

# Feminism, Foundations, and Social Change: Understanding Women’s Philanthropic Nonprofits

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It is crucial to understand the role of feminism in addressing social issues, particularly with the prevalence of feminist causes today. This necessitates examining feminist organizations within public administration that strive toward equity, and gender and social equality. It is also crucial to understand those institutions that have influence and resources to invest in social change. The intersection of these topics is found in women’s grantmaking foundations and funds (WFFs). This research explores how these organizations are 21st-century feminist organizations, the type of feminism they embody, and their role in—and contribution to—social change. Feminist organizations aim to advance gender, social equality, and equity despite being overlooked in public administration, philanthropy, and nonprofit literature. This research utilizes an exploratory and descriptive design to shed light on the current state of feminist organizations and foundations in public administration, filling critical knowledge gaps.

## Introduction

Feminism, philanthropy, and nonprofits have achieved greater gender and social equity in the United States, including women’s right to vote, access to higher education, and the birth control pill (Johnson 2017). Women have utilized philanthropy and nonprofits to gain access to the public sphere and power in order to foster changes that benefit women and society (Johnson 2017; Kaber 2005; Lister 2012, 374; Martin 1990; Stivers 2000). Early feminist activism led to the establishment of feminist organizations, which created women’s foundations and funds (WFFs) in the 1970s. The purpose of WFFs is to direct money toward nonprofit organizations that serve and support women and girls (Bothwell 2005; Shaw-Hardy 2005). WFFs are founded on feminist philosophies, making feminism an essential framework for understanding WFFs’ role in the 21st century. As Bell et al. (2019, 4) note, feminism allows for different approaches to knowledge production, challenging the patriarchal foundations of organizational literature and academic work (see also Benschop 2021).

Literature indicates that feminist organizations have

played a significant role in advancing the impact of feminism (Ferree and Martin 1995, 4; see also Riger 1994). These organizations function as extensions of the feminist movement (Bunjun 2010; Chirita 2013; Ferree and Martin 1995) and were founded to challenge the patriarchy and create social change (Shaw-Hardy 2005). However, feminism and feminist organizations and their contributions are often overlooked in public administration, philanthropy, and nonprofit literature (Bell et al. 2019; Benschop 2021; Dallimore, 2000; Gheradi, 2003; Pandey et al. 2022; Schwabenland et al., 2016). Whether WFFs are feminist social change organizations impacts the feminist movement, philanthropy, nonprofits, and public administration.

WFFs offer a way to understand the role and impact of feminism within public and nonprofit administration. Public administration aims to advance the common good (Frederickson 1991; Miller and Fox 2007), encompassing gender and social equity (Gooden 2017; Johnson and Svava 2011), to which nonprofits and philanthropy contribute. Moreover, WFFs pose the potential for a contemporary understanding of feminist organizations, including feminism’s significance for

women's philanthropic nonprofits. As less than 2% of all U.S. philanthropic dollars go to women's and girls' causes (Skidmore et al. 2021), WFFs are likely some of the few grantmaking foundations aiming to advance social change benefiting women and girls (Gillespie, 2021). Shaw-Hardy and Taylor (2010) state that WFFs invested over \$60 million in 2009. With women's issues in the spotlight (Bell et al. 2019; Brewer and Dundes 2018; Williams 2021), these organizations potentially hold power and influence for greater gender and social equality and equity.

WFFs are grantmaking foundations and funds. Grantmaking foundations, especially, are believed to impact social change significantly (Anheier and Hammack 2010; Frumkin 2006; O'Connor 2010; Viederman 2005). Foundations leverage their influence to change institutions, policies, systems, and practices (Burlingame 2004; Dobkin-Hall 2016; O'Connor 2010, 348; Roelofs 2003). Grantmaking foundations have claimed to invest in social change causes and organizations since their inception. These organizations possess substantial assets, which they use to support societal causes, making them a powerful force (Anheier and Hammack 2010; Dobkin Hall 2013; Edwards and McCarthy 2004, 122; Roelof 2003; Viederman 2005). Bothwell (2002, 43) suggests that the emergence of "progressive social change funders" can provide a substantial amount of funding for social change.

There are ongoing debates regarding whether grantmaking foundations truly invest their funds in organizations and causes that promote social change. Some examples of these debates are found in works by Faber and McCarthy (2005), Jensen (2019), and Kohl-Arenas (2016). Foundations have been praised for their social benefits yet criticized for their lack of impact on social change (Faber and McCarthy 2005). More research should focus on how grantmaking foundations define the specific changes they seek and their methods. Additionally, the literature looks at wealthy foundations' ability to effect social change and whether they succeed (Anheier and Leat 2013; Callahan 2017; Prewitt 2006). However, this attention to large foundations can sometimes overshadow the impactful work of smaller foundations, such as WFFs.

This research aims to explore and better understand WFFs regarding their feminist roots and the ongoing discussion surrounding grantmaking foundations. To achieve this understanding, this research asks how

WFFs are feminist organizations and classifiable by type of feminism as observed in their ideologies, principles, practices, goals, and outcomes, among other features. This research also investigates the role of WFFs in the ongoing discourse regarding grantmaking foundations and their influence on social change. Specifically, the research asks how they approach and contribute to social change. Using an exploratory descriptive design, this research employs Martin's 10 dimensions of a feminist organization as a framework for defining feminist organizations and determining the kind of feminism that WFFs embrace. Martin's 10 dimensions also help differentiate whether WFFs prioritize social change and, if so, identify what they do in the name of social change.

This research finds that WFFs are unwittingly feminist organizations. They tend to be liberal in their ideologies and values and adopt a neoliberal approach to their work, focusing on individualized efforts toward achieving gender and social equality and equity. They exist across feminist waves, embodying concepts and practices from each, and are primarily collectivist organizations. Some seek equality, while others pursue equity. They incorporate nonfeminist institutions, like other foundations and corporations, in their efforts. While WFFs aim to bring about social change, their impact is mainly incremental changes in individuals' lives. This supports the claim that foundations often operate at the periphery of social change initiatives (Faber and McCarthy 2005). The following literature review provides a broad overview of WFFs, examines the role of grantmaking foundations in creating social change, and defines Martin's 10 dimensions. Feminist ideologies, waves, and organizational structures are then reviewed to contextualize three of Martin's dimensions. Much has been written on feminist ideologies, waves, and organizational power dynamics. However, there is far less literature on the organizational practices, goals, outcomes, scale, and scope of feminist organizations.

### Women's Foundations and Funds

Literature on WFFs shows a relationship between these organizations and feminism (Burlingame 2004; Shaw-Hardy and Taylor 2010). Mollner and Wilson (2005) argue that WFFs developed out of necessity (see also Martin 1990) and promote gender equality (Gillespie 2019). These organizations are either 501(c)(3) nonprofits, typically women's foundations, or donor-

advised funds within larger foundations, typically women's funds. Specifically, 37% of WFFs are 501(c)(3) nonprofits, while 63% are housed within larger foundations or other organizations (Gillespie 2019). They are known for their collaborative and empowering nature, with a strong focus on creating positive change (Gillespie 2021). Grantmaking to other nonprofit organizations is the primary activity of these organizations (Gillespie 2019). Goss (2007) argues that WFFs were crucial in advancing women's political relevance in the 1970s and 1980s. However, most WFFs emerged during or since the 1990s (Gillespie 2019).

### Grantmaking Foundations and Social Change

Grantmaking foundations aim to bring about change (Burlingame 2004). The organizations they fund are typically working toward social change in some capacity (Faber and McCarthy 2005, 5). The ability of these institutions to bring about change is closely linked to their money and influence in directing and shaping American society (Dowie 2001, 4). They do this by changing "ideas and practices" and providing or withholding support (Anheier and Hammock 2013, 6). Literature suggests foundations have paved the way for new approaches, a greater acceptance of diversity, and relationship-building practices with those directly affected by injustice (Bothwell 2005; Burlingame 2004).

Today, foundations have amassed great wealth (Edwards and McCarthy 2004, 122) and embody both influence (Hammack 2018, 2) and power due to their funding of public initiatives (Anheier and Hammack 2010; Dobkin Hall 2013; Roelof 2003; Viederman 2005). Though foundations are recognized as "encourage[ing] discussion of structural change in the interests of social goals" (Ostrander 2005, 11), some scholars argue that foundations have failed to effectively address the social issues that can lead to social change (see as examples Anheier and Leat 2013; Callahan 2017; Faber and McCarthy 2005; Prewitt 2006). Jensen (2019) refers to the relationship between foundations and social change as "tenuous" (3).

Foundations tend not to define their intentions or goals for social change (Jensen 2019, 13). According to Faber and McCarthy (2005), social change brought about by foundations has yet to come to fruition because powerful philanthropists dictate what they consider social change. The top foundations typically fund

the most financially well-off nonprofits and causes that benefit the elite class, suggesting that these philanthropic institutions only serve the most privileged families and institutions (Faber and McCarthy 2005, 5). As a result of this practice, there is little funding left for social change programs (Faber and McCarthy 2005). WFFs offer the opportunity to explore the social change work of smaller, grassroots foundations compared to wealthy foundations. Foundations that originated from public resources and championed social change goals reflect grassroots efforts to address social issues. These foundations, led by grassroots movements, aim to challenge institutions of power and award grants to programs that address the root causes of societal inequalities (Burlingame 2004; O'Connor 2010, 348; Roelofs 2003).

### Martin's 10 Dimensions of a Feminist Organization

Martin's 10 dimensions establish a framework for defining feminist organizations. They are characterized by ideology, values, goals, outcomes, founding circumstances, structure, membership, practices, scope and scale, and external relations and are discussed in this order below.

According to Martin (1990), *feminist ideology* is the basis for the existence, mission, and concerns of feminist organizations (192). Martin (1990) notes that even if they endorse feminist ideologies, some may refuse to be associated with feminism (191). Harnois (2012) suggests that some women may connect with feminist ideals but reject the feminist label. Martin (1990) explains that endorsing feminist ideology means being classifiable as liberal, radical, socialist, or other (191).

*Feminist values* encompass goals, actions, and policy decisions. Feminist values prioritize the cultivation of "interpersonal relationships, personal growth, development, and empowerment" (Martin 1990, 190; see also Riger 1994) while countering traditional masculine concepts like hierarchy and individualism (192).

*Feminist goals* help to design action around issues affecting women, while *outcomes* focus on the transformation of women and society. Feminist organizations aim to transform women, serve women, and change culture. *Feminist practices* "are the strategies and tactics feminist organizations employ internally and externally" (Martin 1990, 196). Practices can include to whom and for what purposes resources are expended and should re-

flect feminist values such as “support, cooperation, and empowerment” (196).

*Founding circumstances* are historically situated and can impact an organization’s character and practices (Martin 1990, 194). The *organizational structure* of an organization can be collectivist or bureaucratic (194). *Membership* related to demographics, rules, and qualities is critical to feminist organizations. The *scope and scale* denote the organization’s reach (Martin 1990). The scope is whether an organization is local versus national (198). While most feminist organizations are local and are smaller in reach, some argue that these “attributes isolate feminists from each other . . . and limit their impact on society” (199).

*External relations* could include “legal-corporate status, autonomy, funding, and network linkages” (Martin 1990, 199). Legal status determines the organization’s relationship with the State, with some claiming a “true feminist organization has no ties to the State” (199). Autonomy is the degree to which a feminist organization is “free-standing or affiliated with another organization,” with the understanding that “dependence . . . brings problems” (200). Linkages refer to outside ties or external connections and whether they are “other feminist organizations or primarily with non-feminist organizations” (200).

The remaining literature sections add insight and contextualize three of Martin’s 10 dimensions: ideologies, founding circumstances, and organizational structure. Literature on feminist ideologies, history, and structure is abundant. However, literature is lacking on other dimensions such as organizational goals, practices, scope, scale, and external relations. Research on feminist organizations has primarily examined the internal power dynamics within these organizations rather than the actual work being done by them (Acker 2006; Calas and Smircich 2006; Gheradi 2003; Iannello 2013; Meyerson and Kolb 2000; Schwabenland et al. 2016). According to Martin (1990), the literature fails to address other organizational aspects of feminist work. To better understand their role and impact, Shaw-Hardy (2005), among others (see examples Doss 2007; Hartley et al. 2019; Wesley and Dublon 2015), argue that feminist organizations’ goals and practices must also be examined. WFFs offer the opportunity to examine the aims and activities of feminist organizations. While the literature only explores three of Martin’s 10 dimensions, this research provides findings for the remaining seven dimensions, contributing insights into these under-researched topics.

## Feminist Ideologies

Martin (1990) highlights the importance of ideology in feminist organizations. D’Enbeau and Buzzanell (2013) argue that feminist organizations focus on promoting feminist ideologies and creating solutions to women’s issues (see also Arnold 1995; Hyde 1995; Martin 1990; Riger 1994). Their feminist values and goals guide them, and their ideology shapes their organizational identity, values, and solutions to issues (D’Enbeau and Buzzanell 2013; Hyde 1995). The level of radicalism in their goals and willingness to confront power dynamics determines their degree of feminism (Staggenborg 1995, 343). The more radical the goals, the harder it is to achieve their aims, which hinders continued mobilization (D’Enbeau and Buzzanell 2013).

Feminist organizations are diverse and incorporate different organizational theories and practices (Gottfried and Weiss 1994, 33). Nonetheless, they align with the social change and empowerment values of the feminist movement (Riger 1984), and they aim to challenge power relations (Benschop 2021, 2; English 2006, 93; Gottfried and Weiss 1994). However, little is known about whether this remains true today. Social change is at the “root of the ideology of feminist organizations” (Metzendorf 2005, 24; see also Riger 1984; Valentine and Gripton 1984). According to Metzendorf’s (2005) argument, feminist organizations tend to adopt more conservative attitudes when their focus shifts from pursuing social change to providing social services. Maier (2008) notes that less radicalized feminist organizations might be less interested in social change.

Feminism encompasses various perspectives (Martin 1990). There is considerable diversity in approaches to understanding gender and practicing feminism (Harnois 2012, 824). Nonetheless, there are some common themes. Harnois (2012) characterized feminism as recognizing gender inequality and striving for greater gender justice (p. 824). Martin identifies four feminist ideologies—liberal, radical, socialist, and other. This research replaces “other” with Black feminism to acknowledge the more exclusive histories of branches of feminism and bring in more fourth-wave ideologies and concepts such as intersectionality. Table 1 summarizes liberal, radical, socialist, and Black feminist ideologies to provide insight into these branches of feminism and give context to Martin’s dimension specific to feminist ideologies.

**Table 1. Feminist Ideologies**

<b>Liberal Feminism</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's oppression is "rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that block women's entrance to and success in the... public world" (Tong 2013, 2).</li> <li>• Embraces freedom as personal and political autonomy.</li> <li>• Achieving equal opportunity is possible within current systems and structures (Tong 2013).</li> </ul>
<b>Radical Feminism</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexism is the first form of oppression and is nearly impossible to overcome (Tong 2013).</li> <li>• Aims to bring about gender equality by eliminating the patriarchy (Tong 2013).</li> <li>• Developed consciousness-raising where women share their personal experiences (Tong 2013), increase their understanding of power, organize, and act for social change (Gillespie 2021).</li> </ul>
<b>Socialist Feminism</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women are oppressed through forced gender roles (Tong 2013).</li> <li>• Seeks to confront capitalism and its inherent oppression (Armstrong 2020).</li> <li>• Focuses on the public and private spheres and other systems of oppression such as race (Tong 2013).</li> </ul>
<b>Black Feminism</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlights the oppression of women as rooted in lived experiences (Crenshaw 1989; Davis 2008, 68; Nash 2013; Tong 2013).</li> <li>• Developed the concept of intersectionality, which is the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and power relations (Crenshaw 1989; Davis 2008, 68; Nash 2013; Tong 2013).</li> <li>• An intersectional lens helps challenge hegemonic feminism (Bunjun 2010, 12) by accounting for diversity and differences in lived experiences (Gottfried and Weiss 1994, 37–38).</li> </ul>

### Feminist Waves

One of Martin's dimensions is "founding circumstances," which refers to the historical period during which the organization was established. During the 1960s and 1970s, the second wave of feminism emerged, which saw women gaining a deeper understanding of themselves and the power structures that surrounded them. The slogan "the personal is political" became popular, and the fight for equality was at the forefront of the movement (Rowlands 1996; Summerson Carr 2003; Shaw-Hardy 2005; Tong 2013). Gender equality entails giving women equal access to resources, power, and opportunities. Achieving equity requires the abolition of laws that restrict the freedom of women. This freedom encompasses economic self-sufficiency, protection from violence and gender-based roles, self-determination, self-actualization, autonomy, and the development of political, economic, and social institutions that promote individual freedom (Cook 2014; Tong 2013). In

the second wave, feminists established the first grant-making foundations for women (Shaw-Hardy 2005).

According to Brunell and Burkett (2021), the third wave of feminism emerged in the early 1990s. This wave aimed to achieve equality for women of all races and classes (Phillips 1987), unlike the previous two more exclusive waves (Johnson 2017; Mann and Huffman 2005; Taylor 1998). During this time, intersectionality emerged. Recognizing and accepting differences allows women to comprehend how their unique lived experiences impact "different social positioning, different knowledge claims, and different ways of being" (McHugh 2007, 15). Third-wave postmodern feminism argues that gender inequality is a dynamic and interconnected practice closely linked to other forms of oppression and, therefore, cannot be addressed in isolation (McHugh 2007, 12). During the third wave of feminism, community foundations began offering donor-advised funds to enable women to participate in grantmaking for causes related to women and girls.

The fourth wave of feminism is often seen as an extension of the ideas from the second and third waves (Aziz and Sabri 2023; Munro 2013). It continues to promote the mobilization of women, addressing issues of gender-based violence, advocating for reproductive rights, fostering sisterhood, and empowering women to make their own choices (Peroni and Rodak 2020) along with accepting “intersectional experiences and LGBTQ+ rights” (Castanier 2022, 3). What sets this wave apart from previous ones is its emphasis on using social media for advocacy. Being active online creates awareness about important issues and promotes women forming connections, leading to more significant action (Peroni and Rodak 2020). There is a lack of research on the relationship between women’s philanthropy and fourth-wave feminism.

### Collectivist versus Bureaucratic Feminist Organizations

Martin’s 10 dimensions include organizational “structure,” referring to whether an organization is collectivist or bureaucratic. Feminist organization literature frequently discusses organizational structures, as highlighted by authors such as Staggenborg (1995), Acker (1995), and D’Enbeau and Buzzanell (2013). Benschop (2021) emphasizes analysis of power distributions in organizations and society as crucial to feminist organizational theories, which hold that organizations are “situated” in broader social systems and, therefore, have a duty to promote social justice and equality (2). Early feminist organizations believed that hierarchical organizations with positions of power replicate or encourage men’s dominance over women (Riger 1994). To end women’s oppression, new social arrangements that validate women’s lived experiences, embrace solidarity, and offer equal power and opportunity are necessary (Riger 1994). Feminists aim to develop women’s abilities through collectivist organizations that value participation and humanism (Riger 1994, 276).

During the second wave, organizations focused on promoting democracy, equality, and harmony through “decentralized and nonhierarchical structures” (D’Enbeau and Buzzanell 2013, 1450). Radical feminist organizations believed bureaucracy is “inherently unequal, exclusionary, and anti-democratic” and, therefore, not in line with feminist ideals of equality, empowerment, and participation (Scott 2005, 237). Ferguson (1984)

argues that an organization that becomes bureaucratic stops being genuinely feminist. Even so, many feminist organizations adopt bureaucratic structures to advance feminist outcomes (Acker 1995; D’Enbeau and Buzzanell 2013; Iannello 2013).

The dominance of liberal feminism in the United States has led to the adoption of more “legal rational bureaucratic models” (Gottfried and Weiss 1994, 35). However, little is known about whether this remains the case today. It can be challenging for feminist organizations to reconcile their values with the practicalities of organizational structures and systems, which often clash with each other (Ferree and Martin 1995; D’Enbeau and Buzzanell 2013). Benschop (2021, 2) highlights that despite ongoing tension, feminist organizations remain committed to promoting social change, upholding principles of justice and equality, and exploring innovative approaches.

Even as feminist organizations have become more hierarchical and professionalized, they have remained committed to their core feminist values (Metzendorf 2005). Still, this may or may not be the case today. Gelb (1995) argues that feminist organizations involved in public policy change are more likely to be hierarchical and professionalized but have continued to be change agents. As feminist organizational structures are diverse and can change throughout their lifecycles, it may be necessary for feminist organizations to avoid being limited to either bureaucratic or collectivist models (Bunjun 2010). Bunjun (2010) states they should be perceived as shifting along a continuum. However, Hutchinson and Mann (2004) argue that simply placing women in bureaucratic structures within public administration will not solve the issue, as structures and cultures are created by men. Acknowledging the diversity of organizational structures can help us to understand feminist organizations’ role in the broader feminist movement (Bunjun 2010).

### Methodology

#### *Study Design*

This research aims to align with Bell et al.’s (2020) three modes of feminist research: to apply a conceptual framework to address topics, explore specific feminist types of organizations and organizing as a phenomenon, and produce knowledge. This research used an exploratory sequential and descriptive approach, with “exploratory

sequential” meaning qualitative data was collected before and informed quantitative data collection. The descriptive design enables the utilization of diverse data collection strategies to understand a phenomenon and its population better. This approach helps identify and analyze themes, patterns, similarities, and differences. Descriptive research aids in recognizing characteristics of the phenomenon and population and increases external validity. Moreover, descriptive research provides a strong base for future research.

### **Data Collection**

Various methods were utilized to gather data, such as analyzing IRS Form 990s, the content of WFFs’ websites, and conducting interviews and a survey. The executive directors and other leaders of WFFs were interviewed and surveyed for this research. The data collection process utilized a purposive sample and occurred in four stages. Data collection procedures are summarized next.

1. Conceptual content analysis of WFFs’ websites and secondary documents, such as IRS Form 990s and research reports.
2. Interviews with the first pool of organizational leaders of WFFs (n = 23).
3. Survey of leaders of WFFs, who may or may not have participated in stage 2 interviews (n = 46).
4. Interviews with the second pool of leaders of WFFs, who did not participate in stage 2 interviews but may or may not have participated in the stage 3 survey (n = 15).

First, conceptual content analysis was conducted to identify and quantify the concepts present in the data. A general search was conducted of WFFs. To find these organizations, Google was used by examining 15 Google search pages per state using keywords (e.g., Women’s Foundation in [state] or Women’s Fund in [state]). Two-hundred-seventeen WFFs were identified out of 350 women’s philanthropic nonprofits in the United States. WFFs were identified with a focus on women as the primary funding priority of the organization. As a result, the 133 women’s philanthropic nonprofits not included out of the original 350 were excluded because their focus was not primarily on funding initiatives for women and girls. Once WFFs were identified, content analysis of all 217 websites and IRS Form 990s for 79 WFFs was conducted. This information was pulled into an Excel dataset arranged by the individual organization

(row). Data pulled from websites were added to defined categories (columns). Because women’s funds tend to be housed within larger foundations, they do not file 990s as their data is incorporated into their host foundation’s 990s. Only 990s were present for 79 WFFs, largely independent 501(c)(3) organizations. The content analysis involved analyzing the dataset for themes, patterns, similarities, and differences.

The second stage involved semi-structured interviews with a sample of WFFs identified during the first stage. Twenty-three were in person and three were via telephone, occurring from October through December 2018. To ensure a diverse group of participants, WFFs selected were in various regions of the United States, operated with varying funding ranges, served both rural and urban populations, and, while U.S.-based, were not limited to grantmaking in the United States. Also, WFFs that engaged in activities beyond grantmaking and those that did not were included. See Appendix A for the interview protocol. The interviews aimed to understand the broad scope and overall work of WFFs.

In the third stage, a survey took place with WFF leaders between August and September 2019, reaching out to all identified WFFs in the dataset with publicly available email addresses. Responses included 46 of 183 WFFs, resulting in a 25% response rate. See Appendix B for the survey protocol.

For the fourth stage, an additional 15 interviews were conducted using a new sample pool via telephone in September and October 2019, using the same criteria as in stage 2. The development of the stage 4 interview protocol was based on the findings from the stage 2 interviews. Conducting additional interviews allowed for rich data to be collected and enhanced the sample’s diversity. This included various organizations in size and scope, multiple perspectives, and diverse practices. Between stages 2 and 4, 38 interviews occurred, 17.5% of all WFFs in the dataset. See Appendix C for the stage 4 interview protocol.

### **Data Analysis**

Each WFF’s website, Form 990s, and research reports were analyzed during the initial Google search. Data were categorized into 59 categories (Excel columns). See Appendix D for a list of categories.

This research applied a semi-open coding method using predetermined codes based on the literature and codes that emerged through conceptual content analysis

of the dataset, interviews, note-taking, and memo writing. After coding interviews in MAXQDA and websites and Form 990s, a matrix was created to compare database findings to survey results, interview transcripts, and the dataset for themes, patterns, similarities, and differences to describe a phenomenon and population of WFFs. Descriptive statistics were developed and used to help provide context across the organizations. A comparative matrix was then created to compare Martin's 10 dimensions with the work of WFFs, identifying where connections, differences, themes, and patterns exist.

## Findings

This research asks how WFFs are feminist organizations and classifiable by type of feminism, and it also investigates the role of WFFs in the ongoing discourse regarding grantmaking foundations and their influence on social change. Specifically, the study aims to uncover how they approach their social change work and contribute to social change.

Approximately 5% (10 of 217) of WFFs explicitly refer to feminism on their websites. One acknowledges that gender justice is vital to promoting inclusive feminism, "Gender justice allows our feminism to be more inclusive of lived experiences of race, class, immigration, and gender" (WF117). Interviewees also discussed feminism, as one interviewee shared, "In terms of our grantmaking . . . We only fund feminist social change work" (Interview W).

One interviewee from an organization that does not publicize its feminist stance on the website reveals that feminism is an integral part of the programs they fund, "[The program we funded] was a really innovative and a fun amalgam of feminism, leadership, and action planning" (Interview A, 2019). She expands on this point:

The more people [that] have the opportunity to get educated and discover issues related to feminism or being female, the more people understand. . . just how important it is to have women and girls thriving in the community. (Interview A, 2019)

As this example illustrates, not all WFFs use the term feminism publicly. One reason for this highlighted by interviewees includes not being comfortable with feminism:

Our fund really had a founder who . . . wanted the fund to really have a social aspect . . . even to the point we're trying to bring in maybe some more feminist ideology. . . . That part wasn't as comfortable or as natural with this group . . . trying to bring that part of it in a way that's still comfortable. (Interview B, 2018)

This statement contradicts the literature about WFFs identifying as feminists.

Martin's 10 dimensions organize the remaining findings, and Table 2 summarizes the main findings. The 10 dimensions intersect. For example, social change can be a goal, a tenet of an organization's ideology, and an outcome.

## Ideology

Ideology presents itself in varying ways in WFF's work, as noted in one vision statement, indicating the organization "strives for a world free of racism, poverty, sexism, and other oppressions" (WF88). On WFFs' websites, there are no references to "liberal" or "socialist" terms and one reference to "radical hope."

The presence of Black feminism in the work of WFFs is evident in their adoption of intersectionality. Eight WFFs, or 4% of WFFs, mention intersectionality on their websites. One example includes, "The Women's Fund is committed to gender equity and intersectionality" (WF150). Interviewees also discussed intersectionality. One interviewee defined applying an intersectional lens:

An intersectional lens is looking at how the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and place plays a role in the problem that an organization is addressing and the potential solution or strategy to address that problem. And you need to [fund] a program based on the intersection of those key variables . . . . Keeping that intersectional lens in the forefront is really important in program design and funding programs and also in evaluation. It's also important to desegregate data. You're looking at programs with respect to how is it impacting men versus women, white women versus black women, white heterosexual women versus black gay women . . . . A lot of people are doing this intersectional work. It's really

**Table 2. Key Findings Based on Martin’s 10 Dimensions**

Martin’s 10 Dimensions	Dataset Findings (WFFs’ websites)	Interviews	Survey
Ideology (liberal, radical, socialist, other).	Intersectionality (Black feminism) (n = 8).  Hegemonic feminism.	Intersectionality (Black feminism).  Hegemonic feminism.	Challenge oppressive power dynamics, structures, and relationships as the top organizational priority (n = 1).
Values (e.g., cooperation, nurturance, caring, support, relationships, personal development, equality, equity).	Equality (n = 36). Equity (n = 43). Freedom. (n = 16).  Offering support (n = 172).  Empowerment as an organizational value (n=8).	Equality.  Equity.  Empowerment.	Equality as the top priority (n = 2).  Equity as the top priority (n = 8).
Goals (Improving women’s status in society).	Empowerment—in mission statements (n = 30).  Empowerment—in vision statements (n = 14).  Change—in mission statements (n = 27).  Change—in vision statements (n = 9).  Change—in organizational values (n = 5).	Mission statements.  Social change.  Empowerment.	Advance women socially (n = 14), economically (n = 28), and politically (n = 6).  Being a voice for women’s needs, issues, and solutions is the top priority (n = 10).  Create change as the top priority (n = 11).  Empowerment as the top priority (n = 4).  Educate others as the top priority (n = 6).
Outcomes (Improve or transform lives of women and girls).	Discuss organizational impact (n = 118).	Empowerment.  Change.	Achieved grantmaking goals (n = 36).  Advanced change statewide (n = 36).  Advanced change locally (n = 37).  Advance social change (n = 35).  Advanced policy change (n = 36).

Martin's 10 Dimensions	Dataset Findings (WFFs' websites)	Interviews	Survey
Founding Circumstance (i.e., feminist era).	1970s (n = 6). 1980s (n = 23). 1990s (n = 53). 2000s (n = 80). 2010s (n = 21).		1970s (n = 0). 1980s (n = 6). 1990s (n = 21). 2000s (n = 11). 2010s (n = 4).
Structure (e.g., collectivist, bureaucratic).	Member/donor-advised funds (n = 135). Multiple decision-makers (n = 74). Hierarchy and paid staff (n = 80).		Donor or member-advised fund (n = 19). Members or donors vote (n = 19).
Practices (Activities in pursuit of goals).	Grantmaking (n = 217). Apply a gender lens (n = 18). Practice one or more grantmaking philosophies (n = 81). Employ grant criteria that are measurable and results-oriented (n = 42). Educating others (e.g., conducting research) (n = 48).	Grantmaking. Research. Educating others.	Support grassroots movements always (n = 26). Support successful policy and programs (n = 16). Leadership development (n = 19). Practice gender lens grantmaking (n = 24). Practice multiple grantmaking philosophies (n = 24). Engage in partnerships, coalitions, and initiatives benefiting women (n = 30). Engages in policy advocacy (n = 22).
Membership (Characteristics of members).	Women donors (n = 217). Women members of women's funds (n = 135).	Women donors. Women members.	Women members of women's funds (n = 19). Individual donors—women, men, and non-binary (n = 33).

Martin's 10 Dimensions	Dataset Findings (WFFs' websites)	Interviews	Survey
Size and Scope (local or national).	Local or regional (e.g., county) (n = 164).  Statewide (n = 27).  National (n = 8).  International (n = 20).		
External relations (Environment, linkages, funding sources).	Collaborations (n = 76)  Initiatives (n = 79).  Partnerships (n = 47).  Coalitions (n = 14).  Individual donors (n = 84).  Member donors (n = 58).  Family donors (n = 5).  Corporate donors (n = 20).  Other foundations as donors (n = 16).  Sponsorships (n = 11).  Organizations as donors (n = 6).	Collaboration and partnerships.	Foster collaboration between donors and populations served (n = 18).  Collaborate with others (n = 33).  Engage in partnerships/coalitions (n = 33).  Funds or donations come from a variety of sources (n = 33).  Funds come from local companies, corporations, and foundations (n = 25).

critical. And again, equity is about tailored programs that are targeted at population needs as well as strengths. But different people, based on race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation, face different barriers. We really try to understand the different barriers that these sub-populations of women and girls face. (Interview M)

Another interview participant also associates intersectionality with equity:

There are several lenses of the intersectionality of women, those with disabilities, et cetera. We talk more about equity, which means that no one's circumstance is a pre-determinant for outcomes. In an equitable model, one ensures that people have what they need, meeting them from the place where they are. If we treat all people exactly the same, then we will have a continuation of disproportionate outcomes or disparities. (Interview F, 2018)

Table 3 presents survey findings relating to intersectionality using a Likert scale (1–6) of strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, and not sure.

Data suggests that WFFs involve many individuals and draw on diverse voices in their decision-making processes. During the interviews, some participants discussed intersectionality's role in their work:

We use that term [intersectionality] in talking about ourselves. To say that what we are trying to create is fundamentally a platform for the expression of intersectionality through . . . who you are as a funder

or a donor, who you are as a grantee, who you are as a recipient or beneficiary . . . [it] is front and center . . . across all our dimensions and certainly across all our advocacy as well. (Interview E, 2018)

The following comments emphasize the significance of intersectionality:

[We] think about intersectionality in ways that I think some people dismiss it because they don't think it's relevant to them . . . it's about class. It's about education. It's about opportunity. It's about experience and all those things layered on each other. There are many isms . . . . To me, our job is to try and figure out ways to reach all those women . . . . It's an opportunity to work on that together and highlight some of the leadership of the women and girls . . . and the ways that the issues that they are working on . . . disproportionately affect women and girls. (Interview G, 2018)

An intersectional approach is used to challenge the status quo, as noted by the following interviewee comments:

What we wanted to say for each of the [funding priority areas we support] is that these are solvable problems. Sometimes people are [skeptical], especially if we're [the] worst in the country . . . . We wanted to highlight the intersectionality, highlight the cost of the status quo, give a little bit of context, a story. Then, these are the promising policies from other states or other communities. (Interview H, 2018)

**Table 3. Findings Related to Intersectionality (Survey)**

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
Serving women of diverse backgrounds, races, etc., influences funding priorities/decisions	1.85	0.92	0.85
Funding decisions are made by a diverse group of individuals	2.44	1.19	1.43
Community feedback influences funding priorities/decisions	2.51	0.93	0.87
Feedback from populations served influences funding priorities/decisions	2.34	0.90	0.80
Feedback from grantee organizations influences funding priorities/decisions	2.23	0.80	0.64
Our organization grants to more than one issue-area affecting women and girls each grant cycle (e.g., health, safety)	1.59	0.98	0.96

Embracing intersectionality reflects alignment with concepts and practices inherent within fourth-wave and Black feminism.

## Values

Feminist values include concepts such as empowerment, equality, equity, justice, and freedom, which stand out as central to WFFs, as noted by one WFF, “We mobilize our collective power to promote justice, equality, and empowerment for women and girls in our community and across the globe” (WF61).

The dataset shows that 20% (43/217) of WFFs, refer to “equity,” while 52% (24/46) of those who participated in the survey prioritize “equity.” Approximately 17% (36/217) of WFF websites address the topic of “equality,” while 45% (21/46) of survey respondents prioritize this value. Both equality and equity are also highlighted in interviews. Definitions vary. One interviewee defined equality in an economic context, “We really have defined gender equality through the lens of economic stability and the opportunity to have economic stability” (Interview N, 2018), while another defined equality as having choices, “Gender equality would just mean that everyone gets to make their choices for their life” (Interview Q, 2018). Others tie equality and equity to their mission or organizational purpose.

When we think about our mission, and we think about equality and equity . . . we’re interested in increasing the options open to women and girls . . . let’s level the playing field and more just provide them with some of the things that sexism, racism, and economic inequality kind of strip away. (Interview L, 2018)

These comments suggest a minimization of equity. A larger portion of WFFs actively strive for equity and equality. However, the next comments about equity align more with definitions of equality, suggesting a lack of clarity concerning these terms:

[Our work] really is to advance gender equity. It’s not just about helping women become a little bit more secure or increase their income. It’s truly about achieving equity for all women. Equity is defined as really having equal opportunities and access to programs, services, education, healthcare,

such that all women and girls can thrive. (Interview M, 2019)

Some interviewees shared that they do not connect the creation of their organization with values such as equality, implying a disconnect from feminism:

The creation of the women’s fund was as an opportunity to help support women and girls’ initiatives. It’s more about coming alongside our fellow nonprofits and giving them the seed money to then create innovative programs to empower women and girls in the county. I wouldn’t say it was really founded around the idea of gender equality, inequality—any of that. (Interview J, 2018)

This statement contradicts feminism’s focus on gender equality and the literature’s claims that WFFs pursue gender equality.

## Goals

WFFs’ websites highlight their support for the feminist goal of creating positive changes, as the following mission statement depicts, “The Women’s Foundation promotes equity and opportunity for women of all ages, using research, philanthropy, and policy solutions to make meaningful change” (WF72).

Some WFFs describe change as shifts in “institutional, organizational, or legislative policy or practice” (WF45) and are contextualized within the broader community or society. Interviewees also discussed social change, and the following interviewee helped share insights into these shifts:

Here’s what we mean by social change. We are looking to shift attitudes and behaviors and institutions and policies that impede gender and racial equity. [Through research, we discovered] what people thought social change was—social media. They did. So, we try not to use social change. We try to say things like, “We want to change attitudes and behaviors, and institutions and policies.” (Interview T, 2019)

One interviewee explained how her organization’s goals align with larger social change objectives:

Our mission is to invest in women and girls. Our goal is to achieve gender equity through systemic change, and so the things that we do are all related to that. We're looking at big-picture change, not short-term change for one or two individuals. (Interview K, 2018)

These comments depict a more radical feminist ideology. Conversely, another interviewee explained her belief that social change happens when individuals are empowered, emphasizing the importance of individual-level change or a more liberal approach:

I think social action and social change can happen one person at a time because if you're saving lives, and you're letting people know they matter, and they are important, and not just that their survival is important, but that their well-being is important, then we empower. The more people we empower, the more young women we empower, the more mothers we empower to come together . . . I think important change can happen through this work. (Interview U, 2018)

While interviewees express the importance of social change, others note that stakeholders may face challenges when it comes to providing a clear definition of social change, which may hinder the use of the term publicly:

I think we tend to be a little heady or theoretical sometimes and can lose the heart of our mission and the soul of it. I'm reminded that what resonates is the stories . . . of individuals and how you use the story of an individual to illustrate the kind of social change that's required . . . . To my peers, I would say, "Yes, we are a social change philanthropy [organization]". (Interview D, 2018)

The above comments reflect liberal feminist perspectives and practices.

One interviewee brought up concerns about the organization's stance on social change.

When I started, I was told our mission was social change, and I said... social change by women? Social change for women? Social change through women? Social change what—in women? . . . Change by women means we're doing it. Social change for women means we're the recipient. It matters . . . . What I also learned . . . is that social change was scary for people . . . . Just the use of social change became a barrier, so I stopped using the word social change; except, I went to the board and said, "Okay, so what does social change mean to you?" . . . We talked a lot about the difference between social change and social service. (Interview T, 2018)

**Table 4. Organizational Goals (Survey)**

	%
Advance women's philanthropy	8.53%
Educate others (e.g., about the issues, needs of women)	8.24%
Advance women economically	8.24%
Be a voice for women's needs/issues/solutions	7.94%
Advance gender equity	7.06%
Create broader social change	7.06%
Bring communities together (e.g., to address issues affecting women)	6.18%
Advance gender equality	6.18%
Facilitate empowerment across populations of women	5.88%
Foster collaboration between organizations and populations served	5.29%
Create small-scale change benefiting women	5.00%
Facilitate women's individual empowerment	5.00%
Support grassroots movements supporting women	4.71%
Advance women socially	4.12%
Mobilize, disperse resources for women	3.53%
Challenge oppressive power dynamics/structures/relationships	2.65%
Advance women politically	1.76%

**Table 5. Organizational Impact (Survey)**

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
Developed measurable solutions (e.g., to improve the lives of women and girls)	1.63	0.83	0.69
Developed sustainable solutions (e.g., to improve the lives of women and girls)	1.60	0.83	0.70
Empowered women and girls through funded programs	1.08	0.36	0.13
Achieved short-term grantmaking objectives	1.08	0.36	0.13
Achieved long-term grantmaking goals/outcomes	1.63	0.90	0.80
Created positive community or statewide change	1.28	0.51	0.26
Created small-scale, local changes	1.19	0.46	0.21
Created broader social change	1.91	0.94	0.88
Supported successful policy change	1.97	0.96	0.92
Supported programs with evidence of success	1.14	0.41	0.17

The survey asked respondents to identify organizational goals. Table 4 presents data that shows WFFs prioritize promoting women's philanthropy most, a seemingly liberal feminist perspective. They also seek to educate others, a radical feminist perspective like consciousness-raising, and collaborate outside feminist circles, a liberal feminist approach.

### Outcomes

The survey found that WFFs understand their impact in various ways. Table 5 summarizes the survey results on organizational impact, using a Likert scale of 1 to 4 (agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and not sure).

WFFs strongly believe they positively impact the lives of women and girls and work toward broader social, community, and policy changes and promoting solutions to social issues. Empowering women and girls through funded programs was identified as the area with the most significant impact by 33% (23/46) of survey respondents, taking a person-by-person change approach. The one-empowered-woman-at-a-time approach is liberal feminism in nature.

The definition of "impact" on social change varies. For instance, one interviewee discussed organizational impact through legal changes:

We also helped to pass an earned sick time law . . . . Now, even people who work part-time in the state of [name] can still earn up to three days off a

year with pay to take care of themselves when they get sick. These laws don't just impact women. They also impact men, but the vast majority of those who are positively impacted are women and families. (Interview K)

Another interviewee provides a smaller-scale perspective: "Even changing the life of one person can have a huge impact" (Interview V).

### Founding Circumstances

WFFs have been established across three waves of feminism, which speaks to the historical roots of the organization and the types of feminisms WFFs embrace. About 25% (54/217) were founded in the 1990s and 41% (88/217) since 2000. Currently, 13% (28/217) of all 217 WFFs were established during the fourth wave (2008 to present). These findings suggest that WFFs do not fit into a single feminist era.

### Structure and Membership

Approximately 35% (75/217) of WFFs have a hierarchical and bureaucratic internal structure that includes an executive director and subordinate positions. This goes against second-wave feminist principles and supports Riger's (1994) claim that some feminist organizations use hierarchical power structures to achieve their feminist goals. As the survey indicates, many WFFs rely on committees and boards of directors to make final

**Table 6. How Frequently Does Your Organization Do Any of the Following Related to Grantmaking? (Survey)**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Support new programs/organizations	2.08	0.76	0.58
Support grassroots programs/organizations	2.31	0.82	0.67
Fund replications of projects/models	3.08	1.37	1.87
Conduct site visits with potential grantees	2.10	1.26	1.58
Support the operating costs of grantees	2.67	1.27	1.61
Award multiyear grants	3.69	1.40	1.96
Make grants by invitation only	3.69	1.50	2.26
Have an open call for grant applications	2.00	1.59	2.51
Board of directors/trustees or grants committee make funding decisions	2.28	1.72	2.97
Members/donors vote on funding decisions	2.72	1.85	3.43
Run our own programming	3.21	1.66	2.75

decisions, with 59% (23/46) stating that their board or steering committee always makes funding decisions. In membership-based donor-advised funds, the allocation of funding is decided by members, reflecting more collectivist or democratic structures. Based on Martin's (1990) assessment of reliance on other organizations, collectivist WFFs may have less autonomy than bureaucratic ones because they are often housed within larger grantmaking foundations and, therefore, are not independent of the organization.

### Practices

Table 6 presents the grantmaking practices of the survey participants. The practices are rated on a Likert scale from 1 to 6, which includes options of always, often, occasionally, rarely, never, and unsure.

These findings give insight into feminist organizational practices, allowing for future research on these activities.

WFFs are now engaging in more activities beyond providing grants. This indicates an evolution from their previous focus solely on grantmaking, which was part of the second-wave ideology. As one interviewee notes:

The broader goals of our foundation align closely with our vision and mission, which is to provide opportunity and equality for women and girls . . . . We do that in four areas: research, advocacy, education, and grantmaking. I think that we're far from ever feeling that our vision of gender equal-

ity will be reached. In the meantime, we're making efforts to make sure that we have an informed public through our research, that we are funding and providing critical support to our organizations that serve them, and that we are actively being a voice for women and girls in the legislature, and . . . continue to increase our assets so that we can ensure that work continues long after we're gone. (Interview K, 2019)

According to the survey, 84% (33/46) of respondents reported participating in activities that go beyond providing grants. Table 7 shows the different activities using a Likert scale of 1–6 (always, often, occasionally, rarely, never, and unsure) unrelated to grantmaking.

Research, education, and building relationships align with consciousness-raising practices, a second-wave radical feminist approach. Table 8 details practices related to measuring impact using a Likert scale (1–6) of always, often, occasionally, rarely, never, and unsure.

Women's funds also engage in policy advocacy. Table 9 uses a Likert scale (1–4) of often, occasionally, never, and unsure.

WFFs in the survey indicate they advocate for the following policy changes depicted in Table 10.

Other responses include helping Jewish women get a Jewish divorce, public benefits like SNAP, predatory lending protections, voting reforms, child sexual exploitation, and stopping sexual harassment. Advocating for policy change may be seen as a radical approach. Still, it focuses on transforming existing systems and

**Table 7. How Frequently Does Your Organization Engage in the Following Activities? (Survey)**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Conduct research (e.g., on the status of women and girls)	2.27	1.21	1.47
Educate others (e.g., on the needs of women and girls in our community), including community members and other organizations	1.48	0.78	0.61
Provide non-monetary resources to grantee organizations	2.15	0.99	0.98
Provide non-monetary resources to populations served	2.55	1.10	1.22
Provide non-monetary resources to local community/communities	2.36	1.20	1.44
Provide non-monetary resources to issues affecting women and girls	2.45	1.13	1.28
Host networking events	1.88	0.88	0.77
Run programming	2.48	1.28	1.64
Award scholarships to individuals	3.64	0.85	0.72
Host other giving funds (i.e., a women's foundation houses a women's fund)	3.24	1.16	1.34
Mentor young women and girls	2.58	1.07	1.15
Build relationships with grantee organizations and populations served	1.42	0.82	0.67

**Table 8. How Frequently Do You Use the Following Approaches to Measuring the Progress or Impact of Your Grantmaking?**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Grantee progress updates during the program	1.65	1.08	1.17
End-of-program/grant cycle reports from grantee organizations	1.06	0.24	0.06
Surveys of grantee organizations	3.09	1.46	2.14
Surveys of participants of funded programs	3.82	1.36	1.85
Tracking outputs of grantmaking (e.g., tracking numbers served by funded programs; numbers completing programs)	2.00	1.41	2.00
Tracking outcomes of grantmaking (e.g., changes in local or state policies; growth of women in leadership positions)	2.85	1.57	2.48
Other, please describe	5.33	1.37	1.89

**Table 9. Does Your Organization Engage in Policy Advocacy?**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Does your organization engage in policy advocacy?	3.54	2.31	5.33

institutions instead of creating new ones, which aligns with liberal feminist beliefs.

### Scope and Scale

WFFs primarily provide grants to non-profit organizations within their region, whether it be their city, county, or statewide. According to 990s, 36% (79/217) of WFFs collectively hold over \$870 million in assets. Several individual WFFs have significant assets, with three having over \$20 million and three having over \$30 million. Additionally, 68 out of 217 WFFs, or 31% of

WFFs in this research, awarded \$40,079,512 in grants to nonprofits in 2017 (107/217). On their websites, 49% (107/217) of WFFs share how much their organization has awarded in grants since its inception. These figures were added for a collective total (107/217). WFFs have awarded \$496,324,332 in grants since their collective inceptions. In 2018, 78% (36/46) of survey respondents reported \$23,817,047 in grants awarded. The survey also revealed that 40% (17/46) of WFFs operate with assets between \$1 million and \$9,999,999, while 24% (10/46) operate between \$500,000 and \$999,999. This suggests that WFFs vary in size and scope.

**Table 10. Which Types of Policy Has Your Organization Supported? Select All That Apply.**

	%	Count
Pay equity/reducing the gender pay gap	19.54	17
Access to affordable childcare	16.09	14
Paid family leave	13.79	12
Safety and freedom from violence	12.64	11
Reproductive rights, including access to contraception and reproductive health services	10.34	9
Equal representation in government	10.34	9
Other, please describe	6.90	6
LGBTQIA rights	4.60	4
Prison reform	3.45	3
Access to affordable housing	1.15	1
Not sure	1.15	1
Access to affordable transportation	0.00	0

**Table 11. How Frequently Does Your Organization Engage in the Following Activities? (Survey)**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Engage in partnerships/coalitions/initiatives	1.45	0.74	0.55
Collaborate with others (e.g., with local organizations/community leaders/populations served)	1.42	0.60	0.37

**External Relations**

Collaboration and partnerships are essential aspects of WFFs’ work based on survey responses using a Likert scale (1–5) of always/often, occasionally, rarely, never, and unsure, presented in Table 11.

Of the entire dataset, 35% (76/217) of WFFs mention collaboration. Notably, 13% (28/217) of the dataset encourage or require grantee organizations to work with other organizations to carry out their funded programs to produce more efficient results instead of individual efforts from separate agencies. This is exemplified by the statement, “To deepen our impact and achieve equal opportunities for women and girls, we encourage collaboration to yield a more effective outcome—rather than siloed agencies taking individual action” (WF167). Another instance of collaboration is shown through interview feedback:

We’ve developed what we call our Girls’ Health in Girls’ Hands Program, which is a collaboration of 6 different partner agencies and nonprofits throughout the County serving girls. And we get other outside investors, like private foundations, to

do what we call co-invest in these programs. We were able to develop girls’ leadership programs that are girl-led, meaning the girls are identifying the priorities. (Interview I)

Second and third-wave feminist organizations, according to Martin (1990), tend to be smaller and primarily collaborate with other feminist organizations. WFFs collaborate with nonfeminist organizations, including companies and corporations, the State, other foundations, and other nonprofit organizations.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

This research provides new insights into women’s philanthropic nonprofits, using Martin’s 10 dimensions as a framework for analysis based on ideology, values, goals, outcomes, founding circumstances, structure, membership, practices, scope, and scale. The questions asked are how WFFs are feminist and classifiable by type of feminism and also looks at how WFFs go about and contribute to social change. WFFs embody feminist ideals based on Martin’s 10 dimensions and contribute to social change through individual transformations, with

implications for philanthropy, nonprofits, grantmaking foundations, and public administration. WFFs are run by women for women and are predominantly collectivist feminist organizations aligned with second-wave feminism. While embracing intersectionality, WFFs tend to be liberal feminist organizations, and their values tend to be rooted in neoliberalism. Their practices are varied and evolving, as are their scope and scale. This diversity highlights the adaptability of WFFs to different contexts and the potential for both large and small organizations to contribute to feminist goals.

WFFs may have different levels of engagement with feminism. This suggests that feminism within WFFs is multifaceted and not universal. While they reflect the characteristics of feminist organizations, WFFs generally do not publicly identify as feminists. Further research is needed to understand why and whether they contribute to feminist causes. Increased awareness of their feminist roots might spark greater interest in feminism and lead to a more unified feminist funding movement, benefiting gender, social equality, and equity work within public and nonprofit administration.

Intersectionality is essential to WFFs ideology, indicating Black and fourth-wave feminism or a more radical ideology. While there is no indication that WFFs know they have adopted a Black feminist ideology, doing so indicates active consideration of the intersections of gender, race, class, and other factors in addressing social issues. This has implications for public and nonprofit administration. WFFs can act as a guide to adopting intersectionality in public and nonprofit administration, promoting gender and social equality and equity. However, WFFs are more liberal feminists in their values, goals, practices, and outcomes. Although there are pockets of radicalism, such as consciousness-raising and collectivist structures, WFFs primarily reflect hegemonic feminism and are influenced by second-wave concepts and practices. The adaptability of WFFs across different waves of feminism demonstrates the evolution of feminist ideology and its ability to incorporate new ideas while staying true to its mission. Nonprofits and public administration can use this approach to align their core missions with social equality and equity issues.

According to the survey, WFFs are most concerned with advancing women's philanthropy, a goal that differs from original WFFs. The goals and values of WFFs also reflect feminist principles of equality, equity, empow-

erment, justice, and freedom. However, interpreting these values and goals can vary depending on context. WFFs are flexible in adapting their feminism to their specific values and goals. It could be helpful for WFFs to examine how their work relates to feminism. This could aid in identifying aspects of feminism that may assist or impede their efforts for social change. As a field, public administration serves as a conduit for feminist values and goals through WFFs. Nonprofits looking for feminist-aligned partners to achieve social change may benefit from collaborating with WFFs.

This research helps philanthropists and nonprofit practitioners understand the actions being taken for social change. WFFs have different goals for social change. Some aim for policy change, while others focus on individual empowerment, drawing on second-wave feminist approaches. Some WFFs hesitate to use the term "social change," making defining it challenging. WFFs prioritize advancing women through an individualized approach, making social change cumulative and incremental. However, placing the burden of change on marginalized individuals may reinforce inequities instead of changing systems (Kohl-Arenas 2016). Elevating the voices of the most marginalized populations is essential for systemic change. Still, WFFs challenge the patriarchy by focusing on women's issues and attempting to address intersecting factors affecting their lives. A more collective effort to achieve social change may expand the reach and impact of the broader feminist movement.

WFFs measure impact in different ways, such as policy changes and empowerment. There is variation in how the impact is defined, as findings suggest some emphasize legal changes and others focus on individual-level changes. This approach to social change and impact assessment shows diversity in feminist methods and recognizes the complexity of achieving social change. WFFs have a unique place in the debate surrounding foundations and social change. There is no evidence that WFFs fund the most privileged individuals or nonprofits, as some literature suggests is done by wealthy foundations. Despite their efforts, the tactics employed by WFFs do not achieve systemic impact, partly because these funders operate at a community level. The implication for WFFs is that collaborating as a collective funding movement may lead to better success instead of siloed efforts in limited geographical regions. The field of public administration cannot necessarily rely on WFFs to move the needle of systemic

gender and social equality and equity. The findings contribute to adding grantmaking funds to the foundations and social change debate, which focuses on grantmaking foundations specifically and looks at smaller, more grassroots grantmaking organizations.

WFFs have developed multifaceted organizational practices, including grantmaking, research, education, networking, and policy advocacy. More research is necessary to understand how their methods are applied, the impact of these practices, and their contribution to public administration. Engaging in activities beyond grantmaking shows an evolution from a solely grantmaking focus. Valuable insights include involving diverse voices in decision-making and seeking feedback from the populations served. There has been limited development in understanding the practices foundations use to bring about social change. This research takes steps to broaden this understanding. Other organizations can learn about grantmaking and non-grantmaking practices that promote social change, and their grantmaking and other practices can benefit foundations promoting gender and social equality and equity. These findings also shed light on how feminist organizations operate in a historically male-dominated public administration (Stivers 2000).

There is variation in the internal structures of WFFs. Some adopt hierarchical and bureaucratic models, while others use more collectivist or democratic approaches. The findings suggest that women's funds tend to be more collectivist, while women's foundations are often hierarchical. The hierarchical structures in many women's foundations contradict traditional second-wave feminist principles, indicating a divergence from earlier feminist ideals. This suggests that women's foundations may prioritize efficiency and decision-making processes that align with bureaucratic structures, potentially to achieve their feminist goals more effectively. Collectivist, membership-based women's funds are closer to original radical feminist organizational ideals, and women's foundations are specific to liberal feminism and more traditional public administration organizations. Nonprofits that align their objectives and practices with WFFs should be open to working with differently structured organizations that embrace different feminist perspectives to achieve broader feminist goals. These findings also contribute new discourse to feminist organization literature related to the internal structures of 21st-century feminist organizations. Both types of

feminist organizations operate within public administration, indicating that not all organizations within the field are hierarchical and traditionally male-dominated.

Collaboration and partnerships are essential for the work of WFFs. They work more frequently with non-feminist organizations, which differs from Martin's 1990 description of feminist organizations. The impact of collaboration, initiatives, partnerships, and coalitions with others who share similar values and goals may facilitate greater progress toward social change. The emphasis on collaboration, both with feminist and non-feminist organizations, recognizes the potential to leverage resources, networks, and expertise to achieve their feminist goals. It also highlights the ability of WFFs to engage with a diverse range of stakeholders and identify potential solutions. Nonprofits seeking funding and partnerships with WFFs should understand their missions, visions, and goals to identify alignment. This will help develop an understanding of how public agencies and nonprofits' missions, visions, and goals operate and work together.

Much of feminist organization literature is situated in the third wave. This research provides an understanding of contemporary feminist organizations and explores feminist philanthropic nonprofits through fourth-wave principles. Moreover, the findings add new insight into feminist organizational practices, goals, outcomes, and external relations, which can be explored further in future research. The research shows that WFFs are multifaceted organizations that incorporate feminism in diverse ways. Understanding WFFs' roles and methods is essential for policymakers, activists, and researchers who aim to advance feminist causes and understand the wide range of strategies employed by feminist organizations. The findings are advantageous for public administration as they help to acknowledge the existence of feminist organizations, understand their goals and activities, and appreciate the significance of collaborating with WFFs to enhance the lives of women and society. Studying WFFs may motivate other public administration entities and groups to embrace feminist ideologies, values, objectives, and other characteristics to achieve more significant gender and social equality and equity. Moreover, findings may benefit WFFs, helping them to uncover ways to expand their impact on social change.

The field of public administration must recognize and embrace diverse ways of thinking and doing, including feminism (Ricucci 2010, 57). WFFs are po-

tentially influential organizations, and understanding how they and other nonprofits and public agencies operate in this context can reveal how their goals and approaches align with promoting social change and greater gender and social equality and equity. WFFs, as grantmaking organizations, advocate for gender and social equality and equity, and their role may be crucial in achieving these goals or fall flat. It is incumbent upon public administration to acknowledge and understand WFFs so that the field can serve as a channel and support system for their efforts.

The aim of this research is to understand the work of WFFs. The findings help to update our understanding of feminist organizations and provide insights into the role of feminism in advancing social change and social equality and equity by both WFFs and in the field of public administration. During the study, the interview protocol enabled discussions on feminism, even though it was not the sole focus of the research. Based on 217 WFFs in the United States, the findings are widely generalizable, but it is possible that not all WFFs focused on women and girls in the United States were included in the study. Not all WFFs have detailed websites, indicating that the dataset findings may be deflated. The study did not investigate how fundraising is related to identifying WFFs as feminists, an area that requires further research to develop a more complete understanding. Martin's (1990) 10 dimensions were utilized as an analytical framework. As such, it should be noted that they do not incorporate the latest fourth-wave concepts and practices. Additionally, past studies have not utilized Martin's 10 dimensions in examining a group of organizations, as opposed to just individual organizations. Finally, it is worth mentioning that literature from feminist organizations, specific to power dynamics and ideologies, is somewhat dated. Further research should consider how this could be updated in a contemporary setting.

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## Appendix A. 2018 Interview Protocol

1. Can you please describe how you understand or define gender equality?
2. What role does gender equality play in relation to the foundation's purpose and work?
3. In what ways does your foundation support gender equality?
  - a. What does it do, if anything, beyond grantmaking?
  - b. Would you provide some examples?
4. How would you describe your foundation's grantmaking philosophy?
5. Why do you think that the foundation adopted this philosophy?
6. Are there ways that this philosophy applies to other areas of your foundation's work? Would you give me an example of this in action?
7. What criteria, if any, does your foundation apply to funding decisions? Please provide an example of how these criteria were applied in relation to a funded program or organization.
8. How would you describe your grantmaking process(es)?
9. What type of information do you typically use to inform funding decisions? Please provide an example.
10. Who is involved in decision-making for your foundation's grantmaking?
11. Does the foundation consider feedback from those served when making funding decisions? What does this look like?
12. What types of organizations does your foundation fund? Can you provide an example or two? Why were these chosen to receive funds?
13. What types of programs does your foundation fund? Can you provide an example or two? Why were these chosen to receive funds?
14. How would you describe the populations served by programs or organizations funded by your foundation?
15. Do you have any additional documentation about your grantmaking philosophies, approaches, and decisions that may help us understand your foundations' work but that is not available through your website?
16. Do you have anything more you would like to add?

**Appendix B. 2019 Survey Protocol**

1. What is the name of your organization?
2. Where is your organization located?
  - a. By state.
3. What is the organization's year of inception?
4. What is your organization type?
  - a. Independent 501(c)3
  - b. Donor/member-advised fund within a larger 501(c)3 or other organization
  - c. Other, please describe.
5. What is the size of your organization based on your total assets?
  - a. <\$100,000
  - b. \$100,000–\$499,999
  - c. \$500,000–\$999,999
  - d. \$1,000,000–\$9,999,999
  - e. \$10,000,000–\$24,999,999
  - f. \$25,000,000+
6. Please describe your funding source.
  - a. Funds/donations come from a variety of sources (e.g., individuals, companies, and other foundations)
  - b. Funds/donations derive from membership fees only
  - c. Funds/donations derive from one main source (i.e., individual patron or family)
  - d. Other, please describe.
7. [If selected 6a] Please describe your funding sources by selecting all that apply.
  - a. Individual donors (women, men, non-binary)
  - b. Membership fees/dues
  - c. Local companies
  - d. Corporations
  - e. Other grantmaking foundations/funds
  - f. Other, please describe.
8. [If selected 7a] About what percentage of individual donors are:
  - a. Women
  - b. Men
  - c. Non-binary
  - d. Not sure
9. How many people serve on your board of directors/trustees or the advisory board/steering committee of your organization?
  - a. By number, 1 to 21+
10. About what percentage of your board/steering committee is made up of women?
  - a. Open answer question
11. About what percentage of women board/committee members are:
  - a. Black/African American
  - b. Asian
  - c. Hispanic/Latina
  - d. Native American
  - e. Pacific Islander
  - f. White
  - g. Not sure

12. Approximately how much did your organization give in awarded grants during the last grant cycle?
  - a. Open answer
13. What are your funding priorities? Select all that apply.
  - a. Economic empowerment (e.g., self-sufficiency, job training)
  - b. Education
  - c. Health and well-being (e.g., access to contraception and reproductive healthcare)
  - d. Leadership development
  - e. Safety (e.g., safety from violence)
  - f. Basic needs (e.g., childcare, emergency assistance, housing, transportation)
  - g. Other, please describe.
14. What populations of women do you fund? Select all that apply.
  - a. Girls
  - b. Adolescent girls/young women (15–24 years)
  - c. First-generation college students
  - d. Senior aged
  - e. Low-income
  - f. Single mothers
  - g. Teen mothers
  - h. Immigrant/refugee
  - i. Jewish
  - j. LGBTQIA
  - k. Black/African American
  - l. Arab
  - m. Asian
  - n. Hispanic/Latina
  - o. Native American (including Native Alaska)
  - p. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
  - q. White
  - r. Disabled/have different abilities
  - s. Incarcerated
  - t. Veteran/active military
  - u. Living in urban areas
  - v. Living in rural areas
  - w. Not sure
  - x. Other, please describe.
15. Do you fund/support other populations beyond women and girls?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not sure
16. [If selected 15a] Which other populations do you fund? Select all that apply.
  - a. Children (e.g., boys, trans children)
  - b. Families (e.g., men, low-income families)
  - c. Immigrant or refugee families
  - d. Gay, queer, or trans men
  - e. Men specifically, for the purposes of benefiting women's safety and well-being
17. How frequently does your organization do any of the following related to grantmaking? [always, often, occasionally, rarely, never, not sure]:
  - a. Support new programs/organizations

- b. Support grassroots programs/organizations
  - c. Fund replications of projects/models
  - d. Conduct site visits with potential grantees
  - e. Support the operating costs of grantees.
  - f. Award multiyear grants
  - g. Make grants by invitation only
  - h. Have an open call for grant applications.
  - i. The board of directors/trustees or grants committee makes funding decisions
  - j. Members/donors vote on funding decisions
  - k. Run our own programming
18. What, if any, grantmaking philosophy does your organization practice? Select all that apply.
- a. Gender lens grantmaking/investing
  - b. Economic justice grantmaking
  - c. Community-based grantmaking
  - d. Social change philanthropy
  - e. Collective philanthropy/giving
  - f. Participatory or hands-on philanthropy
  - g. Strategic grantmaking
  - h. Data-driven grantmaking
  - i. Impact investing
  - j. Inclusive philanthropy
  - k. Jewish lens grantmaking
  - l. Catholic/Christian lens grantmaking
  - m. No specific grantmaking philosophy practiced
  - n. Other grantmaking philosophy, please describe.
19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your organization's approach to grantmaking [strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, not sure]
- a. Serving women of diverse backgrounds, races, etc., influences funding priorities
  - b. Funding decisions are made by a diverse group of individuals
  - c. Community feedback influences funding priorities/decisions
  - d. Feedback from populations served influences funding priorities/decisions
  - e. Feedback from grantee organizations influences funding priorities/decisions
  - f. Our organization grants to more than one issue-area affecting women and girls
20. How frequently do you gather the following types of feedback? [always, often, occasionally, rarely, never, not sure]
- a. Issues or needs expressed by populations served
  - b. Issues or needs expressed by grantee organizations
  - c. What is working/not working with a funded program from grantee organization
  - d. What is working/not working with a funded program from populations served
  - e. Indicators of whether funded programs met or did not meet program goals
  - f. Other, please describe.
21. Are you a member of one or more funding donor networks, such as the Women's Funding Network or the Jewish Women's Funding Network?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not sure
22. [If 21a] Which funding network(s)?
- a. Open answer

23. Does your organization engage in policy advocacy?
- Often
  - Occasionally
  - Never
  - Not sure
24. [If 23a] Which types of policy has your organization supported? Select all that apply.
- Reproductive rights, including access to contraception and reproductive health services
  - Paid family leave
  - Pay equity/reducing the gender pay gap
  - Safety and freedom from violence
  - LGBTQIA rights
  - Equal representation in government
  - Access to affordable childcare
  - Access to affordable transportation
  - Access to affordable housing
  - Prison reform
  - Not sure
  - Other, please describe.
25. [If 23c] How likely is your organization to engage in policy advocacy in the future?
- Extremely likely
  - Moderately likely
  - Neither likely nor unlikely
  - Moderately unlikely
  - Extremely unlikely
26. Does your organization engage in one or more activities beyond grantmaking?
- Yes
  - No
  - Not sure
27. [If 26a] How frequently does your organization engage in the following activities? [always/often, occasionally, rarely, never, not sure]
- Conduct research (e.g., on the status of women and girls)
  - Educate others (e.g., on the needs of women and girls in our community)
  - Provide non-monetary resources to grantee organizations
  - Provide non-monetary resources to populations served
  - Provide non-monetary resources to the local community(ies)
  - Provide non-monetary resources to issues affecting women and girls
  - Host networking events
  - Run programming
  - Engage in partnerships/coalitions/initiatives
  - Award scholarships to individuals
  - Host other giving funds
  - Mentor young women and girls
  - Collaborate with others (e.g., with local organizations/community leaders/populations served)
  - Build relationships with grantee organizations and populations served
  - Other, please describe.
28. [If 26b] Is your organization open to engaging in any of the following activities beyond grantmaking in the future? Select all that apply.
- Same as question 27

29. The goal(s) of your organization is to: Select all that apply.
- Be a voice for women's needs/issues/solutions
  - Create broader social change
  - Create small-scale change benefiting women
  - Facilitate women's individual empowerment
  - Facilitate empowerment across populations of women
  - Mobilize, disperse resources for women
  - Support grassroots movements supporting women
  - Educate others (e.g., about the issues, needs of women)
  - Bring communities together (e.g., to address issues affecting women)
  - Foster collaboration between organizations and populations served
  - Advance women socially
  - Advance women economically
  - Advance women politically
  - Advance gender equality
  - Advance gender equity
  - Advance women's philanthropy
  - Challenge the patriarchy
  - Challenge oppressive power dynamics/structures/relationships
  - Not sure
  - Other, please describe.
30. Which 1 or 2 of the goals you selected do you feel are the primary/most important for your organization?
- Same as 29.
31. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the types of impact achieved by your organization? Our organization has [agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, not sure]
- Developed measurable solutions (e.g., to improve the lives of women and girls)
  - Developed sustainable solutions (e.g., to improve the lives of women and girls)
  - Empowered women and girls through funded programs
  - Achieved short-term grantmaking objectives
  - Achieved long-term grantmaking goals/outcomes
  - Created positive community or statewide change
  - Created small-scale, local changes (e.g., in local communities)
  - Created broader social change
  - Supported successful policy change
  - Supported replicable programs
  - Supported programs with evidence of success
  - Other, please describe.
32. Which 1 or 2 do you feel have been your organization's greatest area of impact?
- Same as 31.
33. How frequently do you use the following approaches to measuring the progress or impact of your grantmaking? [always, often, occasionally, rarely, never, not sure]
- Grantee progress updates during the program
  - End-of-program/grant cycle reports from grantee organizations
  - Surveys of grantee organizations
  - Surveys of participants of funded programs
  - Tracking outputs of grantmaking (e.g., tracking numbers served by funded program)
  - Tracking outcomes of grantmaking (e.g., changes in local or state policies)
  - Other, please describe.

34. How has your organization experienced any of the following difficulties in assessing impact? Select all that apply.
- Limited expertise
  - Limited resources
  - Limited availability of employees, boards, and committees to assess the impact
  - More time is needed (assessing impact over a longer period of time)
  - Outcomes of funded programs are difficult to measure
  - Difficulty obtaining data from grantee organizations
  - Difficulty obtaining data from populations served
  - Other, please describe.

### Appendix C. 2019 Interview Protocol

- What does your foundation or fund want to achieve overall? What is the end goal(s)?
- What activities of the foundation/fund would you consider to be the most important to advancing your mission?
  - In what ways, if any, does your organization engage in collaborative activities? What type of collaborations are they?
  - Please describe the ways, if any, in which your organization educates others.
- Please describe your grantmaking philosophy.
- Please describe the populations your organization awards grants to support.
- Please describe some of the programs that you are most proud of funding.
- Does your organization gather feedback from populations supported or the broader community? Why or why not?
  - Could you please describe an example of how you go about applying feedback from populations supported or from the broader community?
- How do you define social change?
- Describe the role of your organization in creating social change and/or facilitating empowerment as you understand it.
- What does impact mean to you in the context of your organization's work?
  - Please describe an example of your organization having an impact on the lives of women in your community.
- Do you have anything more you would like to add?

**Appendix D. Dataset Categories**

Dataset categories – columns
Organization name
City
State
Organization type – independent (501c3) or member
Community foundation name if applicable
Statewide or Local funding
Donor type – public/private
Demographics of donors
Funding sources
Inception date
Mission statement
Vision statement
Values
Leadership makeup
# of staff
# of board members
Total assets (990s and websites)
Funding scope of individual grants
Grants awarded (amount) 2018
Grants awarded 2017
Grants awarded 2016
Grants awarded 2015
Grants awarded 2014
Grants awarded 2013
Years with grant data
Endowment Yes/No
Grantmaking philosophy yes/no
Specified philosophy or approach
Specified philosophy or approach – details
Types of organizations funded
Funding priorities
Funding priorities – details
Types of programs funded
Total # of organizations funded since inception
Total # of programs funded since inception
Total # of funded programs 2018
Total # of funded programs 2017
Total # of funded programs 2016
Total # of funded programs 2015

Total # of funded programs 2014
Total # of funded programs 2013
Demographics of populations served by funded programs
Other activities (beyond grantmaking) yes/no
Activity details
Activity details continued
Change focus yes/no
Change focus – details
Process for decision-making
Decision-making continued
Stipulations for grants yes/no
Stipulations/requirements – details
Stipulations/requirements continued
Stipulations/requirements continued
Contact information
Name of Executive Director
Data source
Other