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The 2020 Presidential Election: An Examination of the Opinion Leadership of Divine-9 Sororities & Fraternities

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This textual analysis of Facebook and Instagram posts examines the content that members of Divine 9 organizations shared during the 2020 presidential race in support of the Joe Biden-Kamala Harris ticket. We conclude Black Greek members served as opinion leaders who used social media effectively to shift the focus away from historically racist and sexist narratives that framed Harris negatively. She became the first Black, South Asian American, and female to serve as the Vice President of the United States. This study illustrates how scholars may use CRT and Black feminism to center women of color in critical analyses of social media content.

Keywords: Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Theory, opinion leaders, two-step flow, Kamala Harris, Joe Biden, Social Media, Divine Nine, 2020 Political Campaign

Divine Nine became a household phrase after the election of former Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA) to the post of U.S. Vice President in 2020. As the running mate of former Vice President Joe Biden, Harris garnered support from members of the Divine Nine—which includes five Black fraternities and four sororities. During her nomination acceptance speech, Harris mentioned her “chosen” family: “Family is my beloved Alpha Kappa Alpha, our Divine Nine and my Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) brothers and sisters” (Jones, 2020).

Previous articles on the Divine Nine have focused on the history and significance of the organizations (e.g., Dowe, 2020; Greyerbiehl & Mitchell, 2014; Parks et. al, 2014; Ross, 2000). Recently, Wilson (2021) explored membership in Black Greek sororities and impact on career advancement. Black (2021) examined Greek fraternity and sorority members' viewpoints on how membership influenced their leadership and career development. Other studies have examined Black

women's political and career ambition and membership in the Divine Nine, formally known as the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) (e.g., Black, 2021; Brown et. al, 2022; Dowe, 2020; Sapiro, 2022; Wilson, 2021).

Still other articles consider the perspectives of Black, female politicians (Brown et. al., 2022; Harris, 2019; Zurbriggen & Vallergera, 2022). Harris (2019) concluded the introduction of Black feminist concepts in political movements has had an impact on the political shifts of the past seven years, including the Black Lives Matter movement. Zurbriggen & Vallergera (2022) examined gender stereotypes in political cartoons, concluding those that focused on race were more common in cartoons about Harris and Elizabeth Warren than their counterparts.

While these studies provide history and context about Black Greek organizations and an overview of women in politics, few examine political framing by Divine Nine members. To address this gap in the literature, we use both Critical Race and Black Feminist theories to examine the opinion leadership of Divine Nine members during the 2020 campaign. The members used social media to counter the negative narratives of Harris that painted her as incapable of serving as U.S. vice president.

First, we examine the literature on Black feminism, CRT, the two-step flow of information and its role in opinion leadership. Then, we explore the history of Divine Nine organizations, their role in social justice and Harris' political career. Lastly, we offer a textual analysis of the themes that surfaced in Instagram and Facebook posts regarding Harris and the 2020 election.

Scholars must continue to study media representations and cultural narratives to assess their potential to depict women of color negatively. Stereotypes that lead to instances of systematic racism are detrimental to the success of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC)—often preventing them from reaching their full potential. Opinion leaders have the power to change narratives (Katz, 1957; DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1976). In this case, the themes that surfaced in the content of Divine Nine Instagram and Facebook posts helped change the cultural narratives of Harris.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical race and Black feminist theories work under the assumption that scholars must disrupt racist narratives and expose how dominance negatively affects media representations. CRT emerged as an outgrowth of the civil rights tradition and the Critical Legal Studies movement that advanced an understanding of law as deeply connected to lived experiences and social power. CRT scholars argue that social relations are fundamentally race-related due to legal, social and historical traditions. Common CRT tenets such as “colorblindness doesn't exist;” and the “permanence of racism” (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1991) may be used to analyze social media platforms.

Crenshaw (1989) identified Black women as the starting point of her research, asserting that when the group is spotlighted, it becomes “more apparent how dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis” (p. 139). In her 1989 book, Crenshaw describes intersectionality using employment discrimination-based lawsuits to illustrate how Black women's complaints are overlooked because they are discriminated against based on gender and race. The Combahee River Collective (1977) offers this statement regarding representations of Black women: www.circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html.

Merely naming the pejorative stereotypes attributed to Black women (e.g., mammy, matriarch, Sapphire, whore, bulldagger), let alone cataloguing the cruel, often murderous, treatment we

receive, indicates how little value has been placed upon our lives during four centuries of bondage in the Western hemisphere. ‘We realize that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation are us.

Unlike many other methodologies, CRT and Black feminist theories have an activist element. They focus on how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, and on why there is a need to encourage its citizens to begin a process of change.

As an extension of Black feminist theory, recent studies use an intersectional approach to question how outlets, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, change the way people think about women. Bailey (2021) explores how Black women have used social media platforms to confront misogyny in several courageous efforts to combat depictions of them as more ugly, deficient, hyper-sexual, and unhealthy than their non-Black counterparts. Focusing on queer and trans Black women, the article shows us the importance of carving out digital spaces where communities promote Black women’s remarkable efforts to disrupt mainstream narratives and reclaim their lives.

Continuing this vein of research, Childs (2022) examined how Black women use Instagram and YouTube in the quest to contest anti-Blackness and colorism in the beauty industry. Specifically, she examined how prominent Black beauty influencers and everyday Black women responded to the cosmetic brand, Beautyblender, and their lack of foundation shades in the initial release of their first foundation. She concluded social media platforms give Black women the ability to practice traditional Black feminist traditions such as self-definition and self-empowerment.

Divine Nine History and Opinion Leadership

Divine Nine organizations formed in the early 20th century when most Black people attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) for a college degree and were not allowed to join similar social organizations on Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) campuses (Jones, 2020). Table 1 indicates two of the major Black fraternities were started at PWIs (Cornell and Indiana University), and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority was started at Butler University in Indiana. At HBCUs and the PWIs, Black students developed fraternities and sororities to plan and support programming that emphasizes social justice, civic engagement, community service and networking opportunities.

Table 1. Divine Nine Organizations

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity	Founded 1906	Cornell University
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority	Founded 1908	Howard University
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity	Founded 1911	Indiana University
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity	Founded 1911	Howard University
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority	Founded 1913	Howard University
Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity	Founded 1914	Howard University
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority	Founded 1920	Howard University
Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority	Founded 1922	Butler University
Iota Phi Theta Fraternity	Founded 1963	Morgan State University

Black sororities and fraternities recognize that some of the earliest civilizations and centers of learning originated in Africa and the Middle East, and then were imitated in Greece (Owens, 2020). In his foundational work on the Black bourgeoisie, Frazier (1962) noted that the creation of Divine Nine organizations was an act of social resistance—around the same time as the growing Black middle class began to take shape in the late early to mid-20th century. Political actors both in and outside of Black

communities look to Black Greek organizations for leadership on social justice issues. As one member reflected in an online forum, “it’s a funny thing, when it comes to Black Greeks... We are demonized for our pledging and hazing, even called “educated gangs,” and then hailed as heroes of the Civil Rights Movement and praised for our community service and social-humanitarian programs today” (Hughey, 2008, p. 528).

Harris (2021) discusses the role of Black Greek organizations in society in her book that highlights how Harris and many HBCU alums become civic leaders. The author notes that sororities provide a platform for individuals to improve their leadership skills. From women’s equality work during the suffragette movement to social justice activism during the civil rights era to impactful inner-city mentoring programs in the 1990s, members of Black Greek organizations share a proud tradition of friendship and service (Ryan, 2020). As an integral part of college campuses, they have been a catalyst for providing social, civic, and political leadership opportunities to youth at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

Support for educational endeavors has been a strong goal for members of the Divine Nine. Millions of dollars have been raised for scholarships to help college students via the United Negro College Fund and other educational aspirations over the years. The Ivy Reading AKAdemy is an early literacy program targeting kindergarten students through grade (Parks, 2008). Voter education and empowerment have been central to the Divine Nine’s mission since its inception (Stewart, 2014). Members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., were among the only Black women to participate in the women’s suffrage march in 1913 (Brown, Parks & Phillips, 2012). After the civil war, sororities and fraternities were among several groups and movements that attempted to organize and bring together Black people around common causes (Parks et al., 2014).

Harris is not the only politician to hold membership in one of the Divine Nine groups. Civic leaders past and present with ties to BGLOs (Black Greek Letter Organizations) include Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Septima Clark, Ben Crump, Keisha Lance Bottoms, Benjamin Jealous, Mary McLeod Bethune, Bobby Rush, Nina Turner, and John Lewis.

Delta Sigma Theta member Shirley Chisholm was the first Black woman to seek the presidential nomination of a major political party (Democrat). Four years before her 1972 presidential campaign, Chisholm became the first Black woman to be elected to Congress. Chisholm, who died in 2005, broke barriers and influenced change throughout her career. She used the motto “unbought and unbosser,” which she would also name her 1970 autobiography (Shirley Chisholm: Facts About Her Trailblazing Career, n.d.). She was the first Black and first woman to deliver the keynote address at the 1976 Democratic National Convention. Charlotta Bass was the first Black woman to run for vice president in the United States in the 1952. The South Carolina native, born in 1874, ran on the Progressive Party ticket (Caldera, 2020).

Harris’ win was a feather in the cap of all women. It took a century after American women won the right to vote for one of them to be elected Vice President of the U.S. The 2020 general election was unprecedented (Cubit, 2020). She wore a white suit in honor of the 100th anniversary of the suffrage amendment and acknowledged that the choice was symbolic to highlight the centenary year of women’s suffrage in the U.S.

Race and gender were at the forefront of Harris’ victory speech. She reclaimed America as “our nation - our Black, Asian, female nation,” praising “all the women who worked to secure and protect the right to vote for over a century,” She proclaimed, “while I may be the first woman in this office, I won’t be the last. Because every little girl watching tonight sees that this is a country of possibilities” (PBS, 2020).

Harris’s education at Howard University and participation in Black Greek life as a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., are important credentials that proved invaluable in her journey to the White House (Harper, 2020). To highlight her solidarity with women of color, Harris used the same advertisement color scheme as Shirley Chisholm. This was an intentional effort to rally the support of the more than 825,000 college-educated women in the Divine Nine around the world.

Harris' Media Coverage During the 2020 Election

Even with Harris' multitude of accolades, media content often focused on her personal life rather than her political background (Coles & Pasek, 2020). Almost a quarter of her coverage included at least one racist or sexist stereotype (Harris, 2019). Gender stereotypes framed her as inauthentic, ambitious, while racial frames depicted her as violent, angry and unprofessional (Nee, 2022; Parry-Giles, 2021). In August 2020, then-President Donald Trump labeled her "nasty," "mad," and "angry" (Clifton, 2020, para 1). Other media content focused on her personal life and personality rather than her political background and skills as a politician (Nee, 2022; Clifton, 2020; Parry-Giles, 2021).

Most prominently, intersectional stereotypes—based on gender and race—framed her as not Black enough and sexually promiscuous (Winfrey & Carlin, 2023). Within the first week that Harris was named to the Democratic ticket in 2020, posts highlighted her relationship with Willie Brown, the former San Francisco mayor. Tumulty et al. (2020) noted posts accused Harris of sleeping her way into "powerful political jobs" (para. 7). The hashtag #heelsupharris appeared 35,479 times in Twitter posts (Tumulty et al., 2020).

Critics challenged whether she was eligible to hold the U.S. vice presidency office, since her parents were born in Jamaica and India (Nee, 2022). The coverage was akin to the scrutiny former president Barack Obama received during his stint as U.S. President. Other posts used the tragic mulatto trope to demonstrate pity for Harris, who they claimed was not really Black or Indian. This content conjured memories of the media coverage Obama received during his role as president. He, too, was framed as trying hard to succeed but always falling short—a key feature of the "tragic mulatto" stereotype.

During the October 2020 vice presidential debate, individuals attacked Harris' performance focusing on her facial expressions rather than the points she made as a debater (Waymer & Hill, 2023). Critics highlighted what they called "mom" like facial expressions and raised concerns about mansplaining. Others described her facial expressions as sassy and a display of the angry Black woman trope. They even blamed her for the fly that landed on Mike Pence, her opponent's forehead.

Throughout the 2020 presidential campaign, Harris bounced back by resisting racist and sexist commentary about her character. She "remained true" to her Black identity, personality, and unique style—wearing either Chuck Taylors or heels, pantsuits, and pearls (Harris, 2020, p.69). "She took up space in a consequential race in a new and powerful way. Instead of going away to lick her wounds, she transformed and emerged more powerful and more focused. Now as vice president, she is acquiring a reputation as the administration official most interested in building authentic and deep ties" (Ryan, 2020, p. 69).

Social Media and Opinion Leaders

Black fraternities and sororities and their alumni (Daniels, 2020) are arguably the most powerful organizations in the Black community. Until recently, they've largely been an untapped resource for presidential administrations and candidates hoping to connect with Black constituents.

While this study does not explicitly measure whether Facebook posts from Divine Nine organizations directly influence the political choices and behavior of audiences, it is still important to acknowledge the two-step flow of information theory as a theoretical framework in this analysis. The two-step flow of information theory posits media influences are filtered through "opinion leaders" before trickling down to the masses (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Thus, a two-part process of information transmission takes place.

Lazarsfeld et al. (1948) described opinion leaders as individuals with above average political engagement and media consumption who are spread across all levels of society and occupations. Because of their media use and high political interest, they are sought out for their advice and opinion on political topics (Katz, 1957; DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1976).

Zheng, Song, & Zhang (2022) note the development of Internet technology and social media have transformed how traditional opinion leaders communicate. They have gradually played a more diversified role in the online network. They discovered the effect of opinion leaders is extensive and the public find network opinion leaders easier to trust. “Although opinion leaders can easily gain the trust of the audience, they will also easily lose their influence in the audience owing to the improper words and deeds (Zheng, et al., p. 892).” They add “opinion leaders can not only play a positive role, but also cause negative effects (e.g., group polarization and information cocoon).”

Alexandre, Jai-sung Yoo, & Murthy (2022) concluded during Trump’s first days in office, Twitter-based opinion leaders were either media outlets/journalists with a left-center bias or social bots—providing evidence of the continued relevance of studying media sources on social media as opinion leaders.

In this study, we hypothesized Divine Nine organizations served as the opinion leaders during the 2020 presidential campaign. Their experience in political action and community leadership positioned them to not only pass along political information but to also offer their “interpretations” of that information (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1976, p. 212).

Scholars have noted that membership in a sorority undoubtedly helped propel the Harris and Biden to success (Morain, 2022; Dolan & Swers, 2021). With 1,026 chapters and 300,000 members, the AKA sorority is a large group. It was reinforced by other members of Black fraternities and sororities, which has more than 2.5 million members worldwide, including some of the most influential Black people in the country. The groups mobilized both formally and informally in person and on social media during the 2020 campaign period at the local, regional, and national levels (Janes, 2020). They shared content on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Realizing the Divine Nine’s dedication and influence, the Biden Administration decided to meet with Divine Nine leadership monthly to discuss policy proposals that affect Black communities (Daniels, 2021). In addition to Harris, Biden tapped other members of the Divine Nine in an administration that includes Housing and Urban Development Secretary Marcia Fudge, and House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn. Keisha Lance Bottoms, the former Atlanta mayor, now serves as a senior adviser for public engagement to U.S. President Joe Biden. (See Appendix B for a list of 10 prominent members of each of the Divine Nine) (Ross, 2000).

Research Questions

Social media has been noted for its dual ability to share unfiltered information and to respond to it with counter narratives. During the 2020 presidential campaign cycle, memes shared on social media platforms served as a means for members of marginalized groups to speak up and address their concerns in a public forum. As Kendall (2020) notes: “It’s true that social media has made it easier to see inflamed emotions. Facebook and Twitter are places where the marginalized can’t be silenced as easily. It’s a place where attracting attention to social ills is easier if solutions aren’t necessarily forthcoming” (Kendall, 2020, p. 253).

Building on this extensive review of the literature, we address the following questions:

RQ₁: How did members of the Divine Nine use social media to share messages during the 2020 U.S. presidential election?

RQ₂: What themes were prominent in Divine Nine-election-themed Instagram and Facebook posts?

RQ₃: How did members of the Divine Nine change the narratives used to frame a Black, female politician during her bid for U.S. vice president?

We extend the CRT and Black feminist literature with a textual analysis of Divine Nine produced Harris-themed memes. Online conversations fostered by Greek organizations influenced popular culture and highlighted the importance of supporting the movement. The success of social

media efforts in political campaigning is an example of changing social norms and acceptance of a campaign led by Greek digital communities. Social media was an effective storytelling tool used to promote positive narratives and help elect Harris.

METHODS

Stereotypes and counter-narratives are two central themes of interest in this textual analysis. Mainstream media offered traditional framing of Harris that depicted her using both racial and gendered stereotypes. Divine 9 members offered alternative messages. Scholars have moved beyond examining stereotypes of Black people and take into consideration the contextual and interactive elements of culture, race, class, and gender as well as steps that may be taken to improve circumstances (Thomas, 2004). Theorists have called for new research to focus on the racism experienced by Black women in various realms, including health, employment, and educational settings.

CRT and intersectionality offered a dual lens for us to investigate the nuances of Harris' media coverage (Stewart, 2019). Black feminist theory gave us the tools necessary to examine the power dynamics at play for Harris as a Black woman, while CRT methodology allowed us to examine underlying ideologies of systemic racism (Crenshaw, 1991). Harris' experiences cannot be explained with separate examinations of her race or gender; therefore, we used an intersectional approach to examine her social media framing during her historic 2020 election.

We collected our sample in November 2022, using the keywords "Divine Nine," and "2020 presidential election." It included five videos and 55 images from Instagram and approximately 550 Facebook posts. Instagram and Facebook were of interest for our study because people used social media content to help share information about politics.

Next, we used a textual analysis to find the most prominent themes in our sample using a CRT and intersectional lens. Henry (2017) notes the trend in scholarship that deviates from intersectionality's original intent to spotlight Black women. The article questions the academy's use of the concept in unexpected and questionable ways that highlight dominant groups, such as male military officers. She offers some cautionary methods for rethinking militaries, masculinities, and feminist theories. Offering similar concerns, Nash (2016) examined the large body of feminist work on intersectionality and called for a return to the 'inaugural' intersectional texts—namely Crenshaw's two articles (1989, 1991). Heeding these warnings, recently there has been a call for intersectional scholars to recenter their research on Black women.

Textual analyses often outline culture as a narrative or story-telling process in which texts or cultural artifacts consciously or unconsciously link themselves to larger stories in society. To identify key visual and textual themes, we used constant comparative analysis (Eaves, 2001) and openly coded images and text posted on Facebook and Instagram following the 2020 presidential election (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

This method of analysis helped us characterize the Harris-themed content that Divine 9 organizations shared during the 2020 Presidential election.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Divine Nine members collaborated for a common cause during the 2020 election period. Most of the Facebook and Instagram posts in our sample focused on the following themes: programming, calls to action and voter registration. Messages were consistent in branding the respective organizations to offer an instant method of identification. Signature colors and crests offered audiences a method of instant identification of the Divine Nine organizations and offered an indication of the solidarity between the nine groups in their efforts to encourage people to vote.

Calls to action encouraged people to sign petitions, get out the vote, and/or to come together as one voice. Notably, Black History month events highlighted the importance of voting. One event co-sponsored by the Lexington, Kentucky, chapter of the NAACP and Delta Sigma Theta, Inc., focused on registering friends and relatives. Similarly, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority sponsored a Black History

Month event titled, “The Divine Nine and When We All Vote.” The event highlighted the sorority’s history in voting and offered a platform for discussing how its members could get involved in the 2020 election.

The emphasis on aligning with historic figures like Dr. Martin L. King Jr. was evident. Event flyers often featured his image or famous quotes. The Steve Harvey FM Facebook page, which has 1.9 million followers, used Dr. King’s likeness on a poster for an event co-sponsored with a Divine-9 organization. Other groups featured Shirley Chisholm and other prominent female leaders as well to highlight the importance of supporting Harris.

Divine Nine organizations collaborated with other organizations to garner support for Harris. For example, the Atlanta Greek Picnic Weekend, which began hosting events in 2004, sponsored a special election-themed Atlanta Greek Picnic to emphasize the importance of voting. Divine 9 groups united with the When We All Vote, an organization Michelle Obama founded, sponsored in the effort to register new voters and to advance civic education.

Greek members continued to post content after Harris was elected. Posts cautioned individuals to be careful because Harris has broken the glass ceiling, and there is glass is everywhere. Voter rights was one of the major issues of the 2022 midterm elections. In January 2022, as members of the Divine Nine celebrated their anniversaries, the organizations showed their support for voter rights in the tradition of civil rights luminaries that were part of the organizations like John Lewis (Phi Beta Sigma) Dorothy Height (Delta Sigma Theta) and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Alpha Phi Alpha).

In April 2022, the NPHC released a collective statement denouncing the wave of state voter suppression legislation in which Republican-led legislatures began chipping away at voting rights in the aftermath of former president Trump’s 2020 election defeat. Several of those states, including Georgia and Arizona, enacted restrictive voting laws targeting voters of color in time for the 2022 midterm elections.

Stroll to the Poll

Other posts promoted strolling to the polls, wearing Chucks & pearls and uniting visually to support Harris. A member of the AKA sorority organized the Stroll to the Polls initiative to encourage political activism and to bring Divine 9 members together. Maisha Land, the owner of the Gems of Georgia Dance Studio in Southwest Atlanta, is the organizer. She began with a handful of women participating, then grew into thousands after she united her own AKA sorority sisters with members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc., and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc.

Whether alone or in a group, Divine 9 sorority members donned T-shirts, pearls and sneakers and shared photos of themselves on social media strolling to the poll. After weeks of practice, the event went viral, and a series of images and videos appeared online. Social media posts succeeded in attracting participation and interest in supporting Harris. Mainstream news media covered the initiative, and the success of the Stroll to the Polls initiative illustrated unity among Greek sororities.

Because of the publicity surrounding the Stroll to the Poll initiative and others like it, Black women were credited with helping save Biden's presidential hopes, Land said.

Virtual Events

Virtual technology allowed Greek members from different geographic locations to unite. Divine 9 members used Zoom, Instagram Live and other online platforms to support Harris. Divine Nine leaders and politicians discussed the Biden-Harris ticket and the key role women play in their communities and civic action programs sponsored by Divine Nine sororities.

Other topics included how its members are actively engaged in elections and getting people to vote. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority sponsored a virtual event titled, “When We All Vote,” to discuss civic engagement, the key role women play in the community, and how members of the sorority are planning for the midterm elections. Similarly, award-winning journalist Sybil Wilkes collaborated with Divine 9 members to sponsor a roundtable talk on Black Greek leadership and politics. The virtual event

highlighted the Divine Nine's 45-day election season strategy and focused on harnessing the group's collective influence to inform, empower, and activate the Black community to vote.

Alpha members sponsored virtual events with fellow Divine Nine organizations and civil rights groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League to advocate for voting rights at state legislatures across the nation. Dr. Willis L. Lonzer, III, general president of Alpha Phi Alpha, helped draft a statement condemning GOP voter suppression legislation. Other events included the State of the Black Vote IG Live series.

CONCLUSION

This study of Instagram and Facebook posts shared during the 2020 election campaign provides insight into the role that Divine Nine members played in the election of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. It examines how social media helped change the narratives of the framing of a Black woman during the 2020 election. Divine Nine sororities and fraternities shifted the focus away from historically racist and sexist narratives that framed Harris in a negative manner and emphasized the importance of voting, strolling to the polls and her strong HBCU ties.

Divine 9 groups sponsored events, shared calls to action and educated key publics about the importance of voting. Facebook and Instagram posts framed Harris more positively, usurping negative cultural narratives that deemed Harris unsuitable for U.S. vice president.

Ryan (2020) notes the urgency felt by Black women, in general, and their ability to serve as opinion leaders in their communities: "For the Black vote, we're (Black women) the ones who mobilize because we don't just go on our own, we take our families, our friends, and communities with us. We lead, not just vote" (p. 33). Black women inherit an unearned legacy of race, gender, and class oppression as descendants of the only group of people that were enslaved and brought to the United States to work for free (Collins, 2000).

One important implication of this study is it offers a strong indication of the role sorority and fraternity members play in politics—as a lifelong community that supports one another like family—as role models, mentors and, in this case, voters. Another study implication is it offers a glimpse at the role Divine Nine organizations may play in future elections. It provides credence to the important role Divine Nine organizations play in the Black community and society. It documents the depth and breadth of community building fostered through involvement in Divine 9.

While we primarily emphasized the types of political messaging Divine 9 shared on Instagram and Facebook, the potential influence of these messages is also worthy of continued examination. Future research might include interviewing social media users to explore how they interpreted messages shared during this period. Studies might utilize the multi-step flow of information theory to examine opinion leadership, Divine Nine organizations and the use of social media for political races. The flow of information has been heavily examined in relation to political communication (Bappayo et al, 2021; Ileri et al, 2017; Settle, 2018). However, an examination of social media content might prove useful for explaining the connection we found with messages disseminated on Facebook and Instagram.

Despite what the name suggests, opinion leaders are not always traditional leaders in society—in this case, they were members of Divine Nine sororities and fraternities. The messages imparted by images of Divine Nine members dressed in their signature colors and crests and strolling/stepping to the polls transmitted the importance of solidarity for a common cause. Social media created new opportunities for BGLOs to transmit information to its members, the mass media, opinion leaders and mass audiences. In the end, these messages were effective calls to action that served as an impetus for getting people to vote.

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Appendix A. 10 Prominent members for each of the Divine Nine

10 Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Members	Claim to Fame
Martin L. King Jr.	Nobel Peace Prize winner, minister and civil rights leader
Paul Robeson	Singer, actor and activist
W.E.B. Dubois	Historian, sociologist and NAACP founder
Willie Brown	Former San Francisco mayor
David Dinkins	Former New York City mayor
Cornel West	Author and professor
Andrew Young	Former mayor of Atlanta and UN (United Nations) ambassador
Roland Martin	Journalist and media entrepreneur
Lionel Richie	Entertainer
Raphael Warnock	U.S. senator for Georgia

10 Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Members	Claim to Fame
Arthur Ashe.	Tennis legend
Lerone Bennett Jr.	Former Johnson Publishing Co. editor and historian
Thomas Bradley	Former mayor of Los Angeles
Calvin Butts	Pastor, Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York
Cedric the Entertainer	Comedian, actor
Alcee Hastings	Former U.S. representative for Florida
Robert Johnson	Founder and former CEO for Black Entertainment Television
Bill Russell	NBA Hall of Fame
Bernie Thompson	U.S. representative for Mississippi
Wellington Webb	Former mayor of Denver

10 Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Members	Claim to Fame
Lt. Col. Guion Bluford.	First Black U.S. astronaut in space in 1983
Earl Graves Sr.	Founder and former CEO of Black Enterprise magazine
Benjamin Hooks	Former NAACP executive director
Langston Hughes	Poet, playwright and novelist
Jesse Jackson	Former director of Operation PUSH and founder of National Rainbow Coalition
Michael Jordan	NBA legend, formerly with the Chicago Bulls, and entrepreneur
Tom Joyner	Radio legend
Ronald McNair	Astronaut
Shaquille O’Neal	NBA legend, formerly with the LA Lakers, and entrepreneur
Carter G. Woodson	Founder of Negro History Week, which has become Black History Month in the U.S.

10 Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Members	Claim to Fame
Nnamdi Azikiwe.	Former president of Nigeria
Harry Belafonte	Actor and singer
Morris Chestnut	Actor
Bobby Jones	Gospel entertainer
Huey Newton	Co-founder of the Black Panther Party
Kwame Nkrumah	Former president of Ghana
A. Philip Randolph	Labor leader and civil rights activist
Al Roker	Weather anchor for NBC Today Show
Blair Underwood	Actor
Armstrong Williams	Conservative political commentator and media entrepreneur

10 Iota Phi Theta Fraternity Members	Claim to Fame
Harry Alford	Co-founder and former president/CEO for the National Black Chamber of Commerce
Terrence Carson	Actor and singer
Spencer Christian	Former weather anchor for ABC's Good Morning America
Kendrick Dean	Grammy-nominated producer and songwriter
Drew Fraser	Comedian
Desi Arnez Hines	Actor
Frank McCall	Police chief in Ferguson, Missouri
Stephen Ray	President of Chicago Theological Seminary
Bobby Rush	U.S. representative for Illinois
Christopher Staples	Harlem Globetrotter

10 Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Members	Claim to Fame
Marian Anderson.	First Black woman to sing at the Metropolitan Opera

Maya Angelou	Best-selling author, poet, singer, professor and dancer
Vanessa Bell Calloway	Actress
Althea Gibson	Tennis legend
Kimberly Godwin	ABC News president
Cathy Hughes	Founder of Radio One, TV One
Mae Jemison	First Black female astronaut in U.S.
Sharon Pratt Kelly	First female mayor of Washington, D.C.
Coretta Scott King	Civil rights activist and Martin L. King Jr's widow
Toni Morrison	Nobel Prize-winning novelist

10 Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Members	Claim to Fame
Mary McLeod Bethune.	Educator and civil rights leader who helped start Bethune Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida
Keisha Lance Bottoms	Former Atlanta mayor who now serves as senior adviser for public engagement to U.S. President Biden
Carol Moseley-Braun	First Black woman to serve as U.S. senator from Illinois
Shirley Caesar	Gospel singer
Johnetta Cole	Former president of Spelman and Bennett Colleges
Marcia Fudge	U.S. Secretary for Housing and Urban Development
Paula Giddings	Author and Black feminist scholar
Nikki Giovanni	Poet, professor and author
Abby Phillip	CNN political anchor/commentator
April Ryan	Broadcast journalist and author who has covered five presidents as a White House correspondent

10 Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Members	Claim to Fame
Danielle Belton	Former editor in chief at The Root and blogger who created www.blacksnob.com

Vivica Fox	Actress
Anita Hill	Attorney and law professor who was the plaintiff in sexual harassment case vs. Clarence Thomas
Zora Neal Hurston	Author and folklorist known for <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i>
Clara McLaughlin	First Black woman to own and operate a TV station in U.S, former president of East Texas Television
Minnie Riperton	Singer
Esther Rolle	Actress
Lisa Spradly Dunn	CEO of Odyssey Media
Sheryl Underwood	Comedian
Dionne Warwick	Five-time Grammy award-winning singer

10 Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Members	Claim to Fame
Vanessa Bell Armstrong	Gospel artist
Corrine Brown	Former U.S. representative for Florida
Gwendolyn Cherry	Former U.S. representative for Florida
Ann Fudge	Former chair and CEO of Young & Rubicam Brands who now serves on several corporate boards
Brenda Joysmith	Visual Artist
MC Lyte	Hip-hop Artist
Martha Reeves	R&B Singer
Mary Washington	First Black CPA in the U.S.
Ruth Whitehead Whaley	First Black woman to practice law in the U.S.
Tonya Lee Williams	Actress