

# WOMEN IN JEWISH COMMUNAL LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

AUDREY S. WEINER, D.S.W.

*Senior Vice President/Administrator, Sarah H. Neuman Nursing Home, Mamaroneck, New York*

*A recent survey of New York UJA-Federation agencies reveals that the number of female CEOs has increased significantly over the past seven years and that almost half of those second in command are women. To enable this nucleus of women in management positions to crack the glass ceiling in the coming years, this article presents a series of recommendations relating to mentoring, skill development, communication, and networking.*

Concerns about limited opportunities for women to assume leadership roles in Jewish communal service have been voiced for the past generation. Embodied in these concerns are anger and frustration about limited career options and opportunities as well as the recognition that the talents and values of women as executives and as lay leaders can enhance service delivery.

This article examines the status of women in Jewish communal services in New York City as one means to clarify issues relating to the advancement of women professionals. Women's current and potential leadership roles are explored with comparisons drawn to American businesses. The article concludes with a series of recommendations for Jewish professional women seeking success in the management of the Jewish communal enterprise. It is both a serious and optimistic examination reflecting the importance of the subject and this author's own bias.

The UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York (UJA-Federation) roster of chief executive officers (CEOs) and chief volunteer officers (CVOs), as well as agency budgets as of May 1994, was analyzed to determine the gender distribution by functional fields. Two "fax" surveys

were also completed. The first survey, addressed to UJA-Federation agency executives, asked about their career paths, tenure, the composition of their management teams, and their perceptions of the impact of gender on their functioning as an agency executive. A second survey examined the motivations and experiences of those who are currently participating in a mentoring program under the auspices of the JCSA Subcommittee on Women's Issues (see article by Silverstein and Tannenbaum).

## UJA-FEDERATION NETWORKS

The Council of Jewish Federation's *Survey on the Status of Women in the Leadership and Professional Positions of Federations* (1993) indicates that from 1975 to 1993 there were notable gains in the role and participation of women and the level of leadership they attained within their federations. In general, women tend to play a much greater role in small federations than they do in large federations on both the lay and professional levels. For example, in small cities in 1993, 36% of the executive directors were women compared to no female CEOs in large cities. Similarly, 30% of the small city chief volunteer officers were female, whereas only 7% of the large city presidents were women.

An analysis of the UJA-Federation of New York agency roster indicates a similar profile. This analysis included the 90 affiliated and allied UJA-Federation agencies that had full-time directors as of May, 1994.

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Table 1. Comparison by gender of Full-Time UJA-Federation CEOs in May 1994

	Operating Budget			Chief Executive Officers			
	Range \$ (millions)	Mean \$ (millions)	Median \$	Male # %	Female # %	Total	
JCCs/Ys	\$648,836 - \$20.47	\$4.08	\$2,420,000	18 69%	8 31%	26	
Camps	\$499,779 - \$2.33	\$1.09	\$737,240	13 100%	0 -0-	13	
Human service	\$721,800 - 85.2	\$30.5	\$14,500,000	12 86%	2 14%	14	
Nursing homes	\$24.56 - 107.52	\$63.38	\$62,000,000	6 100%	0 -0-	6	
Hospitals	\$18.5 - 900.3	\$441.6	\$476,000,000	7 100%	0 -0-	7	
COJO/JCRC	\$30,700 - 19.54	\$1.65	\$183,000	11 65%	6 35%	17	
Education	\$1.4 - 4.1	\$2.8	N/A*	1 50%	1 50%	2	
Misc (Not Available)				4 80%	1 20%	5	
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>72 80%</b>	<b>18 20%</b>	<b>90</b>	

\*With only two agencies, median is not relevant.

COJO = Council of Jewish organizations; JCRC = Jewish community relations council

No subsidiary corporations or corporate divisions were included.

Of the 90 UJA-Federation agencies, 80% are directed by male CEOs and 20% by females (Table 1). Jewish Community Centers and councils of Jewish organizations have higher proportions (31% and 35%) of female CEOs. There are no female CEOs of nursing homes or hospitals, the two functional fields with the highest annual operating budgets. Twenty-two percent (22%) of agency presidents are women (Table 2), with a range from 0% (nursing homes, hospitals, and education) to 46% (camps).

The data suggest that at the smaller agencies, as defined by operating budgets, women have achieved lay and professional

leadership roles. "Smaller" describes those agencies with a median annual operating budget ranging from \$700,000 to \$2,800,000 and includes Community Centers, camps, councils of Jewish organizations, and educational agencies.

#### SURVEY OF UJA-FEDERATION CEOS

A fax survey was completed of these 90 UJA-Federation agencies. A total of 42 responses (46.6%) were received; a greater response rate was obtained from male CEOs (50%) than from female CEOs (33%). There was representation from six of the seven functional fields, with no responses from education agencies. The highest re-

Table 2. Comparison by Gender of UJA-Federation Agency Presidents in May 1994

	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	
JCCs/Ys	16	62%	10	38%	26
Camps	7	54%	6	46%	13
Human service	13	93%	1	7%	14
Nursing homes	6	100%	0	0%	6
Hospitals	7	100%	0	0%	7
COJO/JCRC	15	88%	2	12%	17
Education	2	100%	0	0%	2
Misc	4	80%	1	20%	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>90</b>

COJO = Council of Jewish organizations; JCRC = Jewish community relations council.

sponse rate was from the male hospital CEOs (71%).

CEO tenure varies only minimally by gender, with male CEOs holding their position an average of 8.4 years and female CEOs an average of 6.3 years. Only 27% (9) of the male CEOs and 33% (2) of the female CEOs were promoted from within their agency.

The responses of male CEOs to the question about the positions they held immediately before becoming the CEO indicates the lack of a single career path:

- 33% were CEOs of a smaller agency or facility.
- 21% held management positions in larger agencies including department head, chief financial officer, etc.
- 17% were CEOs of a comparably sized agency.
- 17% were an associate or assistant director in a larger or comparably sized agency.

The absence of a clear, single track to becoming an agency CEO has clear implications for women aspiring to that goal.

#### TRENDS IN FEMALE LEADERSHIP

In the survey to CEOs, the gender of the respondent CEO's predecessor was requested as one means by which to understand em-

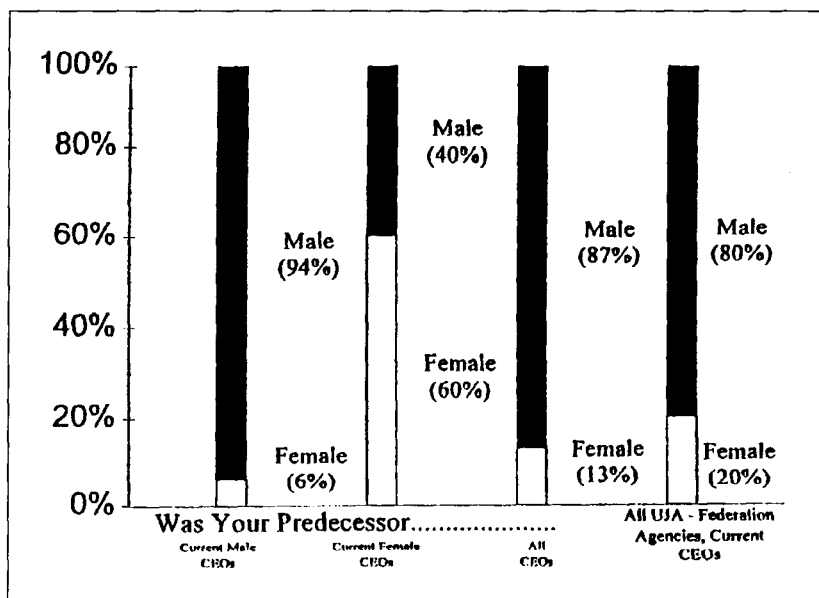
ployment trends (Figure 1). Only 13% of the predecessors to the current CEOs were female, in contrast to 20% of today's CEOs. Given the tenure of respondents in the current position, this change occurred over seven years. Therefore, progress in increasing the number of female CEOs has been made during the past decade.

Another finding related to this question is that female CEOs are ten times more likely to have a female predecessor than male CEOs. This may be because female CEOs tend to be concentrated in a few types of agencies — smaller ones, Jewish Community Centers, and councils of Jewish organizations.

To look toward the 21st century one has also to assess the gender of those who are second in command, as well as of individuals who direct corporate divisions of significant size (Figure 2). Of agencies directed by men, 39% of the second in command were female; in agencies directed by women this figure rose to 100%. Overall, 47% of the agencies have a woman as their second in command.

The gender of directors of corporate divisions with budgets of \$2,000,000 or more was also determined. Such divisions include, for example, nursing homes, schools of nursing, and programs for the chronically mentally ill, and their annual operating budgets may be larger than that of many

Figure 1. Gender of the Predecessor of the Current CEO



discrete agencies. Fifty-nine percent of these divisions are directed by women.

In addition, more than 54% of members of current agency management groups, defined as “those individuals with whom you meet on a regular basis to plan and problem solve,” are female.

Based upon both the current second in commands and the composition of management groups there seems to be a growing number of women in upper levels of management who would be available to become agency CEOs in the 21st century.

**PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF GENDER**

The CEO survey also addressed perceptions of the impact of gender on a series of variables relating to CEO functioning, specifically their ability to manage an agency; relationships with trustees, peers, and UJA-Federation, and their ability to juggle their personal and professional lives (Table 3). No CEO felt that gender affected an individual’s ability to manage or direct an agency. However, the male and female CEOs did perceive differently the impact of being a female CEO on a series of variables.

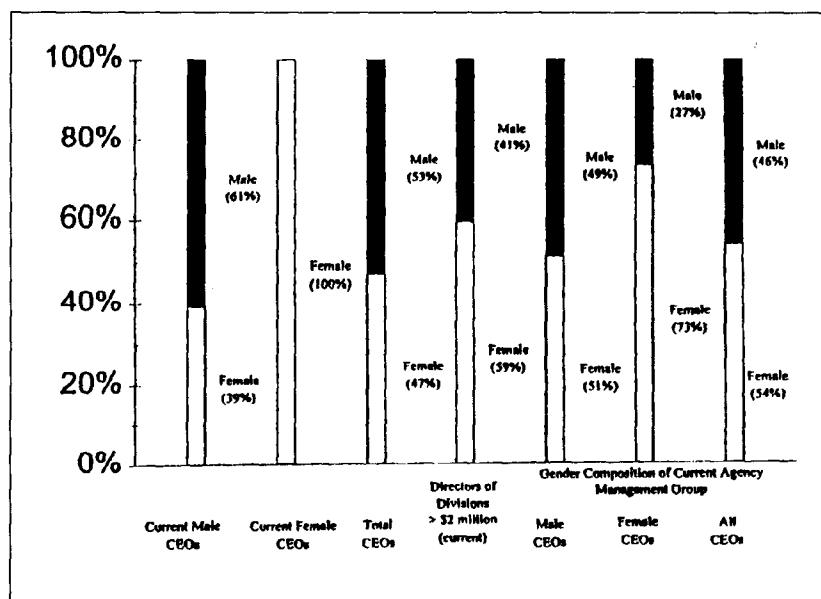
Women thought that gender had a more significant impact on every aspect of their role, with one notable exception: women think that their gender has much less impact on their relationship with female trustees than do men. In fact, men thought that the variable most significantly affected by gender is the relationship between female CEOs and female board members. In sharp contrast, women thought it the second *least* significant variable.

It is also noteworthy that women rate gender as having the most significant impact on “their ability to juggle their personal and professional lives” and “their ability to manage at UJA-Federation.” Interestingly, one woman indicated that her gender had a significant *favorable* impact on her relationship to UJA-Federation.

**DISCUSSION**

The glass ceiling has been described as a transparent barrier between middle and upper management that lets women glimpse but not grasp the “coveted corner office.” It is a barrier to women as a group who are kept from advancing to higher-level jobs simply because they are women (Economics

Figure 2. Gender of the Second-in-Command, Division Directors, and Management Groups



Press, 1994).

Yet, recent experience has shown that the higher that women rise in management, the further the ceiling rises. Many women today hold jobs that are above where the glass ceiling was a decade ago (White, 1992). This continued elevation of the glass ceiling seems also to be a trend in Jewish communal life.

In their book *Reinventing Corporations*, Niasbitt and Aburden (1986) indicate that "significant change occurs when there is a confluence of changing values and economic necessity." The massive influx of women into the workforce, the increasing educational attainment of women, and the need for corporate restructuring constitute such a confluence, with each trend spurring, hastening, and reinforcing change.

Since the beginning of this century, the proportion of women in the U.S. labor force has risen dramatically. In 1900, women over the age of 14 comprised about one-fifth of the total workforce. By 1990, women represented 45% of the total labor force.

The pre-World War II pattern of women's employment matched well with the traditional division of family labor. Women

worked outside the home before marriage and children when they dropped out of the labor force. After World War II a dual peak pattern of employment developed. Women worked outside the home in the early years of marriage, then became full-time homemakers when their children were born, and returned to work in their middle years when children no longer required close supervision. More recently, women have pursued a more continuous pattern of labor force participation throughout adulthood. In fact, the most recent growth in employment has occurred among women with very young children (Sorensen & Verbrugge, 1987).

The educational attainment of women has also increased significantly in recent years. In 1991, women earned more bachelor's degrees (53.9%) and master's degrees (53.5%) than men. (These figures compare with 46.1% and 47% of bachelor's and master's degrees, respectively, in 1977.) Women earned 43% of law degrees (up from 22.4% in 1977) and more than one-third of MBAs, compared to one of seven in 1977 (Wellington, 1994).

Within the Jewish community the numbers are even more startling as American

Table 3. Perceptions of the Impact of Gender on CEO Functioning\*

	Male CEOs	Female CEOs
Ability to manage or direct an agency	1-	1-
Ability to relate to Jewish communal service peers	1.04	1.16
Relationship with board of trustees in general	1.15	1.33
Ability to juggle personal and professional life	1.24	1.8
Ability to relate and manage at UJA-Federation	1.24	1.8
Relationship with male trustees	1.26	1.33
Relationship with female trustees	1.50	1.16

\*A rating of "1" is insignificant or irrelevant, "2" is significant and "3" is very significant.

Jewish women are the best educated of any ethnic group in the country. Of Jewish women aged 25 to 40, 68% have college degrees compared with 18% of other white American women (Schneider, 1993).

From education and labor force data, it is logical to look next at management statistics. The percent of executive, administrative, and managerial employees who are female has increased exponentially from 2.5% in 1977 to 42% in 1993 (Wellington, 1994).

A recent survey conducted under the auspices of the UCLA Anderson Graduate School of Management found that in the last 10 years the percentage of women having the title of executive vice president has risen from 13% to 23% (Benson, 1994). The average senior female executive is described as being 44 years old, works 56 hours a week, and is married with one to two children. She earns two-thirds of the income of men holding comparable positions and still has primary or shared responsibility for household duties and child rearing. It is not surprising that the female executives surveyed perceived that being a woman professional significantly affected their ability to juggle personal and professional duties.

The corporate restructuring of the 1990s has opened up new opportunities for women. Niasbitt and Aburden argue in *Reinventing Corporations* that the most successful companies are those who aggressively hire, train, and promote women because "women can transform the workplace by expressing, not giving up their personal values." Their conclusion is supported by recent experience. According to an article in a recent issue of *Craigs-New York Business* (Benson, 1994), recruitment of female and minority managers is becoming a business priority. Women with a financial background can now command a 20% to 30% premium in salary over male candidates (Benson, 1994). *Time* magazine reports (1988) that fully one-third of all new businesses are started by women and that women are more likely to be top executives in small companies than in large ones, similar to the experience in UJA-Federation and in small federations nationwide.

#### WHAT LESSONS CAN BE LEARNED?

The current male and female CEOs in New York provided a series of recommendations for less experienced women in Jewish communal service who wished to become CEOs.

The use of a list format does not reflect a prescriptive or "cookbook" approach, but rather a means to detail practice wisdom.

- Develop strong administrative and planning skills, and learn about personnel, finance, and building operation services. Certain lower-level jobs in these areas are valuable.
- Take control of your career—it is your responsibility.
- Take opportunities when they are presented, create opportunities when they are not.
- Express your primary identification with executive functions and advancement. Discuss your desire for advancement with your supervisor.
- Be prepared to change jobs and take risks. The data reported in this survey indicate that internal promotion is not necessarily the avenue to becoming a CEO.
- Obtain advanced degrees.
- Take unpopular jobs and excel at them.
- Learn the value of self-promotion. Cohen-Kaner (1993) notes the importance of women setting forth their credentials early on in their career (see her article in this issue).
- Seek new venues, conferences, and programs.
- Network and become involved in professional organizations.
- Obtain mentors. Both female and male executives spoke of the importance of mentors. Jane White, in her book *A Few Good Women, Breaking the Barriers of Top Management* (1992), also emphasizes the importance of mentors.

White (1992) adds these five guidelines for women seeking advancement:

1. Work smart.
2. Be a realist.
3. Make sure your husband (or significant other) is supportive of your work.
4. Work at a job you love, a job that loves you, and an agency that loves you.

5. Be suspicious of a boss who patronizes you.

To address the systemic barriers that prevent women from advancing beyond the glass ceiling, the JCSA Subcommittee on Women's Issues (see next article) established a formal mentoring program in 1994. Instead of hiring from diverse labor pools, top management has often relied on word of mouth to recruit new executives. Typically a male CEO network comprises members of the "old boys network." In addition, not enough effort is given to providing high-visibility, career-enhancing assignments to women (White, 1992). The mentor program is designed to address both barriers.

There are currently 14 mentors (13 female and 1 male) and 6 prospective "mentees." The mentors are middle- and upper-level managers, half of whom are agency directors. On average they have served as professionals for 16 years, with 10.4 years spent as supervisors or managers.

In a survey gauging their willingness to serve as a mentor, this group of professionals ranked *their* goals by completing this sentence: I hope to "assist an inexperienced professional to succeed..." Those goals are ranked below in order from most to least importance (the asterisk denotes an equal ranking):

- as a female professional
- in Jewish communal service
- as a social worker\*
- by balancing professional and personal life\*
- in an "executive" position

The low ranking given to mentoring to succeed in an executive position is of interest. This may be explained by the success the mentors have had in middle management positions.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The data reported in this article indicate

that there is a nucleus of very bright, very competent women desiring to crack the glass ceiling. However, if they are to succeed, these actions must be taken:

- Dialogue, discuss, and communicate—we need to talk honestly and openly. Why is there a difference in perceptions between male and female CEOs about the relationship of female CEOs to board members and to UJA-Federation? What does this difference mean?

Important change is not easy. Professional forums are critical vehicles in which collective concerns can be discussed.

- Redefine the glass ceiling. We need to consider that women who are managing divisions with budgets of \$5,000,000 or more have cracked and once again raised the existing ceiling. We can then admit them to the “old boys club”—or better yet change that *club*.
- Admit that there has been a glass ceiling and in so doing, do not ask women to be patient. Do not tell them that “we are collectively committed to cracking the glass ceiling in five years,” as one survey respondent wrote. Rather, do aggressive outreach, give women visible assignments and opportunities to return to school, act as mentors, and encourage them to be mentors and mentees.

These recommendations do not translate into a request for affirmative action, to hire a woman who is not the best candidate for the job. Doing so is damaging and patronizing. Rather, we need to stop believing the stereotypes about women—because stereotypes are dangerous for everyone. White (1992) suggests that such terms as “the Mommy trap” and other subtle forms of polite and accepted sexism lower our expectations of ourselves and each other. It is also necessary to change our visualization of a CEO as one who is a male to an image that is not gender bound and then to deal with the discomfort caused by this change.

An old Chinese proverb says, “Women hold up half the sky.” For the sky to be complete both halves have to work together. (Helgesen, 1990). Truly, nothing can be fully human that excludes half of humanity—and that includes our agencies, their boards of trustees, and their executive leadership. And nothing, including changing our corporate cultures, can be accomplished unless there is a commitment within the Jewish communal enterprise to doing it together.

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