming workload, and its impact on her personally, Dorothy recalled:

Because of the expectations, because of the adversity, what you took was somebody who was incredibly high achieving with incredibly high standards, who was ready to work her ass off and make a change, and then watch what happens and take advantage of that person immensely.

As they were talking about the *overwhelming workload* they experienced as FSAs, three participants described some of the internal pressure they felt to do the work in support of their students. In talking about the internal pressure she felt in addition to the external pressure of the expectations from supervisors, colleagues, alumni and students to attend events, meetings, and functions, Ashlyn stated, “If I don’t do it, who’s going to do it? If I don’t show up, the students won’t feel supported.” Similarly, Bruce shared his feelings of “If not you, then who?...it was just

me trying to have the superhero complex...Somebody's got to take care of these students, somebody's got to be there for them. Somebody's got to be the one to make sure that if they have a question I'm available via text, email, in-person, phone call, whatever." In thinking about the amount of work, Roberto remembered, "it was unbearable for a lot of it, but I had to make it happen...I just cared so much about the community that I didn't want them to suffer."

The *overwhelming workload* that resulted from the unreasonable responsibilities that participants assumed in their roles also seemed to be a common theme among participants' ultimate decision to quit their FSA roles. Both Ashlyn and Rebecca shared their realization that they were no longer able to contribute in ways that were meaningful to them due to the sheer amount of work.

Ashlyn recalls:

I had an aha moment during recruitment where I realized I just don't think all of this is worth it anymore. I still believed in the power of fraternity and sorority and I still do, but being that person who is down in the weeds like that and not being able to showcase my actual talent. I was like, I just don't think this is for me anymore.

Similarly, Rebecca shared her realization:

This is too much for me. I'd rather just have my peace of mind than to be in this very intense environment...I realized that I could no longer contribute in a way that was going to be impactful because there were just too many systemic barriers to my success or to the success of why I began being an FSA.

A few other participants reached a point where they were either frustrated or ultimately done with juggling the work. In thinking about what led to her decision to quit, Linda shared, "It wasn't the work we were doing. It was the amount of work and the unreasonable expectations that I was fed up with." Similarly, Bruce shared:

I'm like, I'll just go get another job. I could go work at Target and make more money than I'm making here, I can go be a cart pusher for 18 bucks an hour. You're paying me 14 and I have a master's degree, I'm not doing it for the money.

Finally, after a deep breath and with great emotion, Maggie reflected on her decision to quit. She shared, "For self-preservation, I love my students, but I just can't make myself do this anymore."

Serving as the "face of FSL"

A fifth subtheme that participants described under the theme of *unrealistic expectations* was the expectation that they serve as the "face of FSL," constantly representing the entire community of fraternity and sorority members. Roberto described his feelings of isolation when he shared that "people did not seem to...like fraternities and sororities and I felt like the new enemy or new person that they had to be weary of because I was really invested in fraternities and sororities...no one had my back."

Other participants shared experiences where colleagues and supervisors justified unnecessary expectations of their participation or support of campus-wide events solely because of the involvement of fraternity and sorority students. Darwin shared:

That was the presumptive piece, if there was anything that happened to do with FSL...it was really easy for a lot of people to justify needing my high level engagement and touch with that versus just coming to me with questions or seeking my expertise or perspective...I can't do everything for all of you all of the time.

Ashlyn shared her experiences with the additional burden of colleagues expecting them to increase participation or provide fiscal support. Ashlyn described it by sharing she "felt overwhelmed by the expectations, like, oh just snap your fingers and get students to do this thing or come to this thing or pay this much for a speaker. You need to get butts in seats."

Similar to Ashlyn, Bruce stated:

They [campus administrators] wanted to see more from the Greeks and get their activity because the Greeks do all of the things and they have the service projects, they have the philanthropy dollars, they have the academics. So just expected me to just bring them on over here to boost the metrics of the general population and help set that higher.

Burnout

As a result of the *unrealistic expectations* while working as an FSA, many participants experienced the sixth subtheme, *burnout*, which ultimately contributed to their decisions to quit their campus-based jobs. Dorothy shares how the extra workload that was expected of her impacted her when she shared, “I couldn’t continue to volunteer in all the capacities I was expected to volunteer to within the division and do my job and not get compensated. Truly, the burnout was unbelievable, I mean unbelievable.” Ashlyn and Linda both shared about times that they felt burned out as an FSA. Ashlyn said:

My experience is that it was very thankless at times...More often than not, I was really burning myself out and not feeling like anybody even noticed I was there. Maybe that’s a sign of success if you’re just behind the scenes kind of orchestrating, making sure everything is good, or it could feel, like it did for me, man, what am I doing?

Linda reflected on her burnout and how it impacted her motivation to work:

Because we are constantly living within unrealistic expectations, we are just at capacity. So when the unexpected comes up, it’s like ‘holy shit, I don’t know where to go with this.’ Or you get to the point where you’re just like ‘Fuck it all, I’m not answering my phone. I’m just not responding to anybody. I don’t care.’ Which is also, you never want to get to that point either.

Maggie reflected further on experiencing burnout and on watching other people leave the field of fraternity and sorority advising due to their own burnout:

If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem, which is why I think is why a lot of our great professionals are leaving campuses. Because they're exhausted. You can only try to be the only person trying to do the right thing for so long before you're like, "I've got to sleep. I just can't do this anymore."

Challenges Specific to Working in Fraternity and Sorority Life

The second theme that emerged from the data analysis were the *challenges specific to working in fraternity and sorority life* and how those complicated the FSA role in ways that set those roles apart from other functional areas in student affairs. While the literature noted the complex responsibilities assigned to FSAs, the participants shared nuances about the work itself. Within these complexities lie four subthemes: (a) *high-pressure work*, (b) *lack of accountability*, (c) *working with affiliated alumni and national organizations*, and (e) *negative impact of men's fraternities*.

High-Pressure Work

One subtheme that emerged from the data was the high-pressure nature of fraternity and sorority advising due to the complexity of the job, the risks involved with fraternities and sororities, and the expectation to serve as an expert in so many different areas related to FSL. As she was reflecting on the pressure associated with being an FSA, Ella sighed and said, "This job is not for the faint of heart." Relatedly, Ashlyn noted:

There's a lot of pressure associated with the role. Folks are expecting you to be an expert on diversity, equity, inclusion. Folks are expecting you to be an expert on health and safety. Folks are expecting you to be a counselor. Folks are expecting you to be a party

planner, an event planner. Folks are expecting you to be a legal expert. There were times where I was trying to decipher things that, in my opinion, I had no business being a part of with the experience that I had. So that all takes a toll.

Multiple participants described the constant fear of a serious incident occurring within their communities. While the details of these incidents cannot be disclosed due to confidentiality, four participants shared personal experiences dealing with student deaths or severe injury due to hazing or alcohol-related activities and how respond to those incidents impacted their jobs. Other participants shared the impact that the constant worry had on their daily work. Dorothy summarized this feeling when she shared:

The workload and expectations were never-ending and impossible, I would say. This was the thing that wore me out the most...there was never a finish line, and there was always another incident.

Similarly, Ashlyn described her constant worries and how she believes feelings like hers are a cause of attrition in fraternity and sorority advising:

I would wake up every day thinking ‘Am I going to get sued today? Am I going to get a 2:00 AM phone call that one of my students has died?’ That’s not something I’m going to have to think about outside of this work. I think we need to either compensate more or have more realistic expectations or both would be ideal, but I think one or the other has got to change or we’re going to continue to see attrition in the field.

As she continued to reflect on the fraternity and sorority industry and the nature of the work being so high-pressure, Ashlyn noted:

I spend a lot of time thinking about the [FSA] industry and who is still there and who is not there...it seems disproportionately like there are tons of people going into this

field...it's like a pyramid almost. The bottom row is all these entry level professionals and everybody's gung-ho about it. And then many fewer mid-level, and then even fewer folks who are bringing with them that wisdom and experience at the top. And so that means you've probably got a lot of institutions where professionals who have had only a few years of experience doing really high-risk, high-pressure work. And then we wonder why folks aren't making it to the top of that pyramid and sticking around and ultimately giving back what we need into the profession.

Lack of Accountability

The second subtheme comprising *challenges specific to working in fraternity and sorority life* is an overall lack of accountability that most participants experienced and their frustrations with this lack of accountability. Angrily, Maggie stated, "we're willing to make excuses for eighteen-year-olds being just bad people and chalking it up to boys will be boys." Further, Rebecca shared, "I felt frustrated that I couldn't do my job because I'm trying to make these people better, or at least hold them to the standards that we say we want them to embody, and we're just letting them get a pass." Notably, Ashlyn shared the following reflection on the lack of accountability within fraternity and sorority life and its impact on students:

You all say brotherhood. And first of all, what does that mean? I think we use that a lot when we're trying to recruit people to join our fraternity and sorority communities. We're like brotherhood and sisterhood, and really what we mean is belonging, friendship, things like that. I look at it now and I'm like, if they're your brother and you care about them, why is there no accountability for the bad behavior? We're saying brotherhood and letting them get away with bad behavior, and sisterhood, too...we say we're the best, deepest

kind of friendship, lifelong relationships you can have, yet, I don't know that we really do live up to our promise to make people better people.

Sharing frustration with the broad lack of accountability within FSL, Darwin and Rebecca shared their thoughts on why they believe it occurs. Rebecca reflected on the influence of alumni and advisors on the accountability process: "there was an advisor who...had all of these connections that could allow them to get away with certain things...we're not holding people accountable because there's some influential people involved. Darwin went further to hypothesize on the business-like nature of fraternities and sororities and how that impacts the lack of accountability:

Whether or not our peers actually admit this, fraternity/sorority and higher ed is a business...And I think it's really easy to justify and permit poor decisions, poor representation because of the guise of brotherhood or the excuse of brotherhood, but you represent and you're not just impacting your campus in the next couple years by a poor decision, you're impacting potentially the entire brand for decades...We need to prune the trees, the branches, to protect the product and the brand sometimes...it's easier to say 'well, maybe look the other way or make concessions on sanctioning or punishments because it's a 100 person chapter and that's a lot of money.'

When reflecting on the lack of accountability within FSL and their own experiences with wanting to make a change, Ella and Ashlyn had perspectives on how difficult it was to make changes within the fraternity and sorority community. Ashlyn said, bluntly, "If we don't drag some of these skeletons out of the closet and really start talking about it, nothing's going to change." Likewise, Ella shared:

I think I actually thought I'd be able to make more of a difference than I could... When I first started I was like "This needs to change. We're going to make a difference." And then it just wasn't. And then it was getting worse instead of better.

Finally, Ashlyn described the long-term significance of the lack of accountability in fraternity and sorority life:

I think the longer that sort of thing [lack of accountability] continues, we're not doing ourselves any favors because others are calling us out on it yet nothing is changing.

Society is looking at our experience and saying 'this isn't worth it' and monetarily, is it?

We are paying so much for insurance alone, and this is not sustainable. So we love this thing so much, but is it enough?

Working with affiliated alumni and national organizations

A challenge that is very unique to fraternity and sorority life is the added layer of *working with affiliated alumni and national organizations*. While two participants mentioned instances of help they received from alumni and advisors, most participants also spoke of the additional challenges that came along with working with these two stakeholders who often felt like opponents rather than partners. Rebecca spoke of the extra work she had to put in "trying to just prove my worth to the advisors." Similarly, Roberto talked about "decades of fighting between the school and chapters and alumni" as he remembered the challenges he inherited in his position and how it made his work much more difficult. Other participants described feeling like an outsider. Dorothy shared:

People didn't want me. The students, the advisors, the alumni, none of them wanted a representative who wasn't one of them... I had an IFC advisor come in my office and say "You know, it's great and all that we have a Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, but I

think it would be better if we just had a Director of Fraternities who is a man and a Director of Sororities who is a woman because I just don't think you get it."

Participants shared challenges in working with alumni and national organizations that complicated their work in two different ways: using their money and power to influence daily operations (i.e., recruitment) and resistance to making necessary changes. Rebecca shared two examples of famous and rich alumni who "got involved to get two students through recruitment or they were going to pull funding for the school," and because of their level of giving at her university, she was expected to interfere with the recruitment process to please the alumni.

Dorothy shared similar experiences as she described:

...that kind of conflict with people or just navigating community partnerships and then ultimately being told we are going to do what they [alumni] want to do regardless of whether or not it's good for the community because they may give money.

In describing her significant frustrations with alumni and their influence on her work, Maggie said:

As a poorly paid, over-worked, under-supported staff member on campus, how do you contend with alumni that are collectively giving millions of dollars to the university? Because when it comes down to it, the university will post your job before your body hits the morgue, before they will go up against these alumni.

Ella summed up her frustrations with working with alumni and national organizations as she continued to reflect on the resistance to change in fraternities and sororities:

The reason why it's not changing is not necessarily the students, but the alumni and the national organizations and the power and the money that these organizations have...I thought we could actually make changes. I thought I could actually shut a fraternity down

and have those students learn their lesson and then bring them back in four years and start over again. But you can't do that because you have people who are on the board of trustees who remember their glory days and don't understand why we can't shut them down. There's just so much money and power behind the scenes that is preventing the changes from actually happening...And it's bigger than I ever thought it was and it's more powerful than I ever thought it was. And that's why it's not going to change. And that's really disheartening because it should change and I think there's enough people who want it to change.

In addition to the challenges participants faced in working with fraternity and sorority national organizations, several participants also expressed frustrations with the stress and lack of support they experienced from the AFA community specifically. In talking about her experience at an AFA Annual Meeting where she was trying to advocate for her community and get support from her national organization partners at a time when her community was in crisis, Ella shared that the experience was so negative and harmful that she “was up until 2:00 in the morning crying in the hotel lobby.”

Other participants noted the drama within the field or the pressure to be connected or “AFA Famous” and how that negatively impacted their experiences as FSAs. As she began to cry, Maggie shared, “You don't know who your friends are, you don't know who your enemies are. In the fraternity/sorority world, it's very catty.” In a similar experience, Darwin described the pressure he felt related to the AFA community when he said, “That was definitely some type of emotional challenge for me too, of what does it take to be AFA Famous and is that something I really want to pursue.”

Negative impact of men's fraternities

One final finding related to the *challenges specific to working in fraternity and sorority life* was the negative impact of some men's fraternities that several participants experienced in their FSA roles. In addition to the interference with accountability systems as noted above, participants shared their frustrations with men's fraternities and how some of those organizations and their perceived tolerance for systemic behavioral issues affected their work. Angrily, Dorothy reflected on one of the main reasons she ended up leaving her FSA position:

I was like, I'm done. This is not a safe place for boys to be anymore. This is not a safe place for boys to become men. It's just not. They're not getting what they need. We have this crisis... and I stopped believing in fraternities. I just couldn't do it anymore. I didn't see the purpose. I didn't see them ever adding value. It just seemed like a space...and my university president said this after an issue that occurred, that 'boys will be boys,' and I just stopped believing in it...I don't understand why we can keep killing people and living and existing. I don't get it...I still support sororities. And what is the difference? We've had to fight for equity and we're still fighting for equity.

Similarly, Maggie echoed her frustrations with some fraternities, specifically referring to NIC-affiliated or NIC-adjacent men's fraternities, and how their actions lead to FSA turnover and patterns of harmful behavior:

The root of every bad experience I've had as an FSA...I'm talking like serious, detrimental, traumatic issues that are impacting professionals and students alike always come down to unchecked male behavior...on the student advising side, 98% of my alumni problems stemmed from NIC-affiliated or NIC-adjacent alumni advising fraternities and allowing behaviors that are harmful to each other and are harmful to the

rest of the community. But because dollar signs are the most important thing to a university, we do not dare to piss those folks off. We do not dare to hold those folks accountable because they may stop donating.

It goes without saying but also probably needs to be said. There is a patriarchal, systematic, systemic problem in our field...200 years of overwhelming patriarchal problems that are ingrained in historically predominantly white male institutions. And until we decide to put our foot down and hold everyone accountable equally, we're going to continue to lose good folks in the field. We're going to continue to have deaths from hazing and alcohol. And we're going to continue to have universities that shudder because they don't want to do the right thing.

Impact of the Campus Environment

A third theme that emerged from the data was the *impact of the campus environment on FSAs*. Within this theme are four subthemes: (a) *challenges facing student affairs*, (b) *lack of understanding and respect for fraternity and sorority life*, (c) *impact of supervisors and campus leadership*, and (d) *“other duties as assigned.”* While each college and university is a different environment, it was evident that each participant experienced similar challenges that complicated their roles as FSAs.

Challenges facing student affairs

Several participants identified challenges they experienced that they linked to their employment in the broader field of student affairs and not just their roles as FSAs, but they also articulated how these challenges complicated the already complex work of being an FSA. In speaking broadly about why people are leaving the field of student affairs, Rebecca stated “there’s so many good people that have left because they are just like ‘I can’t fight the bigger

things that continue to plague universities.” Similarly, in reflecting on her own departure from student affairs, Ella said “I didn’t really know what I wanted to do next. I didn’t want to work my way up in student affairs because the reactive nature of the job, that wouldn’t decrease if I became a dean of students.”

Linda and Ashlyn clarified more of the challenges they observed while working as FSAs in the field of student affairs. Linda described an overall lack of resources:

There will never be enough resources. There’s not enough resources in the world to prevent the student who calls you at 11:30 on a Friday night and has an emergency.

There’s always going to be a 24-hour nature of this work. There’s work to be done at nine o’clock in the morning, but there’s also work to be done at nine o’clock at night. And so to say that you have an eight-hour day job, I just don’t know that’s possible, unless you have shift work in this role where you absolutely have someone on at all times. And that’s just not practical, for a variety of reasons.

Ashlyn described a culture within student affairs that normalized the notion of working overtime or taking on more for the sake of the students when she shared a mentality that she had experienced numerous times from supervisors and colleagues:

It was like “I know we’ve been on campus until 11:00pm last night and then we needed you again at 8:00am. Yeah, that’s rough man, but we’ve got to do it. There’s no alternative. It’s just like that’s what we signed up for.” And that’s something in higher ed and student affairs in general, I’ve seen and heard my whole career is like, well, we do it for the students though. We do it. We just do it. We show up and I don’t think that does us any favors, but I think that’s very much a, it’s like a sacrificial, it’s like an understanding that that’s just what we do.

Lack of understanding and respect for FSL

Participants experienced feelings of disrespect and a lack of understanding from both colleagues and supervisors on their campuses. This lack of respect and understanding created environments where participants felt under-valued and some questioned their roles altogether. Roberto shared that he “felt very, very alone...because they didn’t understand fraternities or sororities.” Similarly, Rebecca put it simply when she said, “if you feel like you aren’t being seen or your voice isn’t being heard, do you value being in the space?” Notably, Ella shared about the effort she took to inform her colleagues:

My role in both of my FSA jobs in large part was educating my colleagues about Greek life. That was a big part of my role. None of my colleagues ever knew anything about it. I was the sole person.

Both Dorothy and Bruce shared conversations they had with their supervisors very early in their roles, with Dorothy’s being a conversation that occurred as she was being offered the position. In that conversation, her supervisor said “Nobody else is going to take this job. It’s yours if you want it, but just know that it’s going to be hard for you.” This led her to believe that they either weren’t taking the search for an FSA seriously or they didn’t respect the work itself. Similarly, Bruce shared that his supervisor and upward leadership:

...didn’t understand Greek life at all. They didn’t understand the ins and outs and the importance of talking to headquarters, talking to alumni, talking to all the different constituencies and they didn’t care. They had told me they didn’t care and the Dean at the time told me “Bruce, I’m not expecting anything elaborate, but if you just sit in that [FSA] position for five years we’ll find some place to bump you up. I don’t expect you to build the program, I don’t expect you to do all the formalized things and all of your

grandiose ideas. If you just stay in that position for five years, we'll bump you up." And I was like 'wtf?' So I could tell immediately that there was no kind of respect of intentionality for that role as the FSL supervisor.

Ella shared a very detailed story regarding a series of chapter investigations for hazing and unhealthy behaviors in the FSL community on her campus that resulted in the university hiring an external review board. This story highlighted the overall lack of care and respect for the community and for Ella as the FSA from the decision makers at her institution:

So the topic of whether or not fraternities and sororities should exist at my university came up. Because it was a legitimate thing that people were talking about. Should we abolish it? Should we get rid of it? And they [campus leadership] ended up deciding no, we shouldn't get rid of it. But not because they create any great value-add to campus, but because it's logistically too difficult to shut them down right now. So they basically were like 'Let's give you three years, and in three years we're going to reassess...we're going to invest more in fraternities and sororities and see how it goes'...what they meant by invest more was 'Ella, you have to do more work.'

“Other duties as assigned”

The fourth subtheme within the *impact of the campus environment* centers around the additional roles and responsibilities that were assigned to FSAs. Some of these assignments came due to the FSL community's size or involvement in other campus activities, while others were “earned” based on participants' prior successful work. Rebecca summed up the thoughts of several other participants when she said that “I was always doing more than was in my job description.” Darwin articulated his frustration with being given extra responsibilities outside the realm of his job just because his fraternity and sorority community were involved:

You're being given extra responsibilities because all of the fraternities and sororities participate and have teams, so it makes sense... Well just because they go to classes doesn't mean I should be the dean of the college too.

Other participants detailed their experiences from being given extra responsibilities solely because of their good work in their FSA roles. Bruce reflected on being given responsibilities over all student organizations:

My supervisor said to me "So, whatever you're doing here [in FSL] with your success, we need you to replicate that to the other students in all of the other organizations and have them become more involved and all of that stuff." I was the other duties as assigned guy for sure... called myself the junk drawer... we all have one, but we just kind of keep throwing stuff in. So you're the junk drawer, you're going to take it and I'm like all right.

Similarly, Darwin and Linda expressed their frustrations at being given these extra responsibilities.

Darwin describes feeling taken advantage of when he shared:

If you continue to demonstrate competence and work efficacy, you get rewarded with more work and more responsibility, sometimes to the detriment of the rest of the stuff you're trying to do. So eventually you just get stretched too thin because everything keeps piling up because either no one else wants to do it, no one else can do it, or they're not willing to invest in the staff structure to allow people to do it really well... I understand the nuance and statements of you're at a small campus so you wear a lot of hats. However, I think that sometimes that can be taken a bit too far and taken advantage of people... I think at the level of compensation I was at, it certainly did not align with what I felt I was doing or the contribution I was making to the institution.

Linda also shared her frustrations and how she felt like her time was wasted: when she was expected to support events solely because her community was participating in them:

Sometimes you have to pitch in. Everybody's going to have to drag trash to the dumpster at some point in their lives, not a big deal. It's the other times, "what the hell am I doing here? I don't have anything to do with this. I have no authority over here. I'm literally just a warm body. This isn't my job. I don't know what you're expecting me to contribute to right now, other than you're taking my fucking time. That's it. You just want to look like you're handling the situation, and so you are putting people on it. But you're not giving us any direction, we have no roles right now. So I'm just standing around wasting my time, and I'm already frustrated that I'm here. And now, I'm frustrated that I'm here and I'm useless. What are we doing?"

Lasting Personal Effects of the FSA Experience

The final theme that surfaced from the data analysis was the *lasting personal effects of the FSA experience*. Upon reviewing the transcripts from each participant, it became very clear that serving in the FSA role had lasting negative impacts on multiple facets of their lives. With this theme lie three subthemes: (a) *impact on physical and mental health*, (b) *life trajectory*, and (c) *impacts on family life*.

Impact on Physical and Mental Health

The first subtheme within *lasting personal effects of the FSA experience* was the *impact on physical and mental health*, describing the direct impacts that serving in the FSA role had on the health of participants. Most participants talked about struggles they had with their mental health as a result of their work in fraternity and sorority life. "This was always something that frustrated me a lot in the job," Ella shared. She went on to explain, "It's like, I don't make a lot

of money. I work all the time. I am putting my job ahead of my family and my health, my mental health half the time.” Similarly, Rebecca recalled:

The expectation was to “Put the students first.” And I’m like “Yeah, but what about me? If I’m on fire it’s not helping anyone...they coach you that you’re doing it for the students and then it’s like well, what about yourself? I loved what I did, but it was like, yeah, this is not...the longevity...that work led to stress and anxiety...I can’t sustain this with all the other things that are compounding, especially my mental health...It was not healthy long-term, just to be away from people and secluded.

Ashlyn reflected on her experience and on what she was modelling for her students:

I think students don’t necessarily think of us staff as having outside lives. They’re just like, well, this is your job and of course you’re going to be there. But I still think students pick up on more than what we give them credit for. And I wouldn’t necessarily want to teach students that that’s normal or to burn yourself into the ground...and yet we’re like ‘balance.’ Make sure you’re getting your schoolwork done and make sure your mental health is a priority. And yet ours is down the drain whether they can tell or not...I know I was not modelling the way I needed to be at all.

Four participants described the trauma they experienced and the lasting impact that has had on their lives. As we were talking about his time as an FSA, Roberto got very emotional and shared, “I am finally at a place where I can talk about it...it took two years of straight pain and not feeling comfortable.” In a similar conversation, Linda told me, “This was years ago and I’m still emotional about it. There was a period of time that was just so much...It just felt like you’re doing so much and you’re failing.”

Dorothy went on to explain the trauma she experienced and its impact on her mental health:

We work in a very highly-traumatizing world, where we absorb secondary trauma left, right and center...this is demoralizing, right? Because I'm the expert and I'm trained. I'm also boots on the ground and I'm not getting any mental health support...I needed someone who can help me process this trauma. I need somebody else who's hearing this to help me process it, but that wasn't available to me...I loved what I did. I did it for the love of the game....But at a certain point, I couldn't keep up with the game. I couldn't keep up with the rules and standards and expectations, and they are demoralizing. They're soul crushing and my mental health is worth more to me than this job.

Similarly, Maggie shared:

I had this incredibly multifaceted traumatic experience...[from being an FSA]...It was to the point that I was not sleeping, I was not eating...it used to be daily that my blood pressure would get so high that it felt like my neck was getting tight...it was physically hard. There were days where I would just sit in the parking lot and need to cry for a couple minutes before I went into the office just to be like "Get it out now. Take deep breaths. Remember why you're going to work. Focus on the students."

Life trajectory

The second subtheme under the *lasting personal effects of the FSA experience* is how this work and ultimately leaving the field of fraternity and sorority advising changed each participant's *life trajectory*. Rebecca explained that she actually felt empowered when she got to the point in her work where she realized, "I'm going to change trajectories and do more for my own wellbeing."

In contrast, multiple other participants shared more negative shifts in their trajectories when they decided to leave fraternity and sorority advising. With great sadness, Maggie shared “I felt like 12 years down the drain...I felt like an absolute failure. Everything I had worked for professionally was completely gone.” In a similar emotional state, Roberto cried as he told me, “I completely changed careers...It was very hard (to leave). It was a breakup. It was a breakup. It was a relationship for me.” Ella began to reflect on the time she realized she may need to shift careers and she recalled:

Around the time that everything was bad, I started thinking I should maybe do something else with my life, but I didn’t know what that was. I loved being a Greek advisor. It felt like a part of who I was. I think that because we’re so close to these things, we get into it. I didn’t become a Greek advisor for no reason. It felt like a part of my identity. I know it’s not part of my identity, but it felt like a part of my identity.

Also through tearful eyes, Dorothy shared her perspective on the lasting impact of her decision to quit her FSA job:

I don’t know that guilt is the right word. It’s not guilt, it’s not shame. It’s sad, it’s sorrow. This didn’t have to happen...Every night, I still struggle with that [decision to leave] because it closed an opportunity for me.

Impacts on family life

Several participants shared that they were parents while working as an FSA, and they reflected on how their work negatively impacted their family lives. Maggie shared that she realized she “spent more time in this office than I did with my own children.” Similarly, Ella got very emotional when she reflected on the challenges of being a mom and an FSA: “My kids were little. I wanted to be able to actually be at home with them sometimes.”

Bruce became very emotional as he recalled his experience as a father while working in fraternity and sorority life:

I had a nine-year-old and a five-year old at that time and all they knew was ‘Dad’s always working, Dad’s going to work again... Three days after my job ended, I was home for dinner for the third night in a row for the first time in five years... at the time my youngest was three and my oldest was seven, he goes, “Wow, dad. You’re home for dinner again?” And the fourth night and the fifth night, “Well, dad are you just going to be home for dinner every night? This is the best. Can we go outside and play?” And at that moment it hit me and I get choked up thinking about it from time to time. But I didn’t realize... how important that was for them and what I had been sacrificing... to be present with students... I keep telling my wife, “I am so sorry that I would give everyone else the best of me and come home and give you all the rest of me and from time to time the rest of me was never enough and I know that now.”

In summary, these findings represent the lived experiences of the nine participants, and they answered both research questions regarding the FSA experience through the four themes of (a) *unrealistic expectations*, (b) *challenges specific to working in fraternity and sorority life* (c) *impact of the campus environment*, and (d) *lasting personal effects of the FSA experience*. The cumulative effects of the findings ultimately led to participants’ decisions to quit their FSA jobs. These findings present opportunities for future discussion and exploration, which is detailed in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how the complex nature of FSL work influenced the quitting behaviors of formerly campus-based fraternity/sorority professionals. To fulfill this purpose, the following research questions guided the study: (a) How do former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors describe their former FSA positions and work experiences; and (b) What aspects of the fraternity/sorority advising position led to former campus-based FSAs' decisions to quit their campus-based role? Through semi-structured interviews, I gathered data from my participants about their lived experiences as former campus-based FSAs and their decisions to leave campus-based work altogether.

In this final chapter, I discuss the findings from chapter four and draw connections to how they answer both research questions. Next, I discuss the relationship between the findings and existing literature, and I identify the unique ways that this study adds to the current research. I then detail my recommendations for future research and implications for policy and practice as they relate to this study. Finally, in closing, I share some final reflections on my own positionality as the researcher as well as gratitude for my study participants as I conclude the chapter.

Discussion

Through the data analysis, four themes emerged that described participants' experiences and whose cumulative effects ultimately led to their decisions to leave their jobs. The following discussion is organized by research question, followed by a discussion of how this study supports existing literature and how it differs from the literature and presents unique findings of its own.

Research Question 1

The first research question aimed at gathering an understanding of the lived experiences of former campus-based FSAs and their work in fraternity and sorority life. Participants described a deep commitment to their students and to creating optimal fraternity and sorority experiences, but they also shared about the realities of working as an FSA, depicting often undesirable working conditions. The primary, overarching theme throughout the data was the existence of *unrealistic expectations* throughout the FSA experience. All nine participants described how these unrealistic expectations began with a complete *lack of onboarding and training* in their FSA roles, which left participants feeling unprepared from day one. A second subtheme that emerged was a *disconnect between expectations and reality of the job*, in which participants described their working conditions and experiences to be worse than what they expected. Participants went on to describe their experiences with expectations of regularly *working overtime* without additional compensation and juggling an *overwhelming workload*. Finally, within the theme of *unrealistic expectations*, participants shared about how the weight of *servicing as the “face” of FSL* impacted their work and how all the expectations combined ultimately led to *burnout*.

The second theme that answered this research question was the *challenges specific to working in fraternity and sorority life* that participants experienced in their campus-based roles. Participants shared how the *high-pressure work* coupled with the *lack of accountability* for fraternities and sororities created stressful work environments and added additional work and frustration. Participants went on to describe the nuanced challenges and complexities that are specific to FSAs in *working with affiliated alumni and national organizations*. Finally, in addition to the general challenges associated with working with national organizations, several

participants specifically described the *negative impact of men's fraternities* they experienced as individuals and within their campus communities.

The third theme that emerged from the data was the *impact of the campus environment* on FSAs' work experiences. Participants described some of the general *challenges facing student affairs* that are not specific to the fraternity and sorority life functional area. Participants went on to depict the *lack of understanding and respect for fraternity and sorority life* they felt while working on campus and the weight and workload that came along with having to perform *other duties as assigned* based on their roles as FSAs.

The final theme that materialized from the data was the *lasting personal effects of the FSA experience* that participants shared. When talking about these effects, most of the participants became visibly emotional and upset, particularly as they reflected on the *impact on physical and mental health* they experienced while serving in their roles and that several participants continue to experience today. Multiple participants also reflected on the unexpected and often unwelcome changes to their *life trajectory* that occurred as a result of their decision to leave the FSA position and campus-based work altogether. An unexpected subtheme that emerged from the data was the *negative impacts on family life* that participants attributed to their FSA positions and the time and work commitments that were expected of them.

Research Question 2

The second research question was focused on the reasons campus-based FSAs decided to quit their jobs and leave campus-based work altogether. Through analyzing the data, it became clear that there were not specific events or particular reasons that participants quit their jobs; rather, it was a cumulative effect of the themes that answered research question one. Participants shared that their experiences with *unrealistic expectations, challenges specific to working in*

fraternity and sorority life, and the *impact of the campus environment* ultimately led to their decision to quit their jobs. Further, all nine participants shared about how their experiences in their positions, coupled with their eventual quitting decision, created the final theme of the *lasting personal effects of the FSA experience*, which have continued to influence participants' well-being and their perceptions of fraternity and sorority life altogether.

Relationship of Findings to Relevant Literature

This study was rooted in the literature as described in chapter two, specifically to the sensitizing concepts of the weight of fraternity/sorority advising, the complexity of the FSA job, and the burn through that exists in the field of fraternity and sorority advising. Several findings from this study further support the existing literature, including the feelings of overwhelming workload and burnout as described by participants. These support previous research on the complexity of the FSA role (Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, 2020b; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2020; Hendricks & Whittier, 2019) and the normalcy of burnout in this profession, which further supports the notion of burn through in the profession (Anderson, 2021; Steiner, 2020; Winfield & Paris, 2022). Findings from this study also build on the literature on the overall challenges facing all student affairs professionals in today's landscape.

The main way that findings in this study varied somewhat from existing literature concerned the primary reasons student affairs professionals leave their jobs. Specifically, previous research found low salaries to be a primary reason for transitioning out of student affairs work (ACPA, 2022; NASPA, 2022). Participants in this study, however, did not cite low salary as a driving factor behind their decision to quit. Three participants mentioned they wished their salaries had been higher, but on the whole, salaries were not a key factor for quitting

behaviors, which is especially notable considering that FSAs are often paid less than professionals in other functional areas (CUPA-HR, 2019).

Unique Findings

In addition to both supporting and challenging existing literature, this study provides several unique findings. As stated in chapter two, there is limited literature surrounding fraternity and sorority advising as a specific functional area within student affairs research. This study provides greater context into the FSA experience and why FSAs leave their jobs. Further, the participants in this study belong to either the millennial generation or Generation X and are not the typical age-bracket studied in current literature around the Great Resignation. It is also of note that the participants in this study served in campus-based FSA roles for a minimum of five years, which sets this study apart from the existing literature on entry-level professionals quitting their jobs within their first five years (Marshall et al., 2016).

This study revealed challenges specific to working in fraternity and sorority life. These included the high-pressure nature of the work itself, which was further complicated by the lack of training, and the difficulties participants faced in working with alumni and national organizations, especially men's fraternities. These nuanced challenges that are specific to FSA positions, particularly the core finding of the *unrealistic expectations* that exist in fraternity and sorority advising, suggest that working in fraternity and sorority life is a particularly complex functional area within student affairs. In addition to the challenges specific to working in fraternity and sorority life, this study highlighted the disconnect between expectations and the reality of working as an FSA. Despite having familiarity with fraternity and sorority life through their undergraduate involvement and graduate assistantships, participants shared that the realities of their FSA positions were far worse than they could have imagined or prepared for.

Finally, this study brought to light the lasting negative effects of the FSA experience. Previous research described the lack of work-life balance and the impact of experiencing burnout, but participants in this study described with great emotion the negative impacts that this work had on their health, family life, and career trajectories. As participants shared their trauma and pain, it became abundantly clear that serving in these positions caused lasting harm of varying degrees to these former FSAs.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

Implications for Research

This study focused on the lived experiences of formerly campus-based fraternity and sorority advisors who had left campus work altogether. The nine participants provided rich data regarding their diverse experiences; however, the findings do not provide a comprehensive picture of the experiences of all campus-based FSAs. Further, while the sensitizing concepts that guided this study were affirmed by the findings, unique findings from this study should be taken into account when framing future research.

As fraternities and sororities continue to navigate changing undergraduate enrollment trends and membership declines, it is imperative to learn more about how various stakeholders define the value of the fraternity and sorority experience today and to learn about how it is relevant for contemporary college students. A study involving affiliated and unaffiliated students, alumni, and university leaders may add further insight into perceptions about fraternity and sorority life and assist fraternity and sorority leaders in identifying avenues to increase their value-add to the college experience. Gaining insight into university leaders' perceptions may also aid in conversations around the general *lack of understanding and respect for fraternity and sorority life* on college campuses as it was identified through this study.

One additional recommendation for research would be to investigate the relationships between national organizations, affiliated alumni and the colleges and universities on which these organizations have chapters. One nuance specific to working in fraternity and sorority life that emerged in this study was the subtheme of the difficulties in *working with affiliated alumni and national organizations*. By studying the nature of the working relationships between these organizations, their alumni and the professionals who work on campuses, researchers may be able to identify themes that could aid in relieving existing tensions and make policy recommendations to increase collaboration and open communication.

While this study focused on professionals who had previously worked in fraternity and sorority life, it shed light onto the two themes of *overwhelming workload* and the expectations of *working overtime*, which are not unique to FSAs and which may indicate a more generalized student affairs practice of burning through and exhausting student affairs professionals for the sake of the college or university (Anderson, 2021). Future research should include a comprehensive study of the unrealistic expectations regarding workload and hours worked for all student affairs professionals to aid in understanding some of the challenges faced by student affairs employees working in higher education. Through increased awareness of workload and actual hours worked, student affairs employees will be better equipped to engage in advocacy efforts to bring change to the industry norms and reduce inequitable workloads, comparable to the work academic faculty are conducting through The Faculty Workload and Rewards Project to reduce burnout, increase retention and increase faculty production (O'Meara et al., 2022). Further, this study highlighted the trauma that some former FSAs experienced as a result of both the work itself and of responding to or supporting communities through specific traumatic incidents. More research on this trauma is necessary in order to better understand the lived

experiences of not just FSAs but all student affairs professionals and to help develop stronger trauma-informed resources and support structures for these professionals.

Implications for Policy

Based on the findings of this study, it is imperative for policy makers and university leaders to be mindful of how implementing new policies and laws impacts the staff members who are responsible for enforcement. One example of legislation is Adam's Law in the Commonwealth of Virginia (Adam's Law, 2022), which is aimed at educating students on the definition and risks of hazing and creating more harsh consequences for people who are found guilty of hazing. A portion of this legislation includes requirements for colleges and universities to provide mandatory trainings to potential new members, all active members, and volunteers who work with fraternity and sorority life. With FSAs feeling overwhelmed and overworked, enforcing new student- and organization-level policies – including those like Adam's Law in Virginia – often causes additional work and responsibilities for FSAs and their student affairs colleagues. Enforcing these policies and laws, which are intended to create safer communities, establish higher levels of accountability, and increase consequences for harmful behavior, often requires significant amounts of work, and resources should be dedicated to support FSAs and campus-based staff as policies and laws are being developed.

An additional area of policy that needs further attention aligns with the subtheme of *working overtime* is the issue of employees being expected to work more than their 40 hours without being eligible for overtime pay. These expectations are not isolated to fraternity and sorority life, as indicated by the findings within the theme of *impact of the campus environment* and the literature (Winfield & Paris, 2022). Campus human resource offices should evaluate the

written and unwritten expectations of student affairs employees to assess the degree to which these employees are expected to work in excess of their contracted and compensated hours.

Lastly, it is critical to consider how the current climate of changing policies and uncertainty around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives impacts college students and campus-based professionals. This is another area of policy consideration that is not limited to fraternity and sorority advising but is a broader consideration for all professionals who are working on college campuses. Not only could these policy changes impact professionals directly, particularly professionals who are persons of color or whose jobs are directly related to DEI initiatives, but these changes could significantly impact students who are members of identity-based fraternities and sororities, further adding to the pressure and workload for FSAs. Additionally, the uncertainties that exist around the threat or possibility of policy changes surrounding DEI may cause university leaders to be more risk averse in fear of violating potential new policies or legislation.

Implications for Practice

In addition to the recommendations for policy and research, I have several recommendations for practice based on the findings of this study. While every institution and every professional is different, I present these recommendations as suggestions to support fraternity and sorority advisors, improve the FSA experience, and uplift the fraternity and sorority experience regardless of institution type or organizational structure. I have organized these recommendations below by stakeholder type: AFA and national organizations, campus leadership, and individual fraternity/sorority advisors.

Recommendations for AFA and National Organizations

One particularly troubling finding was the lack of onboarding and training that every participant experienced. In response to this finding, I recommend that AFA continue to invest in providing training and on-demand resources, in areas including the basics of fraternity and sorority advising and crisis response, for new and seasoned FSAs alike. Even though employee training is ultimately the responsibility of the campuses that employ FSAs, members of AFA possess the expertise and skillsets required to fully train FSAs within this specific functional area of student affairs and this is a significant way that AFA and its partner organizations could support campuses. Through its First 90 Days program, AFA provides a comprehensive experience for brand new professionals, but that experience may be cost- or time-prohibitive for eligible participants and its capacity is limited, so it may be helpful to evaluate ways to scale this program and remove barriers to participation. In addition to creating these training and onboarding resources, it is crucial for AFA and its members to raise awareness of the resources available and how to access them to new FSAs and to those in supervisory and leadership roles. Furthermore, I recommend the creation of on-demand training modules that professionals of any level could access. These should be created in partnership with the national trade organizations and umbrella organizations, including the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), the National Interfraternity Conference (NIC), the National APIDA Panhellenic Association (NAPA), the National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC) and the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO). In addition to providing resources for general organization advising, I recommend creating modules on the nuances of working with different organizations in areas including but not limited to recruitment, intake, risk management policies and prevention, and alumni support structures. Further, AFA

should build on their existing partnership with the Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) to provide resources and training based on best practices involving organizational conduct and accountability. In a climate of limited professional development and travel funds, these on-demand learning experiences would provide opportunities for cross-training within fraternity and sorority advising and could consistently enhance the onboarding experience and skillset of FSAs regardless of location or institution type.

One additional recommendation is for AFA to work closely with the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) to establish and communicate specific industry standards and best practices around student to staff ratio. Having specific staffing recommendations would better position campus-based fraternity and sorority professionals to advocate for appropriate staff structures and new positions as necessary.

Recommendations for Campus Leadership and Offices of Fraternity and Sorority Life

Campus leadership and offices of fraternity and sorority life must do a better job of training and onboarding new fraternity and sorority advisors. This is crucial for the success of new FSAs on any campus, whether or not they attended that institution for their education and regardless of if they have served in an FSA role before. Each campus and fraternity and sorority community has unique histories, policies, and procedures and it is imperative that campus offices provide a robust and comprehensive training and onboarding experience for their new professionals. This holistic onboarding should include everything from job-specific training and advising preparation to crisis response and nuanced information about the specific organizations and councils on that specific campus. Moreover, in training and onboarding, I recommend proactively sharing support and wellness resources, particularly related to mental health and trauma, and support for how to handle burnout. By providing these trauma-informed resources

from the beginning, supervisors and campus leaders begin to normalize using them from day one.

In response to the findings, particularly those related to *overwhelming workload*, I recommend that supervisors of FSAs evaluate the actual responsibilities and duties of their FSAs. Knowing that these professionals are often receiving requests from campus partners, national organizations, alumni, and students, I believe that many supervisors may not be fully aware of the workload facing their team. Further, I recommend that offices of fraternity and sorority life partner with their campus professional development and assessment units to leverage institutional assessment resources, become part of established assessment cycles, and conduct regular CAS self-assessments and program reviews. Results from these assessment efforts will not only highlight opportunities for growth, but they can also provide evidence and benchmarking data to support necessary resource requests or staffing justifications.

In consideration of the challenges participants described in working with affiliated alumni and national organizations, my final recommendation is for fraternity and sorority life offices and campus leadership to be more intentional and structured in building and maintaining relationships with the national organizations who host chapters on their campus and the affiliated alumni who support and advise those chapters. While the nuances of organizational status and advisor requirements may be specific to each campus, I recommend that all campuses evaluate the nature of their relationships and of the mutual expectations that exist between their office of fraternity and sorority life and these organizations. If these expectations do not exist, I suggest beginning to have conversations with each organization to clearly ascertain the structure and expectations of working together to support the chapter. By establishing these more formalized relationships and using more proactive communication regarding campus culture, campus-based

professionals can advocate for their community needs and increase collaboration and support, particularly around organizational accountability.

Recommendations for Fraternity and Sorority Advisors

One final area of recommendations for practice focuses on campus-based fraternity and sorority advisors themselves. After speaking with participants and analyzing the data, I find it imperative to share a few recommendations for FSAs who may be experiencing unrealistic expectations or feeling overwhelmed, and I want to address these professionals directly in my final section of recommendations.

First, know that you are not alone. Even though you may be an office of very few or even an office of one on your campus, there is a community of folks there to support you. For some, AFA can be a great resource, providing opportunities for volunteering, networking, and mentorship. If AFA is not a helpful space for you, know that there are many other professionals and volunteers who are open to connecting and supporting you. These may include colleagues from other campuses, partners at national organizations, alumni, or volunteers. While some alumni or national organizations may be challenging, there are many others who stand ready to support and help you. Lean into those partners and ask questions. Reach out to the trade associations, umbrella councils, or national and regional volunteers when you have questions about policies or procedures, or even when you aren't sure what to do. Don't be afraid to build partnerships or be vulnerable. You don't have to know everything or be super-human to be an impactful fraternity and sorority advisor.

Most importantly, you matter. You and your well-being are important. Working in the field of fraternity and sorority advising can be meaningful work, but it can also be very stressful. You are just as important as the students and the organizations you serve, and you cannot serve

them well if you are not also taking care of yourself and your needs. Know when to establish boundaries and how to communicate those boundaries with your supervisor and with the community you serve. Reach out when you need help or when you are feeling overwhelmed. Find ways to hold time and space on your calendars for your health needs – even if that means saying no to meetings or programs or students. If you feel you are unable to advocate for yourself, I encourage you to use resources that are available to you through your human resources office to help you navigate these conversations, particularly if you are being asked to do more work than is included in your job description. You matter.

Closing Reflexivity

As I conclude this dissertation, I am grateful to reflect on my own learning and discovery throughout the course of this study. The interviews themselves were an emotional journey. At several times, the interviews with my participants almost felt like the exit interview they never had when they left their FSA roles. I am overwhelmed by the vulnerability my participants displayed and by the trust they put in me by sharing their stories. I found myself crying along with participants as they talked about how much time their jobs took from their children. I got frustrated and angry when participants shared their frustrations in working with national organizations and the lack of accountability for fraternities and sororities they experienced. My heart ached as I heard stories of fraternities and sororities gone wrong. As I shared in the beginning of my study, I believe in this experience with my heart and soul, but I am often appalled at the reality on some campuses. More than ever, I stand firm in my conviction that these professionals are often the deciding factor in shaping healthy fraternity and sorority communities. I truly believe that, when done well, fraternities and sororities can add significant value to the college experience for members and the campuses on which they reside, but I know

that the value and health of the community rely heavily on the work of campus-based fraternity and sorority advisors.

Finally, I need to share my true feelings about this study. I am proud and honored to be able to share the stories of my nine participants. The time they shared with me and the stories they confided in me will always be a treasured gift, and I hope I have done them justice. I have always felt that fraternity and sorority life is often overlooked or ignored in research, and I feel blessed to be able to contribute in some way. As a former campus-based FSA, conducting this study became cathartic for me – a way to process my experiences and honor the work that was so meaningful to me. And for that, I will be forever grateful.

Conclusion

In closing, fraternity and sorority advisors play a pivotal role in creating healthy, positive fraternity and sorority communities on college campuses. While some may argue whether or not fraternities and sororities should exist, the reality is that these organizations are on hundreds of campuses throughout the United States and each of those campuses needs strong professionals serving as fraternity and sorority advisors. Currently, the high turnover rate of FSAs is a cause for concern, and student affairs administrators should be aware of the reality of the experiences of FSAs and take action to create more sustainable working conditions and expectations for professionals in these roles. The *unrealistic expectations* facing FSAs are causing undue stress and lasting harm for the professionals in these roles. Furthermore, employee turnover in student affairs is not isolated to solely fraternity and sorority life, and supervisors and administrators need to take a critical look at the way they are burning through the professionals who are serving students to evaluate current expectations and support structures to improve the student affairs professional experience overall and reduce employee turnover.

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Appendix A

Introductory email to potential participants who responded directly to social media announcement

Subject line: Invitation to participate in a research study about fraternity/sorority advising

Hello, [first name]-

My name is Abbey Rowe Erwin, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education program at Virginia Tech. I appreciate you responding to my Facebook announcement seeking participants for my dissertation in which I am seeking to learn more about the reasons former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors left their positions. This study has been approved by the IRB at Virginia Tech.

Specifically, I am seeking participants who were formerly campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors (>80% of position was dedicated to fraternity/sorority advising) and who left their positions from January 2018-December 2023. Additionally, participants will have left campus-based roles altogether.

If you are interested in participating in my study, I would greatly appreciate it if you would take a few minutes to complete this participant interest form. I anticipate the survey should take you no more than 5-10 minutes to complete. If you are eligible for the study, it will consist of one Zoom interview that should last no longer than 90 minutes. Participants who complete the interview will be compensated with a \$10 Starbucks e-gift card.

Finally, if you have any friends or colleagues who you believe may be eligible for this study, or who may know of potential participants, I would greatly appreciate it if you would forward this email to them. If you or anyone else has any questions regarding my study, I am open to talking about it at anytime! I can be reached at rowea@vt.edu or 540-315-1101. I appreciate your time and your support.

Take good care,

Abbey Rowe Erwin

Appendix B

Introductory email to potential participants who were recommended

Subject line: Invitation to participate in a research study about fraternity/sorority advising

Hello, first name-

My name is Abbey Rowe Erwin, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education program at Virginia Tech. I am currently working on my dissertation in which I am seeking to learn more about the reasons former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors left their positions. This study has been approved by the IRB at Virginia Tech.

Specifically, I am seeking participants who were formerly campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors (>80% of position was dedicated to fraternity/sorority advising) and who left their positions from January 2018-December 2023. Additionally, participants will have left campus-based roles altogether.

I'm reaching out to you because you were recommended to me as a potential participant. If you are interested in participating in my study, I would greatly appreciate it if you would take a few minutes to complete this participant interest form. I anticipate the form should take you no more than 5 minutes to complete. If you are eligible for the study, it will consist of one Zoom interview that should last no longer than 90 minutes. Participants who complete the interview will be compensated with a \$10 Starbucks e-gift card.

Finally, if you know of anyone who you believe may be eligible for this study, or who may know of potential participants, I would greatly appreciate it if you would forward this email to them. If you or anyone else has any questions regarding my study, I am open to talking about it at anytime! I can be reached at rowea@vt.edu or 540-315-1101. I appreciate your time and your support.

Take good care,

Abbey Rowe Erwin

Appendix C

Participant Interest Form (QuestionPro)

Thank you for your interest in this study about former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors' experiences and their decision to leave their campus-based role. I appreciate you taking the time to complete this participant interest form, which will allow me to determine your eligibility for the study and to insure I include a diverse group of participants. It should take no longer than 5 minutes for you to complete this form.

Once you submit this interest form, you may expect to hear back from me within two business days. If you need to contact me regarding this study, please email me at rowea@vt.edu, or call/text me at 540-315-1101.

This study is fulfilling a requirement for my Ph.D. and has been approved by the Virginia Tech IRB (#23-1321).

New Block: Information Sheet



Information Sheet for Participation in a Research Study

Principal Investigator: Dr. Claire Robbins (robbinsec@vt.edu)
Other Study Contact: Abbey Rowe Erwin (rowea@vt.edu)
IRB# and Title of Study: 23-1321: Exploring the experiences of formerly campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors and their decisions to quit campus-based jobs

You are invited to participate in a research study. This form includes information about the study and contact information if you have any questions. I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech, and I am conducting this research as part of my course work.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?

If you decide to participate in this study, you will complete a survey that asks for your name, contact information, limited demographic information (i.e., race, gender), information about your previous campus-based fraternity/sorority advising job, and a pseudonym (fake name) that will be used in all reports and publications. As part of the study, you will be asked to participate in one 90-minute Zoom interview during which you will be asked about your experiences as a former campus-based fraternity/sorority

advisor and your decision to quit that job. The Zoom interview will be recorded. If you decline to be recorded, you cannot be in the study as this is the data collection method being used.

The study should take approximately 120 minutes of your time. We do not anticipate any risks from completing this study.

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will do our best to protect the confidentiality of the information we gather from you, but we cannot guarantee 100% confidentiality.

Any data collected during this research study will be kept confidential by the researchers. Your Zoom interview will be recorded and then transcribed. The researchers will code the transcripts using a pseudonym (false name). The recordings will be uploaded to a secure password-protected computer in the researcher's office. The researchers will maintain a list that includes a key to the code. The master key and the recordings will be stored for 3 years after the study has been completed and then destroyed.

WHO CAN I TALK TO?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Abbey Rowe Erwin (rowea@vt.edu) or Dr. Claire Robbins (robbinsc@vt.edu). You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Virginia Tech HRPP Office at 540-231-3732 (irb@vt.edu).

Please print out a copy of this information sheet for your records.

If you would like to participate in this study, click yes to begin the survey or you may exit the survey if you don't wish to participate.

New Block: Demographic Questions

1. What is your name? (Short answer box)
2. If selected for the study, you will be asked to provide a pseudonym in order to protect confidentiality. Is there a first-name pseudonym you would prefer? (short answer box)

3. What is your race? (short answer box)
4. What is your gender? (short answer box)
5. What is your current age bracket? (multiple choice)
 - a. 18-24
 - b. 25-29
 - c. 30-34
 - d. 35-39
 - e. 40-44
 - f. 45-49
 - g. 50 or older
6. Are you affiliated with a fraternity or sorority? (Yes/No)
7. If yes, please indicate the organization: (short answer box)
8. What year were you initiated into your organization? (short answer box)
9. How many total years of professional experience do you have working with fraternities and sororities?
 - a. 0-1
 - b. 1-3
 - c. 3-5
 - d. 5-7
 - e. 7-10
 - f. More than 10

New Block: Information about your previous campus-based fraternity/sorority advising position. For this section, please answer the questions as they pertain to your most recent campus-based fraternity/sorority advising position.

1. What is the name of your previous college or university where you served as FSA?
Please note, this information will only be used by the researcher to identify characteristics about the institution (i.e., enrollment, institution type, etc.) and will not be reported with any other data. (short answer box)
2. What was your former job title in your fraternity/sorority advising role? (short answer box)
3. What was your former salary in your fraternity/sorority advising role? (multiple choice)
 - a. \$0-\$29,999
 - b. \$30,000-\$39,999
 - c. \$40,000-\$49,999
 - d. \$50,000-\$59,999
 - e. \$60,000-\$69,999
 - f. \$70,000-\$79,999
 - g. \$80,000 or more
4. Approximately how much of your time was dedicated to fraternity/sorority advising? This includes chapter and council advising and any of the following areas of responsibility that were specifically related to fraternities and sororities: housing, conduct, leadership development, budget, assessment, risk prevention, crisis response, etc.

- a. 0-24%
 - b. 25-49%
 - c. 50-79%
 - d. 80-100%
5. What month and year did you begin in this fraternity/sorority advising role? Note: if you shifted positions within the office, please indicate the initial month and date of your first FSA position in this office. (short answer box)
 6. What month and year did you quit this fraternity/sorority advising role? (short answer box)

New Block: Information about the role you took immediately after leaving your fraternity/sorority advising position

If you have held more than one position since leaving your campus-based FSA role, please use the position you held immediately following the FSA position to answer the following questions:

1. What best describes the type(s) of employment you went to immediately following your FSA position? (select all that apply)
 - a. Fraternity or Sorority Inter/national Organizational/Headquarters or Foundation Staff
 - b. Consulting (related to fraternity/sorority life)
 - c. K-12 education
 - d. Public service or government
 - e. Private industry
 - f. Retail or food service
 - g. Non-profit organization
 - h. Full-time student
 - i. Other (please indicate)
2. What best describes the nature of your employment immediately following your FSA role?
 - a. Full-time
 - b. Part-time
 - c. Other (please describe)
3. What best describes the modality of your employment immediately following your FSA role?
 - a. In-person
 - b. Completely remote/virtual
 - c. Hybrid
 - d. Other (please describe)

Appendix D

Email responses to potential participants who completed the participant interest form

Email to participants who qualify for the study after participant interest form

Subject line: Research Study on fraternity/sorority advising

Hello, [first name],

Thank you again for your interest in participating in my study about former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors. After reviewing your participant interest form, I'd like to invite you to participate in my study!

If you agree to participate in my study, we will need to schedule a time for a Zoom interview that is convenient for you. I anticipate the interview will last 60 minutes, but I like to plan for 90 minutes in case our conversations take longer than expected. [Include information about how to schedule]

Thanks again for your participation in my study. If you have any questions or need to contact me, please don't hesitate to email me at rowea@vt.edu or call/text me at 540-315-1101. I look forward to talking with you soon!

With warm regards,
Abbey

Email to participants who did not qualify for the study after participant interest form

Subject line: Research study on fraternity/sorority advising

Hello, [first name],

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study about former campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors. After reviewing your participant interest form, I'm sorry to share that you do not meet the criteria to participate in my study. I truly appreciate your time and your willingness to help me with my study, and I hope you understand.

Thanks again for your interest in my study. If you have any questions or need to contact me, please don't hesitate to email me at rowea@vt.edu or call/text me at 540-315-1101.

With warm regards,
Abbey

Appendix E

Interview Guide

1. How did you decide to become a fraternity/sorority advisor?
2. How do you feel your membership in a fraternity/sorority impacted your decision to become an FSA?
3. Tell me about your onboarding into your first FSA role.
4. Tell me about your FSA position. What were your main areas of responsibility?
5. Thinking back to when you first started in your role, was your position what you expected it to be? How did the reality of the job differ from your initial expectations?
6. How would you describe your relationship with your supervisor? How did this relationship impact your experience in your FSA role?
7. Did you ever feel overwhelmed in your FSA role? If yes, tell me about it.
8. Tell me about what led to you deciding to leave your campus-based FSA role.
 - How did you feel about this decision?
9. Thinking back, are there specific things that could have changed to cause you to stay in your position?
10. How has your perspective on fraternity and sorority life changed now as opposed to before you worked in your campus-based role?
11. Before we finish, I want to ask one final question. Is there anything you'd like to share with me that you think I should know about your experience as a campus-based FSA but didn't ask about?

Appendix F

IRB Approval



**Division of Scholarly Integrity and
Research Compliance**
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732
irb@vt.edu
<http://www.research.vt.edu/sirc/hrpp>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 3, 2024

TO: Claire Kathleen Robbins, Abbey Rowe Erwin

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Exploring the experiences of formerly campus-based fraternity/sorority advisors and their decisions to quit campus-based jobs

IRB NUMBER: 23-1321

Effective January 3, 2024, the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category (ies) 2(ii).

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit an amendment to the HRPP for a determination.

This exempt determination does not apply to any collaborating institution(s). The Virginia Tech HRPP and IRB cannot provide an exemption that overrides the jurisdiction of a local IRB or other institutional mechanism for determining exemptions.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<https://secure.research.vt.edu/external/irb/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before beginning your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Determined As: **Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category(ies) 2(ii)**
Protocol Determination Date: **January 3, 2024**

ASSOCIATED FUNDING:

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this protocol, if required.