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## Original Article

# Private Black colleges' encouragement of student giving and volunteerism: An examination of prosocial behavior development

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**ABSTRACT** Colleges and university missions often espouse ideals such as creating an active and engaged citizen. The concept, principles and manifestation of citizenship can take many forms. One such form is that of prosocial behavior, or voluntary actions towards others. Philanthropy is one example of prosocial behavior. This study enhances our knowledge of how institutions instill the idea of 'giving back' in students and why young people decide to support higher education through a case study of the United Negro College Fund's (UNCF) National Pre-Alumni Council (NPAC). Guided by prosocial behavior theory this case study explores how NPAC instills the importance of giving to students and what influences participants' philanthropic behaviors. The major findings include how NPAC instills prosocial behaviors in a way that (1) is correct for their developmental stage and age group, using a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations; (2) educates student on being philanthropic and the need for personal and alumni support of the UNCF and Black colleges; and (3) acknowledges the African-American experience, by encouraging service within the surrounding communities and tying their work to messages of racial and community uplift. The study includes 25 interviews of NPAC participants and advisors from 13 institutions, representing one-third of the UNCF.

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## INTRODUCTION

Philanthropy and specifically alumni giving are central aspects of American higher education. Without the voluntary dollars that donors provide



to supplement tuition and other sources of institutional income, universities would not be able to reach their fiscal obligations or curricular goals (Brittingham and Pezzullo, 1990; Pooch and Siegel, 2005). Voluntary giving, through unrestricted annual giving programs, makes up 10 per cent of current operations at the nation's colleges and universities (Council for Aid to Education, 2007). However, when combined with income, such as interest from endowment – a result of prior voluntary support – this percentage increases (Worth, 2002).

College and university alumni are those most likely to donate to the institution as philanthropic giving is often predicated on personal connections between the donor and the recipient (Miller and Casebeer 1990; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Mosser, 1993; Taylor and Martin, 1993; Bruggink and Siddiqui, 1995; Young and Fischer, 1996; Hunter *et al*, 1999; Clotfelter, 2003; Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins, 2003; Gaier, 2005). Prior research indicates that engaging in prosocial behavior as an adolescent and college-aged adult increases the likelihood of financial giving to a non-profit later in life (Kang, 2005). This case study explores what private historically Black colleges and universities, members of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), are doing to encourage prosocial behavior development among college students leading to increased philanthropic giving and volunteerism to their institutions and larger communities.

### **Case study context: The UNCF and its national pre-alumni council**

The UNCF, established in 1944, is a comprehensive fundraising

organization that solicits donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations. The Fund provides operating funds for its 39 members – private historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) – scholarships and internships for students at hundreds of institutions, and faculty and administrative professional training. Then-president of Tuskegee Institute Fredrick D. Patterson founded the UNCF in 1944, after calling on his fellow private Black college presidents to coordinate their own fundraising. Patterson believed that the private-HBCUs would be more successful as a group than as individual institutions (Gasman, 2007). The organization generated its funds from individuals in a number of ways: alumni appeals, solicitation of celebrities, annual telethons, and student fundraising through the National Pre-Alumni Council (NPAC) system (Personal communications, 8 November 2005; 10 November 2005).

In 1946, 2 years after the founding of the UNCF, James E. Stamps, an alumnus of the one of the College Fund's charter members, Fisk University (Nashville, TN, USA), established the National Alumni Council (NAC). NAC's purpose was to bring alumni together in partnership with the UNCF to serve the needs of private Black colleges. Twelve years later, in 1958, Walter Washington, a Tougaloo alumnus and then president of Utica Junior College (Utica, MS, USA), created the NPAC under the NAC. Washington established the NPAC to establish loyalty between institutions and their alumni and the UNCF (United Negro College Fund, n.d.).

NPAC and its affiliated chapters at the UNCF member colleges is a

student-alumni association, in which participants are engaged in fundraising and alumni-relationship building for their *alma mater* and the UNCF (Tipsord Todd, 1993). The UNCF's NPAC was established in 1958

to stimulate interest and participation of students in the programs of the United Negro College Fund, to preserve and to further loyalty and fellowship between the member colleges and universities, assist in raising funds during the annual campaign and help them become better alumni while in school and upon graduation. (United Negro College Fund, n.d.)

Simply put, the NPAC's purpose is to instill a culture of giving in its members (Personal communication, November 8, 2005). Over the last 47 years, NPAC students have raised more than 3 million dollars for the UNCF annual campaigns (Benedict College Division of Institutional Advancement, n.d.). In 2004, NPAC raised an impressive \$277 000 (Personal communication, 10 November 2005). The goal of this case study is to explore the UNCF-NPAC as a model of socialization and how it encourages college students to develop their prosocial behaviors.

### **Problem statement**

Social psychologists contend that prosocial behavior, or voluntary actions that are carried out to benefit others, can be learned through direct reinforcement, observation and discussion (Rushton, 1975; Israel, 1978; Ahammer and Murray, 1979; Smith *et al.*, 1979; Eisenberg, 1982; Grusec, 1982; Rushton, 1982; Grusec,

1991; Moore and Eisenberg, 1984; Schroeder *et al.*, 1995). Past research on prosocial behavior within the disciplines of psychology, genetics and sociobiology provides a conceptual framework for exploring philanthropy, volunteerism and giving among students of higher education (Rushton, 1982; Harbaugh, 1998; Sansone and Harackiewicz, 2000; Friedmann, 2003). Using prosocial behavior as a theoretical framework, this study explores the following overarching questions: What stimulates students to act in a prosocial manner? What motivates students and young alumni to make financial contributions to their *alma maters*?

### **Significance and purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the UNCF's NPAC as a model of socialization and how it involves and teaches the next generation of alumni donors the importance of supporting their *alma mater* and the UNCF. Knowing more about what motivates students to give is important because their giving affects future donations. In recent years, there has been research on the power of student-alumni associations in engaging future alumni to help create a new generation of volunteers and donors at predominantly White institutions (Friedmann, 2003). However, this research neglects private HBCU and their unique position in having a community chest-like fundraising arm – the UNCF. By exploring the NPAC and how it instills a culture of giving in students, this case study helps inform our knowledge on how philanthropic behavior, in terms of giving and volunteerism, is instilled in



African-American college students. A better understanding of this phenomenon will assist HBCUs and predominantly White institutions in their efforts to engage a population of students that has historically been overlooked in the alumni giving process (Council on Foundations, 1999).

In a 1999 Council on Foundations report entitled *Cultures of Caring: Philanthropy in Diverse American Communities*, the authors recommend that additional philanthropic research be conducted on how non-profits are building connections to new donors. The Council on Foundations believes that 'some universities and colleges are developing sophisticated programs to reach and involve their diverse alumni. Learning how the leaders of these organizations have developed their programs, and how they measure success, would be extremely useful to other organizational leaders' (p. 11).

This study is in direct response to the Council on Foundations' call for future research. By further understanding how the UNCF engages African-American students and young alumni – successfully creating a culture of giving among them – other institutions of higher education and non-profits will be able to better understand the unique aspects of this diverse community and the cultural dimensions associated with giving. As a result of this knowledge, more colleges and universities will have the potential to expand their giving programs and participation within African-American communities and among students and young alumni.

The need for more research on philanthropic giving patterns is apparent. Brittingham and Pezzullo

(1990) believe that fundraising is 'thinly informed by research' (p. 1). The vast majority of philanthropic literature within higher education is atheoretical (for example, Burnett, 1992/2002; Flanagan, 1999; Ciconte and Jacob, 2001; Connors, 2001; Dove, 2001; Greenfield, 2001; Worth, 2002; *New Directions in Philanthropic Fundraising* series). Although existing research offers some guidance for practitioners, the implications are limited by the failure to ground the research in any theoretical or conceptual framework. This work, through an examination of how cultures of giving among students and young alumni are created and sustained helps fill this theoretical void in the literature.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

College and university advancement offices ponder donor motivation and how to encourage alumni to make financial contributions to their *alma mater* on a regular basis. According to social psychologists, it is possible to learn prosocial behavior (Eisenberg, 1982; Rushton, 1982; Schroeder *et al*, 1995). The action of giving alumni donations to one's *alma mater* therefore, can be learned.

Studies show that as a person ages, developmental and moral reasoning can evolve in terms of helping others. Young children offer help as a result of extrinsic motivation: being told to help, wishing to avoid punishment or being promised a gift or prize. Less tangible benefits, such as peer approval, are associated with adolescent motivation to help others. Adults reach a different stage, in which intrinsic feelings motivate their prosocial behavior (Cialdini and

Kenrick, 1976; Bar-Tal, 1982; Eisenberg, 1982; Kohlberg, 1985; Schroeder *et al*, 1995). When children perform prosocial acts and receive positive feedback, they internalize the praise and think of themselves as 'good' (Rosenhan, 1978; Miley, 1980). As they repeat these actions and grow older, children experience increased levels of moral obligation and their need for external motivations is reduced (Piliavin and Charng, 1990). Schroeder *et al* (1995), reviewing other research, suggested that prosocial behavior can be taught and learned. Many believe that direct reinforcement, as well as observing and discussing altruism, influences prosocial behavior (Rushton, 1975; Israel, 1978; Ahammer and Murray, 1979; Smith *et al*, 1979; Grusec, 1982; Rushton, 1982; Grusec, 1991; Moore and Eisenberg, 1984).

Colleges and universities regularly solicit their alumni for donations, using intrinsic and extrinsic benefits as motivation. Extrinsic motivators may include small gifts, invitations to campus activities, listing of names in widely read annual reports, membership in giving societies, or the belief that alumni participation and dollars increase their *alma mater's* reputation and therefore the value of their own degrees. In contrast, intrinsic motivations for giving include alumni giving to a scholarship to help others attend college (Harbaugh, 1998).

Sansone and Harackiewicz (2000) debate the value of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Social learning theory suggests that student involvement in a group that encourages forms of philanthropy (monetary, service and so on) influences students' socialization and organizational identity, ultimately

increasing their prosocial behaviors (Rushton, 1982). Friedmann (2003) finds that as a result of this socialization process, intrinsic motivations of prosocial behavior would have a greater influence than extrinsic motivations. Students in organizations that encourage philanthropy could more easily understand the needs of institutions and therefore have higher participation rates in annual campaigns. Kang (2005) found that experience in contributing during school years has a significant and positive effect on future giving patterns.

Schervish (1993) asserted that a person's philanthropic identity is established by means of motivating factors, such as involvement in a 'community of participation.' He suggested that by participating in an 'organizational setting in which philanthropy is expected or at least invited by the fact of being active in the organization' (p. 33), a socialization process takes place whereby the donor's identity with the 'community' is strengthened.

Student involvement in alumni and fundraising activities at institutions, as undergraduates, is one such community of participation. Additionally, it creates a strong foundation for active alumni support after graduation. In a 1981 interview about his involvement in founding of the UNCF in 1944, James P. Brawley, then president of historically Black Clark College (now Clark-Atlanta), understood the importance of instilling a culture of giving in undergraduates so that they are more likely to donate as alumni. Brawley believed

If you are going to develop responsive alumni you don't do



it by talking to them when they are in their caps and gowns ready to go, and then expect them to respond by giving handsome gifts to the college ... the need is to develop a systematic plan for the alumni to contribute and stimulate their interest through what is done while they are at the college for four years, and if you don't get a good response out of them during those four years, the chances are 99[per cent] that you won't get much of a response after they have gone. (Brawley, 1981, n.p.)

There is substantial literature that agrees with Brawley's principle and discusses the importance of engaging students in fundraising programming (for example, as solicitation callers) and even as donors early in their careers at both two- and four-year institutions (Lynch, 1980; Purpura, 1980; Shanley, 1985; Kerns, 1986; Chewning, 1993; Nakada, 1993; Nayman *et al*, 1993; van Nostrand, 1999). Robbie Nayman *et al* (1993) suggested that 'turning students into donors is a socialization process that involves orienting students to the notion of voluntary giving, actively engaging them in varied institutional advancement activities, and strategically timing program initiatives' (p. 90). By socializing the students in this way, Nayman *et al* found that students are more likely to participate in future fundraising campaigns. It is this socialization process that, in part, frames my study. According to Atchley's (1989) continuity theory, established patterns are likely to be followed in the future. Building upon Atchley's observations others have

used continuity theory to explain continual giving within a philanthropic context (Piliavin and Charng, 1990; Okunade and Justice, 1991; Lindahl and Winship, 1992). Further research showed that giving from young alumni, even in small amounts, has potentially large affects on lifetime donating (Okunade and Justice, 1991; Lindahl and Winship, 1992; Nayman *et al*, 1993; Monks, 2003).

## METHODS

Generally, qualitative methods are useful in investigating emerging ideas and in the creation of new theories (Strauss and Corbin, 1994; Creswell, 1998). In addition, qualitative methods are used to understand the context of a situation, the influence of the environment or personal background on the study participants' actions, the process of how events take place and the meaning of different variables in the phenomena (Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1988). Much of the philanthropic literature, both in and out of higher education, is primarily based on large-scale quantitative surveys and does not focus on how young alumni choose to make their first gifts to an institution. These studies do not describe how students make decisions to engage in prosocial behavior or their reasons for wanting to make a philanthropic contribution, or choose to volunteer, which are complex phenomena.

Case study methodology, in which a contemporary phenomenon is investigated within its real-life context, was appropriate given my interest in understanding the 'contextual conditions' that instill prosocial behavior among college students (Yin, 2003b). In addition, Yin (2003b)



recommended an explanatory case study when research questions are concerned with *why* an event occurs. Taking this into account, I performed a case study of the UNCF's NPAC. The case study included interviews, observations and content analysis.

In accordance with Stake (1995), I developed, critiqued and adjusted my data collection protocol. I developed my interview protocol based on my review of the literature in order to emphasize the role of theory (Yin, 2003a). The interview protocol focused on collecting information that describes both institutional and organizational culture, interactions among students and available supports for students' fundraising and educational initiatives on the importance of philanthropy from their institutions and the UNCF.

I completed the data collection protocol using multiple sources of data and information, including institutional documents, interviews with students and advisors and observations (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003a). My study included perspectives of key external and internal stakeholders. I carried out a content analysis of primary and secondary documents and interviews as part of this case study in an attempt to understand how prosocial behavior development is encouraged among young Black donors. The primary and secondary source analysis included institutional documents (such as *The Torch*, the NPAC newsletter and NPAC fundraising manuals) and national fundraising reports (such as *Giving USA* and the Voluntary Support for Education annual studies). The primary and secondary source analysis along with informal conversations and observations added context to my study.

I used in-depth interviews in this study, as Marshall and Rossman (1999) recommend this method of inquiry when phenomena are being studied. The interviews included representatives from the following stakeholder groups: 21 one to one-and-a-half hour interviews from students and 4 NPAC advisors from 13 institutions, representing one-third of the UNCF member colleges.

## FINDINGS

Through its programs both on a national and institutional level, NPAC attempts to make significant inroads in instilling, cultivating, and encouraging prosocial behavior among UNCF students. By encouraging philanthropic participation in all forms – monetary and service – to the UNCF, their *alma mater*, and their local communities, NPAC is effectively hoping to create more prosocial alumni. As indicated by the interview responses, these students and alumni understand the benefits of acting in a prosocial way as well as the importance and need to give back to their *alma mater* and the UNCF.

This section enumerates how NPAC's students and advisors increase the likelihood of African-American students at UNCF member institutions engaging in prosocial behaviors generally and specifically to the college fund and their institutions. Strategies employed, in part, include involving students in and having them understand the mission, purpose, and impact of NPAC; harnessing the school spirit of those involved; teaching the importance of and need for philanthropic support of the UNCF and member colleges; and the use of



both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations to involve students as donors and solicitors of others. In addition, external influences such as family and the African-American experience are explored as having influenced students' decisions to participate in NPAC fundraising. Further, I look at how NPAC's promotion of other forms of philanthropy beyond the UNCF increases student prosocial behaviors.

### **Involvement leading to education on the importance of philanthropy**

Students involved in NPAC fundraising efforts are likely to give and participate at a greater rate than their peers in post-graduation campaigns by the UNCF and their individual institutions. A former president of NPAC's executive board interviewed for this study, noted that 'involvement in NPAC opens pre-alumni's eyes to the work of the UNCF and how their education and their institution have benefited from the UNCF' (Personal communication, 10 November 2005). This idea is corroborated by other NPAC executive board members. One student claimed that his involvement not only taught him about the need for fundraising for the UNCF, but it:

[prepares] students to become effective alumni under the guidance of dedicated alumni. It is important that we learn as pre-alumni about our responsibility to give back to our communities and schools, in hopes of allowing other young people to have the same opportunities which we have been privileged enough to receive. (Personal communication, 10 November 2005)

Other students spoke of how the organization prepared them as future alumni connecting them not only to their *alma mater* but to the UNCF.

Further, many NPAC participants and advisors alike acknowledged that the organization teaches students about the financial needs of both the UNCF and the individual Black colleges. The advisors stressed the importance of informing students about the needs prior to graduation. The notion of opening students' eyes to the needs of the UNCF and their *alma mater* before graduation is very important as it is helpful to increase future giving. A former Pre-Alumni Council (PAC) advisor for a college in North Carolina confirmed this:

Students are not aware of how important their dollars or their financial in-kind gifts are to an institution. Once they do become aware, then there is more of an inclination to support. So because so much of the work of the Pre-Alumni Council (PAC) was educating and making those students aware, I'm inclined to believe that they do support at higher levels. Those that are members of the PAC support at higher levels than those who are not members of the Pre-Alumni Council for that very reason. (Personal communication, 13 March 2006)

Advisors consistently remarked that educating students while on campus was easier and more beneficial than starting this education process after they graduated.

One way that NPAC educates students on how important donations are to the UNCF and the institutions is



through highlighting alumni gifts and showing the students how the money is being used. One active Tougaloo College student mentioned the importance of answering questions such as: 'What are they going to do with my money if I donate it? What are they going to do with my computer if I donate it?' (Personal communication, 9 January 2008). He continued,

the Pre-Alumni Council also allows you to do is to see exactly how this money is spent. [For example,] we see that when an alum [*sic*] sends in a check for \$5000 that it is immediately earmarked to give scholarships, book scholarships to students and those kinds of things. So it helps you see that the institution is managing and using donations effectively to benefit students. It's always a good feeling to know that when I send my check in, I don't have to worry about someone mismanaging the funds. (Personal communication, 9 January 2008)

Understanding how donations are used gives students confidence that their donations will be used in a good manner when they donate. This student's concern about mismanaged funds shows that there is still an air of concern about how Black colleges manage their budgets (Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins, 2003).

Beyond teaching about how donations are used, NPAC educates students on how they benefit from the UNCF. At many institutions, participants indicated that the PACs often had informational meetings to disseminate this information. One PAC advisor from Jarvis Christian College

(Hawkins, TX, USA) described the purpose of these meetings to 'inform all of our students of exactly what UNCF is, what Pre-Alumni is, how it is benefiting [them]' (Personal communication, 23 January 2008).

Simply stated, the Council's message is that 'every student benefits from the UNCF' (Personal communication, 10 January 2008). One strategy used is to inform students that even if they are not direct recipients of a UNCF scholarship, they are in essence indirect beneficiaries of UNCF dollars. One national executive board member from Clark Atlanta University mentioned that 'not too many students know what UNCF does for the institution. A lot of the institutions wouldn't be open if it wasn't for UNCF' (Personal communication, 9 January 2008). She went on to say that she sees her job (and NPAC's job) as one of an educator 'illuminating' the benefits of the UNCF. She often tells non-scholarship recipients that, even though they are not receiving a noticeable deduction from their tuition from the UNCF 'they're actually on UNCF scholarships ... you might not actually see that you have maybe \$1000 or \$2500 going towards your account. But sometimes UNCF might be paying the light bill and you'll never know' (Personal communication, 9 January 2008).

Further, a former NPAC president from Bethune-Cookman University who works with a number of young alumni declared: 'I have to say with the people I am interacting with now, it's hard to get the alumni to understand that [alumni giving] concept if they didn't get it while they're in school' (Personal communication, 19 January 2008).



She acknowledged that imparting the importance of giving to the institution is not simple, but has the potential of a large effect on future giving:

We try to educate everyone but some people are going to slip through the cracks. We're trying to start now so then when they do graduate, it's like, 'Oh, you're part of the Pre-Alumni Council? I used to be a part of Pre-Alumni Council. They're calling me for my pledge of \$100. I'm going to use this \$100 but I'm going to include \$150 more.' That's the concept that we're trying to get now – that we are in school so that when we graduate, we're like, 'Okay, we'll give back to our alma mater,' and not think twice about, 'Oh my goodness, why do I have to give \$150? I just graduated!' (Personal communication, 19 January 2008)

This is consistent with many students and advisors views. Throughout interviews they acknowledged that central to NPAC's mission was to encourage students to donate when they are alumni.

Those involved in NPAC educate students beyond describing how students benefit from UNCF dollars; they also teach students how institutions use philanthropic gifts and how university expenses are not covered by tuition alone. A PAC advisor from a North Carolina institution describes these lessons as 'give[ing] them [students] a better understanding as far as when we do ask for an alumni [*sic*] to contribute it doesn't take them off guard or they're not questioning why that we want you to give' (Personal communication,

13 March 2006). He asserts that there is a need for more information about how institutions use funding because 'there's a misconception out there that the university has tons of money to maintain its operational expenses and why should they ask for an alumni [*sic*] to give X, Y, and Z especially if tuition is what it is' (Personal communication, 13 March 2006).

Involvement in fundraising programs such as the annual UNCF campaign, and soliciting alumni for annual campaigns encourages the idea of supporting the UNCF and the institution while the students are still enrolled (NPAC PowerPoint presentation, 2006). These hands-on fundraising experiences gave students an appreciation for private financial support. Involvement in the institution and the UNCF was a theme that emerged from students and advisors. Two specific types of involvement were repeatedly mentioned: first, involvement in acts of philanthropy (both direct fundraising and community service; discussed later), and second, involvement in alumni activities such as hosting homecoming weekends and participation at NAC events. Students and advisors reported that those involved in these programs often had an increased level of school spirit than those in the general student body. It is the bond to their *alma mater* that will have the largest effect on future giving to the institution and the UNCF.

### **The use of benefits to encourage participation**

#### *Networking as an extrinsic motivation*

NPAC uses multiple forms of extrinsic motivation to engage students and

encourage their involvement and participation in fundraising. One such motivation is the opportunity to network with alumni of stature. These opportunities are often at the school level but also extend to the national level with alumni from other UNCF institutions at events. One student commented that these networking opportunities are 'really rewarding experiences' (Personal communication, 9 January 2008). He continued that in his experience, networking also helped the local PACs recruit new members. In the student's words, 'I think when we get fresh persons [first year students] on campus when they see the esteem of the organization' and the people who members get to interact with through programs (Personal communication, 9 January 2008).

Another student mentioned that these networking opportunities have landed her and other students she knows employment. 'The UNCF is working for us and UNCF alumni provide us with a lot of internships and jobs after we graduate ... When we go to conferences as Pre-Alumni Council, the opportunities are there. I have friends, who I went to school with, went to a conference, brought their resumes and they had a job when they got out of school' (Personal Communication, 19 January 2008).

In addition, advisors claimed that having NPAC students interact with alumni as event hosts and in more informal networking situations were very important to the development of the students' likelihood to be active alumni. By interacting with active alumni the students are exposed to the importance of alumni giving and involvement. These interactions further educated students and illuminated the

purpose and importance of alumni giving to both the UNCF and their institutions. By being involved in activities that raise money for programming, the UNCF, or their *alma mater*, students gain understanding on how to achieve these goals and further learn the needs of the UNCF and historically Black institutions.

#### *Appealing to students' intrinsic motivations*

NPAC requires its member councils at each institution to engage in a service project within their campus' home community – often supporting Black organizations (Personal communication, 8 November 2005; NPAC PowerPoint presentation, 2006). The organization suggests that local Pre-Alumni Councils engage in service to 'spread the mission of [*sic*] UNCF and promote unity between your PAC, campus, and community' (Personal communication, 8 November 2005). The NPAC executive board promotes community service programs such as: (1) adopt-a-class, where participants work with a primary or secondary class and implement activities that have educational and/or historical component; (2) health disparities forums, where students choose a health issue that effects their community and invite experts to share information on the topic with fellow students and the local community; and (3) high school visitation days, in which local secondary students are invited to the campus for a college tour and information about the UNCF and other member institutions (Personal communications, 10 November 2005; 10 January 2008; NPAC PowerPoint presentation, 2006).



The high school visitation days project grows out of the goal to 'assist [the National Alumni Council] in its aim to encourage young people to attend College Fund/UNCF member institutions' (Personal communication, 8 November 2005). The community service projects are typically situated within the African-American communities surrounding the HBCUs campuses. They are predicated on the concept of racial uplift. Student respondents in this study spoke about how helping other African Americans, particularly high-school students understand the importance of pursuing higher education, was very important to them.

Many of the interviewed students and PAC advisors mentioned that these service projects were part of the draw of involvement in their campus organizations. Students spoke about how this adds to their student experience and gives them a connection to the community surrounding their campuses. One junior from Tougaloo College said:

Once they [students] join I think what keeps them active members is that they actually see the work that the Pre-Alumni Council is doing in the community outside of the gates. Tougaloo is a gated campus. So outside the gates they see the work that the Pre-Alumni Council is doing. They see the work that they're doing on campus. (Personal communication, 9 January 2008)

By engaging in large community service projects such as these, not only does the PAC promote itself and its mission, but it gives the participants another avenue to teach the members

about the importance of helping others, and more specifically the Black community, continuing the concept of racial uplift that historically has been central to the history of HBCUs.

### **Implications for future alumni giving**

An intended goal of NPAC and its local chapters is to encourage the students to be active alumni with both the UNCF and their *alma mater*. One way to be active is through continued financial support of the institution. Other ways include volunteering time to the institution through helping out with recruitment of new students, giving current students career advice and connecting and soliciting classmates on the institution's behalf.

Understanding that NPAC encourages students to contribute financially to the UNCF and their *alma mater* and through service to their community, when applying the continuity theory (Atchley, 1989), we can expect to observe that post-graduation those involved in NPAC are continually engaged. In speaking with students, alumni and advisors there was a clear belief that NPAC does have a positive effect on future participation with the UNCF and the individual institutions. A former president of the NPAC and Texas College senior believes that alumni that are involved in their PAC are more active in the UNCF and their institution post-graduation. She has seen most involved students become active young alumni in the UNCF NAC and their institution's regional alumni councils. She asserts that one of the reasons for this active transition is the students' observing dynamic alumni involved at activities such as

the annual NAC–NPAC conference (Personal communication, 10 November 2005).

Another NPAC executive board member and student at Clark Atlanta University said that involved students were actively encouraged to join their local NAC chapters upon graduation. ‘We encourage them [graduating students] to join their local NAC, to join their National Alumni Council and their local institution club as far as the networking opportunity’ (Personal communication, 7 January 2008). She went on to say that as she is graduating in the spring, she has already contacted the local chapters to begin making contact, and is using those contacts to help make her decision as to where to go to upon graduation. By using these networking contacts she and others will remain close to the UNCF and her *alma mater* after graduation, thereby increasing the chances remaining involved and of donating in the future.

Beyond the use of transition from the PAC to the Alumni Council as a way to keep new graduates connected to the UNCF, the education of students on the needs of the institution and the college fund seem to have affected students. Student responses to whether or not they were going to participate as alumni were all positive. This could be because students interviewed were often the most active and participants in NPAC. One student stated: ‘If you’re involved with their institution and you generally have a love for your institution then you’re going to be involved as an alum [*sic*]’ (Personal communication, 7 January 2008). Another student saw her continued participation as an obligation, ‘I’m just happy that I was given the opportunity, and I could go

ahead to give back because that was one of my ways of giving back was participating within the Pre-Alumni Council’ (Personal communication, 10 January 2008).

Along these lines, a senior at Tougaloo College claimed that all students at his institution receive the message that the UNCF and the institution need alumni support. However, those involved in the PAC receive a more intense message:

I think that everyone on campus understands the importance of giving back. I think that everyone on campus gets the message that you need to be an active alum [*sic*] once you graduate. But I think that for the members of the Pre-Alumni Council that that message is really intensified and that they are the ones who are expected to push their classmates who get the message, who get the understanding but sometimes need that extra push to do what they know is right to do. The members of the Pre-Alumni Council are the ones who are responsible for helping to give that added push if needed. (Personal communication, 9 January 2008)

This idea of PAC alumni giving an ‘added push’ to their classmates to donate after graduation was corroborated by several advisors that I interviewed. Many institutions use PAC alumni as class agents who solicit classmates in annual and reunion campaigns (Personal communications, various dates). Another Tougaloo student explained that pre-alumni councils

... build up this habit of giving  
... Once they [students] leave



their institutions it's kind of engrained in them that I have to give something, be it my time or money. Pre-Alumni Council more than anything else creates ... a spirit of giving. As intangible as that spirit of giving is, we see very tangible results from it. You'll find that our most active members in the Pre-Alumni Council are active alumni. (Personal Communication, 4 February 2008)

As indicated by the interview responses, the PAC advisors agree. They see young alumni who were involved in the NPAC involved in the institution to a greater extent than other young alumni. An advisor at a Florida institution observed: 'I see them participating because they are still young. Maybe they can't give as much financially and maybe not even at all but they do help us as resources and volunteering' (Personal communication, 8 January 2008).

Although all of those interviewed claimed that NPAC participation was effective at influencing future philanthropic behavior and increased the likelihood of those involved to be active alumni, there were no specific assessment methods in place that could measure the level of activity of those students that were involved in the organization after they entered the alumni population.

All student participants said that they planned to continue their involvement after graduation, including giving monetarily to the UNCF and their *alma maters*. The vast majority of the students interviewed said that they would 'give back' as alumni for several reasons: (1) out of gratitude to the

institution and the UNCF; (2) to help future students like themselves; (3) out of institutional pride or school spirit; and (4) because they have a deeper understanding of the needs of the their institution and UNCF. It should be noted that there is significance to the use of the words 'give back' rather than just 'give' to the institution or UNCF. This is a form of intrinsic motivation where 'giving back' shows that students believe that their donations are in response to receiving something intangible from the institution and UNCF, that there is a mutually beneficial relationship, rather than the student only giving of themselves in a one-way transaction. Within the fundraising literature the most effective communications are considered to be two-way symmetrical, where the institution and donor each feel as though they have given something to one another, as is in this case (Kelly, 1991, 1995a, b; 1998; Alessandrini, 1998; Grunig *et al*, 2002). Of note, Tindall (2007) found the use of two-way symmetrical fundraising communications not as prevalent at public HBCUs as other communication models.

## DISCUSSION

NPAC is a model organization in terms of socializing students to increase the likelihood of prosocial behaviors. As with any organization, there are opportunities for improvement and new strides that can be taken. However, NPAC's current practices lend themselves to understanding how young African Americans can be encouraged to engage in prosocial behavior including acting philanthropically and to be instilled with a culture of current and



future giving to the UNCF as well as their *alma mater*.

NPAC successfully combines students' connection to African-American communities, and desire for racial uplift with education about philanthropy and the importance of giving to the UNCF and Black colleges – which results in students' increased propensity for prosocial behavior. Through a number of programs, initiated both by classmates and advisors, students are given the skills to fundraise among fellow students, alumni and their local community for the college fund. The use of specific extrinsic and intrinsic motivations that are appropriate for African-American college-aged students adds to NPAC's success at instilling a culture of giving in the organization's participants.

The NPAC successfully engages students in its mission – to create active supporters of the UNCF – by appealing to students in the giving process in a way that: (1) is correct for their developmental stage and age group, using a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations; (2) educates student on being philanthropic and the need for personal and alumni support of the UNCF and Black colleges; and (3) acknowledges the African-American experience, using messages of racial and community uplift in their solicitations. My study was guided by the theory that prosocial behaviors can be learned and enhanced as a person develops (Eisenberg, 1982; Rushton, 1982; Schroeder *et al*, 1995).

### **Encouraging other forms of philanthropy**

According to interview participants, the importance and actions of racial uplift extended beyond scholarships

into the local community. As discussed earlier, NPAC encourages other forms of philanthropy that lead to an increased likelihood of giving to the UNCF and the student's *alma mater*. Rushton (1982) found that according to social learning theory, students involved in a group that encourages various forms of philanthropy (monetary, service and so on) have an increased socialization to the organization and stronger identity. As a result, their prosocial behaviors are increased. Further, Kang (2005) suggests that participating in other forms of philanthropy, such as donating time through community service while a student, has a positive effect on future giving.

My study adds to the understanding that prosocial behaviors can be supported and further developed. Advisors and students alike asserted that NPAC creates an environment where prosocial behaviors are encouraged through service and giving. Schervish (1993) would consider this a community of participation. NPAC expands this community of participation beyond the organization. Traditionally, a community of participation within a philanthropic context is found where greater education and understanding of the organization promote greater contributions and support. The fact that NPAC encourages service to external organizations – mostly within the African-American communities – while having the mission to enhance giving to the UNCF is significant. Most college and universities, like other non-profits, do not encourage external support of other organizations for fear that it might reduce their institution's donations.



NPAC participants interviewed mentioned their education about the UNCF's needs and their community service as reasons why they plan to remain involved with the college fund and their *alma mater* after graduation. The local community service projects that NPAC participants create or participate in demonstrate a commitment to racial uplift. Little is known about the millennial generation's giving patterns and tendencies. However, Oates (2004) observed that this generation volunteers at a greater rate than generation X – the generation that preceded them. Participants in my study certainly see the importance of and give generously of their time through volunteer service.

### **The use of benefits to encourage participation**

Further, my study adds to our understanding of how youth, specifically African Americans in the millennial generation, act in a prosocial manner. As a person matures, his/her motivations to act in a prosocial manner develop (Cialdini and Kenrick, 1976; Rosenhan, 1978; Miley, 1980; Bar-Tal, 1982; Eisenberg, 1982; Kohlberg, 1985; Piliavin and Charng, 1990; Schroeder *et al*, 1995). College-aged young adults are at a stage in their development where intrinsic motivations to help others in an altruistic way are beginning to develop while extrinsic motivations – such as peer approval and recognition with gifts and awards – are still important (Piliavin and Charng, 1990). Interviews with students and PAC advisors revealed a number of extrinsic motivations that encouraged student involvement in NPAC, the UNCF and their *alma mater*. These

extrinsic motivations included networking with prominent alumni and campus leadership as well as incentives and rewards, such as additional scholarships and recognition. Intrinsic motivations included wanting to give back to the UNCF and their *alma mater* for what was provided for them, helping other students who will come after them, and supporting the African-American communities – all of which can be viewed as acts of racial and community uplift. Although a number of these motivations are similar to the donor motivations found by other researchers, such as networking, recognition and some aspects of reciprocity, others are not (Pickett, 1986; Pezzulo and Brittingham, 1993; Kelly, 1998; Friedmann, 2003). For example, NPAC's use of community service, scholarship and fundraising programs, as well as external community involvement, such as working with local churches and community organizations are unique to this research.

NPAC uses intrinsic motivations, such as the ability to give future students the possibility to attend college through scholarship donations to encourage involvement. Many of NPAC's intrinsic motivations are predicated on racial and community uplift. Students' use of racial and community uplift to engage each other in acts of philanthropy are apparent throughout NPAC. Local community service projects are prime examples of NPAC students wanting to further the Black communities in the United States of America and abroad.

### **Involvement leading to education on the importance of philanthropy**

In terms of promoting giving and prosocial behavior, the importance of

understanding the institution and its needs cannot be underestimated. Cheryl Hall-Russell and Robert Kasberg (1997) suggest that African Americans prefer to 'make donations on a situational and personal basis, rather than an abstract or organizational level' (p. 4). In other words, giving to one's *alma mater* or the UNCF just because these institutions are deemed important is often not enough to motivate African Americans to donate. A personal connection and understanding of why the money is needed and how it is going to be used is necessary. According to my research, NPAC addresses Hall-Russell and Kasberg's finding by educating students on how they have benefited from the UNCF and its alumni support. Campus-level PAC's use of events such as 'PAC awareness week,' open meetings and educational programs are some examples of this type of education.

NPAC educates participants on the importance of philanthropy to the UNCF and the member colleges through direct instruction and programs, by showing how their gifts, fundraising efforts and volunteering make a difference. This education is an important investment in future giving and increased prosocial behavior. In her work at public predominately White institutions, Friedmann (2003) notes that student alumni association advisors believe that 'students involved in their organizations develop greater prosocial behavior and increased intrinsic motivation toward their institutions as alumni compared to members of the general student population' (p. 80). By participating in fundraising activities while in school, students 'have a greater awareness and

understanding of the significance of private giving to the institutions' than their peers (Friedmann, 2003, p. 80). In addition, Friedmann found that volunteering for one's *alma mater* is a form of prosocial behavior that can lead to monetary gifts in the future. As mentioned earlier, NPAC not only encourages volunteering for the institution and the UNCF, but also promotes student volunteerism in the local community.

Students interviewed for this study also noted that they learned how donations were spent on the national and institutional levels through their involvement in the UNCF. According to the participants, this was helpful when deciding to solicit others and when choosing to make their own donations. Concern about how Black colleges spend their funds is not unexpected. This concern is historically prevalent and perpetuated by the media (Gasman, 2007). By giving students better understanding and confidence about how historically Black institutions manage donations, NPAC is combating the enduring stereotypes and racist perceptions of Black colleges.

### **Implications for future philanthropic participation**

As seen in the literature as well as the interview responses, involvement in the NPAC has implications on future giving. Building upon Atchley's (1989) continuity theory, Lindahl and Winship (1992) and Okunade and Justice (1991) have found that past giving behaviors are correlated with current and future giving practices. These theories suggest that by enhancing students' prosocial behavior through instilling a culture of



philanthropy, colleges can establish relationships that will continue well after graduation. Research shows that a young alumnus/na's giving, even in small amounts, has the potential to promote lifetime giving (Okunade and Justice, 1991; Lindahl and Winship, 1992; Nayman *et al.*, 1993; Monks, 2003).

During the interviews, NPAC participants repeatedly mentioned their intentions to remain involved in both the UNCF and their *alma mater*. Students often noted that they knew NPAC's mission of creating active alumni who will donate after graduation. NPAC advisors, typically development officers, took this one level further. In their statements advisors used words such as 'responsibility' and 'expected,' when referring to an alumnus/na's giving to the UNCF and his/her *alma mater*. These words are much more poignant than I heard from student participants. This type of rhetoric is commonplace among advancement officers across higher education (Worth, 2002). As mentioned, while students did not use these exact words, it was clear from their intonation and discussion of the importance of giving to the UNCF and their *alma mater* that they had a shared understanding of this 'responsibility.'

NPAC's use of students' bond to their *alma mater*, or school spirit, also has a significant effect on current and future giving. By connecting the giving process to the UNCF and what their institution has done for them, as well as their family (if they are legacies), participants are more likely to give their time and money. Although NPAC does a good job educating students about the need for

and role of funds donated to UNCF and their institutions, the actual act of solicitation may enhance their understanding of the purpose of fundraising. When fundraising for a specific project wherein they can view the results of their efforts, students are able to see what can be accomplished with proper funding. This knowledge can translate into students' understanding the needs of the institution in a more practical sense and thereby increase their likelihood to give and fulfill their 'responsibility' as alumni.

If students understand this 'responsibility,' giving will typically follow, as long as their *alma mater* and the UNCF remains in contact and continues to cultivate young alumni. Too often Black colleges do not follow through with their alumni by remaining in touch, maintaining a current database of addresses, or informing them of positive things happening on campus and the achievements of fellow alumni (Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins, 2003). Though NPAC is a great cultivation tool for students, it is only a beginning, which must be built upon in order to increase alumni giving.

In keeping with the literature, my study revealed that after graduation, few relationship building techniques are continued by the UNCF or the individual institutions. This finding is not surprising, as Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins (2003) have shown that HBCU advancement offices are often small and do not have the means to track alumni giving and involvement patterns in a highly sophisticated way. This finding is also consistent with Anita Friedmann's (2003) study of student-alumni

associations at predominantly White public institutions, which showed that little cultivation of student-alumni association participants at her study's institutions after graduation. One difference between my findings and Friedmann's study is that NPAC participants are often informally encouraged to take a role in the national or local alumni councils throughout the country after they graduate.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

My research on NPAC of the UNCF has broadened our understanding of how African Americans in the millennial generation think about and choose to act philanthropically and the role that Black colleges play in the cultivation of these behaviors. NPAC's programs use both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations that stimulate college students to respond with participation as both donors and fundraisers. They motivate students with gifts and opportunities that are appropriate for the developmental stage of college students. Further, the use of messages and opportunities to participate in racial and community uplift adds to NPAC's success and the participants' desires to be involved. NPAC continually connects their work to the African-American experience. In addition, I found NPAC's education of students on the importance of giving and needs of the UNCF and the member colleges to be vital in students' decisions to be involved as donors and fundraisers. This study is supported by and advances our understanding of the theoretical literature surrounding philanthropy, fundraising and prosocial behaviors.

Understanding the theories behind prosocial behavior development, donor motivations and continuity theory illuminate the need for organizations such as NPAC. Although it does not directly benefit the UNCF or the institution NPAC's efforts to engage students in the planning and service of projects that help communities instills a culture of prosocial behavior that will likely result in an increase propensity to give time or money to the UNCF or their *alma mater*.

This case study has increased our understanding of how African Americans of the millennial generation think about and participate in prosocial behaviors, including participation in traditional philanthropy and fundraising for the UNCF and their *alma maters*. My case study shows that NPAC is successful at cultivating a culture of giving among its members that encourages prosocial behavior. As seen in my participants' interview responses, the current generation of African-American students is motivated to give by actions of racial and community uplift. The study reveals the importance of such actions, as students frequently expressed interest in volunteer work and service to the community. Participants were inspired to such action by extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, including networking opportunities as well as knowing that they are helping others receive a college education.

As HBCUs seek to enhance young alumni giving, there is much that can be learned from the NPAC model. By engaging students in projects and activities that not only result in direct fundraising for the UNCF and their institution but allows students to





develop and enhance their prosocial and philanthropic nature, NPAC is cultivating a culture of giving that can result in an increased participation in fundraising campaigns on both the college fund and institutional levels. However, NPAC is also enhancing its participants' philanthropic propensity in general, thereby adding to and improving society.

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