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Examining the Role of Social Justice Grantmaking on Childcare Advocacy and Community Organizing Among Women of Color

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1 Introduction

Philanthropy can shape the social change process by influencing policy agendas, narratives, and, ultimately, which groups can fully participate in a given social movement. Indeed, philanthropic organizations serve as resource brokers (Seltzer, 2012), venture capitalists (Knott & McCarthy, 2007), policy actors, and institutional entrepreneurs providing important capital for social change (Hunsaker & Hanzl, 2003; Suarez, 2012). University-led and independent research across disciplines has explored the role of philanthropy in producing and supporting social progress through its investments in social movements (Barman, 2017; Hunsaker & Hanzl, 2003; Minkoff Agnone, 2010).

Despite this body of work, research on the role of philanthropy in grassroots childcare policy and advocacy, particularly in connection to women of color engaged in community organizing, is sparse, and specific grantmaking practices that support social progress are underexplored (Bartley, 2007). The present paper helps address these research gaps and provides a synthesis of how one foundation, the Ms. Foundation for Women, critically assessed the current childcare field to support a new social movement trajectory informed by an analytical framework rarely discussed in the literature calling for childcare advocacy: an intersectional lens that recognizes and aims to combat the persistent sexism, racism, and classism undergirding U.S. childcare policy. The foundation applied social justice grantmaking over a five-year period to support strategies that would develop a childcare system responsive to needs of people from all racial, economic, and immigrant backgrounds (Mathew, 2016). Further, prior research has documented the reluctance of philanthropy to invest in grassroots-led organizations and advocacy in general, even in the childcare field (Knott & McCarthy, 2007). The present paper offers another perspective with an example of a foundation that solely invests in grassroots-led organizations that use community organizing to achieve childcare policy gains and other grassroots social movement agendas.

2 Ms. Foundation for Women Overview

Formed in 1973, the Ms. Foundation for Women is the nation's first women's fund. Its mission is dedicated to feminism: building the collective power of women to realize a nation of justice for all (Mathew, 2016). Headquartered in New York, the public foundation uses a social justice philanthropic approach to resource grassroots movements led and informed by women of color, as well as low-income, trans, native, and immigrant women. It asserts that the lived experiences of women should inform the social change process (Wadia, 2008). The foundation recognizes the significant social, economic, and political gains women have made

since its inception, as well as the persistence of gender oppression and inequality, particularly along race and class lines. The foundation has grantmaking programs in the areas of safety, health, and economic justice (collectively referred to as "she").

Working under a five-year strategic plan inaugurated in 2011 and first implemented in 2012, the division responsible for economic justice investments, the Women's Economic Justice Program, elevated childcare to its single priority policy area. The foundation's stated goal was to "build an integrated movement toward universal access and opportunities in childcare that address workplace issues, transform public policy, and increase access to childcare subsidies while improving jobs in the childcare sector" (Mathew, 2016); similar goals were recommended in social work literature (e.g., Kahn, 2014; Palley & Shdaimah, 2011). The foundation's *theory of change* statement asserted that the foundation would make "strategic investments in grassroots organizations working to create opportunities [that will] sharpen advocacy and policy efforts in childcare, advance a conversation on women's equality, and address systemic barriers to women's economic security" (Mathew, 2016). Between 2012 and 2016, the foundation issued 54 grants totaling US$1.8 million to 24 grantee organizations working to improve childcare access, quality, affordability, and flexibility as a means of advancing women's economic mobility, earnings, and status (Robinson, 2017). The multipronged strategy coupled grantmaking with capacity building, advocacy and policy, and strategic communications (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Approved Strategic Plan, Fiscal Year 2011 (Childcare)

Grantmaking:
Fund parent organizing, workers' rights, and childcare worker organizing groups
Capacity Building:
Provide capacity building to advance policy and advocacy
Advocacy and Policy:
Win increased and consistent public funding of childcare and improve quality of care jobs
Strategic Communications:
Increase resources by elevating the issue at the national level

3   Methods
In September 2016, the foundation secured the services of an independent evaluation firm led by a woman of color to assess its economic justice program, which, at the time, focused primarily on childcare advocacy. The overarching question guiding the evaluation was how, if at all, the foundation's social justice grantmaking model and strategies supported grantee policy achievements. The evaluation covered the 2012–2016 grantmaking period. Data collection began in November 2016 and ended in March 2017. The evaluation process concluded in September 2017 with the release of a final evaluation report (Robinson, 2017) and a national webinar that summarized the findings and recommendations to strengthen the Women's Economic Justice Program and its investments. The evaluation process was also intended to inform the foundation's upcoming five-year strategic plan and new directions for

the 2019–2023 grantmaking period. The external evaluation was participatory, consistent with the foundation's approach to be transparent and engage grantee partner organizations in foundation internal practices. The evaluation drew on grantee expertise during the analysis and reporting stages. Grantees were invited to assess and validate the findings in the evaluation report at two time points. A first draft of the evaluation report was shared and discussed with foundation staff and grantees at their 2017 annual retreat in a facilitated discussion with the evaluator. A subset of grantees volunteered to read a second draft of the report and provided their comments directly to the evaluator either over the phone or in writing. Grantees were specifically asked, "From your or your organization's perspective, do you feel your experience is represented in the report?"

The present paper draws on the same dataset used in the retrospective and external evaluation and applies techniques, such as those used by Jung, Kaufmann, and Harrow (2014) and Sanders et al. (2017), to examine the role of foundations in supporting nonprofit policy and advocacy. The dataset is made up of interview (primary data) and archival data (secondary data). Confidential semi-structured key informant interviews (n=22) were conducted by the external evaluator with various foundation stakeholders, including foundation program staff and board members, grantee organizational leaders (e.g., executive and campaign directors), consultants, and donors familiar with the foundation's childcare investments. These individuals were asked to share their perspectives on the past and present childcare policy arena (including grantee-specific policy gains and setbacks as described in grantee applications and interim or final reports), the role of other foundations investing in childcare at the same time as the Ms. Foundation for Women, the landscape of women's economic issues as it related to childcare, and, most importantly, the role of the foundation's strategies on women-/women of color-led organizations advocating for an improved childcare system.

A semi-structured interview guide consisting of open-ended questions was used and, if requested, was shared with the interview participants before the interview. These interviews were completed via telephone or video calls and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded, professionally transcribed, and then analyzed thematically using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The coding process was not entirely inductive, as the data were examined using themes from the social movement literature, such as *organizational fields*, which Bartley (2007) defines as "creating an arena that brings a number of different actors (often with different interests, ideologies, and organizational forms) into routine contact with one another, under a common frame of reference, in pursuit of an at least partially shared project" (p. 233). This theme is exemplified by the foundation's use of grantee convenings to build peer relationships and shared understanding across the labor and early education sectors, as well as its financial support for several cross-sector research projects. Infusing deductive approaches allowed us to contextualize specific aspects of the grantmaking model that could be implemented by other grantmakers.

The analysis of interview data was combined with a document review process using the foundation's internal and external documents describing the goals of its childcare investments, grantee applications, interim reports, and final reports submitted between 2012 and 2017, grant expenditure data stored in the foundation's grant management system, printable grantee products (e.g., research reports, policy reports, photos, and webpages), and online national news articles related to the country's political climate and positions on childcare policy. Of these, the most important sources of data were collected from grantee applications, interim reports, and final reports, which provided the most detailed information on the organization's history, nonprofit legal status, the size and composition of the

organization's board, staff, and constituency groups, the organization's internal and external short- and long-term policy and advocacy goals, planned strategies to increase its organizational and political capacity, organizational partnership development and maintenance activities, the amounts and types of other grants received, and grantee reflections on policy gains, setbacks, and losses for each grant year. When needed and if possible, grantee statements were substantiated with interview data, foundation records, and basic Internet searches.

4 Findings: Key Elements of the Ms. Foundation for Women's Childcare Grantmaking

Hunsaker and Hanzl (2003) identify several replicable practices for social justice grantmakers. These practices align with the foundation's approach, which include supporting women-centered strategies, long-term general operating grants, grantee capacity building support, targeting root causes, and the democratization of grantmaking procedures. Each characteristic is described below in the context of the foundation's childcare investments. We draw on grantee experiences to show how these characteristics strengthened their organizations and campaigns to facilitate policy gains. In this section, we also present the foundation's activities to reframe childcare as central to women's economic security; to elevate women of color leaders, their narratives, and their organization's intersectional policy agendas; and to support cross-sector childcare advocacy. Through its model, the foundation was able to operate alongside and support a grassroots social movement agenda. Specific and replicable strategies are explored and recommended to other foundations for adoption, such as offering multi-year general operating grants to grassroots-led organizations employing a gender-race-class-lens in their community organizing.

4.1 Putting Women of Color at the Center of Childcare

Putting women of color at the center of childcare has implications for which policy goals are pursued and who participates in the social change process. Women are the primary caretakers of children while they are increasingly the primary income earners in American households (Wang, Parker, & Taylor, 2013). These and other demographic trends captured the foundation's attention to resituate childcare as central to the foundation's economic security agenda. To examine the childcare movement from the perspective of women of color, the foundation commissioned several participatory action research projects using a gender-race-class lens (Ms. Foundation for Women, 2014; Pinto, 2016; Restaurant Opportunities Centers [ROC] United, 2016). Of these works, Pinto's (2016) investigation provided an assessment of the childcare organizational field. He concluded that universal childcare advocacy had been predominantly led by education advocates focused on child wellbeing. The policy analysis prepared by these advocates rarely addressed the economic, political, and social circumstances of the child's parent and community or of low-wage workers. Consequently, the devaluation of childcare stemming from sexism and racism in the U.S. went unrecognized in the narratives produced and the policies pursued by traditional childcare advocates. Without a gender-race-class lens and an explicit focus on women, mainstream childcare advocates neglected the childcare demands of the fastest-growing job sector—low-wage occupations within predominantly female industries—and missed opportunities to connect with women of color organizing. Additionally, while labor advocates (rightly) celebrated the success of their paid leave and minimum wage campaigns, these campaigns largely targeted workplace policy and employers in the private sector. The role of government-funded public goods like childcare were rarely addressed or connected to women's employment status, earnings, and mobility. In our study, every interview participant described the importance of

infusing women of color and low-wage workers' lived experiences, narratives, and policy solutions into the childcare movement. For example:

> Women of color and the experiences of women of color, those experiences too often are just not front and center when we talk about women's economic security, childcare, the whole swatch of economic justice issues. And so, Ms. is known for trying to bring that intersectional analysis to the conversation and I think that's an important aspect of the work that's being done.

And,

> [the Foundation] just gets the importance of paying attention to gender, and that is a contribution that is so valuable to the work that we do. We've got some funders who pay attention to poverty, and some funders who pay attention to racial inequity. But having a foundation that pays attention to poverty, race, and gender is so important.

Another interviewee illustrated fundamental differences in proposed policies using this lens:

> [M]aking low-income, working single moms the focus of early childhood policy-making leads to building a delivery system that offers full-time, affordable childcare. When early childhood education policies are designed to meet children's educational needs but not the needs of working mothers, we get programs like pre-K that are between two and six hours per day, only during the school-year months. Working moms cannot rely on this for childcare because it doesn't cover the hours they work. In fact, having to piece together multiple care arrangements to cover the workday makes a working mom's life harder and a low-income working mom's challenges nearly impossible.

A different interviewee articulated how novel the foundation's investments were within the larger philanthropic sector:

> When the Ms. Foundation decided to take on childcare, it was radical. No one was positioning childcare at the center of their economic justice agenda. Now, we are talking about workers as parents and using a two-generation approach, but when the Ms. (Foundation) was doing it, nobody else was really doing it. That's how bold it was.

With financial support from the foundation, grantee partners documented the needs of third-shift workers and the challenges of securing childcare in garment, retail, nail salon, child and elderly care, restaurant, and other low-wage sectors. Grantee partners also made policy recommendations such as broadening the scope of coverage for families and increasing and stabilizing childcare provider reimbursement rates (e.g., Ms. Foundation for Women, 2014; Restaurant Opportunities Centers [ROC] United, 2016). Their published reports addressed the research gaps identified by academic researchers (see future research suggestions by Ha & Ybarra, 2013). Grantee-led research had important consequences for their childcare campaigns. The findings established an empirical connection between childcare and labor issues such as wages, sick leave, family medical leave, and scheduling practices, and facilitated cross-sector campaigns with labor groups. For example, the foundation's grantee partner, ROC United, released a report on nighttime childcare needs and had plans to establish neighborhood childcare cooperatives. It also began working with the New York Deputy Secretary of Labor to include childcare in the state's One Fair Wage campaign. Child advocates also benefited from using the new integrated frame in their campaign strategies. For example, the Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI) is part of a project that

aims to provide childcare services to women in a construction training program. If successful, the program will be implemented throughout the state's workforce development system.

Foundations support movement-building infrastructure by resourcing organizing groups and networks capable of mobilizing new and broad bases of constituents to achieve a policy agenda (Masters & Osborn, 2010). In the case of childcare, constituent bases capable of authoring childcare policy had not been widely developed (Pinto, 2016). Similar to the practices of other foundations of this type (Ostrander, 2004), the Ms. Foundation for Women selected its grantee partners because they are constituent-led, use a gender-race-class policy analysis, and conduct explicit consciousness-raising and leadership development activities among the people most impacted. For example, MLICCI organizes 600 childcare providers who meet with legislators and participate in town hall meetings. Another grantee who works with over 2,400 parents stated:

> We've been organizing parents and early educators as well as early learning center owners for about seven years to expand access to high quality early education. …We're one of the few organizations that have real constituents that have a stake in the campaigns. There's certainly a lot of advocates who've been involved for longer than we have but are more traditional advocacy organizations that don't really have any sort of grassroots constituency to them. We're the only ones with a grassroots constituency.

Another stakeholder noted the value of grassroots-led organizations as members of the larger childcare advocacy context:

> [The foundation is] more willing to fund these groups. I do think the Ms. Foundation has really stood out doing this. It's harder for these groups to get money. They're smaller. They're less organized; they don't have a track record. They don't have the same resources. The groups that they focus on (e.g., grassroots organizing) are important to have in the mix because they provide another approach to change, which is what we need in the environment.

In addition, the foundation is committed to funding women- and women of color-led groups, which have historically been underfunded. As the Ms. Foundation for Women looked back at the early days of the childcare movement (Pinto, 2016), they identified the first philanthropic shifts affecting women of color childcare organizing almost four decades prior. Specifically, in the 1970s, Johnnie Tillmon, an African-American seamstress from Arkansas, became executive director of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) and led a national, bipartisan, multi-sector campaign to pass the Comprehensive Child Care Act of 1972. Although the bill had bipartisan support and passed the House and Senate, then-President Nixon vetoed it. If the Act had been implemented, it would have expanded women's access to affordable, quality childcare. Nonetheless, it galvanized social justice leaders and prompted the creation of a deep infrastructure reinforcing the idea of the government's role in subsidizing childcare as a public good. In the following decades, as the U.S. welfare system eroded, government and philanthropic sectors shifted their economic equality financial investments to target the workplace and the private sector. These investment shifts undercut the needs of working, low-income women, particularly women of color, and the organizations that advocated on their behalf. The NWRO and other grassroots organizations—once the strongest examples of women of color organizing for economic security—experienced disinvestment in philanthropic funds by the mid-1990s. As described earlier, childcare advocacy conversations were then eclipsed by early education advocates and educators focused on quality care; childcare became divorced from racial and gender justice, labor

standards, and federal economic policy. By the 2010s, childcare was no longer a major policy concern (Palley & Shdaimah, 2011). Today, philanthropic investments in grassroots organizations are rare and unpredictable (Foundation Center, 2009; Ostrander, 2004). Less than 4% of U.S. domestic grants, in one study, targeted women and girls (D5 Coalition, 2012). Few foundations employ a social justice model of grantmaking, even during times of widespread economic problems (Schlegel, 2016), and of all social justice grants made by U.S. foundations, only 11.4% targeted women and girls globally in a 2006 analysis (Foundation Center, 2009). In the 1950s, less than 1% of foundations funded social movements (Jenkins, 2001), and in 2009, only 12% of domestic and international grants offered by U.S. foundations funded social justice (Foundation Center, 2009). Large, private, and older foundations are less likely to support social justice causes (Suarez, 2012).

This historical review of Tillmon's work and social justice grantmaking targeting women provides a deeper context with which to characterize the Ms. Foundation for Women's social justice grants in childcare. To hold itself accountable to supporting a new philanthropic shift in support of grassroots organizations, it tracks its investments in women- and women of color-led organizations by monitoring the gender and racial makeup of the grantee organization's board chair, executive director, senior management, and primary constituent group. During the five-year period examined in this study, 79% percent of grantee organizations were led by female executive directors, and by 2016, 83% of the executive directors were women, 50% of whom were women of color. This distinguishing characteristic was commonly highlighted in our interviews, as one grantee described:

> When we had our grantee cohort meeting in D.C. and then had meetings with federal representatives, that meeting was 90 percent women of color. I think it's creating spaces that put women of color in the lead that is very intentional. It doesn't just happen organically. It happens because of intention and I've been in other national cohort meetings of childcare organizing and its 20 percent women of color are in the room. I just really think Ms. recognizes that it's not going to happen organically. There has to be an intent to fund organizations that put women of color at the center and that's reflected when we have meetings and when we're together. It's just a beautiful space when we come together and are strategizing and learning from each other. It's just very meaningful.

4.2 Long-Term General Operating Grants

In social justice grantmaking, *how* grants are administered matters as much as *which* organizations and campaigns are resourced. Long-term investments and general operating support (e.g., grant funds that cover personnel, administration, and program expenses) are important characteristics of social justice philanthropy (Hunsaker & Hanzl, 2003). A key characteristic of the Ms. Foundation for Women's grantmaking approach to the childcare movement was to provide long-term general operating grants to its grantee partners in recognition of the length of time it takes to achieve cultural shifts and policy change. In 2013, only 20% of the childcare cohort had been previously funded, whereas by 2016, 100% of the grantee cohort had received successive childcare grants (Robinson, 2017). The foundation provided consistent philanthropic support even while offering annual renewal grants. Long-term investments helped the foundation incubate organizations and support their organizational growth. For example, one grantee partner, All Our Kin, started as a pilot project and expanded geographically to three cities during this grant period. The foundation's general operating grants allowed grantees to drive their role in the movement. As one grantee stated:

> I don't feel like we have to make something up to feel like we fit in to what Ms. is
> trying to accomplish. They fundamentally get why we need to be at the table. They trust
> us to decide what we need to do with the money and what we're working on and what
> we need to advance at any given moment, so I don't feel a lot of pressure to constrain or
> bend ourselves into something just to feel like we fit.

Long-term investments and general operating grants are uncommon practices within philanthropy, despite research suggesting these practices are valuable to organizations working for social change. Between 2003 and 2013, 80% of U.S. social justice grantmaking[1] was restricted to specific projects, and 90% of foundations only provided one-year grants (Schlegel, 2016). Past studies have sought to understand how such investments are useful to the social change process. The Foundation Center (2009), in interviews with 18 social justice funders and eight advocates/activists, found that "single-year project grants are seen as leading to tentative work and inhibiting innovative thinking" (p. 8). McCarthy (2004) characterized such grants as "threats" to grassroots social movement organizations because they can co-opt the grantee's strategy when combined with incremental outcome measures. Bothwell (2001) asserts that the decline in progressive institutions, increases in issue silos, and dependence on incrementalism are due to the overuse of project-specific grants intended to increase accountability and give foundations maximum control over the social change process. Hunsaker and Hanzl (2003) and Horvath and Powell (2016) concur, stating that such grant procedures allow foundations to control what is funded. From a grantees' perspective, restricted funding reduces their ability to respond to changing organizational needs and campaign demands (Bothwell, 2001; Foundation Center, 2009). Similar to these and other studies (Bartley, 2007; Schlegel, 2016), long-term general operating grants received the most praise from the Ms. Foundation for Women grantee partners and were deemed critical to sustaining childcare policy campaigns in the absence of other foundations willing to support childcare advocacy and organizing (Robinson, 2017), for example:

> It makes it very difficult as an organization to make long-term plans and long-term
> organizing work becomes harder. I would like to see the funders stepping up for
> multiple year grants and investing in the ecosystem in the long term.

Another stated,

> I think particularly when the foundation has an interest in engaging diverse voices
> and women of color, you have to be able to invest in people over the long haul and
> not just a few years to give them enough resources to really do the work that you
> want them to do.

4.3 Capacity Building That Elevates Grantees' Visibility as Experts
As much an indication of values as an institutional practice, the Ms. Foundation for Women positions women of color as powerful leaders capable of designing just policies and participating in their own liberation. The foundation's capacity building supports are intended to "bring the organization to the next level of operational, programmatic, financial, and political maturity to effectively and efficiently advance a collective mission for equality" (Mathew, 2016). The foundation provided this support typically in the form of leadership

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[1] The study defined social justice grantmaking as at least 50% of grant dollars benefitting lower-income communities, communities of color, and other marginalized groups; and at least 25% of grant dollars are used for advocacy, organizing, and civic engagement to promote equity, opportunity, and justice.

development in areas with an immediate application to grantee campaigns. For example, nine economic justice grantees working on childcare policy participated in the Public Voices Fellowship designed to elevate the national visibility of women of color as childcare experts. The entire fellow cohort collectively published 32 op-eds in national and mainstream media outlets during their fellowship and continue to do so. In another example to elevate grantee visibility, in 2015, the foundation arranged a meeting between its grantees; Linda K. Smith, deputy assistant secretary for Early Childhood Development for the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and the Office of Public Engagement under the Office of the Vice President to discuss federal childcare policy. The foundation's grantees valued informal and formal capacity building supports, for example:

> I just think what our program officer has done for us and how she supports us and how she's just thinking about and creating opportunities for us to show our leadership and to bring our members along the ride. It has just been fantastic. …It's not just the grants that they provide, but it's the capacity building support, the communication support... It's just a very comprehensive and holistic approach to grantmaking that I think is just very unique and provides us additional support that we wouldn't have otherwise.

Peer-based capacity building was also valued. This form of support was initiated during the foundation's annual convenings, which were designed to shape a common language, deepen peer relationships, and generate complementary strategies. One grantee shared:

> I think we got a lot of value and enjoyment out of the convening part. I know that it can always be tough to ask grantees to be convened. It was important for us to strengthen our connection to another grantee that works near us, works with a constituency that overlaps with us, and a lot of their members also live in some of the same neighborhoods that we do but we had never really collaborated with [them]. … Their membership includes a good number of immigrant workers, and they have been sort of squarely wrestling with night child care for people who work late shifts. We've learned from their process to provide formal or informal child care and some of the barriers to entry that they ran into. There's been just a lot of learning from each other. We've also thought that any initiative that they develop, if they develop a site, a facility, a program, whatever, or vice versa, that we could potentially work together—that there would be some spillover between clients from our side and from theirs.

Another interviewee supported this view:

> I remember when I went to my first cohort meeting. It was both exciting and incredibly humbling to be in a room and feel like we're trying to impact the issue of childcare. There were all these stakeholders that I didn't know. What's been a strength is the diversity of stakeholders and the broad umbrella of stakeholders that the Ms. Foundation has been able to bring together. And with a real eye toward having a very strong race and gender analysis behind this work that has, I think, shaped who they were then, considering part of the cohort and who needs to be in relationship with one another. What I appreciated about Ms.' approach was the notion of building a cohort and the notion of these are people in this field that need to be in relationship to one another if we're going to make a difference long-term.

4.4 Targeting Root Causes

Explicit within a social justice approach to grantmaking is a focus on the causes of a social problem. In simple terms, social justice philanthropy is "grantmaking for progressive social reform" (Suarez, 2012, p. 259). According to the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, it "involves giving to create a more equitable distribution of power[2]—to truly reform institutions so that the need for chronic charity is eliminated. This, we believe, is the most important role that philanthropy plays in our democracy" (Hunsaker & Hanzl, 2003, p. 4). The committee also states:

> Philanthropy can encourage civic action by…collaborating with the government and private sector to lay down the foundation for a society with fairer distribution of and access to social, economic, and political power. (Hunsaker & Hanzl, 2003, p. 5)

For the Ms. Foundation for Women, targeting root causes meant supporting organizations working to redesign the childcare system in favor of universal and responsive childcare by increasing public funding and eliminating the sexism, racism, and classism undergirding childcare policy. Some examples include the following (also see Robinson, 2017):

- In New Mexico, OLE New Mexico is working to secure a $14 billion endowment for early childhood education. In line with the foundation's goal to improve the quality of jobs in the childcare sector, this grantee partner organization also commissioned a study by the University of New Mexico to determine a liveable wage scale for childcare workers. The organization also supported 15 workers' centers to hold union elections and finalize the first multi-employer collective bargaining agreement between the Quality Early Learning Association (QELA) and Early Educators United AFT, affecting 750 childcare business owners.

- In Mississippi, advocates worked to allocate $8 million in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families funds to the Mississippi Child Care Development Fund. This work extended services from 6 to 12 months for TANF clients, transitional childcare clients, homeless children, foster children, and children in state protective custody—about 8,000 children in total. In this state, over 149,000 children are eligible for assistance, yet only 17,000 are served. Ninety-two percent are Black children, and 87% of these children are served by licensed childcare providers owned by Black women.

- In Vermont, advocates successfully secured universal pre-K education, which will integrate an additional 1,800 children into pre-school programs.

- In New York and other states, several workers from the restaurant and garment industries became licensed childcare providers to fill the gap in overnight, in-neighborhood, culturally responsive, and affordable care options. Several locales are piloting childcare cooperatives to address overnight care needs.

- In Pennsylvania, the Childspace Cooperative Development Initiative helped pass a soda tax to finance universal pre-kindergarten and stabilize childcare provider reimbursement rates.

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[2] Power in this context is defined as the social, political, and economic resources available to an individual or collective (Hunsaker & Hanzl, 2003).

Beyond increasing government funding for childcare, grantee partner campaigns infused a gender-race-class lens into the childcare movement. For example, in California, Parent Voices worked on a campaign directed at a 1990s-era regulation that prohibited parents from receiving additional cash aid if they had subsequent children; it was considered a regressive policy informed by the myth of the "welfare queen." The organization also started a campaign to include childcare and home centers under the state's sanctuary policies to protect immigrant families. In New York and other states, several attorney generals reviewed fair workweek practices among major retailers at the behest of several workers' centers funded by the foundation. MLICCI influenced the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights' report through its testimony on the racial inequities in childcare. Building on Tillmon's organizing efforts from decades earlier, these strategies helped re-energize the concept of childcare as a public good that deserves government investment.

4.5 Democratization of Philanthropy

The Ms. Foundation for Women's program staff members are primarily women of color who have held positions as community organizers in various social movements and view their work as accountable to the broader social justice movement. Having a diverse staff with relevant professional backgrounds provides the foundation with credibility and legitimacy in grantee organizing spaces and supports mutually beneficial funder-grantee relationships. The lack of diversity is a recognized obstacle in social justice grantmaking, though promising demographic shifts suggest that philanthropy is embracing increased diversity (D5 Coalition, 2012; Hunsaker & Hanzl, 2003). Dedicating significant time to relationship building during site visits, calls, and virtual meetings, the foundation's staff engages grantees as real peers. This practice mitigates the power imbalance that often occurs in funder-grantee relationships (Ostrander, 2004) and helps make the foundation accessible, accountable, transparent, and responsive to women. One grantee exemplified this transparency:

> The one year that we weren't funded, I called our program officer, and I said, "Can we sort of talk about it and get feedback?" And that was so helpful, because she was so open. …It was so great to have the kind of relationship where we could talk openly about why they make their funding decisions and what might make us more competitive for a certain pot of money, and just again, not to have an opaque process, but to have one that's really transparent and open and includes dialogue is really wonderful.

Foundation staff members engage in open and frequent communication that extends beyond grant-funded work and employs a readiness to elevate grantees' visibility and credibility by leveraging the foundation's relationships with leaders, including other grantmakers and policymakers as described in the previous section and in the quote below:

> I would say, out of our funders, they're probably one of the only "high touch" funders. It's actually been quite appreciated. They have connected us with other resources that have been really wonderful for the organization. I think more than just a funder we really consider them a pretty big resource and ally. It's very different. They really are the only funder I would say that is like that. It's been like that in a very sort of direct way in that their communication is not just by e-mail, but they really do check in and hold calls and convene both as a cohort, people [that] are part of an Economic Justice mentee/cohort, but also individually.

5 Conclusion

There are currently 1.4 million philanthropic organizations working for a better society (Barman, 2017); the impact of these organizations is global. If 50 of the largest foundations increased their social justice grants, they would collectively make US$10 billion available to social change organizations in the next decade (Schlegel, 2016). In a recent survey by the Center for Effective Philanthropy (2017), nearly 75% of foundations that responded indicated that they plan to make changes to their grantmaking programs because of the election of Donald Trump, and 48% believe that their jobs will be more difficult under his administration. In the midst of a new political environment and the need for more grants resourcing women of color leaders and social justice, we call on foundations across the globe to support a gender–race–class childcare advocacy agenda by doing the following:

1. Providing long-term general operating support to women- and women-of-color-led organizations across multiple issue areas. Women of color are at the frontlines of social movements and just forms of democracy.

2. Funding childcare community organizing from a gender–race–class perspective. Women experience multiple interlocking systems of oppression (e.g., colonization and capitalism) and thus bring a unique perspective to policy formation and implementation.

3. Conducting internal assessments of your foundation's role in supporting and operating *alongside* grantees to achieve social progress. The internal assessment should track the foundation's diversity and perceived legitimacy by grantee constituent groups.

4. Democratizing grantmaking practices by engaging grantee organizations as partners, developing strong funder–grantee peer relationships, and supporting informal and formal capacity building that raises the visibility of women of color leaders and their organizing campaigns. The foundation's interest in grantee organizational sustainability and effectiveness led to long-term financial investments and relevant capacity building opportunities designed to elevate grantee expertise and visibility.

5. Engaging in funder–grantee shared learning using participatory action research and evaluation. The foundation's interest in policy solutions leaned on assessment methodologies that recognized grantee knowledge and expertise.

Because of philanthropy's influence, it is important to consider its role in ensuring that women of color-led organizations are fully resourced as essential actors in any social change process, including childcare and related issues. The lack of philanthropic investment in women and girls of color and in social justice more broadly is likely to have consequences beyond the availability of financial capital. Across multiple social movements, research has also documented philanthropy's role in channeling, delaying, controlling, suppressing, and co-opting social progress through its investments in social movements and countermovements[3] (Barman, 2017; Bartley, 2007; Brulle, 2014). Philanthropy can impede social progress by disinvesting from large-scale grassroots political participation and consciousness-raising strategies among oppressed communities; discouraging confrontational

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[3] Countermovements are defined as "those organized efforts that are opposed to the objectives of social movements" (Brulle, 2014, p. 683).

tactics that challenge traditional power institutions; characterizing empowerment as a product of social services rather than the redistribution of power; investing solely or primarily in professionalized top-down or politically moderate groups using color- and gender-blind strategies; and investing in efforts that aim to restrict local, state, and federal government roles in the provision of public goods (Bartley, 2007; Haines, 1984; Horvath & Powell, 2016; Jenkins, 2001; O'Connor, 2010). The consequences—whether unintentional or intentional, direct or indirect—are germane to a movement's infrastructure and ultimate success.

Philanthropic investments in childcare advocacy organizations with a gender–race–class lens matter. This paper examined the role of the Ms. Foundation for Women's grantmaking practices in supporting grantee campaigns and how it affected the trajectory of the childcare movement by funding a subset of actors representing low-income women of color and workers using democratic methods (e.g., grassroots mobilization) in their childcare policy campaigns. Knott and McCarthy's (2007) review of 12 foundations supporting childcare advocacy describe many elements found in the Ms. Foundation for Women's approach, though our paper presents the benefits of a gender-race-class lens. Simply put, they remind us of the aims all foundations seek to achieve with their investments:

> Foundations thus invest some of their venture capital in building a policy infrastructure favorable to their programmatic goals. Their return on investment will be a combination of immediate program outcomes, generally positive but limited in geography and scope, and broader policy changes that in turn will guide the development of future programs operated by foundations, government agencies, and the private market. (Knott & McCarthy, 2007, p. 322)

6   Limitations

There are several limitations to the study. Interview bias could have impacted grantee information sharing, as some grantees may have feared adverse consequences if they provided a negative critique. To avoid this issue, interview transcripts and audio files were only accessible to the evaluator, all interviews were confidential, and no identifying information appeared in the quotes used unless the interview participant gave permission. Collectively, interview participants made over 20 agency-specific recommendations to the foundation, suggesting that critical feedback was not withheld. The evaluator asked for specific examples to avoid positive critiques that were overly inflated or too broad. Temporal effects on interviewee attitudes are a drawback of any cross-sectional study design. Interviews that took place after the 2016 national elections were notably different in stressing the importance of the foundation's work. As such, it revealed the key components of the foundation's strategy that had been and would be useful in the new political context. In this study, these later interviews provided useful information for the foundation since it was engaged in a concurrent strategic planning process. We acknowledge that multiple actors, including but not limited to grantee organizations, were involved in the passage and defeat of local, state, and federal laws. Our goal, as with most advocacy studies, is to document contributions rather than establish causality. Despite these limitations, the results are consistent with a previous external assessment of the foundation (Wadia, 2008) and the social movement literature, as described throughout this paper. Our chosen methodology utilizes the perspectives and expertise of childcare organizers, adding their voices to the literature and their perspectives on the strategies that were most beneficial to their childcare policy and advocacy campaigns. Our work responds to prior requests to produce qualitative research that offers an understanding of foundation motives for social change grants (Suarez & Lee, 2011). Finally, this article

responds to several calls in social work to produce research on advocacy (McNutt, 2011), childcare (Kahn, 2014), and feminism and social justice (Turner & Maschi, 2015).

Understanding the political context is important for evaluations of social change. This includes understanding the role of the opposition (Leca, Battilana, & Boxenbaum, 2008; Robinson, 2014). This study does not address this need. We agree with Leca et al. (2008) that future studies of a foundation's role in social movements should simultaneously examine the foundations that are supporting the countermovement. The Ms. Foundation for Women's grantees reported that they faced direct opposition to their policy goals from other policy actors (e.g., corporations). Grantee "policy gains" include successfully *defeating* legislation that would restrict access to childcare (e.g. grantees defeated $74 million in cuts in the Midwest and a plan to fingerprint parents receiving benefits in the South) (Robinson, 2017). This raises questions that are beyond the scope of this study: who else was operating in the childcare organizational field? How did the foundation's resources affect opposition groups, including philanthropic actors supporting countermovements, funding alternatives to government/public goods, and weakening deliberative processes, public oversight and participation (also see Horvath Powell, 2016)?[4] An expanded study design would provide a richer description of the movement's infrastructure as well as the countermovement's infrastructure (the policy spaces or organizational fields of groups working against childcare and women's economic security). This would further our understanding of the vital role of women of color-led organizing and the social change process to secure universal childcare.

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[4] Countermovements are defined as "those organized efforts that are opposed to the objectives of social movements" (Brulle, 2014, p. 683).

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