# The Antecedents and Consequences of Multiple Logics in Community Foundations

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# Introduction

Critics describe philanthropic foundations as elitist, insular, and conservative organizations (Reich, 2018). Over the last decade, foundations have faced increased pressure to promote equity and social change in organizational practices and grant outcomes (Villanueva, 2018; Walker, 2019). These pressures heightened with the convergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 racial justice protests following the murder of George Floyd and since then foundations across the globe made new public commitments to address issues of equity and justice. By July 2021, one hundred and sixty-five foundations had committed more than $10.8 billion for racial equity (Candid, n.d.). Still, new calls demanded that foundations not only devote more resources to address systemic disparities, but also to evaluate how their philanthropic practices perpetuate inequitable systems. These field pressures mirror diverse calls within academia to pay more attention to the intersection of race, class, and power in organizations (Ray, 2019; Rojas, 2019).

However, there is great skepticism regarding whether foundations can make lasting changes that will transform philanthropic practice and grantmaking (Beer et al., 2021). Foundations dependent upon elite donors for resources and rooted in the unique cultures and organizational structures of local communities balance the interests of donors and community, which may not always align with a social change agenda. Even well-intentioned philanthropic efforts have co-opted efforts at radical reform in ways that reflect elite interests (Francis, 2019; Kohl-Arenas, 2015; Roelofs, 2003).

In this paper, we draw upon organizational institutionalism and the concept of institutional logics to describe the long-term co-existence of multiple logics within the U.S. (CF) industry throughout its hundred, plus year history. Using the method of ideal types (Reay & Jones, 2016), we describe the multiple and historically persistent logics within CFs in the United States, the factors associated with the dominance of each logic, and the consequences for philanthropic parity. While we had originally intended to describe a “new logic” of social change philanthropy that was competing to replace pre-existing logics, our construction of ideal types led us to the preliminary conclusion that the logic of “social change philanthropy” is not new within the CF industry. Consistent with other studies of “waves” of diffusion and adoption of logics (Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2017), we find the co-existence of four logics whose dominance has long ebbed and flowed, reflecting historical events and the influence of institutional entrepreneurs and national foundations. The logic of social change philanthropy although manifested in the values and practices of individual organizations at specific points in time, this logic was never “institutionalized” within the CF industry.

Specifically, we explore the two questions: 1). What are the multiple logics in the CF industry and what events have influenced their ebb and flow? Then we offer hypotheses to guide our second long-term question 2). What macro and organizational factors are associated with the contemporary dominance of these logics? We conclude by discussing the implications of our analysis, specifically, What are the long-term consequences for communities of CF logics?

Our paper contributes to the study of philanthropy by applying the methods of ideal types to identify the logics manifested in CFs, extending existing studies of the strategic orientations of CFs (Graddy & Morgan, 2006; Millesen & Martin, 2014; Sloan, 2020). The ideal type approach “…provides the basis for comparing logics and theorizing what mechanisms drive differences among and changes in logics over time.” (Reay and Jones, 2016, p. 449). Second, given that the dominance of logics ebbs and flows (Fan & Zietsma, 2017), we identify the contexts in which specific logics, particularly the logic of social change philanthropy, may take hold. We conclude by positing when the logics may produce philanthropic parity, in an important mid-range goal of this logic. We begin by defining CFs and the historical development of the industry.[[1]](#footnote-1) We then introduce the concept of institutional logics, the methods for the construction of ideal types, and our description of four ideal types of logics that animate the CF field.

1. **Background on CFs**

The Council on Foundations describes community foundations as public charities that raise donations from a broad public to build an endowment to benefit the residents of a given locale. The first CF emerged in Cleveland, Ohio in 1914. Cleveland, one of the most important manufacturing centers and the fifth largest city in the United States at that time, served as an important hub for philanthropic creativity. The city’s wealth combined with its rapid growth and the “…attendant problems of poverty, inequality, and social disorder prodded leaders to think about how private dollars, alongside public ones, might improve the city for all its residents and for ongoing business success” (Berman, 2015, p. 11). Fredrick Goff (a lawyer and president of the Cleveland Trust Company) was at the center of two important philanthropic innovations of the time: federated giving campaigns and the rise of the great private foundation. Drawing on both models, Goff devised a plan for local based philanthropic trust. “Fred Goff did not think small. He wrote to John D. Rockefeller that his goal for the Cleveland Foundation was “to do for the inhabitants of Cleveland what you have done in a large way through the Rockefeller Foundation for mankind at large”(Sacks, 2014, p. 7) . In Goff’s plan, CFs would receive charitable trust funds, which would be held and managed by a bank trust, while a distribution committee of knowledgeable community leaders would respond to the current needs of the community by distributing the income from the invested endowment.

The community foundation model spread quickly through a network of bankers. By 1920 nineteen out of the twenty-one largest U.S. cities, those with populations of 300,000 or higher, had formed a CF (Sacks, 2014 p. 8). By 1931, seventy-four CFs had been created in the United States., all by trust companies or banks with trust departments (Hardy, 2012). While the growth of CFs slowed during and immediately after the Depression (Sacks), the 1960’s and 1970’s saw a renewed growth in the number of CFs in the United States and their assets under control, particularly in the West and South (Sacks, 2014). This expansion and asset growth resulted from changes in the federal tax code, that provided preferential treatment to CFs as public charities (Berman, 2015; Colinvaux, 2018) and the ascendancy of neo-liberal values which emphasized private solutions to social issues (Dunning, 2022) (. The development of the CF industry was also supported by several national foundations, including Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. McArthur Foundation, and the Lilly Endowment, all of whom launched initiatives to build the capacity of CFs (J. S. Lowe, 2004). Recently in response to increasing diversity in local communities and the racial justice movement of 2020, CFs have been pressured to adopt language and practices that reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social change.

As we will subsequently describe, the history of the CF industry in the United States points to the existence of multiple logics, which have ebbed and flowed over time. In the following section, we introduce the concept of institutional logic, our methodology to describe ideal types, and the elements and historical sequencing associated with each ideal type.

**2. Defining Institutional Logics**

Institutional logics as are defined as “…socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences.” (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 2). Logics provide the “…formal and informal rules of action, interaction, and interpretation that guide and constrain decision makers in accomplishing the organization’s tasks” (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804). As rules, they provide a set of values and assumptions about what constitutes appropriate practices to achieve desired ends (Kroezen & Heugens, 2019). Logics emerge from societal institutional orders (family, profession, state, religion, market, corporation, community, religion) and are enacted and reshaped and customized within organizations, industries, and fields.

**3. Method for Constructing Ideal Types**

We used the method of ideal types (Reay & Jones, 2016) to identify the multiple logics that animate the CF industry. As a method, ideal types operationalize and compare logics across “elemental categories or building blocks” (Smets et al., 2015, p. 934), allowing scholars to compare across logics and theorize what mechanisms drive these differences and what processes may shape change over time (Reay & Jones, 2016). Ideal types offer a typology, but they do not describe an “average” type of organization nor signify approval of a particular type (Thornton et al., 2012). Ideal types have been used in the study of such diverse settings as higher education publishing, investment and banking services, pharmacy practices, prisons, and peace organizations.

We first identified components or elements (the y-axis) that are the building blocks that are particular to each logic (the x-axis). This enabled us to compare across logics. We used existing studies of logics, paying particular attention to the description of ideal types in the nonprofit/voluntary sector and human services, to identify “elemental categories” privileging previous research and theory (Reay & Jones, 2016). In addition, we identified other elements that are unique to the context of CFs (for example, the nature of community) through our reading of the academic and professional literature on philanthropy. We also identified the historical events associated with logic dynamics in the CF industry (Thornton et al., 2005). Such events include shifts in government regulatory routines and governance regimes, changes in the resource environment, including market competition and philanthropic resources, and changes in social and political contexts.

To describe the content of each cell in each ideal type, we drew on multiple sources of data, including historical accounts and academic studies that describe developments in the CF field and within individual foundations. We also drew on other academic studies that similarly describe the emergence of similar logics in other industries (for example, the replacement of the trust model in banking), and contemporary articles written by both academics and practitioners, and news releases. It is important to recognize that unlike the major national foundations, there are few empirical case studies of CFs (Hardy, 2012). As a result, our analysis relies heavily on a limited number of resources describing a small number of cases. As will become obvious, the legacy of the Cleveland Foundation and its founder, Fredrick Goff, imprinted many of the logics that have animated the CF industry since its founding in 1914.

**4. Results: Describing the Ideal Types of CF Logics**

Our analysis identified the existence of four ideal types that co-existed throughout the history of the CF industry. Their dominance has ebbed and flowed within foundations and across the industry over time. Table 1 summarizes these ideal types. We elaborate on those four types below.

## 4.1 Logic: Philanthropic Stewardship

The logic of philanthropic stewardship has long dominated the CF industry. This logic emphasizes the protection and growth of long-term assets for the future and unforeseen needs of place by convincing donors of their obligation to community and the trustworthiness of financial institutions in stewarding those assets. This logic is informed by the societal logics of community (rooted in the early 20th century notion of “small town” --focused on mutuality and collective responsibility) and the logic of the banking profession (an emphasis on stewardship and accountability that emerged from its roots in the trust and banking industry). The geographic region stretching from Northern New York, Ohio, the Great Lakes, and the Upper Mississippi Valley was characterized by a powerful sense of community. The values of this region were “rooted in a commitment to…moralistic communal politics” that shaped distinct understandings of individuals’ responsibilities to the collective community (Schneider, 1996, p. 201), a community of place in which needs were met through mutuality and collective responsibility (Hall, 1989). This Midwest civic culture emphasized Western European notions of “noblesse oblige” and stewardship to the communities from which one has benefited (Hall, 1989; Hammack, 1989; Joseph, 1989; Ruesga & Puntenney, 2010). This obligation was inherent in Goff’s expectations for giving to the CF and provided a base of norms for the CF industry (Joseph, 1989). As Goff’s wife explained. "He had a great desire in some way to make a useful contribution to the future of the city where he had spent his life and done his work. ...” (Tittle, 1992, p. 54).

Concerned about obsolete trusts and the movement of industrial capital outside of local communities, Goff concluded that the ideal "immortal being" for community philanthropy was his own local bank (Tittle, 1992, p. 54). Like a bank, a CF could receive large gifts, including complex assets, hold those assets in an endowment, and ultimately distribute the earnings from the endowment, holding the principal to respond to unforeseen future needs. While accountability was symbolically represented in the names of these new philanthropic vehicles, for example Chicago Community Trust and the New York Community Trust; Goff also sought to implement practices that would be “publicly accountable” (Hammack, 1989; Leonard, 1989a). While commercial banks would fiscally manage the philanthropic endowment, the income from the endowment would be distributed to charitable needs in the community through the advisement of a knowledgeable board of local elites (Tittle, 1992). Often appointed by publicly elected officials, Goff referred to is as a “committee of citizens” (Zunz, 2014, p. 55) and expected that they would be accountable to the entire community (Tittle, 1992, p. 59). Being rooted in stable interlocking networks of civic leadership created expectations of effective oversight (Colinvaux, 2018).

This model of elite stewardship reflected the philosophy of Social Darwinism, articulated by Andrew Carnegie in the Gospel of Wealth, and held by many early 20th century philanthropists. Social Darwinism advanced the notion that the "the few strong must take care of the weak many" not only by "returning their surplus wealth to the mass of their fellows” but also by “employing their "superior wisdom, experience, and ability" to reinvest his money where it would do the most good” (Kelley, 2000, p. 54). Over time, the distribution of funds advised by a voluntary committee of elites led to practices of reactive grant making to established organizations with elite boards relying heavily upon the expertise of those making the request (Hardy, 2012). As a result, resulting in funding to uncontroversial organizations (Hardy, 2012) and the capital needs of major institutions (Segal, 1989).

Reflecting this focus on philanthropic stewardship, in 2000 the Council on Foundations proposed National Standards for U.S. CFs and formed the Community Foundations National Standards Board, “codifying a high bar for conduct, ethics, transparency, and compliance, CF leaders established a framework designed to exceed the expectations of lawmakers and the public for strict adherence to the law in service to donors and communities nationwide” (Council on Foundations., 2002). While the “trust” structure of CFs gave way to corporate structures, the logic of philanthropic trust has continued to dominate the CF industry and the identity of a “charitable check-writing institution” focused on growing and managing assets has persisted through the history of the CF industry (Ryan & Millesen, 2014, p. 258).

## 4.2 Logic: Donor Services

In contrast to a logic of philanthropic steward based in a norm of communal philanthropy, the donor services logic emphasizes recruiting and retaining donors by marketing CFs as foundations that serve the values and needs of individual donors. Rather than being “trustees” for the community, this logic is based on the norm of fidelity to the intent of the donor (Frumkin, 1997). Philanthropy is an expression of a person’s private values and “moral imagination” (Payton & Moody, 2008) and a means that serves the needs of donors. This aligns with the norms of “individualistic philanthropy,” in which philanthropy is seen as a path to “nurture, support, and realize personal goals” (Schneider, 1996, p. 204) . The donor services logics is dependent upon the use of professional fundraising and marketing techniques to recruit and retain donors (Berman, 2015; Zunz, 2014) by providing the legal, organizational, and financial services that freed donors from the operational costs of administering their own trust (Kelley, p. 80). As a result, the source of professional identity for many staff lay not with the banking industry, but in the professions of fundraising and marketing charged with growing the assts of the endowment by attracting new donors. The donor services logic is influenced by the societal logic of the market, which emphasizes philanthropy as a transaction, benefiting the self-interest of the donor. The donor services logic further blurs the line between philanthropy and the market in keeping with a growingly financialized model of post-industrial, globalized societies that increasingly permeates philanthropy (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Eikenberry & Mirabella, 2018). More broadly, Davis (2009, p. 6) described a portfolio society “…in which the investment idiom becomes a dominant way of understanding the individual’s place in society.”

 The donor services logic encouraged distribution practices that are “advised” or “directed” by the living donor. From the beginning CFs balanced a donor services logic with a philanthropic trust logic. When the widow of the one of the first donors to the Indianapolis Foundation raised concerns about how her husband’s bequest was being used, a trustee quickly acquiesced to using $1,500 available from the Roberts trust to fund a new named nursing position for the Public Health Nursing Association. “This would solve the need to supply adequate help to children and satisfy Mrs. Roberts’s concerns“ (Hardy, 2012, p. 168). However, a trustee then asked fellow members of the Distribution Committee: “Do we not want to reflect the interests and wishes of our donors in the work we initiate and perpetuate?” (Hardy, 2012, p. 168).

The donor services logic was particularly strong in the Northeast, where elites placed an emphasis on the mechanics of philanthropy and viewed the mission of a CF as an efficient means to distribute the charitable funds for individual donors (Hammack, 1989). The New York Community Trust, viewed engaging living donors in philanthropic decision making as an important fundraising tool (Colinvaux, 2017) and by 1931 the New York Trust opened the first fund truly advised by a living donor, a significant departure from the Midwest “stewardship logic.” The donor services logic privileged communities of interest and identities, rather than community of place (Colinvaux, 2018) . One of the first funds established at the New York Community Trust in 1925 provided scholarships to students at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (Hammack, 1989).

While the logic of donor services has existed within the CF industry from the beginning; the donor services logic gained dominance in the CF field beginning in the early 1970’s because of a variety of tax rulings and socio-demographic changes. Tax rulings in1943 and 1964 that distinguished between public charities and private foundations based upon the proportion of annual support that came from public sources (government and public appeals) (Hall, 1989) increased the emphasis on professional donor cultivation. Later, the 1969 tax law further clarified distinctions between public and private foundations, providing advantages for public status, and made it clear that a single charitable entity could be a collective of individual endowments (Colinvaux, 2018). This “safe harbor ruling” (Berman, 2015) provide additional traction for the donor services logic. . Norman Sugarman, a lawyer for the U.S. internal revenue service and Jewish philanthropy activist, advanced this special ruling for public foundations and then led the “marketing of the donor services model” to donors, advisors, and philanthropic organizations over the next few decades. (Berman, 2015, p. 16). Sugarman worked with charities to develop a narrative of “public fundraising” and educated donors about the tax advantages of giving appreciated stock to “public charity,” the efficiencies to the donor of holding endowment funds in public foundations, and the importance of retaining “advisory control” over philanthropic gifts. In sharp contrast to Goff’s philanthropic trust logic that emphasized “community control” over the distribution of funds and “collective giving for the benefit of community”, this emerging endowment model “…elevated individual donors and their philanthropic priorities, and by design enabled the donors who gave the most money to set philanthropic agenda.” (Berman, 2015, p. 22). This shift also changed the economic model of CFs as CFs became increasingly dependent upon fees generated from management of donor advised funds to support their operations.

While the 1969 tax change propelled the dominance of the donor service logic, globalization and a variety of social identity movements fostered greater elasticity in the definition of community (Colinvaux, 2018), eroding the notion of community as a place of shared identity (Barman, 2006, 2008; Carson, 2015; Ostrander, 2007). Demographic and technological changes empowered donors to seek control over their philanthropic decisions. In the 1990’s CFs also faced growing competition from financial investment firms for philanthropic advising after an IRS ruling enabled commercial investment firms to open charitable arms with public charity status. Fidelity and other commercial investment companies had the scale to make donor advised philanthropic funds into a viable commercial “industry” (Berman, 2015, p. 23), pushing CFs into competition with large national sponsoring organizations. To compete CFs re-articulated their value to donors, justified their fee structures, and improved their interactions with donors (Berman, 2015; Carson, 2013, 2015). By 2016 CFs were looking more like commercial finance. “CFs now court financial planners and wealth managers as well as donors” and were “reducing investment and management fees to better compete with the low-fee, no-frills sponsors with ties to commercial firms”(Daniels & Lindsay, 2016, p. 4).

Ultimately, the ascendancy of the donor services logic not only reshaped the definition of community in philanthropy but “…transformed the nature of American philanthropy by conferring upon private expenditures and decision-making the privileges of public sanction and subsidy… privileging individualism over collectivism (Berman, 2015, p. 26).

## 4.3 Logic: Public-Private Governance

The public-private governance logic emerged from a unique combination of a corporatized logic of the “democratic state”, and the market, which converged to emphasize a public/private partnership in a model of shared local governance. This logic defines community as a process characterized by the interdependence and commitment of community actors who work for the betterment of a defined place through joint control or governance (Joseph, 1989). At the turn of the 20th century, frustrated with the ineffectual political response to the growing needs of changing communities and potential overreach of government, civic leaders perceived that the best way to tackle the complex social problems of the day was through “cross sectoral partnerships” (Hall, 1989), referred to as the “associational state” (Balogh, 2015) , shared governance, or coproduction of public goods (Dunning, 2022). This logic emphasizes 1). non-governmental solutions to public problems in which the private sector, including philanthropy, is engaged in cross-sectoral partnerships to design, fund, and implement public policy 2). belief in the power of capitalism to solve social problems 3). the power of scientific methods to produce efficient and effective results that can be measured (Lowe, 2004). Consistent with this logic, early 20th century civic leaders, “…scarcely perceived public/private boundaries”(Badertscher, 2015, p. 266).These values have permeated the language and practice of many CFs, their dominance ebbing, and flowing with shifts in public policy.

The public-private governance logic has emphasized CFs role in agenda setting through community studies, convening public private partnerships, and leveraging cross sectoral resources to fund and deliver public services. Informed by scientific approaches philanthropy, one of the signature practices of the earliest CFs were community studies. These studies used “science”—research conducted by trained personnel- to create public awareness of community needs, identify effective solutions to social problems, arrive at technical solutions, and shape the public agenda(Hammack, 1989; Tittle, 1992). The Cleveland Foundation poor relief, the performance of public schools, recreation, and criminal justice s. The Chicago Community Trust launched studies of immigrant integration, the jails and housing for single working women (Loomis & Mazany, 2017). The Indianapolis Foundation launched **a** health survey (broadly defined to include the prevention of poverty and poor health) and Buffalo compiled and published a directory of area social agencies (Hardy, 2012). These studies raised awareness of social needs not only among the public but were also intended to shape the perceptions of the city’s elite. As Tittle (1992) described ”… the most enduring contribution of the survey years was to establish a precedent for a local philanthropy to act as a civic agenda setter and problem-solver” (p. 73).

A commitment to public private governance required that CFs work with other institutions, nonprofits, businesses, and government agencies (Hall, 2006; Tittle, 1992). These coordinated efforts attempted to “institutionalize dialogue” between major organized groups in communities. Coordinated efforts were particularly successful in small size, stable Midwest cities, which were able to pull interlocking groups of elites who worked across governments agencies and commissions, business, and charitable/philanthropic organizations (Badertscher, 2015; Hardy, 2012; Loomis & Mazany, 2017; Tittle, 1992).

In the United States, the logic of public-private partnership ebbed in the face of stronger government involvement in social services from the Great Depression through the 1960’s. Yet preference for small government was a strong part of the U.S. political ideology and social fabric. Fueled by public perceptions of the failure of Great Society programs (Hall, 1989), for the last five decades, the neo-liberal political ideology has dominated political discourse and public policy in the United States. This ideology has permeated conservative and liberal, Republic and Democratic administrations and at all levels of government (Dunning, 2022; J. Lowe, 2006; Yin, 1998).Public policy increasingly focused on reducing government spending on social programs and promoting community-based voluntarism to take the place of government service delivery (Lowe, 2006). Local government with new responsibilities but not the accompanying funding to fulfill them (Bernholz et al., 2005), looked to local philanthropy to increasingly pick up the slack in local service delivery systems. Neoliberal ideologies also shifted the narratives and practices of local governance, celebrating the role of finance and markets in social welfare activities (Dunning, 2022; Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004). These ideological shifts were directly reflected in policy changes, such as community development block grants, which provided CFs with grants and other funding opportunities to play key roles in local community development efforts (Lowe, 2006).

At the same time, enactment of the public-private governance logic was also driven by practical concerns. Perceiving existential threats to their legitimacy and value proposition in the face of commercial competition for donor services (Bernholz et al., 2005; Carson, 2015), community foundations increasingly emphasized their unique position in local governance. This shift has been supported by national foundations through direct assistance to individual CFs and efforts to influence the “identity” of the CF industry through professional training.

The revitalized logic of public private governance, branded as community leadership (CFLeads, 2009), embodies many of the earlier 20th values and practices of the public-private logic, with little reference to the historical legacy of this logic. Building off the early 20th century community studies, contemporary civic leadership embraces the use of data to set civic agendas and monitor progress to achieving those agendas. “The Boston Foundation now functions as a think tank joined to a foundation, and its internally generated data and research have allowed the region to partake in unusually rigorous and intelligent conversations; when everyone is looking at the same information, the conversation is more productive…” (Grogan, 2013, p. 221). The project not only documented the issues but offered policy strategies (Dunning, 2022; Grogan, 2013).

Consistent with a financialized societal logic (Davis, 2009; Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004), the 21st century logic of public-private governance supports marketized narrative and practices that include strategies that leverage diverse social and financial capitals to support public service delivery. Leveraging capital from individuals, businesses, and government to support community projects, CFs become grant seekers not just grant makers. CFs have also sought to leverage their endowments to provide loans for projects to both businesses and nonprofits, rather than relying solely upon charitable grants to nonprofits. These program related investments (pioneered by the Cleveland Foundation) (Tittle, 1992) have become an increasingly popular financial tool for community philanthropy. This financialization is also reflected in the grant making practices of CFs as they have adopted formal grant applications for specific projects, focused on competitive funding, and heightened evaluation and monitoring. These shifts monetized the relationship between CFs and community nonprofits. Through their support of these financial tools, CFs have played key roles in transferring the adoption of new “financialized” models of social service delivery, supporting the emergence of professionalized and financialized nonprofit organizations (Dunning, 2022; Wolfe, 2006).

## 4.4 Logic: Social Change Philanthropy

The social change logic seeks to dismantle the structures that foster oppression of marginalized categories of people through policy change by returning economic, social, and political power to marginalized individuals and communities (Paarlberg et al., 2022). This logic is rooted in societal logics of community, democratic governance, and universal values of human rights. This logic recognizes communities as places of contested “pluralism” (race, class, ethnicity, gender, and other social categories and classifications) in which residents negotiate diverse values and claims (Ruesga, 2014), rather than places of shared identity or common goals. This logic has been promoted by minoritarian voices within the CF industry since 1914. The values of the early 20th century CF movement were situated in a wave of religious evangelism and secular spinoffs, including Temperance movements, utopian socialism, and women’s suffrage movement that advocated for social change. The CF movement emerged as “…many Americans translated their search for spiritual perfection into efforts to reform society through political and legal channels.” (Hall, p. 181). Early CF entrepreneurs were also often motivated by personal experiences of childhood poverty and liberal social networks that made these “reformers” empathetic advocates for change (Loomis & Mazany, 2017; Tittle, 1992).

The motivations for social change in the first years of the 20th century were clearly mixed, as they are now. During the Progressive era , the growing struggle between capital and labor that resulted in violent strikes and the rise of socialism, highlighted the existential threat of inaction. For elite reformers in search of a safe “social movement” to head off more radical change , CFs provided a path to redistribute wealth (Hall, 1989). CFs representing a middle course between socialism and “laisezz faire capitalism,” could use their elite positions to safely change policies and practices to redistribute economic and political power (Wolfe, 2006).

The social change logic animated the early work of the Cleveland Foundation and often pitted foundation elites against, rather than in partnership with, the city’s established political and economic leaders. The first Cleveland community studies often offered “radical” suggestions to change the political structures that administered social welfare systems. For example, the study on poverty relief called for transferring responsibility for public welfare from the private sector to the state (Tittle, 1992, p. 74). One of the most colorful examples of the Cleveland Foundation willingness to use their social and political power to advocate for change was the criminal justice study which called out all the major political and commercial actors in the criminal justice system, including a ring of attorneys with powerful political ties, unqualified judges focused on re-election, and newspapers engaged in sensational and prejudicial reporting. When a judge threatened to jail the Distribution Committee for contempt, they responded by telling “Judge Powell that he could send the sheriff anytime he wanted to receive us” (Tittle, 1992, p. 88). From the survey came several reforms that included a “watchdog agency by a coalition of 13 civic and business groups in January” (Tittle, 1992, p. 89).

While not all these studies led to “radical change” in local systems, they were revolutionary in several ways. First, a social change logic shifts the goal of community studies from agenda setting to empowering marginalized residents. Unlike a supervisory approach evident in the public/private governance logic, a few of these early studies rooted in a social change logic sought to bring in the voices of marginalized residents. Moving beyond a survey of experts, Cleveland’s study of recreation engaged “…immigrants in back-alley lodgings, coffeehouses and cafes across the city.” (Tittle, 1992, p. 82). These studies also provided an opportunity for the Cleveland Foundation to connect to national liberal movements by enlisting other national reformers in their efforts. Cleveland’s on-site manager of the crime survey (Tittle, 1992, p. 84) was Felix Frankfurter[[2]](#footnote-2), regarded by many as a dangerous radical because of his pro-labor sympathies (Tittle, 1992, p. 84). Finally, these early CF studies identified the core political and structural sources of oppression. When reflecting on the alienation of immigrants, the Cleveland Foundation called out social and economic discrimination which undervalued immigrants’ skills in the workplace. These early studies were indeed radical calls for social change when viewed in the context of the times and place and often radical in process by bringing marginalized voices into the policy process.

While the social change logic lay mostly dormant between 1930 and 1960 it resurfaced in Cleveland (and a few other CFs) during the tumultuous 1960’s. The fusion of government policy, the Civil Rights movement, the actions of national foundations, and the ideologies of individual foundation leaders animated the re-emergence of the social change logic for a brief time during the 1960’s and 70’s. Johnson’s War on Poverty and Great Society agenda, informed by the Ford Foundation’s Gray Areas Program, provided the framework for the re-emergence of the norms and practices of social change philanthropy in the 1960’s. The Civil Rights movement not only highlighted inequalities and systemic barriers based on race and class but also empowered residents and grassroots organizations to challenge local business and political powers. For the first time, the War on Poverty linked the federal government to neighborhood- based entities and grantmaking became a policy tool for traditionally excluded groups to participate in local governance( Dunning, 2022).

In the early 1960’s, the Ford Foundation committed to attacking urban problems head-on by revitalizing “community action philanthropy” (Tittle, 1992, p. 128). Guided by the norms and practices of “maximum feasible participation” [[3]](#footnote-3) the Greater Cleveland Associated Foundation (GCAF)[[4]](#footnote-4) was established through funding from the Ford Foundation. The GCAF sought “sweeping changes” in Cleveland’s political structure, preparing citizens to participate in the political process and involving community representatives in identifying needs and setting goals for the city(Tittle, 1992). Through their support for community-based initiatives that were grounded in principles of democratic governance, GCAF built the capacity of neighborhoods to participate in local decision making, “grooming” a generation of neighborhood leaders (Tittle, 1992, p. 251). Through the 1970’s the Cleveland Foundation continued to support community organizing, initially led by the Commission on Catholic Community Action (CCCA), in impoverished African American communities decimated by to deindustrialization and suburbanization (Yin, 1998).

Although federal tax laws prohibited foundations from playing a direct role in political activities, GCAF, played key behind the scenes roles in supporting Carl Stokes’ election as the first Black mayor of a large city. GCAF leadership served as consultants to the Ford Foundation which provided a grant to Congress of Racial Equity (CORE) in support of voter registration in Cleveland (Tittle, 1992, p. 189). After Stokes's historic election, the Cleveland Foundation worked closely with the new mayor to ensure the success of his programs, providing him with unbudgeted personnel, informal consulting, and communications support (Tittle, 1992).

The social change logic emerged sporadically in other foundations at various points in time. In the 1980’s, the Boston Foundation focused its efforts on the racialization of poverty, fearing that economic inequalities and racism would reignite the social problems of the 1960s (Dunning, 2022; Leonard, 1989b). The Boston Foundation shifted grant making to support “empowerment” (skill building, leadership development) and approved guidelines for the community organizing initiative, which was that at least 50% of those who plan, implement, make policy, and raise funds for the organization must be poor and low income. These guidelines increased funding to local grassroots organizations addressing poverty. The Boston Foundation’s final report of the Persistent Poverty Project, recommended “a new social contract” between engaged citizenry and a “respectful, responsive” government, grounded in the values of inclusion, diversity, dialogue, and empowerment (Dunning, 2022). The re-emergence of the social change logic in 2020 not only focused on addressing structural and systemic root causes of racism and other forms of oppression but also the need to shift power within CFs (Paarlberg et al., 2022). It is too early to tell the degree to which social change logic will become institutionalized in CFs and will come to dominate the industry, a question that we will return to later in this paper.

**5. Discussion**

CFs provide an appropriate context in which to observe the dynamics of multiple institutional logics within the industry and the complexity of logics within individual organizations. . Because of their historical connection to the banking and investment industries (Hardy, 2012) and their embeddedness within local communities, CFs have long sat at the intersection of several societal logics. Legally structured as public charities (versus private foundations), CFs sit between the private values of donors and broad interests of the public (Frumkin, 1997; Suárez et al., 2018). Individual CFs and the CF industry have balanced efforts to “grow philanthropy” among the affluent and address “social justice issues” that responds to the needs of marginalized communities (Carson, 2005). These logics have often existed side by side, reflecting organizational life cycles, leadership values, and strategic decisions (Daly, 2008; Harrow et al., 2016; Millesen & Martin, 2014), as well as broader community and national economic, social, and political contexts (Dunning, 2022). Logics in the CF industry are “vibrant, unfolding, and contingent” (Lounsbury et al., 2021, p. 263)..

Our use of organizational institutionalism to construct ideal types in the CF industry presents many interesting questions for foundation leaders and organizational scholars. While our analysis largely focused on the events that catalyzed the dominance of logics within the industry, it is critical to understand the contextual and organizational conditions that support the dominance of a logic in a particular organization at a particular point in time.

## 5.1 Factors Associated with Logic Complexity

While emphasizing the contexts in which logics emerge and change, organizational institutionalism is not a theory of environmental effects but instead a meta-theory of how and when inter-institutional systems affect change (and stability). Our discussion of the historical events identified several key social, economic, and political events that shaped the dominance of logics throughout the hundred-year history of the CF industry, including the Progressive Movement, the Depression, the Civil Rights Movement, the 1969 Tax Reform Act, and most recently the COVID 19 pandemic. Instead, we now propose to identify the local contextual factors associated with the complexity of logics within a foundation. Loosely using Scott’s concept of the three pillars of institutions, we identify four broad forces that shape the relative dominance of a specific logic within a CF at a specific point in time. We propose that these forces shape differentially affect the complexity of logics within a foundation.

### 5.1.1 “An Exogenous Shock”

The birth of the CF industry was a response to broad societal upheaval at the turn of the 20th century, particularly in the industrial cities of the Midwest and east coast. In some communities, the fear of social unrest during the 1960’s and beyond rekindled the social change logic. Consistent with the theory of social control, CFs may be more willing to embrace social change logics in the face of “increasing threats of social disorder.” “Some critics have argued that it’s no accident that grand philanthropic gestures coincide with moments in our history when wealth becomes concentrated in very few hands and the gap between the rich and the poor grows unmanageably large” (Ruesga 2014).

H1: The presence of local social protests is positively associated with the re-emergence of the social change logic in a foundation.

Logics also emerge in uneventful times, shaped by local cultural and organizations contexts. .

### 5.1.2 Cultural Context (Cultural/Cognitive)

Organizations are embedded in distinct and enduring cultural contexts that define the norms and values and expectations of community actors (Berrone et al., 2016). A foundation’s alignment with the values and norms of the community will enable the foundation to mobilize community support and attention (Battilana et al., 2009; Wade-Benzoni, 2002). This alignment may be regional or local. Our analysis clearly identifies that diverse regional cultures have shaped the development of CFs. Historically, CFs in the Midwest have oriented towards a geographic community emphasizing communal responsibilities and collective action, while the CFs in the northeast have emphasized individual donor rights and the mechanics of philanthropy. Despite increasing geographic mobility and globalization, there is strong evidence that historical regional cultures imprint values on communities (Marquis et al., 2007). .

H2a: Location in the northeast is positively associated with dominance of the donor services logic in a foundation.

Similarly, within communities, the presence of a liberal leaning elite supported the emergence of social change logic. Early descriptions of social change efforts in progressive communities describe the existence of a reformist culture within the community that fostered interlocking networks between social and economic elites that crossed government, business, and philanthropy (Hardy, 2012; Loomis & Mazany, 2017; Tittle, 1992).

H2b: Location in a liberal community is positively associated with dominance of the social change logic in a foundation.

Drawing upon research in philanthropy (Odendahl, 1989)and early studies of community power elites (Mills 1956), Marquis and colleagues (2013) argued that the wealthy fund nonprofits and causes that promote the needs of their classand that high status nonprofit organizations, such as CFs, function in part to promote local elite cohesion” (Marquis et al., 2013, p. 40). Beginning in the late 19th century, “emerging upper classes eager to control unruly urban environments and define social boundaries” used elite nonprofits to “promote and maintain upper-class solidarity and permit elites to monitor and control [nonprofit] policies.” (Marquis et al., 2013, p. 42). In testing how local culture was related to the development of the nonprofit sector, they found a positive relationship between a dense corporate sector and the growth of the nonprofit sector in a community.

H2c: Location in a socio-economically advantaged community is positively associated with dominance of a donor service logic in a foundation.

### 5.1.3. Community Organizational Field (Power!)

Marquis and colleagues (2013) conceptualized the local “…geographic community as an institutional field—that is, a more or less integrated set of corporate, nonprofit, and governmental actors that “partake of a common meaning system and interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than with actors outside the field” (p. 40). These community actors embody the regulative and social normative institutional pillars (Berrone et al., 2016) and have the power to shape logics within and across organizations. For example, a strong local government may imply a trust in government institutions and the presence of a strong social safety net (Berrone et al., 2016,). However, in places in which the corporate elite dominate, they have a strong role in shaping “the means and ends” of large nonprofit organizations (Marquis et al., 2013, p. 40), particularly when such organizations are CF dependent upon elites for financial sustainability.

In Boston and Cleveland amid growing disparities in the 1980’s, the re-emergence of the “public-private governance” logic at the expense of the social change logic resulted from a weakening of local governance and the dominance of elite corporate networks that supported a neo-liberal agenda (Dunning, 2022; Lowe, 2006; Tittle, 1992; Yin, 1998). Yin (1998) described how the political costs of social change philanthropy became too high for the Cleveland Foundation which was dependent upon donations from the business elite and embedded in elite networks. When activists protested at the suburban country club and disrupted an annual corporate shareholder meeting of prominent local corporation, “the money [for community organizing] just dried up” (Yin, 1998, p. 142). Moving forward, the primary means of support from the Cleveland Foundation consistently favored housing and commercial redevelopment activities over neighborhood advocacy (Yin, 1998).

H3a: Location in a community with weak government capacity and strong corporate sector (a corporate dominated location), is positively associated with dominance of public-private governance logic in a foundation.

### 5.1.4 Imprinting

Organizational theory posits that the characteristics of the organization’s environment at the time of its founding imprints the later development of the organization. Stinchcombe (1965)used the concept of imprinting to explain why organizations founded during similar period retained commonalities across time. Marquis and Tilcsik, (2013, p. 199) defined imprinting as “… a process whereby, during a brief period of susceptibility, a focal entity develops characteristics that reflect prominent features of the environment, and these characteristics continue to persist despite significant environmental changes in subsequent periods.” Imprinting shapes both the value and practice elements of logics. At founding organizations adopt features that are perceived as legitimate or fit with the demands of the technical environment. These features persist because they are “institutionalized” –they become taken for granted and diffused through professional networks (Scott, 2013). Founding stories also linger as part of the organizational and community legacy and may shape how organizations interpret later issues (Molotch et al., 2000). In addition, the circumstances of founding create a stock of capabilities and resources that can continue to reinforce later behavior. Thus founding events have large consequences for later action.

Our review of the development of the CF movement suggests two key historical time periods that may have had long-stranding consequences for the dominance or re-emergence of logics. First, CFs established before 1930 may have been strongly influenced by the banking industry, which left an indelible narrative and practice of the “philanthropic stewardship” model, legitimizing the new organizational form. Some CFs still retain names that incorporate “trust” and governance practices that originated in Cleveland in 1914 to ensure “community representation” linger with some CF still being governed by boards of trustees appointed by elected officials.

**H4a:** Being founded pre-1930 is positively related to a strong philanthropic stewardship logic.

While imprints persist, the manifestation of imprints vary across time and contexts (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). Given the connection of the early CF movement to liberal progressive traditions in Midwest cities, we might expect that this context was more likely to support the legitimacy of a social justice narrative. Rather than dying this logic may have laid dormant to be revived at later points in time as evidenced by its ebb and flow in Cleveland.

**H4b:** Being founded pre-1930 in midwestern cities is positively related to the re-emergence of a strong social change logic.

The tax reform act had a significant impact on the birth of new CFs and the growth of donor advised funds within CF(Berman, 2015; Colinvaux, 2018).

**H4c:** Being founded post-1970 is positively related to a strong donor services logic.

Similarly, we expect that being founded during the ascendancy of neo-liberal values will imprint a CF with a logic of public-private governance.

**H4c:** Being founded post-1970 is positively related to a public-private governance logic.

## 5.3 Conclusion

Our analysis of the logics within the CF movement suggest that multiple logics ebbed and flowed within the CF industry, since its emergence in 1914. We have offered initial hypotheses about contextual factors that may explain the emergence and domination of logics at points in time and in particular places. These questions are especially relevant today considering growing critiques of institutional philanthropy, particularly the donor services logic within the CFs industry, and calls for a commitment to social equity and change. Despite these historical critiques, the logic of social change philanthropy was at best a minoritarian logic within the CF field until 2020. Although social change has animated the narrative and practices of a few CFs at certain times throughout the past hundred years, why has the social change logic remained a minoritarian logic, even amid widespread calls for social change in the 1960’s? Although our review focuses on the potential for local exogenous pressure, the cultural context, local organizational field, and imprinting may also explain the dynamics of logics.

While understanding the antecedents of complex logics, important questions remain. about the dominance of the configuration of CF’s logics for local communities. As Suárez et al. (2018) (p. 7) noted “the logic[s] that predominates could be consequential…” for foundation practices and broader community outcomes. Whereas the effect of corporations on society was a central concern for early organizational theorists (e.g., Michels 1962, Weber 1964), recent studies of the nonprofit sector have largely focused on how characteristics of the environment shape the sector. This perspective assumes that organizations are the product of the environment (Marquis & Battilana, 2009) and ignores the role that organizations have on the environment (Hinings & Greenwood, 2002; Stern & Barley, 1996). However, recent studies have sought to understand how organizations shape community outcomes, including the vibrancy of the local nonprofit sector (Marquis et al., 2013, p. 39), various dimension of civic engagement (Sampson, 2019), and even grand societal challenges such as income inequality (Berrone et al., 2016). In particular, the distribution of philanthropic resources may be dependent on an alignment of organizational fields and cultural contexts. Future research is needed to understand these complex relationships. Our initial conceptual framework is incomplete.

# Table 1: Philanthropy Ideal Types:

y-elemental categories x-axis: **Ideal Types of Institutional Logics in the CF Industry**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Philanthropic Community Trust Logic** | **Donor Services Logic** | **Public-Private Governance Logic (Community Leadership)** | **Social Change Logic** |
| **Taken for granted ideational elements (norms, values, schemas, vocabularies)**  |
| Community | place that creates shared sense of identity, commonality of values and traditions  | defined by donors’ interests, values, identities  | Interdependence & commitment of residents to work for betterment via shared governance | Places of contested pluralism” (race, class, ethnicity, gender) in which residents negotiate diverse values and claims  |
| Basis of norms | Social Darwinism |Midwest “civic culture”“noblesse oblige”  | Philanthropy as an expressive act | Scientific philanthropy| |Welfare capitalism| Neo-liberalism | Faith, spiritualism, humanism that emphasize inalienable rights  |
| Mission | Grow & preserve capital | Mobilize donors  | Improve community conditions  | Dismantle barriers that perpetuate disparity  |
| **Material elements (practices, behaviors)**  |
| Basis of grant making  | Grantee | Donor | Data | Resident voice  |
| Basis of strategy  | 1). Grow assets 2). Approve grants  | 1). ID donors 2). Guide donors 3). Efficient management of donor experience | 1). Agenda setting 2). Convene 3). Leverage cross-sector resources 4). Allocate 5). Measure  | 1). Acknowledge inequity 2). Empower marginalized 3). Political action  |
| Governance  | “committee of citizens”  | Legal contract with donor | Self-perpetuating board of cross-sectoral actors  | Resident self-governance |
|  |

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1. We use the term industry rather than more common term field to refer to the collection of community foundations. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Frankfurter would eventually go to become a leader in Roosevelt’s liberal social welfare reforms in the 1930’s and eventually would become the Supreme Court’s first Jewish justice. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The GCAF was a unique philanthropic experiment that operated under The Cleveland Foundation for six years before merging with the Cleveland Foundation. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)