

When Process Eclipses Product: The Dual Mission of Jewish Women's Foundations

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March 2011

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Executive Summary:

As a movement, Jewish women's foundations have succeeded in creating a counter-cultural philanthropic sphere dedicated to the reversal of the historical, trend of under-funding the needs of women and girls. The foundations pursue a mission of social change funding for feminist causes, acting as large 'giving circles' to determine which proposals should be funded. Simultaneously, they work to educate, empower, and embrace their women donors, thus shifting the status quo of philanthropy in the Jewish community. Although mission statements and donors alike firmly embrace the concept of social change grantmaking, most of the young funds continue to focus on the donor empowerment side of their mission. This article examines that balancing act, drawing on individual and focus group interviews, the funds' public relations materials, and participant observation of their regular conferences.

The tension between process and product, or, in other words, internal and external social change, is a major characteristic of the fledgling foundations. The larger, qualitative dissertation, of which this paper is a part, sought to understand the giving and affiliation patterns of 75 respondents, using interviews with professionals in the field to contextualize this data. All respondents are donors to Jewish women's organizations, some which could be characterized specifically as feminist organizations. Notably, the Jewish Women's Foundations, in both their grantee and donor empowerment work, fall into the category of feminist social change. This reflects the strong influence that the non-sectarian women's funds have had on

their development. In a broader typology of social change philanthropy that I have created as part of this work, the JWFs arise as ‘integral’ social change organizations, typically hosted by Federations, whose social work is more likely to be ‘tangential’ to their social service agenda. This article explores the ways in which the Foundations work to increase membership and funds, while keeping social change for women and girls at the center of their grantmaking process and product.

When Process Eclipses Product: The Dual Mission of Jewish Women's Foundations

*"I need a women's fund as much as the grantees need us."*ⁱ

After cocktails and dinner, fifty Jewish women donned their new uniforms unknowingly. As they reentered the conference room for their final session of the day, a facilitator distributed second-hand t-shirts, purchased two days earlier at a New York City thrift shop. Cloaked in these oversized shirts and waiting for instructions, the women - all lay or professional leaders of Jewish women's foundations - joked about the smells and logos of their impromptu smocks. A young woman, the retreat's artist-in-residence, asked her participants to gather around a long set of tables at the front of the room. A long, heavy white sheet of paper covered the entire length of the joined tables, and paints and brushes awaited their partners.

The women were to create a mural in four stages. First, their instructor asked them to paint freely. Second, she added music to the process. Next, painters were blindfolded and guided by a partner. Finally, the women had to paint alone, silently. By the end, two lay leaders had initiated a new canvas, a foundation professional had circled the entire mural to fill in white space around the edges, and several members had retired their smocks completely. The resulting mural was a muddled brown, with only small sections of color or

design. The canvas seemed saturated by too many layers of paint, with no continuous pattern or image.

Debriefing after the project, the ‘artists’ agreed that they were not terribly proud of the final version of their cooperative mural. But one retreat participant chided the group: “it’s not about the product!” Her implication, that the exercise was primarily about *process*, reveals much about the emerging culture of Jewish women’s foundations. The delicate balance between the *process* of empowering their funders and the *product* of grants to their partners will determine the fledgling foundation movement’s successes and struggles.

This struggle between the donor empowerment process and the social change product manifested itself at the 2003 Jewish Women’s Foundation Conference, where the mural was created.ⁱⁱ A Force for Change III, the third working retreat for professional and lay leaders of Jewish women’s foundations, convened 50 representatives from 23 foundations. The three-day retreat was held at the Dolce Tarrytown Conference Center in Tarrytown, New York in October, 2003. The group, convened by the Dobkin Family Foundation, opened itself up to observation and documentation for the first time that year.

I collected data, through participant observation at this and the 2007 conference, and through an additional 15 interviews (five professionals and ten lay leaders), between fall 2003 and fall 2007. Field notes, interview transcripts and promotional materials (both hard copies and online materials) have thus shaped my findings about the JWF movement.

Donors to Jewish women’s foundations have succeeded in creating a counter-cultural philanthropic sphere. The foundations seek to reverse the historical, Jewish organizational trend of under-funding the needs of women and girls.ⁱⁱⁱ Foundation documents and interviews with foundation leaders reveal that they pursue a mission of social change funding for feminist causes, acting as large ‘giving circles’ to decide which of their solicited proposals to

fund.^{iv} Simultaneously, they work to educate, empower, and embrace their women donors, thus shifting the status quo of philanthropy in the Jewish community. Although mission statements and donors alike firmly embrace the concept of social change grantmaking, I argue that most of the young funds continue to (unconsciously) focus on the donor empowerment side of their mission, thus diminishing their grant product.

The donor empowerment process almost universally eclipses the social change grant product, although leaders seem not entirely aware of this unintended consequence. Donor empowerment - educational programs, extensive grantmaking research and process, and often universal participation in decision-making - is theoretically a means to the end of social change grantmaking. In fact, the internal empowerment process has become an end in itself. Ultimately, this means that grantee needs are, for now, secondary to the needs of the donors. Not surprisingly, then, grantees cite frustrations with the JWF grantmaking process, characterized by a formal request for proposals, site visits and/or interviews, as well as regular evaluation reports, typically in pursuit of relatively small, single year grants.

Social change thus happens on two uneven levels, the grantee (external) level and the grantor (internal) level. Research on feminist organizations suggests that this focus on leadership processes is common in such young organizations. Typically, however, feminist organizations will eventually compromise on a 'hybrid' model which better integrates and balances process with product. Although privileging the donor empowerment process can

compromise the social change grant product, many elements of the donor empowerment process also have the potential to enhance that product.

Despite being donor-centered in this stage of development, JWF philanthropists are more than socially motivated. Histories of Jewish women's organizations have typically asserted that women volunteered or gave to "synagogues, schools, and other Jewish organizations, [which] provided a chance to get out of the house and to socialize with like-minded women, and to engage in good works."^v Today's foundation donors, in contrast, are primarily motivated by access to power. They are also, and perhaps secondarily, motivated by the application of that power toward feminist social change. Despite new historical circumstances - high educational attainment, expectations for full-time careers, growing access to leadership in mainstream organizations - these philanthropists (and the organizations to which they donate) still struggle to balance their own needs as feminist funders with those of the grantees and of the social change product.

Movement History, Character and Literature

Although initially launched in the late 1970's, Jewish women's foundations have only begun to form en masse, and to draw media attention, since the late 1990's. In retrospect, Jewish women foundations entered the scene in 1979 with the founding of US/Israel Women to Women. The group raised money from American women and granted directly to Jewish and non-Jewish women in Israel around issues of social justice, wellness and economic

empowerment. Women in Milwaukee and New York, among today's movement pioneers, established their foundations in 1995. Since then, Jewish philanthropists have pooled their dollars to create more than 20 such women's foundations nationwide. The Jewish Women's Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, the largest Jewish women's foundation, granted one million dollars during its first decade, and simultaneously raised a six million dollar endowment. Each foundation pursues social change for women and girls through their collective grantmaking. While several are completely independent, many JWFs are hosted by their local Federation but retain autonomy over their allocations. Primarily in the last ten years, the foundations have collectively granted over \$10,000,000 and hold endowments which total over \$30,000,000. This donor-centered, collaborative system, inspired by the women's funding movement, was 'imported' by crossover donors and staff. Although Jewish women were early adopters in the feminist funding movement, many felt alienated by anti-Israel sentiment or frustrated that Jewish needs were rarely addressed by the funds.^{vi} Still, they brought the feminist, social change goals, reflected here, to their own funds: "Network of Women's Funds member funds have two missions: to be grant makers and to develop women as philanthropists for women's issues."^{vii}

In pursuit of these dual goals, founders of the particularistic Jewish women's funds sought a new, intimate philanthropic structure with direct access to power and full control of their allocations. In a case study of the

Chicago foundation, Sylvia Neil encourages the fledgling foundations (and their Federation hosts) to

incorporate, carefully and intentionally, a programmatic context for systemic transformation for women and girls. It must provide a forum for the empowerment and self-determination of Jewish women as funders. The way for the Jewish community to accomplish these goals is to reach out beyond its parameters to incorporate the ground-breaking ideas advanced in the secular women's funding movement as well as the grant-making philosophies of the growing foundation community and apply a Jewish substantive and organizational context.^{viii}

Indeed, Jewish women's foundations have been deeply influenced by the women's funding movement, particularly vis-à-vis their dual mission of empowerment and social change for women and girls.^{ix} Despite this more universal fund structure, JWFs are particular in their grantmaking content, which is typically geared toward 'social change for Jewish women and girls.' Raquel Newman explains the nascent movement as a response to dissatisfaction with mainstream Jewish philanthropy (and with women's funding, more broadly). The funds demonstrate "that [women's] needs are not being met currently by their federations."^x

Susan Weidman Schneider also highlighted this felt neglect as a catalyst for the foundations. She draws on interviews with foundation "converts" and "Federation stalwarts," to examine the differences between mainstream Jewish philanthropy and that of the fledgling foundations.^{xi} A New York Jewish Women's Foundation leader, one of the 'converts' described their humble beginnings:

Five of us got it started in a ladies' room at Federation. We knew that only a very small percentage of Jewish community money finds its way to things directed at women and girls, and the truth of the matter was -

Jewish women and girls were not getting what they needed! Not enough women were in positions in the Jewish community to be making the decisions that would have funneled the money to the causes we were passionate about. The *suits* at the table were all men!!

Many women's needs, as grantees, as feminists, and as power brokers, were not being met by mainstream and mixed gender organizations. Jewish women's foundations sought to fill those gaps.

Through this work to fill the gaps in mainstream funding and their distinct structure, the foundations emerge as "counterhegemonic publics."^{xii} Nancy Fraser suggests that such countercultural organizations find an audience by addressing the "felt lacuna"^{xiii} of women's lives. The funds' power to address communal gaps, for donors and for grantees, is a major membership motivator.

Concerned about such communal gaps, Barbara Dobkin and Nancy Schwartz Sternoff prescribe "a sea change for a community that has traditionally been risk averse."^{xiv} Dobkin and Sternoff, respectively the *de facto* lay and professional leaders of the loosely affiliated Jewish women foundation movement, also describe the dual mission of Jewish women's foundations. They predict that the process of women's self-empowerment will be the more challenging of those movement goals. Dobkin and Sternoff's thinking, like the funds themselves, is influenced by the women's funding movement - one that significantly predates the recent surge in Jewish women's foundation building.^{xv} The Jewish funds' missions, as well as the character of the emerging movement, clearly reflect this influence.

Social change philanthropists, in the Jewish world and beyond, often define their work in contrast to direct or social service charity. Such assertions are essential to understanding the culture of these funds. In an email to the board members of the Jewish Women’s Foundation of Metropolitan Detroit, director Helen Katz summarized this distinction:

There is a difference between wanting to do charity and wanting to make change. Both are goals that have their time and place, but the future strength of the women’s funding movement is to keep our eyes on the prize - getting to root causes, making changes in behavior that cause problems in the first place, working ourselves out of our jobs.^{xvi}

In fact, foundation leaders consider direct service, providing for immediate needs, to be the traditional role of Jewish Federations (North American community chest-style organizations which fundraise and allocate for Jewish agencies in their communities and abroad). A large percentage of JWFs are actually hosted by their local Federation, which might provide staffing, office space or other overhead expenses.^{xvii} The leaders argue that since the established Jewish community typically serves a community’s direct service needs, JWFs can look toward solving the long-term causes of those needs. Still, the foundations’ definition of social change goes beyond grants, and includes funding strategies (after the initial grant). Movement rhetoric focuses on creating grantee partnerships, leveraging funding, and creating sustainability, which all contribute to their ideal social change grant product.

Created at least partially in the image of the women’s funds, JWFs also embrace a double mission: “Lay and professional leaders of these new [Jewish women’s] funds share two common goals: first, to increase the dollars flowing

to programs for women and girls and, second, to empower Jewish women as advocates and activists for a more inclusive community that address the needs of this population.”^{xviii} Their dual emphasis (as expressed in most JWF missions statements) on the funder empowerment process and the social change product, both characterizes and challenges these foundations as they come of age.

Jewish women’s foundations lag behind their non-sectarian counterparts. This lag manifests in chronological age (women’s funds began 15 years earlier), in fundraising accomplishments, and in philosophical development. For example, integration of grantees into the power structure, a central principle of the women’s and social change funding movements, has not yet been a priority for the Jewish women’s foundations. For scholars and practitioners alike, inclusion of grantees is essential to social change grantmaking. ‘Democratization’ of decision-making, at the heart of social change philanthropy, is characterized by “responsive ‘bottom-up’ grant making as well as effective ‘top-down’ funding initiatives that include stakeholder input and stress the importance of responsible, mutually respectful relationships between funders and grantees.”^{xix} Likely because of their heavy emphasis on donor empowerment, the young JWFs have sidelined grantee empowerment and inclusion. Thus, the possibility must be considered that their current focus is on creating social change - i.e. access to organizational power and financial clout - within their own socioeconomic group. At this

stage, the funds' commitments to their client groups are less often articulated as a major donor motivator.

The Hadassah Foundation, widely considered the model Jewish women's foundation, does not share this defining struggle between the donor empowerment process and the social change product. Unlike its peers, its mission makes no reference to the Foundation trustees. Since the Foundation was initially endowed with \$10 million by its host organization, and since its by-laws call for exactly 20 trustees, they do not struggle with recruitment, retention, and fundraising like the other JWFs. These pressures are often cited as the reasons that the Federation-linked women's funds continue to focus on internal social change or the donor empowerment process. Freed of concerns about raising an endowment or reserve, the Hadassah Foundation has historically been more product-centered than its JWF colleagues.

A clear emphasis on donor empowerment is underscored in recent research on feminist organizations. As is the case in the Jewish women's foundations, other American feminist organizations struggle to balance the needs of their donors, professionals and volunteers with those of their grantees or clients. Does feminist process - in the form of consensual decision-making or democratized leadership - ever limit, rather than enhance, the product the group seeks to create? Rebecca Bordt witnessed this trend in her research on feminist organizations. The organizations under investigation sought to completely democratize their leadership and decision-making in their early years. After much growth and struggle with consensus-making and inefficiency,

Bordt finds, mature feminist organizations often develop into a hybrid organizational form. “I argue that women have moved beyond their original preoccupation with organizational form, which often took the form of denigrating bureaucracy and romanticizing collectives. Rather than pitting bureaucracy against collectives, women today are creating hybrid forms of organization that combine, in innovative ways, the best characteristics of both.”^{xx} That hybrid blends the consensual decision-making philosophy with a mildly hierarchical structure, allowing for a balance of participation and efficiency. In my terms, this hybrid blends a focus on the donor empowerment ‘process’ with an emphasis on the grantees and the grant ‘product.’

Feminist funders in more mature organizations also work to mitigate the inherent power dynamics of the funder-grantee relationship. Susan Ostrander described a related phenomenon at the Boston Women’s Fund, where donors struggled to “moderate the contradictions of feminist philanthropy.” By including grantees in the grantmaking process, ensuring diverse decision-making groups, and shifting their grant requirements to meet the needs of the field (rather than the grantees meeting the needs of the fund), BWF succeeded in circumventing some of the problematic power structures typical of nonprofit organizations. “I have suggested here that not only does increased funding matter but so does the kind of philanthropic relationship through which that money is distributed.”^{xxi} In this way, donors and leaders of the fund created a feminist grantmaking process while simultaneously and consequently enhancing their grant product.

Can JWFs' emphasis on process, however, serve the product? One foundation professional, communicating via email with her trustees throughout the 2003 conference, reflected on the 'process-oriented' mural exercise. "The result was a mural that you might not want to hang in your living room, one that quite defies artistic description - but it was done in an atmosphere of trust and freedom in preparation for tomorrow's substantive collaborative work."^{xxii} The social relationships built would be useful in trying to forge a collective grant. While participants did feel that the next day's collaborative sessions were productive, the collaborations mostly focused on the donor empowerment process. A brainstorming session with all conference participants yielded nine (out of 12) ideas for donor-focused projects. Ultimately, of the four projects chosen by vote to pursue further, three were donor-focused while only one focused on grantees. Collectively then, as well as individually, the nascent Jewish women's foundation movement has prioritized donor empowerment over their social change grantmaking.

Decision-Making and Access to Power

"Yes, I value the opportunity to leverage the power of my charitable contribution and have a real say in where my money goes. I will become a member."^{xxiii}

Foundation leaders seek both their own empowerment and that of other women donors in their communities. Within these funds, donors gain instant access to decision-making power, which has historically been limited for women in the Jewish community. Typically, immediately upon donating to and

thus joining a fund, each trustee has equal weight in grant choices. This differs dramatically from their experiences in larger and more hierarchical Jewish organizations where power is typically granted to longest-standing members, largest donors, or most socially connected individuals. Women have typically struggled for such access, particularly in allocations decisions. For some donors such immediate entrée into core participation and decision-making processes is the primary draw to the JWFs.^{xxiv}

A gendered draw to such intimate and empowered philanthropy reaches beyond the Jewish funding world, a result of women’s historically limited access to organizational power. In her study of United States giving circles, Angela Eikenberry revealed that women were attracted to the giving circle model of pooling financial and intellectual resources, particularly because of their personal empowerment with those groups: “Women especially brought up the attraction that giving circles hold as a tool for individual empowerment. The giving circle is seen as a way for a group of people to control how things go.” Eikenberry’s respondents appreciated this control over funding in an “easy, simple and non-bureaucratic” organization, which they considered “an alternative to the time commitment of traditional volunteering.”^{xxv}

Jewish women seeking such access, but with limited time for ‘extracurriculars,’ are likewise particularly drawn to the Foundation model. The funds enable women to leverage their finite charitable dollars for guaranteed and immediate participation. One respondent, speaking in a focus

group at the 2007 Force for Change IV conference, shared her motivations for giving to the JWF:

I'm a [full-time professional] and I have three children, so I have a limited amount of time to devote outside of those two things, and the organizations that I'm drawn to are the ones that give me a sense of empowerment, the opportunity to participate directly in the decision-making. So I'm really involved in two organizations: Jewish Women's Foundation and [a Jewish community loan fund]. Similar to Jewish Women's Foundation, we have people that come in and apply for loans. Board members interview these people, not collectively, but two board members interview each applicant, and decide whether or not we are going to give them a loan and what the terms of that loan will be. So I'm interested in being involved with organizations that I feel a sense of accomplishment, a sense of involvement, a sense of empowerment with. I was on the Board at my temple and dropped off after my term ended because I just felt like we were basically rubberstamping the things that were said by the committee and the professionals of the temple were doing.

The respondent reports that she is primarily motivated by her own sense of involvement and accomplishment. Thus, in terms of her philanthropic motivations, the organization's donor empowerment process supersedes its grant product. While this reflects her personal motivations, it also reflects movement rhetoric which focuses heavily on gaining power for women as donors and leaders.

The donor also highlights an essential element of the empowerment process, namely allocations of grant money, which attracts women to the funds. At least in the smaller foundations, power and decision-making responsibilities are real, and are granted almost universally to those who seek it by investing time and money. As others note, the immediacy of those decision-making responsibilities also appeals to current and prospective donors.

The immediate power stands in stark contrast to the ‘all-in-good-time’ dynamic of many mainstream Jewish organizations, where women often have to slowly work their way through the ranks (and might never have access to top positions).^{xxvi} The respondent also compares her direct power in her foundation with the artificial ‘rubberstamping’ duties of other boards on which she has served. The funds’ unique power-sharing dynamic is heavily interconnected with the feminist and less hierarchical structures of the funds.

This pursuit and use of power exemplifies Fraser’s concept of ‘counterhegemonic publics.’^{xxvii} Through participation in the funds, women philanthropists gain immediate and direct access to allocations power. Perhaps secondarily, they use that power to allocate to issues that have historically been underfunded by the mainstream Jewish community. Donors’ empowerment process is in some ways comparable to members of women’s book groups, described by Elizabeth Long. Both groups address the ‘felt lacuna’ of women’s lives by situating them with like-minded peers.

What people value about these book discussion groups can provide some clues about what is missing from their ‘real’ lives. To put it more positively, it is clear that the act of founding or joining a reading group and deciding what its program will be provides an occasion for people to define who they are culturally and socially and to seek solidarity with like-minded peers. For many, joining a reading group represents in itself a form of critical reflection on society or one’s place within it, because it demands taking a stance toward a felt lacuna in everyday life and moving toward addressing that gap. This action, in turn, reveals both to participants and to the analyst some of the ways in which contemporary society fails to meet its members’ needs - needs that correspond in patterned ways to their social situations.^{xxviii}

JWFs are likewise a ‘form of critical reflection’ on the Jewish community and women’s place therein. Donors to the women’s funds, however, almost never

spoke about forming social connections with group members, although such friendships were apparent at conferences and even within focus groups. The “felt lacunae” for fund members were access to power and a feminist environment for their grantmaking. JWFs also differ from book groups vis-à-vis their product. Donor empowerment, while still as part of a marginal group, seeks to impact the world beyond their group. Even if this is currently a secondary part of their work, it is the funds’ *raison d’être*. In that way, it is a more public ‘public’ than the groups that Long describes. In the vision of the elites of the JWF movement, the funds seek social change for women and girls as well as change in the community’s power centers.

Funds challenge mainstream Jewish philanthropy and empower donors by building an egalitarian or consensus-based model of decision-making. Creating such a non-hierarchical structure is in line with the desire for equality among all levels of donors. Equal decision-making power for all funders rejects the common equation of money and decision-making power (‘pay to play’), of which mainstream Jewish philanthropies are often accused. This strategy aligns partially with the Marxist argument that “in a society where economic status is held constant, egalitarian organization has a much greater chance for success.”^{xxix} As Kathleen Ianello found in her study of feminist organizations, organizational size and philosophy - not just leveling the financial playing field - also factor into decision-making structures.

The funds use their countercultural approach to decision-making and collaboration to recruit new donors. Access to power and collaborative

decision-making seem to be the major attractions of the Jewish women's foundations. New York's fund makes the connection between collaboration and equality explicitly: "A collaborative experience from start to finish, the JWF's unique grant making process involves the entire membership - every member has an equal voice, no matter what her level of giving."^{xxx} Pittsburgh likewise demonstrates this commitment to equality in decision-making. After listing its varied levels of trusteeship, from \$10,000 to \$100,000, Pittsburgh's public relations materials note: "Trustees at all levels participate fully in grantmaking decisions."^{xxxi} Chicago's Jewish Women's Foundation likewise beckons: "At JWF, your voice matters . . . We are saving a place at the grant-making table for you!"^{xxxii} Thus, the funds' goal of leveling the playing field for women and girls mirrors their attempts at organizational equalization through their 'one gift, one vote,' system.^{xxxiii}

Respondents articulated the funds' egalitarian decision-making system as contrary to their experiences in mainstream, co-ed Jewish organizations. A focus group's collective description of those experiences clarified why the Foundations are both unique and appealing.

Respondent 1: Well I just know this from my own personal standpoint, I found it easier to come into the Jewish Women's Foundation and immediately have a voice and be listened to, as opposed to some of the male and female co-ed organizations, where I think it's harder to stand up and be heard, especially as a woman. Being five feet tall, I get overlooked, literally. I found a much more comfortable setting in a group of women to speak up and be less afraid of sounding foolish or not being able to come up with the exact right word or...

Respondent 2: And you don't have to fight, so then it's your issues.

Respondent 1: Right. Right. I've been in meetings that are not just groups of women and I found it much more intimidating and you're much more reticent. And you kind of sit here and think, first, about exactly what you're going to say before you decide whether or not you're going to volunteer and say it.

Respondent 3: Very often co-ed meetings or committees, even though they're co-ed, they're usually male-run, you know. And so that could be intimidating just because that's the nature of it for some reason.

Several women's experiences of feeling intimidated in coed meetings or decision-making processes demonstrates the appeal of the funds' 'everyone gets heard' philosophy.

For Jewish women's foundations, the choice between consensus and democracy seems to be a choice between the donor empowerment process and the social change product. Nancy Schwartz Sternoff worried that the foundations would "get stuck . . . in consensus making instead of grant making." Sternoff articulated a compromise strategy, proposing a move away from consensus making and "making everyone happy." Instead, she recommended ensuring that "everyone gets heard." Kathleen Iannello's study of feminist organizations uncovered another "modified consensus" model, which seeks to balance efficiency and the ideal of consensus. The organizations that have successfully used modified consensus - where routine decisions are made by the few, while critical decisions are made by complete consensus - are notably small, with about 15 active members. The challenges of retaining even a modified consensus grow as an organization's active membership grows.

The more mature Jewish women’s funds, which tend to be somewhat less process-centered, have embraced more hierarchical decision-making structures. Susan Ebert, director of the Boston Jewish Community Women’s Fund since its inception described her foundation’s evolution:

I think we’ve matured and we’ve probably become a little more formal in our organization than we were before. We have a more defined governing structure and a better defined grant process. Originally we started out - we were going to be this pure Greek democracy. Everyone was going to have equal roles and stuff. And then we discovered that the people who can make the best decisions ultimately are the people who have been part of the process all the way along. So we have changed our procedures . . . So it’s just all evolutionary. It’s learning how to do business and working out a style that works for us.

In contrast, the early BJCWF insisted upon ‘equal voice’ for all gifts. In 2003, one of its founders communicated this ideal in an interview: “it has always been clear from the beginning that it doesn’t matter what you’re giving, everyone gets the same vote.”^{xxxiv} By 2007, Ebert noted how this had evolved: “There was a time when anyone could come and vote at the final meeting. That’s not true anymore. People can come and observe the final meeting but the only people who can vote are the people who have really been an integral part of the grants process.” Integration in and knowledge of the grants process, demonstrated through volunteer commitment, not level of donation, is now the key to decision-making power at this mature fund.

Although many of the women’s foundations have outgrown the pure consensus model, all funds still work to maintain the feminist spirit of hearing all of its trustees’ voices, even when it does not solicit their votes. Hearing such a range of voices, and also including grantee voices in the grantmaking

process, is the central tenet of the women’s funding movement. The non-sectarian movement is guided by “four principles of social change philanthropy” for “building a better world.” Three of the four connect to an equal distribution of decision-making power and including diverse voices in that process. The first of the principles is labeled democratization: “to create an effective movement for change, everyone must be able to find a place at the table.”^{xxxv} Second is the ‘decentralization’ of decision-making power. And the third is ‘diversification’ of voices in the decision-making process. The JWFs strive for these ideals through integration of grantees of all levels and all backgrounds (including, for example, Jews of color, lesbian Jews, and non-Jewish spouses).

To be true to the full definition of social change grantmaking, grantee voices must also be included, heard and heeded. Since recruitment materials and respondents alike report a focus on donor empowerment, it is not surprising that grantee voices (representing the product) are not often part of decision-making. Although integrating grantees into decision-making is considered essential to effective feminist funding, funds constantly struggle with such integration. Ostrander’s non-sectarian Boston Women’s Fund succeeded in integrating these elements:

At the fund, this commitment to feminist and democratic principles extended to sharing power with grantee groups. This tightened connection with grantee groups could contribute to strengthening the fund’s ability to resist additional pressures for formalization and dilution of its progressive feminist goals, since other research has found that a key factor here is an organization’s ‘connection to its movement base.’^{xxxvi}

In other words, integration of grantees actually helps to ensure long-term empowerment for donor and grantee alike. Today, the young JWFs continue to focus more heavily on their internal empowerment process, with a relatively homogeneous group of donors at the center. Although some mature funds have become more product-oriented, none have yet fully integrated grantees into their decision-making. Ostrander’s research strongly suggests that such integration would ultimately improve the social change product, while also retaining an authentic donor empowerment process.

Conclusion:

Social change, as we have seen, is pursued by Jewish women philanthropists through both the donor empowerment process and the social change grant product. Although process typically eclipses product, social change is still happening on two levels. Primarily, that change is happening on the organizational level, through the empowerment and education of women as donors. Of course, grants to partner organizations also seek social change for women and girls. But many donors still seem more motivated, perhaps unconsciously, to change their own and their peers experiences and expectations as donors and lay leaders. On their tenth anniversary, Nancy Schwartz Sternoff asked donors to the Boston Jewish Women’s Fund, “What has changed over the past 10 years?” According to Sternoff, they responded: “We have changed.”^{xxxvii} Their assertion, that social change has primarily happened for them, reflects the funds emphasis on the donor empowerment and internal

social change side of the mission. At the same time, the group's candid response makes clear that they feel proud of their personal transformations, and likely that they consider it the foundation for creating external social change.

Since both sides of the funds' dual missions are change-oriented, the Jewish women's foundations remain integral social change organizations despite a seeming imbalance toward donor empowerment. If other American feminist organizations are a predictor, the maturing funds are likely to create their own hybrid forms to balance their donor empowerment process with a feminist social change product. In fact, changes in the pioneering funds and in movement rhetoric signal the beginning of that shift, at least as pursued by the leadership.

The 2007 conference revealed that the tug-of-war between process and product might actually be reflecting a tension between veteran and newer donors and funds. While the 'folk' of the movement - donors, committee members, board members of young funds - relate to the funds in a process-centric way, many of the lay and professional 'elites' have begun to seek a product-centered movement. A comparison of 2003 and 2007 conference content reflects the leadership's desire to move the maturing funds toward a focus on their social change product. The 2003 retreat centered almost exclusively on donor empowerment, fundraising, and organizational structure. By 2007, the content was decidedly more product-centered, focusing on relationships with grantees and the process of social change. Representatives

of grantees even formed one of the conference's panels, modeling the integration of product into donor education. Perhaps this reflects an actual movement of the more mature funds toward Bordt's description of 'hybrid' organizations (those that blend process and product, hierarchy and consensus). Or, it might simply reflect the desire of the elites, leaders of those mature funds and conveners of the conference, to encourage that shift. The well-empowered elite have a different set of needs than the movement's folk, who still seek donor empowerment, hands-on grantmaking, philanthropic education and social connections with other donors.

Distinctions between conference content and interviews at the conference revealed two tracks of foundation development. The foundations' folk speak in a process-centered way. Leaders of the newest funds, and donors to more mature ones, still consider donor empowerment the central attraction and primary mission of the Jewish women's foundations. On the other hand, Dobkin and Sternoff, movement conveners, along with lay and professional leadership from pioneering funds, are shaping an aspirational, product-centered model. That model is based on successes of the women's funding movement more broadly, where donor empowerment remains essential, but primarily as a means to the end of social change through grantmaking.

This should not undercut the importance of donor empowerment for the funds. For one, without this process, Jewish women's foundations would hold limited social and therefore financial capital with which to do their social change work. Donor education and inclusive grantmaking are major

recruitment tools for the funds. Further, without donor education they could not select the best partners for change-making nor could they effectively collaborate with them. In fact, when donor empowerment is used as a means to the end of grantmaking, it produces more motivated donors, more strategic donors and more change-oriented donors.^{xxxviii} If applicable to the larger JWFs, these findings predict that internal social change, through donor empowerment, should ultimately lead to more external social change through grantmaking.^{xxxix}

In addition to their dual mission, the Foundations and their leaders seek to impact the broader Jewish funding agenda, adding feminist social change for women and girls to mainstream allocations. As my dissertation will probe, has their social change funding impacted their host organizations, most typically Jewish Federations? Conversations with foundation staff make clear that integrating their grantmaking priorities into mainstream funding remains an implicit part of their dual social change agenda. Perhaps this is even a third type of social change the foundations seek to create. Integration of social change, particularly feminist social change, into the mainstream communal funding agenda would reflect systemic change in those institutions and for their stakeholders, while yielding larger grants and greater impact for the grantees as well. The question remains, however, whether the young JWFs are prepared to take on this third frontier. For now, it seems, they are still hard at work on the first frontier, their own foundational process of donor empowerment and internal social change.

Endnotes:

ⁱ Kathy LeMay, conference proceedings (2003).

ⁱⁱ The three-day retreat was held at the Dolce Tarrytown Conference Center in Tarrytown, New York in October, 2003. The group, convened by the Dobkin Family Foundation, opened itself up to observation and documentation for the first time that year. Knowing my interest in the subject, Nancy Schwartz Sternoff, Director of the Dobkin Family Foundation, invited me to observe and, ultimately, to create a conference summary. We agreed that any discoveries could also be explored in an academic article, an option that I am exercising here. Since I was unable to record the sessions, my findings depend largely on field notes compiled over the course of the conference. At the opening session of the retreat, facilitators notified retreat participants of my observation and informed them that all comments would be assumed 'on the record' unless otherwise noted by the speaker. In addition to both formal and informal observation at 'A Force for Change,' I have collected promotional materials, website content and educational materials from the foundations. Inherently, these sources are products of movement rhetoric and will therefore be explored in the context of self-conceptualization.

ⁱⁱⁱ Shifra Bronznick et. al. *Leveling the Playing Field* (New York: Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community and Cambridge Leadership Associates, 2008).

^{iv} Angela Eikenberry, "Giving Circles and the Democratization of Philanthropy." (PhD diss., University of Nebraska, Omaha, 2005). Eikenberry's quantitative and qualitative dissertation research on giving circles yielded the following sketch: "Generally, giving circles: pool funds, give away resources, educate members about philanthropy and issues in the community, include a social dimension, engage members, and maintain independence" (2). Although giving circles are less formal organizations than the JWFs, they are philosophically and structurally comparable, particularly to the younger JWFs. The most common divergence is that the Jewish women's foundations are less committed to independent operation, as many function with Federation or other organizational support.

^v Sylvia Fishman, *A Breath of Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), p. 74.

^{vi} Iva Kaufman, recorded interview (2007).

^{vii} Brenda Brown Lipitz, "Life in the Stalled Lane: Women in Jewish Communal Organizations," *Voices for Change* (1995), p. 90. See also Network of Women's Funds at www.nwf.org.

^{viii} Sylvia M. Neil, "The Jewish Women's Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago: A New Model Toward a New Paradigm," *JJCS* 74, 4 (1998), p. 237.

^{ix} The use of the non-Jewish funds as models reflects a "mimetic process" of "institutional isomorphism"^{ix} wherein Jewish women's funds import structures and forms from the pre-established women's funding movement. These blend easily with the Jewish institutional inclination toward gender-segregated giving. See Paul J. Dimiaggio and Walter Powell. *The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields*. *American Sociological Review* 48, 2 (1983), p. 151.

^x Raquel H. Newman, "Shifting the Fund-Raising Paradigm," *JJCS* 74, 4 (1998), p. 233.

^{xi} Susan Weidman Schneider, "From Pushke to Power Suit," *LILITH* 27, 1 (2002), pp. 16-22.

^{xii} Nancy Fraser. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 167.

^{xiii} Elizabeth Long, *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life* (2003), p. 92.

^{xiv} Barbara D. Dobkin and Nancy Schwartz Sternoff, "Women and Philanthropy," *Sh'ma*, 32 (2001), p. 12.

^{xv} The 1972 launch of Ms. Foundation for Women, the country's largest women's fund, marks the unofficial beginning of the Women's Funding movement. Notably, though, the Carnegie Corporation and the Ford Foundation began systematically funding women's programs and initiatives in the early 1960's and early 1970's respectively.

^{xvi} Helen Katz, personal communication (2003).

^{xvii} The relationship between foundations and their Federation hosts are explored in a separate chapter in my forthcoming dissertation.

^{xviii} Dobkin and Sternoff, “Women and Philanthropy” (above, note xii), p. 11.

^{xix} Mary Ellen Capek and Molly Mead, *Effective Philanthropy: Organizational Success through Deep Diversity and Gender Equality*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2006), p. 5.

^{xx} Bordt, *The Structure of Women’s Nonprofit Organizations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 10.

^{xxi} Susan Ostrander, “Moderating Contradictions of Feminist Philanthropy: Women’s Organizations and the Boston Women’s Funds 1995-2000,” *Gender and Society* 18, 1 (2004), p. 44.

^{xxii} Katz, personal communication (above, note 14).

^{xxiii} New York Jewish Women’s Foundation, membership form, 2003.

^{xxiv} (cite Ma’yan and AWP - look for source about lack of women in planning and allocations)

^{xxv} Eikenberry, *Giving Circles* (above, note 4), p. 5.

^{xxvi} Bronznick, *Leveling the Playing Field* (above, note 3), p. 30.

^{xxvii} Fraser, *Unruly Practices* (above, note 10), p. 167.

^{xxviii} Long, *Book Clubs* (above, note 11), p. 92.

^{xxix} Kathleen Iannello, *Decisions without Hierarchy* (New York: Routledge Press, 1992), p. 5.

^{xxx} New York Jewish Women’s Foundation promotional materials (2003).

^{xxxi} Jewish Women’s Foundation of Greater Pittsburgh promotional materials (2003).

^{xxxii} Downloaded from <http://www.juf.org/women/jwf.aspx> (June 11, 2009).

^{xxxiii} Although some smaller groups still work by consensus, the growing size of many of the foundations means that most now rely on a voting system. Still, the spirit of all participants being including in the grantmaking process pervades their fundraising and PR materials: For those ready to join the foundation, a ‘Yes’ check box reads: “Yes! I value the opportunity to leverage the power of my charitable contributions and have a real say in where my money goes. I will become a Member of the Jewish Women’s Foundation.” Those interested in finding out more, check the following box: “A collaborative, democratically run foundation? I’m intrigued. I’d like to speak to a member for more information.” New York, promotional materials, 2003.

^{xxxiv} Anonymous personal communication (2003).

^{xxxv} Grumm et. al., “Women’s Biggest Contribution: A View of Social Change,” in Elayne Clift (ed.), *Women, Philanthropy and Social Change* (Medford: Tufts University Press 2005), p.141.

^{xxxvi} Ostrander, “Moderating Contradictions of Feminist Philanthropy” (above, note 21), pp. 43-44.

^{xxxvii} Nancy Schwartz Sternoff, interview (2008).

^{xxxviii} Eikenberry, downloaded from [http://www.givingforum.org/s_forum/bin.asp?CID=611&DID=25089 &DOC=FILE.PDF](http://www.givingforum.org/s_forum/bin.asp?CID=611&DID=25089&DOC=FILE.PDF) (May 14, 2009).

^{xxxix} Sternoff (above, note 37). Sternoff uses the language of internal and external social change when referring to what I have called the funds’ dual missions.