HOW PRIVATE PHILANTHROPIES BUILD POLICY CAPABILITY VIA STRATEGIC GIVING: A CASE STUDY OF “ADVANCING AND DEFENDING THE COMMON CORE”

A Dissertation in
Education Theory and Policy
by
Nikolaus J. Barkauskas

© 2017 Nikolaus J. Barkauskas

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

August 2017
The dissertation of Nikolaus J. Barkauskas was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Mindy Kornhaber
Associate Professor of Education (Education Theory & Policy)
Dissertation Advisor
Chair of Committee

David Gamson
Associate Professor of Education (Education Theory & Policy)

Liang Zhang
Associate Professor of Education (Education Theory & Policy)
Senior Research Associate

Scott Alan Metzger
Associate Professor of Education (Curriculum and Instruction)

Dana L. Mitra
Professor of Education (Education Theory & Policy)
Head of Graduate Program (Education Theory & Policy)

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of national educational standards that were initially adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012). The Common Core reform was aimed at improving academic achievement and increasing equity for students across state lines (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012), and thereby graduating students ready to pursue college or career without remediation. The reform was intended to alter the national education landscape by; e.g., setting common approaches to assessment and fostering efficiency in providing professional development and curriculum resources. This study looks at how private philanthropic foundations funded non-profit organizations to develop, build support for, and implement the standards on a wide scale. Specifically, this study examines what has been termed “strategic giving” by analyzing 465 of grant announcements from seven private foundations that supported the Common Core. The findings from this analysis illuminate a set of shared purposes that drove the reform forward and the grant-making strategies used to accomplish those purposes.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures ........................................................................................................... vi
List of Tables ................................................................................................................ vii
Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................... viii

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Study ........................................................................... 1

The Context of the Common Core ................................................................. 1
From National Standards to the Common Core as a National Reform ............... 3
The Role of Philanthropy in the Common Core ................................................. 6
Research Questions ................................................................................................. 8
Significance of the Study ...................................................................................... 8
Summary ................................................................................................................. 9

Chapter 2 Literature Review ................................................................................... 10

Standards-Based Reforms ....................................................................................... 10
Defining Philanthropy ............................................................................................. 12
Philanthropy in the United States .......................................................................... 13
Philanthropy in Education ....................................................................................... 17
Philanthropy in Education Policy .......................................................................... 20
Summary ................................................................................................................. 24

Chapter 3 Conceptual Framework .......................................................................... 26

Capability in Education Policy .............................................................................. 27
Resource Dependency Theory ............................................................................. 29
Summary ................................................................................................................. 31

Chapter 4 Methodology ........................................................................................... 32

Research Design ...................................................................................................... 32
Limitations .............................................................................................................. 33
Trustworthiness of the Study .............................................................................. 34
Sample .................................................................................................................. 35
Data Collection ...................................................................................................... 36
Data Analysis .......................................................................................................... 39
Developing Descriptive and Inductive Codes ...................................................... 39
Analyzing Grant Announcements ...................................................................... 41
Summary ................................................................................................................. 43

Chapter 5 Findings: Shared Foundation Purposes .................................................. 44

Shared Purposes of Common Core Grants from Private Foundations ................. 44
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3-1. A Model of Capability for the Common Core ..........................................................29
Figure 5-1. Crafting CCSS Materials by Recipient Type ..........................................................48
Figure 5-2. Aligning Systemic Policy by Grant Amount ..........................................................52
Figure 5-3. Aligning Systemic Policy by Recipient Size ..........................................................53
Figure 5-5. Advocacy with Target Populations by Grant Amount ............................................61
Figure 5-6. Advocacy with Target Populations by Grant Term Length ....................................62
Figure 6-1. Number of Common Core Grants by Private Foundations Over Time .................67
Figure 6-2. Chronology of Foundation Giving to Support Varied Purposes of the Common Core Reform .................................................................69
Figure 6-3. Chronology of Foundation Giving to Support Varied Purposes of the Common Core Reform: 2012-14 .................................................................69
Figure 6-4. The Proportion of Common Core Grants to each Recipient Type .......................71
Figure 6-5. Plot of Common Core Grants for Achieve, Inc .....................................................74
Figure 6-6. Plot of Common Core Grants for the National Public Education Support Fund ..74
Figure 7-1. A Model of Capability for the Common Core ........................................................78
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3-1. Descriptive Codes from Document Data.................................................................41

Table 5-1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Shared Purposes of Foundations
Supporting the Common Core .................................................................................................45

Table 5-2. Summary of Recipient Types ..................................................................................46

Table 6-1. Grants for each Purpose from 2012-2014...............................................................68

Table 6-2. Comparison of Top CCSS Grant Recipients to K-12 Schools and State
Agencies......................................................................................................................................72
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first the Department of Education Policy Studies at The Pennsylvania State University for its support and guidance during my time at the University. Most especially Karen Tzilkowski, Linda Grant-Oishi, and Sue Tighe. Their support in navigating the procedures of the University has been invaluable. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the past and current chairs of the department, Gerry Le Tendre and Kevin Kinser, respectively. The department has worked hard to support my studies by providing me with opportunities to develop as a scholar.

I would also like to acknowledge the members of the dissertation committee, David Gamson, Scott Metzger, and Liang Zhang, for participating in the review of my work. Your guidance and insight over the last few years have been very insightful. John Roberts, who was once a member of the dissertation committee, deserves a special mention as well. He was always there to discuss ideas or just talk about soccer. I regret that he was no longer able to be a member after moving on from Penn State. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the support of Michael Burroughs. Our time working together at the Rock Ethics Institute helped to shape how I viewed my work, thank you.

My dissertation advisor and chair, Mindy Kornhaber, has gone above and beyond to help me succeed on a personal and professional level. She has been supportive of my work even when I was not. I will always be indebted to Mindy for her patient guidance, her willingness to work with graduate students as an equal, and her sense of humor in the face of (scholarly) adversity. I would also like to acknowledge the support of our research group: Kelly Griffith, Erica Sausner, and of course Julia Mahfouz. I appreciate the hours of collective work we did together and consider them some of the best hours of my life. To Julia, I owe a special debt for introducing me to real coffee and for always being a friend.
Finally, I would like to acknowledge the love and support my family has given while writing this dissertation. To my mother, who does not always ask questions about my work, but who cares about what I do anyway. To my children, who don’t yet know what this means, or what they mean to me, but will someday. Lastly, to my wife, she has been there for me through everything. I owe her my life because she showed me love and support when I probably didn’t deserve it, and when I need it the most. I could not have done this without her, and I will be eternally grateful for her support.
Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of national educational standards that were initially adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012). The Common Core reform was aimed at improving academic achievement, increasing equity for students across state lines (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012) and on preparing high school students to graduate ready to pursue college or a career without remediation. This study looks at how private philanthropic foundations used financial resources to influence the development and implementation of the Common Core. The following chapter will provide an introduction to the Common Core and the policy context into which it was introduced.

The Context of the Common Core

The Common Core State Standards reform was an attempt to make changes to US public education nationally by adopting a common set of K-12 academic standards at the state level. The Common Core State Standards “…are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to take credit-bearing introductory courses in two- or four-year college programs or enter the workforce” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014) and are the latest iteration of systemic reform, also called standards-based reform (SBR) (Carmichael, Martino, Porter-Magee, & Wilson, 2010; Kornhaber, Griffith, & Tyler, 2014; Rothman, 2011). Despite evidence that such reforms have limited success (Amrein-Beardsley, Berliner, & Rideau, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Desimone, 2013; Diamond, 2007; Hamilton, Stecher, & Yuan,
the Common Core reform initially gained widespread support.

Implementation of the standards and work to support the Common Core movement have cost nearly $2 billion between 2008-mid-2015. The Federal Government, through the Race to the Top competitive grant program, has contributed an estimated $1.2 billion to Common Core implementation (Dillon, 2009; Kornhaber, Barkauskas, & Griffith, 2016; Ravitch, 2013). An additional $330 million had been spent by private foundations as of 2014 (Layton, 2013; Kornhaber, Barkauskas, & Griffith, 2016). The sample for this study indicates that foundations spent about $300 million more between 2014 and mid-2015. It is the private foundations’ contribution that is the focus of this study. Private foundations can influence policy without being publicly accountable because the foundations’ activities are considered charitable (Hall, 2003; Saltman, 2010). This study surfaces some of the foundations’ approaches to influencing policy using private contributions.

Private foundations have changed significantly over the past century. Charitable donations are no longer the essence of private philanthropic activity in public education (Anheier & Leat, 2013; Zunz, 2014; Confessore, 2011). Though philanthropic giving has always had the social good as its purpose (e.g., providing specific solutions to social problems) (Havighurst, 1981), the motivation for contributing to that purpose has very rarely extended beyond self-promotion, funding the work of friends, or a latent sense of communal gratitude (Anheier & Leat, 2013; Zunz, 2014). However, with grants for education soaring—they reached $4,969,633,975 in 2012 alone (Foundation Center, 2016)—scholars have begun to take a look at the effect of this spending on education policy (Greene, 2005; Reckhow, 2013; Tompkins-Stange, 2016).

This study seeks to investigate how foundations used their resources to change policy through a case study of a single reform; the Common Core State Standards. Though all grants included in this study were made to support the Common Core, this is not a study or critique of
the Common Core State Standards themselves. Nor is this study intended to examine or critique the amount of money spent on the Common Core reform. The purpose of this study is to understand the strategies carried out by private foundations that sought to enact a major education policy reform.

**From National Standards to the Common Core as a National Reform**

The underlying theory of the Common Core, as with all standards-based reforms, is systemic reform (Smith & O’Day, 1991). The Common Core seeks to improve students’ achievement by raising academic standards and aligning curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, and other parts of the education system to those standards. By the late 1980s, the idea of a national reform to raise standards had coalesced under President George H.W. Bush. The President brought together the nation’s governors in a meeting at Charlottesville, Virginia to discuss education on a national scale (DeBray-Pelot, 2007; Rothman, 2011). The meeting was unusual because it produced “national goals for education” which were quickly adopted by the National Governors Association (NGA) (Rothman, 2011). For the first time, the Federal Government and individual state leaders were agreeing on common goals to improve education (Rothman, 2011; Tyack & Cuban, 1997). These national education goals were further developed by the next President, Bill Clinton, and in 1994 were named Goals 2000 to denote their purpose and their deadline (DeBray-Pelot, 2007; Rothman, 2011). Though academic standards had existed for decades on a state by state basis ‘Goals 2000’ represented an ambitious finish line for students rather than a bare minimum of achievement that existed in many states (Rothman, 2011).

As the nation pursued Goals 2000, contemporaneous policy movements in education added credence to the argument for higher standards. There was a growing concern among
policymakers that low participation in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) from states was hindering the collection of national education data. As a result, education was seen as under-measured and in need of a more robust national examination with wider participation at the state level (DeBray-Pelot, 2007; Rothman, 2011). Some legislators argued that a national assessment would produce better data which could help improve teaching practice (Rothman, 2011; Tyack & Cuban, 1997). Claims from the politicians and leaders in the business community that the US was not competing effectively in the global market justified moving forward with plans for a new assessment, higher standards, and increased teacher accountability (DeBray-Pelot, 2007; Kaestle & Lodewick, 2007; Tyack & Cuban, 1997).

National education policy began to focus on student achievement and teacher accountability with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—named “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB)—in January 2002 by George W. Bush. NCLB sought to increase measurable academic achievement for students by requiring states that wanted federal ESEA dollars to adopt standards, aligned tests, and a set of test-based consequences for schools and districts (DeBray-Pelot, 2007; McGuinn, 2006; Rothman, 2011). Under NCLB schools were required to show that disaggregated groups of students made yearly progress in their percent of proficient students. Schools received annually escalating consequences for insufficient progress (McGuinn, 2006). The data gathered under NCLB highlighted the stark differences in states’ academic and test performance standards (Ho, 2008). Such differences showed that low academic achievement was a national problem rather than an issue to be dealt with by each state (DeBray-Pelot, 2007; McGuinn, 2006).

James Hunt, former Governor of North Carolina, saw national standards as the solution to between-state discrepancies in academic achievement. He argued that US students would do better on international comparisons if academic standards were raised (Rothman, 2011). Hunt brought this proposition before the board of the eponymously named James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute
for Educational Leadership and Policy (now just The Hunt Institute), urging it to position itself as a leader in the national standards movement (Rothman, 2011). Hunt was ideally placed to serve such a role because of his connections to the other state executives, high profile non-profit organizations, and other policy leaders (Rothman, 2011; The Hunt Institute, 2016).

The Hunt Institute convened non-public meetings in 2005 and 2006 to begin the process of developing the standards and generating support for the movement (Rothman, 2011). Among the attendees at such meetings were policy experts, politicians, officers from private foundations, and scholars. Non-profit organizations, such as the National Governors Association (NGA), Achieve, Inc., the Alliance for Excellent Education, and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), partnered to lead the development of the reform (Rothman, 2011). Based on past experiences with reforms like The Annenberg Challenge, the reform’s leaders decided that though the initiative would be state-led, there needed to be a central hub to guide the states (Reckhow, 2013; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). The CCSSO and the NGA Center for best Practices in Teaching were selected to act as a clearing house for the states that signed up to participate (Rothman, 2011; Tompkins-Stange, 2016).

During these initial stages of the reform, 48 state officials participated in the development of the common standards; Alaska and Texas declined (Rothman, 2011). Nearly all would adopt the Common Core in response to the 2009 federally funded Race to the Top (RTTT) competition announced by then Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. RTTT incentivized the adoption of “common, high-quality, internationally benchmarked” academic standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012; Layton, 2013; Rothman, 2011). For their grant applications to accrue points toward winning RTTT funds, states would need to adopt standards that met the program’s criteria (Rothman, 2011).

After the standards had been formally unveiled in June of 2010, they were officially adopted by 44 states. Kentucky had already adopted the standards before they were complete,
and so the standards were set to be deployed in 45 states out of 50, plus the District of Columbia. Texas, Alaska, Virginia, Oklahoma, and Nebraska did not adopt the standards at all (Rothman, 2011). Since the initial unveiling, the implementation of the standards has faced challenges. Political and teacher’s groups in various states have urged lawmakers to repeal or alter the CCSS (Bruce, 2013; Cloonan, 2014; Dawson, 2013; Ek, 2013; Kornhaber et al., forthcoming). Indiana, Oklahoma, and South Carolina have officially repealed the CCSS after being involved in the initial development and implementation (Ballantine, 2014; Ujifusa, 2014) while four other states (Missouri, North Carolina, New Jersey, and Utah) have initiated a process of legislative review (Bidwell, 2015). Other states have augmented the CCSS with additional standards not included in the official release. In many cases, alterations to the CCSS were accompanied by a name change to avoid political pressure and the appearance of “federal intrusion” (Layton, 2014). The reform encountered opposition despite the planning and forethought of the policymakers and philanthropists who supported it.

The Role of Philanthropy in the Common Core

A major factor that affects the Common Core reform is private philanthropies’ role in supporting it. Foundations have done so since the reform’s inception. Indeed, many of the organizations the foundations supported to advance the Common Core have been long-time beneficiaries of private largesse (Reckhow, 2013; Tompkins-Stange, 2016; Confessore, 2011; Layton, 2013; Strauss, 2014). The Fordham Foundation, Achieve, the Aspen Institute, and the CCSSO are all organizations that have been supported by donations from large private foundations (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013; Kornhaber, Barkauskas, & Griffith, 2016).
While philanthropies have been involved in education reform for more than a century, the convergence between foundations to support the Common Core is unique (Confessore, 2011; Layton, 2013; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, for instance, was previously connected to many of the organizations involved with Common Core through its support of initiatives like the American Diploma Project—an effort organized by Achieve, Inc. to align postsecondary education with the demands of college and careers. This connection put the Gates Foundation in a position to take part in the early development of the standards themselves, to act as a central coordinating force, and to help attract other private funders (Layton, 2013; Rothman, 2011). Gene Wilhoit, the former Kentucky Secretary of Education, was the head of the CCSSO when it began to work on the Common Core. Wilhoit had previously worked on the American Diploma Project and was instrumental in convincing the CCSSO board of his organization to be involved in the new form (Rothman, 2011).

Historically, philanthropists supported the stated goals of an organization through donations towards existing work (Anheier & Leat, 2013; Havighurst, 1981; Zunz, 2014). In other words, foundations had rarely sought to dictate which policies to work on, or how to approach them, to their grant recipients (Anheier & Leat, 2013). For instance, early 20th Century progressive philanthropists supported the growth of kindergarten in major cities as a means to improve the health of school children rather than as a means to broader socio-political ends (Tyack & Cuban, 1997). Starting in the 1990s, philanthropists and non-profit organizations began communicating different messages about their roles in policy. Bill Gates himself described the complexity of change in education and touted his foundation as fundamentally different. Gates said that his foundation would push ideas forward rather than merely fund the work of progress (Gates, 1999).

Foundations served two practical purposes in support of the Common Core. First, private foundations gave financial support to non-profits, professional associations, and policy groups
(Kornhaber, Barkauskas, & Griffith, 2016). Second, the foundations provided leadership for the myriad groups involved—e.g., non-profit groups—through their control of key financial resources (Layton, 2013; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). These two functions (a) to provide financial support and (b) to use that support as a tool to coordinate many different organizations are the hallmarks of strategic giving (Cuban, 2015; Frumkin, 2005; Greene, 2015; Hess, 2012; Reckhow, 2013), and it is the strategies used in such giving within the Common Core that is the focus of this dissertation.

**Research Questions**

This case study of the Common Core will expand on the prior research (e.g., Green, 2005; 2015) by defining the strategies of foundations that supported the reform. The following research questions guide this study:

1. What purposes for grant recipients are shared among private foundation that supported the Common Core?

2. How do such shared purposes influence the strategic giving practiced by foundations that supported the Common Core State Standards?

3. How are grants strategically distributed to fulfill or direct these purposes and advanced the reform?

**Significance of the Study**

As the research questions indicate, this study is not designed to evaluate, critique, or support the Common Core itself. This study investigates strategic giving by private foundations aimed at changing policy. It focuses on one case, the Common Core, to illuminate the strategies used by modern philanthropies to encourage such change. Coordinated giving strategies are best
seen through a study of the purposes of grants (Kornhaber et al., 2016) which are described in their announcements rather than in their amounts or political outcomes as prior research has suggested (Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014).

Strategic funding made for the purpose of advancing specific policy reforms originate outside of democratically elected channels. As such, it will be important to understand the strategies used by foundations to affect national and state-level policies. This study will help to show these strategies and evidence from private foundations of concerted effort to pursue them.

Summary

The Common Core State Standards are the latest instance of standards-based reform. The movement for a set of national standards was propelled by the funding and influence of large private foundations that operate outside of the public sphere of education policy development and implementation. This study seeks to shed light on the grant making activities of these large foundations with the aim of better understanding the patterns of foundation giving and, by extension, the processes of supporting an educational reform through philanthropy.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The Common Core is standards-based reform (SBR) that was supported by private philanthropic foundations. As such, the literature review first presents research on prior attempts at SBR. I then will (a) briefly define philanthropy, (b) discuss the importance of philanthropy in the United States, (c) discuss philanthropy in education, and finally (d) summarize research on how policy is affected by philanthropic foundations.

Standards-Based Reforms

Standards-based reform (SBR) is built on the assumption that raising the academic standards of schools, together with providing resources aligned to those standards, will raise the academic achievement of students. SBR typically combines the following:

1. Academic standards
2. Alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment and other key elements of the educational system to the standards
3. Assessments of student achievement
4. Decentralizing the responsibility of implementation to schools
5. Support and technical assistance
6. Accountability provisions (Hamilton et al., 2008).

Under state teacher accountability systems, changing the academic standards to which students are held requires teachers to instruct them using the new standards-aligned curriculum content. Assessments aligned to the new standards must be developed to measure students’ learning and teachers’ instruction of aligned curriculum (Diamond, 2007; Swanson & Stevenson, 2002). Without proper resources and training, teachers are not able to teach this effectively
To succeed, an SBR would provide ample supports for educators beyond the standards themselves (Smith & O’Day, 1993).

The need for supports has been borne out through evaluations of different iterations of SBR that have been attempted in different policy settings. Indeed, research on past SBRs has found that more academically rigorous standards alone will not raise student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Desimone, 2013; Loeb, Knapp, & Elfers, 2008; Spillane & Zeuli, 1999; Swanson & Stevenson, 2002).

However, evaluating SBR is difficult because of the complex interaction of standards with instruction, assessment, and student background (Popham, 1987; Resnick & Resnick, 1992; Spillane & Zeuli, 1999). High-stakes testing can alter teaching practice, such that standards are taught but sporadically (Hamilton et al., 2008). For example, educators might prioritize students who are in danger of not passing a state exam by providing those students with extra instruction in content focused on the standards covered by the exam ( Booher-Jennings, 2005). Not surprisingly, higher standards do not necessarily lead to improved performance on high-stakes standardized tests by students of all ability levels (Neal & Schanzenbach, 2009). In addition, teachers may see curriculum narrowing—i.e. teaching only the material that is most likely to be tested—as a rational response to high-stakes testing (Berliner, 2011; Bisland, 2015). Aligning instruction, assessments, and curriculum to a single set of standards may also create conflicts for educators due to a perceived lack of autonomy in their work (Clune, 2001).

Elements of the Common Core have been designed to address these problems through curricular resources, professional development, and other supports. Private foundations underwrote some of these resources, though their support also went to many activities well beyond such resources.
Defining Philanthropy

This section explores how philanthropy interacts with society, education, and policy. This dissertation distinguishes the term charity from philanthropy. Charity is a broader concept used to mean giving of one’s self to fix extant symptoms of longstanding problems (Ács, 2013; McCarthy, 2003). For example, one might provide a meal and a place to sleep for a weary traveler as an act of charity. In this example, the traveler has a specific and present need for help, and the charitable citizen provides for those needs without expecting a reciprocal act.

Philanthropy, on the other hand, is the giving of gifts with an aim to fix social problems by removing their root causes (Bremner, 1994; Colvin, 2005; McCarthy, 2003; Sievers, 2010; Zunz, 2014). If our traveler had asked for help from a philanthropist, the philanthropist may well provide charity at that moment, but would then go further and build a free hostel to prevent further instances of travelers in need. Both charity and philanthropy provide a valuable service to the community, but only philanthropy looks forward and attempts to solve problems instead of merely treating the symptoms (McCarthy, 2003; Sievers, 2010; Zunz, 2014).

Many historians and economists argue that philanthropy occupies a central role in the American experience (Ács, 2013; Bremner, 1994; McCarthy, 2003; Payton, 2008; Sievers, 2010). However, research critical of philanthropy is in short supply because scholars are not in the habit of questioning potential sources of funding (Colvin, 2005). Those who do take a critical look at philanthropy tend not to be prescriptive but instead frame their critiques as constructive using historical research as data (Colvin, 2005; Saltman, 2010). Indeed, the importance of philanthropic action in American society and the perception of altruistic motivations often shields private foundations from active scrutiny (Anheier & Leat, 2013; Roelofs, 2003).
Philanthropy in the United States

The practice of philanthropy in the United States has its root in the concept of charity expounded by religious tracts of the western traditions. Ancient western religious texts proclaimed selfless acts towards others as one of the highest forms of religious practice; giving of oneself for the good of others brought one closer to God (Bremner, 1994; Stackhouse, 1990; Wuthnow, 1990). The Torah places philanthropic giving high in its hierarchy of moral duties while the Bible and Quran both provide many examples of charitable actions to emulate in one’s life (Bremner, 1994; Stackhouse, 1990). From these axiological frameworks, humans derive their moral duty to give to other human beings. Not only is there a didactic reason for following these religious tenets, but there is also a practical one. Any person may one day find herself in need of aid and, having been charitable herself, can accept help with a clear conscience when she does (Bremner, 1994). However, the duty to give to those in need was not without constraints.

Ancient attitudes towards giving relied on moral value and utility (Bremner, 1994). For instance, the notion of the giver gaining an advantage through a conflict of interest was not considered true giving. A selfless act of charity more closely mirrored the actions of saints, rabbis, or other religious figures who stood as the model of moral behavior in ancient times (Bremner, 1994; Wuthnow, 1990). The act of giving needed to be selfless but also provide a way toward a solution to the problem. For example, one ought not to provide food to those who were not starving because such a gift solves no problem. The act of giving in itself was not as important as the intention of the giver to better the society through their action. In this way, philanthropy is closely linked with notions of community and the common good (Bremner, 1994; McCarthy, 2003; Stackhouse, 1990).

The Puritan communities of the British colonies in America valued charity, humility, doing good, and avoiding excessive profits in their daily lives (Bremner, 1994; McCarthy, 2003;
Sievers, 2010). The Puritans, as outcasts from the Old World, subscribed to different values (Bremner, 1994). In immigrating to the New World, the Puritans gained the opportunity to improve themselves once they were free from the Old World values and rigid class structures (McCarthy, 2003; Stake, 1995) and so communities flourished partly as a result of their interest in community (Barker-Benfield, 2003; Bremner, 1994; Curti, 1963; Stackhouse, 1990; Wuthnow, 1990).

The continued practice of philanthropy in modern society is driven by American values codified in the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson viewed the democratic republic as a concept born out of philanthropy in that individual benevolence, in the form of philanthropy, stems from the same ideological soil as the formation of a common government for the betterment of all (Barker-Benfield, 2003; Gross, 2003; McCarthy, 2003). In the early 1800s, Alexis De Tocqueville—a Frenchman visiting to learn about democracy—noted that citizens in the US had adopted meritorious ideas about success and the infinite perfectibility of man (Dooley, 2014). Today, these notions continue to form parts of what might be referred to as the “American Dream,” American civil society, or ‘the entrepreneurial spirit of America’ (Barker-Benfield, 2003; Ács, 2013). Max Weber called this set of values ‘the Protestant work ethic’ (Weber, 2001). These same ideals persist in modern American values as a sense of togetherness and mutual support that is manifested publicly as a commitment to philanthropic and volunteer action (McCarthy, 2003; Curti, 1963; Sears, 1990; Ács, 2013; Barker-Benfield, 2003). Indeed, the American attitude toward helping has built an international reputation because the political and economic power of the United States enabled it to act philanthropically toward other countries (Curti, 1963).

The particular community values shared by many American produce citizens that re-invest in their communities more than the citizens of other countries (Ács, 2013). Scholars see this form of philanthropy as filling a vital economic and social role in modern American society
The act of supporting one’s community stimulates further social investment by putting resources back into it and provides an impetus for others to do so (Ács, 2013). For instance, if one member of the community has tangible resources for a given project (e.g., money and materials), then other members of the community can likely give their time and energy towards that same project. In other words, an initial outlay of resources can catalyze an even greater outlay of community effort towards a shared goal.

However, post-WWII American individualism redefined the American dream and American community ties (Putnam, 2000; Sievers, 2010). The American society inherited by the baby boomers was the first to experience the commercialized media expressing new notions of “a good life” (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1996) where people spent much of their lives working to attain material luxuries (Putnam, 2000). The supporting ties to the community disintegrated (Bellah et al., 1996; Putnam, 2000), and the individual citizen was compartmentalized (Bellah et al., 1996; Sievers, 2010). Such a decrease in “common good” cohesion resulted in decreased democratic engagement in social change, policy making, and fewer (though more powerful) philanthropic organizations (Putnam, 2000).

After a period of decline in the 1970s, when many non-profits closed their doors (McCarthy, 2003; Sievers, 2010), large-scale philanthropy began to recover. Private foundations began supporting non-profits in earnest (Sievers, 2010) to take advantage of their tax exempt status (Hall, 2003). The political landscape of this period was shaped by a loss of social capital, despite staggering financial gains which resulted in the advancement of private interests over the common good (Putnam, 2000). As a result, philanthropies and their accompanying non-profit organizations became detached from the community values and volunteer ethos that used to drive their progress forward (McCarthy, 2003; Sievers, 2010). For instance, organizations like the Red Cross no longer survive on volunteer work but are instead now staffed by full-time salaried
employees. The majority of non-profits are more like corporations than would have been imaginable in the past (Sievers, 2010).

Scholars nonetheless refer to the non-profit/philanthropic/volunteer community as “the third sector” in American public life, next to private businesses and government (Ács, 2013; McCarthy, 2003; Sievers, 2010). The work accomplished in this sector is often necessary for modern society but is neither commercially viable nor able to be funded publicly (Ács, 2013; Colvin, 2005). Philanthropies, being neither profit driven nor hindered by excessive regulation, are better positioned to deal creatively with social problems and disrupt old traditional solutions (Sievers, 2010; Lagemann, 1989; Payton, 2008).

In economic terms, philanthropy had shifted from a practice well dispersed amongst all walks of civil society (McCarthy, 2003; Payton, 2008) to one increasingly carried out by the wealthy (McCarthy, 2003; Sievers, 2010). This shift was the result of variations in how the social classes within the United States were changing (Putnam, 2000). For instance, the middle class expanded and moved (Coulton, Chow, Wang, & Su, 1996), while the difference in income between the middle and upper class had grown (Braun, 1991; Piketty & Saez, 2003). The growing income disparity has been accompanied by associational networks that came to value individualism over of the common good, as epitomized by the dismantling of the welfare state, and brought changing social attitudes towards philanthropy (McCarthy, 2003; Putnam, 2000; Sievers, 2010).

The growing influence of philanthropy upon policy in the 20th Century is a part of the broader historical cycle of patronage—i.e., influential citizens holding sway over less advantaged groups in exchange for resources—which follows the economic fortunes of society. During prosperity, patrons engaged in “rent making” practices to skim resources from the broader society via their followers who received benefits by association (Fukuyama, 2015). Conversely, patrons reduced their retinue when resources were scarce, and influence waned. Early American
bureaucracy functioned around firmly entrenched systems of patronage from their inception. For instance, political machines in the United States (e.g., New York’s Tammany Hall) engaged in patronage by distributing jobs and favors in exchange for votes. However, while civil service reforms prohibited such direct exchanges between elected officials and lobbyists, donors, or voters, gifts made between organizations are permitted (Fukuyama, 2015). As such, private foundations’ grants remain a legal and effective channel for the communication of influence between individuals and policymakers and perpetuate a modified form of patronage.

Philanthropy represents the best aspects of humankind, but scholars agree that its practice and substance have changed over time. Philanthropic giving is now largely the purview of the wealthy, and this transition mirrors the concentration of political power in the United States over the last 40 years. Furthermore, modern private philanthropies increasingly seek to maintain control over the reforms they support by tying funding to control (Reckhow, 2014; Saltman, 2010), and attempt to direct their recipients to pursue specific problems (Tompkins-Stange, 2016). Such shifts in philanthropic practice are perhaps nowhere more visible than in the philanthropic activities directed at changing public education in the United States.

**Philanthropy in Education**

From school lunches to charter schools, to desegregation and higher education, philanthropists have been involved in most of the major movements within public education over the last 100 years. Billions of dollars have been spent by private foundations on public education (Frumkin, 2005). Though this amount is a fraction of government expenditures on public education (Greene, 2005; Kornhaber et al., 2016) the effect of private spending is far-reaching.
This section discusses how philanthropic activities have intersected with public education to create such far-reaching changes.

Private foundations like the Carnegie Corporation have supported education reform since the late 1800s (Colvin, 2005). The Carnegie Corporation alone is responsible for many public libraries, university buildings, and urban education initiatives since the beginning of the 20th Century (Ács, 2013). The Ford Foundation supported the adoption of teachers’ aides to manage the classroom and help educators to focus on instruction. Both Carnegie and Ford were early supporters of achievement tests and the SAT (Lemann, 2000). Individual philanthropists, too, have contributed a great deal to the cause of education. For example, Grace Dodge donated to the founding of Teachers College (Colvin, 2005). Philanthropies have a history of supporting reforms that later become commonplace in American Schools (Colvin, 2005).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, philanthropists were instrumental in aiding the civil rights movement in the United States (Zunz, 2014). Philanthropy during this time was characterized by building coalitions between funding organizations and public institutions to work together on a given initiative (Colvin, 2005; McCarthey, 2003; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). One example is the Ford Foundation’s instrumental role in decentralizing the schools of New York City in 1968 (Zunz, 2014). The foundation was invested in particular neighborhoods in the city and was serving as part of a commission looking at the future of the schools there. Though the plan eventually faltered, events like this marked the beginning of a period of decline for philanthropy and, by extension, education reform following the economic recession of the 1970s (Zunz, 2014).

Since the late 1980s, modern private foundations have tended to support market-based reforms that innovate using market forces like competition and choice (Chubb, 1990; Shleifer, 1998; Whitty & Power, 1998). For instance, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation supports charter schools in addition to improving districts through restructuring and calling for increased
teacher training and accountability (The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, 2016). Similarly, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has supported education reform efforts including the small schools movement, the American Diploma Project (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.)—an attempt to align high school requirements with the requisite skills for college and career—and the Common Core State Standards.

The current state of philanthropy in public education can perhaps be traced to two major educative experiences for private foundations. The Annenberg Challenge, which ran from 1993 until 2001, stands as a learning moment for private philanthropies funding education and represents the fundamental difference between the operation of old and new philanthropies (Reckhow, 2013; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). The challenge was led by multiple private foundations and aimed at drastic system change for public education. One approach for Annenberg-funded projects was to create networks of smaller schools in New York, Los Angeles, and other urban districts (Colvin, 2005; Greene, 2005). The strategy called on organizations to “work through intermediary organizations” rather than directly through the individual schools but in conjunction with district and city leadership (Reckhow, 2013). Such coalition building was reminiscent of the Ford Foundation or the Carnegie Corporation from an earlier part of the century.

However, the New York branch of the challenge suffered a major setback as a result of the change in leadership from one chancellor of schools to another (Reckhow, 2013). Following the Annenberg Challenge, foundations saw public institutions as fickle and variable (Reckhow, 2013; Tompkins-Stange, 2016), and their attitude moved away from coalition building with districts and towards aggressively setting the agenda through more stable non-profits organizations (Reckhow, 2013; Schmitt, 2015).

Another shift in modern philanthropic giving to public education came in 2005 with Jay P. Greene’s “Buckets into the Sea” (Greene, 2005). Greene (2005) pointed out that philanthropic
giving to education was small when compared with spending on education overall; approximately one-third of one percent. However, he argued that low spending was not the reason for ineffective philanthropy, but that instead philanthropies were largely engaged in “low leverage” activities. That is, philanthropies made little impact because the organizations did not push ideas forward strategically. Greene suggested that if philanthropies desired their money to have a more direct impact that they engage in coordinated, “high leverage” activities. The combination of the Greene’s argument and the lessons from the Annenberg Challenge—i.e. foundations providing leadership for the reform—is now known as strategic giving (Ács, 2013; Cuban, 2015; Mehta & Teles, 2012; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Saltman, 2010).

**Philanthropy in Education Policy**

Under the rational model of policy creation, policy problems and policy solutions have traditionally been decided through public discourse (Majone, 1992; Tyack & Cuban, 1997). However, as an ideal, the rational model ignores how the real policy process is far messier (Stone, 1997). That is because public discourse itself is not always rational, fair, or unbiased and the obstacles to policy creation are numerous. Policymakers can be politically motivated (Stone, 1997), acting under less than transparent obligations (Pincione, 2006; Spring, 2004), consensus may be impossible or even paradoxical (Friberg-Fernros & Schaffer, 2014), and policies are often symbolic rather than substantive (Rosen, 2009). Furthermore, policy is often designed with legally restrictive instruments to maximize impact (McDonnell & Elmore, 1991), targeted to specific populations to maximize the potential for adoption (Schneider & Ingram, 1993), comprised of pre-existing solutions pulled out of the policy “garbage can” (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972), and applied to open policy windows (Kingdon, 1984).
Though all members of the education polity—e.g., special interest groups, political parties, and government agencies—derive from the population of citizens, the balance of power for each group is not equally distributed within the political system (Kingdon, 1984; Stone, 1997; Tyack & Cuban, 1997). For the past 60 years, education policy has been formed in a closed system referred to as the iron triangle (DeBray-Pelot, 2007). Within it, individuals move between government agencies, private sector jobs, and non-profit organizations to address new policy problems by applying previously attempted solutions (DeBray-Pelot, 2007; West, Henderson, & Peterson, 2012).

The iron triangle began to fall apart in the early 2000s during the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (DeBray-Pelot, 2007; Kaestle, 2007). Prominent legislators were actively shut out of the ESEA development when President George W. Bush gave a group of Washington outsiders the job of drafting what would become NCLB (Kaestle, 2007). This process ran counter to prior theories of policy formation (DeBray-Pelot, 2007).

Similarly, the formation of Common Core entailed former governors and state school officials working with private foundations to develop policy (Rothman, 2011). The iron triangle was changed further as personnel moved not just to non-profit research centers, but to non-profit foundations, where they began to assert their role as policy entrepreneurs (Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). While it was federal legislators who were shut out of NCLB (DeBray-Pelot, 2007), during Common Core development and implementation it was the state legislators and local educators who were left out of the policy discussion.

While some question the qualifications of foundation staff to develop K-12 educational policy (Saltman, 2010), program officers at modern foundations tend to understand the educational policy landscape well. However, they are often characterized as impatient, brash, and apt to micromanage (Tompkins-Stange, 2016). Foundation personnel also have markedly
different opinions and ideas about education than do scholars on the subject. For example, scholars see classroom control of student behavior as a more important factor in teacher effectiveness than do program officers (Loveless, 2005).

Nevertheless, the last decade has seen foundations emboldened to take leadership positions with regards to particular reforms (Rogers, 2015; Schmitt, 2015). The so-called *outcome-oriented* foundations are more likely to engage in strategic giving (Tompkins-Stange, 2016) by manifesting:

1. Centralized control of the policy initiative
2. Foundation recipients are elites and expert organizations
3. Pursue problems that are perceived to have a technical solution and clear causation
4. Preference for metrics that are calculable (Tompkins-Stange, 2016)

Regarding education reform, the target of outcome-oriented strategic giving by foundations is not the resolution of a specific problem that moves society forward. Instead, it is the promotion of a certain type of solution (Anheier & Leat, 2013; Greene, 2005; Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Saltman, 2010; Tompkins-Stange, 2016; Zunz, 2014).

The policy process which is funded by strategic giving is carried out in much the same way that a corporation would promote, or “roll out,” a new product for national replication (Reckhow, 2015). Modern foundation leadership remains engaged to ensure the success of the often high-stakes policy changes the foundation is pushing (Reckhow, 2015; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Saltman, 2010; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). Such an approach to policy is disruptive by design (Zeichner & Pena-Sandoval, 2015) and is indicative of how outcome-oriented private foundations operate (Tompkins-Stange, 2016). Foundations assume the role of “jurisdictional challengers” by altering the political interactions between the Federal Government, states, and interest groups (Mehta & Teles, 2012; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014). In other words, modern
foundations actively seek to change the policy environment rather than react to, or work within, it.

Though for the last 40 years wealthy private foundations have increased their philanthropic giving to take advantage of tax deductions associated with donations to non-profit organizations (Hall, 2003), the political power of such large donors is not unlimited. As 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations themselves, the primary function of private foundations must be either research, charity, education, science, religion, or in the interest of public safety (Internal Revenue Service, 2015). Lobbying for specific policy changes is prohibited to them as tax-exempt entities, which is why foundations cannot encourage specific education policy changes directly without losing tax exemption (Hall, 2003).

The constraint of maintaining tax exempt status forces foundations to use their financial resources to pursue policy aims indirectly through other organizations (Reckhow, 2013; Saltman, 2010). Other non-profit organizations (e.g., think tanks), though barred from direct lobbying as well, can affect policy by generating research that shapes the positions of policymakers (DeBray-Pelot, 2007; McGuinn, 2006; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014). Policymakers then propose policy changes based on research from a non-profit that is foundation funded and ultimately supports the foundation’s policy goals.

The foundations’ indirect influence on policy development makes the selection of grant recipients all the more important as foundations aim to engage in high leverage activities. As such, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and others like the Lumina Foundation and the George and Leona Helmsley Charitable Trust, make grants through discreet solicitation of grant proposals from carefully chosen organizations that meet the foundation's mission (Reckhow, 2013; Saltman, 2010; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). Organizations are sought out by the funding foundation, often through social connections (Reckhow, 2013), to complete specific work with regards to a given reform. The details of the grant are specified long before an application is ever
made (Tompkins-Stange, 2016). In other words, modern foundations often do not accept unsolicited applications for funding from organizations in a given field.

An analysis of strategic giving across multiple years shows that private foundations made more grants to large non-profits and that those grants were initiated through a social network of policy elites (Reckhow, 2013). As such, grant making for public education from private foundations avoids interactions with institutions of public education—e.g., school districts or state educational agencies—and is typically focused on major population centers. This approach to policy is due in part to the perception that public school districts are less stable than non-profits already within their sphere of influence (Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014). Foundation giving in major cities has been shown to have had significant effects on the local politics, but not necessarily on educational achievement (Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014).

**Summary**

The practice of philanthropy has deep roots in human society, and it forms a core part of the culture and economy of the United States. Philanthropy was once practiced widely by a diverse community but has since shifted, along with political power, to a decreasing number of elites. Modern philanthropies have shifted their focus from a holistic approach that supports society in moving forward to advocating for specific solutions on a policy landscape that foundations seek to modify to be favorable to their preferred change. Private foundations now make use of such strategic giving to have an increased influence on policy outcomes, especially in education.

The Common Core State Standards are the most prominent instance of convergence between foundations’ will and ability to help society, and their belief in the importance of education. Foundations have operated strategically to advance the reform, even as research
indicates SBR has not markedly altered achievement (Hamilton et al., 2008; Kornhaber et al., 2014; McDonnell et al., 2008), and others have voiced concerns about the effect of such strategic giving on democratic control of public institutions (Cuban, 2015; Levine, 2016; Saltman, 2010).
Chapter 3

Conceptual Framework

The Common Core State Standards are an attempt to change the US public education system to increase academic gains for students such that all high school students graduate prepared for college or a career without the need of remedial instruction. Defining the nature of these changes, as well as providing the resources to enable them, would normally be the purview of local, state, or federal agencies in their roles as policymakers. For the Common Core, private philanthropic foundations acting as policy entrepreneurs have assumed many of the duties typically fulfilled by those in the policymaker role. As such, foundations have endeavored to co-construct the reform as well as provide resources to support educators and schools in their altered work with the new standards. The foundations supporting the Common Core approached the co-construction of the reform and the provision of resources differently from traditional policymakers’ due to the foundations’ outcome-orientation (i.e., a preference for quantifiable solutions to clear problems over a more traditional holistic approach to complex policy issues) (Tompkins-Stange, 2016).

This theoretical framework provides a lens for considering foundations’ strategic giving to develop the Common Core and advance it into education policy. This section first discusses a model of capability under new educational reforms (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). It then discusses Resource Dependency (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) as a way to understand how foundation grants, insofar as they are transactions in service of different aspects of capability, enable foundations advance policy indirectly.
**Capability in Education Policy**

Educational reforms create gaps between policy and practice. Well-designed policy reforms (e.g., SBR or blended instruction) include sources of support for educators to adapt to changes in instruction or content. To that end, one of the policymaker’s main jobs is to bridge the policy/practice gap through the construction of *capability* during implementation. Capability is comprised of four aspects that policymakers can engage with to fill the policy/practice gap (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009).

The aims of the reform include everything the policy is meant to accomplish, both stated and implied. While the aims are a part of the reform itself, the construction of the aims falls to the policymakers. Additionally, the interpretation of the aims as a basis for tangible requirements to support the reform is carried out by policymakers in conjunction with other education stakeholders (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Private foundations that supported the Common Core worked both to establish the policy aims and transform them into tangible requirements and actions (Layton, 2013; Rothman, 2011).

The second aspect of capability is the instruments that policymakers bring to bear on the reform. Policy instruments can include “money, mandates, incentives to comply, flexibility to adapt policy to local conditions, and the ideas that inspire or inform practitioners’ understanding and action or that contain evidence about implementation and effects, among other things” (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009, p. 25). Which instruments can, or should, be used depends on the aims of the policy and the resources available to the policymaking organization (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). For example, private foundations that supported the Common Core have one key policy instrument open to them: control over financial resources. However, *strategic giving* carries much more than mere assistance. The granting of foundation resources functions more like an inducement for recipients than a financial contribution.
Policymakers deploy instruments to mobilize a third aspect of capability, namely resources. This includes such things as personnel, expertise, time, products, services, or opportunities for collaboration. Policymakers determine which resources are best suited to supporting a given reform in conjunction with the aims of that reform and the available instruments. The choice of resources is an important step in determining the exact nature of the capability built to support a given reform (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Relative to public agencies private foundations can be much more selective in their use of resources. Such selectivity results from the foundations’ ability to choose resources from among multiple organizations.

Aims, instruments, and resources all come from and subsist within the fourth aspect of capability, the environment into which a policy is placed. Nevertheless, the environment can be altered by policymakers to make it more hospitable for their proposed policy and the subsequent attempts to build capability for it. The extent to which a foundation alters the policy environment differs according to their goals and aims (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). For instance, foundations with an outcome-orientation prefer projects that produce rapid and measurable change (Tompkins-Stange, 2016). As such, outcome oriented foundations alter policy environments through strategically given, high leverage, grants designed to overcome contrary policy windows, skeptical lawmakers, or obstacles to their proposed change.

The four aspects of capability interact to shape the actions taken by policymakers to implement the reform and support educators working under it. Aims determine the instruments and resources necessary for their fulfillment, resources and instruments advance the aims into action and alter the environment, while the environment itself determines the scope of possible aims and which resources are available through which instruments. Figure 3-1 is a model of interconnected capability for the Common Core.
Resource Dependency Theory

Resource Dependency Theory, developed by Pfeffer and Salancik, states that activities carried out by organizations are determined, in part, by the environment in which they operate, and these environments are always in flux (1978). They argued that organizations within the environment seek to reduce uncertainty to carry out their work. Sources of uncertainty are the environment itself (e.g., its economic, regulatory, and political systems) as well as other organizations in the environment. Organizations cannot operate completely independently but instead depend on resources, services, and expertise of other organizations. Organizations seek to
survive and carry out their work by navigating complex relationships with other organizations and by shaping their environments.

Whenever organizations exchange resources, there is likely to be some attempt at “social control” by the entity providing such resources. Control attempts are contrived to eliminate uncertainty, build legitimacy for the organizations’ mission, and maintain fidelity to the organization’s values (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Such control attempts might involve altering the receiving, “focal” organization’s structure or work processes, or determining the goal of their funded work. Recipients face a choice between accepting such control attempts or losing funding along with organizational stability (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Control attempts by a funding organization are more likely to occur as the following criteria are met:

1. The focal organization is aware of the demands.
2. The focal organization obtains some resources from the social actor making the demands.
3. The resource is a critical or important part of the focal organization’s operation.
4. The social actor controls the allocation, access, or use of the resource; alternative sources of the resource are not available to the focal organization.
5. The focal organization does not control the allocation, access, or use of other resources critical to the social actor’s operation and survival.
6. The actions or outputs of the focal organization are visible and can be assessed by the social actor to judge whether the actions comply with the demands.
7. The focal organization's satisfaction of the social actor’s requests is not in conflict with the satisfaction of demands from other components of the environment with which it is interdependent.
8. The focal organization does not control the determination, formulation, or expression of the social actor’s demands.
9. The focal organization is capable of developing actions or outcomes that will satisfy the external demands.
10. The organization desires to survive. (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p. 44)

The essential connection between private foundations supporting the Common Core and the recipients of their grants is an inter-dependent one. Foundations desire specific work from recipients while recipients require funding to continue working. Thus, control attempts by foundations supporting the Common Core are more likely when the recipient is in a less advantageous position with regards to power over the receipt of grant funding. For example, a
foundation can always find another organization to complete a given task, but a potential recipient may not find another funder. Thus, Resource Dependency Theory predicts that recipients of foundation grants would be likely to accept the foundations’ control over their work in exchange for resources.

The education policy environment is populated by a multitude of organizations and policy solutions directed at improving education. Every educational reform creates a policy/practice gap—a source of uncertainty in the environment of the reform—which policymakers must bridge for educators ultimately to make the reform work in their classrooms (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009; McLaughlin, 1987). As private foundations pursue educational reforms, the foundations empower non-profits to bridge new policy/practice gaps in exchange for financial resources. As such, private foundations and non-profits are in an inter-dependent relationship (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Conditions of resource dependency make the control of non-profits by private foundations possible.

Summary

This study seeks to understand the practices of private foundations which engaged in strategic giving to support the Common Core. The theoretical framework for this study sets a context for understanding what strategies foundations employ to advance the reform by influencing other organizations and the wider environment for the reform. The framework helps to show both the origins of giving strategies in support of the Common Core and the ways in which those strategies was enacted to build capability on-the-ground effectively to minimize the policy/practice gap for educators.
Chapter 4
Methodology

This dissertation is a case study of philanthropic giving to support the Common Core policy reform. It relies on 465 grant announcements and more than 200 IRS documents from private foundations and recipient organizations engaged in advancing the Common Core. The goal of the study is to examine the strategies that foundations used to build capability for the Common Core during its development and implementation by using its primary instrument, funding, to shape other organizations’ actions, alter the environment, and build legitimacy among the public for the reform. To that end, this study is guided by these research questions:

1. What purposes for grant recipients are shared among private foundation that supported the Common Core?

2. How do such shared purposes influence the strategic giving practiced by foundations that supported the Common Core State Standards?

3. How are grants strategically distributed to fulfill or direct these purposes and advanced the reform?

This chapter describes the research methods used to answer the research questions above.

Research Design

Case studies can entail a variety of qualitative methods to generate a rich understanding of the entire ‘case’ under inquiry (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). To inquire about the specific case of philanthropic giving to support the Common Core, I employed document analysis in the tradition of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Maxwell, 2013), using open coding, multiple iterations, and constant comparison. The unit of analysis for this study is
announcements of private foundation grants made in support of the Common Core together with documents, such as news releases, that shed additional light on the grant announcements.

Though the amount of money a foundation gives to a recipient is important to the understanding of how foundations influence policy (see Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Greene, 2005, 2015; Cuban, 2015), grant announcements themselves are important, too, because each reflects the interdependent exchange (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) between funders and recipients. Such exchanges require communication, accountability, and leadership to generate a particular tangible result (Saltman, 2010; Zunz, 2014). Grant announcements are the best approximation of such exchanges because they describe the ideas that foundations seek to grow and build as a part a reform. Finally, foundations give grants to recipients that the foundations see as capable of carrying out specific tasks related to a given reform (Saltman, 2010; Reckhow, 2013; Tompkins-Stange, 2016).

**Limitations**

Though public announcements and press releases contain a great deal of information about a grant’s purpose, they cannot possibly describe everything entailed in a given grant. Potentially, the best source of data for inquiries into foundation activities is the foundation officers themselves. In pursuit of such data, I contacted two program officers from each foundation in the sample (14 total). However, all but one declined to participate in this study. I received polite responses from them all who declined, but received no further elaboration on why each of them declined to participate. As a result, I relied on grant announcements as the closest proxy the foundations’ intentions with regards to their recipients. During my analysis of the grant announcements, IRS documents, and other recipient information, every effort was made to keep the claims made about the findings within the scope of the data available.
Finally, announcements of grants supporting the Common Core were sometimes vague or used obscure language to describe the recipient’s activities under the grant. However, there was no indication that the language used was intentionally deceptive. For this reason, I assumed the fidelity of the foundations’ statements regarding their grants.

**Trustworthiness of the Study**

To support the trustworthiness or credibility of the study, I used supplementary documents to triangulate the information in each grant announcement. Supplementary documents were especially helpful in understanding the sometimes vague descriptions of grants. For instance, one Hewlett Foundation grant was described simply as “For support of the Collaborative for Student Success.” I was able to use supplementary documents to determine that the New Venture Fund used those funds as part of a Common Core re-granting program. By obtaining a better understanding of the program funded by the grant, I was able to assign this grant an appropriate code in line with its purpose.

Supplementary documents for grant announcements also enabled me to triangulate the qualitative data associated with each grant announcement by verifying it with two separate sources. Doing so ensured that the qualitative data used to create descriptive codes was as complete and accurate as possible. Checking the accuracy of data using supplementary documents leads to coding that is well informed, an analysis that yields more valid findings, and a study that is transparent and trustworthy (Maxwell, 2012).
Sample

The sample for this study includes (1) 465 announcements of grants made by private foundations in support of the Common Core State Standards, (2) publications, website content, and IRS Form 990s for the seven foundations and 250 recipients of Common Core grants. All of the collected documentary evidence is available publicly on the internet.

Grant announcements are the unit of analysis for this study and were included in the sample only if they met all of the following criteria: (1) they were made in support of the Common Core, (2) were publicly listed, (3) they announced individual grants rather than general support for the reform, and (4) described why a grant was being made. I collected supplementary documents (i.e. websites and IRS Form 990s) for the foundation and recipient listed for each grant announcement. I stored the data alongside the grant announcement in the study database within MAXQDA.

To determine which foundations had supported the Common Core with grants, I first created a sampling frame of the top 20 education supporting foundations using data from the Foundation Center website. I then narrowed the sampling frame of 20 foundations down to 13 foundations based on whether the foundations’ grant announcements met the inclusion criteria listed above. I searched the grant databases of those 13 foundations for grants made to support the Common Core using keywords like “Common Core,” “CCSS,” and “common standards, among others. The seven foundations that made grants to support the Common Core, and that met the above inclusion criteria, were included in this study. APPENDIX A includes the initial sampling frame, the intermediate list of potential foundations, and the final list of foundations in the sample. Some foundations included in this study were publicly involved with the Common Core (e.g., The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), while others were not.
I did not include some foundations that were publicly associated with the Common Core (e.g., the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation) (The Broad Foundation, 2013), because their grant reporting did not meet the above criteria. The foundations that did meet the selection criteria, and are therefore included in this study, are the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the Noyce Foundation, the Leona A. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, the Lumina Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation. The sample includes 465 grants from these foundations that were made between June 2008 and July 2015. I chose this collection period because it covers the Common Core’s introduction, its adoption by states, and ends after schools in those states had started to use the standards in practice.

Data Collection

This section describes the data collection processes for the study and the inclusion criteria for certain data. These descriptions are of the data itself and what each data type will contribute to the study’s findings or how they were used in the analysis.

Grant Announcements

A grant announcement consists of text describing why a foundation made a grant (i.e. what kind of work a recipient will do with the funding), the name of the grant recipient, and the amount and date of the grant. To find grant announcements I compiled a list of foundations which supported the Common Core using the Foundation Center and searched the individual grant databases of those private foundations for grants which supported the reform. I used the search terms “Common Core,” “CCSS,” “Common Core State Standards,” “college and career ready,” and “high-quality standards” when looking for grants for this sample. All grant
announcements were collected directly from each foundation’s grant database. I copied the text of the announcement from the website and pasted into a spreadsheet along with announcement information used to create descriptive codes (e.g., amount, date, recipient name).

The sample only includes grants made in support of the Common Core. In instances of a vague description, I only included grant announcements if a supplementary source could corroborate their date, recipient, and the amount. I removed grant announcements found during this initial search if there was no direct mention of the Common Core in the description. I also removed announcements if a source could not be found to verify that the grant supported the Common Core.

**Foundation and Recipient Data**

Foundation and grant recipient data consists of websites, publications, annual reports, mission statements, and publicly available IRS Form 990 documents for the foundations and grant recipients in this study. I found information about foundations and recipients by searching their websites or, in some cases, the wider internet. I read the websites and publications of each organization to look for specific mentions of the “Common Core,” “education,” and other education programs such as “standards” or “student achievement.” I searched recipient data for specific mentions of the Common Core grants recipients received from foundations during the sample period. I then saved the documents I’d found into my study database for later analysis.

Non-profits (including private foundations) submit Form 990s to the IRS on a yearly basis. These forms are a report of the organization’s finances for that year, including grants given, grants received, and net assets. I found these forms by searching the Foundation Center website (Foundation Center, 2015) for the name of each foundation or recipient. I used
information from IRS Form 990s to form deductive categories for organizations in the sample (e.g., location or net assets) as well as to triangulate information about grants.

However, some grant recipients in this study (e.g., private corporations, schools, and government organizations) are not required to file an IRS Form 990. For such organizations, I searched the internet for other websites and publications that could provide information comparable to that gained from the Form 990s of non-profit organizations. Sources of information for such organizations included school websites, state databases of student enrollment, and information gathered on for-profit companies from the SEC filings and annual reports indexed in Standard and Poor’s Net Advantage.

**Supplemental Documents**

Supplemental documents were gathered to determine whether or not a foundation made a grant in support of the Common Core. Such documents also served to triangulate grant purposes when the grant announcement is vague. For example, if the purpose of a grant was listed as “To support the Common Core,” more information was needed to code this with a specific purpose. In such instances, news reports or press releases helped shed light on the purpose of that specific grant. To find these sources, I searched the internet for terms related to the specific grant (e.g., the recipient and the amount along with part of the description). Every attempt was made to find a report or article that described the correct grant. I retained these documents and made a note in the database which pointed to that document. These documents were used to justify a purpose code but were not coded themselves.
Data Analysis

Document analysis followed the method of constant comparison to establish an initial coding structure and to combine codes when necessary in later stages. Constant comparison is a coding method in which each item that is coded is compared to every other coded item. There are three stages of coding under this method: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding is a process of examining, understanding, and categorizing the data in the initial stages of a study. Axial coding is then used to organize codes when bigger conceptual categories become clear within the data. Selective coding is the final stage, during which the coding structure is finalized and applied to the grant announcements; it forms the final categorization of the data in the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Developing Descriptive and Inductive Codes

I used deductive codes to organize the data descriptively, around grant size, term length, and recipient location, among others. I analyzed Form 990s to create deductive groupings using specific data points (e.g., net assets or location). For example, I collected the amount of money foundations provided to their recipients with each Common Core grant. Very rarely are two grants made for the exact same amount, which makes analysis difficult when looking for trends in purposes by amount. Using cut points to deductively categorize grants by amount as small (less than $250,000), medium (between $250,000 and $1,000,000), and large (more than $1,000,000) simplified the data. It was much easier to see trends across three categories of grant amounts rather than across more than 400 distinct values. When used this way, descriptive codes make the analysis of disparate data more meaningful. All of the descriptive codes in this study are listed in Table 3-1.
Inductive codes were driven by information in the grant announcements and supplemental materials about the recipient organizations. For instance, I used inductive descriptive codes to categorize recipients beyond their legal classification of “non-profit” using content analysis techniques such as summarizing and reducing (Mayring, 2004) to analyze recipient data. For example, 501(c)(3) organizations are defined as organizations that have education, religion, charity, public service, or safety as their primary activities and do not return profits to a board or investors (Internal Revenue Service, 2015). The difference between two non-profit organizations like the Association for Supervision and Curriculum (ASCD) and the Education Development Center (EDC) is not apparent from their names or legal status. However, ASCD is a professional organization working to advocate for and inform the professionals in the field of curriculum development (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2017). EDC, on the other hand, is a think tank that conducts research on various educational issues, develops educational interventions, and actively works to influence policy and opinion (Education Development Center, Inc., 2017). Each of these types of organizations qualifies as non-profit, but each does distinctly different work and serves different purposes within the reform. The inductive categories are included in APPENDIX C.
Table 3-1. Descriptive Codes from Document Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Code</th>
<th>Qualitative Data</th>
<th>Source Document</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recipient Name</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient Type</td>
<td>Inductive Category</td>
<td>Website / Publication</td>
<td>Content Analysis / Reduction (Appendix C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient Legal Status</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Form 990</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient Size</td>
<td>Deductive Category</td>
<td>Form 990</td>
<td>Criteria listed in Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Form 990</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Form 990</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Size</td>
<td>Deductive Category</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Criteria listed in Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Name</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Population</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Deductive Category</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Criteria listed in Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount Size</td>
<td>Deductive Category</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Criteria listed in Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Amount</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Size</td>
<td>Deductive Category</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Criteria listed in Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Term</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Name</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Orientation</td>
<td>Inductive Category</td>
<td>Website / Publication</td>
<td>Content Analysis / Reduction (Appendix C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Size</td>
<td>Deductive Category</td>
<td>Form 990</td>
<td>Criteria listed in Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Form 990</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Form 990</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Deductive Category</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Criteria listed in Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Size</td>
<td>Deductive Category</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Criteria listed in Appendix B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Name</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Population</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Grant Announcement</td>
<td>Entered from Document</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyzing Grant Announcements

Coding of the grant announcements started with open coding using a constant comparative approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In the first round of coding, I paid close attention to the intent of the grant—i.e., what the grant was trying to do—in addition to finding similarities between the grants. As each announcement was coded, I made decisions about (1) what work the grant was describing and (2) was this work similar to that of other grants. After the first round of open coding, there were approximately 75 codes for 465 grants. After multiple readings of the grants, my question about them moved from what grants...
were “trying to do” to asking “what is the foundation trying to accomplish with this grant”? This enabled me to undertake a second round of (axial) coding, with a much clearer code structure.

This reduced the number of codes from 75 to fewer than 20.

My goal with the third round of coding was to make further distinctions among codes and to better group similar announcements under the same code. The goal of the first two rounds of coding was to work the data so that as few codes remained as possible (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, Charmaz, 2014). The third round of coding was meant to finalize the codes by drawing clear distinctions among them and applying them selectively. I wrote memos during coding to describe this process and to show my thinking behind the complex distinctions among codes.

After three complete rounds of coding, the purposes described by each code were still not clearly defined. I thought the codes that resulted from this process overlapped too much and were too close to traditional policy instruments (e.g., capacity or inducement); which I viewed as researcher bias. Furthermore, the application of the final codes was not consistent. I coded the grant announcements again, one at a time, over three more rounds of coding using yet another, more refined question. The last rounds of coding asked, “what is the granting foundation asking the recipient to do?”

This final question gets the study closer to what grants (as described by announcements) truly are. Grants represent an inter-dependent relationship between foundations and recipients. Recipients are asking for funding in exchange for carrying out tasks. Foundations are asking recipients to carry out a task, to work on a specific aspect of a policy problem, to change their work in some way, or to engage with a certain population in exchange for financial support.

After three more rounds of coding with this in mind, a set of shared purposes among foundations became clear. At the end of these final rounds of coding, there were seven codes which describe these purposes and encompass all 465 grant announcements in the sample.
I then used these purposes in comparisons across descriptive code matrices, generated with MAXQDA’s crosstab feature, to look for patterns between inductive and deductive codes as another level of analysis. Placing the deductive and inductive categories into matrices creates layers of analysis between and within the purposes (Miles and Huberman, 1994), enabling a better understanding of strategic giving by private foundations.

Each descriptive code was loaded into the program and used to compare qualitative data across the purposes, for instance, comparing the amounts for all grants made for the purpose of Aligning Systemic Policy to those for Consulting for Operational Alignment. Such comparisons were represented in graphs to show, for example, that grants for a certain purpose were mostly made for larger amounts while grants for another purpose mostly received smaller amounts of money. This analytical process was guided by readings and memo writing about the data, which imparted a sense of which descriptive codes corroborated or challenged previous research on strategic giving.

Summary

This case study of strategies used by philanthropies funding the Common Core employed data from grant announcements, recipient and foundation websites, IRS Form 990s from both recipients and foundations, and other supplemental documents. Inductive and deductive codes were created using information gathered from those documents. Inductive coding followed the constant comparative method, ultimately identifying seven purpose codes for the work intended by the private foundation making the grant. These coded segments were then analyzed across the various descriptive codes using MAXQDA to look for patterns within, across, and between dimensions of the data that addressed my research questions.
Chapter 5

Findings: Shared Foundation Purposes

This chapter reports the findings from document analyses of private foundations’ grant announcements made in support of the Common Core. The analyses produced a set of purposes which foundations expressed for recipients of their grants. These purposes are “shared” amongst the foundations included in this study. That is, multiple foundations made grants for each purpose. The purposes help to illuminate the strategies which foundations formulated to build the capability to implement the Common Core.

Shared Purposes of Common Core Grants from Private Foundations

This study analyzed 465 grant announcements to illuminate how private foundations’ financial resources were strategically used to affect policy. The seven purposes for grants shared by foundations that supported the Common Core derived from this analysis are described below. The shared purposes show what foundations were asking recipients to do in support of the reform. Table 5-1 describes the activities included and excluded for each purpose. Table 5-2 provides a summary of recipient types which will be used throughout the chapter to describe dimensions of some of the purposes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Crafting CCSS Materials      | - Includes grants that create *new* resources designed to (1) help educators with instruction in the classroom—e.g., course curriculums or professional development—or (2) help educators make decisions about resources related to the CCSS—e.g., a purchasing guide  
  - Excludes grants that alter or validate the Common Core standards themselves, support ongoing projects, or provide training, technical assistance, or information regarding the CCSS                                                                                         |
| Upgrading for CCSS           | - Includes grants that (1) add CCSS to existing products—such as Kahn Academy—to align their content, or (2) encourage the addition of CCSS to a separate policy initiative—such as the Opportunity by Design project—to address needs indirectly related to the standards themselves.  
  - Excludes grants that create new resources or policies, engage the organization in technical assistance with implementation, or advocate for the CCSS with an organization or government body                                                                                       |
| Aligning Systemic Policy     | - Includes grants that fund system level changes to align systemic elements of the CCSS with current policies—e.g., teacher accountability—and grants that fund research to validate such changes or technical elements to justify the CCSS as a viable reform  
  - Excludes grants that fund policy changes unrelated to the new standards in response to perceived policy hurdles or that fund the work of implementing the CCSS. Also, excludes the creation of new resources the training of educators.                                                                                     |
| Consulting for Operational Alignment | - Includes grants that funded organizations to provide practical technical assistance with implementation or policy changes at operational levels above the individual practitioner  
  - Excludes grants that provide professional development inform the public or advocate for the CCSS. Also, excludes grants which build capability by providing funds that prepare for implementation or future policy changes related to CCSS                                                                 |
| Training Teachers and Parents | - Includes grants which (1) provide professional development to teachers to help them deliver the CCSS, or (2) provide information through outreach, news coverage, or websites about CCSS to parents / the public to help them understand and cope with the CCSS  
  - Excludes grants which create new professional development or provide technical assistance to educators that are not meant to train or inform about the CCSS                                                                                       |
| Advocating with Target Populations | - Includes grants which inform target populations with the intent of gaining the support of that group for the CCSS  
  - Excludes grants made to train teachers on operational changes to instruction under CCSS                                                                                                                |
| Building Organizational Capability | - Includes grants which (1) build capability for organizations to address anticipated changes under the CCSS—e.g., new assessments or instructional shifts—or (2) fund the ongoing operation of an organization to support multiple CCSS related projects  
  - Excludes grants that fund the work of implementation, changes to policy, or the beginning of new projects and grants that provide information or training to educators or the public                                                                                          |

Table 5-1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Shared Purposes of Foundations Supporting the Common Core
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicator</td>
<td>This recipient disseminates ideas or news to the public. Can be either for-profit or non-profit. Ex: Education Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Developer</td>
<td>This recipient develops tangible content or materials for use in the classroom. Examples of content include curriculum, textbooks, and instructional frameworks. Groups can be non-profit or for profit. Ex: Filament Games or Pearson, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>A district is a collection of more than one school. The district may be charter or public. Ex: Montoursville Area School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused Non-Profit</td>
<td>A focused non-profit addresses a specific issue in education—e.g., computers in schools—and focuses on raising awareness for said issue. Uses research to justify a position, more so than produces its own research to influence policy. Ex: Council of the Great City Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Association</td>
<td>A collection of members / member organizations that collaborate and communicate about a common issue. May advocate on behalf of their members, or join the discussion on policy issues, but lack a do not engage as heavily in research and tend to be organized around a field or profession. Ex: American Federation of Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>An individual K-12 school. Ex: Hunterdon Central Regional High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Funder</td>
<td>Receives funds from a private foundation and makes grants locally or manages grant-funded projects entailing multiple organizations. Ex: Baton Rouge Area Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Agency</td>
<td>Agencies that are formally part of the state government or are created by statutes to carry out our state business. Ex: Kentucky Department of Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think Tank</td>
<td>Think tanks differ from focused non-profits in that they do not address a specific issue in education but attempt to improve education through research, policy advocacy, and communication. Think tanks tackle many different issues. Think tanks can be partisan organizations, and their issues / solutions tend to follow those distinctions. Their research efforts can and often are directed to specific projects but think tanks tend to focus on the biggest issues of the time, and those focuses change as education changes. They lead the line on policy research and advocacy. Ex: The Thomas B. Fordham Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Universities operate as an individual institution of post-secondary education. Ex: Vanderbilt University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5-2. Summary of Recipient Types
Purpose 1: Crafting CCSS Materials

Teachers who are expected to teach new standards need support in the form of standards-aligned curriculum and instruction materials (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Foundations supporting the Common Core understood this need and funded the creation of new materials for use in classrooms including CCSS-aligned courses, books, and other teaching materials. New resources created specifically for the Common Core also included “tools” to aid educators in aligning their practice (e.g., tools for selecting appropriate CCSS-aligned course materials). Resources created by grants for this purpose served to help educators fulfill their obligation to teach the standards to their students. Grants that directed recipients to create new materials for the Common Core were coded as Crafting CCSS Materials. Grants made for this purpose directed recipients to produce specific and tangible new materials to support educators working under the Common Core.

Examples of materials developed for this purpose include (1) curriculums for use in classrooms, (2) new professional development courses, and (3) resources designed to help educators make instructional decisions under the Common Core.

One example of a grant for such a purpose was awarded by the Hewlett Foundation to Achieve, Inc. for $300,000 in July 2011, “For development of model curricula aligned with the Common Core and PARCC content framework.” Another example of support for new curriculum resources is the grant to Massachusetts Institute of Technology in December 2011 from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for $2,889,132, “to develop Cosmos, a multiplayer online game, aligned to the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards for high school students.”

Grants in this category also created resources designed to help teachers make decisions about which materials to use in their classrooms. One example is the $500,000 grant from the Hewlett Foundation to the Council of the Great City Schools, “For developing tools to guide
school district selection of Common Core teaching materials.” Another example of such a grant is the $548,541 grant from the Helmsley Charitable Trust to Student Achievement Partners, Inc. in October 2014 to provide, “Funding to help educators and districts identify, develop, and select excellent instructional materials aligned to college- and career-ready learning standards.”

Figure 5-1 shows the distribution of grants for the purpose of Crafting CCSS Materials across the recipient type descriptive code. Think tanks received more grants for developing new content than did publishers or other more traditional content developers (e.g., Learn Zillion, a math curriculum company). Using think tanks over more traditional content developers fits with the description of disruptive tactics associated with outcome-oriented foundations (Tompkins-Stange, 2016). The prevalence of grants for Crafting CCSS Materials, and their distribution represented in Figure 5-1, suggest that foundations have explicitly directed their recipients to create such resources rather than leave their development to the open marketplace. The foundations’ preference for organizations which are not typically known for developing such educational materials is a notable instance of foundation influence on important aspects of the reform.

![Crafting CCSS Materials by Recipient Type](image-url)

Figure 5-1. Crafting CCSS Materials by Recipient Type
Purpose 2: Upgrading for CCSS

Grants under *Upgrading for CCSS* seek to alter existing educational policies, products, or services to include the Common Core. As an SBR, the Common Core presented policymakers and supporters with the opportunity and/or need to modify other policies to align them with the Common Core academic standards. Particularly well represented in grants for this purpose are policies concerning student assessments and teacher accountability. Many grants also included in this study entailed aligning existing educational products (e.g., teaching frameworks) to the Common Core. In other words, grants described by announcements in this purpose converted existing reforms, policies, and products into Common Core versions of their former selves. The code applied to these announcements is *Upgrading for CCSS*.

An example of a grant that modified an existing product was made from the Helmsley Charitable Trust to the Danielson Group for $2,962,260 and described simply as “Integrating with the Core.” The Danielson Group produces a teaching framework used to evaluate and develop teachers in schools across the country. “Integrating with the Core,” supported the Danielson Group’s work to adapt the Danielson Framework to evaluate teaching under the new standards effectively.

An example of how the Common Core was attached to other reforms is the grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to the Council of Chief State School Officers for $1,958,500 in November of 2013:

…to support a 20-month project of the Council of Chief State School Officers to help 7-10 member states and a subset of their school districts to integrate implementation of the Common Core State Standards with their reform efforts in teacher effectiveness in ways that produce measurable impact at the school and district level.
The grant enabled the CCSSO to assist states with incorporating two different reforms. Member states were undergoing changes in teacher effectiveness measures alongside a transition to the CCSS. In other words, the grant described here helped to transform existing state-level reforms of both teacher evaluation and academic standards into Common Core reforms.

Foundations often also used the Common Core as a justification to make progress on policy reforms not typically associated with SBR. Grant announcements in this category often described the Common Core as a coming source of policy change to which other reforms need to attend. One example is the expansion of the Physics Education Technology Project (PhET)—run by the University of Colorado at Boulder—which was funded by the Hewlett Foundation for $900,000 in November 2014. That grant announcement contained this description:

For the Physics Education Technology Project (PhET) and research on measuring deeper learning / University of Colorado at Boulder’s PhET Interactive Simulations project creates interactive simulations—based on extensive education research—to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics worldwide. This grant would enable PhET to significantly advance its impact through the creation of next-generation simulations, related teacher professional development resources, and research and technologies to advance effective design and classroom use to support the new Next Generation Science Standards, the Common Core State Standards, and deeper learning. Through this grant, PhET will increase the number of next-generation simulations it provides, enhance the organization’s ability to support improved teaching practices, improve the accessibility of the simulations to all students, increase knowledge about effective simulation design for deeper learning, and move toward a more sustainable long-term business model.
Through *Upgrading for CCSS* private foundations sought to broaden the available resources for the reform beyond what could be created “from scratch” by altering existing and established resources, programs, and policy initiatives. Thereby, foundations aligned as many products with the Common Core as possible. Upgrading some, and crafting others, was a way of harmonizing all Common Core content.

**Purpose 3: Aligning Systemic Policy**

The grants for the purpose of *Aligning Systemic Policy* represent the forethought and planning that went into the development and implementation of the Common Core. The Common Core required policy work on the “front end” to ensure that (a) the standards were comprehensively validated through research and testing, (b) were acceptable to policymakers, and that (c) new structures like data systems and assessments were in place. Aligned assessments, policy positions, and research to validate the standards formed an essential part of the Common Core. Without these primary elements, the reform would be without a reasonable foundation on which to promote sustainable change.

*Aligning Systemic Policy* grants often provided the evidence needed (e.g., supportive research or materials and tracking/studying Common Core implementation) to support the Common Core in the eyes of legislators or the public. For example, the $275,765 grant from the Hewlett Foundation to America Achieves Inc., “For a Common Core implementation research study in two to five states.” Another example is the $987,105 grant made by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to the Education Policy Improvement Center—a non-profit consulting firm—in May of 2009, “to validate a priority set of standards that define college readiness.”

*Aligning Systemic Policy* also included announcements for grants that funded the research for, or creation of, technical aspects needed to “fit” policies together. One instance is the
$3,185,750 grant given from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to the CCSSO in 2009 in order “to partner with federal, state, public, and private interests to develop common, open, and longitudinal data standards.” Another grant, from the Lumina Foundation, for $200,000 in October of 2012, was made to the Council of Chief State School Officers, “To support an inquiry by McKinsey & Company concerning the sustainability and operations of the two Common Core State Standards/Assessment (CCSS/A) consortia post-2014.”

Grants for this purpose went to think tanks more than any other organization; 35 out of 59 grants for this purpose were given to think tanks. Despite promoting the Common Core as “state-led,” private foundations did not fund state or local educational agencies to work on Common Core policy directly. One explanation for such a distribution amongst recipients is that foundations sought to maintain an element of control over the reform and so favored more easily controlled non-profits instead of public institutions.

![Aligning Systemic Policy by Grant Amount](image)

**Figure 5-2.** Aligning Systemic Policy by Grant Amount.

Finally, grants for this purpose tended to be made for smaller amounts (less than $250,000) but went to larger non-profit organizations. Figure 5-2 and Figure 5-3 shows data that agrees with prior research (Reckhow, 2013) in that foundations tend to support more established
organizations when it comes to policy. However, this finding adds nuance by suggesting that private foundations tended to use many smaller grants to make policy changes for the Common Core.

Figure 5-3. Aligning Systemic Policy by Recipient Size.

**Purpose 4: Consulting for Operational Alignment**

Policy implementation calls on education administrators at the state, district and school level to “bridge” between policy and practice to help their teachers work effectively under the new reform (Honig & Hatch, 2004). Outside organizations support the building of these bridges by providing “technical assistance” to these administrators and educators by assessing their needs under reform’s curricular and instructional changes. As part of technical assistance, outside agencies guide educators in addressing potential problems and the effective use of resources. *Consulting for Operational Alignment* represents support from private foundations to organizations for the purpose of working with schools on technical issues of Common Core implementation.

Grants were coded with *Consulting for Operational Alignment* when the announcement described how a recipient would “provide assistance” or “support” for implementation of the
reform at the state, district, or school level. Grants for this purpose often asked recipients to “support” implementation or to “continue their implementation work” without describing specific actions recipients were meant to take. Notably, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation gave out 26 separate grants that stated the following purpose in the grant announcement: “to support implementation of the Common Core State Standards.” This group of nearly identical grant announcements makes up about half the grants for this purpose (out of a total of 60 grant announcements).

Some grants for this purpose targeted specific types of teachers. One example is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant of $205,000, “To operationalize a plan designed to help social studies teachers implement the Common Core State Standards,” given to the National Council for the Social Studies in July of 2014. This grant, like many other grants for this purpose, did not ensure that all teachers would receive help but provided indirect assistance to teachers of a certain type.

Some grants made for Consulting for Operational Alignment were location specific. One example is the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust grant to the Council of Chief State School Officers in March of 2013 for $2,203,114 for “Supporting Rural States with the Implementation of Common Core.” Another example is the Hewlett Foundation’s July of 2012 grant to the Strategic Education Research Partnership—a non-profit think tank—for $403,000 “for work with the San Francisco Unified School District to adopt the Common Core standard[s].” The Strategic Education Research Partnership grant is notable for being made to benefit a school district but not having been given directly to the district itself.
Figure 5-4. Consulting for Operational Alignment by Recipient Type.

*Consulting for Operational Alignment* grants were given to think tanks more than any other recipient type. Schools, school districts, and government agencies were not often the direct recipients of *Consulting for Operational Alignment* grants, but they were instead the indirect beneficiaries of services provided by recipient organizations. This finding suggests that foundations sought control of the reform by keeping resources out of the hands of educators and others in the public sector. The foundations instead gave resources to non-profit organizations over which the foundation might exercise greater control.
Purpose 5: Training Teachers and Parents

The Common Core standards themselves were intended to level the playing field for students from different states by eliminating variation in academic standards from state to state (Rothman, 2011). However, supporters recognized that enacting the standards too quickly would be counterproductive. As such, there was a three-year period between adoption and when the standards went into effect to give states, districts, and schools time to prepare for the Common Core (Ujifusa, 2013). Most states required schools to start teaching the standards beginning with the 2014 school year. During this interval between adoption and enactment educators and parents across the country were contemporaneously in need of help understanding the Common Core and incorporating the standards into their work with learners. Grants that directed recipients to provide professional development for teachers and information to the public were coded as Training Teachers and Parents.

Educators working to adapt to the Common Core required professional development, training seminars, and opportunities to collaborate on strategies to address the upcoming changes. Foundation grants for this purpose often directed recipients to provide professional development, meetings, or opportunities for collaboration to teachers. Members of the public (e.g., parents of students) needed resources to help them understand their children’s homework, as well as the motivations behind the change in standards and the subsequent outlay of resources. To these ends, foundations used grants to direct recipients to distribute information about the Common Core through news coverage, informational websites, and easily distributable online videos on sites like YouTube. The grants made for this purpose were intended to assist specific audiences—often educators—in understanding and adapting to the Common Core.

An example of such a grant is the $299,709 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to the Constitutional Rights Foundation—a non-profit think tank—to “provide
professional development opportunities for teachers to further hardwire the Common Core curriculum” that was made in July of 2014. Such language indicates that the grantor’s attitude towards educators is one of informing rather than collaborating on the reform’s implementation. Other announcements similarly included explicit goals behind the information that was to be provided, such as the $500,000 grant from the Helmsley Charitable Trust in October of 2014 for “strengthening parent understanding and support for common core state standards.”

Other opportunities for educators came in the form of meetings designed for *en masse* professional development. One example is the $965,525 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to Learn Zillion Inc. to, “support TeachFest conferences that will provide technology and professional development for master teachers, enabling them to deepen their understanding of teaching to the Common Core standards” from March 2013. Similarly, the Gates Foundation made grants to Loyola Marymount University and CSU Fullerton Auxiliary Services Corporation (for $1,195,581 and $1,257,526 respectively) in May of 2015 to support meetings for educators. The foundation described both grants as intended to, “convene large numbers of teachers on a single day in regions across the state of California to generate momentum around the singular impact of teachers on college and career readiness and directly impact teacher exposure to materials, resources, and strategies for Common Core implementation.”

Grants for this purpose also sometimes funded broader communications or outreach to the public involving media dissemination about the Common Core. For example the $275,000 grant from Helmsley Charitable Trust to Teachers College Press for, “reporting the common core from the classroom” made in July of 2013. In another grant, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded the James B. Hunt Institute for $500,000, “to support the development of broadcast quality videos in which teachers demonstrate classroom strategies to teach the Common Core State Standards.” These videos, which are still available online, were intended to train
teachers how to adjust to shifts rather than convincing teachers of the necessity of shifts or engaging them in a conversation about the necessity of the Common Core more broadly.

Foundation funded communication projects which targeted the general public similarly emphasized the transmission of information—often in the form of supportive research—rather than consensus building. For instance, a grant of $189,903 was given to Achieve, Inc. by the Noyce Foundation in January 2012 to “Publish and disseminate Achieve’s report on internationally benchmarked science standards and Achieve’s Model Mathematics Course Pathways based on the Common Core State Standards.”

Think tanks received almost one-third of the foundation grants made for this purpose. Such organizations can serve a dual purpose for foundations by delivering a consistent message regarding the Common Core and providing the expertise to deliver high-quality training and information for use by educators. No school, school district, or local government received a grant for Training Teachers and Parents to purchase or provide the training of their choice to their teachers. This finding underscores foundations’ efforts to maintain control over the Common Core message by selecting which organizations would deliver it.

**Purpose 6: Advocacy with Target Populations**

The adoption of a new policy reform often relies on the ability of the reform’s advocates to spread information and gain support. To these ends, the foundations created formalized networks of organizations that supported the Common Core and communicated with sub-groups within the education polity that might endorse or promote the reform. Announcements that directed recipients to (1) generate support for the reform, (2) convince a specific group to support the Common Core, or (3) mobilize supporters toward action in support of the Common Core were coded as Advocacy with Target Populations.
The grant announcements included in this purpose often aimed at gaining the support of a specified subsection of education stakeholders for the Common Core (e.g., local business leaders or Asian-American Parents). One such grant was a $1,000,000 award from Helmsley Charitable Trust to the New Venture Fund—a think tank that specializes in managing large philanthropic giving—made in July 2014. It provided, “Funding to support state education agencies and state-based education organizations to educate key audiences about the importance of higher academic standards and related policies.” In short, this grant provides money to a non-profit organization to support state-level agencies in advocating “key audiences.”

Another example is the December 2012 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to the Florida Council of 100, Inc. for $315,000 “to educate Florida's business and civic leaders on the need for rigorous standards & assessments.” This grant serves as an example of foundations engaging groups that are not typically a part of the education policy landscape but are nonetheless influential. Another such example of gathering influential groups around the Common Core is the $563,611 grant to the Military Child Education Coalition from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in October 2013 to, “support implementation of the Common Core State Standards by engaging military leaders and families.”

In a few instances, grants made for Advocacy with Target Populations focused on building the reform in specific locations. For instance, the Helmsley Trust made two grants (in October of 2012 for $1,323,920 and in August of 2014 for $367,500) to the University of the State of New York, Regents Research Fund which tasked the organization with “Communications in Support of the Common Core Standards in New York State.” The Regents Research Fund is still in operation as an independent, non-profit, policy organization housed within the New York State Department of Education.

Two other grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation similarly entail local advocacy activities. The first was for $500,000 and given to the Tennessee State Collaborative
on Reforming Education in February 2011, “to support statewide education advocacy in support of effective teaching and higher standards through the ‘Expect More, Achieve More’ campaign.”

The second example is the grant for $257,391 to the Pennsylvania Business Roundtable Educational Foundation in August 2012, “to educate Pennsylvania opinion leaders, policymakers, the media, and the public on Common Core State Standards and the Common State Assessment.” Both of these grants, as well as the Helmsley grant above, supported advocacy for the Common Core locally but engage different types of organizations and audiences to accomplish the task.

The Common Core Communications Collaborative (CCCC), a project created to coalesce communications from multiple foundations supporting the Common Core, was supported by a series of grants from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Helmsley Charitable Trust, and Lumina. The project and its aims served:

As a response to build public and political will, and create sustainable demand, for the successful implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and related assessments through strategic and targeted communications support, a group of national and regional funders, are launching a collaborative multi-donor fund, provisionally known as the Common Core Communications Collaborative. The Collaborative will pool resources in support of strategic communications at the national, state, and local levels to help generate sustainable demand for effective implementation of the common core state education standards…this nimble funding source [will] address communications needs proactively as they arise in critical states and districts and nationally.

Grants under this purpose indicate that foundations directed rigorous planning towards engaging and building support for the Common Core. As the description of the CCCC above shows, foundations sought not only to grow support with the grants for this purpose but also to
“create sustainable demand” for educational reform that was developed and promoted outside of the public sphere.

![Bar chart showing Advocacy with Target Populations by Grant Amount](image)

Figure 5-5. Advocacy with Target Populations by Grant Amount.

Grants for the purpose of Advocacy with Target Populations were for small or medium amounts of money (less than $1,000,000) with many recipients receiving between $250,000 and $1,000,000. While 33 of the 77 grants for this purpose were made to think tanks, those grants were mostly short-term grants of six months or less. Figure 5-5 and Figure 5-6 shows the distribution of Advocacy with Target Populations grants by grant amount and grant term length.
**Figure 5-6. Advocacy with Target Populations by Grant Term Length.**

**Purpose 7: Building Organization Capability**

To achieve their goal of widespread acceptance and implementation of the reform, foundations often increased the capability of organizations that supported the Common Core. Such grants often took the form of “general operating support” or funded multiple projects related to the Common Core within an organization. Grants were coded with the purpose *Building Organizational Capability* when a foundation increased a recipient’s financial assets in general support of the reform or funded an organization to undertake future projects to meet the anticipated needs of educators.

Recipients of such grants could then hire more personnel, expand the organization’s mission through contacts with other organizations, or build on an existing program to support the reform at a later time. For instance, a grant for the purpose of *Building Organizational Capability*
might direct a recipient to work with teachers on understanding new types of CCSS-aligned test
questions in advance of CCSS Testing in their schools.

Grants that were used to grow organizational capability did so by funding ongoing work.
Two grants that were made by the Helmsley Charitable Trust serve as good examples. One grant
to Achieve, Inc. was given in March 2012 for $7,816,490 for “supporting the common core state
standards (CCSS) from the ground up.” Another grant went to Student Achievement Partners,
Inc. (in September of 2012 for $10,904,687) for “Empowering all students to achieve the core.”

One example of a grant that anticipated the needs of educators, and funded multiple
aspects of Common Core work, was made by the Hewlett Foundation to WestEd in March 2014
for the amount of $1,300,000:

For building teacher capacity to implement the Smarter Balanced assessments /WestEd is
a research, development, and service agency that works with the education community to
promote excellence, achieve equity and improve learning for children, youth, and adults.
The Common Core State Standards are more demanding than previous requirements in
most states and are accompanied by tests that measure student achievement. They include
short answer and essay questions that assess content knowledge as well as reasoning and
critical thinking skills. To prepare teachers for the implementation of more rigorous
standards, WestEd proposes to work in five states to: (1) strengthen teacher
implementation of performance assessments; (2) build teachers’ knowledge of, and
support for, the Common Core and aligned assessments; and (3) develop a cadre of
teachers to help implement the new state assessments.

Grants that were made to build the capability of an organization tended to have medium
or long terms associated with the funding. Of 58 total grants for this purpose, 44 are considered
to be at least medium term (lasting more than a year). This suggests that foundations showed a
preference for longer term grants when increasing organizational capability to sustain the reform. Providing longer term grants may have enabled organizations to provide a consistent stream of supportive activities in support of the Common Core. Think tanks received approximately 44% (26 grants out of 58) of grants for this purpose. Professional organizations were also well represented with 22% (13 grants out of 58) of grants for Building Organizational Capability.

Summary

This chapter described the shared purposes of grants made by private foundations supporting the Common Core. The chapter provided a more nuanced view of the varied purposes that foundations’ financial resources can take. Purposes ranged from activities focused on practical work, like Training Teachers and Parents, to more technical aspects of the reform such as Aligning Systemic Policy. Grants targeted specific populations from military parents to social studies teachers.

The ultimate goal for all of the foundations included in this study is to improve education and equity through higher standards and related infrastructure for those standards. Yet, a very small proportion of grants examined in this study went directly to public education institutions within the K-12 system. This speaks to the strategies of private foundations with regard to their chosen recipients. The strategies to support and build infrastructure for the reform also build support and control for the foundations, because foundations tend to target organizations (e.g., nonprofits) over which the foundations can exercise greater control rather than public institutions (e.g., schools and school districts).

The potential benefits described in these grants for direct recipients (e.g., increased financial resources and continued work) are not the same benefits intended for students (increased
learning, greater educational equity) or educators (enriched professional development, instruction, and curriculum materials). Benefits for educators and students will remain unknown for some time, and indeed they may never be realized (Kornhaber et al., 2016). The elusive nature of SBR benefits for students and teachers leads some to question the wisdom of large financial contributions in support of the Common Core and the motivations of the foundations that do so (Kornhaber et al., 2016; Layton, 2013).
Chapter 6

Findings: Foundation Synchronization and Consolidation of Resources

The purposes described in Chapter 5 represent strategies undertaken by private foundations to support the Common Core. At the same time, grants for these purposes have had multiple funders. Foundations have synchronized their funding to support particular recipients. Such actions are in line with Resource Dependency Theory, which holds that organizations may coordinate their efforts to reduce uncertainty in the pursuit of their goals (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This chapter presents evidence that foundations synchronized support for specific purposes with events in the reform and consolidated giving to specific recipients that could support the Common Core strategically.

Foundations Synchronized Support for the Common Core

Outcome-oriented private foundations use their financial resources to influence education policy by asserting control over recipients (Saltman, 2010; Tompkins-Stange, 2016) and by selecting those recipients through a cultivated social network (Layton, 2013; Reckhow, 2013). This dissertation provides the first evidence that foundations timed grants to meet the needs of reform itself.

Figure 6-1 is a graph of all Common Core grants for the entire sample. Though most states adopted the Common Core in 2010, the standards were not due to take effect until 2014. The steady rate of grant making from 2008 until 2012 indicates that foundations supported the reform during the interval following adoption. However, in 2012-2013 foundation support increased in anticipation of 2014 and the challenges of implementation. For example, the Bill
and Melinda Gates Foundation—the biggest overall private supporter of the Common Core—made about four times as many grants to support the Common Core in 2013 as in 2012. In addition, foundations increasingly synchronized grant activity between 2012 and 2014 to support the reform.

![Number of CCSS Grants by Private Foundations Over Time](image)

**Figure 6-1.** Number of Common Core Grants by Private Foundations Over Time.

The descriptive statistics for the 2012-14 period, shown in Table 6-1, further indicate increased grant activity in support of the Common Core during that period. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of all grants awarded by from private foundations were made between 2012 and 2014. For some purposes, such as *Consulting for Operational Alignment* and *Upgrading for CCSS*, that number is closer to 80%, which suggests that such purposes were time sensitive in the context of the reform.
Table 6-1. Grants for each Purpose from 2012-2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Total Grants</th>
<th>Grants for 2012-14</th>
<th>% of Total Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crafting CCSS Materials</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>60.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrading for CCSS</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>77.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligning Systemic Policy</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>67.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting for Operational Alignment</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Teachers and Parents</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocating with Target Populations</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>61.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Organizational Capability</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>465</strong></td>
<td><strong>321</strong></td>
<td><strong>69.03%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6-2 graphs grant activity for each purpose between 2008 and July 2015. The years of 2008-2012 were punctuated by clusters of grants for each purpose. In the summer of 2013, foundations began to make more grants to support the reform for every purpose. Consulting for Operational Alignment and Upgrading for CCSS saw particularly increased activity during this time. Consulting for Operational Alignment shows the biggest spike overall while Upgrading for CCSS, along with some other purposes, experienced many smaller spikes in activity during this time.

Figure 6-3 is a similar representation of grants for each purpose over time but focuses instead on the period of increased grant activity in 2012-14. The timing of the increase is notable because it occurred about a year before school districts were due to enact the standards (Ujifusa, 2013). This indicates that foundations anticipated the need for curricular resources and technical assistance and synchronized their efforts to move these into place. For example, Training Teachers and Parents, Crafting CCSS Materials and Upgrading for CCSS each showed increased grant activity during this period. An increase in Training Teachers and Parents likely provided
more professional development to teachers, while both *Upgrading for CCSS* and *Crafting CCSS Materials* would have put more classroom materials and resources in the hands of educators during the time after adoption but before the standards took effect.

![CCSS Grants by code over time](image)

**Figure 6-2. Chronology of Foundation Giving to Support Varied Purposes of the Common Core Reform**

![CCSS grants from private foundation for each code over time: 2012 - 2014](image)

**Figure 6-3. Chronology of Foundation Giving to Support Varied Purposes of the Common Core Reform: 2012-14.**
Some purposes were steadily funded over the course of the reform. These included Aligning Systemic Policy, Advocacy with Target Populations and Building Organizational Capability. Grant activity for Aligning Systemic Policy had a particularly steady pattern. Even during the period of increased overall grant activity, the volume of grants for this purpose went up but the even distribution over time remained. Such a steady application of support towards these purposes indicates that such purposes required constant service. The distinct period of high activity in Common Core grant-making between 2012 and 2014 shows that foundations supporting the Common Core synchronized the distribution of financial resources with events in the reform to increase their impact and the chances of the reform’s success in an uncertain environment.

Foundations Consolidate Resources around Non-Profit Recipients

This section presents findings that indicate grant-making to consolidate resources among recipients of a certain type and quality. In recent years, outcome-oriented foundations have partnered with “elite” non-profits—organizations that are large and are high profile within their field—to pursue education reform (Reckhow, 2013). Think tanks, in particular, received the largest share of foundation support for the Common Core. Meanwhile, K-12 schools and school districts received far less direct support despite having a large stake in the success of the reform (Kornhaber et al., 2016).

Foundations Favor Non-profit Think Tanks over Institutions of Public Education

The Common Core’s supporters endeavored to decentralize power differently than prior SBRs. Rather than place power in the hands of a more numerous group of traditional policy
actors—e.g., federal departments, schools, and state agencies—the foundations deputized an elite group of non-profit organizations to implement this SBR while simultaneously “re-centralizing” power within the foundations themselves.

Prior research on strategic giving (Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Tompkins-Stange, 2016) indicates that foundations supporting the Common Core would maintain control of the reform by proxy of a group of elite organizations, but did not differentiate categories of non-profit recipients. There are many different kinds of non-profits organizations. Looking at sub-categories of non-profits provides insight into how foundations consolidated their financial resources.

Figure 6-4 illustrates the percentage of all foundation grants that went to varied types of non-profits between 2008 and mid-2015 to advance the Common Core. Think tanks received the largest percentage of grants, with 37% of the total sample (170 out of 465). Schools (2 public, 1 private, and 1 charter) received only four grants for direct Common Core support while school districts received 15, or 3% of the total. Of all school districts that received a Common Core
grant, nine were public (60% of all schools), while six were charter school such as the Denver School of Science and Technology, Inc., which received multiple grants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Grants Received</th>
<th>Total Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council of Chief State School Officers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$38,068,943.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>$26,612,492.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Venture Fund</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>$18,218,189.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>$12,855,043.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council of the Great City Schools</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$8,125,942.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGA Center for Best Practices</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$3,061,151.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Aspen Institute</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$5,430,847.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas B. Fordham Institute</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$3,587,116.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total for Top Recipients of Multiple Grants**: 73 $115,959,723.00

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Grants Received</th>
<th>Total Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools or School Districts</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>$16,235,537.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter Schools</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$3,261,156.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$249,113.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Schools</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$12,725,268.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Agencies</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>$25,046,765.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Units</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$1,083,839.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Governments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$100,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Departments of Education</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>$23,862,926.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total for Schools and Agencies**: 39 $41,282,302.00

Table 6-2. Comparison of Top CCSS Grant Recipients to K-12 Schools and State Agencies.

Table 6-2, illustrates foundations’ preference for certain recipient types. The table compares schools, school districts, and state agencies of education with the top recipients of multiple foundation grants in support of the Common Core. Organizations involved with the reform from the beginning, such as Achieve and the CCSSO, received more grants—and more funding—than did other non-profits in the sample. However, organizations which began work on the Common Core later, such as New Venture Fund, still received a great deal of funding in the
form of discrete grants spanning multiple years. These eight recipients of multiple grants received 73 grants between them for a total of $115,959,723 in support.

By contrast, there were 39 grants made to all K-12 educational institutions and state agencies combined. The total support given to these organizations was $41,282,302, or less than less than 40% of the support received by the group of multiple grant recipients. The data in Table 6-3 show that foundations empowered non-profits, and especially think tanks, more so than public institutions to advance the work of the reform.

**Recipients Benefitted from the Consolidation of Foundation Funding**

Foundation funding in support of the Common Core’s mission to advance students’ learning also has an impact on individual organizations. Figures 6-5 and 6-6 show the multiple grants in support of the Common Core received by two recipients. Each block on the grid is one month, each continuous colored bar is a single grant stretched across blocks equal to its term length, and each color represents a different foundation in the sample. The chart shows how the grants for each recipient were distributed over a period of a few years. Yet in both cases, the organizations’ grants overlapped to support sustained Common Core work. This illustrates how grants have a lifespan and take recipients’ attention.

Achieve, Inc. received fourteen (14) Common Core grants for a total of $26,612,492. Achieve had three to five different Common Core grants running simultaneously for most of the sample period. Six of Achieve’s 14 grants were for Aligning Systemic Policy while the remaining grants were for work related to every purpose but Consulting for Operational Alignment. According to Achieve’s Form 990, its net assets for 2013 were $8,666,754. That year the organization received $1,250,000 in new Common Core funding, which was about 16% of their
net assets. In 2014, though, Achieve’s net assets declined to $6,013,866. Still, the organization received $2,250,000 in Common Core grants, making up about 37% of its net assets that year.

![Figure 6-5. Plot of Common Core Grants for Achieve, Inc.](image)

Another example of such a trend comes from the grants received by the National Public Education Support Fund (NPESF). The NPESF worked on the Common Core by leading a philanthropy strategy group. Members of its board also served on the board of the Alliance for Excellent Education which was involved in early development of the Common Core (Rothman, 2011). NPESF received seven grants, totaling $650,000 over three years that supported work at the organization into the summer of 2016. The yearly proportion of net assets is similar to that of Achieve. In 2013, the Common Core grants of $150,000 were 18.5% of net assets for NPESF. However, in 2014 and 2015 Common Core grants amounted to 31% and 22% of NPESF’s net assets respectively. Thereby, foundations’ support refocused each of the two organizations’ work around furthering the Common Core.

![Figure 6-6. Plot of Common Core Grants for the National Public Education Support Fund](image)
Other organizations that received only one grant to support work on the Common Core nonetheless felt the effect of Common Core funding from private foundations. For instance, Research for Action, Inc. received a single grant “to support pilot research and validation of instructional tools in mathematics and literacy aligned to the common core state standards.” The grant was for $1,309,409 in 2013 and came from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. According to Research for Action’s 2013 Form 990 it reported net assets of $2,125,996.00, which mean that the single Common Core grant represented 61.5% of their net assets that year.

In line with Resource Dependency Theory, organizations operating in these conditions are likely to give up some autonomy in exchange for financial assurances for years to come. A lack of organizational autonomy may alter organizational leaders’ perception of the Common Core—e.g., whether or not they question its viability or potential benefit to students—as a result of accepting a Common Core grant from a foundation.

**Summary**

This chapter presents findings that indicate that foundations collaborated on the timing of their funding and consolidated resources to leverage the influence and expertise. Graphs of grant activity over time show increased support just before a period when more resources would have been needed: implementation during the 2013-14 school year. Think tanks received more grants from foundations and often received multiple grants that funded years of sustained work. Meanwhile, public institutions like school systems and state agencies received little direct funding. Such a distribution of resources represents a change from past iterations of SBR, in which support centered on schools as a locus of change rather than the more peripheral non-profits tasked with reform at a distance.
Under the Common Core, foundations have sought to consolidate resources and thereby gain greater control over the reform. The benefits for organizations that foundations selected to support the reform are clear. Recipients got a boost to their net assets for the year for taking on work from a foundation. Resource Dependency Theory predicts that when recipients stand to benefit from an exchange for financial resources more than foundations, the foundations will have more control over grant activities, and recipients may lose autonomy.
Chapter 7

Discussion

This study has identified a set of seven shared purposes pursued by foundations supporting the Common Core through an analysis of 465 grant announcements. Foundations synchronized the timing of their support for each purpose and consolidated their resources among a selection of recipients. The shared purposes represent the function of the foundations’ Common Core work and are best explained as the foundations’ attempt to build capability (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009) for educators and the public to adopt and implement the reform. The approach foundations took to build capability for the reform can be viewed through the lens of resource dependency (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In other words, foundations supporting the Common Core use their financial resources to induce non-profits to pursue specific purposes on their behalf and thereby reduce organizational and environmental sources of uncertainty for the reform.

**Capability with a Purpose: Foundations Developed Common Core Capability by Pursuing Shared Purposes**

Policy capability is “contained in the instruments that policies deploy; in the instruments that educators can use; in educators’ will, skill, and dispositions; and in the environment and organizations in which policy and practice subsist” (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009, p. 15). Whether or not educators can use such ‘will, skill, and disposition’ in the classroom is dependent on the policymakers’ ability to provide them with the capability to do so (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Private foundations, acting as policy entrepreneurs for the Common Core, fulfilled some of the obligations of traditional policymakers (e.g., supporting the reform, providing resources, and
advocating for the educators) by making grants to non-profit recipients towards a set of shared purposes designed to construct the necessary capability for educators.

Figure 7-1. A Model of Capability for the Common Core.

The relationship between the aspects of capability is represented in Figure 7-1 as a Venn diagram. Common Core grants are given for shared purposes in service to the foundations’ attempts to build capability for the reform. The foundations’ purposes found through this study illuminate the capabilities (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009) that were built by those foundation grants to recipients in support of the reform. The following section discusses what the foundations constructed in support of each aspect of capability.
The Aims of the Common Core

The Common Core State Standards aimed to “...[ ] ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to take credit-bearing introductory courses in two- or four-year college programs or enter the workforce” without the need for postsecondary remediation (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014). The standards were also intended to create an even playing field for students in different states:

High standards that are consistent across states provide teachers, parents, and students with a set of clear expectations to ensure that all students have the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life upon graduation from high school, regardless of where they live. These standards are aligned with the expectations of colleges, workforce training programs, and employers. The standards promote equity by ensuring all students are well prepared to collaborate and compete with their peers in the United States and abroad. (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014)

Policy aims are constructed by policymakers based on the intersection of the environment into which a policy will be delivered and the instruments available (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Foundations supporting the Common Core encountered these boundaries alongside internal factors, such as their history working with policy (e.g., the Annenberg Challenge) (Reckhow, 2013), orientation towards policy change (Tompkins-Stange, 2016), and key foundation personnel (Loveless, 2005; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). Foundation efforts to build capability for the Common Core were also informed by prior research on SBR (e.g., educators require resources to teach effectively) (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

After co-constructing the aims of the reform with policy experts and educators, foundations set about fulfilling them through grants for the seven shared purposes. For example,
grants made for the purposes of \textit{Crafting CCSS Materials} and \textit{Training Teachers and Parents} contribute to the aims of the Common Core in part by creating new curriculum materials for the classroom and professional development for the educators themselves. Having ready-to-hand materials that were standards-aligned made it more likely teachers could cope with the policy/practice gap of the Common Core. Similarly, professional development on the Common Core could bridge the policy/practice gap by providing information for educators on how to align their practice to the reform. Finally, grants for \textit{Aligning Systemic Policy} served the reform’s aims by addressing the anticipated need to integrate the new standards with adjacent policies, such as state assessments or teacher accountability measures.

\textbf{The Resources of the Common Core}

Determining the appropriate resources and providing them to educators is a role primarily filled by policymakers following the adoption of a reform (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Foundations supported the Common Core by funding non-profits to create resources and distribute them strategically (e.g., at times of anticipated need or to influential groups). Foundations determined which resources to contribute after considering the needs of educators, the aims of the Common Core, and prior SBR research. For instance, SBR research would have suggested that teaching practice often changes when faced with new standards or new assessments (Amrein-Beardsley et al., 2010; Booher-Jennings, 2005). In response, foundations made grants for \textit{Aligning Systemic Policy} that would codify acceptable changes to instructional practice. Grants for \textit{Upgrading for CCSS} directed recipients to adapt existing products to include the Common Core (e.g., the alteration of the Danielson Framework to align with the Common Core discussed in Chapter 5).

Foundations also used their grants to mobilize less tangible resources like the expertise, time, and energy of the personnel at recipient organizations. Foundations’ grant-making indicates
the intellectual burden of developing and supporting the reform was entrusted to multiple organizations. Foundations often ‘spread the load’ by directing multiple recipients to work on a similar task. For example, grants for the purpose of Consulting for Operational Alignment directed many recipients to support implementation at the state, district, or school level. Foundations sought to orchestrate the delivery of intellectual and tangible resources to coincide with the reform’s stages. By providing resources at the needed times, foundations sought to encourage a smoother adoption of the reform.

The Instruments of the Common Core

A policy’s effectiveness is limited by the instruments available to the policymakers supporting it (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). The instruments available to foundations in their policy work is constrained by their legal status as non-profit organizations (Hall, 2003), which prohibits them from direct involvement with legislation. As a result of these constraints, foundations are restricted to inducing grant recipients to act on their behalf with offers of financial resources. Recipients, in turn, used the resources received from foundations to induce educators and the public to adopt and implement the Common Core.

As the primary instrument available to foundations, financial resources are more powerful with some measure of control attached to them. Modern foundations, therefore, commonly give grants to recipients on the condition that the foundation will guide the recipient's work (Saltman, 2010; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). By maintaining control over the recipient’s work, foundations could control the content of the guidance/products that were passed from recipients to educators and the public.

Foundations’ financial inducement is a powerful instrument. Notably, foundations’ grant-making induced the adoption of the Common Core at the state level. For instance, the
release of the standards, which were developed through foundations’ financial support, was synchronized with the opening of the Race to the Top (RTTT) program. Thereby, all but four states adopted the Common Core to position themselves to compete for RTTT funding. Though RTTT did not require the Common Core specifically, the adoption of “common standards” was one of the key criteria for awarding points towards winning an RTTT grant (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

By ensuring an adequate supply of resources through synchronization, foundations were able to influence education policy significantly. For instance, despite rarely making grants directly to educational institutions, foundations were able to have indirect control over the products, services, and funds that eventually reached educators on the ground. By providing resources the educators would receive through non-profit proxies, foundations indirectly influenced educators’ practice. For example, the goal of a July 2013 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to the University of Washington Foundation for $610,819 was “to develop tools and resources to support school and district leaders in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.”

The Environment of the Common Core

The policy environment helps to define the aims, resources, and instruments available for a given policy while also determining which policies are possible (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Foundations altered the policy environment to accommodate the adoption of CCSS through grants that directed recipients to policy action. Inducing recipients to follow foundation directions is itself an alteration of the policy environment. In addition, foundations were able to increase their impact on the environment through grants that directed recipients to (1) frame the reform in a way that would appeal to educators, the business sector, and other members of the
public, and (2) to create resources that would ease the transition to the new standards. Thus, every grant altered the environment through the construction and provision of capability (e.g., the aims, resources, and instruments) insofar as such provision made the adoption of the reform by legislators, educators, and the public more likely.

However, some purposes altered the policy environment more than others. Foundations made grants for the purpose of *Advocacy with Target Populations* to create political buy-in for the reform and create an environment where another SBR would be viewed favorably by state legislators. For example, the $500,000 grant from the Fred and Leona Helmsley Charitable Trust to the National Council of La Raza in July of 2015 provided, “Funding for national and state-based support of college and career-ready standards and aligned assessments among Latino parents.” This grant illustrates how foundations could use funding to encourage public support of the Common Core from specific populations. Foundations partnered with diverse organizations in an effort to mobilize as many voices as possible in favor of the reform to encourage its adoption by legislators and the public.

The provision of capability ultimately served to make the environment (e.g., educators, policymakers, and the public) more susceptible to change. *Resource Dependency Theory* best explains how foundations engaged with recipients to construct capability for the Common Core. Recipients in need of resources will be more likely to accept control attempts from potential funders (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The result is a cadre of willing organizations working with/for the foundations and supporting the reform. The recipients are compliant because they require funding, the funders exert control as necessary reduce uncertainty for the reform agenda.
Understanding the purposes of foundation grants in support of the Common Core has been one goal of this study. The other has been to shed light on how foundations pursue these purposes strategically. A foundation’s policy capabilities are determined by (1) the foundation’s orientation towards policy, (2) the policy instruments available, and (3) the policy environment in which the foundations are working. Modern foundations have orientations that differ along the lines of internal ideology, personnel, and the background of the foundation’s main benefactor among many other factors (Tompkins-Stange, 2016). However, despite how the modern foundations’ orientations might differ, their educational aims might be described as ‘improving a failing public K-12 system of education’ (Reckhow, 2015; Saltman, 2010). Furthermore, the policy instruments open to any foundation are determined in part by their status as 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations (Hall, 2003).

While a foundation’s orientation is internally determined, and their instrument is legally constrained, the environment in which the foundations operate remains dynamic and malleable. As such, foundations supporting the Common Core pursued change through the strategic alteration of their environment via the exploitation of resource dependency among organizations working in the field of education. In short, foundations took advantage of resource dependency to seek out recipients that would exchange some degree of foundation control. Foundations directed those recipients to specific tasks in support of the reform. Though such financial inducements may only produce temporary effects (Kornhaber et al., 2016), the scope of the relationships established between foundations and recipients allowed for broad involvement in the Common Core.

The inducements offered by foundations’ differ from those traditionally offered by the Federal Government in that foundations are less legally accountable than federal lawmakers. As
such, foundations have a freer hand in selecting recipients and exerting control over their work. Potential recipients of Common Core grants were often identified by foundations through social connections (Reckhow, 2013). Working with such known entities reduced the foundations’ organizational uncertainty. Foundations’ financial leverage over recipient organizations is insurance against uncertainty because recipients under a financial obligation to a funder are more willing to accept control (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) than recipients that are merely connected socially.

Foundations exert control over recipients by taking advantage of the conditions of resource dependency experienced by non-profit organizations in the typical environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). For example, if recipients of Common Core grants had no need for resources, or they had simply disagreed with the foundations’ proposals on principal, then foundations would have had no sure way of motivating the recipients’ actions in support of the Common Core. Strategic giving entails foundations that aggressively pursue particular agendas through chosen non-profits (Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). However, for the strategy to work, there must be recipients willing join in that pursuit in exchange for resources.

Finally, organizational relationships based on the exchange of resources may suffer from two weaknesses. First, such relationships are not as strong as those built on a shared commitment to a “cause.” Recipients of Common Core grants may only support the standards while there is still funding to do so (Kornhaber et al., 2016). On the other hand, organizations that genuinely see the Common Core as able to increase student achievement will support the reform regardless of funding. Second, when foundations act as leaders of the reform, they engender deference to the foundation leadership and run the risk of forsaking the expertise of recipients. Modern foundations can make the environment welcoming of the Common Core, but
not necessarily accepting of the reform in the long term. Even so, foundations might only be able to accomplish/sustain such attitudes while the recipients still have grant money.

This problem points to ways in which strategic philanthropic giving breaks from the historical cycle of patronage. First, patronage required direct interaction between patron and followers (Fukuyama, 2015), whereas the influence of modern philanthropy on education policy has been shown to be indirect (Kornhaber et al., 2016; Reckhow, 2013; Saltman, 2010). Second, a patron’s followers received bureaucratic positions as a reward for loyalty, rather than as a due reward for merit. As such, a patron’s followers were often unqualified to perform the jobs they were given. Modern philanthropies differ in that they tend to support qualified recipients chosen for their ability to complete a task. There seems to be little evidence of philanthropists or foundations making grants to familiar organizations just to boost the recipients’ financial resources. Furthermore, the use of foundation resources to do so would not fit with the “rent making” practices of historical patrons. Instead, modern foundations are focused on policy solutions and enact their preferred reforms by taking advantage of organizational resource dependency to build a network of competent and influential potential recipients with which to work.

This view of strategic giving proposed by this study is that foundations constructed the necessary capability for the Common Core by pursuing shared purposes through grants to non-profit recipients. Foundations induced recipients to action by exploiting extant resource dependency in the organizational environment. Foundations’ freedom extends only to which recipients to partner with and awarding grants only to those organizations willing to accept some foundation control. Those relationships, being built on financial obligations, may not engender loyalty to the reform itself once funding has run out. This conceptualization of foundation strategy differs from that which has been put forth by prior research (Greene, 2005; Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Saltman, 2010; Tompkins-Stange, 2016) as having broad policy
choices, defined by social connections, and reliant on the disruption of existing education policy structures.

Summary

A policy/practice gap exists for all policy changes, but policymakers provide the capability to bridge it based on the policy context and the instruments available to them (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Foundations supporting the Common Core pursued a set of shared purposes as a direct attempt to do just that. Foundations sought to build capability among educators by pursuing these purposes through strategic attempts to control the policy environment via financial grants. Grant recipients accepted control from funders as predicted by Resource Dependency Theory. The degree to which a foundation engages in strategic giving is limited by how willing the organization is to alter the environment through the exploitation of resource dependency among potential recipients. Therefore, the practice of selecting of recipients that comply with foundation directives is at the core of strategic giving in the case of the Common Core.
Chapter 8

Conclusion

Prior research has studied the outcomes of strategic giving by foundations that supported different educational reforms (Greene, 2005; Levine, 2016; Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Saltman, 2010). This study looked at how foundations engaged with a specific educational policy, the Common Core. Whereas prior studies showed the effects of foundation grants on policy and politics, this study asks questions about how the money was used to carry out the foundations’ giving strategy. The findings are a set of purposes that represent the capability (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009) that foundations supporting the Common Core built for educators working under the reform. The purposes are pursued through foundation control over recipients made possible by conditions of resource dependence between foundations and non-profits. Furthermore, there is evidence to support the claim that private foundations that funded the Common Core timed their grants to enhance certain aspects of the reform at specific times. This chapter summarizes the study and its theoretical and methodological contributions to the research on the effects of foundation giving towards education policy.

Summary of the Study

The goal of any study is to answer the research questions that have guided it. As an answer to question one, this study presented seven shared purposes that describe the activities which foundations directed their recipients to undertake. These purposes were found through close analysis of 465 publicly available grant announcements which described the grants given in support of the Common Core. The grants directed recipients to create new materials, advocate for the Common Core, or to provide assistance to schools with implementation. As such, trends
in how these purposes were distributed shed light on how foundations prioritized their activities as well as their attempts to maintain control of the reform.

Relatedly, the answer to research question two is that foundations encouraged policy change with grants, which are all made for a purpose, and each purpose supports multiple aspects of capability (e.g., aims, resources, instruments, and the environment). Capability is the skills, opportunities, and resources educators need to alter their practice under any educational reform (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009).

While the Common Core was described as a “state-led effort” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012; Rothman, 2011), it seems clear that leadership of the reform drew from, and was dependent on, the foundations supporting it, rather than residing with the states themselves. Foundations distributed grants for the Common Core by timing their grant activities to match events in the reform (e.g., develop professional development a year prior educators needing it) and consolidating their resources within non-profit think tanks but avoiding direct financial assistance to schools, school districts, and state agencies.

As a result, think tanks, rather than schools and government organizations, shaped curriculum content, delivered technical support to educators and wrote the policies that would govern and align the reform. Though think tanks have had an indirect influence on the substance of policy for decades (DeBray-Pelot, 2007), lawmakers and educators have always taken the driver’s seat when it comes to which education policies are adopted and to proceed with implementation. The foundation’s preference for organizations that are willing to accept control (e.g., think tanks) over educational institutions is one example of how maintaining control of the reform was an important factor in choosing recipients for grants. Indeed, prior research has suggested that this attitude existed within foundations prior to the Common Core (Reckhow, 2013; Tompkins-Stange, 2016) and resource dependency would predict this behavior from
foundations as a way to stabilize the organization in times of uncertainty (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

The answer to research question three is that Common Core grants were strategically distributed such that foundations maintained control over the work carried out by recipients. Development of the reform (i.e. the standards, curriculum materials, adjacent policies, and political support) was driven by private foundations’ direction of recipients to pursue seven shared purposes. The ostensible goal of the foundations, as policy entrepreneurs, was to provide educators with the capability to implement the reform. Foundations made grants for shared purposes in an effort to build capability for educators, legislators, and the public as they adapted to the Common Core. The purposes are categorizations of those efforts to build capability. The foundations followed through on these purposes by linking control over recipients’ work with financial assistance. Foundations’ control over recipients was due to conditions of resource dependency in the organizational environment.

**Theoretical Summary**

The need for policy capability is common to all reforms, but the approach to its construction is not. Which capabilities are defined by foundations for a given policy are formed by a combination of internal (e.g., personnel, orientation, policy goals, and legal status) and external factors in the policy environment (e.g., the response from the educators and legislators, specific requirements of the reform, and the needs of supporters). In addition to dictating a foundation’s grantmaking process, this combination of internal and external factors also manifests in the strategic distribution of grants among recipients and the purposes for which those grants are made.
Foundations supporting the Common Core pursued these purposes by taking advantage of resource dependency amongst potential recipients. Foundations provided grants to recipients willing to accept their direction in carrying out tasks in support of the reform. This strategy, i.e. controlling recipients through financial inducements, is the only strategy available to private foundations, because of their legal status as non-profits. Indeed, all purposes designed to build capability for the reform ultimately served to make the Common Core more likely to be adopted, implemented, and sustained.

**Significance of the Findings**

Foundation funding for the Common Core affected the Federal Government’s support for the reform. Federal support contributed more financial resources to states through the Race to the Top competitive grant program than did private foundations (Kornhaber et al., 2016). The federal spending on the Common Core of approximately $1 billion dollars since 2009 and the $630,220,098 committed by foundations between 2008 and mid-2015 have had different effects on the reform. Federal RTTT funding indirectly encouraged adoption of the Common Core by prioritizing “common standards” (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Foundation funding not only created the standards but mobilized the resources necessary to support the reform after states had adopted it. Whereas RTTT was an indirect inducement to adopt the reform, foundation funding was a direct inducement for non-profits to create the CCSS and the capability necessary to adopt and implement them.

By providing leadership to the state-led reform, foundations were able to ensure that the products and services required for the Common Core would be available once the standards were adopted. Control of the products ensured that the educators received the message and resources that the foundations considered most appropriate for meeting the needs of the Common Core. In
short, private foundations co-developed the standards first, encouraged their adoption with grants, and then pursued the purposes defined here to create a supportive policy environment and develop the capability educators would require once states were engaged to implement them.

It remains to be seen whether or not the Common Core will raise achievement. If it does not, researchers and critics would have grounds to question the motives of private foundations given that other policy reforms—e.g., universal pre-school or better professional development—have been shown to do more good than SBR alone (Kornhaber et al., 2016).

However, regardless of the Common Core’s impact on academic achievement, the foundations’ actions are significant. This dissertation research highlights the strategies foundations use to push their agenda forward. It also raises questions about the extent to which US education policy should be swayed by a few influential private philanthropies promoting policy ideas that have not been shown to improve student achievement or reduce achievement gaps. There is no doubt that private foundations provided much needed financial resources and capability to adopt and implement the reform. However, it is also clear that without the sizeable policy/practice gap created by the Common Core, those resources would not have been necessary and could have been used on reforms more certain to produce benefits for students and educators.

**Significance of the Study**

The goal of any research project is to contribute to the field in meaningful ways. This study contributes to the understanding of strategic giving from private foundations to change education policy. This study also contributes novel methods to the study of education policy. This section will briefly describe each of these.
Contributions to the Field

The primary contribution of this study is to the understanding of strategic giving by private foundations. This study applied Cohen and Moffitt’s (2009) conception of capability to illustrate how foundations define capability and use specific shared purposes to build it. This study also suggests Resource Dependency Theory as a better model for explaining how foundations interact with recipients when supporting educational reforms. Social connections between funders and recipients are evident (Reckhow, 2013), but the continuation of such funding relationships is better explained as inter-dependent organizations exchanging resources in times of scarcity.

While other studies have been able to address the outcomes associated with foundation funding strategies (Greene, 2005; Reckhow, 2015; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Tompkins-Stange, 2016), this study seeks to understand how the inputs of foundations into the Common Core were put to work. The inputs are determined by foundations while the distribution of the grants is the product of the legal status of the foundation and its view on policy. The practice of strategic giving has moved quickly beyond Greene’s (2005; 2015) notion of picking high leverage activities. Instead, strategic giving now encompasses picking high leverage participants that are willing to be directed in how to engage with educators’ needs under the reform. Strategic giving is, therefore, best viewed through individual reforms so as to see the finer points of the overall strategy.

Contributions to Methods

This study used a sample of 465 public grant announcements to look for patterns in how private foundations made grants to support the Common Core. Document analyses generated the
shared purposes described in the findings. However, this study made use of other novel forms of analysis that contributed to other aspects of the study.

First, the analysis of the data made regular use of descriptive codes to find deeper patterns beyond the text of each announcement. Using descriptive codes enabled the creation of comparison matrices for each purpose. Descriptive codes consisted of qualitative data (e.g., amount, recipient type, or term length) linked to each grant and used to code grants for each purpose using descriptive codes. Following this method of analysis showed the prevalence of think tanks, trends in the amounts of grants given for certain purposes, and foundation activity in making grants for each purpose over time.

Without such descriptive codes, only the purpose categories would have been possible. Descriptive codes are helpful when looking for patterns in all kinds of qualitative data, including interview transcripts and qualitative survey entries. Descriptive codes act like demographic information does for quantitative survey responses, but these data can often speak to questions about why something happened which benefit qualitative research.

Finally, the use of descriptive codes allowed for the visualization of foundation grants supporting each purpose over time. Gathering data in this way is a technique that has not been widely used in education policy research. By collecting information about when each grant was made, it was possible to create a month by month graph of grants for each purpose over the period covered by the sample. These charts clearly illustrate how the timing of grants for specific purposes aligns with anticipated events in the reform and how those anticipated events were supported by synchronized funding. The month-by-month data was also used to create the representation of grant coverage for non-profits which received multiple Common Core grants as an example of how grants overlap to support single recipients. Gathering data on the timing of policy changes could apply to other educational reforms whether the unit of analysis is grant announcements, legislation, or social media postings. Furthermore, such time-based data could
be used to show a change in participant attitudes over the course of a series of structured interviews or survey collections.

Suggestions for Future Research

Given the implications of these findings, more research is needed to identify patterns in how foundations have supported other educational reforms. A sample of documents could be gathered to study other privately backed school reforms such as charter schools, vouchers, or smaller classrooms using much the same methods. However, researchers should make hay while the sun shines, as foundations are beginning to remove data on individual grants from their grant databases. Some foundations have taken down their publicly available grant databases and making data only available through the Foundation Center website. This practice makes searching for foundation grant data difficult and obscure.

Further research should also be conducted on the types, and degree, of social control, exerted on recipients of foundation grants. Interviews and personal contact with foundation program officers would be the best method to pursue these questions. A future study could look at variations in control for different reforms, for different recipient types, or for different grant amounts. Questions remain about the influence of funding on the work of grant recipients. For instance, is the work of a grant funded recipient their own or do funder dictate desired outcomes? Does grant funded research produce objective findings, or do the findings typically support the policy positions of the funder? What effect does the source of support for a given reform have on the reform itself or the civic freedoms of participants in society? In other words, how does the influence of private foundations affect the practice of education and the ideals of democratic government by and for the people?


Database/Grants/2011/11/OPP1044285

Links/Grants-Database


https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08323842

https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033008016


Retrieved from http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000561408

https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.24.2221


Appendix A: Sampling Frame and Initial Search List of Foundations

Sampling Frame of 20 Largest Donors to Education

1) Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation
2) Walton Family Foundation
3) General Electric Foundation
4) Spencer Foundation
5) Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
6) Lumina Foundation
7) Ford Foundation
8) The Joyce Foundation
9) William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
10) W.K. Kellogg Foundation
11) Carnegie Corporation
12) Fred and Leona Helmsley Charitable Trust
13) Noyce Foundation
14) Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
15) Silicon Valley Community Foundation
16) Foundation to Promote Open Society
17) Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation
18) Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
19) Annenberg Foundation
20) American Honda Foundation

Initial list of Foundations Searched for Common Core grants

1) Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation
2) Walton Family Foundation
3) General Electric Foundation
4) Spencer Foundation
5) Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
6) Lumina Foundation
7) Ford Foundation
8) The Joyce Foundation
9) William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
10) W.K. Kellogg Foundation
11) Carnegie Corporation
12) Fred and Leona Helmsley Charitable Trust
13) Noyce Foundation
## Appendix B: Criteria for Deductive Descriptive Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient Size Category</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Recipients with less than 20 staff or a budget of less than $5M per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schools have less than 500 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School districts have fewer than 5 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For-Profits have less than 20 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government is an individual Town Smaller or smaller but not including large cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Universities have less than 5000 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Recipients with between 21 and 60 staff OR budget of between $5,000,000 and $20M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schools have between 501 and 1200 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School districts have between 5 and 10 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For-profits have between 20 and 50 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governments are counties or cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Universities have between 5000 and 12,000 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Recipients with more than 60 staff OR budget larger than $20,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schools have greater than 1200 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School districts have more than 10 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For-profits have more than 50 employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governments are States or State Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Universities have more than 12000 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region Category</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>Maine to New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>NJ, MD, DE, PA, VA, WV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>FL, KY, MS, AL, GA, SC, NC, TN, LA, AR, LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>MN, MS, IL, IA, ND, SD, OH, WI, IN, NE, KS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>TX, AZ, NM, CA, NV, OK, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>WA, OR, ID, MO, WY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation Size Category</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>A foundation with net assets of less than $100,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>A foundation with net assets between $100,000,000 and $3.5B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Foundations with more than $3.5B in net assets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount Size Category</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Grants of $250,000 or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Grants between $250,001 and $999,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Grants of $1,000,000 or more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City Size Category</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Population smaller than 300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>A population between 300,001 and 800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Population greater than 800,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term Length Category</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Terms shorter than 13 Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Terms between 13 and 24 months long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Terms longer than 24 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix C: Criteria for Inductive Descriptive Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient Type Category</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicator</td>
<td>Primary work involves communicating ideas to the public either for profit or non-profit. EX: newspapers, broadcasters, speakers, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Developer</td>
<td>Works to develop content or materials for education in general. Examples of content are curriculum, textbooks, instructional frameworks, systems, etc. Groups can be non-profit or for profit. EX: Publishers or video game developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>A district is a collection of more than one school. The district may be charter or public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused Non-Profit</td>
<td>A focused non-profit devotes their time and attention to addressing a specific issue in education. They are non-partisan, but their issues do tend to fall along political lines. Most focused non-profits in education are dedicated to improving education in some way – either achievement, instruction or organization – but they generally have one method they are trying to get adopted or help schools adopt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Association</td>
<td>A collection of members / member organizations that collaboration and communicate about a common issue. PAs might advocate on behalf of their members or join the discussion on policy issues, but they are not think tanks as they lack a centralized structure and do not engage as heavily in research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>An individual K-12 school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Funder</td>
<td>A secondary funder receives funds from a private foundation and makes grants locally or in a more focused arena. Secondary funders may also receive funds as the manager of a larger project that is being undertaken by a group of non-profits or professional organizations. Their functions are primarily to make secondary grants or manage large grant funded projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Agency</td>
<td>Agencies that are formally part of the state government or are created by statutes to carry our state business. EX: Departments of Education and IU’s or ESAs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think Tank</td>
<td>Think tanks differ from Focused non-profits in that they do not address a specific issue in education but attempt to improve education through research, policy advocacy, and communication. Think tanks tackle many different issues. Think tanks can be partisan organizations, and their issues / solutions tend to follow those distinctions. Their research efforts can and often are directed to specific projects but think tanks tend to focus on the biggest issues of the time, and those focuses change as education changes. They lead the line on policy research and advocacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>An individual institution of post-secondary education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VITA

Nikolaus J. Barkauskas

EDUCATION
2017 Ph.D., Education Theory and Policy, the Pennsylvania State University
2009 M.A., Philosophy, Temple University
2005 B.A., Philosophy, Temple University
2003 A.A., Education, Raritan Valley Community College

AWARDS AND HONORS
2016 Department Student Writing Group Award: $2500
2015 Department Student Writing Group Award: $2500
2014 College of Education Research Initiation Grant: $7000
2013 The Ed and Sue Wilson Scholarship for Academic Excellence: $2500

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS


PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES:
2017 Guest Lecturer – EDTHP 427, Penn State
2017 Peer Review – American Education Research Journal
2017 Peer Review – Education Researcher
2017 Peer Review – American Journal of Education
2016 Guest Lecturer – Education Policy Studies Pro Seminar, Penn State
2016 Peer Review – American Education Research Journal
2016 Graduate Instructor – EDTHP 441, Education, Schooling, and Values
2015 Guest Lecturer – EDTHP 200, Penn State
2015 Peer Review – Education Researcher
2015 Teaching Assistant – EDTHP 115, Education and Society
2014 Peer Review – American Journal of Education
2014 Research Assistant – Rock Ethics Institute, Penn State