

EDITORIAL: THOUGHTS ON POSITIONING IN SORORITY AND FRATERNITY RESEARCH

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As my tenure as Editor of the *Journal of Sorority and Fraternity Life Research and Practice (JSFLRP)* comes to a close, I have been reflecting on my *position* and *positioning* related to advancing our knowledge on sororities and fraternities. While *position*, a noun, reflects my role and its associated power, I rely on Boveda and Anamma's (2023) definition of positioning "as an active verb where researchers reflect and address where their locations lie in relationship to interlocking systems of oppression; fields of study; and, most importantly, research participants over time" (p. 307). Positioning requires personal work and effort to pursue critical consciousness.

In addition, Boveda and Anamma (2023) identified three elements of positioning. These categories are onto-epistemic (i.e., what we know and how we know it), sociohistorical (i.e., personal histories and relationships) and sociocultural (i.e., acknowledgment of oppressive structures and the need to center individuals with minoritized identities).

Over the past two years I have attempted to acknowledge and wrestle with the power and privilege I am afforded as Editor. I routinely reflect how my identities and experiences as a white-identifying cisgender, heterosexual man, my membership in a historically and predominantly white social fraternity and my two-decades of membership of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors have provided me with access to my position. More importantly, I have attempted to reflect on and reconcile how my identities and experiences affect my perceptions of knowledge related to sororities and fraternities.

One way I have attempted to address my location in relationship to overlapping oppressive systems within our field of study by working to recruit, support and uplift new members to *JSFLRP* editorial leadership team who identify with minoritized identities and whose sorority and fraternity experiences and knowledge extend beyond historically and predominantly white sororities and fraternities. In turn, I have worked collectively with my editorial leadership colleagues to diversify the *JSFLRP* Editorial Board, and to diversify the knowledge shared through our publication. While diversity and representation within the Editorial Board are fundamentally important, other steps must be taken to address the role of the journal in the production of knowledge. Authors can support the journal in these efforts through examining and understanding their positioning as it relates to their scholarship.

With this context in mind, I examined how the authors of each of the five articles in this issue engaged with their positionalities. The authors from two articles, McCreary and Schutts (2023) and Tull et al. (2023), did not engage with their positioning related to their research. These authors

both relied on quantitative methods in their studies, and quantitative researchers often do not attend to their positioning because of their reliance on positivistic or post-positivistic paradigms of inquiry (Lorette, 2023). However, the absence of positionality statements does not negate the authors' roles in understanding how their identities and experiences affect their research. For example, what are Tull and colleagues' relationships with the historically white fraternities in their data set? Positioning is not just an exercise for qualitative scholars (Boveda & Annamma, 2023; Lorette, 2023), and all scholars considering *JSFLRP* as the home for their research are encouraged to consider their positionalities.

The authors of the three of the qualitative research studies in this issue, Goodman et al. (2023), Marie and Thompson (2023) and Sasso and Bullington (2023), included positionality statements in their articles. Applying Boveda and Annamma's (2023) positioning framework, Goodman and colleagues addressed aspects of their sociohistorical positioning (e.g., professional situatedness), but did not address their onto-epistemic or sociocultural positioning. Marie and Thompson acknowledged their sociohistorical and sociocultural positioning, but not their onto-epistemic positioning. Sasso and Bullington were the only scholars to address all three elements identified by Boveda and Annamma. Even among qualitative scholars, there are differences in how authors engage with their positionalities.

I engaged in this brief review of positionalities not to shame or ridicule our authors or frame one statement as better than the others, but to acknowledge that positioning is often overlooked and, when done, challenging to do thoroughly. In addition, considering one's positioning is not a post hoc checklist. It is possible that these authors actively reflected on their positioning as they envisioned their studies, conducted their research and wrote their articles, but made decisions to not report some elements of their positioning because of some factor (e.g., page limits for publication). Yet, if scholars hope to produce knowledge on sororities and fraternities that benefits the practice of student affairs professionals who support the learning and success of marginalized students, we must reflect on our onto-epistemic, sociohistorical and sociocultural positioning. I challenge future researchers who submit to *JSFLRP* to consider their position and positioning throughout the scholarly process and to engage with their positionalities in their manuscripts.

References

- Boveda, M., & Annamma, S. A. (2023). Beyond making a statement: An intersectional framing of the power and possibilities of positioning. *Educational Researcher* 52(5), 311-314. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X231167149>
- Lorette, P. (2023). Opportunities and challenges of positionality in quantitative research: Overcoming linguistic and cultural 'knowledge gaps' thanks to 'knowledge collaborators'. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 44(8), 657-671. <https://doi.org/10.1080.01434632.2023.2195383>