Where Are the Women—And Why: An Analysis of Women Administrators in Jewish Communal Services*

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Once a woman is given the opportunity, is she treated as a token? Is she so rare that her every action is noticed, putting her constantly in the spotlight? Is she stereotyped? Is she excluded from lunch "with the boys?" Is she expected to eat with the secretary or line staff?

R IDDLE: A parent and son are in a terrible automobile accident and the parent is instantly killed. The son is rushed to the hospital, placed into emergency surgery. The surgeon with gloves donned approaches the operating table and suddenly cries out, "I can't operate on this child. He is my son." Who is the surgeon?

The first guess usually is "his father." When this is not correct people are likely to guess "stepfather," "priest" anything but mother. In fact, the surgeon is the boy's mother. It is perhaps not surprising that few guess correctly since not only are few mothers surgeons, but our unconscious assumption—our mental picture—of a surgeon is that of a man, not a woman.

So it is in administration. When the title "Executive Director" is used, the mental image of its holder is masculine.

This paper will address the dearth of women in upper level management positions in Jewish social agencies. It will start with a brief summary of the current situation, followed by an analysis of different social science theories that seek to explain why there are so few women. Following this the author suggests some hypotheses particularly germane to this situation in Jewish communal services. The conclusions offer suggestions for amelioration.

Where are the Women?

In an NASW membership survey in 1971-72 it was found that while almost twice as many social workers were women, the proportion of men in administrative positions was twice that of women. Even within administration, men tended to receive higher salaries than women. While almost eight percent of male administrators had salaries of \$25,000 or more, less than two percent of women did. Almost three times as many male as compared to female administrators earned over \$20,000. Even when correcting for family status these figures held true. Whether women administrators were single or married, with or without children, the difference in their salaries was less than the differences between them and male administrators. In none of the women sub-categories did even half as many women as men earn over \$25,000.1

Another NASW study of social work leadership found that in 1976, of 868 non-profit social work agencies (including member agencies of Family Service Association, Child Welfare League of America, federally funded community mental health centers and the National Jewish Welfare Board) women occupied 16 percent of these positions.

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In contrast, of 265 similar agencies in 1957, women had held 60 percent of the top positions. Despite the growth in the number of agencies, the proportion of women in top positions declined by approximately two percent a year over two decades.²

Not only are women underrepresented in social work administration and paid lower salaries but their mobility is slower. Another study of twenty family agencies found that it took women three times as long as men to be promoted from the position at which they were hired to the next level (51.3 months versus 17.6 months) and twice as long for their next promotion (six years as compared to three years).³

The situation in Jewish communal agencies shows even greater disparity than in the general social work profession. In the same 1976 study referred to earlier, out of 113 member agencies of the National Jewish Welfare Board directed by social workers only one percent of these were directed by women. In comparison, 20 percent of the Family Services Association agencies, 19 percent of Child Welfare League agencies and 9 percent of federally funded community mental health centers were directed by women.⁴

A national survey of Jewish communal service agencies the very next year produced similar findings. Of 2200 social workers more than half were women but only one percent of the women were executives and four percent were assistant directors. Of 303 agency executive positions (i.e., director and assistant director) only three percent were held by women, and these tended to be concentrated in the smaller agencies.⁵

In a follow-up of that study the Committee on Opportunities for Women of the Conference of Jewish Communal Services questioned women members on interest in career advancement, mobility, and perceptions of barriers. Of 180 responses 80 percent were interested in career advancement and 40 percent indicated a willingness to relocate for career advancement. In the Federation and Youth Services field over two-thirds indicated geographic mobility. The great majority (70 percent) clearly perceived discrimination as the major barrier to their advancement, over such other factors as family responsibility, mobility, tradition, or women's own reluctance to accept such positions.⁶

Finally, in a study of Jewish communal agencies in the Greater New York Area, while women occupied 60 percent of all professional employee positions, they occupied only 10 percent of all the executive director positions. Of eleven different types of agencies, they occupied these top positions only in Jewish community centers and hospitals. In contrast, twice as many women as men were found at the line-staff level. Salaries were similarly skewed. Only 10 percent of those earning over \$40,000 were women while almost twice as many women as men earned under \$10,000. In six of the eleven agency categories no women earned over \$40,000. Twice as many women as men earned between \$15,000 and \$25,000 while almost twice as many men earned between \$25,000 and \$30,000 and three times as many men as women earned between \$30,000 and \$40,000.7

Why: Four Theoretical Approaches to Causation

Why are women so severely underrepresented in administrative leadership positions in a field that is predominately female? There are four general categories of theories that seek to explain why, in general, few women are found in top management positions. Briefly, these are the biological, the psychological (or psycho-social), the sociocultural and the structural. These explanations range from placing causation within the individual to within the society, and from immutable to remediable. Let us briefly describe and discuss each of these.

Biological: This is the "Biology is Destiny" argument: men and women are inherently different, physically and genetically, and therefore women in management positions violate some immutable "laws of nature." Examples of this type of thinking range from sociobiologists who argue that since in prehistoric times men were hunters and women childrearers, women still belong in the home: to medical doctors who claim that women's menstrual cycles make them unfit for decision-making; to psychologists who claim that because women have wombs they are inner, home-oriented while because men have penises they are oriented out into the world.

These arguments are, in general, specious and distort data to provide evidence in their favor. Certainly it is true that there are some physical differences in men and women but there is no real evidence to show how these affect what are in general culturally defined gender roles.8 Evidence from comparative anthropology as well as historical records indicate that women and men have exchanged roles in different cultures and at different times. One major physical difference, the greater upper body strength in men, is irrelevant for managerial work. The other physical difference, women's ability to bear children, is often confused with rearing children which can physically be done by either sex and in our society is usually a shared parental role. The availability of contraception and child care make this issue moot.9

Psychological: This is basically a psy-

chodynamic explanation based on early childhood experiences and the differential resolution of the oedipal conflict by boys and girls. Boys learn to identify with their fathers, thus separating themselves from their mothers. They are encouraged to be more independent and are protected less than girl children who have a more difficult time separating from their mothers. Hence girls tend to become less independent, to rely on others for approval and to be more affiliation oriented and less achievement oriented than boys.¹⁰ This approach has been popularized through Horner's work regarding women's "fears of success" in which she argues that women fear high achievement (as doctors in her study) because they are afraid they will lose their femininity and experience rejection by loved ones.11

While there is much validity to these observations and conclusions, there are two major arguments against it. The first is that of cultural and/or situational bias. It has been argued that the early childrearing dynamics described by Hoffman are a white, middle-class American phenomenon which should not be generalized into some immutable psychological law of human behavior. Critics of Horner have found her study unreplicable, in two ways. In different kinds of achievement situations that are less male oriented women are less likely to feel defeminized by success. In more recent replication attempts, perhaps as a result of the women's movement, women no longer seemed to be as fearful of success as they did in Horner's earlier study.12

The second type of argument against the psychological causation approach is not with the facts but the consequences. It is argued that looking to early childhood for causation is a "blaming the victim" model: the personality is set by the age of five and if not immutable, change

is exceedingly difficult. This creates a sense of inevitability much as other psychosocial explanations of behavior do.

Sociocultural: This approach is similar to the psychological in that it focuses on the differences in childrearing of boys and girls. Instead of a psychological approach to the mother-child interaction, however, this theoretical approach examines societal factors and cultural mores which result in sex role stereotyping, that is, publicly shared beliefs regarding the appropriate characteristics for males and females.13 It recognizes the difference between biological attributes and gender-related role expectations. A number of popular as well as scholarly works in the last decade have examined such sex role differences in children's play, mathematics ability and expectations, attention by teachers, how boys and girls are portrayed in children's texts, and even the use of distinguishing colors from birth.¹⁴

While it also can be employed in a fatalistic way—"How can I possibly be an administrator, I've been socialized from birth to be passive, compliant and nurturing?"—implicit in this theoretical approach is that there is nothing inherent in boys' or girls' nature that prepares one and not the other for leadership. While individuals may need to become aware of and overcome their sex role socialization, the focus for change is also on the society. Publicly shared beliefs and cultural norms can be and are being changed all the time.

Structural/Situational: Unlike the other theoretical orientations, this approach examines the formal and informal structure of the workplace to explain why women do not move into upper management positions. It focuses on the here-and-now rather than looking into the individual's past; it examines the situation rather than the personality for causative explanations.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter is the best

known exponent of this theoretical approach. In her book, Men and Women of the Corporation, she identifies three elements of her structural theory: opportunity, power and numbers.¹⁵ Through her own study as well as a review of other research findings she concludes that when people perceive they have no opportunity for mobility in an organization they behave in certain ways. Because upward mobility usually is blocked for women they may limit their aspirations, have lower self-esteem, become peer group oriented for loyalty and protection, enjoy personal relationships more than instrumental ones and resign themselves to their present positions. These behaviors have been labelled "feminine" as opposed to "masculine" competitiveness, high aspiration, and vertical orientation, but it is typical for any individual or group which has limited opportunity for advancement.

Similarly, those with little power in an organization become directive, controlling, coercive, insecure and turf protective. Here again, this may seem to describe women in first level supervisory positions. Since it is women who are disproportionally blocked at first level supervision positions, Kanter's theory suggests that it is the situation rather than the gender that creates such behavior and attitudes. When men—or women—are high in organizational power they behave in less rigid ways, delegate more control and provide opportunities for subordinates to move up.

Her third category, numbers, refers to the proportion of women to men in a particular job role. When a member of a particular group—be it a woman, a Black or a Jew—is a "token," that person is more likely to be "on display." They may be either more severely tested or overly protected, they will be isolated and peripheral, they will have fewer opportunities to be "sponsored" and they will be more likely to be cast into role stereotypes rather than be seen as individuals.¹⁶

People are more comfortable with others who are similar to them. This is particularly true for those in executive positions where important decisions must often be made quickly and with inadequate information. In such situations trust based on informal relationships is a major factor. This is why people usually hire those like themselves. This is one reason why non-WASPS in general and Jews and Blacks in particular have historically been excluded from certain corporate sectors. It is also why women have been excluded. Women are seen as different and men often feel more comfortable in the all male "club."

In our society there are few settings where men and women interact as true peers. Consequently, men executives often do not know how to relate to a woman executive. Do I hold the door? Can I tell that slightly off-color joke? Will I get involved sexually? Or will my wife suspect I am even if I am not? Sexual tension is an important factor that is usually not addressed. Since women tend to be seen as sex objects in our society there is a tendency in the workplace to assign them to that roleespecially if they are young and pretty. That is often how secretaries, with less status and power are treated.

Sometimes younger women administrators are also pigeonholed in this way. This has negative consequences in a number of ways. It denies the woman's role as an equal and focuses attention on her looks rather than her abilities. It also makes some male peers and supervisors wary of becoming too friendly, thus depriving her of being part of the informal peer group.

It is also a major factor in excluding women from the benefit of the mentor relationship. In professional work the older man frequently takes a younger man under his wing, steers him through organizational politics, protects him, advises him on his career and opens doors for him. For women the situation is often different. Many older men will avoid taking on women proteges because they are either afraid of the sexual connotations or because they do not feel the same paternal bonding with younger women as they do for younger men. Where mentor relationships exist, in many instances men have sexually exploited the women. Exploitation occurs in sexual relations whenever one individual is in a more powerful position in relation to the other and therefore the relationship cannot be freely entered into by both as equals.

Where the token woman administrator is older and not easily cast into the "kid sister" or "sex object" role stereotype, she may be cast into the role of "nurturing mother", "Amazon" or "castrator". In any case, the token woman is often typecast into one or another role stereotype rather than seen as an individual, resulting in lack of access to the same informal helping relationships as male peers, less opportunity for success and advancement and less respect as a decision-maker.

Why: Particular Issues in Jewish Agencies

As part of our larger culture, many Jewish male agency executives no doubt share in the prevailing belief system that considers women less able as administrators. Some may believe the biological argument of inherent inferiority or difference. Others may believe the psychological explanation that women don't really want to achieve and are happier in supportive roles. Many may have themselves been so imbued with sex role stereotypings that it is hard for them to "see" women as surgeons, executive directors or in any other posi-

tion of power—especially power over men. Many Jewish agency administrators, like other men, may be uncomfortable around women administrators and consciously or unconsciously treat them differently in the work setting.

In addition to all these factors, there are at least three additional factors operating in Jewish communal services that may contribute to the paucity of women in top administrative positions. These three factors are: voluntarism, the Jewish family and the particular age cohort of Jewish male executives and board members.

Voluntarism: The Jewish community has prided itself, and justifiably so, on its long history of mutual aid and voluntarism. It has been a model for other social service systems and has achieved this through the active involvement of volunteers as board members, fundraisers and service workers. This phenomenon, however, can retard the appointment of women administrators for two reasons. Where women volunteers are used extensively, and this is often in volunteer service capacities, there may be a reluctance to hire women in top positions. To do so may be perceived as creating dissension. If some very competent women are contributing their time and effort, perhaps they will resent another woman being paid for what may be seen as similar work, or work for which they are qualified. Since not all the volunteers can be chosen for a paid job, if one of their number were chosen for the paid position it could cause anger and envy, and even the loss of volunteers. Because women as well as men have been socialized into society's norms it is often easier, especially for the older, more traditional Jewish women volunteer, to accept leadership from men rather than from another woman.

Similarly, at the fund-raising and board-policy level, it is often argued that

"we need a man-a woman won't be as respected." One of the major themes in Jewish communal services today is concern about its status.¹⁷ When the social work profession was concerned about its status, it decided the way to raise it was to attract more men to the profession. Unfortunately, that idea probably still carries weight. Since because of sexism women are not given equal opportunity, they have not been in high status positions. Hence women are seen as having less status. Since they have less status, how can they be placed in top level positions? It's a catch-22 and as long as the assumption is not challenged, it will never change. The idea that other male executives and those with access to funds will not be as cooperative with a female executive has been challenged in the corporate world. In the last ten years, banking, major legal firms, and large corporations have hired the most qualified people-even when they are women-and have found that they are very successful in the corporate world of high finance. They gain status, the position does not lose status.

Iewish Family: While the issue of voluntarism is a major one for Jewish agencies, it is not unique to them. United Funds and other non-sectarian agencies with similar voluntary structures have tended to exclude women from top positions for the same reasons. This second factor though, is by definition, unique to Jewish agencies. Because these agencies have emerged from the Jewish community and are Jewish-identified they wish to preserve and maintain Jewish values. Among the many Jewish values and beliefs are those related to the family. In the traditional Jewish family it is believed the mother's sphere is the home. The father is the head of the family and his sphere is the outer world. The roles of men and women are separate and different. Many argue that although they are different they are equal, each in his or her own sphere. Others question whether separate can ever be equal. As long as this traditional belief in separate spheres is unquestioned, there is little legitimacy for women in the workplace. If they are there, according to this belief system, they should be in supportive and helpmate roles to man; for example, assistant director (mother) to the executive director (father), thus emulating the traditional family roles.

Geographic mobility is frequently necessary for career mobility. Whether or not women are geographically mobile, Jewish men making hiring decisions might expect that women especially married women—not only would not but should not be geographically mobile. Similarly, if they hold traditional beliefs about women's role in the family they may assume a woman would not—or should not—be free to travel on business, to attend evening meetings or to give the time and attention necessary in a top administrative position.

Ironically, this "traditional" role is really guite recent. In the shtetl the man was not in the world, but other-worldly. The highest occupation for a man was to study the Torah. To enable him to do this it was the woman who raised the vegetables or milked the cow, brought her wares to market, bartered and bargained, shopped and in general attended to the "wordly" duties-in or out of the home. It was not until after the sons of the Jewish immigrants became successful in business that the concept of wives staying at home became prevalent. This model was more in keeping with the American middle-class consumption model of success than with authentic Jewish tradition.18

Age Cohort: Jewish men in top decision-making positions in Jewish communal services would now be in their late 40s to early 60s. They came to

adulthood and obtained their professional training in the postwar period to 1960. The history of Jewish communal services is intricately linked with that of social work. Two major events occurred in social work in that period. One was the effort in the postwar period to attract men into the profession, in order to "raise the status" of social work. This effort was highly successful, largely due to the availability of the GI Bill of Rights which enabled young veterans of World War II and then Korea—often Jewish urban men from poor or working class backgrounds-to attend schools of social work. The second event was the development of group work and then community organization as major methods within social work.

These two events were interrelated, and also closely connected to Jewish communal services. It was in the Jewish Centers in that period that social group work had its strongest development. Many of the top executives today had their start in Jewish group work services in the late 1940s and '50s, moving on in the early '60s to community organization and administration.

These men entered a profession in which women predominated. Casework, the dominant methodology, was taught by women, practiced overwhelmingly by women and its emphasis on nurturance, empathy and helping was considered "feminine". Although there were also leading women in group work and community organization at the time, these methods became dominated by men and "masculinized". Group work was converted from process to task orientation and in community organization from collaboration to contest.¹⁹ As Kadushin asserts, moving into administration was a way for men in a "women's profession" to minimize the role strain they may have felt in an occupation that was low status and role inconsistent.²⁰ Seen from this perspec-

tive it might be difficult for these men to open up administrative positions to women without themselves feeling conflicted and threatened.

This distrust and "put-down" of social casework, and by extension, of women in social work, can also be seen as a manifestation of a larger cultural phenomenon occurring in the early postwar period when these men, now mostly in their fifties, were reaching adolescence and in the formative stages of their careers. This was the period of pop psychology and anti-momism. Any cursory review of popular culture in the late Forties and early Fifties reveals a simplistic adoption of Freudian psychology.

Women who had worked out of the home during World War II lost or gave up their jobs to, returning veterans in exchange for their place in the consumer child-centered nuclear-family suburban home which was touted as the ideal.²¹ Women were made to feel guilty for neglecting their children or accused of penis-envy or a "masculinity complex" if they wanted careers.²²

In 1942 Philip Wylie wrote "Generation of Vipers". It became extremely popular and controversial in the postwar era and by 1955 was in its 20th edition. This book coined the term "momism" accusing mothers and the worship of mothers of causing most of the evil on earth. Wylie describes mothers in this way:

These caprices are of a menopausal nature at best—hot flashes, rage, infantilism, weeping, sentimentality, peculiar appetite, and all the ragged riticule of tricks, wooings, wiles, suborned fornications, slobby onanisms, indulgences, crotchets, superstitions, phlegms, debilities, vapors, butterflies-in-the-belly, plaints, connivings, cries, malingerings, deceptions, visions, hallucinations, needlings and weedlings.... But behind this vast aurora of pitiable weakness is mom, the brass-breasted Baal, or mom, the thin and enfeebled martyr whose very urine, nevertheless, will etch glass.²³ This is but one example of many pages filled with rage against young women "Cinderellas" who become moms, bent on emasculating and destroying their sons.

It would have been difficult for men growing up in this period not to have been affected by the cultural view of women prevalent at that time. It would have been even more difficult for young men entering a predominately women's profession, a profession that was shifting from leadership by women to the acceptance of a narrow Freudianism which considered women's interest in careers as abnormal, to see women as professional peers. It is that cohort of men who are now in decision-making positions regarding the career aspirations of professional women.

What Can Be Done

The picture does indeed look dismal. There are, however a number of steps that can be taken. First and foremost is the need for male executives and others in positions of power and influence to acknowledge that there is a problem. The statistics clearly show the imbalance. Many women today are seeking administrative positions and are geographically mobile and are not limited by family constraints.

Male executives first need to examine their own attitudes about women. Then they need to examine their own organizational structure to determine whether women do have equal opportunities. If, after objective analysis, discriminatory patterns are revealed, affirmative action in seeking out qualified women candidates, and in their hiring and promotion should be aggressively undertaken. No two people have exactly equal qualifications. When a woman is clearly superior, she well may be chosen. The real issue is whether, when a man and a woman are roughly equivalent, is the man given the edge? Is there an unconscious assumption that he will do the job better, that he seems more like a leader (just as the surgeon is seen automatically as a man)?

Once a woman is given the opportunity, is she treated as a token? Is she so rare that her every action is noticed, putting her constantly in the spotlight? Is she stereotyped? Is she excluded from lunch "with the boys?" Is she expected to eat with the secretary or line staff? Do "the boys" get together for a weekly poker game? Even if business isn't expressly conducted at these times the bonds are strengthened and the woman who is excluded won't have the same access to "the boys" when decisions have to be made.

Does the male exeuctive provide the same mentoring for *a* young woman as a young man? Without that kind of guidance it will be much more difficult for the young women to go as far. Perhaps now that this generation of Jewish men are beginning to see their own daughters strive for professional careers, they may be more able to adopt a fatherly mentor role to young women in the same way they have in the past for young men.

There are at least two important reasons to take these steps. One is institutional self-interest. When over 50 percent of a potential pool of leaders is excluded, the loss in talent, caring and executive ability results in a loss to and weakening of the entire Jewish community. The other reason is ethical. Above all, as Jews, it is imcumbent upon us to remember that discrimination, prejudice and oppression are wrong. As Jews-both male and female-we have suffered these evils. Now we must fight it within our own agencies and within ourselves. Like other forms of discrimination it is often subtle, unconscious, cloaked with many pseudo-scientific arguments. When Jews have been given opportunities they have proven themselves and old discriminatory stereotypes have broken down. It can be the same for women and it is past time to act.

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Twenty-five Years Ago in this Journal

Most of the central agencies for Jewish education presently functioning, accept the existence of the denominationalism ipso facto and, by doing so, perpetuate these divisions within the Jewish community. Their services to schools, generally congregational, are based on denominational differences between the various congregations. In view of the traditional communitarian goals of the Jewish people, expressed in this country through the Jewish Welfare Federation and its constitutent agencies, our central agencies of Jewish education should bring various points of view within the community together, through creating greater understanding between them, rather, than further aid in dividing them. We should endeavor to develop a mature philosophy of Jewish education that will include the main principles of Jewish peoplehood. This can best be done through community schools which develop programs around that which Jews share in common, rather than that which separates us. In our experience in Detroit, we have found that this type of program can be developed in cooperation with the synagogues and other institutions so as to combine direct community responsibility for operation and curriculum of the schools with participation by the synagogue and in the synagogue.

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