The Expanding Role of Philanthropy in Education Politics

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Sarah Reckhow[1] and Jeffrey W. Snyder[2]

Philanthropic involvement in education politics has become bolder and more visible. Have foundations changed funding strategies to enhance their political influence? Using data from 2000, 2005, and 2010, we investigate giving patterns among the 15 largest education foundations. Our analyses show growing support for national-level advocacy organizations. Furthermore, we find that foundations increasingly fund organizations that operate as "jurisdictional challengers" by competing with traditional public sector institutions. We apply social network analysis to demonstrate the growing prevalence of convergent grant-making—multiple foundations supporting the same organizations. These results suggest that a sector once criticized for not leveraging its investments now increasingly seeks to maximize its impact by supporting alternative providers, investing concurrently, and supporting grantees to engage in policy debates.

Keywords: mixed-methods; policy; policy analysis; politics

Until very recently, education philanthropists often faced criticism for their ineffectiveness. For example, the $500 million Annenberg Challenge, which supported public-private partnerships for local education reform, was labeled "one of the major failures in foundation history" (Fleishman, 2009, p. 267). The criticism continued after the Annenberg Challenge ended in the early 2000s, and the Gates Foundation became the dominant education foundation. For example, Greene (2005) analyzed grants from 2002 and compared foundation grant-making to "buckets into the sea" (p. 49). Greene argued that foundation grants were destined to amount to tiny buckets of ineffective funds poured into the vast sea of public expenditures unless they were targeted in ways that could leverage public education spending.

The tenor of the conversation about education philanthropy has changed greatly in the past 10 years. Criticism about ineffectiveness has been replaced by criticism that foundations are too powerful and are attempting to privatize public education from their lofty headquarters (Barkan, 2013; Ravitch, 2010). How did the narrative change so rapidly? How have the strategies of educational philanthropists changed? What are the consequences of these changes for the role of foundations in education policy and political advocacy? Using grant data from the 15 largest K-12 grant-makers for 2000, 2005, and 2010, we closely examine a decade of changes in education philanthropy in the United States. With our broad and longitudinal dataset, we are able to go beyond a case-by-case analysis of educational philanthropy to demonstrate how the largest members of this sector of organizations have changed their behavior in systematic ways.

Our analysis proceeds in three parts. First, we examine philanthropic grant-making for political activities and demonstrate that funding for national policy advocacy grew from 2000 to 2010. Second, we analyze the shifting policy orientation among top education philanthropies. We find that most major education foundations increasingly support jurisdictional challengers—organizations that compete with or offer alternatives to public sector institutions. Meanwhile, funding for traditional public education institutions has declined. Third, we examine the range of actors and perspectives supported by philanthropic grants, applying social network analysis to identify overlapping patterns of grant-making. We find that top donors are increasingly supporting a shared set of organizations—predominantly jurisdictional challengers. We argue that the combination of these trends has played a role in strengthening the voice and influence of philanthropists in education policy.

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Jurisdictional Challengers and Evolving Institutions

Foundations have a complex relationship with the political process. According to Zunz (2012), "the federal government wants to encourage philanthropy, but also wants to control it, and this has repeatedly led to friction" (p. 297). The Tax Reform Act of 1969 prohibited foundations from direct lobbying and electoral politics. These restrictions "raised some concerns among foundation executives about pursuing social change by supporting organizations seeming to be directly involved in Washington policy making" (A. Rich, 2004, p. 58). However, recent research shows that foundations are increasing their efforts to influence the political process and policymaking (Bromley & Tompkins-Stange, 2012; Reckhow, 2013; Scott, 2009; Teles, 2008; Thümler, 2011; Tompkins-Stange, 2013). A wide range of political activity is legally available to foundations, allowing them to play a role in "framing issues, developing public will, supporting advocacy organizations, and funding policy implementation and evaluation" (Ferris, 2003, p. 5).

Although foundations' interest in political engagement appears to be growing, the institutional structure of education in the United States presents many challenges for outside interests seeking to promote policy change. Public schooling in the United States has long been characterized as a highly insulated and bureaucratized field. After the Progressive Era, education also became a professionalized policy domain, linked to specific pathways for training, certification, and programs in colleges of education. Studies of education politics over the past 50 years consistently emphasize the dominance of local actors, including school boards, unions, administrators, the local business community, and mayors (Dahl, 1961; Moe, 2011; Orr, 1999; W. Rich, 1996; Shipps, 2006; Stone, Henig, Jones, & Pierannunzi, 2001). According to Henig and Stone (2008), "for most of American history the cocoon of localism shielded education decision making" (p. 206). Shaping the agenda of more than 14,000 local school districts with varied political contexts and deeply embedded local and professionalized interests is a formidable political challenge.

Yet two key institutional changes have offered national foundations new opportunities for political engagement and new levers for influencing educational policy: the rise of jurisdictional challengers in education and the growing federal role in education. Since the 1990s, the traditional institutions involved in governing and delivering education are increasingly challenged by a new set of institutions that replicate many functions of the old institutions. Mehta and Teles (2012) show how these "jurisdictional challengers" provide organizational replacements and alternate routes for teacher and principal training/credentialing, production of knowledge and research in education, as well as schools and school systems. Major foundations were early investors in some of these organizations, including Teach for America, New Leaders for New Schools, and the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) charter schools (Scott, 2009). Individually, these organizations offer alternatives to the public sector; but as a linked set of actors, they present a coordinated challenge to the jurisdictional control traditionally held by the public sector in education.

Second, the landscape of governing institutions in education has changed, with the federal government growing more active in setting mandates and incentives for states and school districts to follow. The adoption of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001 significantly expanded the federal government's role in education. NCLB departed from past federal involvement in education by mandating states to set standards, sanctions, and teacher certification requirements. Although states were largely left to set their own policies, and indeed varied widely in how they complied with federal law (e.g., Reed, 2009), NCLB marked a dramatic shift in federal priority setting in American education. NCLB has also reshaped the politics of education at the federal level—upsetting the dominance of traditional interest groups and splitting coalition partners, particularly within the Democratic Party (Debray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; McDonnell, 2012). Moreover, the expanding federal role in education is part of a broader institutional shift away from single-purpose governance of education, which Henig (2013) calls the "end of exceptionalism." Henig shows how the set of actors involved in education decision-making also evolves when education policy is absorbed into general-purpose governments. As the White House and Congress focus on education policy, new interest groups find opportunities to grow more prominent in Washington.

Taken together, these institutional shifts provide new pathways for foundation involvement in educational policy and politics that bypass the more complex and varied realm of working through individual local districts. First, philanthropists can directly fund the jurisdictional challengers that work on a national scale to develop their model of school reform (e.g., charter schools, alternative teacher certification). These funds can support the expansion of jurisdictional challengers to new districts, coordination of activities among different organizations, and the formation of new organizations. Second, philanthropists can expand their involvement in policy advocacy at the national level. According to Tompkins-Stange (2013), some foundations are particularly attracted to the notion that spending money on advocacy could help them achieve a better return on investment than traditional "program" grants, because advocacy grants could influence government spending. Rather than trying to sway the policymaking process in all 50 states or thousands of school districts, foundations may support policy advocates to promote their agenda on a national scale.

Data and Methods

To systematically assess the level of grant-making for advocacy and philanthropic support for particular education policy reforms, we collected data from the 2000, 2005, and 2010 990-PF tax forms filed by the 15 foundations that gave the most money for K-12 education. We used lists compiled by the Foundation Center to identify the 15 largest donors in each year (see Appendix A). On 990-PF forms, foundations report every grant they disbursed during the fiscal year.

The set of major foundations within the top 15 has evolved somewhat from 2000 to 2010. There are six major foundations that were among the top 15 in both 2000 and 2010. Some traditional funders prominently associated with education philanthropy, including the Annenberg Foundation, Wallace Foundation, Joyce Foundation, and Lilly Endowment, dropped out of the top 15 by 2010. Meanwhile, among the top 15 givers

in education for 2010, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, Robertson Foundation, Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation, and Doris & Donald Fisher Fund all stem from vast personal fortunes and had living benefactors during this period. Collectively, these six benefactors each made their fortunes as business entrepreneurs—two in technology (Gates, Dell), two in retail (Walton, Fisher), and two in investment businesses (Robertson, Broad). Thus, our data and analysis track a dynamic time in education philanthropy, as a new set of foundations have emerged and older institutions have fallen from prominence.

For each grant that directly funded K-12 education, training and support for K-12 personnel, K-12 policy advocacy or research, or supplementary education services for K-12 students, we recorded the amount of each grant, the recipient, the recipient's location, and the purpose of the grant (if available). For 2000, the dataset includes over 1,200 grants totaling over $486 million (we use inflation-adjusted 2010 dollars for all figures). For 2005, the dataset includes nearly 1,600 grants totaling over $738 million. For 2010, the dataset includes more than 2,600 grants totaling over $843 million. These totals show the considerable growth in giving among the largest education foundations. We code each grant recipient into one of 47 categories; the full list of categories is available in Appendix B. The categories are based on the grantee's function or role, such as school districts, charter schools, or afterschool programs. We use these categories to assess foundation investment in jurisdictional challengers compared to traditional public sector institutions.

We also identify all grants that were targeted to support policy advocacy and/or research at the national level. We include grants involving policy research along with the advocacy grants due to the advocacy role of many think tanks and policy researchers. According to A. Rich (2004), "the very idea of a 'neutral analyst' has been openly discredited by the behavior of experts in think tanks ... experts are quite politically active" (p. 210). Thus, our definition of national research and advocacy organizations includes grantees that convened, contacted, or informed policymakers on a national level. We identify grantees as national advocacy or research organizations based on their websites, organizational purposes indicated on their Form 990 tax documents, and based on purposes indicated by funders in tax filings. If any one of these three elements indicated that a grantee convened, contacted, or informed policymakers on a national level, it was included in our set of national advocacy organizations. Therefore, our pool of national advocacy/research organizations includes some organizations that were initially coded in other categories, but also received grants targeted toward advocacy purposes. We should note that *national* does not imply *federal* for our uses. Although groups with messages suggesting efforts to shape federal policy were most common, other groups on the list were active in multiple states but did not have a specific federal-level mission. Therefore, in our coding for national advocacy and research, we treated organizations active in multiple states as more similar to federal advocates than organizations focused on advocacy in a single state. For further explanation of our data and coding scheme, see Appendix B.

To assess the development of convergent grant-making, we apply social network analysis, using UCINET software Version 6.216 (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002). The network data were drawn from the data on major foundation grants. First, we identified all of the organizations that received grants from more than one major foundation. Among these organizations, we developed affiliation networks to plot relationships between organizations that received grants from multiple major foundations. The network analysis allows us to assess growing convergence towards a shared set of grantees and funding priorities among the largest K-12 education foundations.

Findings

Education Philanthropy and Policy Advocacy

In his 2014 State of the Union Address, President Obama expressed intent to bring together "elected officials, business leaders, and philanthropists" to work on educational issues.[1] Although seemingly innocuous, this acknowledgement showed the clout philanthropic individuals and granting organizations possess as direct participants in policy discussions. Major foundations also play a more indirect policy role by financing research and advocacy aimed at influencing the policy process.

As the federal government became more willing to set education priorities, philanthropic dollars have increasingly been directed to national advocacy and research groups. From 2000 to 2010, foundation attention to national-level policy advocacy and research grew rapidly. Table 1 shows the inflation-adjusted giving to organizations that convened, contacted, or informed policymakers on a national level (reported in 2010 dollars). As this table shows, nearly twice as many inflation-adjusted dollars flowed to these groups in 2010 compared to 2000. Moreover, national advocacy funding grew more than 23% faster than total giving over the decade, suggesting the increased emphasis on this giving did not merely stem from more granting overall.

Although the federal role has expanded in education during the past couple of decades, the authority of local school districts has eroded. Increasing federal and state power and the growing influence of charter schools has diminished the authority of traditional local school boards in many districts, particularly large urban districts. Perhaps in recognition of this trend, foundations have decreased their level of funding to organizations involved in research, advocacy, and school district partnerships at the *local* level. In 2000, local advocacy and research organizations received over $58 million in grant dollars (adjusted for 2010 dollars), and by 2010, they received only $21 million.

Table 1 also shows the national advocacy and research grantees receiving the largest inflation-adjusted dollar amounts. The bottom row shows the total number of grantees receiving more than $1 million in total grants. This figure roughly doubled every 5 years, which may indicate an expanding field of national advocacy and research organizations. The top grant recipients in 2010 include organizations primarily focused on advocacy and political organizing, such as Stand for Children Leadership Center, as well as organizations known for producing policy analysis and reports, such as Jobs for the Future.

Based on our grant data, the groups that receive major foundation funding for policy advocacy are typically professionalized organizations that produce reports and policy recommendations, maintain a paid staff, and have a presence in Washington,

Table 1
Trends in Total and National Policy Advocacy/Research Giving

	2000	2005	2010
Total giving	$486.6 million	$738.1 million	$843.7 million
National advocacy and research	$56.3 million	$69.9 million	$110.6 million
Top 5 national advocacy and research grantees	Rural School and Community Trust	Academy for Educational Development	Education Trust
	Public Education Network	Jobs for the Future	Jobs for the Future
	Academy for Educational Development	Achieve, Inc.	Achieve, Inc.
	Children's Educational Opportunity Foundation America	Developmental Studies Center	Rural School and Community Trust
	Education Commission of the States	American Institutes for Research	Stand for Children Leadership Center
Number of national advocacy grantees >$1 million	7	18	34

Note. Authors' own data gathered from foundation tax returns for top 15 education foundations, reported in inflation-adjusted 2010 dollars.

DC. Many philanthropically funded advocacy organizations work on similar issues. For example, foundations funneled large grants to groups promoting alignment of academic standards across states and strengthening school accountability policies. Two of these groups, Education Trust and Alliance for Excellent Education convene policymakers and provide briefings and fact sheets to legislators. The Alliance for Excellent Education devotes a section on their website "to be useful to and informative for policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels."[2] Indeed, each of these groups retains registered lobbyists to promote their federal legislative agenda. Beyond federally directed activities, each group tries to influence state policies through more grassroots seminars, webinars, and conferences open to individuals hoping to influence local policy arenas.

Other major advocacy grant recipients include prominent think tanks, such as the New America Foundation, Brookings Institution, and American Enterprise Institute (AEI). These think tanks are known as major policy actors across a wide range of issue areas beyond education. Some grants to think tanks focus research production around specific policies, including a grant to Brookings from the Gates Foundation to "develop criteria for certifying teacher evaluation systems."[3] Other grants are broadly framed to support policy engagement and influence, such as a Gates grant to AEI "to support original research and analysis to influence the national education debates and create a supportive policy environment for dynamic reform."[4]

Another large group of grant recipients includes organizations working to advance school choice, including those promoting charter schools. Although some of these groups have registered federal lobbyists (e.g., Education Reform Now), many do not. Other groups, like the Alliance for School Choice, provide boilerplates for legislation to strengthen and broaden school choice policies. The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice offers policy support to state-level initiatives ranging from grants for educational activities, testimony before legislatures, and program/policy design. To equip state-level actors, the Center for Education Reform provides a clearinghouse of policy design and implementation resources and generates resources to highlight strong choice policies. For example, the group creates an index ranking those states with the strongest policies for parental choice. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) retains federal lobbyists to advance federal-level agendas while also providing resources to assist state-level policy work. In addition, an annual conference aims to bring together grassroots actors, businesses, government officials, and nonprofits to advance charter school legislation. The wide-ranging advocacy tactics of these grantees show how foundation dollars help support an organizational infrastructure to shape school choice policies.

Finally, 501(c)4 organizations provide additional avenues to influence policy. Unlike 501(c)3 nonprofits, (c)4 organizations are permitted to participate in political campaigns and elections, although foundations are prohibited from providing funds for these activities. Furthermore, (c)4 organizations are not required to disclose their donors. Although some major foundation grantees have affiliated 501(c)4 organizations (e.g., Teach for America and Leadership for Educational Equity; Stand for Children Leadership Center and Stand for Children), foundations and their benefactors also invest directly in (c)4 organizations. For example, both the Walton and Broad foundations have funded the (c)3 and (c)4 arms of StudentsFirst, Michelle Rhee's political advocacy group (Blume, 2013; Resmovits, 2012).

As educational philanthropy evolves, funds flow increasingly toward national advocacy. Many of these groups are highly active in policy debates on issues such as common standards and charter school expansion. Moreover, foundations are finding new strategies to link nonprofit work with advocacy. According to a recent article on education advocacy in *Philanthropy* magazine, "successful education-reform advocacy involves donors coordinating their charitable, lobbying, and political donations in an integrated effort to improve the public policies affecting schools" (Levenick, 2013). In this vein, funders do not limit themselves to advocacy activities involving 501(c)3 organizations supported by traditional grants; coordination with 501(c)4 organizations is becoming more prevalent. Given the myriad of avenues open to foundations and their benefactors in pursuit of policy influence, our numbers provide an admittedly conservative estimate of philanthropic involvement in national-level policy advocacy.

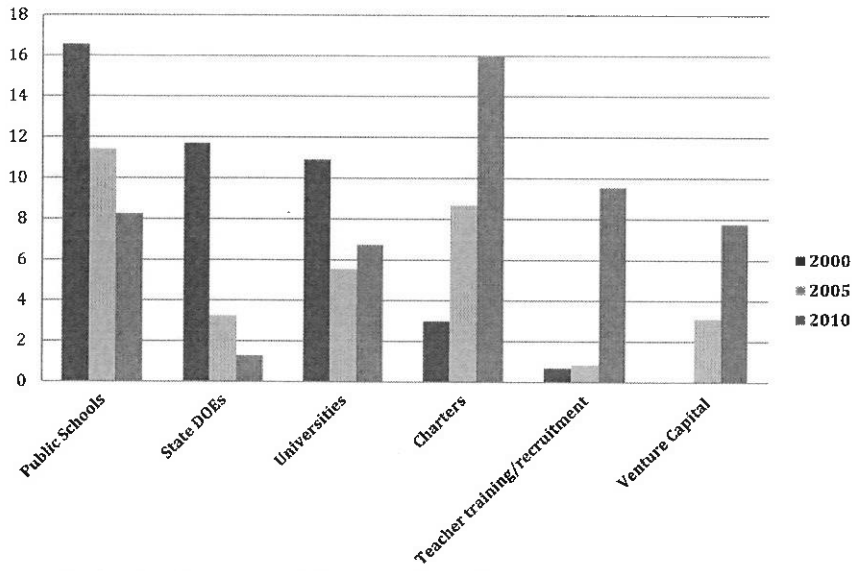

FIGURE 1. *Percent of major foundation grant dollars in traditional institutions versus jurisdictional challengers, 2000-2010*

Investing in Jurisdictional Challengers

Philanthropists fund a wide range of political activities, but what kind of policy agenda do they support? Prior research has shown that foundations—particularly those known as venture philanthropies—played a significant role in the development and expansion of charter schools and charter management organizations (Quinn, Tompkins-Stange, & Meyerson, in press; Scott, 2009). Applying the framework of Mehta and Teles (2012), we use the concept of jurisdictional challengers to describe charter schools and other organizations that compete with or offer alternatives to traditional educational institutions. Using our grant data, we analyze foundation funding for two types of jurisdictional challengers: (1) organizations that provide alternative modes of running schools, primarily charter schools, and (2) organizations that provide alternative sources of human capital in education, primarily alternative certification of teachers.

To assess the distribution of funds to different types of grantees, we total the grant dollars to organizations in categories associated with traditional institutions in education, including traditional public schools and school districts, state departments of education, and universities. Second, we sum the grant dollars to organizations in categories associated with jurisdictional challengers, including charter schools (this category includes individual schools, charter management organizations, charter associations, charter school leadership training, and charter facilities funds), alternative paths for recruitment/training for teachers, and venture capital. The venture capital category includes organizations such as New Schools Venture Fund, which invest most of their resources in organizations that fall under the jurisdictional challenger umbrella, particularly charter schools. All grant categories are listed in Appendix B.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of major foundation grant funding to each category of organizations in 2000, 2005, and 2010. All three categories of traditional education institutions (traditional public schools, state departments of education, and universities) received a smaller share of major foundation grant dollars in 2010 than they did in 2000. The opposite was true of the jurisdictional challenger categories. Funding for recruitment/training of teachers (including Teach for America, the New Teacher Project, and Urban Teacher Residency) grew substantially from 2005 to 2010. A striking contrast between the traditional institutions and jurisdictional challenger organizations is the mirror image in the philanthropic funding trends for traditional public schools compared to charter schools. Funding for traditional public schools dropped from 16% of grant dollars in 2000 to 8% in 2010, while funding for charter schools rose from around 3% in 2000 to 16% in 2010.

Our findings show that major foundations have doubled down on their earlier investments in jurisdictional challengers. Although some funders bucked the trend and maintained high levels of funding for traditional institutions (for example, the Ford Foundation gave 28% of its K-12 grant dollars to universities in 2010), most major funders invested heavily in jurisdictional challengers, particularly charter schools.

Convergence

Major foundations in education have simultaneously shifted away from funding traditional educational institutions towards support for organizations that could create competition for the public sector. This suggests a pattern of convergence in grantmaking—major foundations supporting the same kinds of activities and policy priorities. If foundations are not only funding organizations with similar functions, but also providing financial support for the same organizations, this would indicate significant overlap in the agenda and policy goals of top education funders.

In order to examine this possibility, we use our full set of K-12 grants by the 15 largest foundations from 2000, 2005, and 2010. For each year, we identify organizations receiving grants from more than one major funder and calculate the total grant

Table 2
Top Convergent Grantees

2000	2005	2010
Rural School and Community Trust: $12 million, 2 funders	Council of Chief State School Officers: $23.5 million, 4 funders	Charter School Growth Fund: $46 million, 6 funders
Schools of the 21st Century Corporation (Annenberg Challenge, Detroit): $11 million, 3 funders	Academy for Educational Development: $18 million, 3 funders	Teach for America, $44.5 million, 13 funders
Public Education Network: $10 million, 2 funders	New Schools Venture Fund: $17 million, 5 funders	KIPP: $24 million, 9 funders
Chicago Annenberg Challenge: $9 million, 2 funders	New Visions for Public Schools: $15 million, 3 funders	D.C. Public Education Fund: $22 million, 5 funders
Bay Area School Reform Collaborative: $7 million, 3 funders	Children's Scholarship Fund: $15 million, 2 funders	New Schools Venture Fund: $18 million, 10 funders

Note. Authors' own data gathered from foundation tax returns, reported in inflation-adjusted 2010 dollars.

dollars given to that organization. These funds constitute *convergent grants*—dollars given to grantees that received funds from two or more major funders (Reckhow, 2010).

The amount of convergent grant funding grew substantially from 2000 to 2010. In 2000, 23% of major foundations' grant dollars were given to organizations that received funds from two or more major foundations. In 2005, convergent grant-making grew to 35% of all grant dollars distributed by major education funders. By 2010, 64% of grant dollars were given to organizations that received grants from two or more major funders. These numbers suggest rapidly escalating convergence in education philanthropy, especially from 2005 to 2010.

Additionally, new types of organizations are receiving grants from multiple foundations, and the amount of grant dollars funneled to the largest grantees has grown substantially. Table 2 shows which organizations received the most grant dollars from multiple major foundations in 2000, 2005, and 2010 (all reported in 2010 dollars). In 2000, most of the top grantees received grants from two or three major funders. Three of the top five grantees were nonprofits associated with the Annenberg Challenge (in Detroit, Chicago, and the San Francisco Bay Area), but the target of their activities was reforming public school systems. By 2005, there was slightly more convergence among major funders toward top grantees, but it was not a dramatic change. The top grantees received more money, and a couple received grants from four or five funders. Some of the organizations mostly work with traditional public schools, such as the Council of Chief State School Officers and New Visions for Public Schools, a New York City–based nonprofit that has created and supports small public schools. Others, such as New Schools Venture Fund and Children's Scholarship Fund, mostly support charters or private schools.

By 2010, there is substantial evidence of convergent grant-making among major funders to top grantees. The most dramatic example of convergence is Teach for America, which received grants from 13 of the 15 largest K-12 foundations. Among the major funders, only Ford and Kellogg did not make grants to Teach for America in 2010. The amount of money distributed to the top five grantees also grew by 2010. Combined, these five grantees alone received over $150 million—18% of the grant dollars distributed by the 15 largest education foundations in 2010. Three of the top grantees in 2010 support the charter school sector—Charter School Growth Fund, KIPP, and New Schools Venture Fund.[5] The D.C. Public Education Fund supports the public school district in Washington, DC, particularly the new teacher merit pay system.

The lists of organizations in Table 2 focus on convergence among the grantees receiving the most funding. Convergence can also be viewed more broadly, linking dozens of organizations through shared funding relationships. Organizations that share multiple major funders may also share similar policy goals or face similar pressures and expectations from their benefactors. Moreover, funders that give to several organizations in common may have a strong match in their agenda priorities. Using social network analysis, we can visualize how many grantees share major funders, and whether there are clusters of grantees that share the same group of major funders. The networks presented here draw on the foundation grant data from the 15 largest K-12 funders in 2005 and 2010 (Figures 2 and 3). The organizations included in the networks received at least $2 million in grants and share at least three funders with another grantee. These parameters set a slightly higher bar for convergence—grantees must have three or more major funders in common to be included in the network. In each network, grantees are represented with circles (nodes).[6] Each node's size indicates the amount of grant dollars the grantee received; larger nodes represent more money. A line linking any two organizations indicates that those organizations have three or more funders in common. Thicker lines between organizations indicate higher numbers of shared funders.

Although we analyzed the grant data for 2000 and attempted to create a network, none existed. Several grantees received more than $2 million, but no pair of grantees shared three major funders. This provides evidence of very little convergent grant-making in 2000. Thus, our first network image represents the grantee network in 2005 (Figure 2). The 2005 network includes two separate clusters of grantees. The bottom cluster links research organizations with nonprofit organizations that partner with public school districts—New Visions for Public Schools, Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools, and the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Public Education. The main funders of these organizations include Gates, Annenberg, and Carnegie. The upper right corner of the figure includes a separate set of organizations, primarily focused on school choice and charter schools, including

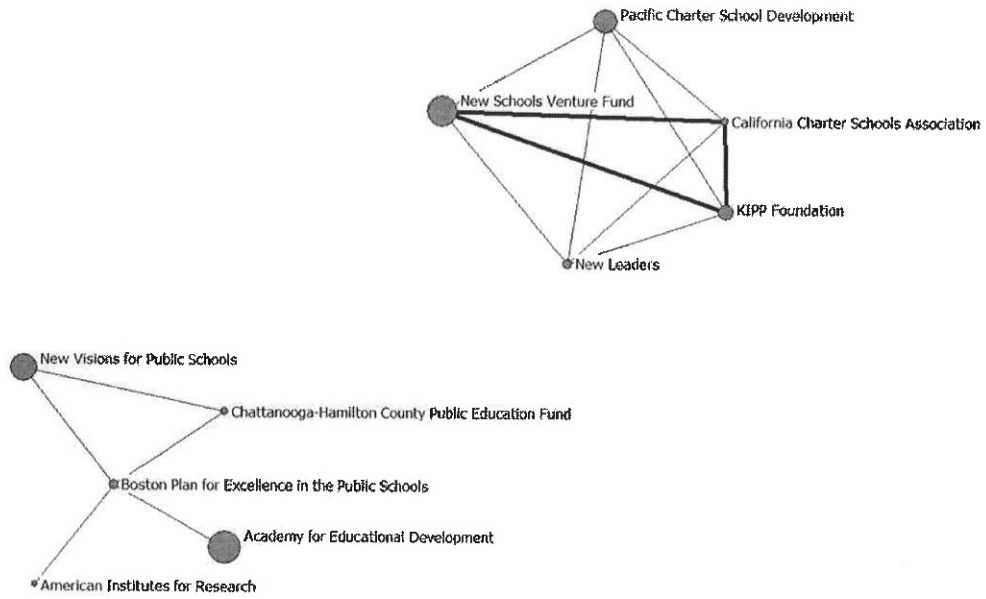

FIGURE 2. *Foundation grantee network, 2005*

Note. Grantees included in the figure received at least $2 million in grants from three or more major education funders in 2005. Links between nodes indicate shared funders (at least three); thicker lines signify more shared funding relationships.

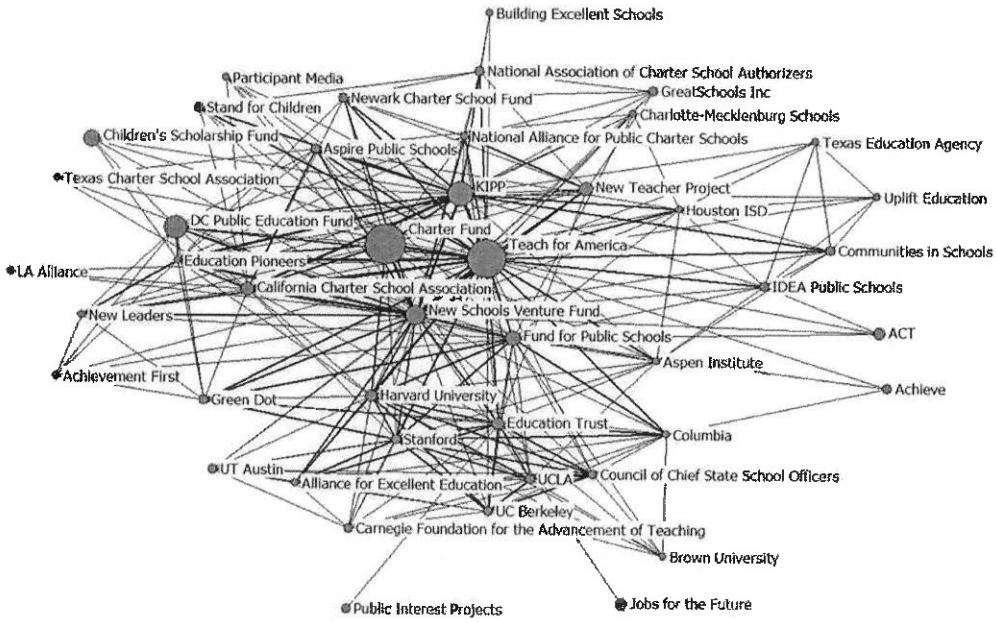

FIGURE 3. *Foundation grantee network, 2010*

Note. Grantees included in the figure received at least $2 million in grants from three or more major education funders in 2010. Links between nodes indicate shared funders (at least three); thicker lines signify more shared funding relationships.

New Schools Venture Fund and KIPP. The main funders for this group include Gates, Walton, and Broad. Although Gates is a funder for both groups, these distinct clusters of grantees suggest some divergence in the agendas of major education funders in 2005—one agenda that is focused on traditional public schools and another that is charter school focused.

The grantee network in 2010 is substantially more crowded and dense (Figure 3). Some of the organizations that composed the cluster at the top right of the 2005 network have moved to the center of the 2010 network. Unlike 2005, there are no completely isolated clusters in the 2010 network—everything is connected. There is a somewhat distinct cluster of grantees at the bottom of the network including several universities (Harvard, Stanford, UC Berkeley, UCLA), as well as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Although traditional education institutions (i.e., school districts, state

departments of education, universities) are not well represented in the 2010 grantee network, the bottom cluster includes some older and more traditional institutions. The funders that most of these grantees share include Gates, Carnegie, Hewlett, and Ford. At the top of the network, as well as the center, there are several organizations involved in operating charter schools or school choice advocacy. A larger group of funders are associated with these grantees, including Gates, Broad, Walton, Dell, Fisher, and Robertson. In some respects, the change in grant-making patterns by 2010 reflects the entry of new major funders into the top 15, such as Fisher and Robertson, which are heavily focused on school choice and charters. Rather than undertaking new policy initiatives or supporting a distinct set of organizations, many of the new entrants among the class of top donors distribute funds that overlap with other major funders.

The amount of inflation-adjusted grant dollars distributed by the top 15 education funders grew 73% from 2000 to 2010; however, by 2010 these funds were more concentrated among a set of grantees that received money from multiple major funders. Foundations have provided substantial and overlapping support for jurisdictional challengers, particularly charter school organizations. By targeting resources to a more focused set of organizations and allowing these organizations to grow stronger and more influential, foundations have likely increased their influence on education policy.

Conclusions

Philanthropy is commonly viewed as a charitable activity, and philanthropists have traditionally approached political advocacy tentatively, if at all. Yet major education foundations are increasingly politically engaged. Their work includes supporting groups involved in policy advocacy, funding organizations that promote competition with public sector institutions, and providing convergent funds to key groups advancing favored policy priorities. Coordinated, policy-focused, and advocacy-oriented philanthropy provides an important pathway for political influence among foundations.

Our research shows growing philanthropic support for jurisdictional challengers in education. Foundations have simultaneously invested greater sums into jurisdictional challengers while divesting from more traditional educational institutions. Moreover, increasing grant-making directed toward national research and advocacy suggests efforts to inject new perspectives, including charter school advocacy, into national educational policy debates. In this regard, philanthropists' attempts to cultivate challengers to traditional school operations coincide with the amplification of new voices in national educational politics.

Philanthropic funding for a jurisdictional challenge differs somewhat from the more traditional view of philanthropists as patrons for the interest group sector. Political scientists have credited philanthropists with helping to foster a diverse civil society by providing resources to groups that might not otherwise have the capacity to organize politically (Walker, 1983). A diverse civil society has been cited as the most significant accomplishment of American philanthropy:

> The greatest contribution of America's private foundations, therefore, is in continually empowering widely diverse individuals and groups holding a rainbow of views on every conceivable matter of social policy and civic concern, to organize themselves, to make their views heard, and to transform their ideas and dreams into reality. (Fleishman, 2009, p. 50)

Philanthropists have acted as patrons for new voices in education politics, funding increasing numbers of national advocacy groups. However, the concept of patronage does not fully capture the role of foundations in education policy advocacy. Philanthropic support for jurisdictional challengers suggests strong alignment of funding for research, advocacy, and implementation to advance a policy agenda. Based on trends drawn from our analysis, foundations have amplified a new set of voices in national policymaking around this more focused group of issues. This type of coordinated grant-making could accelerate changes to the educational interest group sector at the national level. Has the rise of interests associated with jurisdictional challengers come at the expense of other sectors of the education policy community, including unions, professional associations, civil rights organizations, or university-based researchers? This is an important potential implication to examine in future research.

Similarly, scholars could further examine the range of tools philanthropists use to leverage policy. For example, do individual philanthropists coordinate philanthropic and political activities, including support for 501(c)4 organizations, campaign contributions, and philanthropic funding? In addition to financial support for policy advocacy, to what extent do foundation leaders use public channels (e.g., media appearances) or insider channels (e.g., direct access to policymakers) to advance an agenda? Answers to these questions will help clarify whether and to what degree philanthropic activity plays a role in interest group politics and political advocacy.

Additionally, we noted the rise of newer foundations among the largest K-12 grant-makers, including Broad, Robertson, Dell, and Fisher. These foundations—often led by living benefactors—seem to be driving investment toward jurisdictional challengers. Are older foundations trying to emulate the strategies of new foundations? Or is there countermobilization within the philanthropic community to support alternative agendas?

Future research could also build on our convergence findings and explore the extent of agenda alignment across sectors. For example, the Federal Government is arguably the largest "grant-maker" of all, and recent programs, including Race to the Top and the Investing in Innovation Fund, used competitive models to award grants and involved coordinated funding with foundations. How did this coordination arise, and have the funding priorities of major foundations and the U.S. Department of Education become more closely aligned over time? How does public and private funding coordination affect the availability of funds for different types of agendas and programs? We have only begun to examine these relationships and their implications, and researchers must continue to monitor these trends and explore the consequences for educational policy.

NOTES

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[1]See http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/29/us/politics/state-of-the-union-address-text.html?_r=0.

[2]See http://www.all4ed.org/events.

[3]Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 990-PF, 2010.

[4]Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 990-PF, 2010.

[5]Our grant dollar total for all charter management organizations (including KIPP) includes grants to KIPP's main office as well as grants to individual KIPP schools.

[6]Network data analyzed using UCINET. Visual representations were created using NetDraw.

[7]The data were downloaded from the Foundation Center.

[8]We were unable to locate a tax return for this foundation.

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Appendix A

Top 15 Grant-Makers to K-12 EDUCATION, 2000, 2005, and 2010[7]

Largest donors to K-12 education in 2000

1. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
2. The Annenberg Foundation
3. Walton Family Foundation, Inc.
4. J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation, Inc.
5. The Ford Foundation
6. Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds
7. Lilly Endowment, Inc.
8. The Joyce Foundation
9. Ross Family Charitable Foundation[8]
10. The Brown Foundation, Inc.
11. Carnegie Corporation of New York
12. The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
13. The Skillman Foundation
14. Bank of America Foundation, Inc.
15. W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Largest donors to K-12 education in 2005

1. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
2. Walton Family Foundation, Inc.
3. Lilly Endowment, Inc.
4. The Wallace Foundation
5. The Annenberg Foundation
6. Broad Foundation
7. The Ford Foundation
8. Oberkotter Foundation
9. The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
10. H.N. and Frances C. Berger Foundation
11. Daniels Fund
12. J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation, Inc.
13. The Starr Foundation
14. Carnegie Corporation of New York
15. Community Foundation Silicon Valley

Largest donors to K-12 education in 2010

1. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
2. Walton Family Foundation, Inc.
3. W.K. Kellogg Foundation
4. The Michael and Susan Dell Foundation
5. Silicon Valley Community Foundation
6. Robertson Foundation
7. Carnegie Corporation of New York
8. The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
9. Broad Foundation
10. GE Foundation
11. The James Irvine Foundation
12. Doris & Donald Fisher Fund
13. Communities Foundation of Texas, Inc.
14. Daniels Fund
15. Ford Foundation

Appendix B

Grant Recipient Categories

- School district
- Public school
- Charter school
- Private school
- Charter school network
- Scholarship fund
- State department of education
- Data analysis center
- University/community college
- Publicity/media
- Local advocacy/research nonprofit
- State advocacy/research nonprofit
- National advocacy/research nonprofit
- Teacher training/recruitment
- School leadership training/recruitment
- Union/collective bargaining reform
- Association of elected/school officials
- Business constituency group
- Racial/ethnic group
- Local public education foundation
- Community organizer
- Arts education
- Disabled education
- Consultant
- Afterschool program
- Literacy
- Venture capital
- U.S. Department of Education
- Testing organization
- Philanthropic association
- Science/math education
- Parent Teacher Association
- Home schooling
- State education foundation
- College access promotion
- Public school network operator
- School volunteer/mentor program
- Library education
- Other student enrichment
- Civic education
- Community developer
- Legal advocacy
- Other curriculum resources
- Professional association
- Regional research/advocacy nonprofit
- School supplies/clothing
- Wrap around services provider