

Abortion -The Role of Private Foundations

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ALTHOUGH THE VERY WORD “foundation” stems from Latin roots meaning fixed or firmly based, one role of philanthropic foundations is to act as instruments of change and mobility. It is precisely their ability to adapt, sometimes rapidly, to the need for change which distinguishes private foundations from more rigid institutions, and their financial “firm base” makes this flexibility possible.

An historic precedent for the role of foundations in abortion reform may be drawn from the corresponding part they played in the evolution of American birth control policy. That private foundations here made a large contribution to bridging the “support gap” between the first stirrings of interest in change and its tangible implementation is now well known. Even when government began to show unmistakable interest in support of research, domestic programs and technical assistance in the family planning field during the sixties, it was necessary for private foundations to initiate and maintain the momentum of countless projects until the slower legislative and policy-making process could catch up with changing public opinion. Du Coeur once noted. “Liberality consists less in giving a great deal than in gifts well timed.” Thus, modification of old laws, enhancement of social acceptance, emergence of public policy and evolution of modern technology were supported by private foundation activities as family planning gradually found its appropriate place in modern health services.

A similar evolution in the field of abortion is more difficult, since it involves even more sensitive and controversial issues. Nevertheless, whereas significant acceptance of birth control in the United States took fifty years, the corresponding process with regard to abortion seems to be spanning little more than a decade. The fact that the recently passed Tydings Bill specifically excludes abortion from federally supported family planning activities, and that only a handful of states to date have dealt substantially with their outmoded abortion laws, serves to remind us of how much needs to be done. What then is the role of foundations in hastening and abetting this evolution?

In order to answer this question we must understand the nature of the problems yet to be solved in the abortion field, as well as the character of those private foundations whose resources may be utilized. so that requests for support may be appropriately addressed to the most receptive among them.

A tabulation of the variables in abortion service which lend themselves to study and manipulation will serve to illustrate the innumerable experiments yet to be done before we can answer the questions to which this symposium addresses itself. Table 1 illustrates these variables in simplified form.

Table 1. Variables in Abortion Service

<i>Logistics</i>	<i>Technology</i>
Hospital	Dilation and curettage
Inpatient	Suction aspiration
Outpatient	Amnioninfusion
Free-standing clinic	Hysterotomy
Physician's office	Hysterectomy
	Abortifacients
<i>Economics</i>	<i>"Service" Elements</i>
Cost factors	Pregnancy Counseling
Overhead	Psychologic evaluation
Equipment	Pre- and Post-operative care
Professional fees	Professional, nonprofessional roles
Methods of Payment	Physician
Individual fee	Social worker
Private insurance	Paramedical
Comprehensive health plan	Volunteer
Public subsidy	

Some of the infinite combinations of possibilities illustrated here have already been tested. Others have yet to be tried. Many await only the catalyst of sufficient financial support. Recognizing that certain experiments fall within the sphere of interest of specific foundations, let us now turn to the nature and variety of philanthropic foundations themselves.

Foundations have been characterized as "privately organized public institutions." They are generally defined as nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations set up as corporations or

trusts, usually under state laws to receive and distribute advancement of human funds for the advancement of human welfare.

Although there are a number of variations on the theme of a public-private amalgam, their common denominator is the American tradition of voluntary efforts which John Gardner has called “private initiative for the public good.

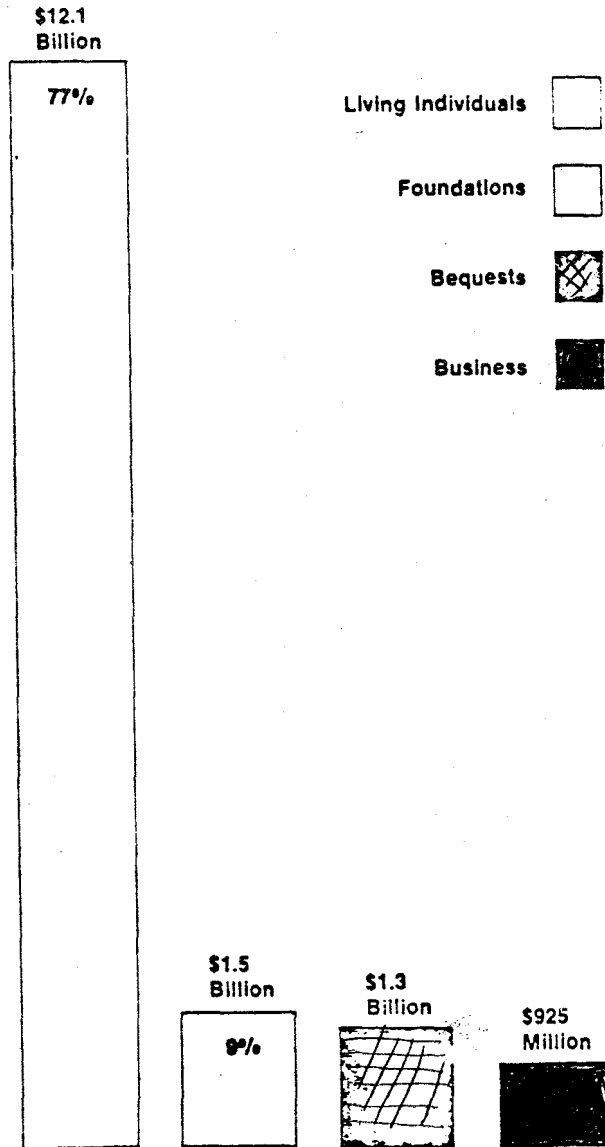
The pattern of modern foundations was originated by Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller early in the twentieth century. Since then, the number of foundations has grown to about twenty-two thousand. Their estimated total assets are over twenty billion dollars and their annual expenditures about 1.5 billion. Figure 1 illustrates the extent of foundation giving in relation to other versions of private philanthropy. It hardly needs saying that progress in the abortion field has been aided, not only by foundations, but also by individual donors, voluntary health agencies, private industry, and in some instances by government agencies as well. Nevertheless, it is the particular contribution of foundations which concerns us here.

Foundations differ from other organizations and agencies largely in their independence and flexibility. They are distinctly free to select those problem areas to which they will address their resources. They are free to pioneer, to explore new ideas and to innovate. They may enter new fields quickly because of their flexibility, and leave them as other sources of support become available. Yet, despite their general reputation for flexibility, they vary considerably in their ability or willingness to support activities as controversial and sensitive as abortion reform. Most foundations are conservative in nature. Most foundation grants are made to well-established agencies where there is very little expectation of controversy or criticism. Donald Young, former President of the Russell Sage Foundation, calls these “blue chip” projects and notes that, in expanding their funds for relatively standard activities, foundations are “serving the main function for which they have been granted privileged status by society.” In his address before the 1962 meeting of the American Sociological Association, he drew attention to the small but significant stream of foundation money flowing into venturesome projects in controversial areas, but he cautioned that large increases in this stream might bring about restrictive action.

The larger foundations are facing the problem of whether to continue the common pattern of grants to many institutions or to concentrate their efforts. In a critique of foundation roles, MacLeod contrasted the concentrated and deep involvement of foundation support, as in the research leading to improvement of the world’s food supply in the international rice and wheat institutes, with the more common

Private Philanthropy in the United States, 1968

(Total: \$15.8 Billion)



Source: American Association of Fund-Raising Counsel, Inc.

Fig 1. Philanthropic foundations in the United States. (From the Foundation Center, New York, NY.)

pattern of "seed money" scattered in the form of grants to individual researchers in many institutions. The future direction of population related research, including some abortion studies, may indeed evolve into a similar pattern of more sustained support focused in fewer centers of concentrated effort.

The Foundation Directory describes five principle kinds of foundations, though these tend to overlap to some extent. They are illustrated in Table 2. Of these five, it is the

Table 2. Philanthropic Foundations in the United States

Type	% Total Foundation Assets
1. General-purpose foundations (Approx 370)	over 66
2. Special-purpose foundations (Approx 500)	10
3. Company-sponsored foundations (Approx 1500)	6
4. Community foundations (Approx 200)	3
5. Family foundations (Approx 15,000)	15

From The Foundation Center (4)

large, general-purpose and family foundations which are of particular interest to potential projects in the abortion field. The general-purpose foundations concern us because of their commitment to population problems and the family foundations (often, as Emerson suggested, reflecting the shadow of one man) typically support institutions in which the donors have a personal interest.

As might well be expected, the largest and thus most conspicuous of the general-purpose foundations have contributed to progress in the abortion field in more indirect, nonspecific and non-controversial ways. Nevertheless, inasmuch as abortion falls well within the rubric of measures influencing population dynamics, to the study of which the largest foundations are now heavily committed, foundation efforts have had an impact, particularly in technologic research and the dissemination of information pertaining to abortion.

Over the past 16 years some 54 percent of the Ford Foundation's large population commitments have been directed to research and training in reproductive biology.

Although specific products applied directly to the abortion “band” of the total reproductive spectrum has not been supported as such, fundamental laboratory research in reproductive chemistry and physiology yields knowledge as potentially applicable to abortion as to other influences on fertility. By the same token Ford Foundation support or symposia on research methods, such as one held at the Karolinska Institute in 1965. and its grants to agencies with broad-spectrum interests in the field of human reproduction. such as the American Public Health Association. Planned Parenthood and the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States. indirectly contributes insofar as these recipients include abortion problems on their respective agendas.

The Rockefeller Foundation similarly has not granted funds directly for specific abortion projects however, its heavy support of university-based population centers combining research. training and clinical service, its support of pure research in reproductive biology and its grants to family-planning agencies. particularly for training centers, help indirectly as these various grantees expand their spheres of activity to include abortion among other methods of fertility control.

The Population Council. technically not a foundation itself, but supported by a number of family- and general-purpose foundations. as well as by government sources, has devoted considerable attention to abortion research in the larger context of population problems. The 1967 Chapel Hill Symposium on Therapeutic Abortion and the American Psychological Association’s December 1969 Workshop on Psychology, Family Planning, and Population Problems, which included considerable discussion of unwanted pregnancy and abortion. were supported by the Population Council. Several issues of the Council’s popular series, *Studies in Family Planning*, have been devoted to abortion studies.

Several foundations with more specialized objectives have shown particular leadership in support of progress in abortion.

The Lalor Foundation, incorporated in 1935 by the Lalor family, has progressively shifted its emphasis from general supportive research in the life sciences to projects involving reproductive physiology. particularly abortion. Many of its research awards have been given to scientists studying fertilization, implantation, early gestation and their controls. One seed planted and nurtured by Lalor Foundation Fellowships through its awards for the study of prostaglandins in Sweden. dating back to 1960. now holds the promise of important harvests if the prostaglandins realize their potential in the 1970’s.

Still another Labor-supported project has yielded important progress in abortion techniques. In 1966 this Foundation supported the work of Dr. Dorothea Kerslake of Newcastle-upon-Tyne Medical School in studies of terminating early pregnancy by vacuum aspiration. Dr. Kerslake’s two teaching films, “Termination of Pregnancy by Vacuum Aspiration” and “Termination with Safety,” have been shown before

121 medical schools, 250 hospitals, 100 research and other institutions. The Lalor compendium on uterine aspiration procedures is now in its fifth edition and gifts of vacuum equipment have been made to teaching and research institutions. The Lalor Foundation has also supported the Abortion Law Reform Association of England and was responsible for publication and distribution of *Guide to the Abortion Act of 1967* edited by Malcolm Potts. Its announcement of September 1970 states, "The Lalor Foundation program of awards for 1971 will give preference to work in mammalian reproductive physiology which is aimed at detection and exploration of dysgenic factors in ovum or fetal development, evaluation of genetic factors involved, anti means toward their disposition. Support of research in the various aspects of abortion is also to be continued."

The Hopkins family of Santa Barbara, California has made notable contributions to progress in the abortion field, partly through the Hopkins Charitable Fund, and partly by means of separate non-tax- exempt gifts in support of abortion law reform. Hopkins' assistance, along with that of other donors, has aided the Abortion Reform Association of New York, the Association for the Study of Abortion and the National Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws. In September 1969, the Hopkins Charitable Fund awarded a grant to the San Francisco-Alameda County Affiliate of Planned Parenthood to initiate a project to provide legal abortion service in the San Francisco area. The Hopkins Grant, with a simultaneous award from the Sunnen Foundation, provides "seed money" giving this project an initial year of support, after which it will be self-supporting from fees. It is this kind of start which permits such a project to experiment with an innovative "team approach" to the delivery of abortion service, with time at the outset for its staff to explore new relationships between hospital, physician and clinic, to acquaint the medical community with its program and to set the stage for training and research efforts to go hand in hand with service. These preparations would not have been possible had the Center been required to depend upon generating its own total support from the beginning. It is precisely this kind of initial "enabling mechanism" which private foundations are uniquely equipped to provide with a modest, nonrecurring initial investment.

The Sunnen Foundation, of St. Louis, Missouri, has supported such activities as the Women's Medical Center in New York City, the Planned Parenthood Answering Service in New York City, the San Francisco Center for Legal Abortion, the New York and UCLA Symposia. It has also provided suction aspiration equipment to hospitals

in various parts of the world and supported research in several hospital Ob-Gyn departments. Because of the legal restraints on foundations, Mr. Sunnen has helped personally with some of the repeal activities and in the creation of the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws.

A number of other family-sponsored foundations have made grants for the support of education, counseling, training and, in some cases, direct services. Among these are the New York Foundation, the General Service Foundation of St. Paul, Minnesota, the Scaife Charities, the Van Ameringen Foundation, and the Family Foundation represented by Stewart H. Mott, a long-time friend of abortion reform and clergymen's counseling efforts. Examples of recipients of foundation support include the Therapeutic Abortion Program of the Los Angeles General Hospital. Planned Parenthood's Pregnancy Counseling Training Project in New York, the Clergymen's Counseling Service and new projects now planned for Boston and Washington.

These are merely samples of foundation supported projects, nor is a complete listing possible here. They do, however, serve to illustrate the role that foundations have played thus far during this difficult period of change in public attitudes and policies toward abortion.

For those interested in seeking foundation support for specific projects, a number of publications and subscription information services are available, The Foundation Center, an independent, nonprofit New York organization, not only compiles the *Foundation Directory*, which is the principal reference work on foundations but also a bimonthly professional journal, *Foundation News* as well. Regional Foundation Libraries are available in Berkeley, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, St. Louis, Cleveland, and Austin, Texas. The Foundation Library Center (a Russell Sage Foundation project) publishes a quarterly report, and The Fund Raising Institute has produced a Foundation portfolio. The Public Service Materials Center publishes a survey of grant-making foundations which suggests specific times of the year in which applications may be appropriately received. Altogether about twenty such informational services are now established to facilitate the contribution of private wealth to public purpose.

The pace of progress in the years immediately ahead is difficult to predict. If abortion is to find its logical place among the determinants of human fertility, much that needs to be done, in technologic research, education, law reform and in the search for new and less expensive ways to deliver abortion service, must depend upon private support. The foundations have demonstrated not only their ability but in some cases, their resolve, to participate in this change.

“Life is short and the art, the occasion instant, decision difficult, experiment perilous.”
But experiment we must, and with such help as theirs, experiment we will.

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