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Student Loan Debt and Its Impact on the Nonprofit Sector

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Abstract

In the United States, the number of students graduating with debt and the amount of this debt have grown significantly in recent years. Little is known about the impact of loan debt on career choices and trajectories, particularly for graduates entering the nonprofit sector. To examine the role of student debt on postgraduation job search and employment, this study used a national sample of 464 graduates who have earned the Certified Nonprofit Professional (CNP) credential from the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance. The findings indicate that race/ethnicity, childhood economic status, graduation year, and amount of tuition assistance influence the acquisition of student loan debt. Amount of student loan debt, however, does not influence the sector of the graduate's first job choice. The only significant factors related to first job are race/ethnicity and graduation year. The discussion outlines potential concerns for nonprofit sector leaders to recruit and retain a talented workforce.

Keywords: *student loan debt; nonprofit sector*

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The nonprofit sector, now more than ever, requires capable and effective employees. To be successful in implementing their mission, decision makers in nonprofit organizations want to hire highly qualified employees. In 2012, nonprofit organizations in the United States employed over 11.4 million staff members (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Although nonprofit sector employment has experienced continued growth during the last decade, nonprofit organizations are often underresourced, confronting "systemic and perpetual funding challenges" (Nonprofit Finance Fund, 2015, p. 1). Thus, nonprofit organizations are not always able to offer competitive salary and benefit packages, particularly to entry-level employees.

Entry-level recruits who are college graduates with debt may not view the nonprofit sector as an attractive or viable job choice. In the United States, the number of students graduating with debt and the amount of debt have grown significantly in recent years. Today, $1.3 trillion is owed by 44 million borrowers, and the average college student graduates with more than $35,000 in student loan debt (Berman, 2015; Friedman, 2017). The amount of individual student loan debt can prohibit graduates from participating effectively in the economy by affecting credit scores and the ability to buy a car or purchase a home.

Although a job search is affected by many variables, the ability to repay student loan debt is certainly on the minds of new graduates and their parents during a job search process. Salary is a key factor. The average nonprofit professional with a position as Program 2 Coordinator makes approximately $39,130/year (Pay Scale, 2015)—a few thousand more than the average debt amount. A common recommendation (e.g., see McGrath, 2014) to students is that they should not borrow more for their undergraduate education than they expect to make in their first year after graduation. Relatedly, Lanza (2016) suggests that students limit their loan payments to no more than 10% of their expected monthly income.

Nevertheless, little is known about the impact of growing student loan debt on career choices and trajectories, particularly for graduates entering the nonprofit sector. To better understand the decisions of young professionals choosing whether to enter the nonprofit field, this exploratory study used a national sample of graduates who have earned the Certified Nonprofit Professional (CNP) credential from colleges and universities offering a Nonprofit Leadership Alliance program. By earning the CNP during their undergraduate or graduate coursework, this group of students indicates an interest in pursuing a nonprofit sector career and, therefore, provides a targeted look at the influence of student debt in initial nonprofit career decisions. This study examined two research questions: (1) What are the factors, such as gender, race/ethnicity, childhood economic status, college/university sector, student type, graduation year, and amount of tuition assistance, that influence student debt? (2) Does student debt influence the sector of a graduate's first employment postgraduation?

Student Debt as a Research Topic

Since the early 1980s, loans have been the largest form of financial aid used by students to shoulder the costs of higher education (Elliott, 2014). In the United States today, the four major federal loan sources for higher education are unsubsidized Stafford loans, subsidized Stafford loans, the Perkins loan program, and Parent Loans for Undergraduates (PLUS; Avery & Turner, 2012). Subsidized loans do not begin to

accrue interest as long as the student remains enrolled at least half time. Unsubsidized loans begin to accrue interest as soon as they are dispersed to the recipient. The PLUS loan was created in 1980 and helps parents meet their expected contribution to their student's educational cost. The Federal Perkins Loan Program was created in 1958. This loan program is unique in that funds are allocated to individual institutions based on the needs of students. In addition, students can take out a myriad of other types of private loans to pay for their higher education.

In recent years, the amount of the student loan debt has risen. The 2011–2012 academic year student loan amount totaled more than $113 billion, a 24% increase from 5 years earlier in the amount of student loans (Elliott, 2014). In that year, approximately 37% of all financial aid received by undergraduate students came from federal student loan programs (Elliott, 2014). In 2013, approximately 56% of Americans ages 20 to 29 with a least some college education had student loan debt, and over half of these young Americans were concerned with being able to repay their loans (Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2013). According to Berman (2015), the average college graduate in 2015 had approximately $35,051 in student loan debt.

Limited research examines how this student debt affects career decision making. The few studies available focus heavily on law students and suggest that the amount of debt at graduation affects work decisions, as well as the timing of life milestones such as owning a home or starting a family (Bidwell, 2014; Chambers, 1992; Mirvis & Hackett, 1983; Roberts, 2012). Chambers' (1992) study examining the burden of educational loans on standards of living for students at nine American law schools across the United States focused on job choice at graduation. Chambers found that student loan debt had a minor impact on students' job choices after graduation, concluding that as a student's debt increased, the graduate's choice to enter public interest or government work decreased. Similarly, Rothstein and Rouse (2011) found that "when students were relieved from the need to incur debt, they shifted toward lower-salary jobs in public service industries" (p. 162). Another factor moving students away from jobs in public service was the lack of knowledge about alternate repayment plans (Chambers, 1992).

Further studies of law students support Chambers' findings. Saur (1998, 2004) found that student debt had a minor influence on career choice during the first 15 years after law school graduation. Field (2009) concluded that law students with student debt were strongly discouraged from public sector employment in the first two years after graduation. Recent studies conducted by American Student Assistance (2013), a nonprofit organization focused on educating students about how to finance their education and pay down their educational debt, found that professionals with student loan debt were choosing to delay buying homes, getting married, having children, and saving for retirement, and were deterred from entering their desired career field because of their debt. Specifically, 30% of survey respondents indicated that student loan debt strongly influenced choice in a career field. Study respondents were more likely to take any job they could get, to pay the bills and make debt payments. American Student Assistance suggested that this need to get a "job" rather than to start a career could have long-term impacts for the individual.

Zhang (2013), Minicozzi (2005), Rothstein and Rouse (2011), and Choi (2014) presented similar findings, suggesting that the burden of education debt results in

graduates preferring to take higher paying jobs to avoid borrowing more money after graduation. Specifically, Zhang found that private and public university students with debt were less likely to go on to graduate school and to choose jobs with the highest initial salary. Taking the higher paying job at the onset of their career can lead to a slower growth of earnings over the long term or lead young professionals away from public interest jobs. Relatedly, Minicozzi and Rothstein and Rouse argued that students with debt are likely to select high-salary jobs rather than low-paid, public service positions to avoid long-term credit constraints. In a recent student study, Kofoot (2017) found that graduates with higher student loan debt who upon graduation had a credential in nonprofit management were more likely to have two jobs right after graduation. Choi's work further suggested that "the impact of debt on career choice might differ by race, socio-cultural, psychological variables, and the characteristics of loan programs" (p. 32). Kofoot also found a significant difference between race and student loan debt.

A recent study of California nonprofits and their employees specifically asked about the negative effect of student debt on organizations' ability to build their workforces. Forty-five percent responded that retaining staff was negatively affected: 43% indicated that recruiting and retaining a younger workforce was negatively affected, and 34% indicated that recruiting staff was negatively affected (Berlin, Dragonetti, Kleinsasser, & Masaoka, 2016). In addition, the study findings suggested that student debt may result in a less diverse nonprofit sector workforce because first-generation college students, people of color, and women are "more likely to have student debt and higher amounts of debt than their peers (Masaoka, Dragonetti, & Kleinsasser, 2017, p. 2).

In summary, limited research to date has focused on the impact of student debt on career decisions. Nevertheless, the existing research, although largely focused on law students, consistently indicates a relationship between the amount of debt and the likelihood of graduates to enter private sector rather than public interest careers. This study seeks to add to this needed body of knowledge by focusing on nonprofit sector career choices.

Method

This study sought to understand the predictors of student loan debt of those who aspire to have a career in the nonprofit sector. In addition, and most important, this study sought to understand which factors, including debt, influence early career decisions to enter the nonprofit sector.

The participants for this study were students who completed the requirements for the CNP credential during their undergraduate or graduate degree coursework, and this indicates a specific interest in working in the nonprofit sector. The CNP credential is a program of the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance (NLA) currently offered on 37 campuses across the United States. Students in NLA programs work toward certification and employment in the nonprofit sector. Students in NLA programs represent majors across disciplines who are enrolled in nonprofit-specific courses and participate in co-curricular activities, including internships and service projects.

The survey[1] was delivered electronically by the NLA national headquarters staff to 3,596 CNPs credentialed from 1948 through May 2015. Follow-up e-mails were sent as a method of encouraging participation. Of those who received the e-mail, 963 opened the e-mail, 563 began the survey, and 464 completed the survey, for a response rate of 12.9%. Many factors may have contributed to the response rate. First, the NLA database may have included e-mail addresses that did not reach the intended participant but were not returned. The wide range of credentialing dates also affected the response rate. Individuals credentialing in the last decade were more likely to respond. Table 1 shows that over 77% of the respondents graduated in 2010 or later. Respondents from the earliest graduation years in the sample may not have remembered the specific details requested in the survey, such as amount of debt at graduation or salary at their first job, and may be included in the number that started the survey but did not finish.

Although the response rate is low and certainly limits broad generalization, this type of data is not available at the individual level from other sources. The wide time frame of these data allows a longitudinal look at the relationship of student debt and job salary at graduation specific to students interested in nonprofit careers.

The researchers conducted a multiple logistic regression to examine the responses concerning two binary dependent variables. The first model's dependent variable was "Did you graduate with student loan debt" using "yes" or "no" coding options. The independent variables included gender, race/ethnicity, gender, childhood economic status, sector of institute, student type, graduation year, and amount of tuition assistance.

Next, the researchers ran a multiple logistic regression on the dependent variable "In which sector was your first job directly following graduation." The survey allowed for four answers including the nonprofit sector, the government sector, the for-profit sector, and other (e.g., attending graduate school). This question was recoded into two groups: those who took a job in the nonprofit sector and those who did not take a job in the nonprofit sector. The independent variables included gender, race/ethnicity, gender, childhood economic status, sector of institute, student type, graduation year, amount of tuition assistance, and amount of student loan debt.

Results

The results of the survey offered an interesting and useful look at influences of student loan debt and the sector of the first job following graduation. The results of the binary logistic regressions outline the variables that influence whether a student took on debt and if that student took a job in the nonprofit sector immediately following graduation. Table 1 provides the demographic information. Nearly 74% of the respondents were female, 66% were White, and almost 37% considered themselves to have grown up in a middle-class family. Fifty-six percent of the respondents attended a public rather than private institution of higher education. While in college, about 76% were traditional students attending school full time. Nearly 59% were more recent graduates, completing degrees between the years of 2010 and 2015. The majority of the respondents received some type of tuition assistance, other than student loans, with 60% receiving between $100 and $20,000. Seventy-one percent of students took on debt. Of those who took on debt, about 27% borrowed between $20,000 and $40,000.

[1]The survey used and data collected for this study were also used as part of a master's thesis by coauthor Kristina Kofoot in completing the requirements of the Master of Arts degree at the University of Northern Iowa.

Table 1

Demographic Information

Variable	Frequency *N* = 464	%
Gender		
Male	121	26.1
Female	343	73.9
Race/Ethnicity		
White	307	66.2
Hispanic or Latino	41	8.8
Black or African American	84	18.1
Other	32	6.9
Childhood Economic Status		
Upper	11	2.4
Middle-Upper	98	21.1
Middle	170	36.6
Lower-Middle	105	22.6
Lower	78	16.8
Institution		
Public	261	57.9
Private	67	14.9
Not Listed	123	27.3
Student Type		
Traditional	354	76.3
Other	10	2.2
Graduation Year		
2011–2015	241	51.9
2006–2010	121	26.1
2001–2005	48	10.3
1996–2000	14	3.0
1991–1995	6	1.3
1957–1990	34	7.3
Assistance		
No Assistance	72	15.5
$100–$20,000	279	60.1
$20,001–$40,000	63	13.6
$40,001+	50	10.8
Debt		
No Debt	134	28.9
$1–$20,000	108	23.3
$20,001–$40,000	126	27.2
$40,001+	96	20.7
Sector of First Job		
Nonprofit Sector	301	64.9
Not the Nonprofit Sector	163	35.1

A binary logistic regression examined the impact of gender, race/ethnicity, childhood economic status, type of institution, student type, graduation year, and assistance received on whether the respondent had student loan debt at graduation. A test of the full model against a constant-only model was statistically significant, indicating that the predictors as a set reliably distinguished between those who took on debt and those who did not ($\chi^2 = 73.374$, $p < .001$, $df = 19$). Nagelkerke R^2 of .216 indicated a weak relationship between the prediction and the grouping. Prediction success overall was 72.2% (91.3% for yes, 24.8% for no). The Wald criterion demonstrated that race/ethnicity, childhood economic status, graduation year, and assistance received significantly contributed to prediction. Gender, type of institution, and type of student were not significant predictors.

Table 2 illustrates the output of each independent variable on the binary dependent variable of yes or no, on whether a respondent had student loan debt. In this model, the success in the model was no and accordingly coded as 1. An output of yes is an indicator of failure, meaning the student took on student loan debt. Race/ethnicity contributed to this model. Using White as the baseline comparison group, the researchers found that Hispanics or Latinos ($p = .014$) had odds of graduating without debt that are .363 to the odds of Whites graduating without debt. Because the odds ratio is less than 1, Hispanic or Latino students are more likely to graduate with debt than those in the baseline comparison group.

For childhood economic status, Table 2 illustrates that respondents of the upper economic status ($p = .018$) contributed to the model. The lower economic status was the baseline comparison. Respondents of the upper economic status had odds of graduating without debt that are 6.091 to the odds of students from the lower economic status, the baseline comparison. Therefore, students of the upper economic status were more likely to gradate without debt compared to those of lower economic status. Likewise, those of upper-middle ($p = .007$) and middle class ($p = .009$) are more likely to graduate without debt than those of the lower class.

Graduation years 2011–2015 ($p = .004$) also contributed to the model. Using graduation years 1957–1990 as the baseline comparison, the researchers found that students who graduated between 2011 and 2015 had odds of graduating without debt that are .246 to the odds of students who graduated between 1957 and 1990. In addition, students who graduated between 1996 and 2000 ($p = .007$) had the odds of graduating with debt that are .083 to the odds of students who graduated between 1957 and 1990. Therefore, students who graduated between 1996 and 2000 or between 2011 and 2015 were more likely to graduate with debt compared to students who graduated between 1957 and 1990.

Additionally, the amount of assistance (other than student loans) a respondent received contributed to this model. Those who received assistance between $100 and $20,000 ($p = .004$) had odds of graduating without debt that are .349 to the odds of students who graduated in the baseline comparison (i.e., $40,000+). Similarly, those graduating with assistance between $20,000 and $40,000 ($p = .024$) had odds of .353 to the odds of those in the baseline comparison. In summary, those who received assistance between $100 and $20,000 and between $20,000 and $40,000 were more likely to take on debt than those who received $40,000 or more in assistance.

Table 2

Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Student Loan Debt

Variable	*p*	*OR*	95% CI
Gender (Reference = Male)			
Female	.481	1.224	.698–2.146
Race/Ethnicity (Reference = White)			
Black or African American	.521	.736	.289–1.878
Hispanic or Latino	.014*	.363	.162–.812
Other[a]	.229	1.691	.719–3.973
Childhood Economic Status (Reference = Lower)			
Upper	.018*	6.091	1.370–27.071
Middle-Upper	.007*	3.405	1.409–8.230
Middle	.009*	3.048	1.324–7.020
Lower-Middle	.841	.910	.360–2.299
Institution (Reference = Private)			
Public	.402	.727	.344–1.534
Not Listed	.961	1.017	.516–2.003
Student Type (Reference = Other)			
Traditional	.458	1.257	.686–2.304
Graduation Year (1957–1990)			
2011–2015	.004*	.246	.095–.640
2006–2010	.137	.478	.180–1.265
2001–2005	.087	.390	.132–1.147
1996–2000	.007*	.083	.014–.510
1991–1995	.068	.101	.009–1.181
Assistance (Reference = $40,000+)			
No Assistance	.331	.656	.281–1.534
$100–$20,000	.004*	.349	.169–.719
$20,001–$40,000	.024*	.353	.144–.869

Note. CI = confidence interval.

[a]Other includes Native American, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, and other.

*$p < .05$.

A second binary logistic regression analysis using gender, race/ethnicity, childhood economic status, type of institution, student type, graduation year, tuition assistance, and amount of debt as independent variables predicted whether a student took a job in the nonprofit sector after graduation. A test of the full model against a constant only model was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 32.580$, $df = 22$, $p = .068$). Nagelkerke R^2 of .097 indicated a weak relationship between the prediction and the grouping. Prediction success overall was 67.5% (90.8% for nonprofit, 23.7% for not in the nonprofit sector). The Wald criterion demonstrated that only race/ethnicity and graduation year contributed significantly to prediction. Gender, childhood economic status, type of institution, type of student, tuition assistance, and amount of debt were not significant predictors.

Table 3 illustrates the output of each of the independent variables on the binary dependent variable of sector of first job being nonprofit sector or not the nonprofit sector. In this model, not the nonprofit sector is coded as 1. Race/ethnicity contributed to this model in that those who are Hispanic or Latino ($p = .049$) have odds of 1.805 to the odds of those who are White in their first job not being in the nonprofit sector. This means that Hispanics or Latinos are less likely than Whites to take a first job in the nonprofit sector.

Graduation year also contributed to this model. Students who graduated between 2011 and 2015 ($p = .018$) had odds of not going into the nonprofit sector that are 3.636 to the odds of students who graduated in the baseline comparison of students who graduated between 1957 and 1990. In addition, students who graduated between 2001 and 2005 had odds of not taking their first job in the nonprofit sector that are 3.494 to the odds of those graduating between 1957 and 1990. Therefore, those who graduated between 2011 and 2015 and between 2001 and 2005 were less likely to take their first job in a sector.

Table 3

Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Sector of First Job

Variable	*p*	*OR*	95% CI
Gender (Reference = Male)			
Female	.163	.693	.425–1.155
Race/Ethnicity (Reference = White)			
Black or African American	.802	1.107	.503–2.436
Hispanic or Latino	.049*	1.805	1.004–3.246
Other[a]	.106	1.921	.870–4.241
Childhood Economic Status (Reference = Lower)			
Upper	.730	1.289	.305–5.451
Middle-Upper	.789	1.108	.524–2.343
Middle	.143	1.646	.845–3.205
Lower-Middle	.224	1.529	.771–3.031

Table 3 (cont.)

Variable	*p*	*OR*	95% CI
Institution (Reference = Private)			
Public	.724	1.132	.568–2.258
Not Listed	.408	.767	.408–1.439
Student Type (Reference = Other)			
Traditional	.815	.941	.566–1.565
Graduation Year (1957–1990)			
2011–2015	.018*	3.636	1.252– 10.557
2006–2010	.087	2.586	.872–7.671
2001–2005	.034*	3.494	1.097–11.132
1996–2000	.447	1.937	.353–10.627
1991–1995	.503	1.965	.273–14.170
Assistance (Reference = $40,001+)			
No Assistance	.939	.969	.435–2.157
$100–$20,000	.388	.744	.381–1.455
$20,001–$40,000	.519	1.303	.583–2.913
Debt (Reference = $40,001+)			
No Debt	.147	1.592	.850–2.981
$1–$20,000	.274	.682	.344–1.353
$20,001–$40,000	.160	1.529	.846–2.765

Note. CI = confidence interval.

[a]Other includes Native American, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, and other.

*$p < .05$.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that race/ethnicity, childhood economic status, amount of assistance, and graduation year influence whether a student incurs loan debt. These results not only support the literature (Avery & Turner, 2012; Choi, 2014; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2013), but also make sense about who is taking on student loan debt. Students from middle and lower-middle economic statuses, often minorities (in this study, Latinos and Hispanics), were more likely to take on debt than other students. These responses raise questions about how well students are prepared to understand the impacts of debt acquisition on their future, including credit scores so important in car or home buying.

Rothstein and Rouse (2011) also found that when relieved from the need to take on debt, students were more attracted to public service jobs with lower salaries. One way to lessen the need for debt is providing students with assistance for tuition, which would then lower their need for taking on debt. This study supported the idea that the more assistance students receive, the less likely they are to take on debt. Contrary to studies by Ratcliffe and McKernan (2013), Choi (2014), and Avery and Turner (2012), this study found that gender did not significantly influence student loan debt. This difference could be explained by the high percentage of females (73%) in the respondent group.

The findings also indicated that students graduating between 1996 and 2000 or 2011 and 2015 were more likely to graduate with debt. The rise in likelihood for the 2011–2015 group may be in response to the fiscal crisis of 2008–2009 with families not yet recovered from losses to support college tuition. The 1996–2000 group does not have a similar financial event to provide an explanation; however, at the time, there were policy shifts (e.g., changes in welfare programs) and continued increases in college tuition rates.

In examining the sector of a graduate's first job, the researchers found that student debt was not a significant predictor. However, race/ethnicity and graduation year were significant influencers in early career decisions. Hispanics or Latinos were less likely than other ethnic groups in the sample to take a first job in the nonprofit sector. Similarly, those who graduated between 2011 and 2015 were less likely than the other graduation date groupings to begin their careers in the nonprofit sector. Although debt was not significant for predicting the sector of a respondent's first job, this parallel in the findings between those more likely to take on debt and those less likely to work in the nonprofit sector in their first job is noteworthy. Hispanic or Latinos and recent graduates are also more likely to take on debt and less likely to work in the nonprofit sector in their first job.

Other factors such as childhood economic status, financial assistance, and the amount of student loan debt incurred were not found to have a significant influence on a graduate's decision regarding the sector of his or her first job. These findings contradict earlier studies. Research by Chambers (1992), Mirvis and Hackett (1983), Roberts (2012), American Student Assistance (2013), and Zhang (2013) suggests that student loan debt affects students' early career decisions including sector of work.

One explanation of why debt and other factors did not influence the sector of a graduate's first job could be the study's survey population. This study included only those who were seeking their CNP credential through the NLA. The path to earning a CNP is rigorous, and a CNP's commitment to working in the sector may be greater than that of students of various majors, including nonprofit management majors who are not seeking the CNP credential. For most students, the CNP is an add-on, an extra credential. The desire to earn the CNP may indicate a level of commitment to a career path that is unaffected by other factors, including debt.

To many people, the finding that debt does not influence the sector of a graduate's first job may seem like good news for the nonprofit sector, but the news comes with possible consequences. Over 20% of the respondents incurred $40,000 or more in debt. If those same students take on nonprofit sector jobs with an annual salary of less than that, they are personally paying a price. Unlike the findings of other studies, the find-

ings of this study suggest that CNPs are willing to "pay a price" for their commitment to bettering communities.

Of course, debt is not the only variable important for choosing a first postgraduation job. Ability to relocate, transportation options, the job market, and more influence job-seeking decisions. These factors were not included in this study. Debt is only one component of a person's financial situation. Other financial aspects affected by debt, such as salary and benefits, that were not reflected in this model could affect the choice of a graduate's first job.

In addition, increasingly jobs that may be attractive to those seeking their CNP are available in all sectors. It is assumed that CNPs, the targeted respondent group for this study, want jobs in careers in which they can positively impact people and the communities in which they live. Today these jobs are not necessarily found only in the nonprofit sector. B-certified companies and benefit corporations must demonstrate a public purpose of their missions. These types of organizations are growing in number and may be recruiting CNPs who would have previously focused their job search in the nonprofit sector. Increased competition from other sectors may explain why some recent graduates are more likely to take a job outside of the nonprofit sector. However, if this trend continues, regardless of the reason, the nonprofit sector may be at a great disadvantage.

The nonprofit sector addresses today's most challenging public issues. Any barriers of recruiting the most talented graduates for the nonprofit workforce need to be addressed. Although this study suggests that those who identify as wanting a career in the nonprofit sector are not influenced by debt to take high-paying jobs in other sectors, additional research in this area is needed. The challenges of recent graduates who take on a large student loan debt include delaying purchasing a home, getting married, having children, and saving for retirement. Additional research needs to explore if and how student loan debt is affecting those seeking jobs in the nonprofit sector or if other factors such as competition explain the decision of recent graduates. For example, do those in their early career in the nonprofit sector take on second jobs to make ends meet?

Additional investigation is also needed about nonprofit sector recruitment and retention and the role of student loan debt. This study focused on those who identified a nonprofit career while still in college and thus likely acquired student debt. With almost 12 million employees in the nonprofit sector, how does student loan debt affect retention and what can nonprofit leaders do to minimize the impact? This study supports the work of Berlin et al. (2016), whose study focused on nonprofits in California and their employees' student loan debt. Both studies reveal concerns and potential impacts on the nonprofit sector workforce, some of which apply across other sectors as well. Additional research can highlight specific aspects of the problem, which can then be addressed in practice.

Although additional research is needed, action addressing challenges and concerns on student debt and its impact on the nonprofit sector can be taken now. Nonprofit leaders and funders should examine how low entry-level salaries and unpaid internships contribute to the short- and long-term impacts of student debt and should ensure that nonprofit employees' earnings constitute a living wage. Nonprofit leaders and funders should also examine their roles in advocating for public service loan for-

giveness or similar programs at state and national levels. These programs could attract and retain nonprofit employees. Is the competition across for-profit and government sectors to "do good" affecting the nonprofit sector's ability to recruit recent graduates? Would current and future employees seek out organizations with loan repayment benefits, particularly early in their careers, thus allowing them to remain in their positions longer? Although providing new or additional benefits may be difficult for organizational leaders and funders, the result of less qualified employees has far greater implications for the nonprofit sector.

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