

Philanthropy and US Student Movements: Four Cases

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The purpose of this literature review is to survey existing research on several major student groups in modern US history, with special attention paid to the following specific points:

- the evidence for the impact of these groups in shaping worldviews
- the role of philanthropy in enabling impact
- lessons for funders interested in student movements

A variety of factors influence the approach one might take to this type of assignment. These factors include the amount of detail desired, the parameters of “modern” US history, and the definition of “student group,” among others. I have chosen to impose the following constraints but acknowledge from the outset that they are somewhat arbitrary:

- Although the high school experience is just as formative (and far more inclusive) in American life, this review focuses on college student groups.
- Student groups are defined as formal and long-lasting organizations in which students participate significantly in decision-making roles. Accordingly, organized student protests (e.g., the Berkeley Free Speech Movement) were not considered as case study topics in and of themselves.
- I have set the cutoff for “modern” US history at the beginning of the 20th century, largely because modern philanthropy took shape during this period.

It is also important to acknowledge the broadly generative role of American higher education philanthropy in fostering the social and intellectual conditions of vibrant collegiate life. Insofar as influential student groups could not have arisen without this matrix, higher education philanthropy (ranging from capital campaign contributions to the underwriting of faculty chairs) has been indispensable. That said, this review focuses on cases of direct philanthropic contributions to student groups themselves.

Rather than select a random and representative sample of student movements, I have chosen to focus on movements for which there is a relatively substantial record of scholarship on philanthropic influence. I believe that this approach is appropriate for the objective of this project, which is to provide funders with actionable insights from historical case studies rather than to determine the historical degree of philanthropic influence on student movements more generally.

To determine the broad pool of organizations meriting possible study I began by reading general historical overviews of student movements, such as Mark Boren’s *Student Resistance*¹ and Alexander

¹ Mark E. Boren, *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

Deconde's *Student Activism*.² These reviews led me to numerous possible organizations, including Students for a Democratic Society, the Southern Negro Youth Congress, and the Student Defenders of Democracy. Only a few of these organizations had a sizeable record of historical scholarship on philanthropic influence. The two most promising groups were the National Student Association (a left-moderate organization with a wide array of interests and activities) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (a left-leaning and eventually radical left-wing student group with a clear focus on racial equity).

In the interest of political diversity, I consulted Jennifer de Forest's 2007 article on conservative higher education philanthropy³, which led me to consider writing on Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). However, I decided on the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) because of ISI's reputation for emphasizing exploration of conservative and libertarian ideas over allegiance to the Republican party, an orientation I thought might be linked more strongly to worldview-shaping potential.

Finally, in the interest of diversity in substantive focus, I consulted a variety of books and articles about religious⁴, fraternal⁵, and environmental⁶ organizations. Candidate groups included Campus Crusade, Alpha Phi Alpha (the first historically black fraternity), and the Legal Environmental Assistance Fund. I eventually settled on the Student Environmental Action Coalition because the organization's involvement with the Tides Foundation offered a relatively novel perspective on funder-activist relations.

A final note on limitations: Although I have attempted to be as comprehensive and exhaustive as possible in my research, this report is limited by its heavy reliance on secondary sources. I make occasional use of primary sources available online, but much of my research is a distillation of findings and insights from other researchers. A more penetrating assessment of any of these organizations would likely require additional time and resources for interviews with key participants and visits to archives.

² Alexander DeConde, *Student Activism: Town and Gown in Historical Perspective* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971).

³ Jennifer de Forest, "Conservatism Goes to College: The Role of Philanthropic Foundations in the Rise of Conservative Student Networks," *Perspectives on the History of Higher Education* 26 (2007): 103–27.

⁴ Conrad Cherry, Betty A. DeBerg, and Amanda Porterfield, *Religion on Campus* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁵ Michael H. Washington and Cheryl L. Nuñez, "Education, Racial Uplift, and the Rise of the Greek-Letter Tradition: The African American Quest for Status in the Early Twentieth Century," in *African American Fraternities and Sororities: The Legacy of the Vision*, eds. Tamara L. Brown, Gregory S. Parks, and Clarendia M. Phillips (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press), 137–80.

⁶ Robert Gottlieb, "Conclusion: Environmentalism Redefined," in *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2005), 389–404.

National Student Association

Background

The National Student Association (NSA) was a confederation of student governments from various American college and university campuses. The organization existed independently for 31 years before merging with the National Student Lobby (NSL) in 1978. During that time, it was a major orchestrator of campus activism and student affairs in the United States. As such, the NSA did not shape a particular worldview so much as it allowed for the general promotion of worldviews by establishing infrastructure for student organizing and activism. Alternatively, one might argue that the worldview NSA fostered was not tied to a particular substantive focus but rather reflected an affirmation of the right and value of student advocacy in general. The right of students to assert their independence on campus was a radical notion at the time of the NSA's founding. During this period many universities claimed authority to act as guardians of their students in place of parents, a principle known as *in loco parentis*. This authority sometimes involved the curtailment of political speech and protest.⁷

By organizing students and constructing outlets for their political energies, the NSA helped to establish students as active campus stakeholders. Historian Angus Johnston outlines some of the organization's many and diverse activities in his dissertation on the NSA:

It sponsored student film festivals, art exhibits, and sports teams. It mounted regional and national workshops and meetings, and conferences for student government presidents, student newspaper editors, and deans of students. It conducted educational campaigns, lobbying work, fundraising drives, and organizing trainings. It ran a travel bureau, a life insurance program, and book co-operatives. It drummed up American support for the Hungarian uprising in 1956, the Southern sit-ins of 1960, and the Kent State protestors in 1970.⁸

The NSA traced its roots to the 1946 World Student Congress, held in Prague. While the American delegation comprised numerous students from several organizations, many of the delegates from other countries represented national student groups. In particular, the Americans were impressed by the organization and cohesion of the national student unions from European countries. Shortly thereafter, the American delegates to the Prague conference organized a National Student Conference at the University of Chicago to promote and institutionalize student solidarity and cooperation on college campuses. The founding Constitutional Convention of the NSA was held at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in September of 1947. This founding convention produced the Student Bill of Rights, which

⁷ David A. Hoekema, *Campus Rules and Moral Community: In Place of In Loco Parentis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994).

⁸ Angus J. Johnston, "The United States National Student Association: Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student, 1947–1978." PhD diss., City University of New York, 2009, 6.

“laid out concepts of student academic rights and civil liberties and, significantly for the South, declared that those rights should not be limited on the basis of race, religion, or political views.”⁹

As exemplified by the Student Bill of Rights, the NSA was conceived as a student advocacy organization, a role that it was able to claim credibly because of its member base. However, as also made evident in this document, the NSA was unable to entirely separate student affairs from political issues of racial discrimination and economic dependency that extended beyond the college campus.¹⁰ Early on, the NSA’s anti-segregation and anti-McCarthyism advocacy alienated certain students¹¹; however, the organization strove to represent American college students in their full diversity. Indeed, a 1969 *Newsweek* article reported that the NSA’s membership “straddles the political spectrum from the left of Tom Hayden to the right of Bill Buckley.”¹²

Despite the NSA’s many accomplishments, historical accounts of the organization often focus on its clandestine relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency. The American government viewed student radicalization as a potential asset to global Communism and sought to stymie it through co-optation. Disguising its support in the form of gifts from philanthropic foundations, the CIA secretly funded the NSA’s international office beginning in the early 1950s in order to surveil international student activity and initiate programs to counter international Soviet influence.¹³ The CIA’s funding represented a broader effort to promulgate an anti-Communist worldview both domestically and abroad (much of the CIA’s funding of the NSA was focused on international programs such as the Foreign Student Leadership Program, which recruited international students for NSA-sponsored leadership training programs in the United States). Because the NSA was viewed as a relatively moderate student organization during the 1950s, the CIA viewed it as a useful conduit for anti-Communist activity.¹⁴

NSA’s relationship with the CIA was revealed to the public in 1967, but the news did not significantly undermine the NSA. The organization grew in prominence as it allied itself more forthrightly with radical left-wing causes, passing a resolution endorsing the black power movement and initiating a task force to replace Lyndon Johnson with a presidential candidate committed to ending the war in Vietnam.

NSA’s escalating and increasingly vigorous political activity eventually provoked an investigation by the IRS into the organization’s tax-exemption, which resulted in a recommended revocation of its (c)(3) status (c3 status stipulates that the organization is not to engage in overt political activity). Subsequent

⁹ Jeffrey A. Turner, *Sitting In and Speaking Out: Student Movement in the American South, 1960-1970* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 34.

¹⁰ Johnston, “Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student,” 19.

¹¹ Joy Ann Williamson-Lott, “Campus Life for Southern Black Students in the Mid-Twentieth Century,” in *Rethinking Campus Life: New Perspectives on the History of College Students in the United States*, eds. Christine A. Ogren and Marc A. Vanoverbeke (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 246.

¹² “Breaking the Rules,” *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969, 57.

¹³ Karen M. Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal: The Inside Story of the CIA’s Secret Campaign to Enroll American Students in the Crusade Against Communism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).

¹⁴ Johnston, “Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student,” 317.

negotiations with the IRS forced the NSA toward the sidelines of student activism during much of the early to mid-1970s. In 1974 the NSA created a separate 501(c)(3) entity—the National Student Association Foundation—to focus on non-political work, freeing the newly designated 501(c)(4) NSA to cooperate with other student unions and lobbying groups. In 1978 the NSA merged with the National Student Lobby to form the United States Student Association (USSA). The USSA went on to influence legislation affecting higher education and remains active to this day.

The NSA's impact is both impossible to deny and difficult to quantify. As Johnston explains, the organization influenced student life both through direct action and by playing a more “infrastructural role.”¹⁵ Many of the activists who founded other influential student groups first met each other and learned about organizing at NSA events and workshops. For example, many of the early leaders of Students for a Democratic Society and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (arguably the most famous left-wing student organizations during the 1960s) had attended NSA Congresses, and several had served as NSA officers.¹⁶ Accordingly, some of the most notable achievements of student movements during the 1960s and 1970s are possibly attributable to the NSA's convening and mobilizing functions. For example, national affairs vice president Ed Schwartz remarked in 1967 that he had often seen students “who know nothing about educational reform before NSA go back to their campuses and start revolutions,” though “they often don't say they got it from us.”¹⁷ To be sure, this quotation does not provide ironclad proof of NSA's impact, and it is difficult at this point to make such a definitive determination, as Johnston acknowledges: “A full reckoning of [NSA's] impact will only be possible...in the context of serious local studies that are not now extant, and of a maturation of our understanding of the impact of student government and student organizing on the American campus more generally.”¹⁸

Until such studies emerge, we are left to ascertain the NSA's impact largely from the testimonies collected in the NSA Anthology referenced previously. As Johnston points out, this compendium is “replete with testimonials from NSA alumni as to the training in public speaking and politicking they got from Congresses and other NSA events, the relationships they formed with students whose backgrounds and perspectives were far removed from their own, and the ways in which NSA encouraged them to think seriously about new questions, and to approach familiar questions in new ways.”¹⁹ Of course, these testimonies do not constitute a random and representative sample of the students who participated directly or indirectly in NSA's programming, and it is essentially impossible to know what the trajectories of these students would have been had the NSA not existed. Accordingly, it is impossible to determine with any precision NSA's overall impact on the normalization of activism and general political engagement as fixtures of American student identity, even as it seems quite absurd to suggest NSA's historical irrelevance on this point.

¹⁵ Johnston, “Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student,” 20.

¹⁶ Johnston, “Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student,” 273, 295.

¹⁷ Johnston, “Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student,” 375.

¹⁸ Johnston, “Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student,” 477.

¹⁹ Johnston, “Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student,” 479.

Influence of Philanthropy

Before reviewing the influence of philanthropy on the NSA, it is important to credit Angus Johnston's 2009 dissertation as by far the most extensive historical account of the organization's history (Johnston is now a scholar of student activism in the CUNY system). Johnston's dissertation documents not only the politics and personalities that animated the NSA, but also the grant-funded projects that constituted much of the NSA's most visible programming. There are numerous other sources on the NSA's history, but many are limited in scope either by timeframe (as in the case of the United States National Student Association Anthology Project²⁰) or substantive focus (as is *Patriotic Betrayal*, Karen Paget's investigation of the NSA's involvement with the CIA). Other sources touch on the NSA but only as part of a broader analysis of student movements (as in Mark Boren's classic *Student Rebellion*) or of institutional dynamics in higher education (as in higher education scholar Cassie Barnhardt's study of social agendas motivating higher education philanthropy²¹). Those interested in a thorough overview of the role of philanthropy in shaping the NSA should consult Johnston's dissertation; the review that follows is a distillation of what I consider the major takeaways.

Income statements compiled by the NSA Anthology show that, during the NSA's early years, member dues were "the principal source of revenue to support a modest budget that relied on considerable unpaid effort from among student volunteers nationally and from student government infrastructures locally."²² Other sections of the Anthology detail recurring financial problems and debate over dues commitments.²³ Johnston reports that "some feelers were put out to foundations, but such donors would be unlikely to fund basic operating expenses."²⁴ As a result, dues remained the chief income stream during the organization's early and formative years, especially for covering general administrative needs.

The NSA's first notable grant-funded project was a study of student governments, which was supported by the Ford Foundation and completed in 1955.²⁵ This award marked an important change in the NSA's revenue, an increasing proportion of which came from foundations eager to support what they perceived to be moderate student leadership during increasingly turbulent times.

Ford's financing of the NSA exemplified both the progressive and moderating influences of American philanthropy.²⁶ At a time known for radical politics on campus, foundation support for campus-based reforms was readily perceived by critics as support for strident left-wing political

²⁰ This anthology comprises memoirs, news clippings, and other documentation tracing the founding and subsequent development of the NSA in the years following World War II.

²¹ Cassie L. Barnhardt, "Philanthropic Foundations' Social Agendas and the Field of Higher Education," in *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, ed. Michael B. Paulsen (Springer: 2017), 181-257.

²² "Budgeting NSA's Milestones: 1947-1948," in *American Students Organize: Founding the National Student Association after World War II*, ed. Eugene G. Schwartz (Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 2006), 196.

²³ Joan L. Lynch, "From Ann Arbor to Minneapolis," in *American Students Organize*, 268.

²⁴ Johnston, "Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student," 192.

²⁵ Johnston, "Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student," 29

²⁶ Barnhardt, 228.

movements. For instance, Holcombe argues that “through the NSA, the Ford Foundation financed the campus rebellion that was a visible part of the 1960s social activism.”²⁷ However, much of the Ford Foundation’s support for the NSA focused on collaboration and dialogue rather than conflict. For example, the Foundation provided a \$60,000 grant to launch a two-year Southern Student Human Relations Project (also financed by the Field Foundation) that organized lectures, discussions, and “common living experiences” for black and white Southern college students in order to foster interracial dialogue and cooperation.²⁸ Another example of Ford’s support of the NSA was a \$315,000 grant for a program that, according to a Foundation official, was designed “to develop some workable alternatives to conflict at specific campuses.”²⁹ In all, much of the philanthropic support that the NSA received was intended to channel radical sentiment away from conflict and toward conciliation, in conformity to the moderate centrist worldview of “Rockefeller Republicans” and “Kennedy Democrats.”³⁰ This effort accords with the common argument that elite foundations often deploy their funding strategically to promote moderation and insider advocacy that respects establishment politics.³¹

Still, the NSA’s association with left-wing student politics led conservatives to view it as a “Communist threat.”³² However, although the NSA was certainly left-leaning, it is difficult to make the case that the organization harbored serious communist sympathies. A former NSA Vice President of Student Affairs recounts, “We thought ourselves worldly in our understanding of the threats to democracy of the international communist movement, and patriotic in our defense of freedom of speech and association.”³³ Indeed, NSA director Allard Lowenstein was on record as a passionate critic of Communism.³⁴ Notably, the Ford Foundation’s support for the NSA’s international work can be viewed as further evidence of the Association’s anti-Communist orientation. The Foundation’s Foreign Student Leadership Program delegated the task of selecting foreign participants in this program to the NSA. Berman cites the rationale offered by Ford Foundation officers in the docket excerpt for the September 1955 meeting of the board of trustees: “The proposal is based on the belief that training in responsible student self-government on the American pattern would stimulate the development of similar activities...overseas.”³⁵ As Berman points out, spreading American norms in student self-government was an important stratagem for advancing American interests during the Cold War.

²⁷ Randall G. Holcombe, *Writing Off Ideas: Taxation, Foundations, and Philanthropy in America* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 94–95.

²⁸ “An Unbroken Line of Commitment to Civil Rights,” in *American Students Organize*, 1102.

²⁹ Quoted in Julie A. Reuben, “Consorting with the Barbarians at the Gate,” in *Making the American Century: Essays on the Political Culture of Twentieth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 198.

³⁰ Gregory L. Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 61.

³¹ Craig J. Jenkins, “Channeling Social Protest: Foundation Patronage of Contemporary Social Movements,” in *Private Action and the Public Good*, eds. Walter W. Powell and Elisabeth S. Clemens (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 206–16.

³² Boren, *Student Resistance*, 113.

³³ Jane Welsh Brown, “Student Rights, Academic Freedom, and NSA,” in *American Students Organize*, 385.

³⁴ Brown, “Student Rights,” 385.

³⁵ Quoted in Edward H. Berman, *The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations on American Foreign Policy: The Ideology of Philanthropy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 94.

Undoubtedly the clearest connection between the NSA and institutional efforts to combat Communism is the secret relationship the organization's top leadership shared with the CIA during the 1950s and 1960s, as discussed in the background section. It is worth emphasizing that CIA support was channeled almost entirely to the NSA's international office, which was heavily siloed from the rest of the organization's operations. This decentralization allowed the funding relationship to persist without the awareness of the NSA's member base, which was generally more radical than the leadership.³⁶

The NSA's relationship with the CIA ensured a steady stream of income for international programs, but maintaining funding for domestic programs remained difficult. The NSA was able to cobble together grants for specific domestic programs from foundations such as the Norman Foundation, the Sidney and Esther Rabb Foundation, the Catherwood Foundation, the San Jacinto Fund, and other more prominent institutions such as the Ford and Field Foundations, but "domestic expansion did more to increase the Association's expenses than its revenues."³⁷ While foundation grants generally provided for some portion of overhead costs, there was no guarantee that grants would persist year-to-year, and reimbursements for administrative expenses were typically tied to discrete projects. Non-project-specific activities were generally funded by other sources. For example, Johnston finds that the money raised for the NSA's 1952 annual meeting of campus government representatives came almost entirely from registration fees and room and board payments by attendees.³⁸ Consequently, the organization's financial condition fluctuated considerably throughout the 1960s as NSA leadership regularly diverted cash from the Association's general fund in order to meet administrative needs associated with new programs.

As funding from the CIA declined in the late 1960s, the NSA became increasingly dependent on foundation grants for programs that were often not central to the organization's mission. In the late 1960s, as Johnston explains, the NSA was "deluged with proposals from foundations seeking a not-too-radical student activist group to work with, and was still, in Ed Schwartz's words, 'learning when not to accept a program even if someone is willing to fund it.'"³⁹ Schwartz, who was NSA's vice president of national affairs, argued that the organization's long-term sustainability depended on cultivating a committed student funding base.⁴⁰ Partly because of financial mismanagement and an overreliance on ephemeral grants, the NSA fell deeply into debt by 1970. The organization contracted in the early 1970s and nearly disbanded entirely in the middle of the decade before merging with the National Student Lobby. As Johnston reports, "this merger, out of which NSA re-emerged as the United States Student Association, reinvigorated both organizations."⁴¹

Overall, philanthropy was both an energizing and an enervating influence on the NSA. Philanthropic funding helped to advance some of the organization's most impactful programming, but it also led to considerable dependency on time-limited and program-contingent funding, a dependency that

³⁶ Johnston, "Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student," 209.

³⁷ Johnston, "Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student," 284.

³⁸ Johnston, "Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student," 206.

³⁹ Johnston, "Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student," 383.

⁴⁰ Johnston, "Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student," 390.

⁴¹ Johnston, "Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student," 419.

ultimately compromised the organization's financial stability. This overemphasis on program-related funding at the expense of overhead support remains a significant problem in the nonprofit sector today.⁴²

⁴² Ann Goggins Gregory and Don Howard, "The Nonprofit Starvation Cycle," *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 7 no. 4 (2009), 49–53.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

Background

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was a civil rights group that emerged from the sit-in movement culminating in the famous Greensboro sit-in of 1960. Following Greensboro, the sit-in protest tactic became increasingly popular with student activists interested in direct, nonviolent strategies to promote desegregation and civil rights.⁴³ Leaders of the growing sit-in movement convened at Shaw University in April 1960 for the Southwide Student Leadership Conference on Nonviolent Resistance to Segregation, an event organized by Ella Baker, then acting director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Baker recognized the transformative potential of the sit-in movement and worked to promote organizational autonomy for its student advocates, viewing the rebellious youth as a necessary counterweight to the more accommodationist “old guard” represented by organizations such as the NAACP and SCLC.⁴⁴ The conference at Shaw ended with the formation of SNCC (pronounced “snick”).

Following its founding, SNCC rose to prominence through its involvement in the 1961 Freedom Rides, a series of protest activities on public buses designed to challenge non-enforcement of Supreme Court legislation prohibiting segregation on interstate travel facilities.⁴⁵ SNCC continued making a name for itself by organizing voter registration drives and mobilizing black communities in the South to challenge and dismantle Jim Crow institutions. As a result of their direct engagement with communities in the South, SNCC volunteers faced constant repression and violence from the police, the Ku Klux Klan, and other citizens opposed to racial integration.⁴⁶ In light of this often violent opposition, SNCC diligently trained its volunteers in nonviolent tactics, holding simulated confrontations to expose volunteers to the discomfort and threat of violence they could expect to face while exercising civil disobedience. For many volunteers these trainings represented their first tangible experience of nonviolence as a risk-laden strategy rather than just a philosophical outlook.⁴⁷

Despite its early successes, SNCC faced ongoing internal debates about the proper extent of involvement from white allies and the legitimacy of nonviolence as a political ethos and tactic. Reflecting its drift from nonviolence as an organizational principle, SNCC officially changed its name to the Student National Coordinating Committee in 1969.⁴⁸ Infighting and radicalization undermined

⁴³ Howard Zinn, “Out of the Sit-ins,” in *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002), 16–39.

⁴⁴ Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 240.

⁴⁵ James P. Marshall, *Student Activism and Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 14.

⁴⁶ Zinn, “Out of the Sit-ins,” 223.

⁴⁷ “Volunteer Orientation for Freedom Summer in Oxford, Ohio,” *Digital SNCC Gateway*, accessed December 16, 2018, <https://snccdigital.org/events/volunteer-orientation-freedom-summer/>.

⁴⁸ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 296.

Northern sympathy and financial backing, weakening the organization. Heavy infiltration and suppression from the FBI further contributed to the organization's demise in the early 1970s.⁴⁹

Although SNCC existed for only about a decade and was burdened by internal strife and external challenges, the organization made a significant impact on the American civil rights movement. The sit-ins and freedom rides were critical for raising awareness of the struggle for constitutional and legal rights for African Americans in the South. Pictures and news coverage of nonviolent activists being assaulted by angry mobs drew public support, donations, and political action, which led to the pivotal legislative victories of the civil rights movement. Additionally, while SNCC was one of many active civil rights organizations at the time, it often assumed a vanguard position in protest and advocacy efforts. For example, while several civil rights organizations contributed to Freedom Summer (a series of protest and civic education activities held in Mississippi in 1963), SNCC field secretary Robert Moses held primary responsibility for organizing the event.⁵⁰ As another example, SNCC assumed responsibility for organizing the Freedom Rides after the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) abandoned the project because of violence from white Southern opponents.⁵¹ SNCC's student composition was integral to its energy and boldness. As Ella Baker recognized at SNCC's founding conference at Shaw University, student activists were less tied to the bureaucracies of existing organizations and were more open to experimentation with new methods of protest and civil disobedience.⁵² The sit-in movement that SNCC pioneered was a case in point.

SNCC's impact manifested not only in concrete acts and events but also in the organization's symbolic power. Many viewed its drift toward the Black Power movement as an existential challenge to the civil rights movement, and not merely as an organizational change. In his final book, Martin Luther King, Jr. directly addresses SNCC's transformation from a stronghold of nonviolence and inclusiveness to a force of militancy and separatism, describing this shift as a key impediment to African American progress.⁵³

Finally, SNCC played a central role in shaping the political engagement of students in the 1960s. This was a period when freedom from parental control became increasingly commonplace, seeding the radical and activist youth culture for which the decade is famous.⁵⁴ SNCC provided formative organizing and protest experiences for a generation of newly independent students grappling with important questions about justice and progress in American society. The organization's direct-action strategies

⁴⁹ Christopher P. Lehman, *Power, Politics, and the Decline of the Civil Rights Movement: A Fragile Coalition, 1967-1973* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014), 70.

⁵⁰ Carson, *In Struggle*, 114.

⁵¹ Dale Anderson, *Freedom Rides: Campaign for Equality*, (Minneapolis: Compass Point Books, 2008), 48.

⁵² Ransby, *Ella Baker*, 244.

⁵³ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967; reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 2010), 34.

⁵⁴ Michael J. Rosenfeld, *The Age of Independence: Interracial Unions, Same-Sex Unions, and the Changing American Family* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

left a lasting impression on participants, “who suddenly became aware of their collective ability to provoke a crisis that would attract international publicity and compel federal intervention.”⁵⁵

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of SNCC’s direct influence on participants comes from sociologist Doug McAdam, who analyzed hundreds of the original applications to the Freedom Summer voter registration project.⁵⁶ McAdam surveyed and interviewed both participants and those whose applications were accepted but who could not participate. Although obviously not a perfect experimental design, McAdam provides persuasive evidence that his comparative framework is an effective method for demonstrating significant differences between the two groups. Indeed, his findings indicate that Freedom Summer had profound biographical and professional effects on participants. Specifically, the direct encounter with virulent Southern racism, the solidarity felt among fellow activists, and the sense of accomplishment associated with even small political victories left a lasting imprint on Freedom Summer volunteers: “It is clear from their accounts that it was an exhilarating experience, affording them an intoxicating sense of purpose, potency, and personal promise.”⁵⁷ Notably, McAdam observes that Freedom Summer volunteers were far more likely than their counterparts to continue involvement with social and political movements throughout their adult lives, demonstrating the worldview-shaping influence of SNCC and of Freedom Summer in particular.

McAdam’s evidence suggests that the most potent aspects of SNCC’s worldview-shaping influence occurred off-campus as students encountered hostility and violence from which college campuses were often (though not entirely) insulated. Indeed, additional research by McAdam shows that the students who volunteered for Freedom Summer already exhibited a strong ideological disposition for civil rights advocacy, as measured by organizational affiliations, prior civil rights activity, and social ties to other participants.⁵⁸ This evidence indicates that SNCC’s impact manifested largely from its conversion of ideological sentiments into real-world action. The organization’s influence on raising awareness, on the other hand, was probably more limited, and there is no evidence to suggest that trainings and orientations had the same lasting impact as actual experience in the field.

Nevertheless, college campuses were important staging grounds for SNCC. A program outline for Northern campus-based SNCC affinity groups emphasizes four functions of campus activity: education (“letting those on campus know just what SNCC is”), fund and supply raising, Northern support (“letters, phone calls, and telegrams to Congressmen, Senators, the President, and the Justice Department demanding that immediate action be taken to insure Justice in the South”), and recruiting (“the gathering of volunteers to work for varying lengths of time on SNCC projects in the South”).⁵⁹ Although

⁵⁵ Carson, *In Struggle*, 37.

⁵⁶ Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁵⁷ McAdam, *Freedom Summer*, 237.

⁵⁸ Doug McAdam, “Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer,” *American Journal of Sociology* 92 no. 1 (July 1986), 64–90.

⁵⁹ “Program Outline for Campus Friends of SNCC Groups,” Montgomery--SNCC: Circulars, newsletters, program outlines, incidents, 1963-1966 (Lucile Montgomery Papers, 1963-1967; Wisconsin Historical Society Library Microforms, Micro 44, Reel 3, Segment 48), accessed November 27, 2018, <http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15932coll2/id/35121>.

SNCC's most impactful work occurred off-campus, the campus remained an indispensable entry point for students interested in participating.

Influence of Philanthropy

The core of SNCC's funding throughout the organization's existence consisted of relatively small contributions from members and sympathizers (mainly northern whites), particularly on college campuses.⁶⁰ Integral to this grassroots fundraising effort was a network of "Friends of SNCC" groups, which also assisted with publicizing SNCC's work in the South. The keystone of SNCC's direct fundraising was its New York office, which drew support from local liberal elites. In 1964 the New York office hired Elizabeth Sutherland, formerly an editor at Simon & Schuster, who strove to professionalize fundraising efforts by encouraging staff to maintain updated mailing lists, follow up with fundraising prospects, and respond promptly to telephone calls and letters. Evidently, this work paid off: in 1964, the New York office raised approximately \$350,000, up from just under \$60,000 the previous year.⁶¹

Although individual rank and file donors appear to have been the backbone of SNCC's financial support, high-profile philanthropists also played a pivotal role in sustaining the organization and directing its operations. Foundation support clearly contributed to civil rights victories; grants funded bail and lawyer fees for jailed student activists, training and travel for new participants, and other pressing needs associated with protesting and voter registration.⁶² At the same time, numerous scholars have argued that philanthropists aimed not only to bolster SNCC but also to round off its sharper edges by steering it away from activities that fostered disengagement from mainstream politics.⁶³ In many ways, the story of SNCC exemplifies both the catalyzing and controlling influences of elite philanthropic support for social justice movements, as elaborated below.

Progressive philanthropists and Democratic Party officials were impressed by the achievements of the sit-in movement but wary of the increasingly radical rhetoric and actions exhibited by student activists engaged in direct nonviolent protest. In June 1961, representatives from SNCC and other civil rights organizations attended a meeting with Robert Kennedy, where he encouraged the attendees to focus on voter registration and "assured the activists that financial support for such projects would be made available by private foundations."⁶⁴ Administration officials had already begun approaching foundations about supporting government plans to launch an initiative later known as the Voter Education Project (VEP), a coordinating body for voter registration campaigns in the South. VEP enabled foundations to make tax-free donations directly to voter registration efforts, which were then

⁶⁰ Herbert H. Haines, *Black Radicals and the Civil Rights Mainstream, 1954-1970* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 97.

⁶¹ "Fundraising & The New York Office," *Digital SNCC Gateway*, accessed October 4, 2018, <https://snccdigital.org/inside-sncc/sncc-national-office/fundraising-new-york-office/>.

⁶² J. Craig Jenkins and Abigail Halcli, "Grassrooting the System?: The Development and Impact of Social Movement Philanthropy, 1953-1990," in *Philanthropic Foundations: New Scholarship, New Possibilities*, ed. Ellen Condliffe Lagemann (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 247-48.

⁶³ Michael Barker, "Elite Philanthropy, SNCC, and the Civil Rights Movement," accessed October 4, 2018, <http://www.swans.com/library/art16/barker68.html>

⁶⁴ Carson, *In Struggle*, 39.

coordinated by the Southern Regional Council (SRC) in conjunction with other participating civil rights organizations.⁶⁵

SNCC activists disagreed over whether to refocus their efforts on voter registration at the expense of continued protests, which had brought SNCC into national headlines and had proved successful in the past. Many students expressed concern that cooperation with the political establishment would dilute the movement's activist fervor and lead to its cooptation.⁶⁶ Ultimately, however, SNCC leaders could not forgo desperately needed funding. James Forman, who handled much of SNCC's fundraising, recounts that the organization faced a \$13,000 debt prior to the influx of VEP funds.⁶⁷ Thus, despite disagreement, SNCC was compelled to reorient to the goals of elite party officials and allied philanthropists.

In addition to altering SNCC's programmatic emphasis, philanthropic funding brought the organization into closer contact with other civil rights groups. For instance, one of SNCC's major philanthropic supporters was Stephen Currier's Taconic Foundation, which was instrumental in promoting the Council for United Civil Rights Leadership (CUCRL) as a vehicle for cooperation among civil rights organizations of the time. CUCRL was an umbrella organization designed to centralize donations for participating civil rights organizations, including SNCC. Following Currier's establishment of CUCRL, he began convening regular fundraising breakfasts at New York City's Carlyle Hotel. As civil rights historian David J. Garrow writes, "No one dissented from [Currier's] plan. The arrangement could lessen the growing internecine conflict before serious damage was done, and it was all but certain to provide each of the organizations with funds they otherwise would not receive."⁶⁸ Revenue generated through CUCRL neared \$12 million in current dollars, much of which "unquestionably represented funds that would not otherwise have gone to the civil rights movement...and helped the cash-strapped leadership organizations in the decisive years of the struggle."⁶⁹

Promoting cooperation was no small task, however, as there was considerable distrust and competition among groups. Stalwart civil rights organizations such as the NAACP and the Urban League were particularly suspicious of SNCC, which was viewed as an amateur outfit because of its rag-tag student leadership and paltry budget.⁷⁰ SNCC's reputation for militant radicalism also earned it a reputation "as the *enfant terrible* of the civil rights movement."⁷¹ SNCC, for its part, viewed the NAACP as "old-timers who did not expose themselves to personal danger and weighed consequences too

⁶⁵ Sean Dobson, "Freedom Funders: Philanthropy & the Civil Rights Movement, 1955-1965," accessed October 4, 2018, https://www.ncrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Freedom_Funders_and_the_Civil_Rights_Movement-FINAL.pdf.

⁶⁶ Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 41.

⁶⁷ James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 269.

⁶⁸ David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 270.

⁶⁹ Dobson, "Freedom Funders," 11.

⁷⁰ Jack Greenberg, *Crusaders in the Courts: Legal Battles of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Twelve Tables Press, 2004), 397.

⁷¹ Carson, *In Struggle*, 92.

carefully before acting.”⁷² Still, interorganizational cooperation was integral to key civil rights successes, as in the case of the formation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), which aimed to unseat Mississippi’s all-white, segregationist delegation to the 1964 Democratic Convention, thereby further pressuring President Johnson and the Democratic Party to pass voting rights legislation. The MFDP grew out of voter registration efforts organized by SNCC in cooperation with other civil rights groups.⁷³

As indicated previously, SNCC became increasingly radical over time. By 1966 SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael explicitly endorsed a Black Power philosophy, stressing a more separatist approach to black liberation and empowerment. This shift marked a turning point for SNCC in terms of both philosophy and messaging. Public relations strategies “would no longer be tailored to appeal to liberal whites—a core SNCC constituency in the preceding years.”⁷⁴ Consequently, SNCC’s funding rapidly dried up. Whereas the New York SNCC office raised \$12,360 in direct mail contributions in 1965, the figure was only \$632 in 1966 following Carmichael’s official endorsement of Black Power.⁷⁵ In addition, foundations began directing more of their grants to more moderate organizations such as the NAACP, accelerating SNCC’s decline.⁷⁶ With increasing state repression, the organization was moribund by the 1970s.

As a case study in philanthropic support for student movements, SNCC offers three important lessons for funders. First, it is one of the clearest illustrations of the potentially co-opting influence of philanthropy. One does not need to adopt a conspiratorial angle on philanthropy’s effect on SNCC to understand that philanthropists approached the organization with the intention of channeling student energy into more politically palatable worldviews and activities. While this strategy won supporters among SNCC members, the organization as a whole drifted toward more radical strategies, as McAdam eloquently summarizes:

In place of such traditional enemies as the southern sheriff, the hooded night-rider, and the ax-wielding restaurant owner, insurgents increasingly came to attribute the ultimate responsibility for the perpetuation of inequality to the dominant political and economic elite of the country.⁷⁷

⁷² Carson, *In Struggle*, 92.

⁷³ “Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP),” *Digital SNCC Gateway*, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://snccdigital.org/inside-sncc/alliances-relationships/mfdp/>.

⁷⁴ Vanessa Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Use of Public Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 122.

⁷⁵ Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC’s Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 221.

⁷⁶ Herbert H. Haines, “Black Radicalization and the Funding of Civil Rights: 1957-1970,” *Social Problems* 32 no. 1 (October 1984), 31–43.

⁷⁷ Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 206–07.

As representatives of the political and economic elite of the country, philanthropists lost incentive to support this worldview. Upon deciding that SNCC could not be salvaged, they shifted their efforts to mainstream organizations representing the outlooks they espoused.⁷⁸

A second lesson relates to the role of philanthropists in building cooperative networks among grantees. While SNCC's relations with other civil rights groups were often strained, the organization accomplished impressive feats through coalitions that were forged by foundations. The Voter Education Project, the Council of Federated Organizations, and the Council for United Civil Rights Leadership were all initiated with the help of philanthropists.⁷⁹ These networks made major strides in raising awareness of civil rights violations, challenging segregation, and mobilizing voters. Thus, under appropriate circumstances, foundations can amplify the results of their grantmaking by encouraging teamwork and checking duplicative efforts among grantees. Still, the tension apparent in SNCC's relations with its counterparts serves as a reminder that philanthropists have often struggled to build durable collaboration among grantees.

Finally, philanthropists interested in fostering worldview-shaping student movements should take note of SNCC's extensive off-campus activities. Doug McAdam's sociological study of Freedom Summer volunteers suggests that campus efforts often draw students who are already primed for movement activities and goals. Real-world engagement and struggle may often be the crucible in which worldviews are tempered and reinforced.

⁷⁸ McAdam, *Political Process*, 210.

⁷⁹ Dobson, "Freedom Funders."

Intercollegiate Studies Institute

Background

The Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) is a nonprofit educational organization founded in 1953 by libertarian teacher and journalist Frank Chodorov. The organization’s mission is “to inspire college students to discover, embrace, and advance the principles and virtues that make America free and prosperous.”⁸⁰

Originally known as the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists, the organization was aimed at combatting the intellectual influence of progressive political philosophy on American college campuses. Chodorov outlined his plan for ISI in an essay titled “A Fifty-Year Project to Combat Socialism on the Campus,” in which he made the case for countering left-wing political influence not merely through libertarian and conservative policy but also by fostering and bolstering a classically liberal worldview on college campuses:

But, the undoing will not be accomplished by trying to destroy established socialistic institutions. It can be accomplished only by attacking minds, and not the minds of those already hardened by socialistic fixations. Individualism can be revived by implanting the idea in the minds of the coming generations.⁸¹

To pursue this ideological mission, Chodorov envisioned a multipronged intellectual campaign to spread classical liberal principles on campuses, including a series of lectures by prominent libertarian thinkers, distribution of books and journals exploring and advocating libertarian topics and ideals, and a social network of right-leaning university students fostering camaraderie and intellectual growth through seminars, conferences, and campus-based clubs. Chodorov’s vision proved prescient, as ISI has come to adopt all of these strategies. The organization fosters intellectual development among conservative students by helping them form campus discussion clubs (known as “ISI Societies”), connecting them to fellowships and conferences, providing them with books and articles that explore conservative topics, and offering them editorial and financial assistance with founding and running campus-based newspapers. Each of these strategies speaks to Chodorov’s vision of an intellectually driven conservative movement on college campuses.

After beginning rather modestly, ISI rapidly expanded, increasing its mailing list from 600 to more than 13,000 within eight years of its founding.⁸² By 1960 ISI had chapters or affiliated clubs at over 50 colleges and universities.⁸³ By nurturing and channeling the intellectual development of young conservatives, ISI became a pillar of the burgeoning American conservative movement, strengthening

⁸⁰ “About ISI,” Intercollegiate Studies Institute, accessed October 2, 2018, <https://home.isi.org/about/about-isi>.

⁸¹ Frank Chodorov, “A Fifty-Year Project,” in *Fugitive Essays: Selected Writings of Frank Chodorov*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1980), 159–60.

⁸² George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 456.

⁸³ Lee Edwards, *Educating for Liberty: The First Half-Century of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2003), 42.

its intellectual base with a cadre of passionate advocates. Today leading conservative activists and theorists recognize ISI as one of the most influential educational organizations shaping the conservative movement.⁸⁴

A consistent theme across ISI's programming is a strong emphasis on intellectual substance over partisan allegiance. Although current events are not considered irrelevant, ISI publications and lectures are known for thoroughly engaging matters of philosophy, social science, theology, and cultural theory. This intellectual orientation reflects the organization's preference "to approach current events from the longer perspective of centuries of Western and American history."⁸⁵ ISI's intellectual reputation has served it well as the American Right has fragmented into camps of traditionalists, libertarians, neoconservatives, and other political factions: "Because it has always opened itself to multiple voices...the organization could never be pigeon-holed or rendered marginal."⁸⁶ Indeed, an important factor in ISI's growth was its gradual expansion beyond Chodorov's original hardcore individualism, which early supporters (notably, its first president William F. Buckley) saw as overly solipsistic.⁸⁷ Over time, ISI has retained its libertarian core while accommodating more republican notions of conservatism.

ISI has functioned as both a top-down system for disseminating values and ideas (through lecture series and publications, for example) and a grassroots network of campus clubs. As Binder and Wood summarize, "With the knowledge and social contacts they gain from being part of the ISI network, young conservatives are expected to continue to transform society in a conservative direction long after they graduate."⁸⁸ Known as "ISI Societies," these clubs are the primary links between students on campus and the national organization, which provides advice, literature, and funding to the societies.⁸⁹ In addition to maintaining a network of campus-based clubs, ISI shapes the conservative student experience and worldview by providing editorial, administrative, and financial support to right-leaning campus newspapers through its Collegiate Network.⁹⁰

ISI might not be considered an "organic" student movement because it was not originally spearheaded by student activists; however, student organizing has been integral to ISI's goals. For instance, the organization's website makes clear that campus groups that operate as chapters of other organizations are allowed to obtain ISI society status and funding. This policy illustrates ISI's commitment to fostering student initiatives across organizational contexts. From a historical perspective, active student involvement and leadership have been core components of the

⁸⁴ Richard A. Viguerie and David Franke, *America's Right Turn: How Conservatives Used New and Alternative Media to Take Power* (Chicago: Bonus Books, 2004), 59.

⁸⁵ John Zmirak, "Intercollegiate Studies Institute," *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 437.

⁸⁶ Zmirak, "Intercollegiate Studies Institute," 438.

⁸⁷ Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 265.

⁸⁸ Amy J. Binder and Kate Wood, *Becoming Right: How Campuses Shape Young Conservatives*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 110.

⁸⁹ "ISI Societies," Intercollegiate Studies Institute, accessed October 2, 2018, <https://home.isi.org/students/isi-societies>.

⁹⁰ Binder and Wood, *Becoming Right*, 107.

organization's programming and have spawned other conservative student movements ranging from "Youth for Goldwater" to the Student Committee for the Loyalty Oath.⁹¹ As ISI continues to build on this legacy, it would seem, as higher education scholar Alison Bernstein argues, that Chodorov's 50-year plan "has largely borne fruit" in the form of a large and well-regarded organization.⁹²

The impacts of Chodorov's investment on student worldviews, however, are less clear. ISI often touts its alumni network (which includes major conservative figures such as Ann Coulter, Laura Ingraham, William Kristol, and Antonin Scalia, among other political and media personalities) as evidence of its impact.⁹³ While this list is certainly impressive, it is difficult to assess the direct influence of ISI's programming on these individuals' careers. Testimonies from recent alumni offer somewhat more persuasive evidence, but these testimonies are clearly marketing material and cannot be treated as rigorous evidence of impact.⁹⁴ Finally, while ISI has clearly helped to build conservative journalism on college campuses through its Collegiate Network, there is a dearth of evidence showing a direct causal link between such journalism and student worldview development. Such a link may exist, but it is also possible that journalism simply expresses and reinforces preexisting political and intellectual partialities. ISI's general stature and success suggest some degree of impact on student worldview formation, but the evidentiary basis for those claims does not allow for any precision or definitive statement on the exact nature of the impact.

Influence of Philanthropy

Much like American higher education at the time, the US philanthropic sector during the first half of the twentieth century was perceived as monolithically liberal. Major progressive foundations evinced a generally progressive faith in technocratic administration of public affairs.⁹⁵ Following World War II, a group of heterodox academics challenged this Keynesian consensus, establishing themselves in a few highly influential academic institutions. As documented in de Forest's trenchant historical overview of conservative higher education philanthropy, conservative foundations originally focused on subsidizing academic appointments for these maverick conservative intellectuals.⁹⁶ Following the publication of Chodorov's "Fifty-Year Project," however, conservative philanthropists paid increasing attention to funding higher education activities more broadly, including student-oriented groups.⁹⁷

⁹¹ de Forest, "Conservatism Goes to College," 111.

⁹² Alison R. Bernstein, *Funding the Future: Philanthropy's Influence on American Higher Education* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 89.

⁹³ "Prominent Alumni," Intercollegiate Studies Institute, accessed October 2, 2018, <https://home.isi.org/prominent-alumni>.

⁹⁴ "In the Spotlight," Intercollegiate Studies Institute, accessed December 16, 2018, <https://home.isi.org/spotlight>.

⁹⁵ Mark Hendrickson, "Steering the State: Government, Nonprofits, and the Making of Labor Knowledge in the New Era," in *Politics and Partnerships: The Role of Voluntary Associations in America's Political Past and Present*, eds. Elisabeth S. Clemens and Dough Guthrie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 54–78.

⁹⁶ de Forest, "Conservatism Goes to College," 107.

⁹⁷ de Forest, "Conservatism Goes to College," 109.

Philanthropic support for ISI began with a \$1,000 check from J. Howard Pew, founder of Sun Oil Company.⁹⁸ Unsolicited and unrestricted, the check signified a hallmark of conservative philanthropy in subsequent decades: support of entire institutions rather than stand-alone projects.⁹⁹ Following Pew's inaugural contribution, a growing cadre of businessmen and family foundations began lending support to the fledgling organization. An ISI donor study found that its supporters tended to be family-owned companies and foundations that were still managed by a donor or near relative "concerned for posterity."¹⁰⁰ The list of contributors was a veritable "who's who" of conservative philanthropy.¹⁰¹ It included the "four sisters," a group of conservative foundations (the Bradley, Olin, Scaife, and Smith Richardson Foundations) that have traditionally coordinated their giving to maximize impact.¹⁰²

Many of these philanthropic partnerships were forged under the energetic and transformative leadership of Victor Milione. A talented and dedicated administrator, Milione oversaw dramatic growth in contributions to ISI. By the time he retired from ISI's leadership in 1988, the organization had reached nearly \$1 million in revenue.¹⁰³ Central to Milione's success in raising the organization's profile was his effort to change ISI "from a fundamentally libertarian group to a conservative one."¹⁰⁴ For instance, changing the name from Intercollegiate Society of Individualists to Intercollegiate Studies Institute was partly an attempt to appeal to the civic republican sentiments of many conservative benefactors.¹⁰⁵ This evolution toward a more broadly conservative identity boosted ISI's appeal to both students and benefactors (whether the tactic diluted the organization's worldview-shaping capabilities is an open question).

As the conservative movement matured during the second half of the 20th century, the field of student organizations became increasingly crowded and competitive. As a result, ISI began the Reagan years with a deficit of \$136,909, continually struggling to balance its budget.¹⁰⁶ ISI's prospects improved after T. Kenneth Cribb, Jr. took leadership of the organization in 1989. Cribb aggressively sought out new funding and succeeded in establishing a sizable endowment. ISI achieved a relatively stable position in subsequent years, enjoying the "lavish funding of several prominent foundations and donors."¹⁰⁷ For example, Foundation Center data show annual contributions of more than \$500,000 in recent years from the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation. The most recent audited financial statement posted on ISI's website indicates that about 90 percent of the organization's \$12 million in revenue came from

⁹⁸ Edwards, *Education for Liberty*, 10.

⁹⁹ de Forest, "Conservatism Goes to College," 110.

¹⁰⁰ E. Victor Milione, "Ideas in Action: Forty Years of 'Educating for Liberty,'" *The Intercollegiate Review* (Fall 1993), 55.

¹⁰¹ Edwards, *Education for Liberty*, 54

¹⁰² Mark Dowie, *American Foundations: An Investigative History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 215.

¹⁰³ Lee Edwards, "Milione, E. Victor," *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 572.

¹⁰⁴ Nicole Hemmer, *Messengers of the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 84.

¹⁰⁵ Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 265.

¹⁰⁶ Edwards, *Educating for Liberty*, 159.

¹⁰⁷ Binder and Wood, *Becoming Right*, 104.

contributions.¹⁰⁸ Today ISI has the reputation of being the trailblazer for student-facing conservative philanthropy. As de Forest summarizes, “ISI provided the model for the next generation of conservative philanthropists, who would leverage their gifts to higher education to promote increasingly vibrant and influential student networks.”¹⁰⁹

With respect to lessons about how philanthropy can influence worldview-shaping student movements, the case of ISI illustrates the importance of antagonism to mobilizing activists and supporters. Here it is necessary to highlight anti-progressivism as a central factor in the broadness and durability of ISI’s organizational identity. From its inception, ISI has defined itself largely in opposition to left-leaning, progressive viewpoints and policies. The sense of embattlement and ostracization among conservatives on university campuses has enabled the organization to emphasize its negative orientation to progressivism rather than build the type of specific ideological identity that would make ISI vulnerable to political fragmentation. This note of beleaguerment is readily apparent in the “President’s Letter” posted on the ISI website:

Free speech and free intellectual inquiry have become endangered species on college campuses. Our students and faculty tell me their horror stories: A hollowed-out curriculum. Politicized classrooms. Protesters who go after anyone who questions progressive orthodoxy. Ignorance of or outright assaults on the achievements of the American Founding and Western civilization.¹¹⁰

By counterpoising itself to a dominant progressive ethos, ISI has been able to build the kind of ingroup solidarity necessary for an effective movement, among both students and donors. Conservative students have relished their underdog status, and ISI has been able to persuade supporters that they are a crucial bulwark against progressive domination on college campuses. This messaging is what persuaded “at least some businessmen, normally concerned only with quarterly statements, to take a longer view and support ISI.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ “Financials,” Intercollegiate Studies Institute, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://home.isi.org/about/financials>.

¹⁰⁹ de Forest, “Conservatism Goes to College,” 112.

¹¹⁰ “President’s Letter,” Intercollegiate Studies Institute, accessed October 22, 2018, <https://home.isi.org/donors/president%E2%80%99s-letter>.

¹¹¹ Edwards, *Educating for Liberty*, 103.

Student Environmental Action Coalition

Background

The Student Environmental Action Coalition, or SEAC (pronounced “seek”), is a network of campus-based student environmental organizations. As of September 2018, SEAC appears to be borderline defunct. A Google News search for “Student Environmental Action Coalition” in 2018 indicates only scant and scattered media coverage of affiliate activity. In its prime, however, SEAC was recognized as “the nation’s biggest and boldest youth-run ecological organization”¹¹² and “the largest national organization of student activists since the 1960s.”¹¹³

SEAC took shape in the late 1980s when students at UNC-Chapel Hill began working with students at Duke University on efforts to preserve the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.¹¹⁴ Realizing that a national coalition would provide students greater opportunity to find like-minded collaborators and advance social impact more effectively, these students approached several national environmental groups for assistance in building a cross-campus student network. According to social activist Paul Rogat Loeb, these national groups were initially “willing to plug [the students] as volunteers or canvassers, but [were] wary about helping establish an organization whose direction they’d have no say over.”¹¹⁵ Such reticence was typical of larger environmental organizations, which had viewed students “primarily as ground troops for the particular activities of an evolving environmental movement.”¹¹⁶

SEAC’s founders eventually succeeded in convincing Greenpeace to place a small ad in its newsletter publicizing the new student coalition. The result was overwhelming: nearly 200 responses from interested campus-based environmental groups within just a few months.¹¹⁷ In response to the flood of interest, SEAC began organizing a national conference, dubbed Threshold, to convene interested students and to bring youth to the forefront of the environmental movement. The conference drew approximately 1,700 students and brought SEAC widespread attention, pushing it into the environmental limelight.¹¹⁸ The organization went on to build a network of regional affiliates, which organized marches and rallies, held speaker and training events, and promoted environmental awareness on campus. A second conference, dubbed Catalyst, drew an astounding 7,600 students, cementing SEAC’s reputation as a major force in the environmental movement and adding momentum to its network on hundreds of campuses.

Sociologist Michael Lounsbury provides evidence of SEAC’s impact, revealing that campus connections to SEAC throughout the 1990s help to explain the degree of sophistication in campus

¹¹² Nancy Marx Better, “Green Teens,” *New York Times Magazine*, March 8, 1992, 66–67.

¹¹³ David Walls, *The Activist’s Almanac: The Concerned Citizen’s Guide to the Leading Advocacy Organizations in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 69.

¹¹⁴ Walls, *The Activist’s Almanac*, 89.

¹¹⁵ Paul Rogat Loeb, *Generation at the Crossroads: Apathy and Action on the American Campus* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 251.

¹¹⁶ Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2005), 394.

¹¹⁷ Loeb, *Generation at the Crossroads*, 252.

¹¹⁸ Julian Keniry, “Environmental Movement Booming on Campuses,” *Change*, Sep.–Oct. 1993, 42–49.

recycling systems and the amount of passion and investment felt by recycling program coordinators.¹¹⁹ Drawing on interviews at dozens of these campuses, Lounsbury found that full-time recycling coordinators were often alumni who had been active in SEAC's efforts to implement recycling systems on campus in the first place, and that SEAC played a pivotal role in launching these programs. For instance, Lounsbury notes that "SEAC's national meetings were particularly instrumental in enabling various student environmental groups to share experiences with each other, including how to structure and make claims when advocating recycling on campus."¹²⁰ It is difficult to determine how much of an impact these meetings had on the formation of student worldviews, since environmentally conscious students were more likely to attend such gatherings in the first place. However, there is some evidence indicating that participation in organized group activities can have independent and significant effects on environmentalist identity formation.¹²¹ Lounsbury's scholarship lends some empirical verification to what might otherwise be called a strong historical gut feeling about impact. As with other organizations covered in this literature review, historical evidence often does not support rigorous, causally oriented conclusions about the degree of SEAC's impact on worldview formation, but it also seems impossible to deny that SEAC's extensive programmatic accomplishments left some meaningful imprint on participants, as is made evident by their testimonies.

SEAC conducted an array of programming ranging from direct service opportunities to advocacy for progressive legislation on environmental preservation and corporate accountability. The centerpiece of its impact, however, was the design of a "campus environmental audit" intended to evaluate environmental sustainability on campus. Known as Campus Ecology, this audit system provided a model for implementation of campus sustainability initiatives in the U.S.¹²² Notably, Campus Ecology concerned not only physical facilities and materials processing but also curricular and extracurricular programming. Accordingly, Campus Ecology's impact should be assessed in terms of both environmental policy change and worldview development. SEAC's inclusion of curricular criteria in its campus audit design reflects its belief that "greening the ivory tower" is a necessary step in raising environmental consciousness among students, and that this worldview-shaping goal requires reform of educational programming, not just educational infrastructure. Thus, an important feature of SEAC's strategy to cultivate student environmentalism was to draw attention not only to industrial disasters and habitat degradation "out there," but also to pressing environmental concerns and challenges within the seemingly innocuous environs of college campuses, thereby inculcating environmental awareness among students within their learning environment. This sentiment is expressed clearly in the official audit guidebook:

¹¹⁹ Michael Lounsbury, "Institutional Sources of Practice Variation: Staffing College and University Recycling Programs," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (March 2001), 48.

¹²⁰ Lounsbury, "Institutional Sources," 41.

¹²¹ Anne Kitchell, Willett Kempton, Dorothy Holland, and Danielle Tesch, "Identities and Actions within Environmental Groups," *Human Ecology Review* 7, no. 2 (Winter 2000), 1–20.

¹²² Mauricio Espinoza, "Fifty Shades of Green: The Meshing of Culture, Teaching and Business in College Campuses' Sustainability Efforts," in *Remaking the American College Campus*, eds. Jonathan Silverman and Meghan M. Sweeney (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2016), 30.

Campus Ecology uses the campus as a laboratory for the study of resource flows and for the implementation of environmentally sound alternatives. It introduces the kind of analytical abilities and practical skills students will need to address the ecological challenges looming before them. It seeks to solve real problems that are embedded in organizations whose decisions shape our lives and environment. Most importantly, this is a book about educating people to think broadly, observe carefully, and act responsibly.¹²³

Central to SEAC's consciousness-raising efforts in the 1990s was its broad conceptualization of environmentalism. Deviating from past apolitical notions of environmentalism as simply conservation, SEAC highlighted the disproportionate impact of environmental crises on poor people and racial minorities. The organization's stark political rendering of environmental activism created two major challenges for the organization. First, it alienated students who questioned the need to discuss race and class as facets of environmentalism.¹²⁴ Second, it invited criticism from members of color who called out the largely white and middle-class composition of SEAC's leadership.¹²⁵ This frustration eventually led to the formation of a People of Color Caucus within SEAC, a sign of growing disagreement and fragmentation within the organization.¹²⁶

Currently available secondary sources offer few details on the sequence of events that led to SEAC's evident decline. Somewhat cryptically, Gottlieb explains that "the organization appeared unable to contend with its enormous growing pains."¹²⁷ Although evidence is scarce, it seems that miscommunication, ideological disagreement, and insufficient organizational capacity in the mid-1990s resulted in a rapid implosion of the national organization.¹²⁸ There were efforts at revival in the early 2000s, but SEAC remains largely inactive at this point in time.

Despite its decline, SEAC continues to be recognized as a pivotal force in the development of student environmentalism, campus sustainability initiatives, and youth-led social movements.¹²⁹

Influence of Philanthropy

When *Greenpeace* publicized the nascent SEAC, the fledgling organization had a paltry budget of \$200, much of which was generated from small-scale earned income initiatives and fundraising activities (e.g., bake sales and resale of aluminum cans). However, the rapid growth accompanying its first conference

¹²³ April A. Smith, *Campus Ecology: A Guide to Assessing Environmental Quality & Creating Strategies for Change* (Los Angeles: Living Planet Press, 1993), ix.

¹²⁴ Loeb, *Generation at the Crossroads*, 258.

¹²⁵ Loeb, *Generation at the Crossroads*, 259.

¹²⁶ John Tan and Eric Odell, "Student Environmentalists Learn Hard Lessons," *Forward Motion*, Winter 1996–1997, 26–28.

¹²⁷ Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 396

¹²⁸ Eric Odell, "Crisis in SEAC: Just What's Going on Here?," *Threshold*, October 1996, 7–9.

¹²⁹ Camille Washington-Ottombre, Garrett L. Washington, and Julie Newman, "Campus sustainability in the US: Environmental management and social chance since 1970," *Journal of Cleaner Production* 196 (2018), 568.

enabled SEAC to begin approaching foundations for additional funding.¹³⁰ Although exact numbers are unavailable, available information suggests that most of SEAC's budget was funded by foundation grants, with the remainder coming from "a limited group of individual dues-paying members."¹³¹ Among the handful of funders acknowledged in Smith's *Campus Ecology* is the Tides Foundation, which served as SEAC's fiscal sponsor. The Tides Foundation remains active today.¹³²

Founded in 1976, Tides "grew out of the frustration with established philanthropy's overwhelming neglect of progressive issues."¹³³ Traditionally, philanthropy for US environmental causes has emphasized 1) reformism rather than radicalism; 2) professionalism rather than amateurism; 3) "insider" institutional tactics for effecting change (e.g., lobbying) rather than "outsider" tactics (e.g., protests and boycotts).¹³⁴ Tides typified a new cadre of environmental funders that became increasingly influential in the 1980s. Known in the academic literature as "alternative foundations," these institutions included movement representatives in their leadership and were much more receptive than their conservative counterparts to funding radical discourse and grassroots organizing.¹³⁵ Douglas Bevington provides a useful historical overview of the advent of alternative foundations in the 1980s.¹³⁶ Although Bevington does not draw an explicit link between alternative foundations and campus-based student movements, it is clear that these foundations' interest in grassroots organizing disposed them to support student movements, as illustrated by the Tides Foundation.

Unfortunately, secondary sources offer few details about the relationship between Tides and SEAC, but Tides had earned a reputation in the mid-1990s as a maverick intermediary in environmental philanthropy (among other focus areas).¹³⁷ The foundation was set up to manage donor-advised funds, linking progressive donors with grassroots organizations lacking the capacity for time-consuming prospect research and fundraising. Additionally, Tides was known for extensive technical assistance, especially to small organizations lacking 501(c)(3) status. As a fiscal sponsor, Tides was (and continues to be) able to receive tax-exempt contributions and then pass along these gifts to its partners.¹³⁸ As Urschel summarizes, "Without institutions like Tides, most activists and their organizations would not know where to look for social change money."¹³⁹ Although specific details about the relationship are difficult to find, SEAC must have benefited from this administrative support, especially given the

¹³⁰ Loeb, *Generation at the Crossroads*, 252.

¹³¹ Walls, *The Activist's Almanac*, 90.

¹³² Smith, *Campus Ecology*, viii.

¹³³ Robert O. Bothwell, "Up Against Conservative Public Policy: Alternatives to Mainstream Philanthropy," in *Foundations for Social Change: Critical Perspectives on Philanthropy and Popular Movements*, eds. Daniel R. Farber and Deborah McCarthy (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 133.

¹³⁴ Robert J. Brulle and J. Craig Jenkins, "Foundations and the Environmental Movement: Priorities, Strategies, and Impact," in *Foundations for Social Change*, 159–60.

¹³⁵ Brulle and Jenkins, "Foundations and the Environmental Movement," 163–64.

¹³⁶ Douglas Bevington, *The Rebirth of Environmentalism: Grassroots Activism from the Spotted Owl to the Polar Bear* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2009), 37–40.

¹³⁷ Stephen G. Greene, "The Rise of the Tides Foundation," *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, July 27, 1995, 8–12.

¹³⁸ Jonathan H. Adler, *Environmentalism at the Crossroads: Green Activism in America* (Washington, DC: Capital Research Center, 1995), 91.

¹³⁹ John C. Urschel, "Coming out of the Green Closet: Wealth Discourse and the Construction of Social Change Philanthropists," *Foundations for Social Change*, 252.

relative amateurism of SEAC's founders. To be sure, SEAC drew funding from major non-anonymous funders; however, the intermediary function played by Tides enabled the flow of money from a crucial pool of sympathetic but hard-to-find donors.¹⁴⁰

The causal connection between philanthropic funding and SEAC's decline is difficult to determine. According to one account, foundations grew uneasy with the organization's growing radicalism and subsequently pulled funding, as recounted by one former SEAC activist:

Unfortunately, SEAC's growth made it overly reliant on grant money. And when some of its foundation donors eventually decided the group was too radical, and yanked their support, SEAC lost a significant chunk of its budget. The number of paid staffers plummeted from 13 down to 7 and then zero.¹⁴¹

An alternative version of events lays more of the blame on SEAC's growing fragmentation. According to this account, funders were more concerned with organizational viability than with political messaging. Writing in the October 1996 issue of SEAC's newsletter, member and Threshold Conference organizer Eric Odell points out that the withdrawal of foundation funding followed the lack of coordination between SEAC's national and coordinating committees. According to Odell, the money was withheld "pending some sane resolution of the crisis." Odell further argues that "we must repair our relationship with funders—which will only happen through proving our stability."¹⁴²

Ultimately, assessing the relative importance of radicalism versus sheer dysfunction in the dissipation of SEAC's foundation funding would require more extensive research, including interviews and primary document analysis. Still, it is possible to draw at least two tentative lessons regarding the role of philanthropy in advancing worldview-shaping student movements.

First, as apparent in the Tides Foundation's support functions, student movements may require more than monetary resources in promoting their causes and growing their organizations. Administrative assistance (including the avoidance of extensive paperwork associated with IRS registration), donor sourcing, and fundraising may provide student movements the extra time and capacity needed to focus on planning training sessions, advocacy, and campus recruitment.

Second, grassroots student movements may channel multiple passions and priorities as students develop personally, learn about political issues, and contend for the first time with the frictions of democratic decisionmaking. Traditional environmentalist philanthropy has generally eschewed these

¹⁴⁰ *Campus Ecology* specifically acknowledges the following funders: Esprit (a clothing manufacturer), the Southern California Gas Company, the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, the Jesse Smith Noyes Foundation, Environment Now, the W. Alton Jones Foundation, the Rockefeller Family Fund, and an individual named David Zucker.

¹⁴¹ Erik Ose, "20 Years Ago Today: SEAC on the Threshold of a National Movement," *The Latest Outrage* (blog), October 27, 2009 (8:00 p.m.), <http://thelatestoutrage.blogspot.com/2009/10/20-years-ago-today-seac-on-threshold-of.html>.

¹⁴² Odell, "Crisis in SEAC," 1996.

types of movements, favoring the safer bet of more conventional forms of action.¹⁴³ However, Brulle and Jenkins explain that such organizations may lack the formative potential of grassroots movements:

While these organizations are often quite effective in securing incremental gains from formal political lobbying and litigation, they would be politically much stronger and make more of a contribution to ecological sustainability if they had greater citizen support and face-to-face participation that would foster changes in individual beliefs and practices.¹⁴⁴

Philanthropists should recognize the importance of fostering a vibrant civil society, which requires social movement organizations with active memberships and regular interaction between leadership and street-level volunteers. This form of environmentalism may be messier, and investments will not always materialize in well-run and cohesive organizations, but grassroots movements may be integral to building lasting awareness and change.

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¹⁴³ J. Craig Jenkins, Jason T. Carmichael, Robert J. Brulle, and Heather Boughton, “Foundation Funding of the Environmental Movement,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 61 no. 13, 1640–57.

¹⁴⁴ Brulle and Jenkins, “Foundations and the Environmental Movement,” *Foundations for Social Change*, 153.

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