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# Next-Generation Philanthropy: Examining a Next-Generation Jewish Philanthropic Network

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*Keywords:* Generation Y; Millennials; next generation philanthropy; family foundations; spend-down foundations; donor intent; social networking; strategic philanthropy

## Key Points

- As a result of mobility, philanthropy among a Millennial group of Jewish donors is becoming divorced from the communities in which their parents live.
- This group's members generally perceive themselves as thinking and acting more strategically than past generations. They expect philanthropic organizations to operate with increased transparency, and those entities will need to adapt to these expectations in order to thrive.
- The characteristics that define the Millennial generation – open-mindedness, a desire for meaningful employment and philanthropic activity, technological adeptness, innovation – are changing philanthropy.
- Despite those changes, philanthropic priorities among families remain substantially constant and transcend generations.

## Introduction

Originally, philanthropy was seen as simply “giving back” to the community, but now it has the ability to dramatically change the community (Williams & Preisser, 2003). Charitable donations from American citizens each year equal 1 percent of U.S. gross domestic product, a larger proportion of GDP than giving in any other country. The nonprofit sector in the United States is comprised of roughly 1.6 million organizations and represents approximately 10 percent of U.S. GDP – roughly the same size as the U.S. defense industry. Voluntary contributions to the nonprofit sector annually yield about \$306 billion; 12.6 percent

of that is generated by foundations (Fleishman, 2007).

Family foundations in the U.S. control about \$300 billion, and there are 7,000 families that each transition \$20 million per year from one generation to the next (Williams & Preisser, 2003).

Family philanthropy has the ability to effect extraordinary change. Successful transfer of both wealth and values in order to create effective philanthropy is critical. The literature on the topic of philanthropy and Generation Y highlights that the face of philanthropy is changing and Millennials are bringing new energy and ideas to the table. However, the issue of Millennials and their impact on philanthropy has thus far generated relatively little literature, reflecting a lack of understanding as to how this generation's traits, opinions, and behaviors are changing the field of philanthropy.

My research was conceived as a twofold opportunity to conduct a focused study on the philanthropic qualities of a group of young members of an organization called Grand Street and to lay the groundwork for a more comprehensive study of Millennials to understand their unique implications on the future of philanthropy. This article draws conclusions from a wide range of relevant literature as well as the perspectives of 12 representative individuals who are part of Grand Street, a next-generation network of young Jews, ages 18-28, who are or will become leaders in their families' philanthropy. Using information from in-depth phone interviews, this article

reveals how this group of Millennials thinks about philanthropy, the kinds of choices they are making, and how they perceive themselves to be different from past generations.

### Review of Literature

This article examines the philanthropic trends among a small group of members of the Millennial generation. Most existing literature has studied generational and philanthropic changes as independent factors. But little research exists on their combined impact. As a result, I reviewed literature focused on four main themes – philanthropic trends among various generations (especially a group of Millennials), the field of philanthropy and how it has changed, the significance of families and family foundations, and how Millennials and philanthropy fit together – in order to understand what kinds of philanthropic choices Millennials are making and how those choices differ from those of past generations. The literature led me to ask whether philanthropy is becoming less community-based, to what extent philanthropy is becoming more strategic, how some Millennials' traits and behaviors influence their philanthropic choices, and to what degree personal values play a role in philanthropy. In general, the research reviewed was consistent with the findings of my interviews, lending support to a belief in the merits of expanding Millennial-focused research in search of a basis for broader generational generalizations that could add to the knowledge about the philanthropic characteristics of these young people.

### Emerging Trends in Philanthropy

Jeffrey Solomon, president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, said, “We haven't done a good enough job with the next generation,” referring to a failure of charitable organizations to address the evolving challenges of geographic and philosophical differences between the generations (Solomon speech at the Center for Funds & Foundations (The Associated) in Baltimore, Md., May 2010). Solomon is in favor of spend-down foundations<sup>1</sup> – those that choose to spend their endowment within a specific time

period and an increasing trend in philanthropy – because, he says, they can focus more on their mission with a greater immediate impact through the concentration of their resources. The growth of spend-down foundations means there will be more philanthropic dollars spent by the Millennial generation, and family foundations will feel a need to incorporate Millennials earlier in the process of giving if they know the foundation's assets will be spent.

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Families and their philanthropy have changed in five significant ways that will have a greater impact on younger generations: their assets have grown, the traditional structure of a family has changed, there is a greater focus on donor intent, there is more use of social networking, and philanthropy has become more strategic. There has been a substantial increase in philanthropy overall, both in terms of the number of foundations and the amount of money committed (Clyde, 1999). There has also been an increase in capital allocated to philanthropy from each generation to its successor. We will see a massive intergenerational transfer of wealth over the next 25 years, with an expected \$10 trillion passing from one generation to the next (Ridings, 2009). As a result of this increasing capital and the desire for people to experiment with innovative ways of giving there are more options for how donors contribute philanthropically; they range from donor-advised funds to giving circles, when donors come together, formally or informally, to combine their resources for a cause. This demonstrates the

<sup>1</sup> Bronfman, founded in 1986, plans to spend its entire endowment by 2016.

importance of understanding how family foundations will change and how new generations will act, especially as philanthropic giving is growing so quickly.

The traditional American family has also undergone significant structural and psychological changes in the past 20 years, with an imminent impact on philanthropy. Record levels of divorce have led to a proliferation of in-laws, adopted children, stepfamilies, and life partners as opposed to a traditional nuclear family structure (Hamilton, 2004). In addition, the greater the extent to which a family is nontraditional, the more foundations will have to delineate clear guidelines for involving new members. Due to the increased mobility of Millennials, some literature suggests that grantmaking may become more complicated because of the family's geographical dispersion (Foundation Center, 2009).

*Effective philanthropy depends on the measurement and evaluation of foundation efforts, programs, impact, and performance. According to this line of thinking, as Grand Street Millennials become leaders in philanthropy they can be expected to value evaluation and effectiveness to a high degree and to encourage foundations to alter their behavior.*

It is critically important to articulate donor intent – how a family goes about creating a charitable legacy – to establish generational continuity and cohesion. Donors today, more than ever before, want more control over their giving so that they can witness its impact, thus getting more of what they want out of their charitable giving (Hamilton, 2004). In this regard, younger donors are often applying the techniques of venture capital-

ism to philanthropy; networks have emerged to support this new vehicle for change (Hamilton, 2004). There is also a trend toward more hands-on giving. Because Millennials want to feel they are personally making a difference, the trend is toward more targeted grantmaking involving greater engagement with grant recipients (Ridings, 2009).

Social networking is one of the defining characteristics of the Millennial generation. Whether on Facebook, Twitter, or online blogs, this generation is plugged in and connected. Online sites like Twitter can facilitate the organizing of fundraisers and other activism, though some argue that while these online networks are effective at raising awareness their fundraising impact remains less clear (Bernholz, 2010). Although some foundation leaders are cautiously optimistic about the potential of social networking to help further the field of philanthropy, they are also uncertain about how to best use it to further their own work (Foundation Center, September 2010). Lucy Bernholz (2010) argues that technology is influencing philanthropy by “setting goals and formulating strategy, building social capital, measuring progress, measuring outcomes and impact, [and] accounting for the work” (pp. 1-2). Bernholz also points out the benefits of making transactions online, enabling donors to contribute in remote areas of the world and helping organizations in faraway locations to feel less isolated. Collaborative online databases have enabled philanthropic institutions to share best practices and feedback to improve their organizations. In the past year, online giving increased by 5 percent while foundations' contributions decreased by 8.4 percent (Bernholz, 2010).

Lastly, there continues to be a growing trend toward more strategic philanthropy. Strategic philanthropy may have begun with such American philanthropists as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, who aimed their giving squarely at causes and not at symptoms; Rebecca Rimel of the Pew Charitable Trusts defines strategic philanthropy as grants that have a clear focus and attainable goal, enabling them ultimately to have an impact on an identified problem (Katz, 2005). There are four requisites for strategic philanthro-

py: achieving (measurable) superior performance in a specific area, choosing a unique positioning, engaging in unique activities, and forgoing some grantmaking opportunities in order to focus on others (Katz, 2005). Effective philanthropy depends on the measurement and evaluation of foundation efforts, programs, impact, and performance. According to this line of thinking, as Grand Street Millennials become leaders in philanthropy they can be expected to value evaluation and effectiveness to a high degree and to encourage foundations to alter their behavior.

### Millennials and Philanthropy

The defining qualities of Millennials that influence their philanthropy are their desire to make a difference, familiarity with crowd-sourced philanthropy and cause branding, and their yearning for immediate feedback (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Millennials rank “making a difference” as the most important aim in their lives, and are willing to sacrifice higher pay to do so. This characteristic is also seen in the widening scope of philanthropic giving. People are no longer giving to just a few organizations in their community, but rather to national and international causes that are important to them. Millennials are most likely to be motivated philanthropically by a desire to make the world a better place, which could be reflected in the increase in giving globally as well as their shift from focusing on the community where they grew up. Millennials are also comfortable adopting new forms of giving, such as crowd-sourced philanthropy, in which individuals influence directly how a corporation spends its charitable dollars. Similarly, research demonstrates that Millennials are encouraging companies to include cause branding in their business strategies in order to integrate a social issue or cause into the organization’s brand equity and identity (Cone, 2006).

One factor that has greatly influenced Millennials’ philanthropic giving is that their parents were likely to include them at very young ages in philanthropic and volunteer activities (Hamilton, 2004). It is easier to involve young children now because of Internet technology. The earlier parents communicate their values with their children, the easier it will be for the younger generation to be prepared for a role in their

family’s philanthropy (Institute for Philanthropy, 2010). Practices such as philanthropic allowance schemes and informal conversations about philanthropy are positive ways to speak to children early on about the topic (Collier, 2006). Donors today are starting their philanthropies at much younger ages than their parents or grandparents because there are many more young philanthropists, especially after the technology boom of the 1990s that increased their access to wealth (Hamilton, 2004). All of these emerging trends, in combination with a unique generation whose approach to the world appears markedly different from that of previous generations, will undoubtedly change philanthropy.

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### Methodology

My conclusions are drawn from an ethnographic observation conducted between August and December 2010 of 12 millennial philanthropists who are members of Grand Street, a constituent program of the Bronfman Philanthropies. Eleven of the 12 interviews were conducted by phone; one was conducted in person. All were transcribed in real time; each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Anonymity was promised to those who requested it. A defining characteristic of my interviewees is that all are Jewish and members of this particular network. Thus, a number of specific factors – including religious sameness, a small number of participants, and membership in Grand Street – limit the ability to generalize from the conclusions presented by the data gathered. However, I believe that the conclusions drawn from the research conducted with this group –

the background, purpose, and operation of which are described in detail in an included narrative by one of Grand Street's founders, Sharna Goldseker – is sufficiently in concert with existing Millennial research to warrant examination of broader trends in Millennial philanthropy.

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### Geographic Dispersion

Grand Street Millennials are more mobile than previous generations and less connected to their original communities; as a result, their philanthropy is less community-based. For instance, interviewee Rebecca Richards grew up in Oklahoma and has since lived in Italy as well as Philadelphia, Penn.; New Haven, Conn.; and New York. The organizations she supports are primarily in Chicago, where she now lives, or in the communities where she most recently resided (R. Richards, personal communication, November 24, 2010). People like to support the communities where they live and the experiential communities (e.g., high school, college) that have positively affected them. However, Grand Street Millennials who are involved in their families' philanthropy are financially capable of establishing themselves in cities far from where they grew up and are often choosing to do so. It is now often considered the norm to move to a new city every few years for a new job or a new academic degree; this is shifting the focus of philanthropy.

A commonality among the interviewees was that their parents support their local communities. For some, parents are part of a close-knit community and connected to specific causes stemming from having grown up in that community. For example, they might have gone to a Jewish day school, sent

their children to that same school, and feel it is important to support the school philanthropically. Millennial Joe Rosenberg (J. Rosenberg, personal communication, November 4, 2010) said his parents

are used to a close-knit community, but ... Baltimore is not the be-all and end-all for me, whereas for my parents it really is. I've lived in New York and California and I've seen that there is so much more out there to see and do.

At age 22, Rosenberg has already lived in three cities. Although he still considers Baltimore his home, he has become involved to a greater extent in the communities where he has resided than in his native hometown. "Because I've lived in different cities," he said, "I'll be more likely to give to places outside of Baltimore, whereas my parents' efforts are much more focused in the Baltimore region."

Others said their parents give locally because that is what they have traditionally done. One Brooklyn-based interviewee (who wished to remain anonymous), said:

[The] biggest difference is that I don't give to anything that is local. My parents are huge supporters of the local Akron [Ohio] community ... whereas I hardly give to anything local unless it's something I'm involved with. They have a legacy of giving to those things and feel like they can't stop.

She explained that since she does not have the same stature in the community, there is no adverse consequence to her not giving locally. Whereas her parents both came from Akron and returned there, none of her friends went back to Akron after college (Kaplan, personal communication, November 24, 2010).<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Richards said she feels that her parents' philanthropy is strongly determined by their relationships in the community. She described how she would rather make larger gifts that will elicit results or will be innovative, while her mother

<sup>2</sup> Several interviewees requested anonymity and are referenced here with fictional names that do not include a first initial.

and grandparents would “rather give smaller gifts to all the organizations in Tulsa [Okla.] and wouldn’t be as worried about the results because they would be supporting all the organizations.”

The majority of the interviewees said that their parents give to United Jewish Federation (UJF), which has chapters in 157 communities in the U.S. that work with local agencies to preserve and enhance Jewish communal life. Robert Egger (2002) views larger nonprofits such as UJF as having “so much stake in keeping the machine alive that their leaders seldom risk going in new directions” (p. 139). Grand Street Millennials indicated a preference for more innovative philanthropic avenues, seeing themselves as less likely to support a large, traditional organization such as their local UJF chapter. As opposed to writing one big check to UJF, as their parents have done, these Millennials prefer to write smaller checks to organizations to which they feel a personal connection and that they feel are more strategic. Melissa Brown Eisenberg admits; “Even though I am a product of the federation system, my eyes are open to elsewhere. I’m not just writing one big check to [the] federation. I’d rather write smaller checks out to other people.” (M. B. Eisenberg, personal communication, October 20, 2010).

In some cases, this means that it is more transparent as to how their dollars will be spent. In others, it means that the donors are personally involved in the organization, as a volunteer or board member, for example, and donate because it is meaningful to them. Rachel Zlotowitz said that her parents “always do a lot with ... local Baltimore things – [Johns] Hopkins, local cultural things.” While Zlotowitz returned to live in Baltimore, Md., her philanthropy looks very different: “Right now I have a small number of things that I feel very passionate about – the things I’m involved in” (R. Zlotowitz, personal communication, November 3, 2010).

The majority of the Millennials I interviewed no longer live in the same community as their parents and do not feel connected to their parents’ causes. Many said that unless they feel personally connected to the cause or organization, they would not give to a local organization in their

home community. Eisenberg said her parents “support local care much more [than would she] – partly because my grandfather got local care. I just don’t feel that need.” Perhaps if she had seen her grandfather experience the benefits of local care, she would have felt a stronger desire to support that kind of cause. However, she felt supporting local care was not strategic and preferred her dollars to go to causes that she felt could affect a larger audience and generate a greater impact.

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Another member of Grand Street, Jos Thalheimer, described how his father’s generation has largely remained in Baltimore, and gets together often. Because he does not live in Baltimore, where he was born and where the family foundation is located, he is not as much a part of their philanthropic discussions and, as a result, it is harder for him to feel connected to the organizations they support (J. Thalheimer, personal communication, October 16, 2010).

### Strategic Giving

One trend that has emerged in recent years is “strategic philanthropy,” which has redefined

how support is allocated and delivered. Strategic philanthropy can take the form of venture philanthropy, which applies the concept of venture capitalism to philanthropy; the increase in spend-down foundations as individuals think more carefully about how and when they can best spend their philanthropic dollars; and foundations that now focus on creating measureable results. After speaking with these Millennials, it is undoubtedly clear that they are strategic in the ways they think about philanthropy.

*Some Grand Streeters are strategic in terms of viewing philanthropy like a business; they want demonstrable results.*

Thalheimer said he is “comfortable giving general operational support instead of program support,” something he learned as a member of the Sling-shot Fund, a small group that compiles an annual Zagat-style book of 50 Jewish nonprofit organizations. Some of those organizations told Sling-shot that it was easier to raise money for clearly popular efforts, such as nutritional programs for children, than to raise money for staff salaries or upgraded computers. By supporting the organizations’ operational costs, a less-popular way of giving money, Thalheimer said he felt he could respond best to organizations’ needs – a strategic way of viewing philanthropy.

Some Grand Streeters are strategic in terms of viewing philanthropy like a business; they want demonstrable results. Joe Rosenberg expressed his desire to “see the immediate results of my actions. ... I think I see it from more of a business mindset, looking for some sort of return on my investment.” With a similar strategic focus, interviewee Tamar Silberberg, founder of the Spruce Foundation in Philadelphia, Penn., discussed critical questions that the organization seeks to answer: “How did our organizations determine their success? Have they engaged their constitu-

ents?” (T. Silberberg, personal communication, October 21, 2010).

Other Grand Street Millennials are making strides in persuading their family foundations to act more strategically. Kaplan said her family

just instituted an individual philanthropy program through which the family is giving matching dollars to every couple to do individual philanthropy, and then come together at the end of the year to share what they did and why they are passionate about it.

As a result of Grand Street’s annual weekend-long retreat, Kaplan and her husband look at what they gave the previous year and examine what they want to do the next year. By reflecting annually on the impact of the organizations they support, they can better determine if their funding met their philanthropic objectives. Inspired by her experience in Grand Street, Kaplan has played a significant role in helping her parents to think more strategically:

I think my parents are now thinking about being more strategic as opposed to haphazardly because they have instituted this family philanthropic initiative. They never were strategic ... but we just went through the process in the last two years to rewrite program areas and the mission.

The family foundation’s previous mandate was supporting at-risk communities, with the risk perceived as physical. The foundation has expanded its program area by redefining risk as alienation from the Jewish community, by being gay, or marrying partners of other faiths. With the help of the younger generation’s involvement, the foundation expanded the original concepts with a next-generation perspective.

Millennial Dave Moss’s description of his grandparents’ charitable initiatives highlights the intergenerational tensions that can arise from evolving perspectives and objectives in philanthropy: “The Rose Art Museum is named after my great-grandfather. My family is a Colby [College] family. Everyone went to Colby. I was raised at Colby.” Moss’s grandmother underwrote a Holo-



caust Studies program at Colby and made one of the original gifts to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Whereas his grandparents gave to traditional philanthropic organizations such as universities and museums, Moss has committed most of his time and energy to smaller organizations that resonate with him. He is the director of development and operations at the National Youth Rights Association (NYRA) in Washington.

Moss discussed his grandmother's recent donations of \$50,000 to Colby and \$100 to NYRA. "I know the president [of Colby] – they don't need \$50,000," he said. "They built all the buildings they need. I tried talking to her, but she likes recognition and that \$50,000 got her a plaque somewhere. She is the way she is." In contrast, he said, his parents "are really following my lead philanthropically. As far as I know, on all the gifts they make, they consult me." Thus, even though motives for giving and, therefore, the gifts themselves may differ among generations, shared interests can shape relationships (D. Moss, personal communication, November 3, 2010).

Eisenberg also addressed differences between her parents' philanthropy and her own: "First, 70 percent of their giving was to things I also wanted to support, but then they started giving to some of their friends' causes and maybe a museum, etc., which I would not do." In contrast to her parents' desire to give to local care, for example, Eisenberg said she doesn't want to give to a local Jewish home because it provides only 100 beds and she would rather give to an organization with a much wider impact. As an example of that type of organization, she mentioned [www.interfaithfamily.com](http://www.interfaithfamily.com), a website that aims to support individuals in interfaith relationships. Given the substantial number of Jews who intermarry, Eisenberg said, millions of people could use a resource like that to maintain a Jewish identity in their family – having a much larger impact, she argues, than 100 beds in a home for the elderly.

Similarly, another interviewee observed how his parents "are more inclined to some of the general Jewish communal stuff and kind of greater civic

community" as opposed to the high schools and universities that he and his sister attended, which Weinberg supports philanthropically. He said he is "probably more inclined in the future to set aside specific dollars for something like a ... supporting foundation, whereas my parents are not necessarily big believers of that structure of philanthropy; they prefer to stroke checks as opposed to having dedicated philanthropic funds" (Weinberg, personal communication, November 9, 2010).

### Millennials' Characteristics and Philanthropy

Howe and Strauss (2000) describe Millennials as "more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse" than previous generations; they are "upbeat and engaged," which is reflective of their desire for hands-on engagement with grant recipients (p. 4). These characteristics shape the ways they view and conduct their philanthropy and make their giving look very different from that of past generations.

Although some of the older Grand Street Millennials seem less likely to change the direction in which their parents give and appear to largely share their parents' philosophies of giving, there are stark differences in the ways the two generations contribute philanthropically.

Eisenberg spoke at length about the ways in which she thinks strategically when making philanthropic gifts – an approach dissimilar to her parents' giving. Still, she described her tendencies as "very aligned" with her parents. "I'm a little more open-minded to things," she said, but "not trying to shift the direction in which we give."

Rosenberg also spoke of what he saw as a lack of open-mindedness in his parents' giving:

I'm not as set in my ways yet, and I can be convinced if someone can make a good case to me. At this point, my parents are somewhat set in their ways. We [Millennials] tend to view the world from a much broader perspective and are more open and adaptable to change.

Several Millennials discussed their direct influence on their parents' philanthropy. Eisenberg said that her involvement with Slingshot has opened her parents' eyes "to smaller organizations that they might not have noticed or bothered to get to know." Eisenberg is informally an officer on her family's foundation board and is "supposed to have a say on certain sizes of gifts."

*If he wanted to know something about American history, he would ask his parents, because they are history professors; his parents view him as knowledgeable in the field of grantmaking and therefore confer with him before making gifts.*

Moss, too, discussed how he is "very involved in the nonprofit world," and, as a result, his parents almost always consult him before making philanthropic gifts. As he describes it, if he wanted to know something about American history, he would ask his parents, because they are history professors; his parents view him as knowledgeable in the field of grantmaking and therefore confer with him before making gifts.

Weinberg noted how his parents' philanthropy "over the years has gone from things that they have been interested in to things that [I] or my sister or wife are interested in." He described how his parents are more inclined to donate to an organization if it engages their kids. So not only does his parents' philanthropy reflect the interests of their children, but his parents believe that it is important for an organization's activities to engage the younger generation.

Via MySpace or Facebook or Twitter, this generation is connected to peers and resources worldwide. "Our generation is much more connected to each other and aware of what is going on in the rest of the world," Eisenberg said. For people

younger than himself, Thalheimer said, Facebook is "the main way of organizing their social life." Facebook also became a resource for learning about new organizations and a tool for making donations. Moss acknowledged, "I often find out about new organizations from Facebook," Moss said; "I've won a number of those contests" in which individuals can vote online to support gifts to organizations. This form of crowd-sourced philanthropy enables businesses or organizations to seek public input on where they donate money.

Some interviewees, while active in their families' philanthropy, still feel their role is undefined or not strong enough. "I've struggled to find a productive voice around the table," Thalheimer said. "Families can always be challenging." Lublin, the youngest interviewee, said: "We have talked about how I can get more involved in the decision-making process, but we're not actually moving towards anything; we haven't really done anything" (Lublin, personal communication, October 16, 2010). Zlotowitz said that "last year, I went to my first foundation meeting. I didn't have any input." These comments raise the issue of balancing the desire to influence their family philanthropy with the need to demonstrate their abilities and earn the respect of older generations.

### Values

No matter how divergent Grand Street Millennials' philanthropy may look from that of their parents or grandparents, the core values that drive their philanthropic decisions are similar. Given the significant amount of money that is being transferred from one generation to the next, it is critical that the values of the older generation are passed on if that generation considers it important that its philanthropic priorities are continued by the next generation. With respect to family philanthropy,

children form their own values based upon what they see being modeled by their parents. While a family foundation/philanthropy is only one element in their overall development, it turns out to be one of the more important elements for children in affluent families. (Williams & Preisser, 2005, p. 3)

Regardless of how different Grand Street Millennials might seem with regard to radical ideas or philanthropic giving, they are, in fact, highly influenced by mom and dad. Some of the Millennials I interviewed explicitly mentioned their parents' values as influential on their philanthropy. When asked how he has figured out his philanthropic interests, Thalheimer replied, "Part of it was really learning from my father and being passionate about the stuff he was involved in." Moss was able to pinpoint the values that influenced him: "The one thing I picked up from my parents – I really believe that things should be fair. I believe that all things that I do tie into that."

Not surprisingly, religion surfaced as one of the main mechanisms through which values were expressed for the Grand Street interviewees. All of the interviewees discussed Judaism or Jewish causes to some extent, and five out of the 10 interviewees said their top philanthropic priority involved supporting such organizations. Another means by which values are embedded in Millennials is through close family relationships. Howe and Strauss (2000) describe how teens in this generation "say they identify with their parents' values, and over nine in 10 say they 'trust' and 'feel close to' their parents" (p. 8).

"Most of our philanthropy is done as a family," Kaplan said.

## Conclusion

Whatever the year they are living in, Americans habitually assume that the future will be a straight-line extension of the recent past. But that never occurs, either with societies or with generations. (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 10)

After speaking in depth with a group of Millennials who are at least somewhat involved in their families' philanthropy and conducting significant secondary research, I have four main conclusions.

First, these Millennials are more geographically mobile than ever. It is true that young people in the decade after college graduation, without family and professional obligations to keep them as rooted as is often the case at other stages of life,

are often noted for their mobility. However, my research indicates a concomitant lack of feeling a philanthropic connection to their native communities, resulting in philanthropy becoming less community-based in the community where they grew up.

Second, the Millennials I interviewed believe they think and act more strategically than past generations. They expect transparency from the organizations they support and demand an assessment of results. Organizations dependent on their support will need to adapt to these expectations in order to survive and thrive.

Third, the characteristics that define the Grand Street Millennials' generation – open-mindedness, desire for meaning with respect to their jobs and philanthropic activities, adeptness with technology, and innovativeness – is changing philanthropy. The third sector will have to work to engage this young generation.

Fourth, as much as philanthropy is changing, there remains constancy in values. Eighty percent of Grand Street members surveyed reported that their top philanthropic priority is the same as that of their parents and grandparents. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the Millennial generation in order to fully appreciate what the future of philanthropy will look like, rather than assuming that it will be an extension of current trends and priorities. As interviewee Tamar Silberberg said, "We want to help our generation become the next leaders." The fact is that this generation will become the next leaders, and the nonprofit sector will suffer if it does not adapt to this generation's preferences and requirements.

It is my hope that research such as that presented in this article will help prepare the third sector for the rising Millennial generation by understanding individuals such as Grand Streeters, as well as providing questions for a larger analysis of millennial preferences and proclivities with regard to their philanthropic perspectives. This will create significant opportunity to benefit through an understanding of these changing factors.

## The Background, Purpose, and Operation of Grand Street

The following section was written by *Sharna Goldseker*, vice president of the *Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies* and director of *21/64*. She also serves on the boards of the *Council on Foundations* and the *Goldseker Foundation*, and is a member of the advisory board of *Strategic Philanthropy Ltd*. She can be contacted at [Sharna@2164.net](mailto:Sharna@2164.net)

Grand Street was launched in 2003 against a backdrop of intergenerational wealth transfer as well as changing dynamics in the American Jewish community. Danielle Durchslag, a 20-year-old at the time and fourth-generation family member behind the Nathan Cummings Foundation, knew she was inheriting a philanthropic opportunity. However, she also knew that the way her parents and grandmother approached their Jewishness and expressed it in their philanthropy differed from her own and how she would want to give once she was eligible, at age 25, for a seat on the Cummings Foundation's board of trustees. She wondered how she would be able to assume this philanthropic legacy while bringing her own identity to the experience.

Interested in learning if she could meet peers who had similar, imminent philanthropic responsibilities, Durchslag approached 21/64,<sup>3</sup> a nonprofit consulting division of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies specializing in next-generation and multigenerational strategic philanthropy. Together they assembled a group of 11 young Jews, ages 18-28, who were or would be involved in their family's philanthropy. The group met for a weekend in Tarrytown, N.Y., with the understanding that there would be no speakers or lectures, but instead the space to ask candid questions about family, philanthropy, Jewish identity, and the intersection of the three.

From that initial gathering, Grand Street was founded. Members took it upon themselves to articulate their goals:

- to build a network of young Jews in similar positions of philanthropic responsibility,
- to create a space where members can find personal development in the philanthropic realm

with their peers and outside of their family foundations,

- to invite participants to ask their own questions, and
- to develop their Jewish analysis and capacity for strategic thinking.

As Grand Street enters its 10th year with some 90 members having participated in network activities over that time, it is remarkable to look back and observe how much in addition to the goals has remained consistent with the founding principles of that initial weekend. Some core elements of that weekend have been perpetuated and replicated elsewhere:

- The group that gathers is intentionally small. Approximately 10 new members join each year, and no first-time weekend gathering exceeds an attendance of 14. Few Grand Street activities exceed two dozen participants, as a priority is placed on intimacy and candor.
- Participants join Grand Street between the ages of 18 and 28, a formative stage in the establishment of an adult identity. Only two members have been admitted before they attended college, since college is seen as a threshold life experience that signals the transition from adolescence to adulthood. One individual older than 28 was admitted to an initial cohort weekend; since then we reverted to participants who are in their 20s and more apt to be exploring their identity.
- The initial cohort weekend, where participants gather to ask candid questions without speakers or lectures, is still in place. And those conversations are still organized around three main questions: Who am I? What am I inheriting? What do I want to do about it? Some participants have already assumed roles within their family's philanthropy when they join and many have yet to do so, but all feel alone in being young and associated with philanthropic wealth while not only allocating or planning to allocate money but also reconciling their personal passions with their families' interests, both Jewish and secular.

<sup>3</sup> See [www.2164.net](http://www.2164.net).

- There are no preconceived outcomes or expectations for participation in the network.

There have been many unforeseen activities and byproducts that speak to identity formation, members' feeling of involvement in the national and global Jewish communities, and their interest in developing a strategic analysis of their philanthropy. Activities and tools include:

- an annual international site visit to Jewish communities in Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Israel, Morocco, Poland, and Russia;
- domestic site visits, including service components, in Miami, Fla., and New Orleans, La.;
- *Slingshot: A Resource Guide to Jewish Innovation*, now in its 7th edition, which highlights the 50 most innovative projects and organizations in North American Jewish life;
- the Slingshot Fund, which has mobilized 50 next-generation funders who have allocated approximately \$2 million to projects and organizations featured in *Slingshot*;
- Slingshot Day, an annual convening for 100 representatives of the 50 groups in the guide and more than 100 funders interested in supporting Jewish innovation;
- focus groups to assist 21/64 in developing philanthropic tools for its work with next-generation and multigenerational strategic philanthropy in Jewish and universal communities;
- myriad informal events, speeches at philanthropic conferences and quotes in newspaper articles, all attuned to Grand Street's guiding themes of Jewishness, philanthropy, family, and the intersection of the three.

While not a comprehensive list, below are many unanticipated outcomes of Grand Street, culled from 30 phone interviews with network members in 2010-11:

- One hundred percent claimed the initial cohort weekend was the most valuable aspect of Grand Street, where they could give voice to their feelings of responsibility, articulate their own values, and grapple with how to hold both. In fact, the majority said it was transformational as it came at a critical stage in their lives and made latent issues manageable.
- One hundred percent said finding peers on these issues and the relationships built from the network had been unintended yet full of meaning.
- One hundred percent participate in philanthropy of some sort.
- One hundred percent can articulate their values; the majority can articulate their giving interests.
- Given the opportunity, the majority has taken up trusteeship, membership on the board of directors, or some sort of allocations role in their family's philanthropy. On many occasions, it was participation in Grand Street that signaled to their families that they were ready for involvement in the family's philanthropy.
- Most feel better equipped to navigate intra- and intergenerational conversations about philanthropy in their families and their communities.
- Those with family businesses expressed that Grand Street gave them a venue to reflect on their purpose and catalyzed their decision to start or stop working in the family business. Others said Grand Street helped them clarify what they wanted to do professionally.
- Grand Street and Slingshot have offered people a Jewish community.
- Most serve on boards of nonprofit organizations in their communities.

- The majority turn to 21/64, seen as professional staff or facilitators of Grand Street, as a resource on Jewish and philanthropic issues.
- The majority turns to 21/64 staff for advice, referrals, and information on related topics such as finding a job and finding out about socially responsible investing.
- With progression of their life cycles, all now articulate a desire for a new set of conversations regarding topics such as foundation trusteeship, financial literacy, and managing wealth and relationships. While Grand Street was not originally intended as a space for some of those discussions, participants feel safe in the network and want to continue to explore difficult topics within its bounds.

On the whole, members of Grand Street have been a pleasure to work with.

Millennials are unlike any other youth generation in living memory. ... They are beginning to manifest a wide array of positive social habits that most American usually associate with youth including a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty, and good conduct. Only a few years from now, this can-do youth revolution will overwhelm the cynics and pessimists. Over the next decade, the Millennial Generation will entirely recast the image of youth from downbeat and alienated to upbeat and engaged – with potentially seismic consequences for America. (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 4)

As Howe and Strauss suggest in *Millennials Rising*, Grand Street members echo the notion that Americans born after 1982 turned a corner from the cynicism of the previous generational cohort, Generation X. Their authenticity in grappling with hard questions, combined with their generativity and productivity these past 10 years, has not only enabled me to work with a group of lovely adults and taught me volumes, it has also led to dozens of unexpected and inspiring outcomes that have already begun to change the landscape of their families' philanthropy, the American Jewish community, and beyond.

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