

Pennies for Pre-Schoolers:
The Role of Foundations in Pre-School Programs, Policies, and Research

by

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ABSTRACT

The lasting benefits of high-quality early childhood programs are widely understood. These benefits and the well-documented return on investments are among the factors that have shaped executives at philanthropic foundations' grant making in support of early childhood programs, policies, and research in the United States. Yet little is known about the investments they are making in the field of early childhood. Drawing from a conceptual framework that combines types of philanthropic investment with the concepts of accountability and transparency, I conducted a comparative case study of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, George Kaiser Family Foundation, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, all of which began financially supporting early childhood between 2000 and 2005. I attempted to understand how and why philanthropic foundations and pooled funding organizations have supported early childhood from the late 1990s through 2018.

Based on my analysis of 32 semi-structured interviews with current and former early childhood philanthropic foundation, pooled funding, and operating organization executives, I found that each foundation independently determines their investment decision processes and invests a disparate amount of money in early childhood. In addition, philanthropic foundations gain programmatic and legislative power by leveraging funds and partnering with additional foundations and businesses. With the inclusion of early childhood programs in K-12 education systems and the decrease in national and state education funding from those same budgets, it is critical to understand how philanthropic foundations have supported early childhood education and some of the implications of their support both locally and nationally.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family.

For Jason, Kali, and Gozer.

I love all three of you so very much.

Jason, my love, I could not have done this without you. You are my best friend and partner, and have been a constant support and sounding board for me throughout the ups and downs of this entire Ph.D. process. I am so grateful for you. You always make me feel like I am capable of doing anything. Thank you for believing in me and cheering for me, even when I struggle with believing in my abilities and myself.

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To Jeremy, Dad, Aunt Mickey, and All of my Family

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And to all supporters of early childhood education

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I first became interested in researching the private funding of early childhood education in the United States after reading Popper's *New York Times* article (Popper, 2015) that described the use of social impact bonds to support preschool in Utah. In August 2013, Goldman Sachs and the Early Childhood Innovation Accelerator, an initiative created by philanthropist J.B. Pritzker, of the Hyatt Hotel brands and the Pritzker Group investment firm, partnered with the United Way of Salt Lake. Through this partnership they provided loans of up to \$7M in support of the Utah High Quality Preschool Program (Glen, Pritzker, & Bayle, 2013; Goldman Sachs, 2015). These loans were provided in the form of social impact bonds or pay-for-success transactions, and were the first of their kind to be used in support of early childhood education (Goldman Sachs, 2015). By utilizing this investment for the expansion of the Utah High Quality Preschool Program and providing early education services for up to five cohorts comprised of 4,000 "at-risk" three- and four-year-old children, the partners intended to increase kindergarten readiness and improve academic performance of the children. The theory driving this investment was that this expansion of high-quality early childhood education would cause fewer children to be referred to special education services when they entered kindergarten, which would result in financial savings to local school districts, the State of Utah, and other government entities (Goldman Sachs, 2015).

Two years later, Popper reported that the Utah High Quality Preschool Program had been successful because 109 of the 110 "at-risk" children who were enrolled in the first cohort would not need special education services when they entered kindergarten (Popper,

2015). Goldman Sachs and J.B. Pritzker received an initial financial return of over \$260,000 on their investments, one of many they were to receive (Popper, 2015). Even though several early childhood education experts found errors with the evaluation of the program and ensuing payout, this social impact bond investment process has since been considered a potential model for a new style of funding for early childhood education programs by philanthropists (Popper, 2015; Tse & Warner, 2018).

The idea that a corporation and philanthropic foundation¹ (hereafter, foundation) would work together to receive financial payouts for their investments in preschool for “at-risk” children surprised me. I had originally and somewhat naively believed that foundations were altruistic with their investments and were primarily interested in supporting the long-term educational, social, emotional, and physical health improvements of young children and members of their communities, rather than receiving returns on their investments. This was the first time that social impact bonds or a pay-for-success transaction program had been used to pay for early childhood education. I began to question the ways in which foundations were investing in early childhood education, what exactly they were investing in, and how they were investing.

For the scope of this study, I decided to focus on foundation investment in early childhood education (i.e. foundations very similar to the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation), rather than the investment role of corporations (i.e. Goldman Sachs) or the

¹ For the purposes of this study, philanthropy refers to the act of giving money, time, and other resources to individuals, causes, and organizations to promote social issues. A philanthropic foundation is a non-governmental, nonprofit, private organization that engages in philanthropy and legally cannot lobby elected officials.

partnerships that foundations were making with corporations. I focused on the charitable work of foundations because historically, they have not been held to the same level of public scrutiny, accountability, or transparency standards, as have corporations or corporate direct giving programs (e.g. Callahan, 2017a; Candid, 2019; Reich, 2018). I first began researching the general investments of foundations in education. By reading seminal research pieces that focused on foundation investments in kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) and higher education (e.g. Bremner, 1988; Hess & Henig, 2015; Lagemann, 2000; O'Connor, 1999; Reckhow, 2013; Russakoff, 2015; Tompkins-Stange, 2016), I began to understand how foundations currently and historically have supported K-12 or higher education either through investments made in specific programs, through research or evaluation of programs, or more broadly through curriculum reform. Foundations have traditionally supported K-12 and higher education through activities outside of the national public funding stream (i.e. through charter schools or charter management organizations, outside school organizations, teacher training programs, or programs focused on workforce development and college readiness, the arts, or STEM education for students) (Inside Philanthropy, n.d.b). I also learned about the upswing of foundation involvement in national education programs and policies in the United States that had occurred over the past ten years (Reckhow & Snyder, 2014). Yet there was a lack of research evidence on the extent to which and how foundations invest in pre-school² education (e.g. Bushouse, 2009; Grant, 1999; Kirp, 2007).

² I am defining pre-school education programs, policies, and research studies as those that are created for or in support of children who are within the ages of birth to four years. I use the terms pre-school and early childhood education interchangeably.

I began to take a closer look at national early childhood education legislation to see where foundations had become involved in the funding of those policies, and a longer historical view of how foundations had invested in pre-school programs from the 1800s to the 2000s. I discovered that it was relatively new for foundations to fund pre-school or to invest in advocacy organizations that were vocal supporters of pre-school education. Perhaps because of that relative newness, few studies had looked deeply into how foundations were investing in pre-school or early childhood education. This dissertation is an attempt to provide some initial insights into the unexplored world of foundation investment in pre-school.

Research Questions & Rationale

My research questions were as follows:

1. How have foundations supported pre-school programs, policies, and research in the United States since the late 1990s?
2. What factors have influenced foundations' investment decisions?

These questions draw upon my knowledge of the well-established long-term benefits of high-quality³ early childhood education. I used these questions to gain a better understanding of the multifaceted financial national and state-based collaborations of support for early childhood throughout the United States.

³ High-quality pre-school or early childhood programs have features that are recognized for improving the cognitive outcomes of young children, such as hands-on curricula and small class sizes (President's Council of Economic Advisers, 2014).

Benefits of High-Quality Early Childhood Education

The lasting social and health benefits of high-quality pre-school programs are commonly understood and have been demonstrated through evaluation studies of “gold standard” programs, including the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program, the Carolina Abecedarian Project, and the Chicago Parent-Child Program, many of which were originally funded by foundations (e.g. Barnett & Masse, 2007; Currie, 2001; Ounce of Prevention Fund, 2017; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2002; Schweinhart et al., 2005). Prominent researchers such as Heckman, Shonkoff, and others have asserted that these programs can deliver a 13% per year return on investment, although previous studies have estimated that return rates have fluctuated between 7 and 10% (García, Heckman, Leaf, & Prados, 2017; Heckman, 2006; Knudsen, Heckman, Cameron, & Shonkoff, 2006; Magnuson & Duncan, 2014). Even though these reported benefits and returns on investment are quite high, pre-school education and care state-based “systems”⁴ are messy and complex. They are comprised of multiple programs (e.g. Early Head Start, Head Start, preschool, child care, family, friend, and neighbor care, and home visiting), multiple curricula, and varying standards. The quality and availability of the programs that are offered also vary by location and not all will provide the same returns on investment.

⁴ I have placed “systems” and “system” within quotation marks to emphasize that I am not describing a straightforward organizational structure. Each state’s financial or program “system” for pre-school is complex and is made of multiple, interconnected pieces. Some pieces, such as program types or financial resources available for families, are similar in multiple states, but they fit together differently depending on the overall budgets and intentions of state government leaders.

Pre-School Funding “Systems”

In the United States, early childhood or pre-school funding “systems” vary by state. For example, in ten states (i.e. California, Colorado, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Oklahoma, Texas, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin) and the District of Columbia, pre-kindergarten (pre-K) programs are funded through the state’s school funding formula, but only seven of those locations (i.e. California, the District of Columbia, Iowa, Oklahoma, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin) allow all age-eligible children to enroll in their programs, and two (i.e. the District of Columbia and Oklahoma) fund pre-K in the same way they fund K-12 (Barnett & Kasmin, 2018). The type of program offered also varies among these states as some provide full-day care and educational opportunities, while others only provide half-day options (Barnett & Kasmin, 2018).

Some states support pre-K through block grants (e.g. the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)) or Head Start funding, which they have received from the federal government, or general fund appropriations (Parker, Diffey, & Atchison, 2018). Compared to school funding formulas, general fund appropriations are unstable because they are subject to the legislative budgeting processes of the states and are vulnerable to funding cuts based on each state’s economic situation (Parker, Diffey, & Atchison, 2018). If a state government is financially unable or chooses not to support pre-K, local governments may create programs at the district, city, or county level, and may fund them through a dedicated funding stream (Parker, Diffey, & Atchison, 2018). Although all of these funding options exist and are used by many states and local governments, six states (i.e. Idaho, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming) do not provide any state funding for pre-K (Parker, Diffey, & Atchison, 2018). In the presence or

absence of such complicated “systems,” foundations may take on supporting financial roles that state or federal governments do not provide.

Significance of the Study

States and local governments are likely to bear more of the responsibility to financially support local early education or pre-school programs since federal spending in the United States, when measured as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP), for early education and care is predicted to decline by 25% or more by the year 2026 (Edelstein, Hahn, Isaacs, Steele, & Steuerle, 2016). But what if state or local government leaders were unwilling or unable to provide these much-needed financial resources? In the absence of the state and, at times, in partnerships with the state, foundations have often stepped in where state and district support is lacking. By providing direct funding for programs, materials, and evaluations, financially supporting pooled funds or operating organizations, and even taking on leadership roles in some situations, foundations have joined the multifaceted arrangement of support for pre-school programs to assist in closing this expanding financial gap. In this context, I am defining a pooled fund as an entity that collects financial contributions from multiple foundations and distributes them according to an established agreement that is made between the funding partners. An operating organization is a type of pooled fund that is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and technical support services of a program. For example, the Ounce of Prevention Fund, an operating organization which is supported financially by multiple foundations, partners with advocacy organizations to build their capacity to advance policy change (Ounce of Prevention Fund, 2019).

Classrooms for three- and four-year-olds have been added to K-12 education programs even as funding is being cut from those same education budgets. Due to these

budget reductions, it is critical to understand the roles philanthropists and foundations take and the decision-making powers they are accorded within the state-based and national multifaceted education policy and financial “systems” for early childhood. Although philanthropists’ financial investments in pre-school-related activities are pennies compared to the current federal funding provided through Head Start, block grants, and other initiatives, they may have an outsized impact on federal and state education policies, including those focused on pre-school education (Callahan, 2017b). This study is one of the first attempts to explain the financial and decision-making powers that foundations have within the pre-school or early childhood multifaceted national and state-based “systems” in the United States.

Overview of the Dissertation

The purpose of this dissertation is to explain how foundations have supported pre-school programs, research, and the advocacy of pre-school policies in the United States since the late 1990s, and identify the factors that have influenced their decisions to invest in pre-school.

In Chapter 2, I discuss how foundations have invested in education in the United States since the mid to late 1880s, examine the literature that discusses how foundations have supported pre-school programs and research directly, and explain how the U.S. federal government has recently encouraged foundations to participate in the combined funding process for pre-school federal grant programs. I also describe the conceptual framework for the study. In Chapter 3, I discuss the context for the study, explain the research methods that I used to collect and analyze data, identify limitations, and describe my position as a researcher in this study.

Chapters 4 through 6 are chronological narratives of the three foundations that are the focus for this comparative case study. I discuss the Buffett Early Childhood Fund in Chapter 4, the George Kaiser Family Foundation in Chapter 5, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Chapter 6. These three foundations began investing in pre-school by hiring staff, determining their funding strategies, and initially supporting programs for children ages birth through four-years-old between 2000 and 2005. Within those chapters, I explain how, when, and why the foundations first began financially supporting pre-school programs, discuss their team and board structures, and identify their strategies or intentions for funding pre-school programs, research, and the advocacy of policies.

In Chapter 7, I identify similarities and differences and provide comparisons across the three foundations. I describe the amounts of money each foundation is investing in pre-school in comparison to the overall amounts of money each foundation is investing, the focus or scope of the foundations, their intentions for changing state and federal pre-school policy or legislation, and their views on partnering with other foundations or businesses to leverage funds, along with additional findings from the study. Finally, in Chapter 8, I discuss the overall implications of the findings from the study and provide recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe how foundations have invested in education in the United States since the mid-to-late 1880s. Next, I examine the literature that discusses how foundations have supported pre-school programs and research directly, and explain how the U.S. federal government has included foundations in the combining of private and public funds for pre-school federal grant programs. I then identify a shared definition of philanthropy. Finally, I discuss the conceptual framework for this study, which combines foundation investment types with Reich's (2018) concepts of accountability and transparency.

Philanthropic Investment in Education

Charity and philanthropic giving associated with education has a brief history in the United States. John D. Rockefeller, Sr., Andrew Carnegie, and Edsel and Henry Ford are recognized as being early influential leaders in the field of educational philanthropy. Beginning with the Rockefellers, foundations have been investing in education since the late nineteenth century. These early foundations invested in causes that directly assisted minorities and people of low socioeconomic status to help them "better" their lives according to the views of the White, upper class philanthropists (Hatcher, 2016).

John D. Rockefeller, Sr.

In the 1880s, John D. Rockefeller, Sr. first began investing in education through a series of donations to a struggling school for African American women. Through his growing investments, the school founders decided to change the name of their school to

Spelman, the maiden name of Rockefeller's wife, whose family was instrumental in supporting the Underground Railroad (Spelman College, 2016; Rockefeller Archive Center, 2011). Shortly thereafter, Rockefeller made similar donations to two other Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): the Tuskegee Institute and Morehouse College, and the United Negro College Fund (Rockefeller Archive Center, 2011; Morehouse College, 2016).

In 1903, Rockefeller established and invested \$33M in the General Education Board (GEB)⁵ and charged the board with improving rural education in the American South for Whites and African Americans (Fosdick, 1952). Overtime, the GEB became known for supporting the preparation of African American teachers and establishing public high schools throughout the Southern United States (Hess, 2005).

Andrew Carnegie

Between 1886 and 1899, Andrew Carnegie wrote twelve articles published in popular magazines (e.g. *Century Magazine*, *North American Review*, *Forum*, and *Contemporary Review*), that described Carnegie's life, how he became a successful businessman, and his beliefs about how others should invest their fortunes (Carnegie, 1901). In 1901, this compilation of articles became *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays*, in which Carnegie aimed to show an audience of philanthropists how they could provide lasting legacies by wisely investing their fortunes while they were still living (Carnegie, 1901). Carnegie believed that foundations and endowments should be created to invest in social issues. In 1905, the

⁵ The General Education Board (GEB) was established by John D. Rockefeller, Sr. to support education for all people in the United States, with a specific emphasis placed on the South and the education of African Americans (The Rockefeller Archive Center, n.d.). Grants were distributed through the GEB to support educational programs and develop social and economic resources to improve educational systems (The Rockefeller Archive Center, n.d.).

Carnegie Corporation established the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Lagemann, 2000). This investment by executives at the Carnegie Foundation was influential in developing the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association (TIAA), creating the Carnegie Unit, also known as the credit hour (Silva, White, and Toch, 2015), and cofounding the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in 1947, which is now recognized as being the world's foremost private, nonprofit educational assessment organization (Educational Testing Service, 2016; Lagemann, 2000).

The Ford Foundation

In 1936, the Ford Foundation directed by Edsel and Henry Ford became a dominant educational philanthropic institution. It was influential in the creation of the Fund for the Advancement of Education (FAE), the Advanced Placement (AP) program, and the Comprehensive School Improvement Program, which provided money for curriculum and teacher development (Ford Foundation, 1972; Hess, 2005; Rothschild, 1999). In 1953, the Ford Foundation was instrumental in the expansion of the United Negro College Fund, and in 1956, executives at the Ford Foundation contributed \$500M in grants to private colleges and teaching hospitals, which at the time was the largest financial investment in higher education in the United States (Ford Foundation, 2019).

Foundation Support for Pre-School Programs, Policies, and Research

Foundation investments in pre-school programs and policies in the United States began in the 19th century (Beatty, 2008). Individual philanthropists and foundations directly funded programs for young children in their local communities. Although this direct giving pattern continues today, some foundations have also developed funding strategies for pre-

school education and supported their own self-created pre-school programs and evaluation research. I will expand upon these different foundation investment roles later in this chapter.

A timeline of foundation, pooled fund, and corporation support for pre-school is included as Figure 1. Even though investment in pre-school began with the Foundation for Child Development in 1899, a relatively large amount of foundations and pooled funding organizations began financially supporting pre-school programs, policies, and research studies in the early 2000s through 2012.

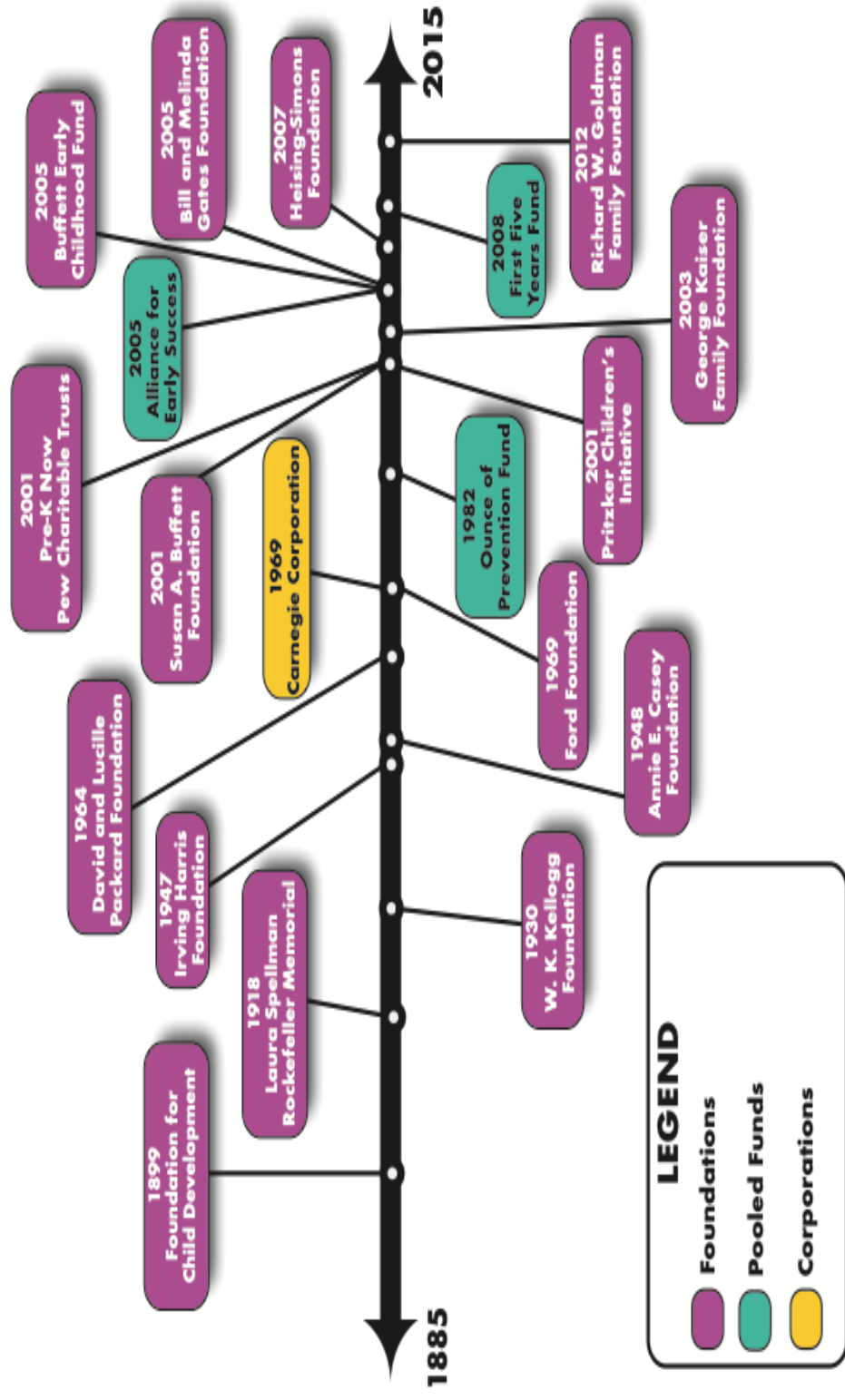


Figure 1. A timeline of foundation, pooled fund, and corporation support for pre-school programs, policies, and research studies from 1885 to 2015.

In the section below, I further describe this evolution of foundation support for pre-school education programs and advocacy of policies.

The Foundation for Child Development

One of the first foundations to invest in pre-school education was the Foundation for Child Development (FCD). The FCD has supported pre-school through third-grade programs and policies since 1899. Originally established as an Auxiliary Board of the New York City Children's Aid Society, the FCD provided direct services for children with disabilities (Foundation for Child Development, 2016). The FCD became a grant-making organization in 1944 after receiving a sizeable donation from a private individual donor (Foundation for Child Development, 2016). After being renamed as the FCD in 1972 to better reflect a new mission of support for the development of all children, the FCD built partnerships with additional foundations, established connections between research, policy, and practice, and supported pre-school through third-grade alignment (Foundation for Child Development, 2016).

The Rockefeller Foundation

Acting as Progressive-Era social reformers in the 1920s and 1930s, the Rockefeller Foundation and related foundations focused their resources on the profession and science of child development. The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial (LSRM) provided institutional supports for researchers to help them develop the fields of child development and social welfare (Grant, 1999; Lagemann, 2000). Subsequently, the LSRM provided funds to institutions engaged in child development research and fellowships to graduate and post-graduate students, and was instrumental in funding and establishing parent education programs (Grant, 1999; Lagemann, 2000). In 1933, leaders of the LSRM transformed the

foundation into the independent Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) (Lagemann, 2000).

The Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation

The Ford Foundation and Carnegie Corporation have provided financial support to general education research and programs since the 1930s. In 1969, the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare were instrumental in the origination of the Children’s Television Workshop, which would later become known as the Sesame Workshop (Palmer & Fisch, 2001). The Carnegie Corporation continued to support research and programming for young children beyond Sesame Workshop. In 1972, the Carnegie Council on Children was established to support research on outside influences on child development (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2017). The Carnegie Corporation has also released multiple research reports, such as *All Our Children: The American Family Under Pressure* and *Starting Points* which identified the importance of the child’s first three years of life and promoted high-quality and affordable childcare options for families (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1994; 2017). As a follow-up to *Starting Points*, the Carnegie Corporation awarded two-year grants to 11 states and cities throughout the United States to involve communities in supporting the healthy development of young children and their families (Hostetler, 2000). The Ford Foundation also continues to support family stability, parent engagement, and child development and has recently invested \$200,000 in the National Head Start Association to support the development of a research tool which will be used to evaluate the outcomes of Head Start on families (Aman, 2016).

Private Involvement in Public Investments for Early Childhood Education

Executives at the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services have recently included foundations in their funding formulas for pre-school federal grant programs. I will now discuss two of those programs: the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge and the Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund.

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge

In partnership with members of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, members of the Office of the Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education released the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) in August 2011. This competitive \$500M state-level grant program was authorized under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 to support states in improving the quality and accessibility of early learning and development opportunities for their youngest scholars, especially those that are low-income, disadvantaged, and/or have high needs (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). To strategically focus the funding of programs for young children and assist in closing the school readiness gap, which exists between children who have high needs and their peers at the time they enter kindergarten, the creators of the RTT-ELC recommended that states develop teams of stakeholders that included private philanthropists to integrate and align resources across state agencies and funding sources (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011).

Within the selection criteria for RTT-ELC, states were required to demonstrate through letters of intent or support that they would be receiving assistance from a broad group of stakeholders to accomplish their goals (U.S. Department of Education & U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). The creators of the RTT-ELC provided examples of acceptable stakeholders, and within those they mentioned business leaders or leaders from family and community organizations, including local foundations (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). By including foundations in this list, and requiring that states identify any funding they intended to distribute to early learning pooled funds, they were encouraging states to combine federal financial assistance with additional private funding sources (e.g. Mazawi, 2013; McGuinn, 2012; Scott & DiMartino, 2009). David Bley, Director of the Pacific Northwest Program of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Susie Buffett, Chair of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, each provided letters of support for the Washington and Nebraska RTT-ELC applications, respectively (Bley, 2011; Buffett, 2011).

Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund

Additionally authorized under ARRA, the Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund was created to:

provide competitive grants to applicants with a record of improving student achievement and attainment in order to expand the implementation of, and investment in, innovative practices that are demonstrated to have an impact on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, increasing high school graduation rates, or increasing college enrollment and completion rates. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

An i3 grant requirement was that successful applicants must obtain either a 5, 10, or 15% match in funds from a private investor. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was one of the private investors to provide a match in funds for a National Writing Project grant, along

with the Carnegie Corporation and Ford Foundation for additional programs (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019f).

This fund was housed at the U.S. Department of Education in the Office of Innovation and Improvement. Over the course of seven fiscal years, from 2010-2016, executives at the U.S. Department of Education granted a total of approximately \$1.43B with the most being granted in fiscal year 2010 (i.e. \$645,978,395) to 49 applicants, and the least being granted in fiscal year 2016 (i.e. \$102,875,168) to 15 applicants (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). According to the U.S. Department of Education, these grants “allow eligible entities to work in partnership with the private sector and the philanthropic community” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

In 2011, during his term as Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan announced that private-sector donors including foundations had committed approximately \$18M to the 23 highest-rated 13 applicants, meeting their match requirement and guaranteeing funding through an 13 grant (U.S. Department of Education Press Office, 2011). Of those 23 projects, four were dedicated to supporting early childhood through either expanding educational programs for young children, providing professional development for early learning professionals, or creating research-based and interactive materials to expand the literacy and language skills of young children (U.S. Department of Education Press Office, 2011). Private-sector donors invested just over \$4M in these four projects, combining their private investments with federal investments of public funds totaling \$23.5M (U.S. Department of Education Press Office, 2011). In contrast, the other 19 projects were dedicated to supporting students at the middle, high, and alternative high school levels, and those enrolled in teacher preparation and professional development programs (U.S.

Department of Education Press Office, 2011). Within those programs, private-sector donors invested just over \$14M in matching funds, and federal investments of public funds totaled \$124.9M (U.S. Department of Education Press Office, 2011).

Defining Philanthropy in the United States

The act of philanthropy is generally defined as a redistribution of private wealth through a nonprofit entity. That wealth has typically been earned through profit-making processes (Levy, 2016). This definition of American philanthropy was first developed in the mid 1800s (Levy, 2016). At that time, philanthropists were commonly recognized for making small charitable donations and supporting local endeavors (Gross, 2003). As more individuals and organizations became engaged in the world of philanthropic investment, the focus of philanthropy altered and the public understanding of what philanthropy consisted became less coherent. Enabled by the wealth that they had accumulated during the American Industrial Revolution, philanthropists took on financial leadership roles, formed philanthropic foundations and sustainable charitable trusts, and transformed their once small charitable gifts into large investments with agendas and strings attached (Bremner, 1988; Gross, 2003; Saltman, 2010).

Types of Philanthropic Investment

There are five main types of philanthropic foundation investments: charitable, strategic, partnership, exertive, and catalytic. I describe and give examples of each briefly in Table 1, and explain them in more depth in the following paragraphs.

Table 1.
Types of Philanthropic Investment

Type	Description	Example
Charitable	Traditional philanthropy; Money is given directly to nonprofit organizations with no requirements	The George Kaiser Family Foundation makes financial donations to a local homeless shelter (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018).
Strategic	Foundations provide limits or only allow their funding to be spent for specific programs or causes	Susan A. Buffett, in partnership with the Sherwood Foundation, paid for local elementary school students to attend a musical performance (Personal observation, January 16, 2018).
Partnership	Foundations donate larger sums, develop boards of private trustees, establish long-term goals, and partner with their grantees to assist them through their grant term limit	The NewSchools Venture Fund supports entrepreneurial activities in education (i.e. teams of teachers conducting long-term projects), especially those that have been created to support underserved communities (Callahan, 2018; Frumkin, 2006). They partner with their grantees to determine their needs, and then provide customized resources and communities of practice (NewSchools Venture Fund, 2019).
Exertive	Foundations take a leadership role in initiating programs, pushing forward ideas or knowledge in support of policy initiatives, and obtaining direct results for their investments	The Ford Foundation pushed to restructure New York City's schools in the 1960s (Ferguson, 2018).
Catalytic	Foundation leaders develop research and strategy plans, determine which resources they will need to fulfill these plans, obtain those resources, and then	The Gates Foundation directs and controls their global health division philanthropic work (Bill &

directly move forward with
completing their plans

Melinda Gates Foundation,
1999-2019e).

Charitable philanthropy. Charitable philanthropy is the traditional form of philanthropic giving. Foundations or individual philanthropists give money directly to nonprofit organizations. There are generally no requirements for these donations, though some foundations may require nonprofit organizations to apply for the funding (Kramer, 2009). This type of philanthropic giving is similar to what Kramer (2009) refers to as conventional philanthropy.

Strategic philanthropy. When acting as strategic philanthropic investors, foundations develop an investment strategy and determine how funding can be spent. In this role, foundations are using the power they have obtained through their financial wealth to identify programs nonprofit organizations and the public should view as important or significant (Reich, 2018). Because policies and programs sometimes change or need to be adjusted within the scope or timeline of the funding, if the funding is too restricted and the foundations are not flexible, strategic philanthropy can also be understood as constraining by nonprofit organizations (Russo, 2015).

In the early twentieth century, the Russell Sage Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Rockefeller Foundation became known as groundbreaking organizations in what is now recognized as strategic philanthropy (Barkan, 2013). Instead of participating in charitable philanthropy by donating small amounts of money, these foundations donated larger sums, developed boards of private trustees, established long-term goals, and determined strategies for accomplishing those goals by funding specific programs

and groups of people. Tompkins-Stange (2016) refers to foundations that participate in this type of philanthropic giving as field-oriented foundations.

Partnership philanthropy. The term “partnership philanthropy” was developed by Fleishman (2007) and is used to describe funding processes where foundations partner with their grantees to obtain investment goals. Frumkin (2006) and Letts, Ryan, & Grossman (1997) refer to this type of philanthropic giving as venture philanthropy. With this type of philanthropic investment, foundations aim to fund nonprofit organizations with the goal of scaling-up programs or receiving returns on their investments (Grossman, Appleby, & Reimers, 2013; Kramer, 2009; Snyder, 2015). Using a venture capital model and the principles of venture capital investing, foundations identify nonprofit partnerships, partner with their grantees to obtain goals, and provide support and guidance throughout the entire grant cycle (Frumkin, 1999; Gose, 2004). Partnership philanthropic investments also provide opportunities for foundations to become directly involved in advocacy and education policy initiatives (Reckhow, 2013; Scott, 2009).

Exertive philanthropy. In exertive philanthropy, foundations lead nonprofit organizations through investment and implementation processes. Fleishman (2007) defines this type of philanthropic giving as driver philanthropy. It is also similar to what Hess and Henig (2015) refer to as muscular philanthropy. An exertive philanthropic foundation takes an unapologetic and forceful lead in initiating programs with the intention of obtaining results that they have predicted prior to making their investments. The foundation also plays an important role in pushing forward ideas or knowledge in support of policy initiatives and becoming an advocate for its preferred causes, to a much greater extent than with

partnership philanthropy. Nonprofit organizations develop the programs that are being funded, but they recognize that the foundations will be in charge of many funding decisions.

Catalytic philanthropy. Leaders or executives of foundations realized that they did not need to allocate their wealth directly to nonprofit organizations or specific programs, thus giving organizations decision-making power. Instead through catalytic philanthropy, a term first devised by Kramer (2009), foundations dictate precisely how they want to invest their wealth and make all decisions regarding their investments. Catalytic philanthropy occurs when foundation leaders and funders take initiative in deciding which broad societal problem they would like to solve and how they will go about solving it (Kramer, 2009). In catalytic philanthropy, foundation leaders develop research and strategy plans, determine which resources they will need to fulfill these plans, obtain those resources, and then directly move forward with completing their plans. Tompkins-Stange (2016) refers to foundations that participate in this type of philanthropic giving as outcome-oriented foundations. At times, foundation executives engage with community leaders or nonprofit organizations to create partnerships and sustain programs beyond their original research and strategy plans (Kramer, 2009).

Accountability and Transparency

While much of the discussion above has focused on the more benevolent side of philanthropic giving, Reich (2018) identifies some of the possible adverse characteristics of foundations through the themes of accountability and transparency.

Accountability. Foundations and foundation leadership are not held to the same accountability standards as public business executives or elected officials at the local, state, or federal government levels. Executives (i.e. chairs or co-chairs) or members of the governing

boards at foundations who typically make final investment decisions are not publicly elected by U.S. citizens or appointed by elected officials. If anyone is unhappy with how foundations are being governed or how they determine their priorities and distribute funds, there is no formal process for recalling those executives or board members and electing new people to fill those roles.

There is also little accountability for the investment decisions of executives at foundations. For example, an executive or board member may decide that he no longer wants to financially support an afterschool program at an elementary school. The funding of that program could immediately be cut, forcing the elementary school to find other sources of funding or no longer offer the afterschool program to its students. The executives and board members of the foundation can simply walk away with no future obligation to the school or the children.

A lack of accountability may also be understood as a positive trait of foundations and their governing boards. Foundations are able to take risks, maintain long-term relationships with the recipients of their funding, make mistakes, and indirectly influence policy change locally and nationally by providing information to policymakers, which they have access to because of their grant making. Reich refers to this as the discovery argument, as foundations may prompt a stimulation of innovation privately and publicly through their investment actions (Reich, 2018).

Foundations may also quickly change their investment decisions to support what they view as more pressing issues or causes. Because of the flexibility foundation executives and board members have with their investments, they can provide funding for public goods

that may not be supported by local or national governments. In this way, foundations are able to coexist with government entities and support one another through their investments.

Transparency. Foundations are legally required to pay out as little as five percent of their assets every year, which can include the administrative expenses that are needed to run the foundation, and file an annual tax form⁶ (Reich, 2018). Beyond those requirements, foundations are managed as their executives or board members wish with few consequences. They do not need to be transparent about their activities to the general public, their donors, or the programs receiving their support. They are able to decide if they will have a website, keep records of the programs or activities they invest in, maintain a physical office with a working telephone number, or write an annual report, and if they do the latter, if they will distribute it publicly. They are also not legally required to evaluate their grant making, publicize their board meetings or open them to the public, or announce the decisions that have been made by the board publicly.

In Chapters 4-6, I will be discussing the pre-school investment work of three philanthropic foundations: the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, the George Kaiser Family Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. I will use this expanded conceptual framework, which is a combination of the five types of philanthropy and Reich's concepts of accountability and transparency to analyze the types of investments foundations are conducting and some of the practices of the foundations.

⁶ On a 990-PF Return of Private Foundation tax form, foundations are required to report the fair market value for all of their assets at the end of each year; the contributions, gifts, grants, etc. they have received; their net rental income; and compensation amounts for their officers, directors, trustees, etc. (U.S. Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, 2018).

Conclusion

In closing, this chapter summarized foundation investment both broadly in education and specifically in pre-school or early childhood education. I also discussed a trend in education policy in which federal public dollars are being combined with private investments, and emphasized a gap in research that currently exists regarding foundation investment in pre-school. I highlighted a commonly accepted definition of philanthropy and identified the varying types of foundation investment in the United States. I concluded this chapter with an explanation of Reich's (2018) concepts of accountability and transparency and discussed how they are being combined with the five types of philanthropy to create the conceptual framework for this study. This conceptual framework provides a lens for exploring foundations, the investment roles that they take, and some of their motivations for supporting pre-school. In Chapter 3, I describe the methods that I used to conduct comparative case studies of three foundations that are currently investing in pre-school programs, research studies, and advocacy for pre-school related policies.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the context, research design, and methods that I used for this study. I also identify the limitations of the study and my position as a researcher. To examine foundation engagement in pre-school programs, research studies, and advocacy for state- and federal-level policies from the late 1990s through 2018 in the United States, I used multiple qualitative methods to understand the intentions and motivations of foundation executives. I collected and analyzed semi-structured interviews, annual reports, and policy documents; used multiple cycles of coding using a combination of codes drawn from the literature, open or descriptive codes, and in vivo codes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2016); and wrote reflective and analytic memos after conducting interviews and while coding the interview transcripts to identify themes (Maxwell, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

My research questions were:

1. How have foundations supported pre-school programs, policies, and research in the United States since the late 1990s?
2. What factors have influenced foundations' investment decisions?

I employed a qualitative comparative case study approach (Stake, 2006). After researching the history of foundation investments in pre-school, I observed a significant increase in the number of foundations that were investing over time. I illustrated that change through Figure 1 in Chapter 2. Because multiple prominent foundations began investing in pre-school from 2000 to 2005, I focused this study on three of those to determine why that shift

in investments occurred: the Buffett Early Childhood Fund (BECF), George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF), and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Gates Foundation). When I began my research, I started with the BECF, because of professional background knowledge I held as an early childhood scholar regarding its importance in the field of early childhood education. I quickly discovered that the investment history of the BECF was directly connected to the pre-school investments and histories of the GKFF and the Gates Foundation.

Context of the Study

Foundation and pooled fund websites and information I received through my interviews indicated that multiple foundations were combining their funds and supporting the same pooled funds or operating organizations and education programs. I illustrate this finding in Figure 2.

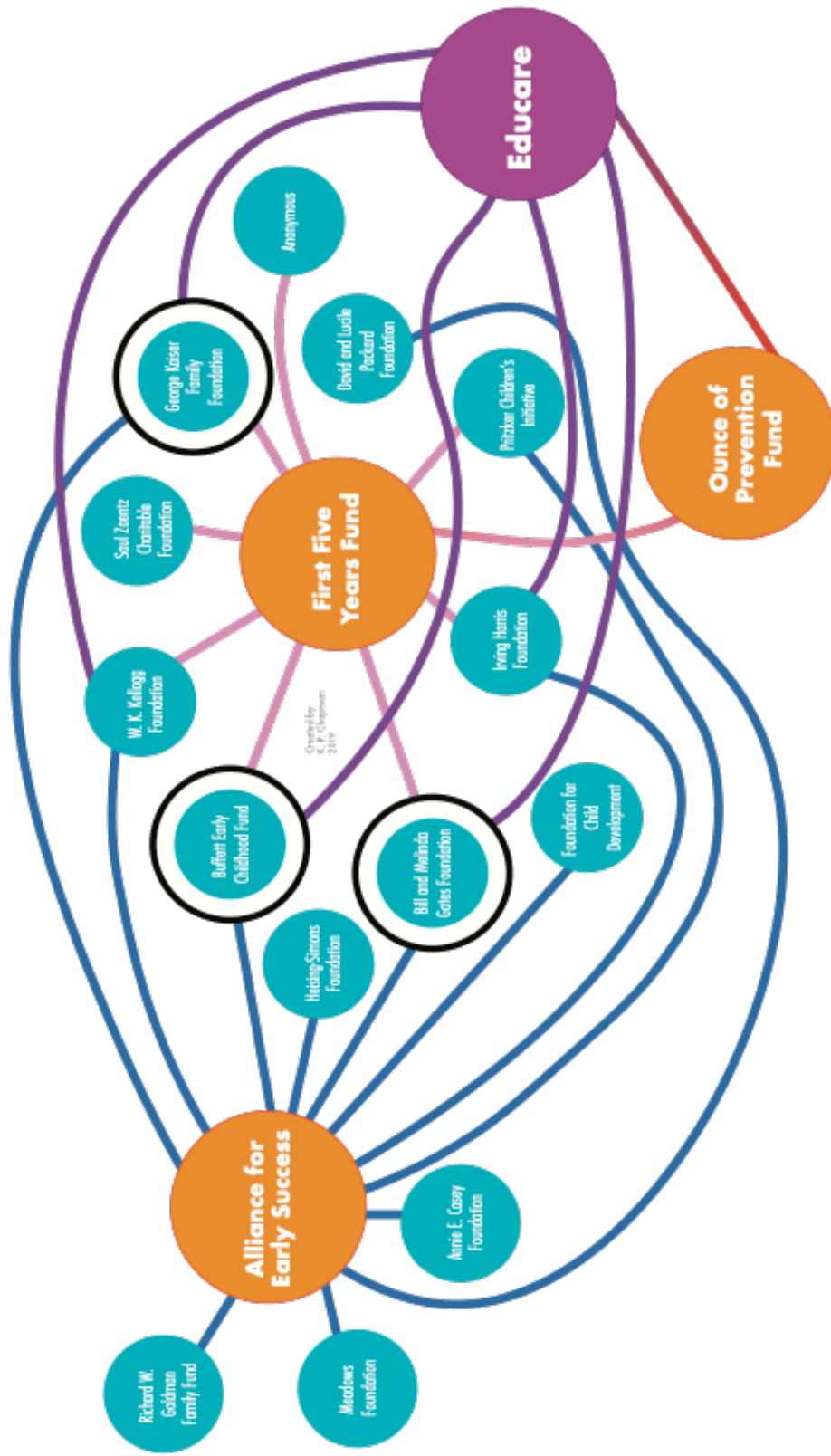


Figure 2. Visual network of partnerships between foundations, pooled funds, and pre-school programs.

Figure 2 is a stylized representation of the connections between foundations, pooled funds, and pre-school programs rather than a statistical model created through a more formal analysis process. The orange circles represent the pooled funds of the Alliance for Early Success (Alliance) and the First Five Years Fund (FFYF), and the Ounce of Prevention Fund, an operating organization. In Chapter 1, I identified a pooled fund as a financial collaboration amongst foundations that is distributed in support of programs or advocacy for policies according to an established agreement between multiple foundation partners. I also identified an operating organization as a type of pooled fund that is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and technical support services of a program. Also in Figure 2, the teal circles represent individual foundations, and the purple circle represents Educare, a pre-school program. I have circled in black the three foundations (i.e. the BECF, the GKFF, and the Gates Foundation), which are the focus of this comparative case study, to highlight their connections with both pooled funds (i.e. Alliance and FFYF) and the pre-school program (i.e. Educare). I discuss the work and intentions of each of these three foundations in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 and also describe Educare, the Alliance, and FFYF in depth in Chapter 4.

I reviewed the investment history of foundations in pre-school, conducted semi-structured interviews with current and former foundation executives, and analyzed tax forms and annual reports of the comparative case study foundations. Table 2 provides an overview of my project timeline:

Table 2.
Research Project Timeline

Research Project Actions	November – December 2017	January – May 2018	June – August 2018	September – December 2018	January – April 2019
Received IRB approval					
Pilot study data collection					
Conducted semi-structured interviews					
Reflexive memo-writing					
Transcribing Interviews					
Data analyses and coding					
Writing results					
Member checking					

Methods

Semi-Structured Interviews

After receiving approval from the Internal Review Board (IRB) of Arizona State University (Appendix A), I conducted three pilot interviews: one with a current executive of a foundation, another with a former executive of a foundation, and a third with a consultant for various foundations that have invested in pre-school programs, research studies, and advocacy of policies. I have provided the consent form that each interviewee signed in Appendix B. The pilot interviews helped me narrow down and clarify the wording of my questions. I also decided to conduct semi-structured interviews, as they would provide some flexibility and space for me to ask follow-up questions as needed (Maxwell, 2005).

Key questions for my interviews centered on how foundations were investing in pre-school programs, research studies, and advocacy for state- and federal-level policies. I also included additional questions focusing on the investment histories of the foundations, their board structures, and decision-making processes to gain a more thorough understanding of each foundation. To become more knowledgeable about the executives themselves, I also included a question about their individual backgrounds and work histories. The list of questions I began each interview with is provided in Appendix C.

Initial interviews. I created an initial list of twelve individuals with whom I wanted to conduct an interview. These executives were either currently working or had formerly worked for the Alliance for Early Success, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Buffett Early Childhood Fund, First Five Years Fund, Foundation for Child Development, or the George Kaiser Family Foundation. They were identified as key individuals because I believed they would be able to explain how my case study foundations began financially supporting pre-school programs, policies, and research studies, and why these foundations in particular had decided to invest in pre-school. I also thought that these executives might be able to identify why these three foundations were forming financial partnerships with additional foundations or pooled funds.

Snowball sample. During the initial twelve interviews, I included a question that assisted in the expansion of my sample: “Are there any other foundations or people that you think I should be including in my study that I might not be thinking of?” In their responses, if two executives from separate foundations or pooled funds identified the same person or foundation, I added that person or foundation to my list of prospective respondents. Because of this snowball sampling technique, I ended my study with a total of 32 interviews.

I considered my search exhausted when interviewees were not providing names of new interviewees. Table 3 lists the foundation, operating organization, or pooled fund with which I conducted interviews, and the number of interviews I conducted with each.

Table 3.
Semi-Structured Interview Participants

Foundation, Operating Organization, or Pooled Fund	Interviews
Alliance for Early Success	3
Bezos Family Foundation	1
Buffett Early Childhood Fund	5
Early Childhood Funders Collaborative	1
First Five Years Fund	1
Foundation for Child Development	2
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	3
Irving Harris Foundation	1
Heinz Endowments	1
Heising-Simons Foundation	1
Helios Education Foundation	1
George Kaiser Family Foundation	2
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	2
Ounce of Prevention Fund	2
David and Lucile Packard Foundation	1
Pew Charitable Trusts	2
Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trusts	1
J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation	1
Senior Advisor to Multiple Foundations	1
Total	32

Interview locations. I conducted these interviews in person whenever possible. The interviews occurred either in office conference rooms, the professional offices of the executives, or a local coffee shop. If an interviewee was unavailable to meet and talk together in person, we would instead talk to each other via the telephone, Zoom, or Skype. I gained verbal permission from each interviewee to audio record each interview, and offered to share the audio recordings with each interviewee along with a transcription of the interview. I also

gained verbal permission to have each interview transcribed through professional transcription services.

Follow-up interviews. At the conclusion of each interview, I asked my interviewees if I could contact them again via email if I had any additional questions. All of my interviewees agreed. Because of this agreement, I conducted follow-up interviews via email with executives from the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, George Kaiser Family Foundation, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In these follow-up interviews, I asked them to identify the amount of money they were investing annually in pre-school.

Interview Transcription and Coding

After I had conducted the pilot interviews, I transcribed them verbatim. I shared the transcriptions and audio recordings of the interviews via email with the individuals I had interviewed, if they had so requested. Once I had received the transcriptions back from the interviewees, I coded the interviews through two rounds or cycles using a combination of codes drawn from the literature, open or descriptive codes, and in vivo codes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2016).

For subsequent interviews, I employed professional transcription services from Rev.com and NoNotes.com. If there was substantial background noise in the interview recordings, such as when the interviews were conducted at a local coffee shop, I personally transcribed those interviews. For the purposes of member checking, I sent each interview transcription and audio recording to each interviewee, if they had indicated their need to review their interview on their signed consent form. After they returned their transcript, I coded their interview using a combination of codes drawn from the literature, open or descriptive codes, and in vivo codes (Saldaña, 2016).

After my first cycle of coding, I read through each transcription and noted all of the codes that I had used. I then condensed those codes through a second cycle of coding (Miles et al., 2014) and determined that my codes could be largely grouped into five themes: background/context of philanthropic entity⁷—past; interviewee information; overall role of philanthropy (in general); philanthropic entity general information—current; and philanthropic entity investment role. I provide a description and example of each of these themes in Table 4. I also identify subthemes within the description section of this table.

Table 4.
Themes Developed From Codes

Theme	Description	Example
Background/Context of Philanthropic Entity—Past	Description of the history of a philanthropic entity. Subthemes: description, influencing factors, motivating values, and name power.	“At the end of 1999, Warren Buffett and his wife, Susie, created three new foundations, one for each of their three children. They were kind of training wheels foundations and they each had a relatively small amount of money to begin with. Susie Jr. wanted to focus on education” (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018).
Interviewee Information	An individual discussed either their personal background and work history, or their current or past role at their philanthropic entity.	“I was the Head Start and Early Head Start director for the largest, at the time, community action agency. So, I ran the Head Start and Early Head Start program. I had about 1500 kids, 20 sites throughout Birmingham, Alabama in Jefferson County, and then when I left Jefferson County, when I left the Head Start role, I went to the state and worked for Governor Riley where I led the state’s pre-K program, and the expansion of state pre-K” (M. Davis, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

⁷ A philanthropic entity refers to either a foundation, pooled fund, or operating organization.

Overall Role of Philanthropy (In General)	An individual discussed the general role of philanthropy in the United States. Subthemes: state system work and “unique.”	“I think philanthropy has a really unique and wonderful role to play in building state system work” (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018).
Philanthropic Entity General Information— Current	An individual discussed the current work of their philanthropic entity. Subthemes: board, networking or partnerships, pre-school team, research, and strategy.	“We are a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization. We function like a grant maker. So, people, individual foundations, pool their money to us that we turn around and make grants for early childhood advocacy and policy. I have a team, a small team of six and they are policy experts, they have research backgrounds, they have communications backgrounds. They each take part of the portfolio and they’re the ones that lead up grant making in specific areas” (L. Klein, personal communication, April 17, 2018).
Philanthropic Entity Investment Role	An individual discussed the investment roles that their specific foundation takes or that they, as executives, take within their investment processes. Subthemes: active, partner, passive, strategy, and venture.	“There are examples of us being more passive donors. Say, for instance, there’s a homeless shelter in town, and we know that for whatever reason, either, oil and gas is down and not as profitable, donations are down, we might ratchet up what our gift to the homeless shelter is in tougher times. That would not be anything we’re attempting to run, but it would be something that we’re more passively responding to a need in funding” (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018).

After I had coded the interviews and used them to write the chapters of this study, I shared those chapters with the interviewees I had quoted. This member checking process gave them an opportunity to give feedback and recommendations, and to confirm, from their perspectives, the accuracy of my interpretations.

Memos

Immediately after conducting interviews, I wrote reflective and analytical memos. Within those memos, I wrote general observations and reactions I had from the interviews, identified connections from the interviews to my research questions, discussed possible themes that could be identified through the interviews, and described any lingering questions that I wanted to follow-up on with the interviewees. I utilized these memos when I was writing the narratives of the three case studies and throughout my analysis process. I also wrote memos on the first or last pages of paper copies of each interview. Within those memos, I wrote about the current or past strategies of the philanthropic entities, historical information, quotations that were important to remember and include in the chapters of this study, and pieces of information I needed to follow-up with either through emailing the interviewees or looking at the websites of the philanthropic entities.

Documentation as a Complementary Function

As another source of data, I also analyzed annual reports and 990PF tax forms of foundations, websites of the foundations or pooled funds, and documents that the executives gave to me during our interviews. These additional data sources helped me provide a more holistic view of the three case study foundations.

Limitations

This study has certain limitations. First, I was not able to reach, interview, and include every single person of which I had originally intended. That said, I do not believe that I am missing any key perspectives of executives from foundations or pooled funds in this study. In future studies, I may not limit my scope to the voices of current and former executives at foundations, and instead may include educational leaders, teachers, parents or

guardians, or other stakeholders that are either included in decision-making processes with foundations or are directly affected by the financial decisions that are being made.

I allowed the individuals that I interviewed to tell the stories of their foundations, pooled funds, or operating organizations through their own words. Although I trust what they discussed with me, I am triangulating and confirming their words through additional sources of data (Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Mathison, 1988). Through my research, I have not found any disconfirming evidence when examining how the foundations conducted their investments, but had I included the perspectives of educational leaders or other stakeholders, that might not have been the case. Other stakeholders such as educational leaders, elected officials, or parents of children attending programs that are receiving support from foundations may have a different perspective on how executives at the foundations conduct business, invest money, or share knowledge. I am interested in including these perspectives in future studies.

Additionally, some of the current and former executives of pooled funds that I interviewed recommended that I look at state-based foundations or other national foundations to learn about what these were doing in support of pre-school within specific states. This recommendation was outside of the scope of this study, although I plan to pursue several of those state-based foundations for future research studies.

Position as Researcher

My position as a researcher in this dissertation study is multi-faceted. First and foremost, I have long been an enthusiastic supporter of high-quality early childhood education. By eight-years-old I had decided that I wanted to be a kindergarten teacher when I grew up. I pursued that goal by majoring in early childhood education and receiving my

Bachelor of Arts in Education undergraduate degree through a nationally ranked early childhood program at Arizona State University.

I used my degree by teaching kindergarten and pre-school classes in three states after graduation. Through these teaching experiences, and reflecting on my own personal experiences as a White, middle class, female student from the Midwest United States, I began to understand how the quality of available materials and curricula for kindergarten differed from state to state. In turn, I developed my own integrated curriculum that I taught in all three states, and my students scored higher on standardized assessments and writing assessments in each state, when compared to their peers. That said, I do not know if it was my curriculum or enthusiasm for teaching that helped my students succeed.

I also continued my dedication for high-quality early childhood education by working as a Confidential Assistant for the Early Learning Team at the U.S. Department of Education. Through that role, I was involved in the creation of the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grant program. Trusting that we had the best of intentions, I believed that our work would assist in the expansion of high-quality early childhood educational opportunities for all young children throughout the United States. I also began to gain insights into the complex world of early childhood education policy.

I was able to cultivate many connections through that role, which I used when I reached out to executives of foundations and pooled funds for this study. I believe that I gained access with certain individuals because I was transparent regarding my federal government experience through the Obama administration and the U.S. Department of Education. Since they had connections or a working relationship with my previous

supervisors in those positions, or they remembered working with me through that previous role, most were eager to assist me in this research study.

Since I left the U.S. Department of Education in 2012, I have acquired more critical perspectives about the work that we conducted. Through my current specialization in early childhood education policy, I am also able to see how policies and funding structures vary for early childhood throughout the United States. I am dedicated to this research now, more than ever, as I am eager to share what I have learned about the private funding of pre-school. It is my hope that this study provides some clarity regarding philanthropic foundation investment in pre-school, a currently unexplored area of research.

CHAPTER 4

BUFFETT EARLY CHILDHOOD FUND

Introduction

In this chapter, I address my research questions through a case study of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund (BECF). I discuss the history of the foundation, its connection with the Irving Harris Foundation, and its financial support of Educare Omaha and the Educare Learning Network. I then examine the BECF's involvement in the creation of the Birth to Five Policy Alliance and the First Five Years Fund. Finally, I describe the BECF's current mission, investment priorities, and transparency practices.

The Creation of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund

Warren Buffett is the third richest person in the world with a current net worth of \$82.5B (Kroll & Dolan, 2019). He earned this wealth as the CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, an American holding company (i.e. an investment firm), which owns more than 60 companies (Kroll & Dolan, 2019). Buffett has promised to give away 99% of his wealth in his lifetime, and in 2010, he partnered with Bill Gates to create the Giving Pledge⁸, a campaign that invites “the world’s wealthiest individuals and families to commit more than half of their wealth to philanthropy or charitable causes either during their lifetime or in their will[s]” (Giving Pledge LLC, n.d.).

At the end of 1999, Buffett and his then wife Susan Thompson Buffett created foundations for each of their three children. They invested approximately \$30M in each foundation annually from 2000 to 2007, so that their children could begin their own

⁸ The Giving Pledge launched with 40 pledge signatories from the United States, and as of 2019, 190 individuals from 22 countries have joined (Giving Pledge LLC, n.d.).

philanthropic endeavors (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018). They also made additional yearly gifts to their children's foundations, so that each child's capacity to give accelerated over time (D. Pedersen, personal communication, April 7, 2019). Their daughter, Susie Buffett, was interested in investing her inheritance (i.e. the Susan A. Buffett Foundation, which she later renamed the Sherwood Foundation) in the Omaha public school system and giving back to the community in which she grew up and was educated. In 2005, she started the BECF, financially supported by the Sherwood Foundation, to invest in early childhood causes.

During an interview, Jessie Rasmussen, the current President of the BECF, discussed Susie Buffett's investment interests and working relationship with the Omaha Public Schools superintendent:

Susie [*Buffett*] has always been a big investor in public education as an equalizer. I don't know if she'd use those words, but as an equalizer of economic disparities. She feels a deep commitment to the public school system in general, and to the specific school system here that she graduated from, which has the highest concentration of kids of low income. It's always interesting to me because she went to the superintendent, and said, "How can I have an even greater impact?" He said, "Don't give us any more money, invest in the early years, and make sure these kids are arriving at kindergarten on par with their more resourced peers. Because, he said, "They come to us a year to two years behind. And yes, we can help them catch up, but it's really, really hard. It's time intensive, resource intensive, and far too often, we fail" (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

Susie Buffett accepted the superintendent’s recommendation and decided to focus the investments of the Susan A. Buffett Foundation, and then the BECF on programs and support for children ages birth to five.

Dan Pedersen, the original President of the Susan A. Buffett Foundation and the BECF, was working at *Newsweek* in the 1990s, when he was recruited for the position of President. During an interview, he discussed his experience there, a connection that he had with Susie Buffett, and how his previous work and their connection brought him to work for the Susan A. Buffett Foundation:

I had grown up in Omaha myself and I had worked for *Newsweek* for 18 years as a bureau chief. My magazine had done an awful lot of reporting in the 1990s on “brain science” and the explosion in our understanding of infancy and the power of what’s happening in a small child’s brain, because there was a period in the 1960s and ‘70s and, of course, before then, where people still thought that the first six months of life were kind of a vegetative state for a child and that there wasn’t anything meaningful going on in the first six months. There was a guy named Berry Brazelton⁹ [*Dr. T. Berry Brazelton*]...He was somebody who was very influential in also helping us to conclude that early childhood, particularly infants and toddlers, were where we ought to be focusing. I wound up not just making a recommendation [*to Susie Buffett*], but leaving *Newsweek* and coming to work as the founding president of the Susan A.

⁹ T. Berry Brazelton was a professor of pediatrics emeritus at Harvard Medical School. He was one of the world’s foremost authorities on young children, having written over 200 scholarly articles and more than 30 books on pediatrics, child development, and parenting, including the *Touchpoints* series (Brazelton Touchpoints Center, n.d.). Brazelton died in March 2018.

Buffett Foundation and the Buffett Early Childhood Fund (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018).

Once Susie Buffett decided that she would invest in educational programs for young children, she hired Pedersen, and her mother arranged for them to meet with Irving Harris, a philanthropist from Chicago, Illinois. Susie Buffett’s mother had connected with Harris through their mutual philanthropic interest in teen pregnancy prevention (H. Horwitz, personal communication, June 28, 2018) and Harris had become a strong supporter of foundation and pooled fund investments in early childhood education. I will now briefly discuss Harris’s investment history, development of his foundation, and his influence on Susie Buffett, the Susan A. Buffett Foundation, and the BECF.

The Irving Harris Foundation

Irving Harris was an investor. Throughout his lifetime, he bought and sold many companies, started mutual funds, and leveraged his money through the stock market, but he originally acquired his wealth through a partnership with his brother in the development of the Toni Company, an enterprise that created and produced home permanents¹⁰ (P. Glink, personal communication, March 28, 2018). After the sale of the Toni Company to Gillette in the mid 1940s, he began the Irving Harris Foundation to give back to his community of Chicago, Illinois (Irving Harris Foundation, n.d.). Grounded in the Jewish principle of “Tikkun Olam”¹¹ and driven to support equitable outcomes for children and families, Harris

¹⁰ A home “permanent wave”, “permanent”, or “perm” is a kit that is purchased and used in the home to transform straight hair to curly through chemicals and/or heat (Blumenthal, 1985).

¹¹ “Tikkun Olam” or “Tikkun ha-Olam” is a Hebrew phrase and Jewish principle, which means to repair or heal the world (Rosenthal, 2005).

first provided grants in the area of literacy development in high school, and later focused on supporting middle school children (Irving Harris Foundation, n.d.).

During an interview, Phyllis Glink, the original Program Director and now Executive Director of the Irving Harris Foundation, discussed how Harris's interests in investing in education, family support, and mental health issues in the 1960s had shifted in focus from older students to young children:

He just kept getting younger and younger with the ages that he focused on until, when he died, he had been focused for many years on the prenatal and first three years of life as the most critical point that research and science tells us is important. And so through the foundation in the 1970s and '80s, he started a lot of fundamental organizations that are still in existence today, like the Ounce of Prevention Fund, Erikson Institute, ZERO TO THREE, Family Focus, all of them at the cutting edge of the fields in which they're focused and all of them focused on young children and families...We hosted the very first "Brain Conference" in June of 1996 that helped to trigger one of the early childhood cover stories in *Newsweek* (P. Glink, personal communication, March 28, 2018).

The Irving Harris Foundation also partnered with the Ounce of Prevention Fund to build and support the first Educare center in the United States, which was opened in February of 2000. An Educare center is a high-quality, free-of-charge program for children who are low-income and ages birth-to-five, which also provides on-site parent engagement opportunities. It is replicated throughout the United States and is typically affiliated with an elementary school and a research partner (Educare, n.d.a). Educare centers are funded through a combination of federal dollars from Head Start and Early Head Start with private investment

dollars, which are contributed by local and national philanthropic foundations. These funds are provided through agreements by all affiliated parties, and not through formal education policies. There currently are 23 Educare schools operating across the United States, with another two expected by mid-2020.

Two months later, Susie Buffett, Dan Pedersen, and additional members of the Buffett family, including Susie Buffett's brother Peter Buffett, traveled to Chicago to tour Educare Chicago and meet with Irving Harris, Phyllis Glink, and the Ounce of Prevention Fund President Harriet Horwitz. After the visit, Horwitz, the rest of the Ounce of Prevention Fund leadership, and Harris would become key thought partners for BECF for more than a decade. "It turned out to be," said Pedersen, "a kind of perfect marriage between a philanthropy and a nonprofit intermediary [*pooled fund*] organization" (D. Pedersen, personal communication, April 7, 2019).

Educare Omaha and the Educare Learning Network

Susie Buffett left the meeting with Irving Harris and the tour of Educare Chicago with the explicit interest of building an Educare center in North Omaha, a community that was socioeconomically similar, albeit on a smaller scale, to the South Side of Chicago (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018). Shortly after they had broken ground on that Educare program, Peter Buffett approached Dan Pedersen and expressed interest in building an Educare center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018). Pedersen assisted Peter Buffett in arranging for that center to be built and worked with him to find financial and research partners in Milwaukee to support the center (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018).

Located adjacent to Kellom Elementary School in the Near North Side neighborhood of Omaha, Educare Omaha at Kellom opened in 2003, because of multiple strategic and partnership philanthropic investments from the Susan A. Buffett Foundation with leadership at Kellom Elementary School and the school district. It originally and currently serves 156 children ages birth to five and their families, (Educare, n.d.c). Soon after it had opened, Annie Koppel Van Hanken, a representative of George Kaiser¹², contacted Harriet Horwitz and Dan Pedersen with interest of coming to visit the new center (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018). After her visit, Van Hanken returned to Tulsa, Oklahoma to discuss what she had observed with Kaiser.

With the opening of Educare centers in Chicago, Omaha, and Milwaukee, George Kaiser realized that a network of high-quality early childhood centers was being formed, even if that had not been the Susan A. Buffett Foundation's and then the Sherwood Foundation's original intention. Dan Pedersen discussed Kaiser's observation and interest:

We didn't, at Buffett, set out to build a national network of Educare schools. We set out to build a couple of replications, one in Omaha and one in Milwaukee. If George [Kaiser] hadn't come along, we probably would have stayed closer to home than we did. But George [Kaiser], basically, after Annie's [Koppel Van Hanken] visit, said to us, "Well, you guys aren't just a couple of replications of Educare, you're a little network. How do we join the network?" (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018).

¹² George Kaiser is a philanthropist who is interested in making investments that support children through their earliest stages of life. I will discuss his background and investment work in Chapter 5.

Jessie Rasmussen also described the creation of the Educare Learning Network as

“happening organically” during her interview:

They decided that they would open 10 to 12 schools in 8 or 10 states to have something newer than Abecedarian and Perry to be a proof point to say what quality early childhood can accomplish. And then, they also wanted it to really be a platform for change both in changes in policy, as well as changes in practice. As Eva [*Eva Roberts, current Director of Strategic Initiatives at the BECF*] may have told you, we have not been able to stop the growth. We’re up to 22-23 schools in 14 states, plus DC [*soon to be 25 programs in 15 states plus DC*] (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

To expand the Educare Learning Network and their philanthropic investments beyond strategic or partnership and into exertive investments, Susie Buffett and Dan Pedersen convinced Irving Harris and George Kaiser to each contribute to an Educare Replication Pool. This pooled funding of \$1M was used as a financial incentive to entice communities and support them in their early education endeavors, if they were willing to provide money to physically build the Educare center (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018). This exertive philanthropic incentive of \$1M for each new Educare center has been successful as Educare centers are continuously being built throughout the United States (J. Rasmussen and S. Mullin, personal communication, January 16, 2018). Currently, the BECF, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, George Kaiser Family Foundation, Irving Harris Foundation, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation contribute to this Educare Replication Pool to encourage the steady growth of the Educare network.

The Collaboration Continues

Even though they were witnessing the growth and expansion of Educare centers and the Educare Learning Network across the United States, Susie Buffett and Dan Pedersen understood that they would never be able to sustain that growth indefinitely. It was at this point that they began to think beyond individual centers and focused on how they could influence state-level public policy for early childhood (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018). They decided to create the Birth to Five Policy Alliance to influence state-level public policy and the First Five Years Fund to influence federal-level public policy.

Birth to Five Policy Alliance

In 2005, Susie Buffett and Dan Pedersen created the Birth to Five Policy Alliance, through an exertive philanthropic investment of the BECF. Under the leadership of Joan Lombardi¹³ the Birth to Five Policy Alliance would be a pooled fund that would scale high-quality birth-to-five programs by advocating for public policy change at the state-level (L. Klein, personal communication, April 17, 2018). Over time, the Birth to Five Policy Alliance changed leadership, focus, and its name. In 2013, it became the Alliance for Early Success (hereafter, Alliance) and instead of focusing on policy for all children ages birth to five, the Executive Director Lisa Klein and her Board of Directors and staff focused their work on

¹³ Joan Lombardi, Ph.D. is an international expert on child development and social policy. She has served as a Senior Advisor for many foundations, as the first deputy assistant secretary for Early Childhood Development in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services during the Obama administration, and as the deputy assistant secretary for policy and external affairs in the Administration for Children and Families and the first commissioner of the Child Care Bureau among other positions during the Clinton administration, along with many other roles (Global Philanthropy Forum, 2019).

supporting health and education policy advocacy for children of low socioeconomic status aged birth through eight years (Alliance for Early Success, 2019; Samuels, 2013).

By understanding the power that is wielded through this pooled fund and having a vested interest in supporting policies for young children and their families, 11 foundations¹⁴, including the BECF, currently strategically invest in the Alliance (Alliance for Early Success, 2019b). The Alliance, acting in a partnership philanthropic role, provides grants, and technical assistance through a Technical Assistance Network, and rapid response which allows “grantees to either seize opportunities or prevent threats to policies or funding that could not be predicted” when those grantees first applied for funding (Alliance for Early Success, 2019a). Executives and Board Members of the Alliance, along with “solicited input from over 150 experts, including early childhood advocates and leaders, K-12 experts and leaders, researchers, policymakers, and foundation officers,” have also developed a Birth Through Age Eight State Policy Framework, which was most recently updated in April 2018. This policy framework provides language for state leaders and advocates to use when advocating for policy change in the areas of health, family support, and learning for children ages birth through eight years (Alliance for Early Success, 2018). Executives at the Alliance view this strategy as successful because advocates in states such as California, Colorado, Georgia, Michigan, and Washington have been partnering with them (i.e. the executives at

¹⁴ The foundations that are currently investing in the Alliance for Early Success are: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, BECF, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, George Kaiser Family Foundation, Heising-Simons Foundation, Irving Harris Foundation, J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, Meadows Foundation, Richard W. Goldman Family Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

the Alliance) and working closely with state agencies to implement policy change (Alliance for Early Success, 2019c).

First Five Years Fund

Foundation executives' interest in influencing policy evolved from the state-level with the Alliance to the federal-level with the creation of the First Five Years Fund (FFYF). In 2007, many early childhood advocates and funders, including the BECF, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, George Kaiser Family Foundation, and Irving Harris Foundation, were concerned with the Republican administration and its lack of interest in financially supporting young children. Dan Pedersen described this change of philanthropic investment focus during his interview:

The Bush years were not very good years for new federal investment in early childhood...And so the same funders that were now funding the Alliance, and by now, some others like Pritzker and I think Packard by then had joined, we decided it would be a timely moment to create a pooled fund—along with our partners at the Ounce of Prevention Fund who housed the advocacy and education effort legally—for federal policy change, and that's how the First Five Years Fund came into being (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018).

Kris Perry, the Executive Director of the FFYF from 2012-2018, discussed the investment interests of their funders and the ongoing work and mission of the FFYF:

Our mission and priorities were to ensure that more low-income children had access to high-quality early childhood education. The focus on quality was also a differentiating factor as many of the groups at the time who did education advocacy were sorting themselves out as access or quality. The funders really felt strongly that

we should be asking for both at the same time from the very beginning because that's what research shows works, that continues to be their claim to fame is that they're not tied to a piece of the field, such as the workforce, or facilities, or curriculum, that they're tied to a much broader goal that allows them to work on all kinds of different legislation, everything from ESSA [*Every Student Succeeds Act*] to SNAP [*Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*], to preschool development, to grant development (K. Perry, personal communication, February 22, 2018).

Currently, the FFYF has 10 strategic funding partners¹⁵. Executives at this pooled fund, even through leadership change¹⁶ at their individual foundations, have maintained a consistent mission and focus of their work. For the foreseeable future, the FFYF will be focused on advocating for federal policy change through a partnership philanthropic role on behalf of young children.

During his interview, Dan Pedersen described the unique investment process of a pooled fund, like the FFYF, and the roles that foundations take within pooled funds. He also described his excitement for how the Educare Learning Network, the Alliance, and the FFYF have persisted, withstanding leadership change at the foundation-level:

¹⁵ The FFYF has the following funding partners (listed in order of initial support): BECF, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Irving Harris Foundation, George Kaiser Family Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Pritzker Children's Initiative, Heising-Simons Foundation, The Saul Zaentz Charitable Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and an anonymous donor.

¹⁶ Leadership change occurs when a new person becomes an executive director or chief executive officer at a foundation or a pooled fund. Typically, when that new person becomes the director, he or she provides a new investment plan or goals for the foundation, which at times causes the foundation to stop funding certain programs or agreements they have with other foundations.

Philanthropy loves its own sovereignty, it's our money, it's our patron's money, we're going to make all the decisions about how it's given away. Well that's not how a pooled fund can work. In a pooled fund, you kind of park your sovereignty at the door and you put your faith in the executive and her team who's making the decision on behalf of the pooled funders. But what you lose in sovereignty, you gain in impact, which was the idea. I'm really happy to report that seven years now...all three of these constructs, the Educare Network, the Alliance, and the First Five Years Fund are still alive, not only alive but thriving, all three of those patrons and some others are continuing to support them. And that's unusual in philanthropy because what almost always happens is that when you get new leadership, you get a new agenda because the new leader has to prove that she or he is smarter than the old leader and then the focus changes, but that hasn't happened here (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018).

Through Pedersen's interview, he discusses how unusual it is for a foundation to "stay long" or in a strategic or partnership philanthropic role with the same cause, maintaining the same focus. BECF's investment focus in young children and their families is stable, and instead of funders leaving for new causes, they remained and were joined by additional funders to support the Alliance and the FFYF.

BECF in 2018

Executives at the BECF describe their leadership team of seven as small, mighty, and flat, rather than hierarchical (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018; E. Roberts, personal communication, January 16, 2018). Instead of assigning individual members of their team portfolios of programs or initiatives that are dedicated to a specific

area of work, they all work together to partner with and support their grantees through a strategic or venture investment approach. Eva Roberts, the current Director of Strategic Initiatives at the BECF, discussed their partnership philanthropic work with their grantees and how the BECF differs from other foundations:

So, when I think about other foundation staff that you'll interview, if you asked them, they'd probably say the majority of their job is cultivating proposals, reviewing proposals, and that's like a fraction of what we do. We just do our work differently, more in partnership with our grantees, a little bit more hands on in terms of doing the work with them and guiding the work (E. Roberts, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

Mission

The focus and mission of the BECF is clear, and has not changed since it was first created in 2005: the organization is focused narrowly on early childhood education, specifically for children ages birth to five, and on supporting children that are facing the greatest risks (E. Roberts, personal communication, January 16, 2018). They maintain this focus through their strategic and partnership philanthropic investments and, as discussed previously, they have been influential exertive investors and co-creators in Educare, the Educare Learning Network, the Alliance, and the FFYF. They have also upheld the interests of their benefactor, Susie Buffett, and board of directors by extensively financially supporting the Omaha, Nebraska community. Through their dedication and unwavering mission, they have earned high trust and confidence from their benefactor and governing board in their decision-making practices, and while they may seek guidance from their board, it is ultimately the responsibility of the BECF President and team to make decisions for how

and in what programs, advocacy organizations, or research projects they will invest (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

Investment Priorities

Executives at the BECF prioritize their investments in three areas: practice, policy, and science or knowledge development.

Practice. High-quality programs, through Educare and additional early learning centers, for children ages birth to five will always be a key priority for BECF (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018). Executives at the BECF pride themselves in investing in programs that have strong leaders, as Jessie Rasmussen discussed:

Because we tend to invest in the same thing across time, we don't have an explicit set of criteria for funding programs. Having said that, our long-term investments are made with organizations that have strong leadership, effective management, and who deliver on their promises to contribute to achieving our mission to give every child the opportunity to experience a strong start in life. Bottom line, we invest in people and our relationships with those people; less on who submits the best proposal (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

Although the BECF tends to fund the same programs over time because the leadership team has built substantial relationships and ongoing partnerships with the leaders of those programs, in 2015 they launched a new partnership grant program within the Educare Learning Network. They distributed Acceleration Grants to their Educare grantees, with the intention of inspiring innovation and promoting cooperation throughout the Educare Learning Network (Educare, 2018). Educare school leaders collaborated together to form project ideas, and then had to propose those ideas to the leadership at the BECF. If their

grant was funded, they then worked together to carry out their projects and report their findings to the leadership at the BECF¹⁷. Because they considered the first round of the Acceleration Grant program a success, executives at the BECF decided to fund a second round of grants in 2018. In this second round, Educare school leaders could submit applications to either scale up their original projects or propose new project ideas (E. Roberts, personal communication, January 16, 2018; Educare, 2018).

Policy. Executives at the BECF fund advocacy for state-level policy change for young children through the Alliance, and at the federal-level through the FFYF. Due to IRS regulations and the BECF's 501(c)(3) status, they cannot directly advocate for policy change and are not legally allowed to lobby elected officials for their support, (E. Roberts, personal communication, January 16, 2018; J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018). However, they can share knowledge and information with elected officials and they do so regularly, whenever elected officials or their staff members contact or approach executives at the BECF with questions (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018). In general, the executives at the BECF suggest that the elected officials connect with the leadership at the Alliance or the FFYF to avoid any possible conflicts of interest, and to maintain their 501(c)(3) status which prohibits them from taking explicit political stances.

Science or knowledge development. The BECF has many science or research partners in whom they invest, and they are eager to financially assist in the development of

¹⁷ For example, one Acceleration Grant project is a consortium of Educare centers in Omaha, Seattle, and Miami who are interested in the combination of early childhood and science inquiry. They are working with the Educare master teachers of those centers to assist the master teachers in increasing their knowledge of science and their ability to integrate it with other subjects (E. Roberts, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

knowledge, which they hope will be beneficial for the research and practice of early childhood education. Nationally, they invest in the work of people such as Dr. Jack Shonkoff, the Founding Director of the Harvard Center on the Developing Child, and James Heckman, Ph.D., a Nobel Laureate and the Henry Schultz Distinguished Service Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago; and in the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018). The BECF also continuously supports public-private partnerships for birth-to-three services and focuses their research investments in the areas of evaluation, child development, and the early childhood workforce (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018). In Nebraska, the Sherwood Foundation, separate from the BECF, funded the creation of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska¹⁸ (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

Transparency

The executives at the BECF have produced annual reports from the beginning (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018). The most recent annual report is available through their website, which is regularly maintained. However, members of the public may request copies of their previous annual reports. Executives of the BECF may also be easily contacted by members of the public, as their email addresses are listed on the

¹⁸ Researchers at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska conduct applied research in support of children ages birth through eight, work with early childhood practitioners to implement evidence-based practices in their programs and classrooms, inform elected officials of their work and what they have found to be successful for improving learning and developmental outcomes for young children, and share what they have identified through outreach and public education opportunities (Buffett Early Childhood Institute, 2012-2019).

BECF website. By providing this information to the public, the executives at the BECF are attempting to provide at least some transparency regarding where their investments are made throughout each year.

Conclusion

The BECF is an influential foundation in the state of Nebraska and nationally. The executives at the BECF maintain a clear mission and focus, and through their investment priorities, they wish to positively affect the lives of children ages birth to five. They also make their major investment decisions known to the public through their annual reports and their regularly maintained website.

The foundation prides itself in the relationships it builds with its grantees and prefers to financially support them for prolonged amounts of time. It also prefers to make investments through pooled funds in collaboration with other foundations. Because the private dollar investments of foundations will never have as broad a reach or as large of an impact as federal investments, the executives at the BECF intend to influence early childhood policy in partnership with other foundations and through their support of advocacy organizations. The executives at the BECF feel that foundations can have a broader influence in early childhood practice and advocacy for policies if they collectively invest. Their intention is to increase young children's access to high-quality early childhood education and care throughout the United States.

CHAPTER 5

THE GEORGE KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a case study of the George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF). I discuss the history of the foundation, George Kaiser's interest in pre-school, and the GKFF's financial support of Educare Tulsa and the Educare Learning Network. I then examine the GKFF's pre-school investments beyond Educare. Finally, I describe the GKFF's current pre-school team, governing board structure, mission, and transparency practices.

History of the George Kaiser Family Foundation

George B. Kaiser was born and grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma. After receiving his bachelor's and Master of Business Administration degrees from Harvard, he returned to Tulsa in 1966 to work for his father at the Kaiser-Francis Oil Company (George Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019a). In 1969, Kaiser's father had a heart attack and Kaiser acquired the company from him, which he incorporated in 1976 (Bloomberg L.P., 2019; Helman, 2011). Under his leadership, the company thrived and Kaiser amassed a vast amount of wealth (Inside Philanthropy, n.d.a). He gained additional wealth after purchasing the Bank of Oklahoma out of federal receivership and growing the bank into an operation that spans nine states and manages nearly \$30B in assets (Inside Philanthropy, n.d.a).

As a way to invest in his community of Tulsa, Kaiser established the Tulsa Community Foundation in 1998 with the assistance of local philanthropists (Tulsa Community Foundation, 2012-2019). The Tulsa Community Foundation "assists other nonprofits, corporations, individuals and families with meaningful and efficient charitable

giving solutions” (Tulsa Community Foundation, 2012-2019) and is currently one of the largest tax-exempt, nonprofit community foundations in the United States (Tulsa Community Foundation, 2012-2019). In 1999, a year after the Tulsa Community Foundation was created, Kaiser established the George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF) as a supporting public organization (i.e. a Type I 509(a)(3) supporting organization) of the Tulsa Community Foundation (George Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019b).

Kaiser currently continues his role as the President of the Kaiser-Francis Oil Company and invests much of his wealth through the GKFF. As a signatory of The Giving Pledge in 2010, which I described in Chapter 4, Kaiser has agreed to devote nearly all of his accumulated wealth to charitable causes either through his lifetime or as part of his will (Giving Pledge LLC, n.d.b). Through his Giving Pledge agreement letter, Kaiser discussed the advantages he had experienced in life through genetics and upbringing, and expressed his dedication to efforts for reversing the generational cycle of poverty (Giving Pledge LLC, n.d.b).

Kaiser’s Interest in Pre-School

George Kaiser did not have an educational or professional background in pre-school. He was curious about the topic and had read research that focused on the importance of early brain development (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018), and wanted to assist Tulsa in supporting young children that were of low socioeconomic status. Since he had a vague idea of how philanthropy could make an impact on the preparation of young children for kindergarten, he hired Annie Koppel Van Hanken to assist him in this mission (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018).

When I spoke with Van Hanken, she described their initial process of investing in pre-school as starting with a blank slate (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018). She stated:

We had no roadmap; we had no programs that we were holding up as the examples of best practice. We weren't real familiar, even, with the public funding streams to know what levers there were to pull. We started at a place and at a time of complete innocence and open-mindedness about what the best methodology might be and where it was even appropriate for philanthropy to participate. It's such an example of relying heavily on people smarter than we were, trying to be open-minded about following up on every contact. I had never worked in philanthropy, so I wasn't even coming with experience in the field, let alone early education...We just sort of took it slowly. As luck would have it, most of us rely on people that we think are more knowledgeable, and I met someone who introduced me to someone else, and it sort of snowballed into a series of conversations and relationships that helped us formulate an approach over the first, I'd say, three or four years (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018).

The first person Van Hanken met in the area of pre-school was Harriet Horwitz, the original President of the Ounce of Prevention Fund. Horwitz then arranged a meeting for George Kaiser and Irving Harris, who I spoke about in Chapter 4, and encouraged Van Hanken to speak with Dan Pedersen, the original President of the Susan A. Buffett Fund and the Buffett Early Childhood Fund (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018). Kaiser also spoke directly with Susie Buffett to learn about her philanthropic work in pre-school (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018). Through all of

these connections and conversations, Van Hanken was advised to travel to Chicago to visit the Educare center.

GKFF and Educare

Kaiser decided to strategically invest in Educare after he visited Educare centers in Chicago, Omaha, and Atlanta, and consulted research regarding the importance of brain development and high-quality early education experiences for children living in poverty (A. K. Van Hanken, January 4, 2018). Educare Tulsa at Kendall-Whittier, the first Educare center for Tulsa, Oklahoma, opened in August 2006. Since then, the GKFF has financially supported the opening of two additional Educare centers, Educare Tulsa at Hawthorne which opened in 2010, and Educare Tulsa at MacArthur which opened in 2012 (Educare, n.d.d). Although they supported the initial opening of these centers, the GKFF does not financially support their daily operations¹⁹. Collectively, the three Educare Tulsa centers serve 520 children ages birth to five years and their families (Educare Schools, n.d.). Executives at the GKFF also have plans to open a fourth center in the next few years (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018).

During our interview, Van Hanken was interested in discussing what she saw as the uniqueness of the Educare Tulsa centers when compared to other Educare centers. She wanted me to be aware of how they have provided strategic or partnership philanthropic services beyond a traditional Educare center, which she described as “expansive”, to support

¹⁹ The daily operation costs of Educare centers are paid for through public-private partnerships, of which the majority is provided through Head Start and Early Head Start federal dollars (Center for High Impact Philanthropy, 2015).

the needs of the Tulsa community through the work of their “Educare Beyond the Walls team”:

We run programs through there that partner with 30 churches in the community to turn typical church activities into opportunities for talking, reading, and singing with young children...We are a home for Reach Out and Read in the community...Reach Out and Read is an early literacy program that’s actually delivered by pediatricians. It requires a little bit of administrative support and costs that we shoulder at Tulsa Educare. We also run out of Tulsa Educare a mother/child intensive parenting program that’s from the CDC [*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*] called Legacy Parenting. That’s for pretty high-risk moms, and young children enrolled by the age of six months, where they’re being modeled strong attachment and strong parenting principles through facilitated dialogues and group meetings by licensed counselors (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018).

Throughout this strategic and partnership philanthropic work and their financial commitments, executives at the GKFF have demonstrated their dedication to supporting and providing needed services to families in the Tulsa community that are experiencing poverty.

In Chapter 4, I discussed how George Kaiser was the first person to approach Susie Buffett and Dan Pedersen about creating an Educare Learning Network (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018; J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018). Kaiser had observed the positive influences Educare centers were having in their individual communities and believed in the power of connecting the centers to assist them in having a larger, nationwide effect for young children (D. Pedersen, personal communication,

May 29, 2018). Executives at the GKFF have invested over \$30M in total for the building of Educare centers, supporting research and evaluation projects with the University of Oklahoma – Tulsa Early Childhood Education Institute and the Department of Human Development and Family Science at Oklahoma State University – Tulsa, and developing the Educare Learning Network (Inside Philanthropy, n.d.a). In contrast, the annual cost to run the three Educare centers in Tulsa is over \$7M or roughly \$4000 per child enrolled (Helman, 2011).

Pre-School Investments of the GKFF Beyond Educare

Program Support

The GKFF financially supports 11 Head Start and Early Head Start “look-alike” centers that are run by an organization entitled the Community Action Project of Tulsa (CAP Tulsa), and are included within the Oklahoma Early Childhood Program (OECF) (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018). Of these 11 centers, eight have earned accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)²⁰, and all are required to meet ten quality standards which are focused around teacher licensure and degree requirements, length of program day and year, and types of family support services offered through the program (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018; Community Action Project of Tulsa, n.d.). The GKFF works closely with the Oklahoma Department of Education to combine their private sector

²⁰ To earn NAEYC accreditation, a pre-school program must meet 70% of assessment items measured for each of 10 standards and 100% of the required assessment items. Each class within a program that is assessed must also meet 70% of the assessment items measured. The cost of accreditation varies by size of program, but most small pre-school programs will not be able to afford the significant expense, even when NAEYC provides need-based financial assistance (National Association for the Education of Young Children, n.d.).

dollars of \$15M with the state's public sector dollars of \$10M, an illustration of how the state is underfunding pre-school education (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018). Through their financial support of these and the three Educare Tulsa centers, the GKFF now financially supports 14 high-quality pre-school centers serving over 2,000 children within the Tulsa, Oklahoma metropolitan area (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018).

Policy Support

Although George Kaiser is more inclined to invest directly in pre-school programs offered in and around Tulsa, Oklahoma through strategic philanthropic investment (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018) and research projects that evaluate those programs, the GKFF also makes partnership philanthropic investments in state-level policy advocacy through the Alliance for Early Success and federal-level policy advocacy through the First Five Years Fund. Executives at the GKFF are also in constant communication with their local policymakers and feel that an important part of their jobs is to bring issues forward to different stakeholders and physically show them the positive effects high-quality pre-school is having in their community through tours of Educare centers (K. Levit, personal communication, January 4, 2018; A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018). These actions may have helped convince elected officials to approve a \$25M pilot program to promote the school readiness of low-income children ages birth through three years throughout the state of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City Educare, 2011-2019).

GKFF in 2018

Generally, the GKFF focuses its investments in four categories: parent engagement and early education, health and family well-being, criminal justice, and vibrant and inclusive

Tulsa, which they also identify as civic enhancement on their website (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018; George Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019c). The foundation employs a Senior Program Officer for each of these categories, an overall Executive Director, and additional staff who focus their work on the Birth through Eight Strategy for Tulsa (BEST), general business analytics, data systems and technology, research partnerships, and investments (George Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019c). In an interview, Ken Levit, the Executive Director for the GKFF, discussed the investment priorities of the GKFF. He stated,

We focus primarily on early childhood education, but we also do quite a bit of work around the social safety net in general and a variety of projects around civic enhancement around the greater Tulsa area, downtown revitalization, neighborhood improvement, public parks, and the arts (K. Levit, personal communication, January 4, 2018).

Pre-School Team

Currently, the pre-school team at the GKFF has three members, and their work is separated into portfolios. Annie Koppel Van Hanken is the Senior Program Officer and her work is focused primarily on parent engagement and early education before children enter the public school system (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018). One of Van Hanken's teammates focuses their work on vulnerable families, which is located within the foundation's community health sphere, and another teammate's activities center around low-income children within public education (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018).

Governing Board Structure

The GKFF has a board of directors that is comprised of seven members who are originally from the Tulsa, Oklahoma area. They include the CEO of the Tulsa Community Foundation; a lawyer and trustee of the University of Tulsa; the chairman, president, and CEO of the QuikTrip Corporation; a board member for Tulsa Educare; and three of Kaiser's children from his first marriage (George Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019d). This board composition emphasizes Kaiser's interest in keeping his foundation decisions within his family and focusing his foundation's investments in the Tulsa community (George Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019d).

Mission

Instead of utilizing a mission statement, the work of the executives at the GKFF is guided by a unifying theme and quote from George Kaiser: "No newborn child bears any responsibility for the circumstances of her birth and yet her future chance for success in life is heavily influenced by those circumstances" (George Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019a). Kaiser is emphasizing that things a child has no control over, such as socioeconomic status, or family health history, has a profound impact on the life of a child. He believes that work of the GKFF should be focused on supporting the young children of Tulsa, Oklahoma, through a strategic or partnership philanthropic role, so that they are given opportunities to succeed (George Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019a).

Transparency

The GKFF has a physical office in Tulsa, Oklahoma and maintains a website, which identifies their leadership team members and the areas in which they focus and invest (George Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019c). They also provide an office telephone number

and general email addresses for members of the public and members of the media to use if they wish to request information. Through their BEST website, they allow members of the public to subscribe to a newsletter, which provides updates on the work they are accomplishing through their BEST program (George Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019e). They do not, however, provide individual email addresses for the members of their board of directors, executives, or staff members.

Beyond the information they have provided through their website, the GKFF is not transparent about its work. Executives at the foundation have never created or distributed an annual report, and they do not have any historical documents about the foundation or the work the executives of the foundation have accomplished over time (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018). When I spoke with Van Hanken, she did not give any indication that this practice would be changing in the future for the GKFF.

Conclusion

George Kaiser created the GKFF as a means to give back to the community that had given so much to him and his family. Through his research focusing on the importance of infant brain development, he knew that he wanted to support high-quality pre-school and attempt to reverse the generational cycle of poverty for the people of Tulsa, Oklahoma. He hired Annie Koppel Van Hanken as his first employee of the GKFF. Through her interactions with other philanthropists who were supporting pre-school, Kaiser decided to financially support the building of an Educare center and the nationwide creation of the Educare Learning Network, the Alliance for Success, and the First Five Years Fund, through both strategic and partnership philanthropic roles.

Van Hanken attributes the success the GKFF has had in pre-school to the support they received from additional philanthropists. During our interview, she stated,

I would just say that the community of foundations that are really deeply invested in early education is very collegial and close. There's like 10 foundations²¹ around the country that do early childhood work...a very close, tight-knit community of early education donors that share a lot and support each other...Because we're all so focused on what's good for kids, it's a very supportive community (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018).

Through their connections with other foundations and the work that they continue to accomplish in support of high-quality pre-school programs, advocacy for policies, and research studies, the GKFF has grown to become a known and respected foundation in the field of pre-school philanthropy.

Although they have demonstrated to their community and fellow foundations that they are accountable as a partner and investor for pre-school causes through their long-term investments in the Alliance, FFYF, and Educare, executives at the GKFF are not transparent about their past or current work, and have no plans to produce or distribute annual reports. Van Hanken claims that since the GKFF has a living donor who is entrepreneurial, executives at the GKFF are not interested in documenting the history of the foundation or “treating the enterprise as important history” (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018).

²¹ She later specified those 10 foundations as: the Ballmer Group, Bezos Foundation, Buffett Early Childhood Fund, Einhorn Family Charitable Trust, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Heinz Foundation, Heising-Simons Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Packard Foundation, and J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation.

CHAPTER 6

THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a case study of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. I discuss the foundation's history and the influence of Bill Gates, Sr. in the early learning investments of the foundation. I then examine the three early learning strategies that the foundation has completed and is currently pursuing. Finally, I describe the foundation's early learning team, mission, and transparency practices.

The Evolution of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

In 1994, Bill Gates, Jr. (hereafter, Bill Gates), the co-founder of Microsoft, established the William H. Gates Foundation through a donation of Microsoft shares (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019a). This foundation was primarily directed by Bill Gates, Sr. and was dedicated to improving reproductive and child health within the developing countries in Africa and Asia (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019a). As the wealth of Bill Gates accumulated, so did his philanthropic propensities, and in 1997, he established the Gates Library Foundation, which was later renamed the Gates Learning Foundation, to improve Internet access for low-income families in North America (Langley, 2016).

When he retired from his day-to-day role at Microsoft in 2000, Bill Gates, along with his wife Melinda Gates, merged the William H. Gates Foundation with the Gates Learning Foundation to create the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (hereafter, Gates Foundation) (Langley, 2016). Bill & Melinda Gates, along with Bill Gates, Sr. as the co-chairs, determined that the investment priorities of the foundation would be centered on global health,

education, libraries, and the Pacific Northwest, where the foundation was headquartered (Langley, 2016). Warren Buffett, a friend and confidant of Bill Gates, pledged in 2006 to give approximately \$31B in Berkshire Hathaway stock to the Gates Foundation, as a direction in his will, to support the Gates Foundation's work in reforming education and fighting infectious diseases (Smith, 2006). Buffett has since taken on a trustee role within the Executive Leadership Team at the foundation (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019b).

The Influence of Bill Gates, Sr.

Bill Gates, Sr. has performed an important role in the investment trajectory of the Gates Foundation, especially in their support of early childhood care and education. At the beginning of the Gates Foundation, Bill Gates, Sr.'s strategic philanthropic investment work was concentrated in the areas of community involvement in Washington State and United States-focused education (Stiffler, 2015). As a strong believer in the power of high-quality early childhood education, he connected with Dan Pedersen, the original President of the Susan A. Buffett Foundation and the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, and Harriet Horwitz, the original President of the Ounce of Prevention Fund. Through those connections, Bill Gates, Sr. traveled to visit Educare Omaha, and then to visit Educare Chicago towards the end of 2004 (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018).

After those visits, and as the Gates Foundation grew, Bill Gates, Sr. pushed for the foundation to invest in early childhood care and education. His influence at that time was no longer a controlling one, as Bill Gates was skeptical about early childhood and instead decided to take the foundation in an alternative direction by investing heavily in high school (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018). Even as the foundation became

more institutionalized and additional staff joined the Gates Foundation, Bill Gates, Sr. was not able to convince his son to substantively invest in early childhood.

In 2002, Dan Pedersen went to Seattle to speak with Bill Gates' top education officer to solicit support for building an Educare center in Seattle. Pedersen was unable to convince the foundation to invest at that time, but because of the persistence of Bill Gates, Sr., Bill Gates agreed to visit Educare centers in Omaha and Chicago (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018). In part due to those visits, the Gates Foundation financially supported the opening of the Educare Seattle center in 2010. In addition, they continue to provide strategic philanthropic investment support for the growing Educare Learning Network, which may be due to the Buffett family's connections to the network. The Gates Foundation is not as active in or dedicated to Educare as GKFF and BECF.

Early Learning Strategy Investments of the Gates Foundation

The early learning²² strategy of the Gates Foundation has gone through at least three iterations (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018). Throughout those variations, the deputy director and program officers on the early learning team have consistently focused their strategies on improving preschool, or high-quality programs solely for three- and four-year-olds, either in Washington State or nationally throughout the United States (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018). They have conducted this work

²² Executives at the Gates Foundation prefer to use the term 'early learning' instead of 'early childhood', although both terms have similar meaning. Through my professional experiences in the field of early childhood both as a preschool and kindergarten classroom teacher and as a Confidential Assistant for the United States Department of Education, I have found that 'early learning' is typically used when emphasis is placed on the educational experiences of young children, and 'early childhood' is used when non-academic experiences are also emphasized.

with the support of three anchor partners: the Ounce of Prevention Fund, which provides strategic consultation, technical assistance, and professional development around instructional leadership to state programs and advocates; the Alliance for Early Success (Alliance), of which I described in depth in Chapter 4; and the University of Washington, through a research practice partnership that is working with the state of Washington to determine its early learning agenda (M. Davis, personal communication, March 14, 2018; S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018). I will now describe each of these three early learning strategies in detail.

Early Learning Strategy #1

The first version of the Gates Foundation’s early learning strategy began in 2006 and was concentrated on working in communities. They focused their work through what they refer to as “demonstration communities” in South King County and Eastern Washington, and in Yakima or central Washington (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018). Sarah Weber, a current Senior Program Officer of the early learning team, an employee of the Gates Foundation for 18 years, and someone who has been working on the early learning strategy for 11 years, discussed this work:

We wanted to see, if we were able to provide deep intensive services across a range and create a community of early learning supports, first of all, what we would learn from that, what would work best, and how might then the state pick up that which was most effective (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

These initial services included home visiting, early pilots of the state’s Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)²³, financial support for the Educare Seattle center, and development of a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA)²⁴ (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018). Throughout this exertive philanthropic work, executives at the Gates Foundation realized that they could not sustain all of these investments without additional public support (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018). Over time, they partnered with the state of Washington’s Department of Early Learning, and completely handed off many of these investment priorities to them through Washington’s receipt of a Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

Early Learning Strategy #2

Although their early learning budget decreased after 2008, due to the financial crisis that was occurring at that time in the United States, the Gates Foundation continued to support early learning in Washington (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

Through this second strategy, the early learning team through the Pacific Northwest

²³ A QRIS is a statewide “systematic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs” (National Center on Child Care Improvement, 2013). They typically have five components: quality standards, quality improvement supports, financial supports and incentives, system monitoring and accountability, and engagement and outreach (Epstein et al., 2017; Kirby, Caronongan, Malone, & Boller, 2015). Early childhood education and child care programs voluntarily decide to participate in their state’s QRIS and receive ratings based on their compliance with these five components.

²⁴ A KEA is an assessment that is used to collect preliminary understanding data of what a child knows and is able to do when he or she first begins kindergarten (BUILD Initiative, 2019). States that were selected to receive an RTT-ELC grant were required to develop a KEA (BUILD Initiative, 2019).

program supported Washington’s RTT-ELC grant work, as I briefly discussed in Chapter 2, by funding the development of the state’s QRIS and KEA, and providing smaller investments within the state’s pre-K through third grade continuum (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018). In partnership with Thrive Washington, an organization that was initially created to directly support advocacy activities and the expansion of high-quality early childhood care and education opportunities in the state of Washington, they also assisted in the building of a Washington statewide Early Learning Coalition. They also continued to support the development of and advocacy for early learning policies at the state and federal levels through a partnership philanthropic role with the Alliance for Early Success (Alliance) and the First Five Years Fund (FFYF) (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

Early Learning Strategy #3: The Current Strategy

In its current early learning strategy, the early learning team of the Gates Foundation, in partnership with their three anchor partners of the Ounce of Prevention Fund, the Alliance, and the University of Washington, is focused on understanding how state systems can enhance the quality of early learning program settings (M. Davis, personal communication, March 14, 2018; S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018). Their current strategy is not focused on supporting direct services for early learning, unlike the strategies that have been implemented by the BECF and GKFF.

For this work, executives at the Gates Foundation are utilizing the 15 Essential Elements for High-Quality Pre-K (hereafter, 15 Essential Elements), which were developed

by Jim Minervino²⁵ through a review of research and comparative case studies (Minervino, 2014). These Essential Elements can be divided into three categories: a) enabling environments, which include political will and strong leaders; b) rigorous, articulated early learning policies, which include teacher compensation and qualifications, class size, adult-child ratio, program hours or dosage provided for children, early learning standards, effective curriculum, and support for children who have special needs and/or are Dual Language Learners; and c) strong program policies, which include high-quality teaching, professional development opportunities, child assessments, data-driven decision-making, and integrated systems which align with K-12 education (Minervino, 2014).

Minervino asserts that all 15 elements must be present for an early learning program to be fully considered high-quality and for the effects of the program to be sustainable long-term for young children (Minervino, 2014). While executives of the early learning team agree with Minervino, Marquita Davis, the current Deputy Director for Early Learning at the Gates Foundation, explained that due to budget constraints—early learning is not identified by the co-chairs as a high priority of the foundation—they have decided to first implement the five essential elements within the area of program policies (i.e. high-quality teaching, professional development opportunities, child assessments, data-driven decision-making, and integrated systems which align with K-12 education) (M. Davis, personal communication,

²⁵ Jim Minervino was the Corporate Vice President of Corporate Marketing Strategy and Insights at Microsoft. In 2009, he left his position at Microsoft to become the founder and Chief Executive Officer at Ready On Day One, a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to ensuring that all children are ready to enter kindergarten academically and socially prepared (Ready On Day One, n.d.). He does not have any formal training or background in early childhood education although he has consulted with well-respected early childhood researchers.

March 14, 2018). The Early Learning Team believes that by focusing on these elements, they could have the largest influence on early learning compared to their previous strategies (M. Davis, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

Even with Minervino's review of research, Bill Gates remained skeptical about the long-term impacts of early learning programs, and he and Melinda Gates were interested in seeing what was happening for early learning outside of the state of Washington (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018). Sarah Weber discussed how the early learning team was interested in finding programs that were succeeding and showing educational gains for young children, and were financially sustainable because that was one of Bill Gates' investment priorities. She stated,

We went to these places that were getting really great gains for what would not be considered unsustainable costs... We went to many places, but the ones where we saw the most sustained gains and reasonable costs were Boston, New Jersey, Maryland, and North Carolina, and really based this last iteration of our strategy on what those places had in common around what we called essential elements of quality for pre-K (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

Utilizing what they observed in those four locations, the early learning team of the Gates Foundation decided to implement the essential elements in Washington, Oregon, and Tennessee, states where they were already working for the foundation's K-12 strategy (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018). Currently, through an exertive philanthropic investment approach, they are focused on replicating high-quality early learning practices in those three states and determining how they can sustain those educational gains through third grade (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

They then plan to use that work for developing “tool kits and playbooks” that other states will be able to use when implementing high-quality early learning programs, and distributing them through an exertive philanthropic investment approach (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

Early Learning at the Gates Foundation in 2018

The early learning team at the Gates Foundation is the same size it has been since the beginning of the foundation, and consists solely of two Program Officers—one Senior and one Junior—and a Deputy Director. Their team is situated within the Local Giving or Washington State/Pacific Northwest Program of the Gates Foundation, even though their investments reach beyond the state of Washington (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018). The team also divides their work amongst the Program Officers through portfolios, which are categorized in three areas: partnership for pre-k improvement, early learning strategy, and advocacy grants to targeted states (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

While their core team is small, they work with and receive support through administrative, communications, and other teams at the foundation, and from a Measurement, Learning, and Evaluation (MLE) Specialist, who assists them in developing a logic model and explicating the outcomes of their work (M. Davis, personal communication, March 14, 2018; S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018). The MLE Specialist and support team also assists each of the grantees in developing measurable outcomes, if they are unable to do so independently (Former Gates Foundation Employee, personal communication, February 21, 2018). When the early learning team members report their work to the co-chairs (i.e. Bill & Melinda Gates, and Bill Gates, Sr.), their MLE Specialist

then aids them in explaining the measurable outcomes of each of their grantees and reporting how their investments are progressing through either a process or outcome evaluation (Former Gates Foundation Employee, personal communication, February 21, 2018). This is a unique resource, compared to what is typically provided at the BECF and GKFF, and it may be provided because of the larger size of the Gates Foundation in comparison to the BECF and GKFF.

Mission

The mission statement of the early learning work of the Gates Foundation is centered on the belief that all young children throughout the United States, regardless of race and income, should be given access to high-quality pre-K (M. Davis, personal communication, March 14, 2018). Originally, their plan was to reach this goal by 2030 (Former Gates Foundation Employee, personal communication, February 21, 2018), but they have since moved away from this specific date and instead have focused their attention on determining how to use the essential elements to expand access of high-quality early learning programs for all young children (M. Davis, personal communication, March 14, 2018). Their current investments do not align with their stated mission. Although they are investing in “tool kits and playbooks” that can be implemented by state pre-school programs throughout the United States and in-turn increase access for young children in high-quality pre-K programs, they are not investing in direct services or programs for young children.

Transparency

The Chief Executive Officer and the co-chairs of the Gates Foundation have produced annual reports since 1998, which can be found on their foundation website (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019c). Within those annual reports, they discuss their

areas of funding broken down by “program areas” (e.g. Global Development and Global Policy and Advocacy) and “non-program areas” (e.g. Communications and Other Charitable Programs), and their total direct grantee support summary by strategy (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 1999-2019d). However, within their United States Program category, they do not specify how much money is spent on early learning in their Pacific Northwest budget subcategory.

The early learning website of the Gates Foundation, which was last updated in 2018, describes their current work in Washington, Oregon, and Tennessee, and how it is connected to their previous early learning work in the state of Washington (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2018a). Although they identify where this work is occurring, they do not discuss the details of their work in or their eventual intentions for this work. They also do not discuss their partnership philanthropic investments in Educare, the Educare Learning Network, the FFYF, the Ounce of Prevention Fund, or the connections the Gates Foundation has with additional foundations such as the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. By clicking on an additional link that is provided focusing on the Early Learning Grants of the Gates Foundation, a person is able to see that the foundation provides financial investments to the Alliance, the Early Learning Action Alliance of Washington, Seattle Public Schools, the University of Washington Foundation, and the Washington State Department of Early Learning, but the amounts of money invested in each of these organizations is not identified (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2018b).

The Gates Foundation provides the names and background information of many of their Deputy Directors, Seattle Community Leadership, and Staff members through their website (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2018c). They also list the “issue areas” on which

each person's work is focused. Although they do not provide email addresses for their employees, they do provide Twitter and LinkedIn information.

Conclusion

The Gates Foundation has evolved since its beginning in 1994 as the William H. Gates Foundation. It grew from one foundation to two, and then became one again, and the scope of focus and strategy, specifically for early learning, altered with at least three different iterations. Through their current strategy, the early learning team is working through an exertive philanthropic investment role to develop a model of high-quality early learning that can be replicated by states throughout the United States, and which will then provide additional access to pre-K for all young children.

Sarah Weber, a current Senior Program Officer of the early learning team, an employee of the Gates Foundation for 18 years, and someone who has been working on the early learning strategy for 11 years, understands the unique role that philanthropy can have in early learning. She explained how executives at the Gates Foundation are focused on using their investments to influence state-level systems for early learning, and not in support of direct services. She said,

We of course want programs, ultimately, to be high quality and have impact for children, but *we feel like our role is more about making sure the system is effective, and that that system supports that practice in the classroom, as opposed to maybe supporting multiple great programs that might have impact for a smaller number of children. We're really about big change and using our dollars to catalyze something that might either never happen or would take much longer to happen were it not for philanthropy* [emphasis added]. We can test and make mistakes in ways that the government can't do, but we want to do that in support of,

ultimately, having the systems own and operate these programs long term. We just want to make sure that we are really smart about using the role of philanthropy in the way that we can make long, sustained change for children and families (S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

Instead of focusing on individual program growth, Sarah Weber is explaining how she views philanthropy as a facilitator of systemic change for early learning, a view that is quite different from the executives at the BECF and GKFF. She recognizes and celebrates the opportunities that philanthropists are given to make mistakes that the government cannot, and be more nimble and quickly change their funding priorities, depending on what they view as the needs of their communities.

CHAPTER 7

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF THE BECF, GKFF, AND GATES FOUNDATION

Introduction

In this chapter, I identify and analyze several similarities and differences of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, the George Kaiser Family Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and provide comparisons across the foundations. The similarities I will be discussing are: trust in pre-school leadership at the foundations, use of research and data, and importance of networks and pooled funds. I also describe the following differences between the foundations: board structures and decision-making processes, lengths and types of philanthropic investments, and monetary investments in pre-schoolers.

Similarities of the Foundations

Each of the three foundations I have included in this comparative case study chose to invest time and money in support of pre-school programs, research studies, and the advocacy of state- and federal-level policies for pre-school. All three independently began investing in pre-school by hiring staff, determining their funding strategies, and initially supporting programs for children ages birth through four-years-old between 2000 and 2005, and they all expanded the reach of their investments through partnerships, networking, and the professional support they received from one another. In my interviews, these three foundations were identified as prominent investors in pre-school by Lisa Klein, the Executive Director of the Alliance for Early Success, and Harriet Horwitz, the original President of the Ounce of Prevention Fund. They stated,

L. Klein: The original one was Buffett, and then when Buffett reached out to their

friends, they reached out to George Kaiser and his family foundation. And they reached out to the president of the Harris foundation...Harris was funding in the space well before Buffett had because they're older...Gates came later...But the idea was, it was very intentional, who could we get to come together to join us, so that there's maximum impact. But the core, I think the core is really important because had they not formed together and decided to fund in early childhood, and to do it in this amazingly coordinated way, we wouldn't be where we are today, I think.

H. Horwitz: A lot of stuff started to happen at the same time, and we were in the field, sewing it all together, so I think there was just a lot of movement nationally. There weren't that many of us, so we all knew each other, and we all got together, and we all plotted and planned and worked...George Kaiser gets it. Susie [*Susie Buffett*] really gets it. Bill Sr. [*Bill Gates, Sr.*] got it. Then Bill Jr. [*Bill Gates, Jr.*] got it.

Although I have discovered through this study that these foundations have many similarities, I will discuss three topics in depth that the foundation executives individually discussed voluntarily during the interviews we had together. Those three similarities are: trust in pre-school leadership at the foundations, use of research and data, and importance of networks and pooled funds.

Trust in Pre-School Leadership at the Foundations

Executives at each of the three foundations discussed how their chairs, co-chairs, and governing board members trust them to invest in the programs, policies, and research

studies that will have the greatest positive influence in the field of pre-school or early childhood education and care. They also discussed how, because of that trust, they are each given autonomy and decision making power with very little oversight. Jessie Rasmussen, the current President of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund (BECF), and Susan Mullin, the current Director of Operations at BECF and a staff member of the BECF from the beginning, discussed during their interview the importance of their roles and the sense of responsibility they feel. They stated,

J. Rasmussen: There is very high trust and confidence in us, in our team to make good decisions. We collectively examine issues together on most things. Ultimately, I'm the one that decides whether or not this is what we're going to support and invest in. We certainly, in our board meetings, report what's going on and we seek their good guidance. It's a luxury to function this way. It's also a very big responsibility when you are given that kind of trust...that level of confidence that you know what you're doing...We're very cognizant of honoring what our benefactor is all about and think about that as part of our framework for making decisions.

S. Mullin: A big piece of it, is just knowing that she [*Susie Buffett*] has the confidence in us, and we've proven that we can manage our jobs, and get the work done. I think that she and the board have been quite pleased with the path we've taken and how the dollars have been spent (J. Rasmussen and S. Mullin, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

Marquita Davis, the current Deputy Director for Early Learning at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Gates Foundation), also discussed the trust the foundation's co-chairs have in the investment decisions she makes. In our interview, she discussed how flexible she can be through her role at the foundation, something that Reich refers to as the discovery argument (2018). She said,

The great thing is that at the foundation, one of the most freeing aspects of working here and also scary aspects is that you have the ability to course correct. You have the ability to fail or course correct, or just continue to learn, without judgment, because even if we fail, we feel like we've learned a great deal that we could still contribute to the field (M. Davis, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

Foundations, such as Gates, are able to be nimble in determining which programs or research studies they will invest. They are also able to choose when they will walk away from those investments or course correct, as Marquita Davis describes. Although she does not ultimately determine how the Gates Foundation will make investments in pre-school, unlike Jessie Rasmussen's role at the BECF, she is able to bring recommendations to the co-chairs and they trust her experience, knowledge, and judgment (M. Davis, personal communication, March 14, 2018). Annie Koppel Van Hanken also described her role at the George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF) as one that is very similar to Marquita Davis's role (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018).

Use of Research and Data

Executives from the three foundations each described how their foundations engage with research and data to make investment decisions. Using Weiss's typology of research utilization, I have identified five ways in which the BECF, GKFF, and Gates Foundation

claim that they are using research and data within their investments. Those research use models are: knowledge-driven, problem-solving, interactive, political, and tactical (Weiss, 1979).

Knowledge-driven. In this type of research utilization, individuals or groups of people conduct new research to test the findings of previous studies (Weiss, 1979). Policies may also be developed by policymakers in response to the findings from research studies (Weiss, 1979). During their interviews, executives at the three foundations expressed how they are acknowledging research that has already been conducted and are working with researchers to apply those tools and extend these findings through new investments. For example, the BECF has financially invested in researchers at the Frank Porter Graham Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to conduct a randomized control trial of Educare programs. Through this research, executives at the BECF are attempting to evaluate the long-term influence of Educare on children who have attended the programs and their families (Educare, 2017; Yazejian et al., 2017).

Problem-solving. In problem-solving research utilization, research is used to solve a social problem (Weiss, 1979). In her interview, Jessie Rasmussen discussed how the BECF uses data and research to inform its practice and investment strategy. She said,

We do look to the data to inform what we're going to invest in as part of our strategy too. What's the need? Not something that just feels good...We're thinking about, how do we do an even broader reach in the Omaha community around early childhood? We have four [*Educare or Educare-inspired*] schools. We're going to have five here in Omaha. Is there more that we can do? The first step is one our team has been researching: community-based strategies or place-based strategies...We continue

to evolve, as one of our fundamental principles is continuous improvement, quality improvement. We use data. Practically, every grant we do, we require an evaluation. We use that to inform not only our practice, but how we function as a network (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

Rasmussen is identifying the important role data has within the work of the BECF. In Chapter 4 I discussed how the BECF has funded Acceleration Grants amongst their Educare grantees. The recipients of the Acceleration Grants identify problems that are occurring within their Educare programs, propose ideas for solving the problems, and then through funding from the BECF, attempt to solve the problems. Through their funding of these programs, executives at the BECF are indirectly involved in problem-solving.

Interactive. In interactive research utilization, individuals collaborate and pool their knowledge and resources to solve a problem (Weiss, 1979). The Alliance for Early Success (Alliance) and the First Five Years Fund (FFYF) are examples of this type of research utilization. In Chapter 4 I discussed how the BECF was influential in the creation of the Alliance and the FFYF, and identified the GKFF and Gates Foundation as funding partners of these pooled funds. Through their roles as funding partners, these three foundations are using their resources to mobilize research and support advocacy actions of pre-school stakeholders at the state and federal levels.

Political. Research findings are used as political ammunition in political research utilization (Weiss, 1979). While politicians use research to justify their preferred policy positions, in this context, foundation executives use the findings that they agree with to justify their investments or conduct additional research (Weiss, 1979). Executives at the BECF, GKFF, and Gates Foundation are funding research and actively sharing knowledge

with elected officials in a way that could be characterized as indirectly political, because they must appear non-political due to IRS regulations and their 501(c)(3) statuses. For example, during their interviews executives quoted the return on investment rates to preschool that have been estimated and publicized by prominent researchers Heckman, Shonkoff, and others (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018; E. Roberts, personal communication, January 16, 2018; J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018; M. Davis, personal communication, March 14, 2018). By funding this research and sharing this knowledge with elected officials, they are attempting to mobilize political support for and encourage the creation of state- and federal-level policies in support of high-quality preschool.

Tactical. In tactical research utilization, individuals use their support of research to demonstrate their responsiveness to the needs of society (Weiss, 1979). At the GKFF, executives claim that research is infused in everything they have done throughout the lifetime of the foundation. In Chapter 5 I discussed how George Kaiser was initially inspired by “brain science” research, which then prompted him to begin funding pre-school education in Tulsa, Oklahoma. During our interview, Annie Koppel Van Hanken also discussed how they continuously engage with research at the GKFF (A.K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018). When pressed further though, Van Hanken did not discuss exactly how they fund research or use research in their decision-making processes.

Executives at the BECF, GKFF, and Gates Foundation claim to fund the work of prominent researchers such as Heckman and Shonkoff to illustrate their support of preschool research. Through their investments, they may also be attempting to enhance their

public images. By investing in the work of a Nobel Prize winning researcher (i.e. James Heckman), these foundations may receive positive public attention and accolades.

Importance of Networks and Pooled Funds

Executives from each foundation discussed the importance of partnering with other foundations to pool or leverage their investments. These executives realized that by combining their relatively small amounts of money with another foundation's comparatively small amount of money, they were able to have a larger overall impact than they could have had independently, either in the state in which they are located or nationally. Jessie Rasmussen identified how executives at the BECF are pooling their funds with other foundations to focus on the pre-school teacher workforce. She stated,

When it comes to national work, our primary investment in practice is the Educare Learning Network. We're also working with other funders on issues that are common across our field. For example, there are several national funders that are working together to address the critical need for competent, qualified, and well-compensated early childhood teachers. We know the most important element of highly effective programs is the adults who are interacting with the children. But as the growth in early childhood programs continues in our country, we are struggling to recruit and retain highly effective teachers. This coalition of funders has committed more than \$10M over the next few years to transform and professionalize the early childhood field (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

The BECF is working with the Foundation for Child Development (FCD) for this workforce development coalition. Through the leadership of Dr. Jacqueline Jones, the current FCD President and CEO, the FCD has made the pre-school workforce

development issue their primary strategy and investment focus (Foundation for Child Development, 2019). During her interview, Marquita Davis also discussed how the Gates Foundation is involved with this same pre-school workforce development coalition (M. Davis, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

Annie Koppel Van Hanken discussed the national pooled investment work of their foundation through Educare. In Chapters 3 and 4, I described how the BECF and the GKFF have been instrumental in the creation of the Educare Learning Network, and the pooled funds of the Alliance for Early Success and the First Five Years Fund. Ken Levit, the Executive Director of the GKFF, also discussed during his interview how the GKFF is a General Partner with Blue Meridian Partners, a philanthropic investment group that “makes large, performance-based investments to scale up the most promising strategies poised to make a national impact on social problems confronting young people and families in poverty” (Blue Meridian Partners, 2019; K. Levit, personal communication, January 4, 2018). Through Blue Meridian Partners, the GKFF is pooling its funds with foundations nationwide with the intention of supporting young people and their families that are of low socioeconomic status. These foundations are also attempting to reverse the generational cycle of poverty, a driving interest of George Kaiser.

Differences Between the Foundations

Despite their similarities, the BECF, GKFF, and Gates Foundations also have quite a few differences. As one of my interviewees stated, “Once you know one foundation, you know one foundation” (Employee of the Foundation for Child Development, personal communication, February 20, 2018). In this section, I will provide an overview of three of

those differences: board structures and decision-making processes, lengths and types of philanthropic investments, and monetary investments in pre-schoolers.

Board Structures and Decision-Making Processes

Each foundation has a different board structure and decision-making process. In the BECF, the board is comprised of Susie Buffett and three other people, who meet once per year (E. Roberts, personal communication, January 16, 2018). For the GKFF, the board is comprised of seven voting members (U.S. Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, 2015b; George Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019d). The executives did not share with me how frequently the board meets or who actually votes regarding their investments in pre-school. They did, however, emphasize that George Kaiser was the primary decision maker regarding their investments in pre-school (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018). In the Gates Foundation, the board is comprised of the co-chairs (i.e. Bill & Melinda Gates and Bill Gates, Sr.) and they meet frequently throughout the fiscal year (M. Davis, personal communication, March 14, 2018; S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

Executives at each foundation have different processes for determining which pre-school programs, research studies, and policies they will support either directly, or indirectly through a pooled fund. In Chapter 4, I discussed how executives at the BECF described their foundation and decision-making process as flat (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018; E. Roberts, personal communication, January 16, 2018). They do not separate their work into portfolios, and they collaborate with each other to make investment decisions (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, January 16, 2018; E. Roberts, personal communication, January 16, 2018).

This process is very different for the GKFF and Gates Foundations. Each of these foundations separates its work into portfolios that are assigned to members of their pre-school or early learning teams. They both characterize themselves as hierarchical, with Senior Program Officers, Executive Directors, or Deputy Directors leading their decision-making processes. Ultimately, the co-chairs or governing board members determine the investment decisions for their foundations, with support or information provided by the staff members of the foundations (A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018; S. Weber, personal communication, March 14, 2018).

Lengths and Types of Philanthropic Investments

Through Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I discussed the different approaches these three foundations take when investing in pre-school. It is important to recognize that each foundation uses different types of philanthropic investments and should not be identified as a singular type of investor. For example, the BECF and the GKFF prefer to “stay long” for many of their investments and invest in direct service programs for young children. Executives at both foundations explained that they believe in investing in organizations or people, through partnership philanthropy (i.e. through their partnerships within the Educare Learning Network and with researchers at the University of Nebraska Omaha and the University of Oklahoma—Tulsa), and not necessarily in individual programs or projects (E. Roberts, personal communication, January 16, 2018; A. K. Van Hanken, personal communication, January 4, 2018). Although they share this commonality, the BECF also tends to make more exertive philanthropic investments as with their creation of the Birth to Five Policy Alliance, while the GKFF makes more charitable or strategic investments directly to the Tulsa, Oklahoma community.

The Gates Foundation does not prefer to “stay long” in their pre-school investments. In Chapter 6 I described the three separate early learning investment strategies that the Gates Foundation has implemented. They move relatively quickly between investments, depending on their assessments of initial successes or failures, and do not typically financially support the same organizations over long periods of time. They also participate in strategic philanthropy as it aligns with their strategies, or exertive philanthropy when they have taken a leadership role in initiating programs, pushed forward ideas or knowledge in support of policy initiatives, and obtained direct results for their investments, like they are currently attempting to do with their third investment strategy. They also prefer to invest in state-level systems for early learning, and not in support of direct service programs for young children.

Monetary Investments in Pre-Schoolers

One of the broader differences I found between the foundations is the amount of money that they each chose to invest in pre-schoolers, or children aged birth through four. When comparing the BECF, GKFF, and the Gates Foundation, each foundation invests quite differently, depending on their overall assets and amount of money they give directly to their grantees. The investment priorities of these foundations also differ, which may provide grounds for them to invest less or more in pre-school.

For the BECF, their total yearly revenue is \$32M and they spend \$30M or 93.75% on pre-school (U.S. Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, 2015a). In comparison, the total assets for the GKFF are \$3B, but they invest \$61M annually in Direct Grantee Support (U.S. Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, 2015b). Of that \$61M, they invest \$24M or 39.34% on pre-school (A. K. Van Hanken, personal

communication, September 4, 2018). The Gates Foundation invests the least in pre-school. They have a total of \$50B in assets, and they invest \$4.6B annually in Direct Grantee Support (U.S. Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, 2015c). Of that \$4.6B, they invest \$16M, or 0.35%, on pre-school (S. Weber, personal communication, September 5, 2018).

In Chapter 1 I described the complex pre-school funding “systems” in the United States and how a nationwide federal public funding stream does not exist for pre-school. To put these figures in the context of federal and state spending for pre-school and K-12, the United States government currently spends a total of approximately \$29B from federal and state sources annually on early childhood education and care (Chaudry, Morrissey, Weiland, & Yoshikawa, 2017; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018). In comparison, \$668B is spent from federal and state sources annually on K-12 education (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

Foundations could substantially influence how state- and federal-level dollars are spent, and executives at the BECF, GKFF, and Gates foundations discussed in our interviews the work they are doing to foster shifts in government spending. For example, Dan Pedersen, the original President of the Susan A. Buffett Foundation and the BECF, discussed how the BECF is leveraging private funds through Educare to entice public spending:

We’re back in a period now just like we were in when we created the Birth to Five Policy Alliance. If there is an opportunity in the public sphere to make smarter, deeper investments in early learning, it’s at the state level again. *You can’t just invest in practice because there isn’t enough private money in the country to deliver the quality that we need.*

So, private money has to be used as a lever to entice public money [emphasis added]. If you stop to think about it, that's what every Educare is. *Every Educare is private money, enticing public money to spend itself more wisely* [emphasis added] (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018).

Pedersen explained that through their investments foundations could persuade policymakers to invest more money for pre-school programs. This change in program support could also eventually cause an increase in pre-school related policies at the state and federal levels. The grand intention of the BECF and Gates Foundation, as well as other foundations, is to have states add pre-school into their K-12 public funding streams.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed and analyzed several similarities and differences of the BECF, GKFF, and Gates Foundation. Even though these three foundations each financially support pre-school, they do so in distinct ways. For example, the BECF makes exertive philanthropic investments through Educare and their creation of the Birth to Five Policy Alliance. While the GKFF makes partnership investments through Educare and the Educare Learning Network, they prefer to make charitable or strategic investments locally to their community of Tulsa, Oklahoma. The Gates Foundation provides a strategic philanthropic investment to their Educare, and instead, provides exertive investments based on their current strategy in Oregon, Tennessee, and Washington.

By highlighting the similarities and differences of the foundations, I am also providing important information about foundations that are investing in pre-school education and assisting in closing the general knowledge gap regarding foundations that financially support pre-school programs and research studies, and advocate for pre-school

policies. Although they have these and other differences, executives at each foundation value the investment processes they have chosen to take, and believe that they each have the best intentions for their work. They all expressed that through their philanthropic work, they wish to give back to their communities and provide successful futures for young children, especially those that are in poverty.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the investment practices of foundations in pre-school programs, research studies, and advocacy for policies, and to develop an understanding of how and why three specific foundations chose to invest in pre-school. I introduced a conceptual framework, which combined five general types of philanthropic investment and Reich's (2018) concepts of accountability and transparency. I then used this conceptual framework to better understand the investment motivations and the intentions of the foundations.

My research questions were:

1. How have foundations supported pre-school programs, policies, and research in the United States since the late 1990s?
2. What factors have influenced foundations' investment decisions?

To answer these questions, I employed a qualitative comparative case study approach (Stake, 2006) focusing on the Buffett Early Childhood Fund (BECF), the George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF), and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Gates Foundation), three philanthropic foundations which each independently began investing in pre-school by hiring staff, determining their funding strategies, and initially supporting programs for children ages birth through four-years-old between 2000 and 2005.

In this chapter, I discuss the overall implications of the findings from this dissertation study for philanthropists, policymakers, and pre-school practitioners. Then, I identify how this study contributes to the literature specifically for philanthropic foundation

investments made in pre-school and throughout early childhood education, and generally for understanding the different forms and goals philanthropy can take. Finally, I provide recommendations for future research directions and end with closing thoughts.

Implications of the Study Findings

The findings of this dissertation study introduce several issues and implications for philanthropists, policymakers, and pre-school practitioners. First, pre-school funding is complicated, and may be even more so than general K-12 and higher education funding in the United States. In Chapter 1 I identified how pre-school funding has many players or streams and can be difficult to coordinate, because there is no national public funding stream for pre-school. In ten states and the District of Columbia, pre-kindergarten (pre-K) programs are currently funded through the state's public funding formula (Barnett & Kasmin, 2018). The involvement of foundations within these complex state- and federal-level based "systems" of funding makes them even more complicated and difficult for researchers, policymakers, and educational leaders to navigate.

In an attempt to simplify these "systems", executives at the BECF, GKFF, and the Gates Foundation aim to be influential in the creation of new state- and federal-level pre-school funding policies. To provide high-quality pre-school for their communities, and to influence the funding decisions of policymakers, executives at these foundations are financially supporting Educare centers and the Educare Learning Network, although the Gates Foundation is a less central player than the BECF and GKFF. Foundation executives believe that if policymakers are able to experience high-quality pre-school first-hand through an Educare center, and understand the positive effects the programs are having on their

communities, then those same policymakers may choose to invest more state-level money in pre-school.

If the creation of new state- or federal-level pre-school funding policies is not feasible for states, the GKFF recommends that state-level agencies work with foundations to work together in support of high-quality pre-school. In Chapter 5, I discussed how the GKFF is working closely with the Oklahoma State Department of Education to combine their private sector dollars with the state's public sector dollars in support of the Community Action Project of Tulsa. This combination of funding has also been encouraged by the U.S. Department of Education through the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant program and the Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund grant competition, which I discussed in Chapter 2. This public-private financial partnership could be arranged between any foundation and their state's department of education or health and human services, in support of pre-school.

Executives at these three foundations presently believe that they will have a larger impact at the state level for pre-school than at the federal level, perhaps because of the views of the current U.S. presidential administration. Dan Pedersen, the original President of the Susan A. Buffett Foundation and the BECF, discussed the present political situation in terms of the seasons. He said, "It's like, "Is it winter or is it spring?" Well, when it's winter in Washington, sometimes it's summer in the states" (D. Pedersen, personal communication, May 29, 2018). Because these and other foundation executives beyond the three foundations that I have profiled in this study believe that it is currently "winter" in Washington, D.C., meaning that the government is frozen and no new spending or growth will occur in support

of early childhood, they are resolved to support and have a larger influence on pre-school at the state level for the foreseeable future.

Finally, in Chapters 4 and 7, I described how foundations are partnering and pooling their funds in support of high-quality pre-school. They are avoiding competition with one another and observing that they can have a greater financial impact if they share their wealth and knowledge with each other. This is an under-researched practice of foundations, and executives at pooled funds (i.e. the Alliance for Early Success and the First Five Years Fund) stressed this seemingly organic change in funding practice for pre-school during our interviews (L. Klein, personal communication, April 17, 2018; K. Perry, personal communication, February 22, 2018).

These collaborations may also be beneficial for pre-school practitioners, as they apply for funding from foundations. Instead of requesting funding from multiple foundations to receive the total amount in which they are in need, pre-school practitioners may instead be given the opportunity to apply for funding from one pooled fund. This one application process will save them time and, if they receive the funding, they will also be given support in the future from multiple foundations.

Contributions to the Literature

Foundation Investments in Pre-School

Current investments of foundations. This study is one of the first attempts to understand how philanthropists, foundations, and pooled funds have supported pre-school programs, research studies, and advocacy for policies in the United States since the late 1990s. Although there are many seminal research pieces that focus on foundation

investment in K-12 and higher education, which I discussed in Chapter 1, there is currently a lack of research on foundation investment in pre-school education.

While philanthropic foundation investment in pre-school is quite similar to philanthropic foundation investment in K-12 with foundations supporting educational activities outside of the national public funding stream, which I briefly discussed in Chapter 1 (Inside Philanthropy, n.d.b; Tompkins-Stange, 2016), the research that is available regarding philanthropic foundation investment in pre-school instead discusses the potential positive influence that individual philanthropists and foundations could make on a future expansion of high-quality pre-school (e.g. Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000) or the role philanthropy has historically played in support of pre-school programs (e.g. Morgan, 1999; Schlossman 1981). This study, and future subsequent publications, will expand the literature of foundation investment and philanthropy by highlighting the practices of three foundations that invest in pre-school education, and the individual investments and investment types in which they are currently involved. By bringing these investments and funding processes of the foundations to the public's attention, this study will also assist philanthropists, policymakers, pre-school practitioners, and researchers in further understanding philanthropic foundation investment in pre-school education.

Power of name recognition. In Chapter 7 I observed that foundations do not invest large sums of money in pre-school programs and policies compared to what is invested by state- and federal-level U.S. governments, and yet, members of the public and research community view their investments as significant perhaps because of their recognizable names (Callahan, 2017b; Russakoff, 2015). This powerful name recognition also gives the BECF, GKFF, and Gates Foundation legitimacy (Ravitch, 2016; Reckhow, 2013).

Although their current investments may seem like pennies in comparison to federal and state funding, they may have a broader impact on political ideas and policy debates because of their name recognition and the support they may receive from political actors, such as governors or senators (Bernholz, Cordelli, & Reich, 2016; Lubienski, Brewer, & La Londe, 2016; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014). This support from political actors and policymakers could lead to significant changes in state- or federal-level policies that are in support of pre-school, which is a long-term goal of the BECF and Gates Foundation, along with the Alliance for Early Success (Alliance) and the First Five Years Fund (FFYF). I discussed in Chapter 4 how executives at the Alliance are currently observing small successes with this goal in multiple states.

Philanthropic Investment Types, Accountability, and Transparency

The conceptual framework for this study combines five general types of philanthropic investment (i.e. charitable, strategic, partnership, exertive, and catalytic) with the concepts of accountability and transparency (Reich, 2018). It will assist philanthropists, policymakers, educational practitioners, and researchers in viewing and identifying the investments of philanthropic foundations holistically, from both a benevolent viewpoint, such as through the philanthropic investment types of charitable and strategic giving, and a somewhat more critical viewpoint, such as through transparency and accountability. By knowing the types of philanthropic investments in which a foundation is engaging, researchers, policymakers, and educational leaders can begin to understand the underlying intentions of the foundations and what those foundations expect to happen through their granting processes.

Although this conceptual framework was especially useful for analyzing the pre-school philanthropic giving of foundations, it could also be beneficial when researchers, policymakers, or educational leaders are analyzing foundation investment in K-12 and higher education. This conceptual framework could also be efficacious if an individual is interested in determining the intensity and influence of a foundation on pre-school policies and practices in a given setting.

However, this framework could be expanded to include collaborative giving when evaluating the philanthropic investment types of foundations, especially when those investments are being made in pre-school education. In Chapter 7 I discussed the importance of networks and pooled funds for foundations that are investing in pre-school education. This current conceptual framework does not account for this unique phenomenon in philanthropic investment. In future studies, I recommend that scholars of philanthropy consider this phenomenon when they are conducting research, as many foundations are currently contributing to pooled funds. They may find that foundations are leveraging their funds and having a slightly larger collective influence on education and other funding priorities through those networks.

Future Research Directions

The History of Educare

During a discussion with Eva Roberts, the current Director of Strategic Initiatives at the BECF, she confirmed that the full history of Educare has never been written (E. Roberts, personal communication, January 17, 2018). Although the Educare website is maintained, and the History page includes a timeline of when each center opened, it does not include information about the individuals, foundations, or operating organizations that were

involved in this history. Additional Educare centers will open in the future, and potential investors may be interested in knowing how Educare center directors, elementary school principals, school district leadership, state-level policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders were involved in the history of Educare and the opening of Educare centers in various communities. By knowing this history, these investors may identify key stakeholders that have potentially been overlooked in the past and encourage additional investors to partner or pool their funds with them and grow the Educare Learning Network, which will bring high-quality pre-school opportunities to more young children.

Pre-school Philanthropic Investment as “Light Money”

Pre-school foundation investments made by the BECF, GKFF, and Gates Foundation, for example, could be considered “light money” as we, as a general society, know from where the money came (Mayer, 2017) and understand that it is being used to support a cause with which very few people would likely disagree²⁶. This is in opposition with “dark money”, which has an unknown origin (Mayer, 2017). Would we, as a society, be comfortable with “dark money” being used to support pre-school? Does giving money provide an aura of respectability for foundations and sanitize funds that were made in a way that could potentially cause immense social harm? If the money is being provided by a foundation that we respect, to support a cause with which we agree, would we be more lenient?

²⁶ The individuals that would most likely disagree with the government’s financial support of pre-school education are those that would not be in support of a nanny state, or of a government that has become overprotective and interferes too much with the personal choices of its citizens.

Recently, the Sackler family and their philanthropic endeavors have been receiving negative media attention, partly due to the release and rising popularity of *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World* (Giridharadas, 2018). Before their influential involvement in the U.S. opioid crisis became public knowledge, the Sackler family was respected and their name could be found, for example, on a wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and buildings at Harvard University. Now that their “dark money” is no longer dark and their involvement has become public knowledge, public institutions have chosen to distance themselves from the Sackler family’s philanthropic generosity and have stated that they will be declining all future donations. Some individuals feel that those institutions are not going far enough, and have asked them to return the philanthropic donations and have the Sackler family name removed from the buildings (e.g. Chaidez & Ryan, 2019; Harris, 2019). What if researchers or journalists determined that the Buffett, Kaiser, or Gates families had earned their initial wealth in ways that could be viewed as unsavory as those of the Sackler family? Should pre-school programs, Educare centers, or community organizations be forced to return those philanthropic gifts?

Instead, is there a way for the wealth of philanthropic foundations to be evaluated before they begin making investments? I agree with a recent recommendation that Giridharadas gave in a *New York Times* article (2019). He suggests that:

Past and future donations could be judged on various criteria: Was the money legally and fairly made? Is the money owed to tax evasion or extreme legal tax avoidance? Is the museum [or organization, child care center, etc.] effectively selling a modern papal indulgence for a sin that shouldn’t be so easily pardoned? Does the donor have a

duty of reparation to people they have exploited or harmed that gives those parties more of a right to the money?

Through this evaluation process, “dark money” becomes “light money” and pre-school programs and community organizations, for example, would be informed of the sources of their grants. I am just beginning to learn about this side of philanthropy, and plan to address these concerns in future studies. I also recommend that other researchers address these concerns in their future work.

Importance of Partnerships with Businesses

During my interviews, current and former executives of foundations volunteered information regarding the partnership work they conduct with businesses to leverage connections and influence the financial and policy decisions of elected officials. Although foundations cannot lobby elected officials to have a larger legislative impact because of U.S. IRS regulations, they can provide knowledge and information to the elected officials. Alternatively, businesses can directly lobby elected officials to support and influence legislative decisions. By partnering with businesses, foundations and pooled funds or operating organizations can indirectly shape early childhood focused legislation at the state and national level.

Sara Watson is the former Senior Officer at The Pew Charitable Trusts, where she directed The Trusts’ 10-year national campaign to advance quality preschool for all children, and co-founder and former Global Director of ReadyNation, an organization that “leverages the experience, influence, and expertise of over 2,000 business executives to promote public policies and programs that build a stronger workforce and economy” (Council for a Strong America, 2019). She described her work at ReadyNation with businesses and how they

partnered with foundations and pooled funds, and educated decision makers on the benefits of early childhood initiatives:

Our focus with our business leaders was less about their private funding and more about using their access to encourage policymakers to invest public dollars [emphasis added]. What any private philanthropy or private investor or donor can do is tiny compared to the public dollars that we spend. And so many of our members do pursue very generous and helpful projects at the community level through their foundations or through their corporate social responsibility initiatives. Our primary role is to support them to say to policymakers, “This is an important public investment. We should invest public dollars because the benefit to the society is so widespread” (S. Watson, personal communication, June 25, 2018).

To entice business leaders to invest in early childhood, and to persuade them to speak with elected officials, Sara and her colleagues at ReadyNation talked with business leaders about the importance of connecting early childhood education to the workforce. She also told me that it was important for business leaders to understand and care about early childhood investments, so they tied them to graduation rates from high school, placement rates into special education, rates of students being held back a grade in school, or employment rates (e.g. García, Heckman, Leaf, & Prados, 2017; Heckman, Grunewald, & Reynolds, 2006).

This is an area that warrants further study, as foundations, pooled funds, or operating organizations do not have a legal obligation to be transparent about their partnerships with businesses, and business leaders may have an influential role in the creation of new state- or federal-level policies for pre-school education. I plan to conduct additional research on this topic in the future.

Closing Thoughts

I am a researcher and scholar who is now dedicated to studying philanthropic foundation investment in pre-school programs and research studies, and advocacy for pre-school policies, and I am left at the end of this study with more questions than I began. I believe that this is a good problem to have as a researcher. Now that I have learned how foundations began investing in pre-school and their motivations for investing, one of my most pressing questions brings me back to the story with which I began this study. In what ways are philanthropic foundations, pooled funds, operating organizations, corporations, or other private funders supporting pre-school? I am excited to pursue the answer to this question, as well as continue my investigation into foundation indirect involvement in state- and federal-level pre-school policy creation and the collaborations foundations are having with businesses and with each other, in the future.

Overall, this study highlights the amounts of money that the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, George Kaiser Family Foundation, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are investing and describes how that funding is being combined with additional foundations in pooled funds, as well as with state and federal investments, to have a broader influence. Executives at these three foundations have told their stories to me in their own words, I have triangulated those stories using documents, reports, and quotes from additional foundation executives, and I have provided narratives of those stories here. This dissertation is a starting point and more critical research needs to be conducted to truly know if the words and missions of foundations align with their investment actions. Instead of viewing foundations and their underlying investment intentions as positive and altruistic, I now believe that researchers should remain skeptical and view foundations with a more critical lens. I have

reached this conclusion because through my analysis process I noticed minor irregularities between the written mission statements of foundations and their verbal descriptions of their work, and the actual investments they were making in pre-school. This lens will help me and other researchers of philanthropy begin to understand why and how each foundation chooses to make their investments, their intentions for those investments, and with which foundations they have chosen to partner.

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL LETTER



EXEMPTION GRANTED

Jeanne Powers
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - Tempe
480/965-0841
jeanne.powers@asu.edu

Dear Jeanne Powers:

On 11/20/2017 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Pennies for Preschoolers: The Role of Foundations in Pre-School Programs, Policies, and Research
Investigator:	Jeanne Powers
IRB ID:	STUDY00007326
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interview Questions.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);• IRB Protocol.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;• Interview Consent Form.pdf, Category: Consent Form;• Interview Recruitment Scripts.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 11/20/2017.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Kathryn Chapman
Jeanne Powers

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Interview Consent Form

Research Project Title: Pennies for Pre-Schoolers: The Role of Foundations in Pre-School Programs, Policies, and Research

Research Investigators: Kathryn P. Chapman and Dr. Jeanne M. Powers

Contact Information: Kathryn P. Chapman: kchapma@asu.edu, 715-252-0441;

Dr. Jeanne M. Powers: jeanne.powers@asu.edu, 480-965-0841

The focus of this research study is to identify how and why philanthropic foundations invest in pre-school programs, policies, and research in the United States. We invite you to take part in this study as you currently or previously worked for a philanthropic foundation that supports pre-school programs, policies, and/or research. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. We do not anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from Arizona State University require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and are informed of how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Please read the accompanying information and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- The interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced.
- You will be sent the transcript and given the opportunity to correct any factual errors.
- The research investigators will analyze the transcript of the interview.
- Access to the interview transcript will be limited to the research investigators and academic colleagues and researchers with whom they might collaborate as part of the research process.
- Any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be made anonymous so that you cannot be identified, if that is preferred by you. Care will be

taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify you is not revealed, if that is also preferred by you.

- You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. This will be held over the telephone or through Skype. It should take no longer than 60 minutes.
- The actual recording will be saved in a password protected, cloud storage Dropbox folder.
- Any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval.

Your words may also be quoted directly. With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements in which you agree:

	I wish to review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation.
	I agree to be quoted directly.
	I agree to be quoted directly, <u>only if my name is not published and a pseudonym is used.</u>
	I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain quotes by me.

All or part of the content of your interview may be used:

- In academic papers, policy papers, news articles, or news interviews.
- In conference presentations.
- In an archive of the project as noted above.

By signing this form, I agree that:

- I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I do not have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time.
- The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above.
- I have read the information provided.
- I do not expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation.
- I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality.

- I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researchers with any questions I may have in the future.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Arizona State University Social Behavioral IRB as STUDY00007326. You may talk to them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- The research team is not answering your questions, concerns, or complaints.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Signature Form (Will be kept and securely stored by Research Investigators)

With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements in which you agree:

	I wish to review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation.
	I agree to be quoted directly.
	I agree to be quoted directly, <u>only if my name is not published and a pseudonym is used.</u>
	I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain quotes by me.

Participant's Printed Name

Participant's Signature

Date

Pseudonym Name (if preferred)

APPENDIX C
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Note: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted. The following questions will be utilized to begin and guide the conversations.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for taking the time for this interview. I am interested in your ideas, thoughts, and opinions, and I appreciate whatever you can and are willing to share about the topics. If you would like, your responses will be kept confidential at all times throughout my study, and you are, of course, free to decide that you do not want to participate at any point. I will be recording this interview and will be transcribing it at a later time. Is that okay with you? [Gain verbal consent] Would you like to remain confidential or may I address you by name? [Pause for response from interviewee]

Background Questions

- Please tell me a little bit about your role and the team that works with you.
 - How long have you been in your current position?
 - How long have you been working for this foundation?
 - Could you please tell me a bit about your work history?

Foundation Background Questions

- Could you please share a bit of history about the foundation?
- When the foundation was created, what were the priorities of the foundation?
- Could you please describe when and why the foundation began funding pre-school-related activities?

- Possible Probe: Did pre-school-related activities fit within the foci, at the beginning of the foundation, or when you began working for the foundation?
 - If so, how?
- When you began working for this foundation, what types of early childhood or pre-school activities did the foundation support?
 - Would you say that there has been a change in focus of activities since your start with the foundation? How so?
- How does your foundation decide which programs should be funded? Is the process the same for pre-school programs?
 - Possible Probe: Can you describe the review process?
 - Possible Probe: Are there other avenues for programs to receive funding through your foundation?
- Is the process the same for supporting state-level or national pre-school/early childhood policies?
 - I may need to give an example of a state-level policy or program: First Things First (in Arizona) or Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) (differs by state).
 - I may need to give an example of a national-level policy or program: Head Start.
- What is your role in the foundation's process of deciding what pre-school-related activities are funded?

- Ask for an example. Possible question idea: Could you please give an example of something you brought to the board of your foundation for support. Why did you bring that specific idea to the board for funding?
- How would you rank pre-school education programs amongst the overall priorities of the foundation?
 - Family-oriented programs?
 - Education research?
 - Could you please give examples of education research? Is the research pre-school-related?
- Do you use research to determine the funding priorities of the foundation? If yes, how?
 - Possible way to ask this: How do you use research to determine your funding priorities at the foundation? Could you give an example of research that was influential?
- What is your foundation's relationship with researchers?
- Have you worked directly with researchers for a funding priority of your foundation? If yes, could you please give an example of this?
- Does your team work with an internal research team at the foundation? What does that team look like?
- Does your team hire outside researchers to develop research studies? What is the process for hiring outside researchers?

- What is your foundation’s relationship with the state department of education, in the state in which the foundation is located?
 - Possible Probe: How has that relationship changed since you have worked for the foundation?
- How does your foundation engage with elected officials?
- Does your foundation work directly with specific elected officials?
 - Possible Probe: State-level?
 - Possible Probe: National?
- How does your foundation decide to work with elected officials?
- Has your foundation ever advocated for any education-related legislation? If yes, could you please give an example?
 - Possible Probe: Has your foundation financially supported any education-related legislation? If yes, could you please give an example?
- Do you know if your foundation has ever been influenced by popular media news stories or pieces related to pre-school education? If yes, can you please give an example?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your foundation or your role at the foundation?
- If I wanted to understand early childhood education policy in the United States, with whom do you think I should talk?
- Are there any other foundations or people that I should be including in this study?

- Possible way to ask this: I'm already talking with quite a few foundations, but could you please give me some suggestions of foundations or people that I should be including in this study, so that I may cross reference your recommendations against my current list of interviews?
- Do you have any questions for me?