Title: Philanthropic investments and higher education: Is funding moving away from the university?

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Abstract

Researchers have taken note of the policy involvement among philanthropic foundations in higher education. In particular, philanthropists have increasingly relied on intermediary organizations —boundary spanning entities that operate between parties — to advance foundation-led initiatives. To what extent have philanthropic investments shifted away from colleges and universities and toward these intermediating entities? Through statistical analysis, semi-structured interviews, and network analysis, this mixed-method study empirically assesses the grant-making trends among six of the most active postsecondary funders. Using an original data set of over $1 billion in higher education filtered grants, findings demonstrated that philanthropic strategies with intermediary organizations has changed. Funders are more willing to mobilize resources to intermediaries than they've done so in the past, especially for causes related to college completion and student success.

Keywords: Higher education policy; college completion; philanthropy; mixed-methods; regression analysis; network analysis

Introduction

Many scholars have taken notice of the involvement among philanthropic foundations in higher education policy making, which has been outwardly more visible in recent years (Barhardt, 2017; Bernstein, 2014; Clotfelter, 2007; Haddad & Reckhow, 2018; Hall & Thomas, 2012; Kelly & James, 2015). While philanthropists have always worked to promote certain agendas in higher education (Barnhardt, 2017; Bernstein, 2014; Slaughter & Silva, 1980; Thelin & Trollinger, 2014), their approach to the sector has changed since the early 2000s (Hall & Thomas, 2012). Not only has there been a rise in "advocacy philanthropy," a close cousin of venture philanthropy (Hall & Thomas, 2012; Kelly & James, 2015), there has also been more convergent grant making trends among leading philanthropists (Haddad & Reckhow, 2018). One particular way in which educational philanthropists have engaged in policy has been through the use of intermediaries (Gandara, Rippner & Ness, 2017; Hall & Thomas, 2012; Kelly & James, 2015; Haddad & Reckhow, 2018; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Reckhow, 2010, 2013). Specifically, intermediary organizations (IOs) are entities that operate between a principle organization and the systems they are trying to influence or improve (Gandara, Rippner & Ness, 2017; Honig, 2004). These conduits, which can be viewed as boundary spanners, have operated between fields of higher education and philanthropy (Gandara, et al., 2017). In higher education policy making, IOs may provide the technical expertise, access to networks, and the organizational capacity needed to formulate and implement reforms (Honig, 2004; Ness, & Tandberg, & McLendon, 2015; Lubienski, Scott, & DeBray, 2011; Scott & Jabbar, 2014). In addition, IOs may operate between different levels of government (local, reginal, and national) and receive mixture of funding from private and public sources (Honig, 2004; Ness, et al., 2015; Lubienski, Scott, & DeBray, 2011). Therefore, these intermediaries can be both, private or quasi-public institutions (Honig, 2004). Scholars and journalists have noted that the newer, more advocacy-oriented philanthropists—The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Gates) and The Lumina Foundation (Lumina)—have been more willing to fund such entities to promote college completion and student success (Gandara, et al., 2017; Hall & Thomas, 2012). The college completion agenda, a reform movement comprised of a coalition of organizations which seeks to increase the proportion of young adults with a credential beyond high school, have been linked to this trend of higher education grant making (Bernstein, 2014; Hall & Thomas, 2012; Kelly & James, 2015).

Intermediary Organizations and Policy Engagement

More recently, this strategy has been reported in media outlets. For example, on March 15th, 2017, *Inside Higher Ed* reported that a new higher education organization, Higher Learning Advocates, established by Lumina, was founded with the sole mission of advancing federal policies designed to promote student success (Fain, 2017). Based in Washington D.C., Higher Learning Advocates aims to shift "federal policy from higher education to higher learning" through research production and advocacy (Fain, 2017, para 3). In particular, Higher Learning Advocates not only received its startup funding Lumina—one of the most active and largest foundations in higher education — but also drew on its networks to establish its board of trustees. According to *Inside Higher Ed*, "[t]he group's attempt to reach both sides of the aisle in Washington is reflected in its initial governing board … which includes some big names in higher education" (Fain, 2017, para 4). Some of its most well-known Republican members are Margaret Spellings, the current president of the University of North Carolina system and the former Bush Administration's Secretary of Education; and the former three time Governor of Michigan, John Engler, who led the National Association of Manufactures and the Business Roundtable (Higher Learning Advocates, n.d.). On the other side of the aisle is former representative George Miller (a Democrat), who once chaired the Education and Workforce Committee in the House of Representatives (Higher Learning Advocates, n.d.). Miller also had experience working alongside President Barack Obama on issues relating to federal loan policy and issues around workforce development (Higher Learning Advocates, n.d.).

Few studies have examined this trend empirically. Many researchers in K-12 education have explored this new approach in rigorous ways, relying on both, quantitative and qualitative assessments (Greene, 2005; Greene, 2015; Hess & Henig, 2015; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Snyder, 2015; Scott & Jabber, 2014; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). Current literature in K-12 education has suggested that the influence of IOs sponsored by foundations is growing, displacing some of the more traditional blocks in K-12 policy (Henig, 2013; Hess &

Henig, 2015; Scott & Jabber, 2014; Tompkins-Stange, 2016; Quinn, Tompkins-Stange, & Meyerson, 2014). According to Scott and Jabber (2014), "Foundations have been critical for providing the essential funding for other IOs and their advocacy efforts, without which such organizations would not exist at their current scale and level of policy influence" (p.238). Scott and Jabber (2014) also noted that foundations play intermediating role themselves. Specifically, foundations can work to broker ideas (Reckhow, Galey, & Ferrare, 2016), or alter the ecology of policy actors in the education sector (Reckhow & Snyder, 2014). While IOs have been shown to be important actors in K-12 education, this has been understudied in higher education. The goal of this study is to fill this gap. To that end, this study will extend the current empirical literature around higher education philanthropy and IOs by addressing the following two questions: (1) To what extent have philanthropic investments shifted away from colleges and universities and toward these intermediating entities? and (2) What are some of the motivations and strategies behind these trends?

Theoretical framework

The conceptual framework which grounds this study is organizational theory, with an emphasis on collective action and resource mobilization (DiMaggio, 1991; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012; Weber & King, 2014). Researchers have posited that philanthropic organizations operate within the organizational field of higher education philanthropy (Haddad & Reckhow, 2018), mobilizing resources for specific outcomes or agendas (Barnhardt, 2017; Cress & Snow, 1996; DiMaggio, 1991; Jenkins, 1998; Jenkins & Eckert, 1986). According to Zald and Useem (1987), this form of mobilizations among actors occurs "to achieve change in the social structure and the allocation of value" (p. 249). One strategy philanthropists have employed is allocating money toward IOs to effectuate field-level change (Ylvisaker, 1987). As Callahan (2017) has noted, "Gifts to policy groups often go hand in hand with other kinds of giving that aims to have influence" (p.76).

Researchers in K-12 education have demonstrated that IOs have become important policy actors, who tend to be networked into the broader policy landscapes (Honig, 2004; Cooper & Schwchuck, 2015; Scott, Jabbar, Goel, DeBray, & Lubienski, 2015). Therefore, resource mobilization may be more than just the allocation of funds (grants), but also access to policy entrepreneurs (social capital) and the networks they represent. According to Clemens (2005), "Mobilization may—and frequently does—run along lines of personal relationships and friendship, but the imagery of social movement theory implies conscious and strategic coordination of action that does not rely on— indeed, typically opposes—coordination that is based on legitimate authority" (p. 357). In particular, Scott et al. (2015) offered the following metaphor, positing that foundations and IOs represent "a 'hub-and-spoke' relationship" (p.7). For Scott et al., (2015), foundations represent the hub, or the centralized unit, and educational non-profits represent the spoke; who may produce research, broker relationships, or connect with others in a policy network. This provides a useful conceptual analysis for this study of higher education funders and IOs.

Methods and Data Sources

Multi-method approach. A mix-method approach is used to examine the research questions above (Yin, 2009). Like many case studies in philanthropy, this study draws on multiple sources of data analysis, ranging from descriptive and inferential statistics, semi-structured interviews, and network analysis (Ferrare & Reynolds, 2016; Reckhow, 2013; Haddad & Reckhow, 2018; Kelly & James, 2015; Klopott, 2015). This analytical approach provides a nuanced view into the trends of philanthropic investments of IOs and the networks they represent (e.g., Ferrare & Reynolds, 2016; Reckhow, 2013; Wasserman & Faust, 1994; Yin, 2009). In addition, unlike past studies which tended to focus on specific programs or initiatives, this approach investigates philanthropy as an ecological system of organizational actors, or what could be referred to as a field-level assessment (Barnhardt, 2017; Klopott, 2015).

Foundations were selected based on the top funders classified by the Foundation Center's Online (Foundation Center, 2018). The foundations in the sample are the Carnegie Corporation of New York (Carnegie), the Ford Foundation (Ford), Gates, The Kresge Foundation (Kresge), Lumina, and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (Kellogg) (Table 1). Other studies have noted that these philanthropists are some of the most active patrons in higher education (Hall & Thomas, 2012; Kelly & James, 2015; Haddad & Reckhow, 2018). Of course, more foundations could have been included, but limiting the scope of funders allows for a greater analysis. An original data set was created to conduct the statistical analysis. Specifically, over 1,700 grants filtered for higher education (N=1730) were collected from the Foundation Center Online Directory (Haddad & Reckhow, 2018; Kelly & James, 2015). Two points of time were considered— 2006 and 2012. These were important dates because they represent a time before and after the college completion agenda gained national recognition, representing a policy window.

Table 1.

Foundation Name	Location	Endowment	Grants 2006	Grants 2012
Gates Foundation	Seattle, WA	$44.3b	N=70	N=347
Carnegie Foundation	New York, NY	$3b	N=80	N=78
Ford Foundation	New York, NY	$12.4b	N=219	N=143
Lumina Foundation	Indianapolis, IN	$1.4B	N=132	N=167
Kresge Foundation	Troy, MI	$3.6b	N=35	N=94
Kellogg Foundation	Battle Creek, MU	$7.3b	N=83	N=281

Note: Grants extracted from the Foundation Center Directory Online. Number of grants represent grants filtered for higher education.

Coding scheme. Each funder's most recent PF-990 tax data was downloaded and examined using R Statistical software (R Core Team, 2016), allowing for a data-driven perspective into the funding patterns. Further, grants were coded based on broad categories and types based on a coding outline developed by Kelly and James (2015). All grants were coded based on the type of funding they provided, such as advocacy, policy, research, college completion, general operating support, and so on (Greene, 2005; Greene, 2015; Haddad & Reckhow, 2017; Reckhow, 2013; Snyder, 2015). Similarly, institutional types were coded as well, such as higher education institutions, non-profit organizations, research firms, membership organizations, and so on (Haddad & Reckhow, 2017; Kelly & James, 2015).

Statistical analysis. In order to examine grant making behaviors and organizational strategies, a logistic regression was conducted, similar to Klopott's (2015) study in K-12 philanthropy. The dependent variable was the likelihood of a funder giving a grant to an IO. The independent variables are the types of foundation identified, the year the grant was authorized (2006 or 2012), and the interaction term. The IO is was a binary variable coded as 1. For this analysis, IOs are organizations that do not represent higher education institutions, such as think-tanks/research firms, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, certain types of membership organizations, and government agencies. Higher education institutions and organizations that represent this sector are coded as 0. The differences between newer and traditional foundations have been a theme in the empirical literature (Haddad & Reckhow, 2017). Therefore, this was included as a binary variable. Specifically, newer, more advocacy-oriented funders were coded as 1, and older, more traditional funders were coded as 0. Years authorized were also coded as a binary variable, in which 2006 is coded as 0 and 2012 is coded as 1. R statistical software was used to conduct the analysis (R Core Team, 2016) and the lme4 packaged was used to run the logistic regression (Bates, Machler, Bolker & Walker, 2015).

$$IOi = \beta_o + \beta_1 \text{Traditional} + \beta_2 Year\ Authorized + \beta_3 Traditional * \ Year\ Authorized + e_i$$

Qualitative interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both, foundation officials and representatives of IOs (Thomkins-Stange, 2016). The qualitative portion of this study was grounded on an inductive approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Seven individuals were interviewed from the philanthropic sector. This included officials at all levels—from the executive teams, directors of programs, senior program officers, and communications staff. Interview questions focused on higher education policy and advocacy engagement, with an emphasis on college completion. The four informants from the nonprofit/policy sector were interviewed to discuss the influence of philanthropists on the completion agenda. For IOs, many have had experience in national and local policymaking and have worked on issues around college completion and student success. In many instances, they were referred by the foundation officials as "knowledgeable insiders." Through this process, participants were encouraged to recruit others in their professional circles to undergo an interview on this topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In total, there were eleven interviews. NVivo (2015) was used to house and analyze the 11 interview transcripts.

Social network analysis. Lastly, social network analysis was used to examine the relationship between funders and the institutional types they fund (Ferrare & Reynolds, 2016; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). The existing research on policy networks have demonstrated the important of organizational types that promote and broker ideas (Reckhow, et al., 2016). Scholars in K-12 have referred to such entities as jurisdictional challengers, organizations which operate outside traditional systems in K-12 education (Ferrare

& Setari, 2018). Therefore, directed affiliation networks were created using the tax form fillings (PF-990s) of foundations to examine funding patters between traditional higher education institutions and IOs (Ferrare & Reynolds, 2016; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). UCINET was used to conduct these analysis (Borgatti, Everett and Freeman, 2002) similar to Ferrare and Reynolds' (2016) study of K-12 funders. Comparing affiliation graphs between 2006 and 2012 allows funding patterns and differences to emerge.

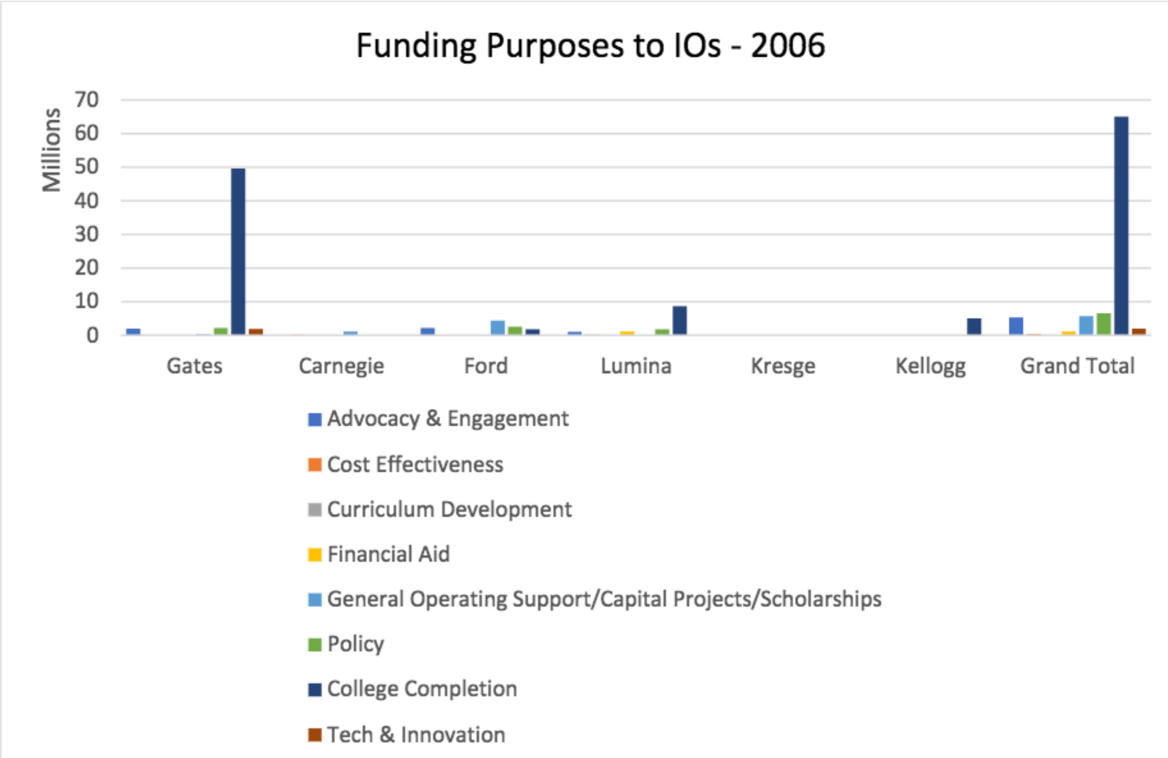
Results

<u>Question 1:</u> To what extent have philanthropic investments shifted away from colleges and universities and toward these intermediating entities

When comparing the granting trends between the two years, the sheer amount of funding to IOs has increased over time. For instance, for 2006, 22 percent of total funding went toward IOs, representing $97.8m in higher education filtered grants. This more than doubled in six years. In 2012, $251m was awarded to IOs, representing 24 percent of the overall grant amount. To further investigate these trends, the coding scheme was used to asssess what granting purposes were directed toward IOs. According to Figure 1, in 2006, for the Gates and Lumina, college completion initiatives held the largest share of IO directed funding, representing nearly $50m and nearly $9m in higher education filtered funding.

Furthermore, we also see Ford and Kellogg providing IOs with college completion grants; yet are nowhere near the levels of Gates or Lumina (Figure 1). Kellogg also provided a sizable amount of funding to IOs for student success initiatives, but this, too, only represented a little over half of what Lumina spent in the same year (Figure 1). Likewise, Carnegie barley allocates any funding to IOs, and when it did, it was directed toward low-leverage forms of support, including general operating support, capital projects, and scholarships (Figure 1). These types of grants are unlike advocacy and policy grants which seeks to influence or improve the system of higher education (Haddad & Reckhow, 2018; Kelly & James, 2015). During the same time, the Kresge Foundation provides no funding to any IOs (Figure 1). In sum, the majority of funding to IOs in 2006 were directed to college completion initiatives, mostly from Gates and Lumina, with Kellogg not far behind (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

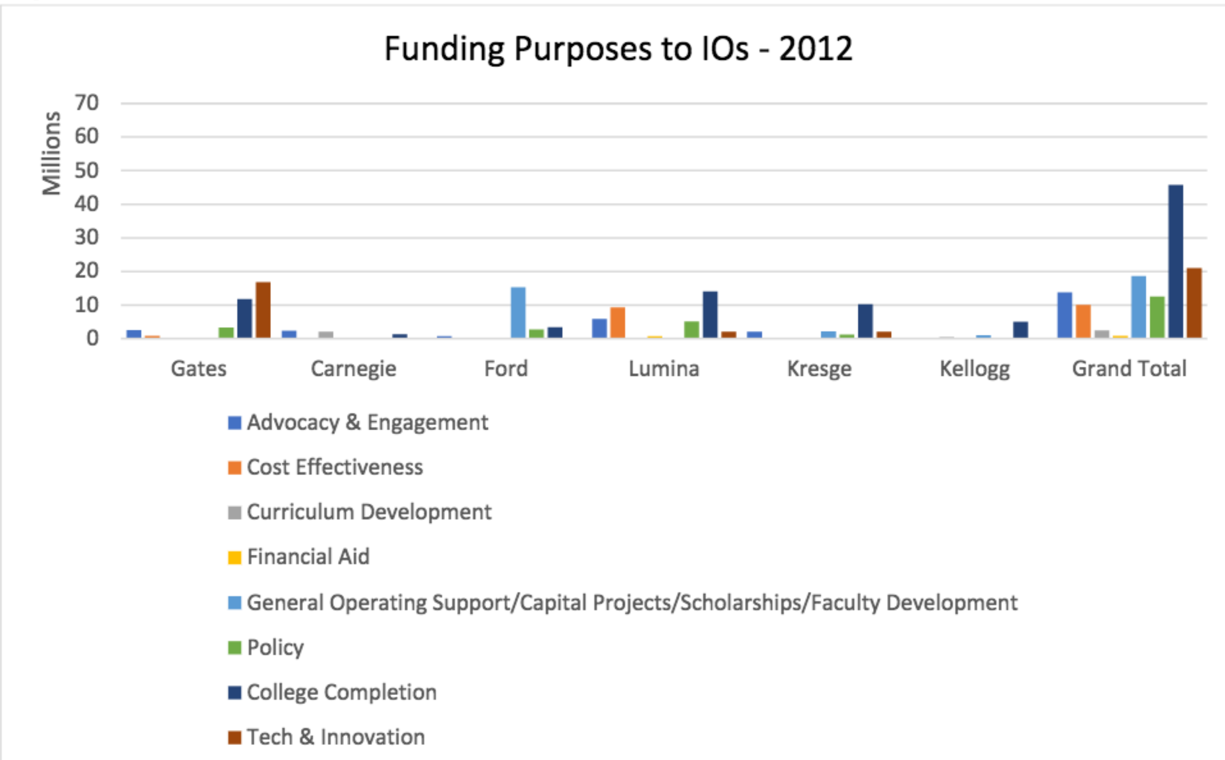


Note: Data collected and analyzed by author using foundations' PF-990 tax filings.

In 2012, the funding landscape for intermediating entities has changed. According to Figure 2, Gates still provided a sizable amount of funding to IOs for the college completion project, but it also diversified the type of grants IOs receive. For example, it increased spending for tech and innovation initiatives (Figure 2). An example of such a grant is a $1.4m investment to Ithaka Harbors, an educational non-profit that works to integrate digital technologies into the classroom. This grant was "To assist in the implementation, measurement, and analysis of learning outcomes and potential system-wide cost savings via multiple massive open online course-based (MOOC) blended learning pilots within the University of Maryland System."

For the Gates and Lumina, college completion initiatives still held the largest share of IO directed funding (Figure 2). In addition, advocacy and policy both receive some funding, though not at the same levels. During this time, according to Figure 2, we do see an uptick of college completion grants by Ford and Kellogg. Interestingly, Kresge became an important player in supporting IOs, matching Lumina's previous spending levels (Figure 1; Figure 2). Other research has shown that Kresge has incorporated many of the strategies ushered in by the newer philanthropists, Gates and Lumia (Haddad & Reckhow, 2018), and this further substantiates these claims. Carnage and Ford have provided more funding to IOs in the college completion agenda, representing $1.3m and $3.4m. In total, college completion still takes the majority of funding to intermediating entities. However, when compared to the numbers in 2006, it has become more diverse. In particular, there is more funding toward advocacy and engagement types of grants, representing a 40 percent increase. Policy and advocacy engagement has been an important strategy to funders. According to Knott and McCarthy (2009), "This approach centers on the goal of facilitating the generation of policy knowledge and ideas, working to bring think tanks and researchers together to create a policy discussion, funding efforts to influence public opinion on the idea, and then funding policy advocacy groups based on these ideas and discussions" (p. 223-4).

Figure 2.



Note: Data collected and analyzed by author using foundations' PF-990 tax filings.

In order to examine some of the organizational approaches and behaviors among funders, I first created a model without an interaction of foundations to examine the main effects of the year grants were authorized. I hypothesized that funding was moving toward IOs, but wanted to look deeper into the granting purposes and how they may be driving this shift in strategies. In order to do so, I examined funding strategies by assessing grant purposes directed at IOs (see Model 1). Below, Model 1 shows that both, year authorized, and funder type are significant predictors of foundation behavior (Table 1).

Model 1. Main Effects Only

$$IOi = \beta_o + \beta_1 \text{Traditional} + \beta_2 Year\ Authorized + e_i$$

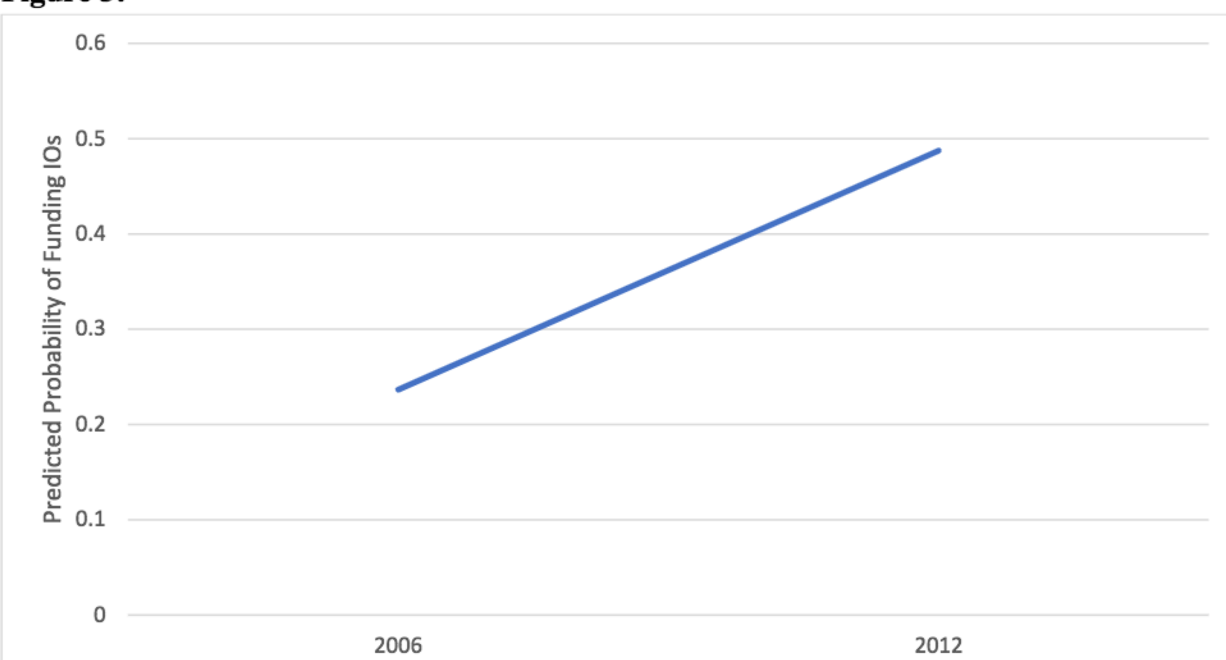
According to Table 2, in 2012, philanthropic foundations were more likely to fund intermediating entities than they were in 2006, controlling for the type of foundations (newer/advocacy funders) (OR=3.073, P<0.001) (Table 2), which is represented in Figure 3 below. Overall, Figure 3 shows that funders were more likely to fund IOs in 2012 than they were in 2006. In both years, foundations were more likely to fund IOs. Traditional funders in the sample were more likely to give a grant to an intermediating entity than the newer foundations were, controlling for years authorized (Table 2). These findings led me to think that the trend between 2006 and 2012 were different between the newer funders and the older, more traditional philanthropists. Therefore, I included an interaction term to explore these differences.

Table 2.

	Estimate	OR	Standard Error	Z	Pr...z..
(Intercept)	-1.543	0.214	0.200	-7.698	P<0.001
2012	1.122	3.072	0.113	9.936	P<0.001
Traditional	0.234	1.263	0.104	2.244	0.025

Note: Reference groups are 2006; reference groups for funders were Lumina and Gates, coded as the newer/advocacy foundations.

Figure 3.



Note: Data collected and analyzed by author using foundations' PF-990 tax filings.

The second model allows for the interaction term between funder. Due to the suspicion that the trend may be different between more traditional funders and advocacy philanthropists, I decided to create a model which separates traditional funders from the newer funders, which is represented in Model 2 below.

Model 2. Interaction Model

$$IOi = \beta_o + \beta_1 \text{Traditional} + \beta_2 Year\ Authorized + \beta_3 Traditional * \ Year\ Authorized + e_i$$

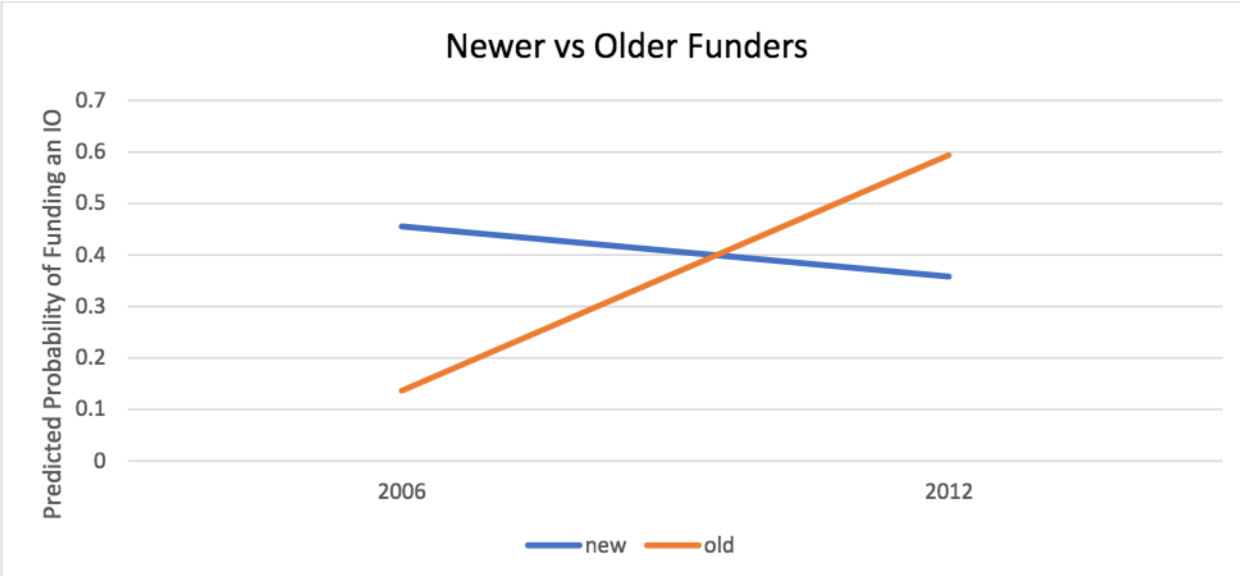
According to Table 3, in 2006, traditionally funders were less to fund IOs than newer foundations (OR=0.189, P<0.001). In 2012, however, newer foundations were less likely to fund IOs than in 2006 (OR=0.667, P=0.016). The interaction term added is large and statistically significant (OR=13.858, P<0.001). This has been visualized in Figure 4 below. For older foundations, the probability of funding IOs increase from 2006 to 2012, whereas for newer foundations, the probability decreases from 2006 to 2012 (Figure 4).

Table 3.

	Estimate	**OR**	**Std..Error**	**z.value**	**Pr...z..**
(Intercept)	-0.179	0.836	0.141	-1.265	0.206
2012	-0.405	0.667	0.169	-2.405	0.016
Traditional	-1.664	0.189	0.201	-8.293	P<0.001
2012*Traditional	2.629	13.858	0.236	11.138	P<0.001

Note: Reference groups are 2006; reference groups for funders were Lumina and Gates.

Figure 4.



Note: Data collected and analyzed by author using foundations' PF-990 tax filings.

Together, this illustrates that the likelihood of funding IOs increased for older funders. However, though these is a lower probability for newer funder, it does not suggest that this is no longer a strategy for the advocacy philanthropists. As the descriptive data illustrated, there is still a sizable portion of funding directed to IOs.

Question 2: Why do educational philanthropist use these external networks over colleges and universities?

A theme which emerged in the interviews is the notion that investing in IOs are just one of the many ways to achieve a foundation's goals. As one high-level foundation official from Kellogg noted, "I'd say we have multiple approaches there. It's not one particular approach. For example, funding research in higher education or with other nonprofits that are doing research on the issues of concern to the foundation. We want strategy." While this quote illustrates that funding intermediating entities is just one of the many strategy's that's philanthropist engages in, many philanthropists still fund traditional institutions. Specifically, in the case of one of the more traditional funders, connecting to local communities is an important rational: "The other piece we look for when we look for that is that the Higher ED institutions are connected to communities. The researchers, the policy and if it's simply sitting in the ivory tower. The research that they are doing is connected to--and inform how the impact will be on the families and the country in general."

Indeed, IOs have no entirely displaced the funding that higher education institutions have traditionally enjoyed. Nonetheless, they did become important players in higher education philanthropy. One aspects which is highlighted through the interview data are importance as network emperors, brokering ideas between research producing institutes and policy makers. As a high-level informant from one of the newer foundations noted, "The other thing that we do is support nonprofits. We support nonprofit and ask to see the network or they have alliances or they are part of a group that really is going to dig deep but not for themselves. For example, we have supported public policy channel based on [noise]. But they are connecting their research. If you look at regional policy."

This can be examined empirically through a social network analysis. Social network research examines relationships between actors – in this case, organizations to organizations (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). In order to examine affiliation, I used the 990-forms from the grant data bases (Reckhow, et al., 2016). This allowed me to assess the relationship between foundations and the institutional types they support. In particular, the grant network is larger in 2006 than 2012 by nearly 50 percent (Table 4). According to Table 4, all funders listed in the networks have a strong ties to traditional higher education institutions.

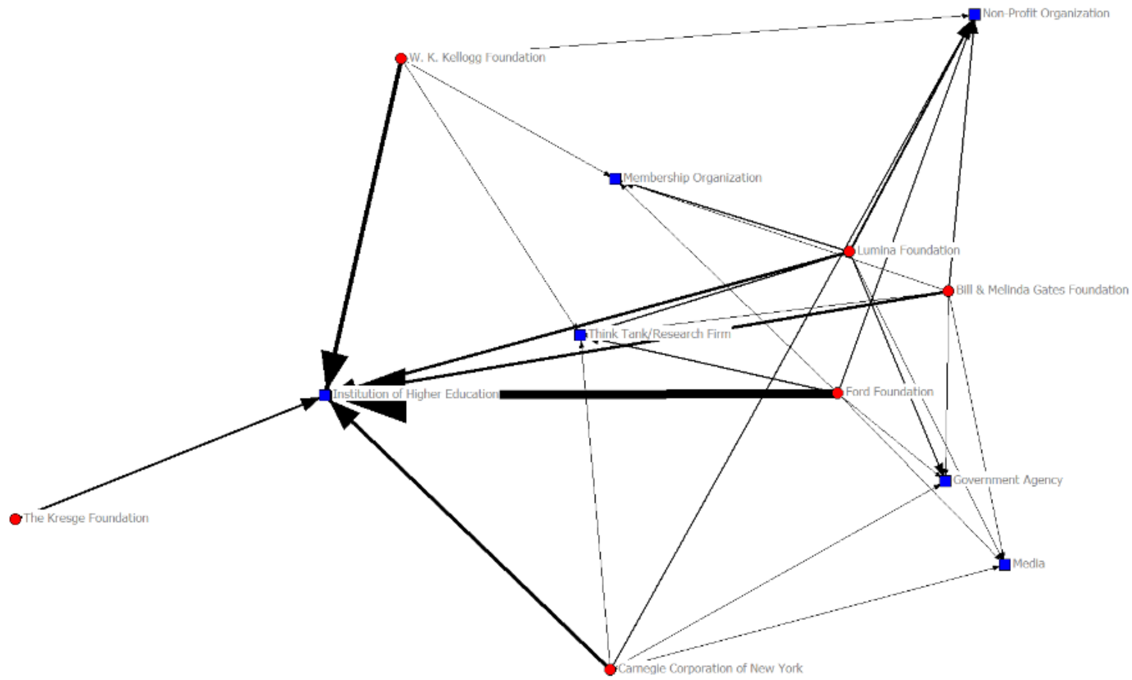
Table 4

	2006 Grant Network	2012 Grant Network
For-Profit Firm	0	6
Government Agency	16	53
Higher Ed	384	531
Media	4	14
Membership Organization	9	91
Non-Profit Organization	87	317
Think-Thank/Research Firm	28	95
Total	528	1107

Note: Data collected and analyzed by author using foundations' PF-990 tax filings.

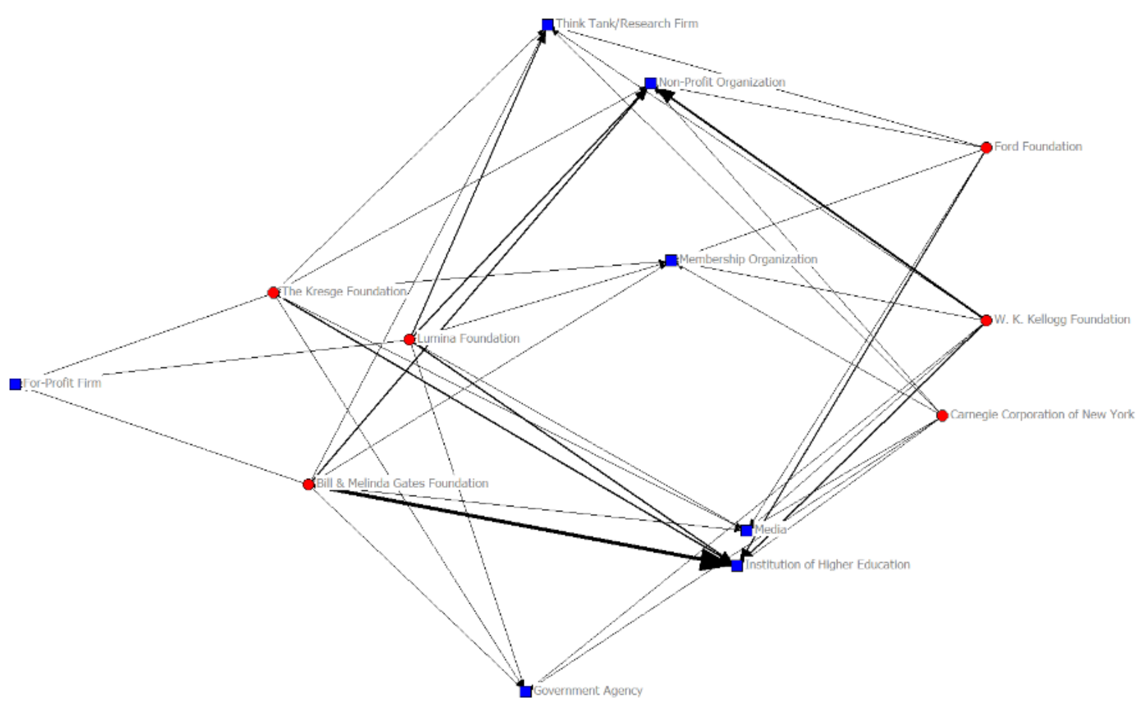
This has been visualized in Figure 5 and Figure 6. Figure 5 represents the 2006 grant network, and Figure 6 represents the 2012 network. In Figure 5, all foundations in the sample have the strongest ties to institutions of higher education, which is represented by the thicker arrows pointing to "Institutions of Higher Education." Figure 5 demonstrated that foundations have always funded a diverse set of organization, but their main target has been colleges and universities. The newer philanthropists have funded more think-thanks, governmental agencies and media organizations than some of the older funders, such as Kresge, Kellogg, and Carnegie. Interestingly. Ford has always had a strong history of funding colleges and universities; however, have been the innovators in supporting IOs, especially for civil (Bernstein, 2014).

Figure 5



Note: Data collected and analyzed by author using foundations' PF-990 tax filings. Red circles represent foundations and blue squares represent institutional types.

Figure 6



Note: Data collected and analyzed by author using foundations' PF-990 tax filings. Red circles represent foundations and blue squares represent institutional types.

Bernstein (2014) argued that the advocacy philanthropists has learned the strategy of funding external entities from the Ford Foundation. According to Bernstein (2014), Ford has had a long history of funding non-profits and other IOs involved in civil rights movement. She concluded that Ford "convinced Lumina and Gates that it was important to engage these "outside" groups in the college completion agenda" (Bernstein, 2014, p.115). Comparing Figure 5 to Figure 6, we start to see that the line toward colleges and universities is still thicker, but so are the lines toward non-profit organizations, media, and think tanks, a drastic change since 2006.

Conclusion

When speaking to the general field of philanthropy, Callahan (2017) posited that "One trend of the past decade or two is that donors of nearly all stripes are getting better organized, recognizing that there's strength in numbers— whether they're trying to conquer Parkinson's disease or trying to make social change" (p.200). Shifting our focus back to higher education, there has been limited scholarship in this area of philanthropic foundations and IOs (Ness et al., 2015). According to Ness et al. (2015), "The state higher education interest group literature is also nearly void of attention to national or regional intermediaries that act as interest groups with the states." (p.153).

The empirical research has demonstrated the philanthropic foundations have become more strategic in their grant making, relying on similar approaches to venture philanthropy (Hall & Thomas, 2012). Furthermore, these funders have increasingly co-funded the same organizations in the name of college completion (Haddad & Reckhow, 2018). Through a mixture of data, this study demonstrated that six of the largest funders in higher education have increasingly relied on IOs in the student success and college completion agenda. a higher probability of giving a grant to an entity outside colleges and universities. In particular, some foundations prefer to use IOs due to their capacity role, reaching directly into communities, and their policy entrepreneurships. Though these are initial findings, they do provide an insight into the shifts among leading philanthropists in higher education, and how they have engaged IOs.

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