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Editorial

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DEAR READERS

Although family philanthropy is a large and growing part of the philanthropic world, we have little systematic knowledge about it.

The vast majority of independent foundations started out as family foundations and more than half of them retain clear family influence. Just over 80% of philanthropic dollars in any year are given by individuals or through bequests, and those supposedly "individual" gifts are very often the result of family discussions about giving family resources. In many communities, local family donors are the primary source for giving for both essential needs and long-term development.

Despite their importance, there has been little research on family philanthropy institutions and processes – their successes, failures, and innovations. While many of the issues facing family foundations are common to all foundations, there are unique challenges and opportunities, such as the difficulties of professionalizing while preserving family governance, or the process of engaging the next generation.

This special issue of *The Foundation Review* is one step down the path toward improving both the understanding and practice of family philanthropy. The contributions herein address a broad spectrum of the live questions in family philanthropy with fascinating data and conceptual rigor.

Starting with the practical, the first two articles discuss how innovative philanthropic tools can be successfully adopted by family donors.

In "Developing a Master Data Sharing Agreement: Seeking Student-Level Evidence to Support a Collaborative Community Effort in Education," **Hernandez, Carlson, Rotondaro, Edmond-Verley, Feliz-Santana, and Heynig** describe how a family foundation collaborated with public sector organizations to forge a data sharing agreement for providing real-time data to both evaluators and program staff. As more foundations recognize the need for data to assess efforts to solve tough problems, crafting such agreements has become a crucial, though difficult step.

Philp's article, "The Education Collaboration Fund: Possibilities and Limitations of Pooled Funds," draws lessons from her experience organizing a pooled fund for educational innovation. The fund engaged major donors and family foundations in a collective process of securing commitments, setting criteria, vetting applicants, and engaging grantees. Philp concludes that pooled funds are a potentially rewarding option for family donors and offers tips to avoid pitfalls and maximize donor learning and satisfaction.

Shifting to more conceptual and foundational (pun intended) concerns, the next article, written by two colleagues and me, tackles a question that has not been consistently answered: "What is a Family Foundation?" **Moody, Lugo Knapp, and Corrado** review commonly used definitions and discuss the variations and complicating factors that make a single definition infeasible. Our alternative is a framework listing the possible family dimensions of any foundation, which foundations can use to reflect on their particular mix of family ingredients to help them with planning, governance, and grantmaking.

The next four articles present impressive new empirical data to address the sort of research questions about family philanthropy that deserve so much more attention.

McKitrick and Hirt, in "Challenges and Strategies for Family Foundations with Geographically Dispersed Board Members," dig into this major governance hurdle facing many family foundations. Based on case study data, they identify several consistent difficulties, especially involving board-staff relationships. The coping strategies that these foundations developed lead to recommendations for others looking to sustain engagement from dispersed family members.

McGinnis and Ashley, in "The Family Difference? Exploring the Congruence in Grant Distribution Patterns Between Family and Independent Foundations," use new empirical data on foundations in Georgia to test whether family involvement affects grantmaking to various nonprofit subsectors. They find no major differences between family and non-family independent foundations, challenging the assumption that family foundations act differently in this aspect of grantmaking.

The next article directly addresses a crucial topic touched on by several others: the characteristics of the emerging generation within philanthropic families. **Lerner** studied a group of Millennials active in Grand Street, "a next-generation Jewish philanthropy network." These Millennials felt strongly that their philanthropic approach was different from their parents but there were also key continuities in their priorities and values. A nice bonus in this article is that the organizer of Grand Street, **Sharna Goldseker,** contributes a section describing how the network was created and adapted to meet these generational preferences.

Rosqueta, Noonan, and Shark discuss findings from in-depth interviews with 33 donors in "I'm Not Rockefeller: Implications for Major Foundations Seeking to Engage Ultra-High-Net-Worth Donors." This pioneering study provides rare insight into major philanthropists, revealing that many have a desire for more and better information. The donors trust and use peers to get most information currently, but the authors suggest ways for major foundations to fill that role better in the future, improving giving decisions for all parties.

This special issue concludes with an engaging book review essay by a veteran family foundation official, donor, advisor, and commentator. **Hamilton** offers his frank assessments of the spate of recent books promoting more "strategic" philanthropy, and discusses how family donors and foundations can make the best use of this push toward strategy – and avoid some unintended consequences.

We hope the articles in this special issue can help us all better understand family philanthropy, and can help improve the work of family donors. We also hope it inspires more people to write on this under-studied topic.

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