The Promises And Challenges Of Community Philanthropy: Place Dilemma, Community Leadership, And Public Engagement On Social Media

Viviana Chiu Sik Wu

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Abstract
Community philanthropic organizations are increasingly looked to as community leaders that coalesce money, people, knowledge, and networks for addressing public problems. However, little is known about the challenges they face and promises they hold, which might bear important implications for both the philanthropic and nonprofit worlds. This dissertation contains three papers that investigate them from the lens of philanthropic capacity, community leadership, and public engagement. In Paper 1, I draw on Pierre Bourdieu's perspectives on social space and capital to examine the interaction effect between inequality across and within communities on philanthropic capacity. The key finding is that community foundations encounter a "place dilemma": The amount of local resources and local inequality are significantly related to their philanthropic capacity. Chapters 2 and 3 explore two strategic opportunities in response to this "place dilemma": Community leadership and public engagement. While the field popularly uses community leadership to describe their role in catalyzing policy change, the challenge remains in defining and operationalizing the concept. Paper 2 sets forth a conceptual framework for defining community leadership as a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses: Convening, Knowledge Sharing, Capacity Building, Policy Engagement, Partnering, and Strategizing. Based on literature synthesis corroborated by empirical evidence elicited from 555 annual reports, I find that they tend to specialize in one or a few leadership capacities, such as partnering, policy engagement, and capacity building, with fewer convening, knowledge sharing, and strategizing. Given the rising concerns about donor-advised funds, Paper 3 sheds light on the various ways community foundations engage with their public constituents, and how this engagement is shaped by donor influence. I combined content analysis and computational methods to identify, predict, and analyze 4,055 public engagement messages of community foundations on Twitter. The findings identified four mechanisms of public engagement, including (1) Mobilization, (2) Advocacy, (3) Conversation, and (4) Knowledge; they also suggest that strong donor influence significantly promotes their roles to advocate and educate but lessens their roles to mobilize and converse with the public. Collectively, this dissertation explicates both the challenges facing and the promises community philanthropy might offer to our communities, which are increasingly polarized and unequal, while also seamlessly connected.

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THE PROMISES AND CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY: PLACE DILEMMA, COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Viviana Chiu-Sik Wu

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“THE PROMISES AND CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY: PLACE DILEMMA, COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA”

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Viviana Chiu-Sik Wu
To my mother, Carla Wu, the strongest, the most audacious woman I have ever seen.

I am grateful to be your daughter, and you as my mother.

All these pieces.
Broken and scattered.
In mercy gathered.
Mended and whole.
Empty handed.
But not forsaken.
I've been set free. I've been set free.
—John 15:13, Romans 5:1-2

(Hillsong Worship, 2014, Broken Vessels / Amazing Grace)
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My thought process toward academics is winding. I am constantly pursuing a critical understanding of our society, to find out how, if possible, we can “fix” our institutions, be they business, public or nonprofit organizations. And most fundamentally, how we, the people, can come together to mend some of the systemic flaws and divides we are experiencing every day. These are no small questions. In charting through this muddy and messy mind of mine, my advisor, Dr. Chao Guo, has been a tremendous help and has given me not only the most useful and thoughtful advice but also genuine mentorship throughout my time in the NPL and doctoral programs at SP2. Chao, thank you for being the best advisor I could ever wish for! I am too fortunate to work with the role model I aspire to be—a scholar with the spirit. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to Chao and all the mentors through singing and playing guitar (Broken Pieces). I practiced it for two months along with dissertation writing, and each note represents a piece of my appreciation to you. #UARETHEBEST! I also receive loving support and companionship from my better half, Dr. Wayne Xu, who has been my research sounding board, debating partner, and my brother in this faith journey. Thank you for taking great care of me; your unreserved love, patience, and sacrifice sustain me through the hardship and the bleak wind of depression. Thank you for encouraging me when I feel frustrated and cheering for me when I reach milestones. You two have moved mountains for me!

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“And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”

– 1 Corinthians 13:2
ABSTRACT

THE PROMISES AND CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY: PLACE DILEMMA, COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Viviana Chiu-Sik Wu
Chao Guo, PhD

Community philanthropic organizations are increasingly looked to as community leaders that coalesce money, people, knowledge, and networks for addressing public problems. However, little is known about the challenges they face and promises they hold, which might bear important implications for both the philanthropic and nonprofit worlds. This dissertation contains three papers that investigate them from the lens of philanthropic capacity, community leadership, and public engagement. In Paper 1, I draw on Pierre Bourdieu’s perspectives on social space and capital to examine the interaction effect between inequality across and within communities on philanthropic capacity. The key finding is that community foundations encounter a “place dilemma”: The amount of local resources and local inequality are significantly related to their philanthropic capacity. Chapters 2 and 3 explore two strategic opportunities in response to this “place dilemma”: Community leadership and public engagement. While the field popularly uses community leadership to describe their role in catalyzing policy change, the challenge remains in defining and operationalizing the concept. Paper 2 sets forth a conceptual framework for defining community leadership as a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses: Convening, Knowledge Sharing, Capacity Building, Policy Engagement,
Partnering, and Strategizing. Based on literature synthesis corroborated by empirical evidence elicited from 555 annual reports, I find that they tend to specialize in one or a few leadership capacities, such as partnering, policy engagement, and capacity building, with fewer convening, knowledge sharing, and strategizing. Given the rising concerns about donor-advised funds, Paper 3 sheds light on the various ways community foundations engage with their public constituents, and how this engagement is shaped by donor influence. I combined content analysis and computational methods to identify, predict, and analyze 4,055 public engagement messages of community foundations on Twitter. The findings identified four mechanisms of public engagement, including (1) Mobilization, (2) Advocacy, (3) Conversation, and (4) Knowledge; they also suggest that strong donor influence significantly promotes their roles to advocate and educate but lessens their roles to mobilize and converse with the public. Collectively, this dissertation explicates both the challenges facing and the promises community philanthropy might offer to our communities, which are increasingly polarized and unequal, while also seamlessly connected.
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PREFACE

In times of escalating income disparity and increasing social polarization and division, this dissertation aims at examining the ways in which people and local communities organize toward addressing social problems and achieving common goals despite differences. Looking back at my research trajectory, my scholarly direction on citizen’s collective action and public engagement remains mostly unchanged from my doctoral application to this dissertation. The research idea for the first paper took shape from a biweekly research meeting with my advisor, Dr. Chao Guo, and other colleagues, Dr. Weiai Xu, Dr. Seongho An, and Dr. Chao Zhang, who helped shepherd the idea back in 2017. I also want to acknowledge the intellectual support of Dr. Weiai Xu, who helped with collecting social media data.

Under the forces of devolution and the increasing social inequality across the nation, place-based philanthropic efforts are increasingly looked to for responding to local needs and policy problems (Bushouse, 2017; Cheng, 2018; Cooper, Bryer & Meek, 2006; Putnam, 2006). Recognizing the evolving scope and various forms of philanthropic actions that intend to contribute to the public good, one unique form of local philanthropic efforts is community foundations. Community foundations are place-based charitable nonprofit organizations that make philanthropy accessible to all citizens, whether wealthy or of modest means, for creating funds that help build their communities (Carman, 2001; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Grønbjerg, 2006; Guo & Brown, 2006). They embody citizens’ collective vision to improve their communities and meet the needs of their fellow citizens at the local level.
While research might not result in a silver bullet, if there is one at all, the three papers shed light on strategic management lessons and the wider policy implications through the lenses of place-based philanthropy, community leadership, and public engagement. In attempting to answer some of the broader existential questions, this dissertation delves into what is possible and what is happening. In the spirit of this continuing research endeavor, this dissertation seeks to spark a greater momentum toward citizen-centered governance, self-governance, collective action, and connective action online that do good for the communities and the world that we share.
Abstract

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of social space, capital, and giving, this study offers a critical perspective on the roles of place—from the lens of community capital and local inequality—in explaining the differing philanthropic capacity of community foundations in terms of their fundraising and grantmaking activities. Based on data from 2,177 serving counties of 943 community foundations across the U.S., we found that community foundations experience a place dilemma: How much they can fundraise and distribute are bounded by the amount of local resources, and concurrently, by the degree of local inequality within the communities. Community foundations serving capital-rich and unequal communities beget the greatest philanthropic capacity, while those serving equally deprived communities are at a considerable disadvantage. Our findings suggest that place-based philanthropy might serve to perpetuate inequality rather than to end it, thus raising serious concerns about the roles of philanthropic and nonprofit organizations in society.

Keywords: place effect, Bourdieu, inequality, community foundations, donor-advised funds
1.1 Introduction

Community foundations are place-based charitable organizations that serve a designated geographical area. They are tasked with raising, holding, investing to sustain long-term endowments and support nonprofit entities (Diaz & Shaw, 2002; Hammack, 1989) and are increasingly recognized for their leadership role in identifying and coordinating community resources to create public value and drive local change (Carman, 2001; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Grønbjerg, 2006; Guo & Brown, 2006; Jung, Harrow, & Phillips, 2013; Mendel & Brudney, 2014; Phillips, Bird, Carlton, & Rose, 2016).

However, are some community foundations innately more generously funded than others?

Unlike other public charities that raise undifferentiated public support, community foundations primarily gather their funds and support from local members of the communities in which they locate or serve. Thus, their support networks tend to be demarcated by geographical boundaries. Given that community resources are not ubiquitously distributed—instead, they are heterogeneously clustered across and within communities (Bourdieu, 1990; Wolpert, 1988), the local resource environment is critical to and to some extent predetermines the amount of philanthropic resources available to community foundations.

While they do not have sufficient resources to substitute for government in the provision of services and welfare (Anheier & Hammack, 2010; Hammack & Smith, 2018b), the number of community foundations has been growing since the first community foundation, Cleveland Foundation, was established in 1914 (Carman, 2001; Hammack, 2018). They held about 10 percent of all foundation giving and 9 percent of
foundation assets (Foundation Center, 2014). A recent study identified 956 community foundations in the U.S., receiving 38.5 billion dollars of donations, making 7.3 billion dollars of grants, and withholding 74 billion dollars of total assets (Wu, 2019).

To address this research question, we draw on Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of social space, capital, and giving to argue that place-based nonprofits such as community foundations experience a place dilemma: They are not only place-based but also potentially place-bound by local resources and predicted by local inequality. In other words, how much they can fundraise and distribute might depend on the locational resources that communities have in the first place and the degree of inequality within the communities. Essentially, the heterogeneous philanthropic capacity might be the resulting phenomenon of a “field of struggle” among people residing across communities and within communities in the community philanthropy field.

Based on nationwide data of 2,177 counties and equivalences served by 943 community foundations across the U.S., our empirical results show that the place effect favors more unequal communities over less unequal ones. The significant interaction of capital accumulation and local inequality further reveals that the positive effects of local inequality and capital accumulation reinforce one another, leading to significantly greater philanthropic capacity of community foundations. Moreover, foundations serving capital-rich and highly unequal communities are clear “winners,” while those serving equal communities are “losers,” in terms of developing philanthropic capacity in both fundraising and grantmaking. Foundations serving unequally deprived communities also tend to outperform their equally deprived counterparts. We argue that community
foundations are not only place-based but potentially also place-bounded and co-exist or even grow with inequality.

The contribution of this study is twofold. First, this study contributes to the nonprofit capacity literature by offering a critical perspective on how place (i.e., the capital that affixes to it and local inequality) shapes the philanthropic capacity of community foundations. The empirical results suggest that place-based philanthropy might serve to perpetuate inequality rather than to end it, thus raising serious concerns about the roles of philanthropic and nonprofit organizations in society. Second, using a national-wide population-level data that identifies the service areas of community foundations ($N=2,177$), this study also expands the sampling frame and the geographical scope of research, allowing for more robust and reliable statistical results. In doing so, this study overcomes a major weakness of prior studies concerning a small sample with a limited geographical focus and can reflect their “substantive presence” of nonprofits’ actual service areas (McDougle, 2015).

### 1.2 Theory and Hypotheses

“Social Space” and Uneven Distribution of Resources

To disentangle why place matters to the nonprofit sector, it is necessary to explore what place entails. According to Bourdieu (1991), space is not objective; rather, it is socially constructed and is understood relationally (Bourdieu, 1989). Social space is “a (multi-dimensional) space constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation or distribution constituted by the set of properties active in the social universe under consideration, that is, able to confer force or power on their possessor in that universe”
Essentially, social space is a geographic metaphor for how people and communities of people are arranged in relation to others—based on the amount and configuration of capital one has—in multi-faceted fields, which are the different social arena in social life (Bourdieu, 1984).

The relative positions of two groups (be it people or communities) depend on the “field” we look at. Within a field, specific kinds and combinations of capital, including economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital, determine the relative positions of communities and their members (Bourdieu, 1977b). Different forms of capital can be converted into one another, and the use and the acquisition of a specific capital form depend on the other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Heterogeneous opportunities and abilities to accumulate these various kinds of capital can result in an unequal distribution of power, engendering power relations between dominant and subordinated groups among the have and the have-nots in social space across different fields (Bourdieu, 1989).

Hence, in understanding place—where community foundations serve, we construe place beyond the understanding of a foundation’s geographical location but look at the relative social positions of communities (and their members) where community foundations serve. Following Bourdieu’s understanding of social space, the one who has more capital, either a kind or in total, acquires a higher social position and more power than the one who has less capital in the social space. Those who are proximate in social space are more likely to form groups as in families and neighborhoods, forming clusters of resources and differentiated classes—the have and have-nots, who are segregated
both in terms of social spaces and geographical spaces (Bourdieu, 1989). The history of residential segregation and inequality in the U.S. provides evidence of these segregated spatial arrangements and hierarchical social relations that Bourdieu observed in Algerian society (Sampson, 2008, 2012, 2019). For instance, back in the 1930s, the government-sanctioned redlining policy arbitrarily denied or restricted financial services to communities of color and low-income communities, furthering the historical oppression and segregation for disadvantaged communities and vulnerable groups within these communities (Hillier, 2003; Squires, 2003; Zenou & Boccard, 2000).

In this study, we consider place-based philanthropy as one of the social fields of practice where power struggles take place to further one's social position (Bourdieu, 1990). In the context of place-based philanthropy, people in different geographical communities can be construed as occupying different social positions whereby power struggles and conflict can take place both across communities (i.e., inter-community) and within communities (i.e., intra-community) in the community philanthropic field, as shown in Figure 1.1.
It follows that communities made up of people who have more resources are in higher order than the communities made up of people who have less. Given the spatial heterogeneity of capital acquisition and the power dynamics across communities, some communities have more capital endowment than their peers, engendering the undesirable phenomenon wherein the better-off communities might tend to grow even richer, while the worse-off communities might become poorer, perpetuating the uneven distribution of resource endowment in the first place. Accordingly, the degree of social distance between communities can be shown by the differences in the capital endowment. Likewise, within the same communities, people who have more resources are in higher order than those who have less, and they strive to sustain power domination through social practices such as giving. The degree of social distance between the haves and the have-nots within a community can be signified by the difference in individuals' resource endowment or how unevenly distributed resources are—in other words, the magnitude of local inequality.
The Place Dilemma of Place-Based Philanthropy

Previously, we introduced the notion of place as social space and discussed how resources are unevenly distributed within and across communities. Following Bourdieu, we further argue that philanthropy can be an effective means of expending capital and further accumulating capital (i.e., acquiring both material and/or non-material profit such as prestige or honor). People “play” the game of giving to acquire more capital and maximize their positions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.19). In Bourdieu’s own words, “[a] man possesses in order to give… [b]ut he also possesses by giving” (1990, p. 126). As economic wealth does not have justification per se, redistribution through philanthropy serves to justify their material riches as “one means among others of accumulating symbolic power—the power to secure recognition of power” for “reproduction and legitimation of prevailing hierarchies” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 131).

This critical view of philanthropy as a means of reinforcing the status quo has strong implications for understanding the capacity of place-based philanthropic institutions such as community foundations. Unlike private foundations, community foundations are established to benefit a geographical region and are legally required to meet the public support test as stipulated under I.R.C. § 509(a)(1). A community foundation’s philanthropic capacity—the ability to raise public philanthropic supports and to distribute grants to local nonprofits—is central to its mission. Legally speaking, they are obligated to draw a substantial part of its support in the form of contributions from the public residing from the communities. Because community foundations are locally embedded in serving communities, place is a double-edged sword especially for
those serving disadvantaged communities: While by design, the place-focused and community-embedded nature allow them to play a pivotal role in prioritizing the addressing of local needs, the social positions of communities in which they serve may or may not prove advantageous to their work (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Walker & Mccarthy, 2010).

**Place Effect I: Capital Accumulation and Philanthropy**

Our first argument is that community foundations are not just place-based but potentially *place-bounded* in their philanthropic capacity: How much they can fundraise and distribute highly depends on the amount of capital that their communities have. That is a concerning issue, as the amount of resources they have may also affect how much of a community leadership role they can play to address local needs. Given the place effect, we thus argue that communities are characterized by their differentiated endowments of economic, social, and cultural resources in relation to other communities, which in turn contribute to the differing levels of philanthropic capacity of community foundations serving these places.

Consistent with Bourdieu’s propositions, we focus on the three major types of capital that comprise the structure of society—economic, social, and cultural capital—to understand the extent to which capital accumulation of communities predicts the philanthropic capacity of community foundations serving the respective communities.
**Economic Capital**

Bourdieu (1986) argues that economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital, which are transformed, disguised forms of economic capital (p.54). Economic capital includes a community’s monetary resources that are immediately and directly convertible into money and possibly institutionalized in the form of property rights (Bourdieu, 1986). It consists of money (wages, dividends, and financial investments), real estate, and the means of production that can be bought and sold on a market (Neveu, 2018). More specifically, Bourdieu’s analysis of gift exchange (1977) highlights that institutional philanthropy allows the haves to give back to society for avoiding scrutiny over their wealth and the inequality that led to it (pp. 194-195).

Similarly, the literature consistently reveals that wealthier communities tend to feature a higher level of philanthropic giving, and hence a higher philanthropic capacity for supporting the growth of highly diverse nonprofit sector than poorer ones (Ben-Ner and Van Hoomissen, 1992; Brown & Ferris, 2007; Bielefeld, 2000; Corbin, 1999; Grønbjerg & Paarlberg, 2001; Wolch & Geiger, 1983; Wolpert, 1993). In alignment with the literature on the subject, we expect the economic affluence of a community to have a positive association with the dollar amount of donations received and grants distributed by community foundations.

**Hypothesis 1**: Economic capital of the community is positively associated with the philanthropic capacity of community foundations serving there.
**Social Capital**

Power and dominance derive not only from the possession of monetary resources but also from the possession of social resources, which lead to more gift exchange. Bourdieu (1986) construes social capital as the aggregate of the actual or potential resources that are embedded in “a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (p. 51). Such social networks of association (involving membership in an institutional group) and the norms of trust and reciprocity tied to the relationships therein can facilitate collective action by “transforming contingent relations” in the neighborhoods into relationships that imply “durable obligations subjectively felt” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 52) Given the institutional networks that result, the higher the number of social networks and resources embedded within a community, the more collective actions take place in that community to fulfill the “durable obligations” to help each other reciprocally (G D Saxton & Benson, 2005; Schneider, 2009). Since social capital can facilitate cooperation and collective action, we expect a positive association between higher social capital and donations provided by community members to the community foundations as well as grants distributed.

A growing body of literature has explored the positive role of social capital in giving. Graddy and Wang (2009) found that community foundations receive more per-capita gifts if they are located in communities with higher levels of social capital and social trust. Their finding aligns with Bekkers’ (2003) assertion that social trust increases with charitable giving. Similarly, Brown and Ferris (2007) found that social trust and
individuals’ associational networks are important determinants of giving and volunteering. These findings led us to formulate the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 2**: Social capital of the community is positively associated with the philanthropic capacity of community foundations serving there.

**Cultural Capital**

Bourdieu considers cultural capital plays a central role in societal power relations. Cultural capital provides the means for a non-economic form of domination and hierarchy and allows the causes of inequality to be disguised. As Ostrower (1998) and Dimaggio and Useem (1978) also noted, culture is a distinctive feature of elite philanthropy, and giving especially to cultural causes is vital for elite class cohesion and class reproduction. To Bourdieu, cultural capital emerges in three different states, _institutionalized_ cultural capital relates to the person's education or legally guaranteed qualifications completed; _objectivized_ cultural capital is transferrable through possession of books, art); _incorporated_ cultural capital gained through cultural participation, tastes, and skills. Certain forms of cultural capital are valued over others, and cultural capital is convertible into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

For this study, we focused on a more observable aspect of cultural capital—institutionalized cultural capital, which comprises a formal recognition of a person’s cultural capital in the form of academic credentials or professional qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). Institutionalized cultural capital helps us explain the reproduction of social hierarchy: Elite families endow their children with the cultural capital, such as in
the form of higher education that enables them to succeed in maintaining their elite positions (Bourdieu, 1973, 1993). Bourdieu (1986) not only sees education as a function of increasing productivity, as human capital theory suggests but also stresses how the educational system reproduces the social structure by “sanctioning the hereditary transmission of cultural capital” (pp. 243).

Alternatively, educational credentials can also be understood as a form of human capital, as discussed in the literature. However, we acknowledge that Bourdieu makes little if any reference to human capital. Notably, the philanthropy literature considers human capital a relevant predictor of giving. Brown (2001) found that more highly educated people tend to donate more to charitable causes. Wiepking and Maas (2009) argue that highly educated people with higher productivities have more financial resources, allowing them to be more generous than others. Furthermore, Brown and Ferris (2007) assert that education has a socializing effect, which increases the rewards of more highly educated people when they give more.

**Hypothesis 3**: Institutionalized cultural capital is positively associated with the philanthropic capacity of community foundations serving there.

**Overall Configuration of Capital Accumulation**

Given that each capital is convertible and one aspect of capital does not necessarily reflect the aggregated level of capital accumulation (Bourdieu, 1986; Greenspan, 2014; Pret et al., 2016), an overall community capital accumulation which factors in economic capital, social capital and cultural capital allows us to see the
combined effect of capital on philanthropic capacity of community foundations. We predict that:

**Hypothesis 4**: Capital accumulation is positively associated with the philanthropic capacity of community foundations serving there.

**Place Effect II: Local Inequality and Philanthropy**

Aside from looking at the level of capital accumulation of communities, our second argument examines how local inequality within communities, which denotes the unequal resource distribution among community members, might relate to the philanthropic capacity of community foundations. While a community might have a high level of capital endowment, people do not necessarily share resources equitably and hold differing amounts of capital, resulting in unequal power positions and prevailing hierarchies within a community.

On that, Bourdieu explains the process of inequality and specifically how unequal power persists through everyday practices such as giving. In “Outline of a Theory of Practice” (1977), Bourdieu argues that giving might be more prominent in a highly unequal community where the haves might be motivated to give for legitimizing and sustaining their possessions and dominance in relation to their peers and the have-nots (Davis & Moore, 1944). Through giving, the dominant upper class readily converts economic capital into symbolic capital, which is a capital of credit and social recognition granted by the receivers. Recent studies echo Bourdieu's arguments, offering evidence that the dominant upper class is motivated to give not necessarily by a concern for social
inequities but instead by the effort to advance their status (Barman, 2017; Odendahl, 1990; Ostrower, 1995). Donations to hospitals, universities, arts, and museums, and other nonprofits not only helps elites to legitimize their possession of economic capital (Adloff, 2015; Silver, 2007), but it also generates symbolic capital (such as honor and prestige) that sustains their social positions and class status (Ostrower, 1995).

Bourdieu’s ideas on social space, capital and giving (1983, 1989) explicate that intensifying inequality arises from a competing phenomenon wherein members strive to sustain their relative positions by accumulating and reproducing capital through economic riches—in short, power begets power; resource begets resource; advantage begets advantage. Parallelly, the latest research shows that the U.S. is facing skyrocketing income inequality than ever. The haves are enjoying a bigger and bigger share of the pie while the have-nots are left with increasingly less (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, Saez, & Turner, 2014; Piketty, Saez, & Zucman, 2016; Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2017). Recent empirical studies also show that increases in inequality contribute to more giving, and giving might further reproduce inequality (Beaton & Hwang, 2018; Payne & Smith, 2015). Given that local inequality, and particularly economic inequality, is highly relevant to giving, we predict a positive relationship between local inequality and philanthropic capacity of community foundations:

**Hypothesis 5**: A higher level of local inequality is associated with greater philanthropic capacity of community foundations.
1.3 Methodology

Data Collection

The study subjects were first identified from the list of community foundations from the Council on Foundations website (www.cof.org) between 2017 and 2018. Through manual verification and screening out irrelevant and dormant organizations, the final list compiled in 2019 contains 956 community foundations, each with a unique Employer Identification Number (EIN), serving 2,269 counties in the U.S. We collected the service area data of community foundations from checking their websites, as well as their annual reports and social media pages if information was not available on websites. The data of their philanthropic activities were also collected from their latest IRS Form 990 for 2015 or 2016. Our final dataset consists of 2,177 U.S. counties and county-equivalents that are being served by 943 community foundations, which accounts for nearly 70 percent of all 3,142 U.S. counties and county-equivalents. Some data loss occurred due to missing data of the social capital measure (N=92).

All data used for analyses were measured at the county level. While the data of community foundations was recorded for individual foundations (i.e., the unit of observation), we grouped them by county and compared community foundations serving across different counties. We posit that county-level analysis is best suited for this study not only because they tend to serve at the county level, but also that it allows us to look into the place effect on all community foundations that serve the same county. Using the FIPS (Federal Information Processing Standard Publication) county code, foundations’
service areas, and philanthropic activities were matched to its serving counties and county-level measures. We used negative binomial regression models for handling over-dispersed count data for the dependent variables of philanthropic capacity of community foundations serving the same counties.

**Dependent Variables**

The philanthropic capacity of community foundations can be assessed by their fundraising capacity and grantmaking capacity. Fundraising capacity was operationalized as the total dollar amount of donations raised by community foundations serving a county per one thousand dollars of total assets that reside in a county for a given year (Guo & Brown, 2006; Ostrower, 2004; Scherer, 2017). A standardized denominator allowed us to compare the philanthropic capacity accurately when large and small community foundations serve the communities with varying total assets. The donations received denotes the amount of resources raised and amassed by community foundations, which was measured by two major types of contributions: Unrestricted contributions indicated in Part I of Form 990 on line 8 (contributions and grants, both cash and non-cash), and donor-advised funds (DAF) specified in the “donor-advised fund” field on Schedule D of Form 990 for either 2015 or 2016 whichever was available. According to the Internal Revenue Service, a donor-advised fund is a separately identified fund or account that is maintained and operated by a section 501(c)(3) organization. While the organization has legal control over the funds, donors of DAF retain advisory privileges concerning the distribution of funds and the investment of assets in the account. On average, the
community foundations in our analysis raised over $17.5 million in a county on average, and collectively over $38.5 billion philanthropic dollars.

Similarly, grantmaking capacity was measured by the total dollar amount of grants distributed by community foundations serving a county per one thousand dollars of total assets that reside in a county for a given year. The grants were distributed to benefit the community, supporting the programs and services provided by human services nonprofits, churches, and schools in a county, for instance (Guo & Brown, 2006). The grants distributed measured by the total amount of “grants and similar amounts paid” are also reported on line 13 of Form 990 for either 2015 or 2016, whichever was available. Overall, community foundations in our dataset distributed more than $3.3 million in a county on average, and $7.3 billion grants in total.

To handle the data complication when community foundations serve multiple service areas, we derived the average amount of donations, grants, and assets for each service area served by the same foundation. We first computed the average amounts of its assets, grants, and contributions, respectively through dividing them by the number of service areas it serves. The average amount was then extrapolated to all its serving counties. To this end, we made a minimal assumption that each service county receives a comparable amount of donations and grants from the same serving foundations. Given that we do not know where (and the specific population they serve) the contributions came from and were distributed, we are cautious to only use the organizational data (i.e., total assets) as the denominator. In the instance where multiple community foundations
serve a county, we aggregated the sum of donations, grants, and assets from all the
community foundations serving the same county.

**Predictor Variables**

*Economic capital* was gauged the *Median Household Income* as found in the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates. The higher the median household income, the more economic capital community members have in general. *Social capital* was measured based on the county-level Social Capital Index created by the United States Joint Economic Committee (2018). Consistent with Bourdieu’s focus on the importance of being connected to networks that possess resources, the social capital index was created using principal component analysis of sub-indices that account for social capital from the levels of family unity, community connectedness, institutional wellbeing, and collective efficacy. This conceptualization accounts for associational life across different levels of social life.

*Cultural capital* emerges in three different states: *institutionalized, objectivized* or *incorporated* forms. We focused on a more observable and measurable aspect of cultural capital, institutionalized cultural capital, which comprises a formal recognition of a person’s cultural capital in the form of academic credentials or professional qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). It was operationalized as the education level of residents in the counties studied. It was measured by the percentage of the population with a bachelor’s degree or higher in the county, as indicated in the 2015 ACS five-year estimates.
Since capital relates to each other, our analysis did not stop at examining the effects of one capital. Additionally, to gauge the aggregated effect of economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital altogether, we created a single measure of **community capital index** using z-standardization procedures. Given that the three variables have different distributions and standard deviations, the single index was obtained by standardizing these three capital variables (i.e., through subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation) to put them on a common scale with values ranging between 0 and 1, followed by a summation of the three standardized values for each county. Given no prior theoretical and empirical knowledge on the relative importance of the capital, we assume equal weighting for all three kinds of capital, albeit the reality might be varied and more complex.

**Local inequality**, as proxied by economic inequality, is highly relevant to the philanthropic field (Bourdieu, 1977a). It captures the extent to which economic wealth is unduly concentrated among a few or equally shared among community members, giving rise to a gap of varying size between stratified classes—the haves and have-nots—in the community (Smeeding, 2005). We used ACS’s *Gini index of income inequality* for partially capturing the level of local inequality. According to the Census Bureau, the Gini index measures wealth distribution across a population, with zero representing total equality and one representing total inequality, where all wealth is concentrated in a single household.
Control Variables

Given that larger and older foundations tend to have a higher amount of contributions and grants, we controlled for organizational size and age in our models (Guo & Brown, 2006; Graddy & Wang, 2009). **Organizational size** was measured by the aggregated total assets of community foundations serving a county for either 2015 or 2016 whichever was available. **Average organizational age** was measured by the average number of years that community foundations had been legally recognized in a county. Specifically, we counted the difference between 2015 and the ruling year of community foundations. Finally, we controlled for **county population** using 2015 ACS five-year estimates.

1.4 Results

As shown in the summary statistics in Table 1.1, our dependent variables are highly skewed with variance larger than the mean. Since they do not follow normal distribution, instead of using a linear model with log-transformed variables, we relied on a maximum likelihood estimation of the negative binomial distribution for handling overdispersion of the data. To rule out potential multicollinearity among the predictors, we calculated variance inflation factor (VIF) for each predictor variable. We discovered no high correlations and the mean VIF value is 1.91.
We computed two sets of negative binomial regression models to examine the main effects and interaction effects of community capital and local inequality on the philanthropic capacity of community foundations as proxied by asset-adjusted total contributions and asset-adjusted total grants as presented in Table 1.2. We used state-level cluster-robust standard errors to account for potential state level influence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DV: Total Contributions Received (Asset-adjusted)</th>
<th>DV: Total Grants Distributed (Asset-adjusted)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>1.01***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Index</td>
<td>0.89***</td>
<td>0.87***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Index x Gini</td>
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<td>1.02**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inequality</td>
<td>1.04***</td>
<td>1.05***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Index x Inequality</td>
<td>1.01**</td>
<td>1.01***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Assets</td>
<td>1.00*</td>
<td>1.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>0.99***</td>
<td>0.99***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural-Urban Index</td>
<td>0.96***</td>
<td>0.94***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (in 100,000)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.02**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2,177</td>
<td>2,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Likelihood</td>
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<td>-15,277.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theta</td>
<td>1.87***</td>
<td>1.84***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akaike Inf. Crit.</td>
<td>30,515.99</td>
<td>30,568.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:*

- *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001
- Exponentiated coefficients (Incidence Rate Ratio) reported;
- Cluster-Robust standard errors in parentheses
Main Effects of Capital Accumulation and Local Inequality

The first set of models looks at the relationship of each capital on the philanthropic capacity of community foundations in terms of their fundraising and grantmaking efforts. The results in Table 1.2 show that economic capital is positively related to the total donations received, but not significantly related to grants distributed at 0.05 level (Hypothesis 1). A one-unit increase in economic capital (i.e., $1000 increase in median household income) is associated with an increase in the expected amount of total contributions received by 1%, holding other variables constant. Cultural capital significantly and positively predicts the total donations and total grants (Hypothesis 3), while social capital has a significant negative association on both (Hypothesis 2). A one-unit increase in cultural capital (i.e., 1% increase in bachelor's degree earners) is associated with an increase in the expected amount of total contributions and total grants by 1%, respectively, controlling for other variables constant. However, a one-unit increase in the social capital index is associated with a decrease in the expected amount of total contributions and total grants by 11% and 13%, respectively, other variables being constant. Taken together, cultural capital is a significant positive predictor for total contributions and total grants, while economic capital positively predicts total contributions but not for total grants. Gift exchange might be more common among cultural and economic elites to distinguish themselves and to acquire symbolic capital through giving (Ostrander, 2007; Ostrower, 1995, 1998). Communities that are culturally rich and economically affluent are conducive to promoting the philanthropic capacity of place-based foundations.
Furthermore, the second models show that community capital is positively related to the philanthropic capacity for fundraising but not for grantmaking efforts at the 0.05 level (Hypothesis 4). A one-unit increase in community capital index is associated with an increase in the expected amount of total contributions received by 3%, holding other variables constant. Lastly, we found that local inequality is positively associated with the philanthropic capacity across all three models at the 0.05 level (Hypothesis 5). A one-unit increase in the Gini coefficient is associated with an increase in the expected amount of total contributions received by 4 to 5% and that of total grants by 3%, other variables being constant.

**Interaction Effect of Capital Accumulation and Local Inequality**

To understand the potential cross-over interaction effect between capital accumulation and local inequality, we introduced an interaction term between the capital index and local inequality in the third models. In other words, our interpretation of the relationship between local inequality and philanthropic capacity might be contingent on the level of community capital, and vice versa. Our empirical results indicate significant positive interaction effects between community capital and local inequality on philanthropic capacity. It follows that the relationships between local inequality and philanthropic capacity *significantly and positively* depend on the level of capital accumulation (*IRR* = 1.01). To showcase the interaction effects, we created the interaction plots using the centered mean value (i.e., scaled to 0), one standard deviation below (i.e., -2.36) and above mean value (i.e., +2.36) of capital accumulation (i.e., the moderator) and with the range of values for local inequality to illustrate how dependent
variables change (Aiken & West, 1991). Figures Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3 below show the marginal effects of the interaction between community capital index and local inequality on the philanthropic capacity for total contributions and total grants, respectively.

Figure 1.2 Interaction Effects Between Capital Index and Inequality on Total Contributions

Figure 1.3 Interaction Effects Between Capital Index and Inequality on Total Grants
The empirical analysis leads to several key findings. First, the significant positive interaction effects in both models reveal that the effects of local inequality and capital accumulation reinforce one another. When capital accumulation increases by one unit, the effect of local inequality on the expected amount of philanthropic capacity further bolster up by 1%, and vice versa (holding other variables at their means). Considering both the interaction effects and the main effects, the results indicate that the more the capital accumulation a community has and the higher the degree of local inequality within a community, the greater the philanthropic capacity of community foundations. As shown in Figures 1.2 and Figure 1.3, the three lines indicate differing levels of capital accumulation, philanthropic capacity in terms of total contributions and total grants (y-axis) increases when local inequality (x-axis) and capital accumulation (moderator) increase. The greater the local inequality and capital accumulation, the greater the philanthropic capacity of community foundations.

Second, the results of the main effects suggest that local inequality is a significant and consistent predictor of philanthropic capacity in both fundraising and grantmaking efforts (Hypothesis 5). While the capital index is also significant for predicting total contributions, it is insignificant in the model for total grants (Hypothesis 4). Juxtaposing this insignificant main effect and positive interaction effect in the total grants model reveals that having more capital does not necessarily boost grantmaking capacity, unless the communities are also more unequal.

Third, we found that community foundations serving different places are positioned at a relative advantage or disadvantage in the community philanthropic field.
Specifically, as seen in Figures Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3, community foundations serving capital-rich and unequal communities are the most advantaged which tend to beget the greatest philanthropic capacity among all (top-right star), followed by those serving unequal and capital-poor communities (bottom-right triangle) which have greater philanthropic capacity than those serving equally poor communities (top-left triangle). Yet, community foundations serving equal and capital-rich communities tend to have the least philanthropic capacity (bottom-left star), followed by those serving equal and capital-poor communities (top-left triangle).

Robustness Check: The Place Effect for Donor-Advised Funds

A limitation of our research design is that we do not directly observe whether people donate for furthering one’s power positions. While our data did not speak to donor psychology, we can gain insight into this issue by examining whether our results still hold with donor-advised funds (DAFs) as a dependent variable. DAFs are separately identified funds or accounts set up under community foundations and other 501(c)(3) nonprofits, which allow DAF donors to retain advisory privileges in distributing funds.

We argue that since DAF donors retain control over their philanthropic dollars, they are the ones who are to be seen and recognized instead of the community foundations who act as intermediates to facilitate donor wishes in this context (Reynolds, 2008). DAF, as a philanthropic vehicle, allows donors to enjoy more social recognition and symbolic capital than donors of unrestricted funds, which are distributed in foundations' discretion according to their grantmaking priorities.
It follows that the social returns of giving might potentially be greater when employing DAF, hence, we expect that in highly unequal communities, the haves might not merely give more to avoid scrutiny over their wealth and the inequality that led to it, but they might do so more readily through DAF that honors their philanthropic wishes.

Table 1.3  Negative Binomial Regression Results for Donor Advised Funds of CFs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DV: Donor-Advised Funds (Asset-adjusted)</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>0.78***</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Capital</td>
<td>1.02***</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Index</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini Index of Inequality</td>
<td>1.03**</td>
<td>1.06***</td>
<td>1.05***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Index x Gini</td>
<td>1.01**</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Assets</td>
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<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>0.99***</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
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<td>Rural-Urban Index</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
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<td>Population (in 100,000)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.03***</td>
<td>1.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2,177</td>
<td>2,177</td>
<td>2,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Likelihood</td>
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<td>-14,578.66</td>
<td>-14,571.08</td>
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<td>theta</td>
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<td>0.78*** (0.02)</td>
<td>0.79*** (0.02)</td>
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<td>Akaike Inf. Crit.</td>
<td>29,109.55</td>
<td>29,171.32</td>
<td>29,158.16</td>
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</table>

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001
Exponentiated coefficients (Incidence Rate Ratio) reported; Cluster-Robust standard errors in parentheses
As seen in Table 1.3, we found consistent evidence that local inequality is a significant determinant for philanthropic capacity as measured by total contributions and total grants, as well as DAF; the effects of local inequality and capital accumulation significantly interact with each other, together they engender a greater positive effect on philanthropic capacity ($IRR = 1.01$). While the insignificant main effect of capital accumulation reveals that having more capital does not necessarily lead to more DAF, as long as local inequality increases simultaneously, philanthropic capacity tends to go up.

### 1.5 Concluding Discussions and Future Research

Drawing on Bourdieu's perspectives on social space, capital, and giving, the empirical findings suggest a significant relationship between the local resource environment on the philanthropic capacity of community foundations. Specifically, we found that community foundations might be trapped in a place dilemma whereby they are not only place-based in serving the community, but local inequality significantly predicts their philanthropic capacity for fundraising and grantmaking. The significant interaction of capital accumulation and local inequality further reveals that the positive effects of local inequality and local capital reinforce one another, leading to a significantly greater philanthropic capacity of community foundations. Moreover, foundations serving capital-rich and highly unequal communities are clear “winners.” In contrast, those serving equal communities are "losers,” in terms of developing philanthropic capacity in both fundraising and grantmaking. Foundations serving unequally deprived communities also tend to outperform their equally deprived counterparts.
Our findings raise serious concerns about the roles of philanthropic and nonprofit organizations in society: To what extent might place-based philanthropic effort be replicating or even reinforcing, rather than addressing the inherent disparity across the nation? Does inequality call for more philanthropic giving to mitigate its ramifications, or does it allows the haves to give for fortifying existing power structure across the already unequal lands of the rich and the poor (Duquette, 2018; Hay & Muller, 2014; Sampson, 2012, 2019; Schlozman et al., 2012)? Our auxiliary analysis on DAF reinforces our finding that local inequality is a critical factor for predicting philanthropic capacity. In keeping with a Bourdieusian perspective, the greater the local disparity between the haves and have-nots, the wider the social distance between the groups, and the haves might be more readily convert their economic capital into symbolic capital through both giving and making grants through charitable institutions such as community foundations and the use of DAF to gain more capital and power from the gift exchange.

While our study provides both theoretical arguments and empirical evidence that community foundations might serve to perpetuate local inequality rather than to end it, it does not rule out the possibility that it is community demand that drives the growth of community foundations, in that greater local inequality indicates greater and more diverse community needs (Kim, 2015). Nonetheless, this study contributes to a critical view that philanthropic institutions might be used to advance the positions of the powerful (Bourdieu, 1990; Ostrander, 2007; Ostrander & Schencish, 1990). As Bourdieu argues, giving provides the haves a source of symbolic power to exert influence over and distinguish themselves from peers and the have-nots, while legitimizing their social positions and inequality through “giving back to society” (Adloff, 2015; Ostrower, 1995).
Essentially, this becomes a self-reinforcing process: inequality might prompt giving, and giving might further reinforce inequality.

Additionally, we found that community foundations serve on an unequal playing field, whereby some community foundations tend to enjoy greater philanthropic capacity than the others in part due to such place effects. In particular, community foundations that serve capital-rich and unequal communities beget the greatest philanthropic capacity. In contrast, those serving more egalitarian communities tend to have lower philanthropic capacity across all levels of capital accumulation. Community foundations serving unequally deprived communities also tend to enjoy more philanthropic capacity than their counterparts that serve equally deprived communities. Those serving equally deprived communities, which might also have greater needs, tend to bear lower philanthropic capacity in all measures of contributions received and grants distributed, putting them at a relative disadvantage among their peers (Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Lee, 2017; Vermeulen et al., 2016; Walker & Mccarthy, 2010).

Given that locational advantages and disadvantages might trigger a self-reinforcing process that amplifies inequality across communities, the findings spur a fundamental question on the potential limits of nonprofit capacity to make an impact, especially in equally deprived communities. As Walker and Mccarthy (2010) highlighted, community-based organizations located in resource-deprived communities confront “a vicious cycle” in which resources necessitated for survival are seemingly lacking. Future research is warranted to temporally explore the extent to which philanthropic effort might be reproducing or eroding the existing disparities across the
lands of the rich and the poor (Ashley, 2014; Duquette, 2018; Payne & Smith, 2015). Another fruitful avenue is to examine the underlying social values and historical discourses that define the very purpose and success of philanthropic foundations (Hammack, 1990; Scherer, 2017; Suárez, 2012; Whitman, 2009)—the extent to which and under what conditions nonprofit and philanthropic vehicles are created for and contributing to revamping or sustaining existing power structures.

Along this line, more scholarly attention is also needed to examine where, not just how much, public and philanthropic dollars are distributed (McDougle & Lam, 2014; Wolpert, 1988, 1995; Wu, 2019). Future research is warranted to critically explore distributive justice issues in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors (Freeman, 2018; Harvey, 2000). In addition to the where question, it is also important to explore how public and philanthropic dollars are distributed. For instance, some community foundations may choose to award fewer grants at larger amounts, while others may give out a greater number of grants at smaller amounts. Such variations indicate that community foundations are not passive recipients of local resources; rather, they can be proactive and strategic in defining community priorities and addressing constituent demands (Brown & Guo, 2010, pp.5-6). While it is beyond the scope of our study to take a deeper dive into a community foundation’s grant-making policies, processes, and strategies, this is an area where future research may prove fruitful.

This study also sheds light on two strategic management directions for nonprofit managers. From the resource standpoint, nonprofits need to devise collaborative strategies to draw resources outside their organizations and serving areas in order to
mitigate the place disadvantage, particularly for those serving equally deprived communities where community needs tend to be greater (Joassart-Marcelli & Wolch, 2003; Kim & Peng, 2018; Paarlberg & Varda, 2009; Walker & Mccarthy, 2010). From the impact lens, despite adverse place effect, nonprofit managers might find strategic opportunities to increase their impact beyond what money can offer to perform their philanthropic role. As extant studies suggest, nonprofits can enhance their community impact by serving as a democratic mediator to engage with the public and build collaborative synergies and partnerships across sectors for addressing local policy issues (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977; Bushouse, 2017; Easterling, 2011; Ferris & Williams, 2010; Phillips et al., 2016; Quinn et al., 2014).

Following prior research on the subject, we conducted this study under the norm that community foundations derive resources primarily from residents and entities from the serving counties. However, the reality can be more nuanced (Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Guo & Brown, 2006). While we took out regional foundations from our analysis, some might primarily serve metropolitan areas and not necessarily a county. Even so, they might not equally distribute philanthropic resources among all serving counties and all parts of the counties. Contributions can come from outside the serving communities, or through other corporations and foundations. Grants funded by DAF might be distributed to organizations outside local communities. However, the lack of reliable data sources that detail where contributions come from and where grants go prevents us from accounting for such complexities. Given the use of service area data, which is only available for one year at the time of data collection, we had to limit this study to a cross-sectional design, a tradeoff to account for the accuracy of where they serve.
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Structural Topic Model.


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Abstract

Community philanthropic organizations are increasingly looked to as community leaders that coalesce money, people, knowledge, and networks for addressing public problems at the local level. However, the field remains difficult to grasp—what it is and how it is realized in practice. This article proposes a multi-dimensional conceptual framework that construes community leadership in six leadership capacities: (1) Convening, (2) Knowledge Building, (3) Capacity Building, (4) Policy Engagement, (5) Partnering, and (6) Strategizing. Using a semi-automated approach, I then analyzed 555 annual reports of community foundation to corroborate the proposed framework. The exploratory analysis shows that they tend to specialize in one or a few leadership capacities, such as partnering, policy engagement and capacity building, while convening, knowledge building, and strategizing are less common among community foundations. This article contributes to building both the theoretical and empirical foundation to advance future research on community leadership.

Keywords: Community leadership, community philanthropy, dictionary-based, public policy
2.1 Introduction

Community philanthropic organizations, such as United Ways and community foundations, are at the forefront of funding local initiatives and leading many public policy innovations across sectors (Daly, 2008; Ferris & Mintrom, 2009; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Hamilton, Parzen, & Brown, 2004). While they do not have sufficient resources to substitute for government in the provision of public services and welfare (Anheier & Hammack, 2010; Hammack & Smith, 2018b), their ability to lead and coalesce money, people, knowledge, and connections for addressing public problems at the local level—“community leadership,” can bring transformative impact to communities (Ferris & Mintrom, 2009; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Phillips et al., 2016).

Community foundations traditionally follow the donor-driven model, whereby keeping scores of asset accumulation and efficient distribution of charitable funds is the goal (Hammack, 1989, p. 30). However, they have been recognized to possess a distinct potential for local leadership more than other institutions such as national and regional foundations, donor-advised funds and civic and service organizations due to their “institutional flexibility, range of boundary-crossing relationships, civic standing, and ability to see and connect the pieces into a larger whole” (Hamilton, Parzen, & Brown, 2004, p. 3). Amid the rising call to embrace a community leadership role, they have been going beyond their primary functions of fundraising and grantmaking, stepping into leading and steering community change as studies shown (Ballard, 2007; Bernholz et al., 2005; Easterling, 2011; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Hamilton et al., 2004; Layton, 2016; Leonard, 1989; Phillips et al., 2016; Reynolds, 2008).
While extant studies revealed that community philanthropic actors might play an important leadership role, the concept of community leadership has not been clearly or consistently defined and operationalized in the literature, presenting fragmented understandings that bring confusion. The conceptual understanding of what community leadership is and how it exemplifies in practice remains amorphous, if not grandiose rhetoric (Jung et al., 2013). These important gaps necessitate this study to undertake a systematic examination to conceptualize and operationalize community leadership.

In this paper, I fill in this important literature gap by reviewing both academic and practitioner literature on community foundations for developing a theoretical framework to explore what constitutes “community leadership.” I corroborated the framework with empirical evidence elicited from foundations' annual reports to assess 555 community foundations. With the proposed conceptual framework, this article contributes to building both the theoretical and empirical foundation for future research on community leadership and their contributions to local communities.

This study seeks to make two major contributions. First, based on a literature review on extant studies and reports on community foundations, this paper synthesizes and conceptualizes a multi-dimensional conceptual framework for understanding community leadership capacities. Second, triangulated by annual reports, this study provides systematic evidence to illustrate how foundations practiced community leadership on the ground. A clearer conceptual understanding and operationalization of community leadership help advance future research and guide philanthropic and nonprofit actors to make intentional investments in their organizations, strategizing their ways to exercise community leadership more readily.
2.2 Literature Review

The Rise of Community Leadership

The term “community leadership” treks across disciplines and fields, this study focuses on understanding the notion of community leadership in the context of community philanthropy. Community philanthropy encompasses place-based philanthropic organizations that serve a designated location to support the wellbeing of members residing in the area by making grants to support the works of local nonprofit organizations. Hence, one specific type of community philanthropy under study here, namely community foundations, are distinct from identity-based charitable funds or giving circles that delineate “community” by specific interests, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. While the subject of this study is community foundations, this does not preclude the fact that other philanthropic and nonprofit entities also practice community leadership. The insights elicited from analyzing community foundations are transferrable to any other organizations.

The term community leadership first appeared as early as 1990 in the literature (Hammack, 1989; Leonard, 1989), but surged in 2005 that shifted the narrative in the field of community foundations. Back in 2005, Bernholz, Fulton, and Kasper published a report “On the Brink of New Promise: The Future of U.S. Community Foundations.” They articulated strongly the need and the rationale for community foundations to step forward as community leaders. They argued, “donor services and grants management have been in the past” (Bernholz, Fulton, & Kasper, 2005, p. 5). As the philanthropic marketplace became increasingly competitive, they pointed to the threats of being
complacent with performing the traditional functions of attracting donors, building endowments, and making grants. The increasingly crowded philanthropic landscape served both the wake-up call and opportunity for community foundations to lead as a community leader—taking on a proactive, catalytic approach to engage community members for creating community impact (Ballard, 2007; Bernholz et al., 2005; Millesen & Martin, 2014).

This growing consensus has elevated community leadership as a moral and market imperative in the field and the scholarship (Ballard, 2007; Community Foundations Leadership Team, 2008; Easterling, 2011; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Hamilton et al., 2004; Jung et al., 2013; Phillips et al., 2016; Rader, 2010). Community leadership makes community foundations distinct from private foundations and commercial counterparts: The commitment to involving local people in decisions about how to change their communities for the better, essentially placing community voice at the center of philanthropy and community change (Ballard, 2007; Sacks, 2014).

**Challenges of Exercising Community Leadership**

While the idea was considered a timely caution, community foundations and other leaders in the field continue to articulate obstacles to take up a community leadership role (Bernholz, Fulton, & Kasper, 2005; Ballard, 2007; CFLT, 2008). One of the key barriers is risk aversion, which relates to the fear of alienating existing and potential donors and the uncertainty that lies in exploring new ways of doing things (Easterling, 2011; Millesen & Martin, 2014). Community foundations traditionally are organized around asset development, donor relations, and investments. They are less familiar about
carrying out effective leadership work, nor have the manpower and knowhow to convene policy deliberation, engage in advocacy, and partner with other organizations to effect community change (Easterling, 2011). Other practical issues that might hinder the adoption of community leadership include finding the right area on which to exercise leadership and identify the strategic issues where leadership work is warranted (Brown et al., 2003; Hamilton et al., 2004). As a result, some have pointed out that tradition seems to become a justification for maintaining a status quo and a rational way of managing fear and risk involved in undertaking a community leadership role (Easterling & Millesen, 2015; Millesen & Martin, 2014; Ostrower, 2007).

Arguably, these practical challenges are related to the conceptual ambiguity about what community leadership is. One outcome of this ambiguity is myriad reports and white papers for practitioners that bring in valuable but inconsistent insights, experiences, and lessons on the ground, often imbued with heavily prescriptive overtones. The challenges of lacking a consistent conceptual framework of community leadership can create confusion in practices, and complicate research efforts that seek to understand and measure community leadership and what outcomes it might bring. The pressing need for building a comprehensive conceptualization of community leadership can also be revealed by the scarce empirical studies available that investigate community leadership practices and are to some extent limited by the use of small samples and a lack of quantitative measures (Carman, 2001; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Millesen & Martin, 2014). The want of empirical research to inform practice can, in turn, hinder the building of evidence-based knowledge for advancing community leadership work in practice.
All these practical and conceptual challenges might have, in part, contributed to the observations that community foundations exercise their community leadership role on an episodic basis, sometimes for purely idiosyncratic reasons and out of serendipity (Ballard, 2007; Millesen & Martin, 2014). The conceptual and empirical challenges warrant this study to produce systematic knowledge of community leadership.

**Defining Community Leadership**

While there are dozens of reports and studies discussed community leadership in the philanthropic context, community leadership was not often defined. When the authors provided or usually cited definitions for community leadership (Appendix I), many provide inconsistent “guideposts” or examples to illustrate the community leadership concept. Nonetheless, there is a relatively consistent understanding that community leaders catalyze change, regardless of the specific leadership work prescribed, which might vary. To name a few, according to the Community Foundation Leadership Team (CFLT) at the Council on Foundations (2008), a community foundation becomes a “community leader” when it acts as “a catalyzing force that creates a better future for all by addressing the community’s most critical or persistent challenges, inclusively uniting people, institutions and resources, and producing significant, widely shared and lasting results” (p. 2). Graddy and Morgan (2006) also echoed that a community foundation adopting a community leadership strategy seeks to be a catalyst for change in the community by participating in and, at times, leading these broader conversations about new policies. Community leadership refers to foundations using a broader range of tools
than grantmaking to forge “solutions to community problems and develop strategies to take advantage of community opportunities” (Reynolds, 2008, p.1).

Without giving specifics on the deeds and effectiveness of outcomes, this paper broadly defines community leadership as the capacity (or capacities) of a philanthropic or nonprofit organization to act as a catalyst for change in order to address local problems and create policy changes.

2.3 A Multi-Dimensional Framework of Community Leadership

While there are broad strokes that outline the primary nature of community leadership, this study further proposes a conceptual framework to help understand community leadership as multidimensional capacities (see Figure 2.1). Based on the review of both academic literature and practitioner reports, I argue that community leadership constitutes six major dimensions of leadership capacities: Convening, Knowledge Building, Capacity Building, Policy Engagement, Partnering, and Strategizing. Because these leadership capacities rarely operate in silos in practice as illustrated in latter examples, this framework implies complementarity and a cohesive understanding of community leadership.
1. Convening

The first leadership attribute is convening. Convening involves engaging community members and stakeholders through various democratic practices such as convening civic dialogues, facilitating policy deliberation and consultation, consensus building, and sometimes, striving compromise (Carpini et al., 2004; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Leonard, 1989; Millesen et al., 2010; Reynolds, 2008).
The convening role of community leadership seeks to bring back civic dialogue and democratic participation to the crux of community philanthropy. Essentially, it is a community-oriented commitment to involve local people in decisions about how to change their communities for the better (Sacks, 2014), through inviting their inputs in the process of foundations’ daily work from identifying community needs, policy alternatives, grantmaking priorities, launching initiatives to evaluating their grants and projects (Easterling, 2011; Ostrower, 2007). As Graddy and Morgan (2006) define community leadership strategy, one of the dimensions is to proactively facilitate and engage with community members in conversations for issue identification and co-envisioning for their communities. Ballard (2007) also points out that “community foundations that are serious about community leadership must be conversant with public policy.” A community leader through convening community dialogues in policy issues and social causes within the communities contributes to civic engagement, which lays the cornerstone of participatory democracy (Bushouse, 2017; Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004; Cooper et al., 2006; Kluver, 2004). A recent study also found that foundations invite community constituents to participate in strategic planning process, grant evaluation, and develop grantmaking strategies that correspond to community needs that expressed by the members (Scherer, 2017).

As community foundations increasingly shift away from the strategic orientation of serving donors, scholars contend that their success is no longer assessed by financial performance but also by community conversations around key issues for achieving their mission (Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Herman & Renz, 1999; Phillips et al., 2016). However, critics warn that policy deliberation might reduce to tokenism unless
community foundation work factors in community inputs, which might or might not align with foundations' goals. As James Irvine Foundation points out (2003), “convening is not just jargon for committee meeting. It’s truly a term of art which means bringing people together for an open-ended, opportunistic and inclusive conversation” (p. 22). Millesen et al. (2007) echo that true outreach “engages responsible critics by listening to their concerns, focusing on common interests, and encouraging involvement” (p. 53).

Furthermore, the convening capacity of community leadership makes community foundations distinct from private foundations and commercial counterparts in which decision-making might tend to be donor-oriented and top-down (Ballard, 2007; Easterling, 2011; Graddy & Morgan, 2006). By soliciting community inputs from all walk of lives and across sectoral boundaries, foundations become more responsive to the communities they serve and maintain independence from undue donor influence and donor ascendency (Ballard, 2007; Carman, 2001; Easterling, 2011; Hamilton et al., 2004; Lowe, 2004). This leadership capacity is particularly important when donors tend to have higher power over decisions made at the grantmaking table (Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Ostrander, 2007; Reynolds, 2008). Some argue that foundations can also engage donors as participants and leaders in community problem solving, leveraging on donors’ knowledge, expertise, and networks, not just donations (Bernholz et al., 2005; Hamilton et al., 2004; Rader, 2010; Remmer & Ruth, 2015).

The prior literature has shown that Baltimore Community Foundation, for example, convened groups of public, private-sector, non-profit, and community leaders. It played a central role in initiating discussions with the mayor and business, civic,
political leaders about linking efforts to increase the city's tax base with those to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families in low-income neighborhoods. From those conversations emerged Reason to Believe, a broad-based civic coalition that married business with poverty reduction (Hamilton et al., 2004).

2. Knowledge Building

Knowledge building corresponds to another important community leadership capacity played by philanthropic actors. Understanding constituencies’ perspectives on issues through convening community dialogues might not by itself inform action. A sound basis of knowledge and policy evidence can shed light on community needs and specific policy issues that help facilitate public opinions and guide collective effort (Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Phillips et al., 2016). As Phillips et al. (2016) observed, community foundations increasingly transition from relying primarily on conventional grantmaking for facilitating change to using knowledge to catalyze community awareness and action. Community foundations help translate information, so that community members and key constituencies understand the issues at hand. They also help frame community discourse on policy issues in the long run, which in turn helps set a community’s change agenda (Ballard, 2007; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Hamilton et al., 2004).

Knowledge building can take the forms of conducting a needs assessment, public education conference, and making grants to support initiatives that promote policy knowledge of specific local issues. As reported in Hamilton et al. (2004), the Rhode Island Foundation established a KIDS COUNT project in Rhode Island for improving the
public understanding and policymakers’ understanding of the conditions of the state’s children. KIDS COUNT served as a knowledge repository to track the status of children, produce data, promote public discussion, and help inform policy work.

Furthermore, Phillips et al. (2016) argue that the knowledge component does not confine to gathering information, but knowledge can be used as a strategic change tool by community foundations. They found that community foundations adopting a knowledge-based leadership style to catalyze community action enables more inclusive and engaged models of community. Using a knowledge-building tool such as Vital Signs, the main role of the community foundation is to curate and broker existing information that allows them to "serve as a convener and leveller of knowledge about the community" (Phillips et al., 2016, p.71). As the philanthropic marketplace becomes more competitive while facing higher demands for accountability and impact, community foundations can serve as community leaders through catalyzing evidence-based, community-informed, measurable impact (Ballard, 2007; Bernholz et al., 2005; Millesen & Martin, 2014).

3. **Capacity Building**

Community foundations serving community leaders can catalyze and sustain community change when they invest in building the capacity of individuals, organizations, and communities to achieve better performance and strengthening accountability for tackling daunting challenges (Ballard, 2007; Easterling, 2011; Hamilton et al., 2004). Local community foundations have local resources and networks that can enhance the problem-solving capacity of their communities. For instance, studies have documented that community foundations offer civic education and community
problem-solving workshops to bolster the civic efficacy and leadership capacity of individual citizens and local leaders (Hamilton et al., 2004).

Furthermore, capacity building helps strengthen accountability and improve the organizational performance of grantees, local leaders, and local nonprofit sectors. With their community knowledge and networks, community foundations help build local leaders’ knowledge and skills for leading and achieving community goals, through designing capacity-building workshops and a performance evaluation process for grantees, fostering a culture of learning, and providing for grantees’ continuous improvement (Hamilton et al., 2004; Warner, 2015). The evaluation process might serve as a tool that helps grantees improve services and strategies by promoting collaboration and learning among organizations (Hamilton et al., 2004). Other examples of capacity building for local organizations include capacity building training, technical assistance, mentoring, peer assistance, coaching, referrals, learning groups, and improving the quality of technical assistance providers (Easterling, 2011; Hamilton et al., 2004; Ostrower, 2007).

Sometimes, community foundations serve as intermediary organizations and support the creation of new intermediary organizations that engage in a range of capacity building functions on behalf of, or in conjunction with foundations (Daly, 2008). At the community level, studies have shown that community foundations play an important role in community development (Carman, 2001; Lowe, 2004). For instance, the study by Lowe (2004) showcases that community foundations increased the capacity of local community development corporations (CDCs) by providing them with fiscal and network support needed for promoting neighborhood development. Specifically, Carman (2001)
identifies various ways through which community foundations can support community development. They use their discretionary funds to provide operating or project support for CDCs and form partnerships, establish donor-advised funds dedicated to neighborhood-based development, provide project or operating support for CDCs, and make program-related investments (PRIs).

4. Policy Engagement

A growing body of nonprofit research suggests that local nonprofits and foundations play important roles at different moments in the policy process, including problem definition, agenda setting, policy diffusion, policy implementation and evaluation (Bushouse & Mosley, 2018; Ferris & Mintrom, 2009; Leroux, 2006; Leroux & Goerdel, 2009; Reckhow, 2013; Suárez & Hwang, 2008; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). Besides influencing the policy process, they also engage in various policy-making venues (e.g., legislative bodies, school agencies, and the courts) across local, state, and national levels of government (Ferris & Mintrom, 2009). Unlike private foundations, community foundations enjoy a wide latitude for engagement in public policy work. By being 501(c)(3) public charities, they are legally allowed to lobby so long as it comprises an insubstantial amount of the organization's total activities ¹. They are not required to distribute 5% of net investment income every year.

¹ The IRS considers a variety of factors, including the time devoted (by both compensated and volunteer workers) and the expenditures devoted by the organization to lobbying activity, when determining whether it is substantial. Organizations (other than churches and private foundations) may elect the expenditure test under section 501(h) as an alternative method for measuring lobbying activity, see https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/measuring-lobbying-activity-expenditure-test
Policy engagement is not limited to and needs to surpass convening for dialogues. Interviews conducted by Millesen and Martin (2014) revealed that while community foundations led convening efforts that bring in perspectives and opinions, more often than not, the leadership efforts seemed to perish after the convening ends. Little meaningful change takes place as a result. Their findings are a case in point that convening might be a necessary but not sufficient condition for community leadership to take place. It demands rallying political action for addressing public problems (Ferris & Mintrom, 2009; Millesen & Martin, 2014).

As Ballard (2007) proposes, “community foundations that are serious about community leadership must be conversant with public policy” (p.5). Using their grantmaking abilities combined with their relationships and knowledge networks, foundations engage in direct advocacy for changes in public policy and social norms, work to forge coalitions and build a critical mass of advocates pressing for policy change (Easterling, 2011; Ferris & Mintrom, 2009). For instance, a recent study by Suárez, Husted, & Casas (2018) investigates community foundations’ mobilizing and advocacy efforts to influence public policy by proposing or endorsing ideas and by mobilizing stakeholders for social change. Some engage in online advocacy through social media and target policymakers to drive policy change (G. Saxton & Guo, 2014).

Furthermore, foundation grantmaking can be a part of the public policy engagement through funding nonprofits that engage in advocacy and organizing that resonate with the foundation’s values and mission (Ferris, Hentschke, & Harmssen, 2008; Ferris & Mintrom, 2009). Besides, community philanthropic actors can engage in public problem solving by building an active citizenry through mobilizing civic and political
participation in volunteering, voting, and protests and collective action behaviors for promoting policy change (K. A. Grønbjerg, 2006).

5. Partnering

One of the greatest strengths of grantmaking intermediaries is their capacity to spin sectoral boundaries due to their "institutional flexibility, range of boundary-crossing relationships, civic standing, and ability to see and connect the pieces into a larger whole" (Hamilton et al., 2004b, p. 3). Community leaders rely on collaborating with and leading efforts in the community to create policy changes that combat the most significant problems facing the region and shift their focus from organization-level goals to network-level impacts (Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Wei-Skillern & Silver, 2013).

Beyond gauging the size of the grants or endowments, these change-making foundations spent considerable time and resources to work with nonprofits, community partners, and change leaders (Graddy & Morgan, 2006). Through leveraging relationships, local knowledge of the issues, and trust, they bring people together to address problems (Graddy & Morgan, 2006). Through fostering strategic connections, community foundations also grow local leadership and broker regional solutions for achieving systems change (Ballard, 2007).

Specifically, philanthropic organizations collaborate with local governments and partners for local systems reform and partnering for cross-sector policy solutions (Ferris & Williams, 2010; Hamilton et al., 2004; Shumate & O’Connor, 2010). Lowe (2004) provided detailed case studies showing the community foundations’ roles by Cleveland Foundation, Greater New Orleans Foundation, and Dade Community Foundation, in
creating and funding new community development collaboratives that fiscally supported local community development corporations (CDCs). These community foundations served as the bridge to connect CDCs with public, private, and non-profit sectors for improving neighborhood revitalization and providing affordable housing in local communities.

Besides funding new intermediaries, community foundations join forces with other local leaders and grantees to address specific policy issues in concerted efforts. For example, Hamilton et al. (2004) present the Rhode Island Foundation’s work to shape community discourse through a partnership with KIDS COUNT. The foundation treated communications on the policy knowledge as a core part of the foundation’s mission and as a critical aspect of its grantees’ work, aiming to shift the public agenda by increasing public awareness, expanding public engagement, and building public will for the long term. The partnership benefited both the grantees and the foundation, which learned to communicate on issues and embraced its institutional role in community change.

6. Strategizing

Finally, the extant literature on community leadership highlights the capacity in strategizing their "theory of change" and defining their roles in leading community change (Daly, 2008). Strategizing is one of the essential features of community leadership (Graddy & Morgan, 2006). Specifically, strategizing involves how community foundations envision desired policy changes in communities. They employ community change strategies (such as a strategic plan or a theory of change) to guide foundations to
achieve specific policy goals. It implies that foundations maintain autonomy and independence to achieve their strategic goals.

Recognizing the limited resources they have to meet the challenges, foundations increasingly emphasize on strategic philanthropy (Hammack & Smith, 2018a). When scarcity meets with the multiplicity of community needs and stakeholder inputs, community leaders face a strategic choice about how to marry public needs with private commitments (Frumkin, 2006). Often, the envisioning process involves prioritizing and choosing the policy goals of the community (Frumkin, 2002).

Foundations' strategic visions and plans can be manifested through their grantmaking priorities in selected policy areas, community foundation initiatives, as well as a long-term strategic plan that guides foundations’ future work. Strategic planning helps organizations translate goals into actionable steps (Graddy & Morgan, 2006). Standardization and professionalization also facilitated leaders to contemplate their strategic direction explicitly (Graddy & Morgan, 2006).

However, more studies emerged recently to warn about the threats brought by the growth of donor-advised funds, which can undermine the autonomous leadership of community leadership to strategize their grantmaking and leadership efforts. With donor-advised funds, donors make the gift to the community foundation and recommend grants to fund charities and causes designated by donors, which are not necessarily the highest priorities for the communities. Hence, community foundations might struggle to strike the right balance between donor priorities and community demands, when some community members who are also the donors might have a louder voice to influence the
objectives of funds at the grantmaking table. Community leadership in the capacities of strategizing and convening can help maintain foundation autonomy in determining the course of change and allows communities ownership and control in community agenda-setting (Remmer & Ruth, 2015).

2.4 Data and Method

To triangulate the proposed conceptual framework, I gathered empirical evidence elicited from a semi-automated content analysis of 555 annual reports of community foundation across the United States. While existing studies have increasingly used mission statements as an indication for organizational orientation and strategies, I realized that the mission statements of community foundations were very much alike and too general to provide clear and reliable evidence of exercising community leadership. Although their mission statements state the term "community leadership" or "leadership" when verified with their websites and annual reports, I found that many do not de facto implement programs or initiatives that correspond to "community leadership," nor do the usage of "leadership" terms necessarily conforms to the conceptual definitions provided by the literature. Hence, empirical rigor requires more detailed and more substantive organizational descriptions for a reliable, in-depth analysis.

In contrast with mission statements, annual reports serve as a relatively accessible and transparent source for documenting community foundation commitment to community leadership. Annual reports are an important accountability tool for nonprofit organizations to communicate their yearly performance as well as organizational visions, values, and goals with donors, community partners, and public stakeholders both online
and offline. Specifically, annual reports can provide observable evidence to specific activities and organizational actions over the year that proxy various community leadership capacities, which is not widely available for research (Powell et al., 2016).

**Data Analysis: A Semi-Automatic Approach**

To understand organizational practices, social scientists commonly use content analysis to study texts such as interview transcripts and archival reports. Content analysis is the process of identifying and labeling conceptually significant features in text, referred to as “coding” (Miles and Huberman, 1994). However, the traditional approach to content analysis requires human coding; analyzing large textual data is labor-intensive and expensive. On the other hand, while computers offer large-scale processing capabilities to deal with systematic patterns, they are not able to understand the contexts and the more subtle meanings in texts. Hence, full automation of qualitative content analysis can be unreliable without a large pool of training examples in the first place (Yan et al., 2014).

This study adopts a semi-automated approach that combines machine coding and manual coding for analyzing the content of annual reports (Litofcenko et al., 2019; Suárez et al., 2018b; Yan et al., 2014). After gathering a nation-wide list of community foundations (Wu, 2019), I was able to download the most recent annual reports of 555 community foundations available on their websites and then extracted the text data for analysis.

**Coding Procedures**

As an overview, the analytic process took place in three steps. As the first step of content coding, I developed a dictionary of keywords for each aspect of the community
leadership construct by drawing theoretical insights from the literature and empirical data of 50 hand-coded annual reports. The dictionaries served as conceptual anchor points for computer coding in the second stage in which I used the dictionaries to automatically identify and label relevant terms within the text (Yan et al., 2014). In the third step, I manually reviewed and verified all machine identified codes to ensure accuracy and removed those that were not. With this semi-automated approach, I created a massive pool of “golden label” training examples (N = 5,779) for building predictive machine learning models in future studies.

For implementing the second and third steps, I employed NVivo 12 Pro. This qualitative data analysis software is commonly used for qualitative content analysis to enhance the transparency and trustworthiness of the coding process (Kaefer et al., 2015). Particularly, NVivo brings in more flexibility to organize multi-media data and integrate thicker descriptions in the qualitative data analysis. The use of the NVivo program also makes comparing coding with another coder more accessible. After importing 555 annual reports in the text (.txt) format, I ran a “Text Search” query to search for exact matches or stemmed words from the dictionaries that are relevant to the six constructs of community leadership capacities respectively (see the list of keywords in Table 2.1, and initial coding results in Appendix 2). As an example, the first stem “conven” allowed us to find references in annual reports that had words with the same stems, such as the word “convening” and the word “convened.” After running the Text Search, I reviewed the results and removed those irrelevant coding and finetuned the dictionaries iteratively. I considered including many other keywords besides those listed in Table 1, but for the
purposes of achieving greater conceptual cogency and validity, I shortlisted the key terms that align with the constructs while minimizing noise in the data.

Table 2.1 Definitions and Indicators for Analyzing Community Leadership Capacities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Lexicons †</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Convening</td>
<td>• CFs convene community meetings for conversations among multi-stakeholders including donors, nonprofits, community members, policymakers and corporations for discussing and addressing local issues; CFs make grants to support such events. Examples: <em>“On the Table” event</em> • Community-wide talks and discussions</td>
<td>• conven • conver • “discussions” • public discussion • community discussion • gather • deliberat • panel • conference • townhall • forum • dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Knowledge Building</td>
<td>• CFs disseminate and gather knowledge and information regarding local needs and policy issues Examples: <em>Community needs assessment, e.g., Vital Signs</em> • Sharing information regarding policy issues through reports and newsletters • Evidence-based policy solutions</td>
<td>• public knowledge • local knowledge • community knowledge • needs assessment • community assessment • survey • questionnaire • indicator • data • publish research<del>4 • conduct research</del>4, • evidence-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Capacity Building</td>
<td>• CFs provide training workshops for community members, nonprofit organizations to increase their civic or organizational capacity Examples: <em>Capacity training for nonprofits, e.g., board governance, social media use</em></td>
<td>• capacity building • nonprofit leader • nonprofit network • professional development • workshop • civic training • civic leadership • civic education • organizational performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4. Policy Engagement | • CFs engage in policy advocacy, lobbying, address specific policy issues, encourage citizens’ civic and political participation for tackle with policy issues  
Examples:  
• Clear indication of policy areas for change  
• Advocacy initiatives, and events of contest, march, voting or other forms of political participation | • Advocat  
• Advoc  
• Advocaci  
• Lobbi  
• public polic  
• justic  
• social justic  
• civil rights  
• equalit  
• reform  
• protest  
• ralli * not reliable  
• legisl  
• congress  
• judici  
• grassroot  
• submit idea  
• public policy  
• rights |
|---|---|---|
| 5. Partnering | • CFs actively partner with other organizations, businesses, government for addressing local issues through setting up initiatives or partnership arrangement, beyond grantmaking relationship  
Examples:  
• Mention of partners and initiatives that involve other organizations to address certain issues | • Partner  
• Collaborat  
• Cross-sector  
• Taskforc  
• Coalition |
| 6. Strategizing | • CFs provide strategic plans for advancing community change, indicate specific community areas for change, make strategic investment on impact  
Examples:  
• Strategic plans for community  
• Selective areas of advancing change | • Strategic plan  
• Strateg  
• Priorit  
• Priority areas  
• Focus areas  
• Impact areas  
• Policy areas |
Indicators of Community Leadership Capacities

For this exploratory study, I created three indicators to map out community leadership capacities of community foundations by each dimension, each combination, and an additive index.

A Single Dimension Indicator: First, I constructed (i) six dummy variables of each community leadership dimension, coded as “1” if there was at least one corresponding coding reference found in an annual report, and coded as “0” if there was none.

An Additive Index: To gauge the overall community leadership capacities of community foundations, I created (ii) an additive index by summing up the six dummy indicators (Kim & Rabjohn, 1980).

A Combined Capacities Indicator: Besides mapping the frequency and nature of community leadership capacities, I computed and gauged (iii) all the unique combinations of community leadership capacities that foundations partake.

2.5 Descriptive Results and Case Examples

I. Individual Dimensions of Community Leadership Capacities

As seen in Table 2.2, which depicts the summary statistics of each community leadership dimension, most community foundations practiced at least one dimension of community leadership capacities (N=519). Nonetheless, rather than taking a balancing
approach of all six aspects, the results reveal that community foundations are inclined to practice certain aspects of community leadership capacities.

Table 2.2 Summary Statistics of Community Leadership Dimensions ($N = 555$)

<table>
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<th>%</th>
<th>No (coded as “0”)</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>Convening</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>332</td>
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<td>Knowledge Building</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Engagement</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnering</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategizing</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.2 Community Leadership Capacities by Each Dimension exhibits the varying patterns across the six capacities of community leadership. The most popular aspect is Partnering ($N=348$), with more than 63 percent of community foundations partnered with other nonprofits, corporations, and policymakers in creating cross-sector initiatives to address specific policy issues. The qualitative analysis reveals many examples that exemplify how community foundations partnered with for launching community-wide initiatives. For instance, Community Foundation of Orange County based in California launched the Orange County Veterans Initiative (OCVI)$^2$ that partnered with corporations and nonprofits to provide mental health services to more than 17,000 veterans and their families as well as help with transitioning to a civilian life that offers steady employment and stable housing. The Idaho Community Foundation partnered with the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation For Health (a private foundation) and Idaho Rural Partnership (a

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government entity) to launch the Idaho Rural Health Coalition Voice of the Community Project, that aims at addressing health inequality in Idaho.

Figure 2.2 Community Leadership Capacities by Each Dimension

Nearly half of the samples partook in Policy Engagement (N=280). Specifically, the qualitative data show that many foundations directly took part in driving advocacy and policy engagement and indirectly so through giving grants to advocacy organizations to support policy causes. Brooklyn’s community foundation is a case in point. With 104 policy engagement lexicons found, its 2019 annual report demonstrates the foundation’s strategic focus on racial justice and to “lead with advocacy” for systems-level change and to address root causes. Its grants funded many justice-based nonprofit organizations for supporting their advocacy work and direct services, such as Brownsville Justice Center, Resilience Advocacy Project, Youth Advocacy Corps, Girls for Gender Equity, and many others. It also launched the Brooklyn Restorative Justice Project in 2015, a partnership
with the NYC Department of Education and the Mayor’s Leadership Team to advance school discipline reform. Another example is “Educate Texas,” an educational initiative of the Communities Foundation of Texas. As its 2019 annual report indicated, its “collaborative advocacy efforts with educators, policy experts, practitioners and leaders” led to the passage of House Bill 3. The bill will reform the school finance system to “incentivize teacher excellence, focus on student outcomes, prioritize full-day pre-K for eligible four-year-olds, and increase funding and equity in schools across the state of Texas.” Noticeably, some community foundations only indirectly took part in policy engagement by granting funds to support advocacy organizations. For instance, while the Community Foundation of Middlesex County does not explicitly adopt a social justice approach, it has funded an advocacy nonprofit called The Center for Children’s Advocacy.

Similarly, close to half of the foundation samples demonstrated community leadership capacity in Capacity Building (N=260). Besides, making capacity-building grants to nonprofit organizations, they offer training workshops and professional development opportunities to both the public and nonprofit workforce. Taking the Community Foundation of Greater New Britain as an example. In 2018, the Foundation introduced a new “Capacity Building Initiative” that offers an online nonprofit resource library and a series of hands-on workshops to around 40 nonprofits on issues including fundraising, succession planning, marketing, and board engagement. Similarly, the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole and other foundations alike also provided professional development workshops, technical support, and capacity-building grants to support nonprofits to build greater capacity.
More than one-third of the samples played a leadership role in *Convening* 
(*N*=223), *Knowledge Building* (*N*=199), and *Strategizing* (*N*=196). Examples of 
practicing convening capacity include hosting public forums and town hall meetings, and 
community dialogues. Exemplars can be found among Philadelphia Foundation, 
Community Foundation of Central Georgia, Lake County’s Community Foundation, 
Northern Chautauqua Community Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, 
which organized "On The Table" events. They invited participants to engage in open 
dialogue and policy conversations that intend to gather people’s voices and inspire local 
solutions to community-specific issues.

Some of them took a more knowledge-driven approach to build and share policy 
knowledge with the community through publishing formal reports, such as Boston 
Indicators, a research center under the Boston Foundation, which published community 
assessment report "Changing Faces of Greater Boston." Besides looking at the wider 
trends, the data reveal that some community foundations solicited community inputs on 
specific topics from the bottom up. For instance, with the Community Leadership 
Planning Grant from Lilly Endowment, Community Foundation of Grant County in 
Indiana garnered bottom-up data on child poverty through The Voices Project. It 
conducted focus group interviews with 500 people, who are either in poverty, were once 
in poverty, prone to Poverty or serving those in poverty. The interviews generated more 
than 60 hours of recorded conversations that provided qualitative data and shared 
knowledge on how and why people experience poverty as well as the best practices that 
help combat poverty.
Surprisingly, *Strategizing* is the least found aspect of community leadership from annual reports. Not too many community foundations explicitly stated the existence of their strategic plans nor delineated their funding priorities or focus areas, albeit many set up special interest funds and donor-advised funds designated for certain funding goals. Some examples of foundations that deeply involve in strategizing include Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta. Besides instituting a strategic plan, it prioritized grantmaking, partnerships, and policy in five specific impact areas: Art, community development, education, nonprofit effectiveness and wellbeing. The Community Foundation serving inland Southern California also specified their five focus areas in its annual report: arts and culture; education; health and human services; environment and capacity building.

II. An Additive Index of Community Leadership Capacities

To inspect how frequent community foundations practiced community leadership across the six dimensions, we need to take an aggregated view. As seen in Figure 2.3, on the far-left side are the community foundations that did not engage in any of the capacities \((N=72)\), representing close to 13 percent of the sample. On the far-right side, we have community foundations practicing all six forms of community leadership \((N=51)\), which constitute less than one-tenth of the sample. While nearly a hundred community foundations embodied only one aspect \((18\%\) percent), 60 percent of community foundations fell in between and performed up to five community leadership capacities simultaneously.
The empirical results seem to suggest that community leadership is not necessarily an all-or-nothing choice but a continuum. To illustrate, if we define community leadership in the sense of achieving all six aspects, we will see that only 9 percent of community foundations engaged in community leadership. However, placing the concept in a continuum ranging from one to six dimensions, then 87 percent of them took part in community leadership at various degrees.

**Figure 2.3 An Additive Index of Community Leadership Capacities**

![Bar chart showing the distribution of community leadership capacities across different levels.]

### III. All Unique Combinations of Community Leadership Capacities

To examine the configurations of capacities beyond the aggregated number, I further studied a total of 58 unique combinations of community leadership across 555 community foundations. Figure 2.4 lists out the top 60 percent of the unique combinations in descending order of prevalence. Besides, one noticeable pattern is that many foundations focused on one dimension of community leadership capacities, for
instance, *Partnering* (the 3\(^{\text{rd}}\)), *Policy Engagement* (the 6\(^{\text{th}}\)), *Knowledge Building* (the 9\(^{\text{th}}\)), *Strategizing* (the 13\(^{\text{th}}\)) and *Capacity Building* (the 14\(^{\text{th}}\)).

**Figure 2.4 Top Combinations of Community Leadership Capacities**

Besides engaging in all six forms of community leadership capacities (2\(^{\text{nd}}\)), other combinations also stand out, such as Partnering and Knowledge Building (the 4\(^{\text{th}}\)), Policy Engagement and Partnering (the 8\(^{\text{th}}\)), and three to five capacities in configurations (the 5\(^{\text{th}}\), 7\(^{\text{th}}\), 10\(^{\text{th}}\)). Echoing the results for the individual dimensions, analyzing the combination reveals that the community leadership capacities of *Convening*, *Knowledge Building*, and *Strategizing* are relatively scarce while *Partnering*, *Capacity Building*, and *Policy Engagement* are more prevalent among community foundations.

### 2.6 Discussions and Conclusion

This study aims to provide greater theoretical clarity to the construct of community leadership. In this paper, I have synthesized existing literature to explore the
theoretical constructs of community leadership. I corroborated the proposed conceptual framework with empirical evidence elicited from annual reports to provide a descriptive scan of 555 community foundations and illustrate the framework with examples. By offering a conceptual framework and empirical operationalization of community leadership capacities, this paper contributes to advancing future research and guiding nonprofit leaders to make intentional investments in their organizations, strategizing their ways to exercise community leadership.

The exploratory analysis of annual reports shows that community foundations are more inclined to realize certain aspects of community leadership, but not necessarily all six components, as identified from the literature. It follows that when we refer a nonprofit organization to practice community leadership, how we define the concept matters greatly—because it affects how we will recognize, interpret and measure corresponding community leadership activities taken place. To factor in the fluidity of the community leadership concept, its empirical measurement might range from a singular dimension, combinations of dimensions, or the full ranges of community leadership capacities in Convening, Knowledge Building, Capacity Building, Policy Engagement, Partnering, and Strategizing.

Nonetheless, a caveat is warranted as to what the “right threshold” or “right recipe” for community leadership should be. While this study reveals that the practice of community leadership does not seem to be a binary choice, this study does not suggest a panacea to these challenging questions. Instead, it might be more appropriate to recognize that organizations develop their unique recipes, picking and choosing the aspects of community leadership that capitalize on the use of resources, and improves the ability to
meet the organizational missions. Further debates and analyses will help bring more clarity to what community leadership is and should entail.

The various community leadership capacities across community foundations also highlight the potential gaps and shortfalls of community leadership in practice. In particular, the sample shows that community foundations did not commonly practice *Convening, Knowledge Building* and *Strategizing*, which are three important components that define the capacities of a community leader to coalesce people and knowledge with strategic visions to serve the communities (Fung, 2015; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Phillips et al., 2016). Since the capacities of convening and knowledge building require different skillsets and expertise that foundations do not traditionally have, institutional adjustments pose key challenges for community foundations to expand and develop their leadership roles (Hamilton et al., 2004; Millesen & Martin, 2014). Taking a more assertive leadership role might also be intimidating to foundation boards, considering that it might go against the tradition to be a neutral facilitator and foundation’s visions might or might not please donors’ wishes (Easterling, 2011; Millesen & Martin, 2014; Reynolds, 2008). However, the adverse implications might be that grantees and community members are not necessarily guaranteed a voice at the grantmaking table, and foundations are not necessarily accountable to their community at large (Guo & Musso, 2007; Knutsen & Brower, 2016). These pitfalls are also commonly associated with the traditional banking model, which is described as donor-driven (Ostrander, 2007; Reynolds, 2008).

In contrast, the aspects of community leadership in Capacity Building, Policy Engagement, and Partnering are more favorable among community foundations. The case examples highlighted the intermediary role of philanthropic foundations in the
policy process (Bushouse, 2017; Bushouse & Mosley, 2018). Community foundations can build collaborative advocacy and policy networks with nonprofits and partners to effect policy change (deLeon & Varda, 2009), or deepen the pre-existing “resource” ties with nonprofits by supporting their operations and advocacy efforts (Millesen et al., 2010; Suárez et al., 2018b). Community foundations are known to be locally embedded and well connected with multi-stakeholders, tapping into local networks, and partnering might be one of their innate qualities (Hamilton et al., 2004). Furthermore, the data show that capacity building and policy engagement are interwoven into the grantmaking programs of community foundations to fund advocacy agenda and capacity building opportunities. As also illustrated in the case studies by Bushouse and Mosley (2018), foundations attempt to influence agenda setting by funding networks of advocacy organizations to champion specific policy frames and alternatives.

The empirical results are largely contingent on the dictionaries developed for the semi-automated analysis. Collaborative coding by another coder can further refine these dictionaries. With little being known, I believe this exploratory study charts a new course and paves ways to a few lines of future studies. Given that the literature remains reticent on why and how community foundations varied in the degrees of practicing community leadership, future research can investigate the factors that might explain nonprofits’ dispositions toward each form and configurations of community leadership capacities. Specifically, theories have highlighted the potential factors, including but not excluded to organizational resources and leadership (Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Millesen & Martin, 2014), community environment (Graddy & Wang, 2009; Guo & Brown, 2006; Wu, 2019), institutional factors (Barman, 2007; J. Ferris & Mintrom, 2009; Irvin & Kavvas,
2019; Ostrander, 2007). These factors might affect not only whether or not but also the extent to which community foundations choose to prioritize their resources to practice community leadership partially or fully.

This study takes a cross-sectional approach to explore the exercise of community leadership; future endeavors can explore whether foundations practiced ad hoc leadership and how community leadership evolved (Anheier & Hammack, 2010; Ballard, 2007; Hammack & Anheier, 2013; Irvin & Kavvas, 2019). Furthermore, future endeavors examining the impact and effectiveness of taking on community leadership will help examine normative claims in the field of community philanthropy (Ballard, 2007; Bernholz et al., 2005; Millesen & Martin, 2014).
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### Appendix 1: Selected Literature on Community Leadership

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<td>Ostrower, F.</td>
<td>The relativity of foundation effectiveness: the case of community foundations.</td>
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<td>Phillips, S., Bird, L., Carlton, L., &amp; Rose, L.</td>
<td>Knowledge as leadership, belonging as community: how canadian community foundations are using vital signs for social change.</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>The Foundation Review</td>
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<td>Suárez, D. F.</td>
<td>Grant making as advocacy: The emergence of social justice philanthropy.</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>Barclay, A.</td>
<td>The Value of Giving Circles in the Evolution of Community Philanthropy How community-based philanthropy can be strengthened by forging a bond between community foundations and Black giving circles in the United States.</td>
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<td>Bernholz, L.</td>
<td>Philanthropy and Digital Civil Society: Blueprint 2019.</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td>Bernholz, L., Skloot, E., &amp; Varela, B.</td>
<td>Disrupting philanthropy Technology and the Future of the Social Sector.</td>
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<td>Brown, W. A., &amp; Guo, C.</td>
<td>Exploring the key roles for nonprofit boards.</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>Rader, D. G.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Advancing Community Leadership Through Donor Engagement.</td>
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### Appendix 2 Machine Dictionary Coding Before Manual Verification

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PAPER 3

Online Public Engagement and Donor Influence:
Qualitative and Computational Analysis of Social Media Messages

Abstract
This paper examines the various ways community foundations engage with their public constituents on social media, and how this engagement is shaped by donor influence. I combined content analysis and computational methods to identify, predict, and analyze public engagement messages of 192 community foundations on Twitter. The analysis of 4,055 social media messages reveals four mechanisms of public engagement, including (1) Mobilization, (2) Advocacy, (3) Conversation, (4) Knowledge Sharing. Given the growing popularity of Donor-advised funds (DAF), the paper then examined how donor influence through DAF might shape the ways these organizations engage with their constituents. The results of a structural topic model reveal that strong donor influence at the grantmaking table tends to promote community foundations' roles to advocate and to educate but lessen their roles to mobilize and converse with the public. The article contributes to the existing literature by identifying the main mechanisms of public engagement and empirically tested the relationship between donor-advised funds and public engagement behaviors of community foundations using qualitative and computational approaches.

Keywords: public engagement, donor-advised funds, social media, machine learning
3.1 Introduction

Literature has long recognized the multiple-constituency nature of nonprofit organizations (Herman & Renz, 1997). Across the charitable and philanthropic field, community foundations are unique in the sense that they are grantmaking foundations and publicly supported 501(c)(3) nonprofits with missions to serve the wellbeing of the designated communities. However, as philanthropy tends to be supply- or donor-led, ongoing debates linger on whether community foundations can serve both the donors and the communities well when their priorities might differ and even conflict with each other (Bushouse et al., 2016; Frumkin, 2006; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Guo & Brown, 2006; Jung et al., 2013; Knutsen, 2012; Knutsen & Brower, 2016; Ostrander, 2007; Rader, 2010). On the one hand, a growing body of literature has underscored the importance of embracing greater public engagement and participation in foundations’ work (Ballard, 2007; Bernholz et al., 2005; Bushouse & Mosley, 2018; Eikenberry, 2007; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Jung et al., 2013; Phillips et al., 2016; Suárez et al., 2018b). The rise of donor-advised funds (hereafter, DAF) in their funding portfolio might stealthily disrupt or even reverse this momentum.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) defines a donor-advised fund as a separately identified fund or account that is maintained and operated by a section 501(c)(3) organization. While the organization has legal control over the funds, donors of DAF retain advisory privileges for the distribution of funds and the investment of assets in the account. Over the past decade, the philanthropic field witnessed tremendous growth in DAF. Notably, National Philanthropic Trust (2019) reported grantmaking from donor-
advised funds to charities has nearly doubled in the past five years. In 2018, DAF supported $23.42 billion grants, among which $6.59 billion were administered by community foundations, which has surged over 13 percent in the past five years. Figure 3.1 showcases the growing proportion of grants administered from DAF accounts at community foundations over the years.

Figure 3.1 Proportion of Grants administered from DAF accounts at Community Foundations from 2009 to 2017

It is troubling, then, when donors of DAF largely decide grant distributions, the role of community foundations in responding to community needs are increasingly “directed” by these donors. Knowing that the ultimate grantmaking decisions might be “out of hand”, it is possible that foundations do not see the need to engage their community constituents in their day-to-day communication. While the literature seems to suggest a weakening relationship with their constituents with greater donor power, we know little about how philanthropic foundations engage their constituents, and how DAF might affect their engagement behaviors. This study fills in this theoretical gap and asks: How might donor influence at the grantmaking table shape or even weaken public engagement efforts of community foundations? Understanding how donor influence
might shape their public engagement efforts can provide important insights into the power dynamics between the community constituents, donors, and foundations.

To address this research question, I investigated online public engagement behaviors of community foundations on a social media platform, namely Twitter. Specifically, compared to offline settings, social media platforms such as Twitter offer scholars accessible data to observe their communication behaviors with their public stakeholders. Although the social media arena is not necessarily the perfect avenue for fostering in-depth engagement, they allow researchers to peek into the day-to-day communication of organizations with their stakeholders that are not easily accessible in offline communication. Given the lack of access to foundations’ interpersonal communication, social media can be one of the useful avenues for observing their engagement behaviors with the public.

I collected the data from the Twitter accounts of 192 U.S. community foundations from September 1, 2016 to September 1, 2017. Among the 66,749 tweets in the raw data, I focused on examining public engagement messages sent by community foundations that involved the community for improving community wellbeing or addressing policy problems. To carefully identify these tweets, I developed a three-stage approach in identifying and predicting public engagement tweets and then exploring the underlying themes of these tweets. First, I conducted a content analysis to study the content of random stratified sample tweets and manually classified them based on a pre-developed coding scheme. This classification process identified 13,438 “gold” labels. The second step was then to train a supervised prediction model using these coded tweets, which
identified a total of 6,331 public engagement tweets within the raw data. Finally, I used a structural topic model that discovered underlying topics in public engagement messages and performed a linear regression analysis of the topics with a covariate of our interest—donor influence ($N=4,057$). In other words, the empirical approach of this paper is to analyze the themes of public engagement tweets, which is the unit of analysis.

Combining the results derived from the content analysis and the topic model resulted in theorizing four mechanisms of public engagement, abbreviated as "MACK," ranging from (1) Mobilization, (2) Advocacy, (3) Conversation, (4) Knowledge. The topic model reveals that strong donor influence tends to promote community foundations’ roles to advocate and to educate but lessen their roles to mobilize and converse with the public. The results show that when DAF funded at least a majority of grants, public engagement messages tend to be dominated by one-way communication through sharing policy knowledge, albeit coupled with policy advocacy. Themes in mobilization and conversations that involve two-way interactions between the foundations and the public become significantly less.

This paper makes three contributions to nonprofit scholarship. First, this study addresses the paucity of research in understanding the ways through which local philanthropic actors engage citizens for addressing public problems and advancing policy agenda (Berger and Neuhaus 1997; Bushouse 2017; Eikenberry 2007; J. Ferris and Harmssen 2009; Ferris and Mintrom 2009; Fyall 2016; Guo and Musso 2007; Clark and Record 2017). Second, through examining the social media communication of community foundations, I provided empirical evidence that contributes to the ongoing
debates concerning donor-advised funds and public engagement. Third, this study made methodological innovation in triangulating both qualitative and computational techniques to analyze large-scale social media text data, providing a useful guide for future research that draws on social media data.

3.2 Literature Review

Multi-stakeholder Dilemma in Philanthropic Triad

Philanthropic organizations translating donors’ private desires into public problem-solving involves a delicate balance on marrying public needs with private visions. As independent, private endowments dedicated to serving a public purpose, philanthropic foundations are among the freest and most resourceful civil society institutions of modern society to respond to public challenges (Anheier & Leat, 2018; Ferris & Mintrom, 2009; Hammack, 1990). However, with limited oversights and potentially undue donor influence, increasing concerns permeate over whether these civil society actors are responsive to the public on the ground and can mediate between donor influence and community needs (Berger & Neuhaus, 1997; B. Bushouse & Mosley, 2018; Guo & Musso, 2007; Ostrander, 2007; Reckhow, 2013; Tompkins-Stange, 2016).

As nonprofits and foundations alike depend on donors' contributions and resources to fund their operations, the issue of the potential dominating power of donors has wide-reaching implications to the nonprofit field. Nonetheless, the multi-stakeholder tensions are arguably more salient among community foundations. Given that they are publicly supported charities, community foundations face dual accountability to donors and the communities they serve (Bushouse et al., 2016; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Guo &
Brown, 2006; Jung et al., 2013; Knutsen, 2012; Knutsen & Brower, 2016). Figure 3.2 below illustrates the triad relationships among community foundations, their donors, and constituents.

**Figure 3.2 Illustration of Philanthropic Relationships**

![Figure 3.2 Illustration of Philanthropic Relationships](image)

**Momentum Towards Community Leadership and Public Engagement**

In recent decades, a rising expectation directed at community foundations, calling them to take on a proactive, catalytic approach to strengthen their ties with the community through greater public engagement (Ballard, 2007; Bernholz et al., 2005; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Jung et al., 2013; Phillips et al., 2016). Public engagement is an important attribute that distinguishes community foundations from private foundations and commercial counterparts—the commitment to involving local people in decisions about how to change their communities for the better (Ballard, 2007; Phillips et al., 2016; Rader, 2010; Sacks, 2014).

Extant studies have recognized organizational and societal benefits of engaging constituents through nonprofit organizations. For instance, place-based nonprofit actors are locally embedded and have local networks and expertise in gaining frontline and first-hand knowledge of community needs. Thus, they can serve as an intermediary to inform
policy entrepreneurs of local knowledge (Bushouse & Mosley, 2018). Through facilitating public discussions and public problem-solving on issues that matter to communities, they participate in co-production and co-governance arrangements to address complex problems and strengthen local governance (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006).

Furthermore, public engagement serves as an essential ingredient for striking a balance and upkeeping the social aspect of philanthropy (Nickel & Eikenberry, 2009; Ostrander, 2007). Through channeling and tapping into community inputs and leading collective action on tacking perplexing issues, community foundations might acquire higher public trust and legitimacy (Moore, 2000). Studies also found that organizations that gain greater public visibility, legitimacy and public support might, in turn, attract more financial and other resources to serve their communities in the long run (Guo & Saxton, 2017; Moore, 2000; Xu & Saxton, 2019).

**Donor-Advised Funds: The Rise of Donor Control**

Despite the growing consensus in the field toward garnering more community voice, the literature has pointed out that the rise of donor-advised funds might stealthily disrupt or even reverse this momentum. According to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), a donor-advised fund (DAF) is a separately identified fund or account that is maintained and operated by a section 501(c)(3) organization. While the organization has legal control over the funds, donors of DAF retain advisory privileges for the distribution of funds and the investment of assets in the account.
In other words, DAF donors are entitled to recommend grants to fund charities and causes at their discretion, which are not necessarily the highest priorities for the communities. Acceptance of the money might result in the foundation forgoing its grantmaking priorities, dancing to the tune of the donor, jeopardizing its independence, and undermining its leadership role in the community (Reynolds, 2008). As Barman (2007) observed, “donor control concerns not whether, when, or how much donors give, but whether donors attach conditions to their contributions” (Wuthnow 1988; Brandt 1990; Hall 1992; Hoge, Zech, McNamara, and Donahue 1996; Frumkin 1997; Lenkowsky 2002; Salamon 2002). Essentially, as some argued, DAF reinforces the power donors have over foundations that “he who has the gold makes the rules,” these legally endorsed privileges, in essence, ascend donors’ position in the philanthropic relationships as shown in Figure 3.3 (Ostrander, 2007; Reynolds, 2008).

Figure 3.3 Illustration of Donor-driven Philanthropic Relationships

While DAF presents itself as an alternative philanthropic vehicle to traditional contributions, the literature has widely discussed the challenges DAF might bring to community foundations. Under the donor-driven culture, community members are not necessarily guaranteed a voice for defining community issues and co-envisioning
potential courses of actions in grantmaking and strategic planning (Ostrander, 2007; Reynolds, 2008). Even if they are engaged, the engagement may be mere tokenism. Moreover, the use of DAFs cuts out the needs to engage the public other than processing the payments and managing the investment for donors. DAF might reinforce the legacy of the donor-driven model when the focus becomes realizing donors’ charitable interests and provide them with efficient donor services and being a professional, trusted steward (Ballard, 2007). Hammack commented (1989) this model as “the mechanical side of individual philanthropy” whereby keeping scores of asset accumulation and efficient distribution of charitable funds is the goal (Hammack, 1989, p. 30).

**Donor Power Weakens Public Engagement?**

A growing collection of empirical work sheds light on the implications of rising donor power on engagement with community constituents using resource dependence theory, social relations theory, and institutional theory. From a resource dependency standpoint, organizational leaders strive to strategically exert control over the environment in which they are embedded (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Literature drawing from resource dependence theory contends that when nonprofits highly depend on funding for survival and operations, donors being the financial sponsors are likely to "earn" more authority. Donors can dictate how to distribute grants as they see fit without soliciting community inputs and knowledge of community needs. It follows that community foundations which emphasize on donor services might be less willing to engage the community at a decision-making level, especially when they are at their
infancy, fear to change the status quo, or risk losing donor support (Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Guo & Brown, 2006; Millesen & Martin, 2014; Ostrander, 2007; Reynolds, 2008).

Similarly, a social relations perspective conceptualizes philanthropy as a two-way, interactive relationship between donors and recipients (Ostrander & Schervish, 1990). However, donors who control the supply of funds tend to have relatively more power than recipients who express demands for those funds. With the rise of DAF, Ostrander (2007) shared similar concerns about the growth of donor control, highlighting that it “undermines the vitally important contributions that philanthropy and nonprofits can make in providing opportunities for democratic forms of civic engagement.” Community foundations might struggle to strike the right balance between donor priorities and community demands when some community members, who are also the donors, might have a louder voice (i.e., in the form of donor ascendancy) to influence the objectives of funds at the grantmaking table.

Beyond the dyadic ties, the institutional perspective suggests that the external environment shapes organizations, hence organizations survive by conforming to the institutional environment in which it is embedded. Barman (2007) shows that the composition and dynamics of the organizational field determine the strategies of solicitation that nonprofits offer to donors. Hence, neither donors nor nonprofit fundraisers are necessarily autonomous and independent of the broader institutional context. Community foundations facing external pressures from the highly marketized environment and the increasing emphasis on community inputs are required to find ways to respond to these pressures.
However, donor services and community leadership are said to be the least internally consistent model unless foundations can leading donors toward mutual goals (Leonard, 1989). Similarly, previous studies on the commercialization of the nonprofit sector highlighted that many nonprofit and public organizations—formerly driven predominantly by the community and state logics—are increasingly challenged by market and corporate demands for performance measurement and marketization (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Evans et al., 2017; Woolford & Curran, 2012).

To sum up, these theoretical grounds suggest that rising donor power might adversely affect the intensity and forms of public engagement efforts by community foundations. Without suggesting that public engagement will decrease (which is outside the scope of this study), it is likely that when donor-advised funds make up a majority of grants, their public engagement efforts might take place in a superficial level, rather than a deeper form of engagement, to fulfill the expectation for greater community-oriented practices in the field (Friedland & Alford, 1991; March & Olsen, 2004). Hence, this leads to the first research question as follows.

**Research Question:** How might donor control shape or even weaken public engagement behaviors of community foundations?

*Levels and Mechanisms of Public Engagement*

However, in order to understand the effect of donor influence on public engagement behaviors, we need to examine what public engagement entails first. While there are theoretical and strategic motives for engaging the public, little empirical
evidence exists that help us decipher public engagement behaviors of philanthropic actors on the ground. In particular, they do not necessarily practice engagement at the same level or in the same way. Looking into public management and communication literature, I found three theoretical frameworks that help differentiate the levels and mechanisms of public engagement.

One of the useful frameworks is Arnstein’s “Ladder of Citizen Participation” (1969). Arnstein identifies several levels of participation from nonparticipation, tokenism to citizen power based on the degree of power-sharing between the policymakers and the public. On the lower rungs of this ladder are “nonparticipation” in the forms of manipulation, therapy, and placation whereby organizations do not hear or factor in public inputs in the policy decisions; Rising to the levels of “tokenism” informing and consultation, in which people are consulted but lack the decision-making power nor are their opinions followed through; on the higher rungs constituting “citizen power” are partnership, delegated power and citizen control whereby citizens obtain a high or total degree of decision-making or managerial power in governing a program or an institution that affect their communities.

Rowe and Frewer (2005) proposed a typology on classifying public engagement mechanisms based on the nature and flow of information. They categorize three engagement levels in terms of public communication, public consultation, and public participation. The bottom level is "public communication," whereby information is conveyed from the organizations to the public through one-way information flow. Public communication becomes “public consultation” when information is conveyed from
members of the public to the organizations without formal dialogue. At the top level is public participation, when information becomes a two-way exchange between members of the public and the organizations through formal dialogue and negotiation.

Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) conceptualize nonprofit use of social media messages on Twitter from sharing information, building a community, toward mobilizing action. The first level is information that involves disseminating information about the organization, its activities, or anything of potential interest to followers. The second level is “community,” which features dialogic messages through which organizations foster relationships, create networks, and build communities that promote interaction and dialogue with the public, including “bonding” messages, such as thank you and acknowledgment tweets. The third level is “action,” which aims at getting followers to respond by doing something, whether it is to donate, buy a product, attend an event, join a movement, or launch a protest. Taken together, the literature coalesced to two common threads to investigate (1) the types of engagement relationship (i.e., one-way versus two-way direction), and (2) the mechanisms through which community constituents take part in or have influence over their communities or policy process (i.e., the depth of engagement). These conceptual frameworks provide insights to the research question:

**Research Question:** How do community foundations engage community constituents?

Table 3.1 Common themes derived from public engagement literature
### Engagement Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Relationship</th>
<th>Engagement Mechanisms (the depth of engagement)</th>
<th>Conceptual Frameworks of Public Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Org ↔ Public</td>
<td>Participate in org. or policy change</td>
<td>Citizen power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Org ↔ Public</td>
<td>Dialogue and negotiation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Org ← Public</td>
<td>Express opinions</td>
<td>Tokenism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Org → Public</td>
<td>Receive information</td>
<td>Non-participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Observing Online Public Engagement Efforts

A growing body of research has been exploring the role of 501(c)(3) service nonprofits in facilitating civic and political engagement. However, little empirical evidence has shed light on the mechanisms of public engagement behaviors by local philanthropic actors who are increasingly leading community conversations and how donor influence might shape their engagement behaviors (Almog-Bar, 2018; Fyall, 2016; Leroux & Goerdel, 2009; Macindoe & Whalen, 2013). Arguably, part of the reason might be that researchers do not have open access to data on foundations’ interpersonal communication in offline or one-to-one settings, for instance, mails, emails, personal chats, and phone calls (Bernholz et al., 2010; Easterling, 2011). Amid increasingly active citizenry in the digital era, social media platforms might present a promising research avenue for observing and analyzing the public engagement activities of nonprofit and philanthropic actors.
Research has shown that the nonprofit sector is increasingly partaking in strategic communication on social media to attract stakeholders' attention and facilitate engagement and mobilization (An et al., 2017; Guo & Saxton, 2017; G. Saxton & Guo, 2014). Moreover, citizens, government, and civil society actors increasingly use online platforms to interact and participate in public affairs in the hope of driving community and policy change (Gordon & Mihailidis, 2016; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014). Social media can serve as a new platform for researching the interactions between foundations, funders, grantees, and constituents, which is more transparent, nonhierarchical, and instantaneous (Bernholz et al., 2010; Noland & Newton, 2013).

Through mining social media data from the Twitter accounts of community foundations, this study explores two research questions in turn: (1) How do community foundations engage the public on social media? (2) How might donor influence shape their public engagement behaviors?

3.3 Data and Method

The study uses U.S.-based community foundations as the study population. I identified the study subjects from the list of community foundations from the Council on Foundations website (www.cof.org) between 2017 and 2018 and expanded the list. After verifying the status of the organizations, I used a customized Python programming language to collect public tweets from their social media accounts. The data mining process complied with the terms set by the Twitter API to respect Twitter user privacy and the intellectual property of Twitter. The raw dataset 398,808 tweets, representing all of the tweets sent by 405 foundations between 7/31/2008 and 9/23/2017. Because of the
variation in the time of Twitter adoption by different community foundations, this study only looked at their tweets sent between 9/1/2016 and 9/1/2017, when most of the community foundations were active on Twitter, to count for the time lag in the adoption. The 2016-2017 raw dataset includes 92,136 tweets by 367 foundations, with 66,749 unique original tweets (i.e., non-retweets and non-duplicates).

**Mechanisms of Public Engagement**

Like other public platforms, social media messages tend to serve numerous purposes and targeted stakeholders. Thus, the challenge was to identify relevant tweet messages. This study focuses on examining public engagement messages that involve the community for improving community wellbeing or addressing policy problems. Identifying these messages required thoughtful steps to pre-process and clean the data to remove noise before conducting the analysis. I developed a three-stage approach in identifying and predicting public engagement messages and then exploring the underlying themes of these messages, as shown in Figure 3.4.

First, I conducted a content analysis to study random stratified sample messages and manually classified them based on a pre-developed coding scheme. This classification process identified 13,438 “gold” labels: 2,043 true positives (tweets related to public engagement) and 11,395 true negatives (tweets not related to public engagement). The second step was then to train a supervised prediction model using this coded sample. I used 80 percent of the coded sample (N=8,024) to train a machine learning algorithm with high levels of accuracy (87%) and predict the rest of the test sample (N=2,007) and all the unseen data (N=56,718). The training and prediction
processes identified a total of 6,331 public engagement tweets within the full data of 66,749 tweets ready for final thematic analysis. Lastly, to explore the latent themes of all the public engagement related tweets, I used a structural topic model which discovered underlying public engagement topics across the large text corpora of messages. I then performed a linear regression analysis of the topics with a covariate of our interest—donor influence (N=4,057). In other words, the empirical approach of this paper was to analyze the themes of the public engagement message, which was the unit of analysis.

**Figure 3.4 Method Visualization**

**Donor Influence**

The key predictor variable of interest is donor influence in grantmaking, which was a dummy indicator of whether more than half of the grants are received from Donor-Advised Funds (N=4,057). The variable had a value of "1" indicating strong donor influence when more than half of a community foundation's total grants come from
donor-advised fund accounts if not, the value was coded "0," indicating low donor influence. The variable was a ratio of DAF-funded grant amount and total grant amount of a given year. The nominator was a DAF-funded grant amount of a community foundation as found in the electronic filing of 2017 IRS Form 990 Schedule D, Part 1 line 3, which was named "Aggregate value of grants from donor-advised funds (during year)." The denominator was the total grant amount of a community foundation in a given year, which was in Part 1, line 13 of 2017 IRS Form 990 named “Grants and similar amounts paid.” Table 3.2 showcases the summary statistics that juxtapose the public engagement tweet data and the donor influence.

Table 3.2 Summary table of public engagement tweets and donor influence of 192 community foundations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Foundations</th>
<th>Donor Influence (1 = high; 0 = low)</th>
<th>Number of Public Engagement Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>0 (&lt; 50%)</td>
<td>2042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>1 (&gt; 50%)</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Results

Stage 1: Identifying Public Engagement Tweets—Content Analysis

In the first step of the content analysis, I analyzed the tweets based on the primary roles of community foundations as fundraisers, grant-makers, and community leaders. I referred to a stakeholder classification scheme proposed by Saxton and Guo (2014), in which community foundations’ tweets target at one of the three types of primary stakeholders. First, donor-oriented messages, which include tweets for fundraising and
providing service to donors. Second, *grantseekers/nonprofit-oriented* messages, which include tweets that address funding opportunities, grant-writing, managerial needs of charitable organizations, and grantees' works. Third, *community-oriented* messages, which include tweets for community events, volunteering opportunities, and sharing information about community needs.

While being informed by Saxton and Guo’s classification described above, the early rounds of coding have revealed two new categories engendered from *Community-oriented* tweets, namely, Relationship Building and Policy Engagement. Eventually, I classified the 13,614 randomly sampled tweets into four categories that serve the primary purposes of tweet messages: (1) Fundraising (*N*=2,242) Grantmaking (*N*=2,861), (3) Relationship Building (*N*=5,552), and (4) Public Engagement (*N*=2,166) (see codebook in Appendix 1), with 628 nebulous tweets that do not contain interpretable content, such as a URL link.

Due to the large size of tweets, I randomly sampled a small batch of 250 out of 2,166 public engagement messages to conduct in-depth open coding. After creating codes that described the engagement practices and themes for the first 100 tweets, I created a preliminary codebook while adding new codes as they emerged. At this point in the analysis, I consider coding additional data but conclude to have reached saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I then constructed linkages between the codes through axial coding, which resulted in a high-level codebook of 4 thematic categories and 12 sub-themes of engagement practices (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The tweets were then revisited and re-coded to ensure reliability (Williamson et al., 2017). Appendix 2 provides a
detailed codebook of the engagement practices, their overarching themes, and representative messages for each practice.

A closer examination of 250 tweets sent for public engagement purposes led to the development of four conceptual categories and twelve engagement practices through which philanthropic actors engage with the public, namely: (1) Mobilization, (2) Advocacy, (3) Conversation, and (4) Knowledge—the “MACK” framework.

Table 3.3 Proposed Public Engagement Mechanisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Relationship</th>
<th>Proposed Public Engagement Mechanisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Org ↔ Public</td>
<td>Participate in org’s mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participate in policy change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mobilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Org ↔ Public</td>
<td>Dialogue and negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Org ← Public</td>
<td>Express opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Knowledge Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Org → Public</td>
<td>Receive information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Advocacy

The first public engagement mechanism emerged from the tweets is policy advocacy, which involves asserting what organizations believe in and mobilize public support for policy visions and priorities they see for the community (Frumkin, 2002). For instance, as showcased in Appendix 2 Code Book for Content Analysis of Public Engagement Messages (p.161), The San Francisco Foundation tweeted, "Housing is looked at as a profitable good, not as a basic right." The Boston Foundation tweeted, “Immigrants & their families, have made & will continue 2 make Greater Boston, MA &
the U.S.A thrive! #sharedfuture...” These tweets reveal the foundations’ community visions for social and policy change and can steer public awareness and government policy. In some instances, the philanthropic and policy effort successfully changed policy agenda, as shown by the New York Community Trust, "Victory! Our grants backed increasing NY’s age of criminal responsibility to 18. NY Assembly passes #RaiseTheAge...”. While only 12.8% (N=32) of the sampled tweets served the Advocacy function, which is the second least category of all engagement mechanisms.

2. Mobilization

Mobilization involves the mechanisms of mobilizing people and community resources for eliciting policy and community change. Our data reveal at least five ways that community foundations might attract resources and call to community action, including but not excluded to calling for voluntary action (such as community service), political participation (such as voting), collective action (such as protests and marching) and behavior change (such as #PublicTransitDay). While the literature has found ample evidence that nonprofits mobilize citizens in volunteering, political participation and collective action (Leroux, 2006; Leroux & Goerdel, 2009; McDonald, 2011; Shier et al., 2014), the sampled data showed limited mobilizing messages, only 10.8% of messages (N=27) were classified in this category.

3. Conversation

Conversation reflects the public engagement mechanism through which a civil society actor convenes community-wide dialogue on policy issues for multisectoral problem-solving (Fung, 2015). The mechanism of conversation contains two categories,
which identify tweets that (a) invite citizens to engage in informal conversations around community issues and (b) convene a more formal type of public deliberation on specific policy areas. Discursive form of engagement is a unique mechanism for producing collective decisions and an important first step in fostering civic identity and expressing their voices to the community issues (Carpini et al., 2004; Cooper, 2005; K. Grønbjerg & Prakash, 2017). The data shows that this engagement mechanism involves two-way participation, including inviting the inputs and ideas from the community, through convening face-to-face forums and events and using hashtags (“#MyMiamiStory,” “#WhatMotivatesMeIn4Words”) for creating online dialogues. However, the engagement level of dialogue is distinct from the mobilization level as it involves less degree of participation from the community, with no specific calls for actions to influence public decisions, other than making formal and informal public dialogue on community or policy issues (Fung, 2015). I found that 31.6% of engagement tweets (N=79) were primarily for convening conversations, which was higher than the proportion of tweets sent for policy advocacy and mobilization.

4. Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing corresponds to disseminating policy information to the public. These tweets contained policy knowledge released by research reports and news that informs the public of the severity and urgency of a policy issue, as well as knowledge and innovation that might contribute to addressing community problems (Phillips et al., 2016). For instance, Community Foundation for Southwest Washington tweeted the issues of homelessness and raising community awareness of how the housing market might alter homeless population “The types of homeless people had changed...so too
might have the conditions that put them on the streets…”. Community foundations also provided training on community problem-solving skills through organizing citizen science workshop and design thinking class. Knowledge is essentially the acumen for catalyzing public problem-solving, as Phillips et al. (2016) pointed out, “the greatest asset of a community foundation is not the size of its endowment, but its knowledge of community and ability to use this knowledge for positive change” (66). Compared to Policy Advocacy, Mobilization, and Conversation, Knowledge Sharing involves one-way interaction as the tweets are mostly informational. A large part of the sampled tweets (N=112, 44.8%) was classified as knowledge sharing; many were supplying policy-related information with a few on civic education.

**Stage 2: Predicting Public Engagement Tweets—Supervised Classification**

Text or topic classification is a common task in social science that involves hand-labeling sets of documents for specific text features (e.g. a combination of manual coding and content analysis). However, this analysis task becomes almost infeasible and very expensive for analyzing an extensive corpus of text that required classification. Alternatively, we can now use statistical machine learning models to classify text into specific sets of categories, which is known as supervised learning. The overall learning process of the tweet analysis undertaken in this study involves a few steps.

The training dataset that contains 13,438 tweets is first preprocessed to create a tidy text data frame. Pre-processing involves tokenization, common, and custom stop word removal stemming. Then I converted it to a document-term matrix such that the data in a one-row-per-document format. Next, I weighed the term frequency using the
term frequency-inverse document frequency (tf-idf), which is the frequency of a term adjusted for how rarely it is used. To reduce the model complexity, I then removed sparse terms from the model. Doing so reduced variance and noise from the dataset and resulted in a statistical learning model with a much smaller set of variables.

The data was then ready for exploratory analysis and training with classifying algorithms. I used Extreme Gradient Boosting (XgBoost), which is a set of decision trees that combines the functionalities of Gradient Descent and Boosting for execution speed and model performance.\textsuperscript{3} Gradient Boosting tends to perform well in unbalanced data as in this dataset, in which public engagement tweets are fewer than other categories.

Given the 13,438 coded tweets, I used 80 percent of the coded sample ($N=8,024$) to train multiple XgBoost models with the objective of binary outcome to classify if a tweet relates to public engagement or not. I then chose the final model that achieved high levels of accuracy (87\%) in terms of predictive performance and applied it to predict the rest of the test sample ($N=2,007$) and all the unseen (non-coded) data ($N=56,718$). It achieved a high level of accuracy of 86 percent, which was the percentage of correctly predicted class over the entire testing class (Appendix 3). All in all, this training and prediction process identified a total of 6,331 public engagement tweets within the full data of 66,749 tweets ready for final analysis.

\textsuperscript{3} Essentially, the gradient boosting model builds one tree at a time. This additive model works in a forward stage-wise manner. It creates a final model based on a collection of individual models. The predictive power of these individual models is weak and prone to overfitting, but combining many such weak models in an ensemble will lead to an overall much-improved result. It reduces variance by using multiple models (bagging) and reduces bias by training the subsequent model by telling them what errors the previous models made (boosting).
Stage 3: Exploring Public Engagement Tweets—Structural Topic Modeling

Supplementing our content analysis on the small sample of tweets, the second stage of analysis involves conducting automatic text analysis to analyze a larger set of public engagement tweets. When analyzing large text corpora, which can be inhibitive for manual coding, automatic text analysis can help us detect patterns and topics of interest from reading the text passages. Automated text analysis refers to a suite of unsupervised machine learning algorithms that use probabilistic models, called ‘topic models’ or ‘concept mapping’ models to inductively discover the overarching themes, the frequency at which they appear, and the co-occurring relationships among them in a large or unstructured collection of documents (Lucas et al., 2015; Reich et al., 2015; Roberts et al., 2013). Hence, these topic models do not require the researcher to pre-specify the topics; instead, they discover the contents from the documents based on the patterns of frequently co-occurring words.

This study employed Structural Topic Modeling (STM) to analyze public engagement tweets. STM is an unsupervised method for uncovering thematic structure within a corpus of documents. ‘stm’ package for structural topic modeling using the R statistical software was used. STM is one of the novel automated text analysis techniques that has gained prominence for analyzing textual data. Notably, because STM not just helps discover topics but also estimates their relationship with covariates in document metadata. I used the outputs of the model to do hypothesis testing about these relationships (Roberts et al., 2013, 2017). For instance, for this study, I incorporated the

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4 For the specific procedure and the parameterization we used, see Roberts et al. (2013 and 2017).
message metadata as a covariate, namely donor influence of the community foundation, which sent the message. In turn, it allows us to find significant associations between donor influence and topics in the text corpus.

**Results from Structural Topic Modeling**

We generated multiple topic models and searched for the most desirable number of topics between 10 to 100 (Appendix 4). After comparing the goodness-of-fit measures of these models and carefully inspecting the topics produced, the final topic model consisted of 25 topics, 4,055 documents, and a 2,686-word dictionary. Some organizations and their tweet data were removed due to missing data for DAF in the IRS e-filing database.

As shown in Figure 3.5, the visualization describes the prevalence of the 25 topics within the entire text corpus as well as the top three words associated with the topic in descending order of tweet proportion. Most of the topics fall within 1% to 7% of the expected topic proportion in all tweet documents. A topic is a mixture of words where each word has a probability of belonging to a topic. Moreover, a document is a mixture of topics, meaning that a single document can be composed of multiple topics.\(^5\) Hence, topic proportion \((\theta_{i,j}, \theta_{i,j})\) denotes the proportion of words in a document \(i\) that belong to a topic \(j\). Appendix 5 shows the five most common words of each topic and their proportions.

\(^5\) As such, the sum of the 25 topic proportions across all topics for a document is one, and the sum word probabilities for a given topic is one.
Figure 3.5 All 25 Topics with Expected Topic Proportions

**Mechanisms of Public Engagement**

Among 25 topics identified, the topic model found 10 topics that were significantly related to donor influence at the 0.05 level, accounting for 1,755 out of 4,055 tweets (43.5 percent). Table 3.4 Thematic Analysis of Engagement Themes lists out my thematic analysis of the 10 significant topics and the corresponding words and tweet examples. Topics were described by their most frequent/exclusive words, identified by a metric that combines word frequency and exclusivity to that topic into a univariate summary statistic referred to as FLEX (Bischof & Airoldi, 2012).  

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6 FLEX is calculated by taking the harmonic mean of rank by probability within the topic (frequency) and rank by the distribution of the topic given the word (exclusivity).
Since latent topics are inferred from documents and these topics do not have pre-existing labels or definitions, one must study the words and tweets linked to each topic in order to assign theoretically informed meanings to these topics. Combining the results from the initial content analysis, I found similar themes that speak to four public engagement mechanisms: Mobilization, Advocacy, Conversation, and Knowledge.

First, Topics 5 and 1 identified with the Mobilization theme, which had the least proportion of tweets, close to 8.5 percent. These mobilizing tweets involved in asking community members to take action and participate in the organizations' work, such as nominating individuals and voting nonprofit projects for awards: "Today is the last full day for round one voting! Vote to help your favorite 4 projects move into the semi-finals!" Other mobilizing messages were to promote political participation, calling for voter registration and voting for elections, as Kalamazoo Community Foundation did, “If you want to vote on 11/8 you have to be registered by 10/11. That's just one week away. Register here...” and so did San Diego Foundation, “Get involved, stay involved, take action. Start by registering to vote. #Future40SD #Politifest.”

Similarly, around 8.6 percent of tweets in Topics 21 and 19 tied to the Advocacy theme. These advocacy messages showcased community foundations’ efforts in advocating for the community's needs but might or might not have a call for action. They involved in advocating for certain policy agenda and policy alternatives for the communities in policy areas such as housing, homelessness, education, equity, and children's rights: "Our #housing crisis is driving our #homelessness crisis. Let s end the cycle! #LACounty #YESonH…” as tweeted by California Community Foundation.
Minneapolis Foundation advocated for impact investing in combating poverty, “How do we change the whole game in the fight on poverty? Here's one innovative answer: Impact investing…” Kalamazoo Community Foundation also called for racial equity and inclusion and provided resources to take action: “People from all walks of life are being called to take action against hate. Here's how we can answer…”.

Topics 13 and 24 fell within the Conversation theme. They made up over 12 percent of tweets that mentioned forums, conferences, and hashtags for convening public dialogue and deliberation on various policy issues in the criminal justice system, child welfare, poverty, and neighborhood problems. These dialogic and convening messages denote the engagement efforts of these local foundations in organizing and convening community-wide conversations. Following these hashtags help us locate the policy discussions. For instance, Chicago Community Trust and Greater Milwaukee Foundation organized #OntheTable2017 and #onthetableMKE, respectively.⁷ Another hashtag “#whatmatters” was used by Triangle Community Foundation which organized “What Matters Community Luncheon: Our Kids” ⁸ and asked the public to join the discussion with policy experts on the literacy challenges faced by children, how poverty relates to literacy, and what they need to succeed, “What does future success look like for #ourkids & what can we do to ensure it? Let s chat. #WhatMatters 4/26 Tix:…”

Parallel to the initial findings from the manual coding, the topic model picked up a greater number of topics and tweets that correspond to the Knowledge theme, as shown

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⁷ On the Table MKE organized by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, see: [https://www.newaukee.com/event/on-the-table-mke/](https://www.newaukee.com/event/on-the-table-mke/) Follow #OntheTable2017 conversations here: [https://twitter.com/hashtag/OnTheTable2017?src=hash](https://twitter.com/hashtag/OnTheTable2017?src=hash)

⁸ See more, [https://trianglecf.org/2017-what-matters/](https://trianglecf.org/2017-what-matters/)
in Topics 17, 11, 12, and 16, accounting for around 14 percent of tweets. The topics show that sharing policy information took place *formally* and *informally*. Some informal ways of sharing policy-related knowledge and local news with the public include reporting from news and research findings, without collecting their primary data. For example, they informed the public of the nature and scale of the policy problems, as Community Foundation for Southwest Washington did, “How did American families fare in 2015? @pewtrusts data shows incomes rose, but economic security remained elusive. [https://t.co/lf7nqJlqVs](https://t.co/lf7nqJlqVs)”. Formally speaking, some foundations published their own data and reports from primary research, needs assessment, and data collection, for instance, Saint Paul and Minnesota Foundation wrote, “Read our latest #MNSights magazine & explore different perceptions of our area revealed #EastMetroPulse report: [https://t.co/5oumwJibCu](https://t.co/5oumwJibCu).” The policy areas of the information were wide-ranging, drawing public attention on numerous policy issues related to economic security, mental health, health care, immigration, poverty, gender gap, racial diversity, food safety, bullying, and education.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Keyword</strong></th>
<th><strong>Topic and Theme</strong></th>
<th><strong>Key FREX words and Example of Tweets</strong></th>
<th><strong>Number of Messages (%)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Coefficient</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“nonprofit”</td>
<td><strong>Topic 5: Mobilization</strong></td>
<td>help, vote, nonprofit, day, survey, today, take</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobilization of citizens’ voting for nonprofits and issues</td>
<td>Today is the last full day for round one voting! Vote to help your favorite 4 projects move into the semi-finals! <a href="https://t.co/EtdEfcTYze">https://t.co/EtdEfcTYze</a></td>
<td>4.44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“vote”</td>
<td><strong>Topic 1: Mobilization</strong></td>
<td>vote, get, one, video, continu, march, regist</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobilize people to vote and participate in voter registration</td>
<td>If you want to vote on 11/8 you have to be registered by 10/11. That’s just one week away. Register here: <a href="https://t.co/Z9iYc2kPz2">https://t.co/Z9iYc2kPz2</a></td>
<td>4.02%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“homeless”</td>
<td><strong>Topic 19: Advocacy</strong></td>
<td>homeless, famili, end, help, can, hous, find</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advocacy on policy issue on housing and homelessness</td>
<td>Our #housing crisis is driving our #homelessness crisis. Let s end the cycle! #LACounty #YESonH <a href="https://t.co/fWYUaxoLtV">https://t.co/fWYUaxoLtV</a></td>
<td>4.91%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“chang”</td>
<td><strong>Topic 14: Advocacy</strong></td>
<td>chang, citi, can, invest, poverti, equiti, tech</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advocacy on policy issues, change and alternatives on equity, poverty, hate, etc.</td>
<td>People from all walks of life are being called to take action against hate. Here's how we can answer: [<a href="https://t.co/BnuJP4cLVG">https://t.co/BnuJP4cLVG</a>. #kzcf](<a href="https://t.co/BnuJP4cLVG">https://t.co/BnuJP4cLVG</a>. #kzcf)</td>
<td>3.67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“convers”</td>
<td><strong>Topic 13: Conversation</strong></td>
<td>join, convers, commongroundcl, talk, host, regist, free</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Convening for community-wide conversation</td>
<td>There's a #CommonGroundCLE conversation near you on July 30th! Find a topic &amp; register for your seat at the table: <a href="https://t.co/FW18f9wMf8">https://t.co/FW18f9wMf8</a></td>
<td>7.15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“voic”</td>
<td><strong>Topic 24: Conversation</strong></td>
<td>make, voic, can, kid, whatmatt, ourkid, sure</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Convening for community-wide conversation on child welfare</td>
<td>What does future success look like for #ourkids &amp; what can we do to ensure it? Let s chat. #WhatMatters 4/26 Tix: <a href="https://t.co/rsFV8kWjr">https://t.co/rsFV8kWjr</a></td>
<td>5.03%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of Tweets with Mobilization Theme** 8.46%

**Number of Tweets with Advocacy Theme** 8.58%

**Number of Tweets with Conversation Theme** 12.18%
| “report” | Topic 17: Knowledge | Sharing policy information through publishing reports | Read our latest #MNSights magazine & explore different perceptions of our area revealed #EastMetroPulse report: [https://t.co/5oumwJibCu](https://t.co/5oumwJibCu) | 207 | 0.02 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| “rate” | Topic 11: Knowledge | Sharing policy information of community (income, unemployment) | For every ethnic group, the 2014 median household income was higher in Delaware than the national median. #netde [https://t.co/4trH0huRoq](https://t.co/4trH0huRoq) | 186 | -0.04 |
| “less” | Topic 12: Knowledge | Sharing policy information such as indicators on economic security | How did American families fare in 2015? @pewtrusts data shows incomes rose, but economic security remained elusive. [https://t.co/ff7nqJlqVs](https://t.co/ff7nqJlqVs) | 113 | 0.02 |
| “indicator” | Topic 16: Knowledge | Sharing policy information on inclusiveness | Los latinos representan el 14% de nuestra poblaci n total. C u n inclusivo es el Condado de Boulder? #BldrCtyTRENDS [https://t.co/MFXQ2QgKRY](https://t.co/MFXQ2QgKRY) [Latinos represent 14% of our total population, how inclusive is boulder county? #BldrCtyTRENDS https://t.co/MFXQ2QgKRY] | 64 | 0.02 |

**Number of Tweets with Knowledge Sharing Theme** 14.31%
Donor Influence and Public Engagement

After exploring the content and themes of the topics, I examined the magnitude and direction of regression coefficients of the 10 significant topics. The linear regression outcome was the proportion of each message about a topic (i.e., topical prevalence) in the STM model and the covariate was the dummy variable of donor influence (Roberts et al., 2013). This allows us to estimate the conditional expectation of topic prevalence given the level of donor influence.

Figure 3.6 graphically illustrates the relationships between the 10 significant topics and donor influence based on the results. One of the FREX keywords was used to designate the corresponding topic, the labelled themes were abbreviated and shown in parentheses. The panel was divided by zero value of beta coefficient on x-axis, where the labels on the left indicate the topics that were negatively associated with high donor influence in community foundations whose DAF supported more than half of the grants. Likewise, the labels on the right sub-panel indicate topics that were positively associated with strong donor influence.

Looking at the right sub-panel, the topic model found a significant positive relationship between donor influence and all Policy Advocacy (A) topics (Topics 19 and 14). In contrast, we can see a consistent and significant negative association between donor influence and all Mobilization (M) topics from the left panel (Topics 5 and 1). It suggests that community foundations with strong donor influence tend to have a higher

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9 In this linear regression, the structural topic model specified document (i.e., tweet messages) as the units.
level of policy advocacy messages but a lower level of mobilization messages than their peers whose DAF funded less than half of their grants.

Figure 3.6 10 Significant Topics Associated with Donor Influence

Note: The themes were abbreviated in parentheses: (M) Mobilization, (A) Advocacy, (C) Conversation, (K) Knowledge

In terms of Conversation (C) topics, we see contradictory directions in Topic 13 and 24. More than 7 percent of tweets linked to Topic 13, which constituted the largest number of tweets compared to other topics, hence ranked the top. The model showed that Topic 13 had a significant negative association with donor influence with an effect size of -0.03. Whereas, Topic 24, which constitute 5 percent of the tweets, was positively related to donor influence with a smaller effect size (0.01). One way to interpret these results is to distinguish the two conversation topics based on their substantive meanings embedded
in the keywords and messages. Looking into the messages identified with Topic 13 revealed a common thread that community foundations invited the public to join and register for a seat for community-wide conversation. The keywords representing this topic are "join, convers, commongroundcle, talk, host, regist, free #commongroundcle, meet, discuss, #onthetable." In contrast, Topic 24 is distinct from Topic 13 by inviting dialogues and conversations on specific policy issues, mostly child welfare. Many messages in Topic 24 embedded dialogic languages such as "Make your voice heard, how can we, chat, make, voice, can, kid, #whatmatters, #ourkid, sure." Taken together, the results seem to suggest that community foundations with strong donor influence tend to send significantly fewer public engagement messages to convene general community-wide dialogues except for dialogues in specific policy agenda, such as child welfare. The messages relating to Topic 24 might come from foundations whose DAF funded heavily on child welfare or other policy areas.

Lastly, the topic model identified four significant topics (Topics 17, 11, 12 and 16) under the Knowledge (K) theme, constituting 14 percent of tweets that shared policy information with the public. Compared with other themes, the knowledge theme encompassed the largest proportion of messages. The results reveal that strong donor influence was significantly and positively related to Topics 17, 12 and 16, but negatively associated with Topic 11. The mostly positive findings suggest that when donor influence on grantmaking is more substantial, community foundations tend to engage in one-way information sharing with the public than their peers whose donor influence on grantmaking is less. In particular, they not only shared policy-related knowledge and local news with the public, such as reporting from news and research findings (Topics 12
and 16), they tend to share their data and publications from primary research, needs assessment and data collection (Topic 17).

Table 3.5 Summarized results on “MACK” public engagement mechanisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Relationship</th>
<th>Public Engagement Mechanisms</th>
<th>Significant Topics</th>
<th>Relationship with Donor Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Org ↔ Public</td>
<td>1. Mobilization</td>
<td>5, 1</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Advocacy</td>
<td>19, 14</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Org ← Public</td>
<td>3. Conversation</td>
<td>13, 24</td>
<td>Mostly Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Org ←→ Public</td>
<td>4. Knowledge</td>
<td>17, 11, 12, 16</td>
<td>Mostly Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Concluding Discussions

In this paper, through analyzing social media data, I identified at least four mechanisms through which community foundations can engage the public—mobilizing, advocating, conversing, and sharing knowledge. The results of the topic model show that when community foundations whose DAF funded at least a majority of grants, their public engagement messages tend to be dominated by one-way communication through sharing policy knowledge, albeit coupled with policy advocacy. Themes in mobilization and conversations that involve two-way interactions between the foundations and the public become significantly less.

The potential erosion in their roles in convening conversation and mobilizing the public to action warrants attention and concerns. Studies have supported that tapping into community inputs for addressing community issues allows nonprofits to become more accountable to the community and can strengthen collective efficacy (Auspos, Brown,
Kubisch, & Sutton, 2009; Jung et al., 2016; Moore, 2000; Phillips et al., 2016). When donors have greater power at the grantmaking table, it raises the question of why community foundations might not appear to do as much in convening civic deliberation and mobilizing the public to action. Drawing from the resource dependence and social relations theories, this might, in part, because convening and mobilizing require more institutional efforts and organizational resources. However, these efforts might or might not yield benefits, especially when most of the grant decisions are not necessarily in foundations' control. Engaging the public in defining community needs and funding priorities is not an efficient use of resources, and crucially, it might conflict with existing donor priorities (Millesen & Martin, 2014).

Nevertheless, both qualitative coding and topic modeling analysis highlight that community foundations under strong donor influence play a significant role in building policy knowledge and disseminating policy-related information to inform the public of community needs and policy issues. The "educating" efforts to translate and frame information for the public and constituencies across sectors can contribute to a better understanding of the issues at hand for solving wicked problems (Fung, 2015). They also help frame community discourse on important policy issues in the long run, which in turn helps set a community’s change agenda (Ballard, 2007; Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Hamilton et al., 2004). While the depth of knowledge engagement is unidirectional and lack of participatory element (Rowe & Frewer, 2005), the STM model also unveiled the extensive policy areas that are mentioned. A possible explanation for the sea of policy knowledge might be that community foundations position themselves as "a knowledge
leader” when engaging with the public and serve as a knowledge hub to supply necessary policy knowledge to donors, public and policy stakeholders (Phillips et al., 2016).

From an institutional lens, community foundations face a highly marketized environment and the increasing emphasis on public engagement. They might come to adopt certain strategic choices that respond to the pressures from the supply (donors) and demand sides (communities) to a varying degree (Barman, 2007; Ocasio & Radoynovska, 2016; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). The findings that strong donor influence might lead to more public engagement efforts in advocacy, but less mobilization and conversation might reflect how community foundations respond to external pressures.

It follows that community foundations might pick and choose their primary engagement mechanisms to fulfill the expectation for greater community-oriented practices in the field (Friedland & Alford, 1991; March & Olsen, 2004). While community foundations under strong donor influence do not have the full power to dictate their grant decisions, they might attempt to serve as a vocal advocate and the source of local knowledge to inform the public, and possibly to steer donor priorities and decisions (Leroux, 2006; Rader, 2010). Furthermore, simply being “outspoken” on the public platform allows them to readily gain visibility and public recognition that they would not otherwise acquire at all. They might appear to “act in” and “stand for” the interests of community constituents, respectively (Guo & Musso, 2007; Pitkin, 1967).

In conclusion, this research joined other scholars who cautioned the potential impact donor-advised funds have on public engagement that defines the very essence of the nonprofit sector (Berry & Goss, 2018; Bushouse, 2017; Eikenberry, 2007; Fung,
2015; King & Griffin, 2019). If the rise of donor power through DAF renders weakening ties with the community, how might we ensure a “community” foundation or a public charity to serve and receptive to community’s needs? Amid rising donor power in the multi-stakeholder triad, this study calls for more research to contemplate whether and how nonprofits such as community foundations can still channel and represent the communities they serve (Guo & Musso, 2007; Moore, 2000; Pitkin, 1967).

**Future Directions and Limitations**

Do donor-advised funds weaken public engagement? More research is needed to draw any definitive conclusions. In particular, a more detailed, qualitative analysis that examines how publicly supported philanthropic vehicles might be accountable to both the donors and the community would be needed (Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Hammack, 2006; Knutsen & Brower, 2016). Understanding the factors, motivations, and challenges for pursuing various engagement mechanisms will also be a fruitful avenue for research.

While social media platforms present as an accessible space for observing organizational communication behaviors, it is critical to keep in mind the limitations of using social media data and topic models for analyzing them. First, online platforms only serve as an *additive* platform for studying how organizations build relationships with public stakeholders; whether the relationships hold on other online platforms and offline, face-to-face communication remains an empirical question (Svensson et al., 2015). Second, social media messages tend to be short (the messages were limited to 140 characters in the dataset) and do not represent the more substantive engagement that took place in offline and other settings. Nonetheless, they are still useful for revealing how
organizations communicate with the public as other studies have shown (An et al., 2017; Guo & Saxton, 2017; Hackler & Saxton, 2007; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Gregory D. Saxton et al., 2015; Svensson et al., 2015; Xu & Saxton, 2019). Third, while structural topic models have unique advantages for allowing hypothesis testing, the topics can sometimes be ambiguous, and hence it requires researchers to employ theoretical basis to infer meanings on the topics as in any qualitative coding (Anzoise et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2013). A correct interpretation also needs the researcher to validate the results of a topic model carefully. In this study, I have taken multiple measures, including manual classification and conducted inductive coding of tweets to explore and verify their themes before and after computing the structural topic model.
3.6 References


Reckhow, S. (2013). Follow the Money: How Foundation Dollars Change Public School


Appendix 1 Code Book for Classifying Tweets by Stakeholders and Purposes

1. Coded as “Fundraising” any tweets directed at donors for:
   • fundraising and appeal
   • information and education about giving
   • facilitating donors’ and their financial advisors’ individual charitable interests
   • appreciation and recognition for donation

2. Coded as “Grantmaking”: any tweets targeted at grantees/nonprofits for:
   • the funding info (indicating areas of needs or fields of interests in grantmaking)
   • grant applications
   • managerial needs of charitable organizations (such as capacity building training and/or networking opportunities for nonprofits)
   • promoting grantee’s work or recognizing grantee’s work

3. Coded as “Relationship building”: any tweets directed at the community for:
   • Small talks, motivational quotes and seasons’ greetings
   • Appreciation towards the general public or specific stakeholders
   • Sharing community news and organizational announcement

4. Coded as “Public Engagement”: any tweets directed at involving the community for improving community wellbeing or addressing policy problems:
   *(NOT for the purposes of fundraising, grantmaking, or relationship building)*
   • Provide policy information on pressing community needs
   • Convening and announcement of community-wide initiatives that involve:
     - civic dialogue, discussion forums,
     - advocacy and lobbying for a policy issue
     - volunteering and civic action
     - civic education,
     - strategic planning for community change,
     - partnerships or collective action for a community issue
Examples of Fundraising

1. Fundraising
   • Your gifts make an impact through the Foundation. #WhyGive
     https://t.co/IyvukGI5f
   • Help Us, Help Others: Support the Community Foundation's Annual Appeal.
     Learn more below. https://t.co/gXfgyv4H7fH https://t.co/l4raPqFQw4

2. Giving tips and information
   • Year-End Giving Tip #6: A charitable gift annuity (CGA) is both a gift and an
     annuity! https://t.co/7DnnSWWcNU
   • 6/13-Professional Advisor Networking Event, featuring Gene Tempel on The
     Role of Philanthropy in a Changing Society  https://t.co/yPnVBhn9iR

3. Facilitate donors’ charitable interests
   • Learn about the recent performance of your charitable assets at The Foundation
     from our experts! https://t.co/jsVTckFEU
   • Feeling overwhelmed trying to choose which nonprofits to support? Here are
     some good tips. #giving #nonprofit https://t.co/PHQAH21scs

4. Appreciation for donation
   • Just like our Community Scholars, we're truly grateful for your support, from the
     bottom of our hearts!  https://t.co/Xe8AfauZ19

Examples of Grantmaking

1. Funding information
   • Fund Spotlight: Mary J. Boland Endowment Fund - https://t.co/snhLc2cZXv
     https://t.co/1GAQM5oiT6
   • New Fund : The John W. McDougal M.A.C. Scholarship Fund supports the
     McDougal Athletic Character Award:  https://t.co/SXlDerp2ze

2. Grant application
   • Proud to help #DriveChange with @UserID through the Basic Needs Giving
     Partnership! Grant apps due 9/1:  https://t.co/8YK3KfnEzU

3. Capacity building training for nonprofits
   • Following link offers guidance for #nonprofit organizations on paying overtime
     under the Fair Labor Standards Act https://t.co/gHgWOOauTH
   • If you’re a nonprofit and looking to increase your social media savvy, consider
     attending our upcoming FREE... https://t.co/LIgoZwP9jt

4. Recognizing grantee’s work
   • Community Foundation salutes grant recipients at Batavia event
     https://t.co/152jakQUiY
Examples of Relationship Building

1. Small talks, motivational quotes, Season’s greetings
   • #ThankfulThursday! https://t.co/EFkFaAy9JX
   • Happy New Year from your friends at the Athens Foundation! #2017 https://t.co/BbCmu85Wv4

2. Appreciation
   • Thank you Scholarship Review Volunteers! https://t.co/2DFJ8wCAjM
   • Congratulations @UserID and @UserID on being 1st #NationalTeacherOfTheYear from MA. https://t.co/Sg3HHRhPmA
   • @UserID Thanks for following us!

3. News sharing and announcement
   • Have you seen our new website? Check it out at https://t.co/LiL4TrORss
   • It's that time of year! Get out there and enjoy Artscape - America's biggest free art festival. We love Baltimore! https://t.co/1Yh82nIvej

Examples of Public Engagement

1. Advocacy
   • Op-Ed: Racial Disparities in NJ’s Juvenile Justice System Are Unacceptable' https://t.co/51l4Y1yFlo @NJSpotlight #juvenilejustice

2. Civic/Political action
   • 4.29: "March for jobs, justice and climate" Miami People's Climate March with @UserID. https://t.co/xxN39sazSi https://t.co/51l1v8nI/I

3. Partnerships or collective action
   • We are pleased to be a part of economic development in the community. https://t.co/J6uKgmoCPs

4. Civic dialogue
   • How can we ensure all Miamians live within a 10-min. walk of a park? Host a #MyMiamiStory conversation, spark ideas https://t.co/tE8oRuXJxK

5. Civic education
   • Come to our Citizen Science lecture this Thursday evening! https://t.co/OMTZoizImF

6. Policy information
   • The types of homeless people had changed...so too might have the conditions that put them on the streets. https://t.co/2R0QuGej7j

7. Strategic planning
   • A goal in the Our Miami Report is for Miamians to have access to more public transit options. #PublicTransitDay https://t.co/DrR4d11Gj3
### Appendix 2 Code Book for Content Analysis of Public Engagement Messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and Practices</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1) Policy Advocacy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Advocacy</td>
<td><em>Tsff:</em> &quot;Housing is looked at as a profitable good, not as a basic right,&quot; @UserID @UserID #affordablehousing</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Agenda setting (via grantmaking)</td>
<td><em>Nycommtrust:</em> Victory! our grants backed increasing NY s age of criminal responsibility to 18. NY Assembly passes #RaiseTheAge <a href="https://t.co/7ZcbsfsRh">https://t.co/7ZcbsfsRh</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3) Partnerships</strong></td>
<td><em>CFGGnews:</em> The Community Foundation is proud to partner with the City of Greensboro to make the Greensboro Housing Hub a [reality]…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2) Mobilization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Volunteering</td>
<td><em>Miamifoundation:</em> Find ways you to get involved in building a better Miami with @UserID for MLK Weekend of Service. <a href="https://t.co/PZrEPFDm76">https://t.co/PZrEPFDm76</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Political participation</td>
<td><em>Cfectnews:</em> November 1 is the deadline to register to vote online or by mail before Election Day (11/8)! Click for all the… <a href="https://t.co/v0FKyyusCy">https://t.co/v0FKyyusCy</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Civic participation</td>
<td><em>Miamifoundation:</em> @UserID weighs in on driving civic engagement in #ourmiami - vote, volunteer, share your stories. <a href="https://t.co/3MyqgdpHrN">https://t.co/3MyqgdpHrN</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Collective action</td>
<td><em>Miamifoundation:</em> 4.29: &quot;March for jobs, justice and climate&quot; Miami People's Climate March with @ UserID. <a href="https://t.co/xxN39szas5">https://t.co/xxN39szas5</a> &amp; <a href="https://t.co/5I1xv3d84">https://t.co/5I1xv3d84</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Behavioral change</td>
<td>Are you on board with #PublicTransitDay? Join hundreds of Miamians pledging to ride transit on 12.9. <a href="https://t.co/JkI6d3aFWK">https://t.co/JkI6d3aFWK</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3) Conversation &amp; Deliberation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Crowdsourcing citizens' ideas for problem-solving</td>
<td><em>Miamifoundation:</em> How can we ensure all Miamians live within a 10-min. walk of a park? Host a #MyMiamiStory conversation, spark ideas <a href="https://t.co/t8oRjuxK">https://t.co/t8oRjuxK</a></td>
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<td>10. Facilitate deliberation</td>
<td><em>CommFound:</em> Join us for A Public Affair on @UserID on 7/24 @ 8:35 re: our county’s educational achievement gap &amp; the role of ELPASO. #CommunityCatalyst <a href="https://t.co/E4x0Qh88KC">https://t.co/E4x0Qh88KC</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4) Knowledge Building &amp; Dissemination</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>112</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Civic education</td>
<td><em>KBCFoundation1:</em> Come to our Citizen Science lecture this Thursday evening! <a href="https://t.co/OMZoi3mF">https://t.co/OMZoi3mF</a></td>
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<td>12. Policy information</td>
<td><em>cfsww:</em> The types of homeless people had changed...so too might have the conditions that put them on the streets. <a href="https://t.co/2R0QuGej7">https://t.co/2R0QuGej7</a></td>
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</table>

**Total** 250 100%
Appendix 3 Confusion Matrix of Test data

The follow confusion matrix shows the model performance for predicting test data.

- **Accuracy on test set= 0.86**
- **Precision (1) on test set= 0.64**
- **Recall (1) on test set= 0.31**
- **Precision (0) on test set= 0.88**
- **Recall (0) on test set= 0.97**
Appendix 4 Goodness-of-Fit Measures of Topic Models (10-100)

Held-Out Likelihood: The lower, the better model captures patterns of natural language.
Appendix 5 Five Most Common Terms by Topics
CONCLUSION

This dissertation focused on the strategic management of community self-organizing efforts through the nonprofit vehicle of community foundations. Each paper of this dissertation examined the management issues from a different vantage point concerning their roles in place-based philanthropy, community leadership, and public engagement. In the first paper, I tested the resource dilemma related to their place-based nature. Given the potential place constraints on their philanthropic role, the latter part of the dissertation investigated the core issues of community representation, engagement, and leadership. I addressed the conceptual and empirical challenges of community leadership in the second paper, followed by the final paper that explored the public engagement mechanisms and how donor influence affects their patterns.

In order to formulate hypotheses related to these topics, I drew on theories from multi-disciplinary fields of public and nonprofit management, social policy, and urban sociology. The data analysis relied on original nation-wide datasets on community foundations, which include organizational data from IRS Form 990, multimedia data from organizational websites, annual reports and social media data from Twitter, as well as community indicators across the U.S. This larger study was triangulated by quantitative, qualitative, and computational methods. I employed a variety of analytical methods to identify, predict and analyze numerical and text data, including negative binomial regression, qualitative coding, semi-automated content analysis, textual data analysis using dictionary-based and structural topic modeling techniques, and a supervised machine learning classification using Extreme Gradient Boosting.
Through this dissertation, I contribute to the nonprofit and philanthropic fields in two ways: To advance theoretical insights on place-based community philanthropy, the construct of community leadership, and the mediating roles of the nonprofit sector in policy processes and public engagement. Second, this larger project contributes to methodological innovation by developing multi-pronged approaches to analyze large-scale text data combining qualitative, quantitative, and computational techniques. By leveraging these techniques allows researchers to harvest new forms of empirical data and realize ample research opportunities that might not be available before.

Looking forward, this dissertation research can enhance our understanding of nonprofit management topics including the effects of community environment and local inequality on nonprofits, the strategic management practices to level the unequal playing field, the longitudinal trend of nonprofit capacities across time and space, the causes and effects of community leadership, donor influence, and public engagement through bottom-up actions of nonprofit and philanthropic actors.