

AN ANALYSIS OF BLACK GREEK-LETTER ORGANIZATION PHILANTHROPY

GARTH HEUTEL, GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY, KOREN HARDY, MACKENZIE MARTI SLATER,
AND GREGORY S. PARKS, WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY

Philanthropy is a significant component of the mission of many fraternities and sororities, especially Black Greek-letter organizations. We examine the role of philanthropy in these organizations, employing an approach infrequently used — archival data collection combined with quantitative methods. We first document the history of philanthropic activity among the nine members of the National Pan-Hellenic Council. Then, we use data from IRS tax returns to document quantitative patterns in these organizations' income and spending. Though the analysis is merely exploratory, we find evidence that BGLOs have lower median revenues and expenditures than do other similar organizations, though a small number of outliers may fuel much of the difference in averages.

In their work, Marybeth Gasman and Katherine Sedgwick argue that African American philanthropy developed and was shaped largely by the experience of slavery. Their premise, drawn from the work of Jayne R. Beilke (2005), suggests that “African American philanthropy developed differently than White benevolence due to Black American’s experience as an enslaved and oppressed group...Black philanthropy is both a response to and an outgrowth of the institution of slavery” (p. 10-11). It should be no surprise that the institution of slavery had a profound effect on African Americans, both those who were freed and their descendants. As a result of their oppression, African Americans responded by supporting each other: “Black philanthropy ranged from singular, spontaneous acts of charity...to philanthropy organized in and channeled through institutions. Institutionally, the development of Black welfare services was intimately connected to Black churches and schools” (Bielke, 2005, p. 11). Indeed, Beilke (2005) contends that the current mode of African American philanthropy, coming from within the African Americans’ community, and as a reaction to slavery, was crystallized in the nineteenth century. Among the institutions that served as the best exemplars of such self-determined philanthropy were African American institutions of higher education and membership-based

African American organizations like churches, benevolent and secret societies, and clubs.

African American Educational Institutions

The idea of self-determination, or self-help, became a key component of African American philanthropy. African Americans, especially those living in the South, realized that most whites would not assist them after their emancipation, and knew that self-determination would dictate the path to a better life. While they accepted white philanthropy, their main source of support came from the African American community. Furthermore, in many situations, white philanthropy did not benefit African Americans; instead, it perpetuated their second-class citizen status (Bielke, 2005). For instance, “Black colleges were favorite recipients of White philanthropy, but these donations were often contingent upon the colleges’ endorsement of the ‘Hampton-Tuskegee’ model of industrial education rather than a classical-liberal curriculum” (Bielke, 2005, p. 19). The Hampton-Tuskegee model was rejected by prominent leaders in the African American community because it did not meet the needs of students (Bielke, 2005). The model provided elementary education, then prepared students for industrial or rural work in high

school. African American leaders correctly viewed this style of education as a means of keeping members of their community from achieving higher education and better jobs.

In the 1900s, men like John Hope were critical to the success of African American colleges. John Hope was born in Augusta, Georgia, to a Scottish father and an African American mother. He highly valued education and recognized the gap between African Americans and whites when it came to higher education in post-Antebellum South (Avery, 2013). John Hope was a huge influence on promoting the higher education of African Americans in the South. As Vida Avery notes, hope “shaped the course of higher education for blacks through his educational leadership and vision, as well as his social and racial activism...His sense of obligation and commitment was his motivation” (2013, p. 78).

Institutions established for educating African Americans were humble in the 1900s. Avery contends in her book *Philanthropy in Black Higher Education*: “Just as it had taken decades for the institutions to stabilize their curriculum and organization...so would it take additional decades to solidify the institutions’ continuing existence” (2013, p. 121). Without philanthropic support, the institutions may not have survived. As Avery describes, “if philanthropists, John Hope, and others had not pooled their resources and energies together, it [the Atlanta University System] would not have materialized” (2013, p. 147). This same concept could be applied to other institutions.

There were several sources of philanthropy toward higher education for African Americans including northern white benevolent societies and black religious organizations, which were the first groups establishing colleges for blacks in the South. Philanthropy was especially important to the African American community because of de jure and de facto discrimination that prevented them from receiving the same educational opportunities as their white counterparts. As Avery (2013) describes in her book, African

Americans often educated themselves. African Americans during this period were in many cases economically destitute and without outside assistance would not have been able to provide education for their posterity. The Atlanta University System is an excellent example of “missionary societies creating educational opportunities for blacks in the South” (Avery, 2013, p. 31). It was constructed in the war-ruined city of Atlanta through funding by the American Missionary Association and the Freedmen’s Bureau. Granted, though Atlanta University was limited in its effectiveness, as it could only serve a set number of students, the mere fact that it existed was proof of the benefits of philanthropy activity for African Americans in the South (Avery, 2013).

Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles, both women from New England, traveled to the South and saw a lack of educational opportunities for African American women. The two women started the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary in 1881, which was created and sustained through donations from local and northern churches. Additionally, John D. Rockefeller donated to the Seminary and made a large impact on African American higher education in Atlanta.

After 1900, the need for missionary societies to set up new institutions had passed, and the new focus became improving the conditions of the schools and finding more competent instructors (Avery, 2013). Avery argues that this era became the “age of philanthropy,” in which industrial philanthropy, philanthropists, and educational foundations “emerged as the source that provided financial resources needed to sustain black colleges and universities” (2013, p. 45). Those involved in industrial philanthropy were wealthy individuals like Andrew Carnegie and J.P. Morgan, and secular foundations like the Daniel Hand Education Fund for Colored People, the Peabody Education Fund, the John Slater Fund, and many others (Avery, 2013). For wealthy individuals, sharing their wealth and providing educational opportunities became

very fashionable, and numerous higher education institutions benefitted from their generosity

African American Membership Organizations

Traditionally, the African American church has been the primary source of philanthropic activity in African American communities; however, civil rights, social, and fraternal organizations also play a role in charitable acts among African Americans (Smith, Bradford, Shue, Vest, & Villarreal, 1999). Both before and after the Civil War, African American churches contributed to the education of African Americans and civil rights programs (Smith et al., 1999). Numerous organizations outside the church formed to perform philanthropic acts in the African American community. Organizations including the Free African Society, the African Union Society, the New York Society, the Clarkson Society, and many others contributed to job training, education, and welfare for widows, children, and the elderly. Other entities such as the African Blood Brotherhood, the Knights of the Invisible Colored Kingdom, and countless other fraternal and secret societies formed to benefit the African American community. African American collegiate fraternities and sororities gave back to their community through scholarship funds (Smith et al., 1999).

In her research, Anne M. Knupfer (1996) found evidence of numerous African American women with the intention of promoting the African American community. For instance, she found clubs:

involved not only in kindergarten and mothering, but also in suffrage, anti-lynching laws, literary contests, political debates, embroidery, sewing, municipal reform, philosophy, youth activities, child welfare, care for the elderly, drama study, safe lodging for working women, health care, orphanages, home life, and rotating economic credit. (p. 1)

It is clear from this extensive list that African Americans were invested in promoting all aspects of life from culture to welfare. These women used orations, writings, and fundraising to support their community. Additionally, they used their gender to advocate for their community, evoking “multiple ideologies, discourses, motifs, and images of womanhood, motherhood, and home life” (Knupfer, 1996, p. 11). By evoking an image of motherhood, they were able to develop a philanthropic institution that pivoted around the idea of family. As families traditionally help one another out, the advantage of extending this metaphor of family across the entire African American community is apparent. It is important to note that women played an active role in promoting the African American community, as often women are ignored in history.

Black Greek-Letter Organization Philanthropy

Among the numerous types of African American organizations that have played, and continue to play, a role in African American uplift, Black Greek-Letter Organizations (BGLO) have also done their part in promoting philanthropic activities in the African American community. These organizations were founded at the turn of the twentieth century, during the period that noted African American historian, Rayford Logan (1954), described as the nadir of American race relations. Among these organizations, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity emerged first at Cornell University in 1906. Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority (1908), Omega Psi Phi fraternity (1911), Delta Sigma Theta sorority (1913), Phi Beta Sigma fraternity (1914), and Zeta Phi Beta sorority (1920) were all founded at Howard University. Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity (1911) and Sigma Gamma Rho sorority (1922) were both founded in the state of Indiana, at Indiana University and Butler University, respectively. In 1963, on the campus of Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland, Iota Phi Theta fraternity was founded

(McKenzie, 2005). These nine organizations compose the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) and are referred to as the 'Divine Nine.' Collectively, these organizations have an impressive historical legacy in the areas of civil rights activism (Laybourn & Parks, 2016a; Parks & Neumann, 2016; Parks, Ray, & Patterson, 2015; Weems, 2011), shaping civil rights policy (Harris & Sewell, 2012; Parks et al., 2015), community service (Gasman, Louison, & Barnes, 2008; Parks & Neumann, 2016), and philanthropy (Gasman, 2011; Parks & Neumann, 2016).

With particular regard to philanthropy, these organizations' efforts have been chronicled at least since the early twentieth century. Phi Beta Sigma conceptualized a scholarship fund (formerly called the Douglass Scholarship) at their 1920 Washington D.C. Grand Conclave. The idea of a scholarship fund was to focus on deserving undergraduates who were struggling to finance their college education. Ultimately, Phi Beta Sigma implemented the fund in 1924 (Savage & Reddick, 1957). In 1922, Delta Sigma Theta similarly created and began funding two scholarships. The Scholarship Award Fund and the College Tuition Fund both intended to benefit young women seeking higher education (Hernandez & Parks, 2016). Not only did the national organizations engage in philanthropy, subunits—chapters—did as well. For example, as part of Alpha Phi Alpha's *Go to High School, Go to College* campaign, its Mu chapter offered a scholarship equivalent to one-fourth the University of Minnesota's tuition (The Sphinx, June 1923). Established in the 1920s, Alpha Phi Alpha's first national program aimed at encouraging young African American men to attend college. Throughout the campaign, Alpha men underscored for the importance of education — in schools, churches, public transportation, and other public gatherings — for the future of the African American community. Myers and Gasman (2011) asserted that the program influenced many African American youths to

attend college. In 1922, Alpha Kappa Alpha's Theta chapter hosted a Charity Ball with the Anti-Lynching Crusade Girls. The ball raised money for Christmas baskets for poor children in the community, and the event brought attention to the political climate that allowed the lynching of African Americans in the United States (The Ivy Leaf, 1922). In 1924, Lambda Omega chapter made dresses for needy children in their community (The Ivy Leaf, 1924).

Kappa Alpha Psi also awarded scholarships and grants to countless students throughout its history. During its early history, scholarships were primarily awarded as part of the Guide Right Program and meant to enable high school students to go to college. By 1925, the fraternity started the National Scholarship Fund because it fulfilled the same goals as the previous scholarship program while simultaneously developing the leadership skills of the undergraduate members. This fund's success inspired the creation of the Research Loan Fund, which loaned undergraduate students money for post-graduate research (Bryson, 2003). In addition to supporting the advancement of African Americans in the area of education, BGLOs sought to elevate their communities in other philanthropic ways. For example, Phi Beta Sigma helped finance the building of a hospital in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1927 ("Report of the 13th Annual Conclave," 1927).

In the 1930s, BGLOs continued their philanthropic endeavors in a familiar area — education. In 1933, Phi Beta Sigma encouraged each of its chapters to start a local scholarship fund by a committee at the Chicago Conclave (Savage & Reddick, 1957). Five years later, the conclave in Winston-Salem, N.C. determined that every one of the fraternity's regions would be obligated to grant at least one scholarship for students of Business Administration (Savage & Reddick, 1957). For Omega Psi Phi, after years of having a relatively modest and unorganized national scholarship program, an improved national scholarship program began to materialize

from 1923 to 1938. In 1938, the materialization process came to fruition in the form of Omega Psi Phi's Scholarship Commission. The Commission had to choose which undergraduates to grant scholarships, which graduate students to award fellowships, and what size each award should be. Meanwhile, chapters often awarded scholarships of their own. National awards tended to range from \$100 to \$500 per person per year while chapter awards ranged from \$200-\$2,000 (Gill, 1977). At the local level, Alpha Phi Alpha's Alpha Zeta chapter established its annual scholarship for the freshman with the highest academic performance (The Sphinx, August 1939).

During this period, the sororities found ways to provide direct resources—money and otherwise—to their respective communities. In 1934, Alpha Kappa Alpha's Theta chapter hosted a contest to create a scholarship to assist a local girl in paying for a college education. They also donated money to other worthy projects in the community (The Ivy Leaf, 1934). Zeta Phi Beta provided financial resources to a summer school and other programs that promoted children's art and music education during the late 1930s (Parks & Neumann, 2016). Because approximately two in three African American southerners did not have access to public library services, Delta Sigma Theta introduced their National Library Project in 1937 that provided books to rural southern African American communities (Hernandez & Parks, 2016). Each chapter was required to donate at least ten books. They were encouraged to donate books which focused on African American achievement and African American history to communicate a message of empowerment to young African Americans. The Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina state legislatures denied Delta Sigma Theta's lobbying efforts for more funding for public libraries. As a result, the sorority raised money to pay for "bookmobiles" which traveled around with librarians (Gasman et al., 2008).

In 1938, Zeta Phi Beta created its Project ZIP initiative. Project ZIP (Zeta Phi Betas Investing

in People) was intended to benefit African Americans in four aspects of life: "economic development and empowerment; health and human services; political empowerment; and prevention of substance abuse" (Parks & Neumann, 2016, p. 138). In 1939, Sigma Gamma Rho donated books to Wilberforce Institute in South Africa through their *African Book Shower* program. That same year, they created a traveling library in Florida called the *Circulating Library on Wheels* (Gasman et al., 2008). As the 1930s wound down, Alpha Phi Alpha and Zeta Phi Beta brought additional, necessary, resources to African American communities. In one community, in 1939, Alpha Phi Alpha brothers organized the *Clinics on Wheels* program, in which dental care was provided in rural areas to low-income African Americans ("Louisiana's Health Program Includes These Clinics," 1939).

Consistent with their legacy of being organizations founded with 'scholarship' as an underlying ideal, BGLOs continued their work in the area of education philanthropy in the 1940s. Kappa Alpha Psi's The Guide Right Commission started a program in 1940 that aided students in their search for scholarships, loans, and part-time jobs to finance their post-secondary education (Reynolds, 1940). Also, the Kappa Alpha Psi Foundation gave \$1,500 to an undergraduate in every one of the fraternity's provinces (Bryson, 2003). Much of Zeta Phi Beta's philanthropic work related to education during the 1940s, including funding a Vacation School for young girls. During the same period, the sorority's Eta Zeta chapter created a scholarship fund for Louisville residents (Parks & Neumann, 2016). Sigma Gamma Rho awarded scholarships on the local, regional, and national level for ethical behavior and academic achievement. As early as 1944, Sigma Gamma Rho gave \$500 to the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). The sorority awarded more than \$25,000 in scholarships to students at the 33rd National Convention (Parks & Neumann, 2015). By 1944, Phi Beta Sigma went on record supporting the UNCF as

well (Savage & Reddick, 1957). In 1947, Alpha Phi Alpha's Alpha Alpha chapter held a musical contest to raise scholarship funds for the winner ("Wilberforce Student Wins Alpha Phi Alpha Scholarship Award," 1947).

Black Greek-Letter Organizations contributed to the greater good in other ways during this decade. Zeta Phi Beta donated more than \$1,700 for a community center and paid for an orphanage's coats, mirrors, and telephone during the 1940s (Parks & Neumann, 2016). Similarly, during the early 1940s, many of Zeta Phi Beta's national projects involved providing poor individuals with the goods they needed. The Psi chapter of Zeta Phi Beta helped to provide poor children with glasses by donating more than \$700 to the program, Blue Revue (Parks & Neumann, 2016). Alpha Phi Alpha's Alpha Psi Lambda chapter donated money toward the construction of a new hospital for African Americans in their community (The Sphinx, May 1944). That same year, the NAACP received a \$500 donation from Sigma Gamma Rho (Parks & Neumann, 2016).

Into the 1950s, BGLOs demonstrated that one of their chief causes was education. In 1950, Alpha Phi Alpha's Beta Sigma Lambda chapter established a \$500 scholarship fund (The Sphinx, February 1950). Similarly, its Chi chapter gave a \$100 scholarship (The Sphinx, February 1950); its Iota chapter also provided a scholarship to a worthy high school student (The Sphinx, Spring-Summer 1950). Alpha Phi Alpha's Gamma Iota chapter created a scholarship for a male senior at a local high school, and they raised funds to show free movies for underprivileged children at their local community center (The Sphinx, Spring-Summer 1950). The fraternity's Zeta Lambda chapter helped its community by awarding a scholarship, purchasing uniforms for a local football team, and contributing to the community chest (The Sphinx, December 1950). Several years later, Alpha Phi Alpha's Xi chapter not only held a symposium on education, but it also gave scholarships to high achieving students at a local

high school (The Sphinx, May 1954). That same year, 1954, the fraternity's Beta Nu chapter gave a scholarship as a part of their *Go to High School, Go to College* campaign (The Sphinx, December 1954). Omega Psi Phi had begun awarding scholarships to qualified high school students every year since 1953 (Gasman et al., 2008). By 1957, Sigma Gamma Rho awarded a total of \$3,000 in scholarships to its members and a total of \$25,000 in scholarships to non-members each year (Parks & Neumann, 2016). Even more, Zeta Phi Beta gave a donation of \$1000 to the United Negro College Fund in 1958 (Gasman, 2011). Zeta Phi Beta accepted an invitation to join the Committee to Salvage Talent one year later. The Committee provided advising and financial aid to African American students to urge them to enter post-secondary education. This was a vital service during a time when African Americans made up 10% of the U.S population yet only one percent of students in integrated colleges (Parks & Neumann, 2016).

The philanthropy of many BGLOs also emphasized helping young people reach their full potential by providing them with skills, guidance, positive role models, and wholesome fun. For example, in 1950, Alpha Sigma Lambda chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha gave \$1000 to their local YMCA (The Sphinx, February 1950). In 1953, Alpha Phi Alpha's Beta Alpha chapter sold Christmas seals, raised money for the March of Dimes, and hosted a program to promote the importance of higher education (The Sphinx, May 1953). In 1954, Sigma Gamma Rho provided \$1000 per year, and numerous volunteers to a camp in Pennsylvania called "Camp Achievement" (Parks & Neumann, 2016). The work of these organizations extended to other areas like focusing on the elderly or more generally on civil rights. For example, Alpha Sigma chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha held a charity program that benefitted elderly and underprivileged in their community during the holiday season (The Sphinx, February 1950). Between 1955 and 1959, Omega Psi Phi raised

\$36,000 from members' lifetime membership fees and contributed the money to the NAACP. Also, during the integration of Little Rock Central High School in 1957, Delta Sigma Theta sisters in the Little Rock area held a fundraiser for the African American Little Rock students in the place of their annual Christmas party (Gasman, 2011).

During the tumultuous 1960s, organizations like Alpha Phi Alpha continued to employ various approaches to community uplift. In 1960, its Gamma Theta Lambda chapter donated uniforms to a local high school band, gave money for the building of a new school, gave money to a local chapter of the NAACP, and awarded scholarships to worthy candidates (The Sphinx, February 1960). Gamma Upsilon Lambda chapter gave its annual scholarship and as well as money to a local health center (The Sphinx, May 1960). In 1963, Epsilon Upsilon Lambda chapter gave \$1000 to a scholarship fund (The Sphinx, May 1963); a year later, Alpha Sigma Lambda chapter recognized outstanding local students and gave over \$1000 in scholarships in their effort to promote education (The Sphinx, December 1964). Later in the decade, chapters like Rho Lambda chapter gave \$500 in scholarships and held a career day for local high school students (The Sphinx, May 1966). Similarly, Beta Alpha chapter awarded a scholarship to a local boy, held a Christmas party for underprivileged youth in their community, and began an Alpha Outreach program, with the intention of brothers acting as role models for local boys (The Sphinx, May 1968).

Sororities like Sigma Gamma Rho gave more than \$10,000 in scholarships in 1961 alone. Three years later, Sigma Gamma Rho donated \$500 to the UNCF, while the chapter in Houston, Texas awarded more than \$2000 worth of local scholarships. Then, the Eta Sigma chapter awarded about \$2,500 worth of scholarships in 1965 (Parks & Neumann, 2016). Delta Sigma Theta created a College Application Program in 1966, which fully or partially covered the cost of applying to college for low-income

individuals (Hernandez & Parks, 2016). In 1967, Sigma Gamma Rho introduced the *Sigma Drop-In*, a program which aimed at improving the lives of young people and supporting scholastic achievement. Sigma Gamma Rho members tutored grade school students and collected donations for the Merriwether Home for children. Two children in elementary school got to the opportunity to study African American History in Atlanta because the Phi Sigma chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho sponsored it in the late 1960s (Parks & Neumann, 2016).

Black Greek-Letter Organizations' philanthropy also extended to building their communities in other ways, including by addressing mental health and poverty. During 1964, the Gamma Alpha Sigma chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho not only gave \$565 to the Kent County Mental Health Association, but it also donated over \$1,600 to various causes related to mental health. The next year, the Gamma Alpha Sigma chapter donated \$2,100 to a mental health initiative (Parks & Neumann, 2016). BGLOs have improved the infrastructure of African American communities through their programs and donations. Alpha Phi Alpha Building Foundation maintained, defended, and supported communities' infrastructure by empowering them economically. In 1966, the members of the Eta Tau Lambda chapter created the housing development Alpha Phi Alpha Homes, Inc. to provide poor and elderly citizens in Akron, Ohio and beyond with inexpensive and quality housing (Myers & Gasman, 2011). On other fronts, Sigma Gamma Rho assisted in the recovery of the Detroit community after the riots in 1967. Sigma Gamma Rho aided the victims of the Detroit riots by contributing \$2000 to the Detroit Emergency Relief Fund. What's more, Sigma Gamma Rho not only gave \$500 to the family of Willie Gibson, it adopted the family for a year. Such actions inspired individual chapters to adopt destitute families for specific periods as well (Parks & Neumann, 2016). Much like the Psi chapter of Zeta Phi Beta's work in the 1940s,

Sigma Gamma Rho's Gamma Sigma chapter provided students at three different elementary schools with the eyeglasses they needed through their philanthropy program, *Eye-Saver* in 1969 (Parks & Neumann, 2016).

The philanthropic endeavors of various BGLOs addressed international needs and foreign policy. In the early 1960s, Zeta Phi Beta requested that its chapters collect games, toys, scholarly works, and other reading materials for underprivileged people in Africa. One chapter, Eta Sigma, even gave 400 pounds of linen to the campaign, "Linen for Africa." By 1963, the sorority introduced, Project Challenging Times, a six-point project which aided impoverished African communities. This project led to the opening of Monrovia, Libya's Domestic Science Center and a community development program run by Zeta Phi Beta members (Parks & Neumann, 2016).

By the early 1970s, BGLOs continued to raise money for, and gave money to, varying causes. Zeta Phi Beta established the National Education Foundation, which funded research, organized workshops, hosted seminars, and awarded scholarships without considering religion, race, or skin color (Parks & Neumann, 2016). In 1971, Alpha Phi Alpha's Eta Tau Lambda chapter, in association with other alumni chapters and Alpha Phi Alpha Homes, Inc. broke ground for a new housing development in Akron, Ohio. They secured a commitment from Federal Housing to assist in the building, which ended up being a \$10 million development (The Sphinx, 1971). In 1976, the General President announced an initiative to raise one million over five years for the United Negro College Fund, the Urban League, and the NAACP (The Sphinx, 1976). In 1978, Alpha Kappa Alpha's Kappa Tau Omega chapter held a spring fundraiser, proceeds to the NAACP, the United Negro College Fund, the Job Corps, the Black Culture Center, the Mental Health Association, and other organizations (The Ivy Leaf, 1978). Omega Psi Phi started a campaign supporting the United Negro College Fund in 1979. Not only did Omega Psi Phi pledge

to donate \$50,000 in five years, but it also set its campaign goal at \$250,000 (Gill, 1977). That same year, the fraternity made a \$2,314 donation to the Detroit Afro-American Museum's building fund (The Oracle, 1979).

These accounts provide only a snapshot of the philanthropic work that BGLOs have done from 1906 through the 1970s. The nine organizations have neither equally robust historical archives nor do they provide equal access to the general public. Moreover, their primary historical texts do not uniformly provide histories beyond the 1970s. However, Internal Revenue Service (IRS) data provide a contemporary snapshot of their work in this area.

Data Generation

We gathered data on the financial performance of the nine NPHC organizations and affiliates based on their filings with the IRS. Nonprofit organizations are required to file with the IRS annually, and most tax-exempt organizations that satisfy certain criteria file a version of the IRS Form 990. These forms are publicly available and are intended to disclose the financial information of firms that are tax-exempt to the public. The National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) collects these forms and digitizes them.

Methods

We used two sets of NCCS data in our analysis. First, we use the "Core" files, which contain records for all organizations that file either a Form 990, a Form 990PF, or a Form 990EZ. These include 501(c)3 charities as well as other types of charitable organizations (i.e., organizations classified as tax-exempt from another part of 501(c) other than 501(c)3). Furthermore, data on 501(c)3 charities are split across two data files: the Core for Public Charities (PC), and the Core for Private Foundations (PF). Generally, public charities directly provide charitable services, while private foundations provide funding for other organizations to do so. Thus, for each year

there are three Core files: Core PC, Core PF, and Core Other.

The second set of data files we use are the Business Master Files (BMF). These data files include the organizations that are represented in the Core files but also many other organizations. Charitable organizations that are not required to file one of the 990 forms, usually because their financial activity falls below a threshold value, appear in the BMF files but not the Core files. There are two BMF datasets for each year: the BMF 501(c)3 data (which contains data on both public charities and private foundations), and the BMF other dataset.

While the BMF data contain more organizations than the Core, the number of variables per organization is higher in the Core files. This is because the Core files come from the 990 forms, which contain detailed financial data; while the BMF data usually contain no more than basic identifying information (e.g., name and address). Therefore, our analysis of the philanthropic efforts of these organizations must be limited to those organizations that we observe in the Core files rather than just the BMF.

Data are collected from 1989-2015. Hundreds of thousands of organizations are included each year, but only a small fraction represents BGLOs or affiliates. To identify which organizations are BGLOs, we matched based on the organizations' federal employee identification numbers (EIN). Using Guidestar (a website that provides information on nonprofits) during the summer of 2014, we identified a set of 2,302 EINs that belong to BGLOs associated with each of the nine NPHC organizations. We searched for those organizations within the Core files or the BMF files. Overall, there are many more organizations¹ in the BMF than in the Core. Thus, there are (usually) many more BGLOs in the BMF than in the Core.

Figure 1 presents the number of organizations found across the years, by data file. It includes the years 1995 through 2013, in which both BMF and Core data files are available. (Core data only are also available from 1989-1994, and BMF data only are available from 2014-2015.) The height of each bar represents the number of BGLOs found in the BMF files or the Core files. Organizations found in both files are

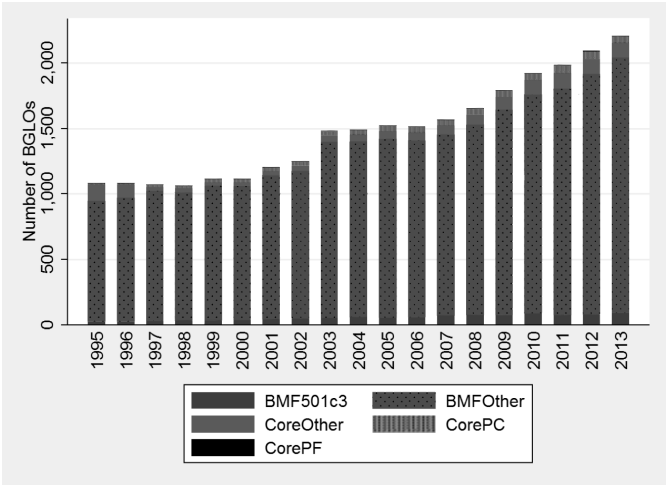


Figure 1
Count of BGLO Organizations by File Type and Year

¹We use the term "organization" to refer to the individual units, e.g. chapters and alumni associations, within each of the nine NPHC fraternities and sororities.

counted towards the Core file total. Each bar is comprised of five different colors, for the two sources of BMF organizations, the 501(c)3 file and the *other* file (not 501(c)3 organizations), and for the three sources of Core organizations, Core PC, Core PF, and Core Other.

The total number of BGLOs identified in the data range from about 1,000 per year to 2,000 per year for this period. The vast majority of organizations are found only in the BMF files, in particular in the BMF Other file. For these organizations, the data do not contain any financial information, only identifying information like name and organization type. Only in the Core data files do we have the financial information like total revenue and expenditures. The number of BGLOs identified in the Core data files ranges from 49 in 1997 to 181 in 2011.

To put the data from the BGLOs in context, we compare them to similar organizations based on their categorization from the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE).² The NTEE assigns an alphanumeric code to each organization based on its purpose. We compare the BGLOs to organizations with an NTEE code B83: Student Sororities and Fraternities. (The major category B is for “Education,” and the subcategory B8 is for “Student Services.”) These organizations include fraternities and sororities that are not historically African American. We do not include any BGLOs that are classified as B83 in the B83 category. There are many more B83 organizations than there are BGLOs, by approximately an order of magnitude or more. The purpose of this comparison is to view the financial performance of BGLOs relative to their most comparable other nonprofits, which we believe to be other fraternities and sororities besides BGLOs. The B83 NTEE code identifier is the only available way of identifying these comparable organizations.

Results

Once the BGLOs were identified, we used the data to present summary statistics on their overall financial performance. Two useful summary measures are total revenues and total expenses because they provide a simple ‘snapshot’ of the magnitude of the philanthropic activity of an organization. More detailed data, like the categories and types of expenditures or the sources of revenues, are generally not available in the 990 data. These variables are only available in the Core files, not the BMF files. Furthermore, they are not available in the Core Other files before 1997.

Figure 2 presents the median and mean of total revenues and total expenditures, in real 2013 dollars, by year separately for BGLOs and B83 organizations. It includes just the Core data years of 1989-2013, and for 1989-1996, the means and medians are calculated with just the Core PC and Core PF files and not the Core Other files (which explains the increased volatility in all measures in those years). Because there are so few BGLOs in the Core files, especially in the earlier years (see Figure 1), these values are volatile.

The picture that emerges from the crude analysis is that there is some evidence that the median BGLO has lower revenues and lower expenses than does the median B83 organizations in most years. The median B83 organization earns about \$100,000-\$125,000 in revenues per year, compared to about \$50,000-\$100,000 for the median BGLO. For expenses, the median B83 organization spends about the same as it earns in revenue, \$100,000-\$125,000 per year, while the median BGLO spends a bit less than its revenue, just about \$60,000. There also appears to be a downward trend in median revenues and expenses over the period for BGLOs. Looking at mean values rather than medians, BGLOs have substantially higher mean expenses and revenues than do B83s. This is likely due to a very small

²<http://nccs.urban.org/classification/ntee.cfm>

number of outliers among the small number of BGLO organizations for which we have financial data.

Next, we separately examined the nine different members of the NPHC. Table 1 presents a count of BGLOs separated by year and by the nine NPHC fraternities and sororities from the BMF files, and Table 2 presents it from the Core files. (Core data are available from 1989-2013, and the BMF files are available from 1995-2015.) As shown in Figure 1, there are about an order of magnitude more organizations present in the BMF than are in the Core. The largest number of organizations were found from the sorority Delta Sigma Theta (DST), which has 632 organization-year observations in the Core files and 12,992 in the BMF files. The next highest totals were for the Core are Sigma Gamma Rho (SGR, 465 observations), Omega Psi Phi (OPP, 450 observations), and Zeta Phi Beta (ZPB, 441 observations). The fewest observations in the

Core came from Iota Phi Theta (IPT), with just 23 observations.

With the caveat implied by the very small sample size for many of these organizations, we present summary statistics on revenues and expenses, separately for each of the nine NPHC organizations, in Figure 3. As in Figure 2, the left column presents revenues, the right column presents expenses, the top row is the medians, and the bottom row is the means. In Figure 3, the statistics are presented by fraternity/sorority, rather than by year (for each fraternity/sorority, all the data are averaged over all the years available). Figure 3 demonstrates that outliers drive much of this analysis, given the small number of observations for many of the organizations. In the top row, the outlier for both revenues and expenses is Phi Beta Sigma (PBS), which as Table 2 shows is represented by just one organization in the Core files for most years in the sample. Its median revenues and

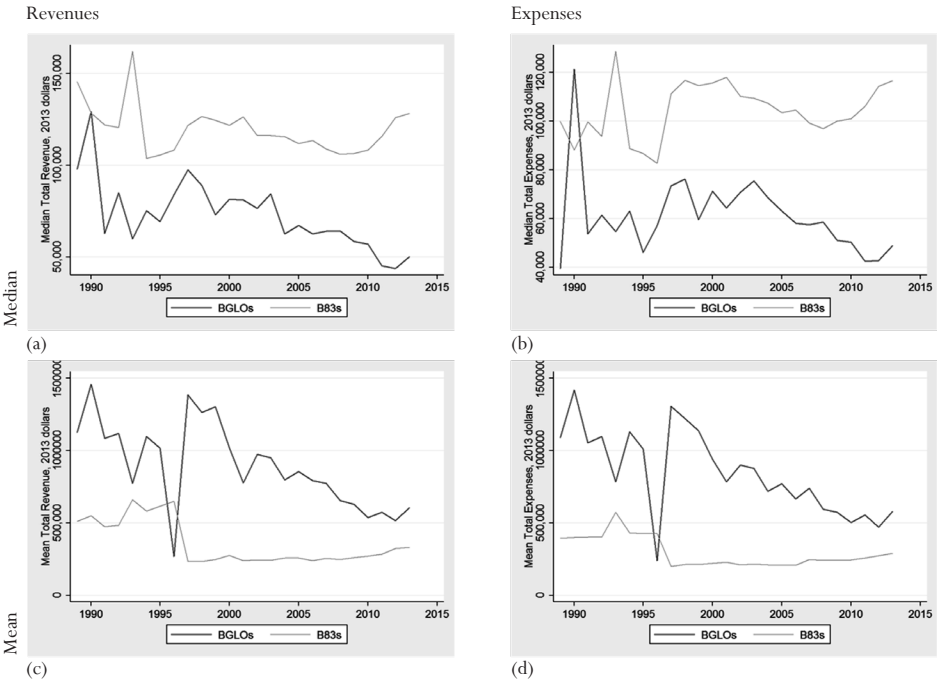


Figure 2
Median and Mean Total Revenues and Expenses for BGLO and B83 Organizations by Year

Table 1
Count of BGLO Organizations by Fraternity / Sorority and Year, BMF files

	<u>Organization</u>									
	AKA	APA	DST	IPT	KAP	OPP	PBS	SGR	ZPB	Total
1995	3	17	465	1	99	67	0	145	148	945
1996	3	18	475	1	99	69	0	152	152	969
1997	1	20	478	1	102	73	0	177	168	1,020
1998	1	21	456	2	105	73	0	179	171	1,008
1999	1	25	483	1	110	75	0	189	178	1,062
2000	1	25	482	0	109	79	0	186	175	1,057
2001	9	24	459	0	198	78	2	194	177	1,141
2002	9	23	459	1	199	77	3	227	174	1,172
2003	10	28	657	1	202	76	3	244	175	1,396
2004	10	28	658	1	200	76	3	246	177	1,399
2005	9	28	682	1	204	75	3	242	174	1,418
2006	9	31	679	1	206	75	3	227	176	1,407
2007	6	35	689	0	209	76	3	219	214	1,451
2008	7	36	707	0	191	66	2	268	252	1,529
2009	7	38	715	0	225	60	4	344	247	1,640
2010	5	41	756	0	225	92	4	361	270	1,754
2011	5	40	738	0	199	167	3	401	250	1,803
2012	4	38	761	0	207	201	4	420	278	1,913
2013	3	39	761	0	225	248	4	433	327	2,040
2014	53	57	737	2	253	238	5	443	352	2,140
2015	52	57	695	2	245	189	6	430	325	2,001
Total	208	669	12,992	15	3,812	2,230	52	5,727	4,560	30,265

expenses are an order of magnitude higher than that for all of the other fraternities or sororities. For the mean values, it is an outlier, along with Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA), which also has very few observations, and Delta Sigma Theta (DST), which has the most observations.

The small number of observations obfuscates this analysis. So in Figure 4, we re-create these summary figures but lump the four fraternities and sororities with the fewest Core observations — AKA, APA, IPT, and PBS — into a single category titled “Other.” This figure provides a more balanced analysis. The top row shows a remarkable degree of consistency in the median values across fraternities and sororities. Median revenues and expenses were each about \$50,000

to \$60,000 per year per organization for all fraternities and sororities, except a bit higher for DST and a bit lower for ZPB. The lower half of Figure 4 shows that the mean values are much higher than the median values for all fraternities and sororities. However, this is much more pronounced for DST, whose mean revenues (\$2 million) was about twenty times as high as its median revenues, and for the “Other” category, which includes the outliers AKA and PBS from Figure 3. The result from DST, though, was not due to small sample size, since DST has the largest number of observations of all fraternities and sororities. This indicates that there were some organizations affiliated with DST that have very high revenues and expenses.

Table 2
Count of BGLO Organizations by Fraternity / Sorority and Year, Core files

	<u>Organization</u>									
	AKA	APA	DST	IPT	KAP	OPP	PBS	SGR	ZPB	Total
1989	2	6	37	0	8	13	1	29	15	111
1990	3	7	25	0	6	11	1	49	11	113
1991	3	8	22	0	6	12	1	52	7	111
1992	3	7	19	0	5	14	1	54	3	106
1993	3	5	23	0	5	14	1	40	8	99
1994	3	6	43	0	3	9	1	35	23	123
1995	2	5	52	0	6	9	1	30	30	135
1996	2	8	35	0	7	8	1	27	26	114
1997	4	7	9	0	8	6	1	4	10	49
1998	4	8	13	0	7	8	1	6	8	55
1999	4	7	15	0	5	7	1	3	7	49
2000	4	8	15	2	6	7	1	5	11	59
2001	4	9	17	2	7	10	1	4	8	62
2002	5	11	18	1	7	14	1	6	13	76
2003	5	11	23	1	9	17	1	5	12	84
2004	6	13	24	1	11	19	1	4	13	92
2005	5	14	25	1	12	22	1	9	15	104
2006	6	15	24	1	13	21	1	11	14	106
2007	7	15	25	2	14	23	1	14	16	117
2008	7	14	25	2	15	22	1	16	20	122
2009	6	14	35	2	26	29	1	15	25	153
2010	8	14	30	2	33	35	1	16	31	170
2011	8	15	30	2	34	44	1	10	37	181
2012	9	18	25	2	34	37	2	10	43	180
2013	9	18	23	2	31	39	2	11	35	170
Total	122	263	632	23	318	450	27	465	441	2,741

Discussion

Our analysis is exploratory, given the rather rudimentary nature of the data that are available to us. Nevertheless, our results yield some important findings that could be relevant to policymakers or scholars of BGLOs. First, it is interesting to note the difference in mean and median revenues as well as expenses between the organizations that we have identified as BGLOs and other college fraternities and sororities identified in the IRS data files. BGLOs have

lower median revenues and expenses, but higher mean revenues and expenses. The difference is driven by a small number of outliers, which is unsurprising given the relatively small number of BGLOs that we can identify. Given this, the more policy-relevant figure is probably the median values, which are lower than those for similar organizations.

Why is it the case that the median BGLO seems to be smaller, in terms of its revenues and expenses, than the median fraternity or sorority? There are several possible explanations, most

of which we are unable to examine thoroughly in this study. One obvious explanation is that BGLOs are smaller than other fraternities and sororities, either in terms of their current membership levels or their number of alumni. The IRS data files do not contain this information. It may also be possible that alumni and current members of BGLOs have on average lower incomes than do alumni and current members of other fraternities and sororities and are thus less able to give to their organizations. Or, it may be the case that potential BGLO donors choose to donate to other types of organizations besides BGLOs. However, given the large body of evidence presented earlier in the paper about the vital role that BGLOs play in African American philanthropy, this explanation may not be satisfactory.

The second major finding of the analysis involves the differences between the nine

different NPHC organizations. Here, we emphasize that the results should be interpreted with caution since the issues arising from the relatively small sample size are even more exacerbated at this scale. Nevertheless, we do find evidence that Delta Sigma Theta (DST), which has the most observations in our data set of any of the nine fraternities or sororities, contributes greatly to the mean values of revenues and expenses being much higher than the median values. This indicates that a small number of DST organizations may be outliers relative to the rest of the BGLOs. As for what could cause this pattern, there is nothing in our dataset that can address this. Perhaps alumni of DST are different in terms of income than alumni of the other eight, or perhaps the difference stems from DST's central management.

Our analysis sheds new light on some of the findings of the previous literature, described

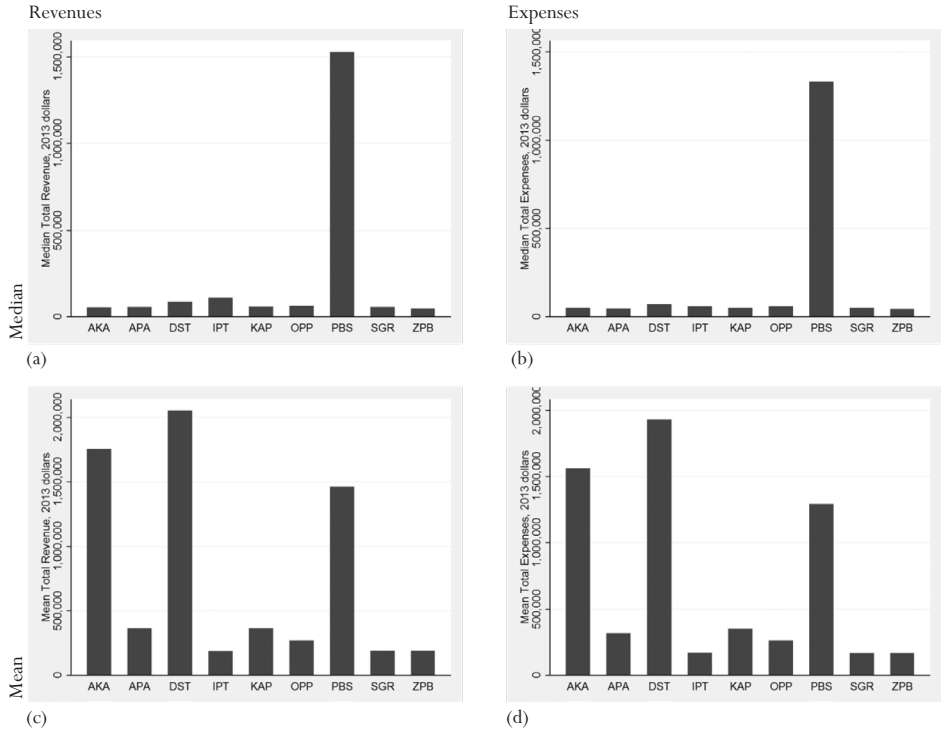


Figure 3
Median and Mean Total Revenues and Expenses for BGLO Organizations by Fraternity/Sorority

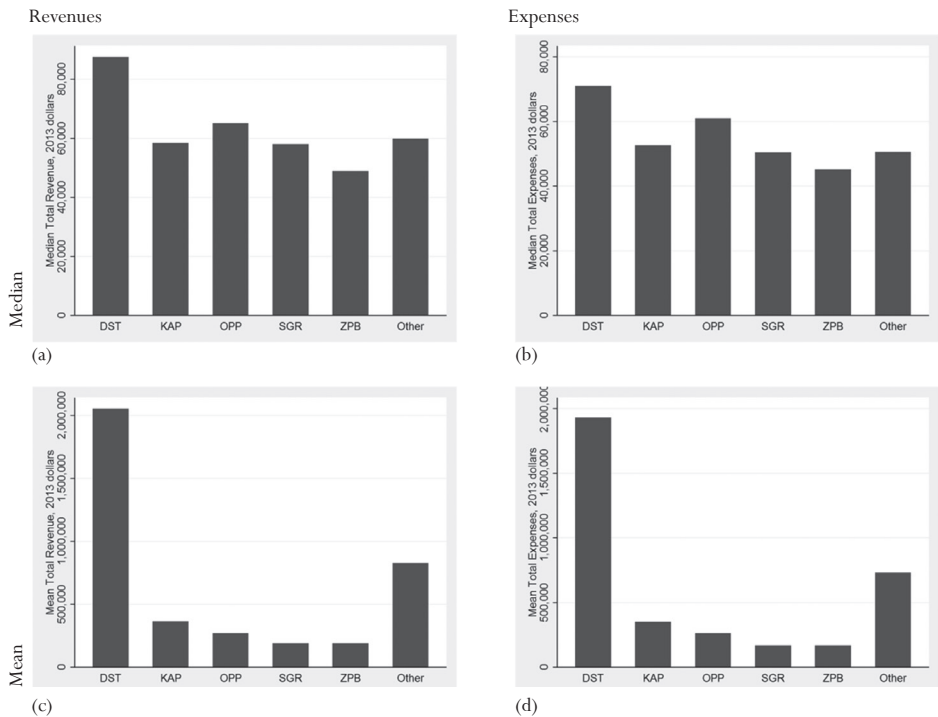


Figure 4

Median and Mean Total Revenues and Expenses for BGLO Organizations by Fraternity/Sorority, Grouped

earlier. Our previous section chronicling the history of BGLO philanthropic efforts focused on qualitative research, and it highlights specific philanthropic actions taken over the past 100-plus years on the part of individual organizations. For instance, Parks & Neumann (2016) list several instances in which African American sororities have made charitable efforts. Hernandez & Parks (2016) focus on the philanthropic efforts of one organization, Delta Sigma Theta. However, to the best of our knowledge, our paper is the first systematic analysis in regard to BGLO organizations and their financial performance.

Our results are potentially relevant for campus-based professionals and fraternity and sorority life advisors. Philanthropy is a major component of the mission of many Greek organizations, especially (as we documented earlier) for BGLOs. Having a systematic overview

of how BGLOs are performing financially, on average, may benefit advisors by giving them a benchmark for their individual organization's performance. For example, if an advisor sees that her organization's expenses or revenues differ considerably from the average for similar organizations, then it may be worth investigating the source of the divergence.

Conclusion

We document the history of philanthropic activity conducted by the nine fraternities and sororities of the National Pan-Hellenic Conference (*The Divine Nine*). Using data from about 2,000 of these organizations' publicly-available IRS forms, we provide summary measures of the magnitude of their philanthropy via each organization's revenues and expenses.

Although our analysis is limited by the relatively small number of organizations for which we have financial data from the IRS, we can draw some preliminary conclusions.

The median BGLO earns about \$50,000 to \$100,000 in revenues each year and spends about the same in expenses. There appears to be a slight downward trend in both of these averages over the past 20 years. When compared to other student fraternities and sororities (those classified with the NTEE code B83), the BGLOs' median revenues and expenses are about one-half as large (\$50,000 to \$100,000 per year versus \$100,000 to \$150,000 per year for revenues, and about \$60,000 per year versus \$80,000 to \$120,000 per year for expenses (see Figure 2, panels a and b). However, the mean values of revenues and expenses for BGLOs are about twice as high as the respective mean values for B83s (see Figure 2, panels c and d). This could be an artifact of the relatively small sample size. When examining organizations separately by the nine NPHC fraternities and sororities, the issue of small sample size is exacerbated. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that Delta Sigma Theta is an outlier, insofar as having slightly higher median revenues and expenses than the other organizations.

Our analysis is very exploratory, and more research could be done along several dimensions. First, by examining total revenues and total expenses by organization, other data available for analysis includes spending by category (for instance, spending on fundraising or salaries) and income by category (for instance, from donations or government grants). Second, we omit any analysis on organizations that are not found in the Core data files though it is possible that for some of these organizations, more financial information is available from another source. Third, our analysis is purely comparative, and perhaps additional insight could be found through quantitative and qualitative analysis looking more closely at a small number of organizations. Fourth, additional data sources may exist beyond

the IRS Form 990s available through the National Center for Charitable Statistics. For example, many nonprofit organizations release financial reports to the public, separately from their IRS reporting.

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Author Biographies

Garth Heutel is an associate professor of economics at Georgia State University and a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research. He studies environmental policy, behavioral economics, and the economics of nonprofit organizations. His research has appeared in *Journal of Public Economics*, *The Economic Journal*, *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, *Review of Economic Dynamics*, and elsewhere. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin.

Koren Hardy is a 2019 graduate of the Wake Forest University School of Law. While working on this article, she was an undergraduate at Wake Forest University. She graduated from Wake in 2016 with a Bachelor of Arts in history. She would like to thank Dr. Gregory Parks for the opportunity to work on this article, and she is very grateful for contributing to such an important topic.

Mackenzie Marti Slater graduated summa cum laude from Wake Forest University with a bachelor's degree in sociology and a minor in history. She earned Distinction in Major and admittance to Phi Beta Kappa. Slater was a research assistant for Dr. Gregory Parks from 2014-2017 and Dr. Hana Brown in 2017. She presented her honors thesis at the Sixth Annual Student Research Symposium on Gender and Sexuality. In 2014, Slater was a member of Kappa Alpha Theta.

Gregory S. Parks is a professor of law at Wake Forest University School of Law. His scholarship has focused on the history, culture, and contemporary issues facing African American fraternities and sororities. He's a Life Member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated.