

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES IN FEDERATIONS

An Historic Review

ELLEN DEUTSCH QUINT

Director of Education and Training, Council of Jewish Federations, New York

Since the early 1970s, the participation of women in lay and professional leadership positions in federations has been on the national and local agenda. The latest employment survey found that women are slowly but surely moving into the most senior positions. The new emphasis on financial resource development may be the key to success in increasing opportunities for women.

One hundred years ago, when the first federation was founded, the average woman in America was married with 3.56 children, a decrease from seven the century before. A woman's life expectancy was 51 years, three years less than men. While women of some means worked taking care of the home, 17% of Caucasian women, chiefly immigrants, worked mainly in textile and garment factories for pitifully low wages. Today, a woman's life expectancy is 80 years, seven years greater than men, and 47% work outside the home; this figure is projected to be 60% by the year 2000 (Wellington, 1995). The world has changed dramatically over these last hundred years, and with it the role, status, and perceptions of and about women. Have the changes been as dramatic in the world of the Jewish federation?

This article reviews the history of women in leadership positions in federations (the main focus is on women in professional positions in the Jewish federations), presents findings of recent surveys related to the topic, and concludes by raising questions for the future.

THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

History allows infinite portals of entry; one must recognize that there are no discrete points and that each moment is the result of multitudes of forces, some of which are intentional and other accidental. Trying to pinpoint the approximate time when the issue of women in decision-making positions made its way onto the national agenda of

the organized Jewish community was an intriguing research task. The history of women in leadership positions in federations is a relatively recent one.

Research reveals that the early 1970s marks the watershed period for moving the issue of women in lay and professional leadership positions onto the agenda of Jewish federations. No doubt the preceding years were filled with meetings and "consciousness raising," and energies focused on getting it there. Clearly women of great leadership and prominence were involved in federation before the 1970s. However, it is during the early 1970s when the forces of politics, history, education, and medicine (the birth control's liberating impact) converged and created the empowering environment for women to fight to put the women's issue onto the agenda of business and organizational life. The Jewish community, although perhaps conservative in its response to the women's movement, was hardly immune to those forces.

In 1972, the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF) conducted its first survey on women in volunteer decision-making positions. The survey confirmed the "severe limitations" on women's volunteer involvement on the most senior levels (Ritz, 1976). Jacqueline Levine (1972) addressed the 1972 General Assembly and in an impassioned speech brought to the gathering a sense of urgency and purpose for changing the role of women in the Jewish community. A resolution was passed recommending that "each federation assumes responsibility for

effectuating the inclusion of women on local agency boards, in the campaign structure, and in all types of community and committee positions" (GA Papers, 1972).

In November of 1974 the resolution of 1972 was reconfirmed, and in 1975 a resolution was passed using stronger language:

The same criteria should be applied in the selection of men and women for highest Jewish communal responsibilities, to carry out a policy of nondiscrimination. To this end, we applaud communities where women are participating in the highest policy-making and decision-making roles in Federations, on agency Boards, in the campaign structure and in all aspects of Jewish community life, but we must again call attention to the fact that the potentials for the involvement of women are far greater than have been realized (GA Papers, 1975).

As the General Assembly is a mirror of activities on the local level, this GA activity reflected similar processes happening in local federations across North America in the early to mid-1970s.

The changing use of language mirrors the impact of the women's movement on federations during this time period. For example, a review of the Leadership Awards Announcement Book distributed annually at the General Assembly indicates that up until 1973 all women were identified by their husbands' names, e.g., Mrs. Norman Schwartz. In 1974, the style changed to listing, in parentheses, the women's first name: Mrs. Norman (Nina) Schwartz. In 1975, the progression continued so that the women's first name was listed, with the married name in parentheses: Nina (Mrs. Norman) Schwartz. The transition slowly continued with a mixture of styles until using women's names predominated, and now using women's names in various combinations with or without their husband's last names is the acceptable style.

Since 1972, CJF has conducted four surveys (1975, 1979, 1986, and in 1993) on the numbers and positions women hold in fed-

eration volunteer leadership. The 1993 survey included questions on women in professional leadership. The surveys indicate both a continued interest in monitoring the situation and dramatic increases in women's participation in key federation positions. The percentage of female federation presidents was 6.2% in 1975 and 22.5% in 1993. The greatest changes seemed to have occurred between 1975 and 1986, with a much smaller percentage increase in the numbers of women assuming board leadership positions between 1986 and 1993 (CJF, 1994).

On the professional side, similar historical forces bringing the issues to the table in the early 1970s were drawing attention to the lack of women in professional leadership positions and to the obstacles they faced in attaining them. An ad hoc committee of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service (predecessor organization to the Jewish Communal Service Association) formed in Philadelphia in 1973 and was instrumental in passing a resolution the following year on "Opening Opportunities to Women in Jewish Communal Service" (Feinstein, 1975).

A survey was conducted in 1975 of the leadership of the fields of Jewish communal service represented in the National Conference to ascertain the status of women and current practices regarding hiring, promotions, salary differentials, etc., and to generate recommendations to improve the status of women. For federations the findings indicated that only in small cities had women attained the position of executive director. Elsewhere, women were holding secondary positions—the conclusion was that most women at that time served in supportive roles to executive directors. As to why, one respondent, an executive director, is reported to have said: "It is women's timidity or reluctance to work under conditions of severe pressure, rather than discrimination on the basis of sex, that has kept them out of these positions" (Feinstein, p. 154). Others commented that as long as "federation leadership is largely in the hands of men,

who tend to carry over prejudicial attitudes from the business world in dealing with women professionals, this situation is not likely to change" (Feinstein, p. 154). The survey found substantive evidence that "some professionals of high achievement and considerable experience in all seven categories within NCJCS are universally excluded from top level posts in their agencies, institutions and organizations, only because they happen to be women" (Feinstein, p. 161).

Actions were recommended, and in fact, through the Association of Jewish Community Organization Professionals (AJCOP) and the NCJCS (now JCSA), Women's Advocacy Committees were formed. The committees have continued to exert influence, generate information through surveys, and provide educational programs.

In addition, the AJCOP women's committee in the mid-1980s met with key women lay leaders active in CJF to promote the issue of advancing women in professional positions in federations. This unofficial joint group focused on ways that women volunteers and professionals could work together to advance each other's causes, on a national and a local level. One avenue was to promote the women's issue on the agenda of the Commission on Professional Personnel, a high-level task force chaired by Mort Mandel of Cleveland. In 1987 this Commission conducted a review and made recommendations regarding a perceived developing crisis in the numbers and qualifications of federation professional personnel. The issue of women was singled out for response:

Women make up to close to half of federation professionals, yet a persistent gender bias is manifest by the lack of female federation executives and by lower salary scales. The commitment to fully integrate women into the work force of Jewish communal service has not yet been realized. Opportunities for women to rise to positions of leadership have been limited....The failure to take account of the talent, energy, intelligence and

experience of women compounds the existing shortage of competent and committed candidates for executive and sub-executive posts (CJF, 1987, p. 9).

In its implementation phase, under the leadership of Esther Leah Ritz, of Milwaukee, this Commission recommended specific steps to be taken in terms of personnel policies, salary standards, open listings of positions, and putting the issue on the agenda of lay and professional meetings so as to change attitudes.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

In 1987, when the Commission on Professional Personnel submitted its report, the federation professional workforce was 40% female; it projected that by 1995 the number would rise to 50%. The reality is that by the 1993 survey the percentage of female professional staff was already at 61%.

The 1993 survey found that 37 of 160 chief professional officers (CPOs) were female (Table 1). However, there were no female CPOs in large communities and only two, including one interim appointment, in large-intermediate communities. As has been true since the figures have been compiled, the majority of female CPOs (n=28) are found in smaller communities.

Women are also now holding key positions that have traditionally been the route to the executive director chair. The 1993 report indicated that almost 60% of department heads are now women (CJF, 1994, p. ii).

In the large communities, although there are still no women executive directors, seven women are the most senior campaign professional and nine are the most senior planning professional. In the large intermediate cities the comparable figures are ten for campaign and ten for planning. The question remains whether these individuals will continue to pursue upward career paths that might require relocation.

In the past to move up, one had to move out. This relocation requirement has always been viewed as a major pillar support-

Table 1. Numbers and Percentages of Women in Key Professional Positions in Federations (August 1995)

Group*	CPO	%	Chief Campaign	%	Chief Planner	%
1 (n=19)	0	0	7	.37	9	.47
2 (n=21)	2	.10	10	.48	10	.48
3-5 (n=56)	7	.13	21	.38	10	.18
6-7 (n=64)	28	.48	†	†	†	†
Total=160	37	.23	38	.24	29	.18

Please note CPO count includes interim appointments.

*CJF identifies federations by groups based on size of the annual campaign and population.

†Position does not exist or information is not available.

ing the glass ceiling. In recent years, however, with the pressure of dual-career couples and the impact of the economy on the real estate and labor markets, mobility is no longer solely a gender-based issue. Federations, whether through a search committee for an executive director or through the executive director hiring senior staff, have been sensitized to the need to accommodate the trailing spouse.

Clearly, women are slowly but surely moving into the most senior positions. The changing nature of our labor force is and will continue to force the issue. The true sign, however, for many that times have changed will be when a woman becomes an executive director in a large city. This is no longer a far-off vision; it is sure to happen in the near future. Consider the enrollment in the recently created Executive Development Program sponsored by a grant from the Mandel Associated Foundations. This program, managed by CJF, is aimed at preparing the next generation of CPOs for the large federations. Twenty-five percent of the participants are female.

INCREASING OUR UNDERSTANDING

The business literature indicates that one of the greatest obstacles to women in their career growth in an industry is "their perception of that industry as a male-dominated culture" (Fierman, 1990; Fine et al., 1990; Lawlor, 1995). To take the pulse of our field on this issue, CJF's Personnel Services Department conducted a survey in 1991 of

women holding senior professional positions in the field. The survey was distributed to approximately 240 women. The results were based on 80 completed responses evenly spread across large and large-intermediate communities, with nine responses from small federations.

The results indicated that over 57% of the women did not feel that men and women were stereotyped in their federations by the professional staff. However, almost the same proportion did feel that there was gender stereotyping by the lay leaders. In response to a later question asking respondents to identify obstacles to women assuming the highest professional positions, the views of lay leadership were seen as a significant barrier. The other obstacles that were cited were mobility, the "old boys network," family considerations being incompatible with the demands of the field, and discrimination in hiring and salary decisions. In response to the question, "Do you believe there are obstacles to women attaining the highest level position in federations?," 80.5% answered "Yes."

Felice Schwartz, who gained notoriety for her conceptualization of the "Mommy track" in the *Harvard Business Review* (Jan-Feb, 1989), later described her rating of how companies are accepting the women's imperative as a business imperative (Schwartz, 1992). On the low end of the scale (zero) are those companies that are ignoring the issue and on the other end (5) are the dream businesses, where women are

truly playing on a level field.

Based on this survey women seem to perceive the federation field overall as a two: companies that want to do what is fair and right. Companies with this rating have formulated two or three specific policies for child care and offer part-time clerical jobs and unpaid maternity leave—but those who work at the company still feel it is a man's world (Schwartz, 1992, pp. 153–154).

FORCES FOR CHANGE

The value of recounting such a history lies in developing an appreciation for the true extent of the change—and to allow perceptions to catch up with reality. One study of women in executive positions indicates that it is realistic and useful to exchange the image of the glass ceiling for the concept of the "comfort zone" (Driscoll and Goldberg, 1993, p. 3). This comfort zone, unlike the glass ceiling, is not an impenetrable cap placed by the organization on women's rise to the top. Rather, it is the level to which women rise and with which the organization is comfortable at the time. It is perhaps more useful to refer to the "current comfort zone," as its upper boundary continues to shift upward. The boundaries for the zone are elastic and can be stretched from the inside as well as from above. This image empowers those in the current comfort zone to challenge themselves and the culture of their organizations.

The current comfort zone for federations today seems to include CPO positions in certain size communities and significant numbers of key secondary positions. Further, what used to be the traditional male bastion of the campaign, based on the numbers, is now clearly within the current comfort zone.

This is particularly significant for the future as, according to those in the personnel and executive search business, experience in financial resource development is a key to being considered a serious candidate for executive director positions (Edell, 1995, p. 136). In fact, the new emphasis in fed-

eration on financial resource development may be the key to success in opening up opportunities for women. The business literature indicates that the main strategy to stretch the current comfort zone is "not just hard work and excellent performance but rainmaking" (Driscoll and Goldberg, p. 4). In our industry that translates into seeking (*finding*) out and developing long-term relationships (*binding*) with donors. As we move into an era of donor-centered development in federations, women may be perfectly poised to become the rainmakers.

Professional success depends on relationship building, listening, and nurturing—all attributes traditionally associated with women (Mixer, 1994, p. 236). The key to success, however, will depend on the "finding," and this is an area in which women will have to sharpen their skills and gain confidence. It requires networking beyond the current comfort zone, building alliances, becoming visible, and being willing to trade in on contacts.

The ability of women to be rainmakers may be further bolstered by the resources that are now or will be in the hands of women philanthropists. In the general community, American women now own 60% of the wealth (Shaw and Taylor, 1995, p. 6). According to recent articles (Schneider, 1993) and research sponsored by such organizations as Ma'yan: the Jewish Women's Project of the JCC of the Upper West Side in New York, Jewish women now control more wealth than ever before.

Federations will soon have to realize that, in this competitive market, where top development professionals are being brought in from other settings, an inhospitable environment for women will simply encourage their moving on to other opportunities, and with them, their relationships.

Another phenomenon that will affect the employment of women in Jewish federations is that of generational changes in attitudes toward women. For those identified as Baby Boomers, and particularly for those in Generation X who are now in the workforce, gender differences have flattened.

Generational differences become more salient than male-female differences. These attitudinal differences will work their way up the system and through to executive search committees.

CONCLUSION

The last 25 years have brought significant change in the number and status of women in key professional and volunteer leadership positions in our federations. The future depends on women continuing to push individually and collectively to expand the boundaries of the current comfort zone, and for federations to recognize the need to be hospitable to women's career and philanthropic interests as a business imperative.

A lesson for the future can be gleaned from the past, from the 1975 GA Resolution: "The pressing tasks at home and abroad which lie before our entire community demand the fullest commitment on the part of each man and woman volunteer (and professional) in Jewish life. It is essential, therefore, that the talent of individuals as individuals be recognized and utilized" (GA Resolution, 1975).

REFERENCES

- Council of Jewish Federations. (1987). *The Developing crisis*. The CJF Commission on Professional Personnel. New York: Author.
- Council of Jewish Federations. (1994). *The status of women in lay and professional position of Federations*. New York: The CJF Research Department and the CJF Women's Advocacy Department.
- Driscoll, Dawn-Marie, & Goldberg, Carol R. (1993). *Members of the club*. New York: The Free Press.
- Edell, David E. (1995, Winter/Spring). Women in the executive recruitment process. *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, 71, 135-138.
- Feinstein, Sara. (1975, Winter). Opening opportunities for women in Jewish Communal Service. *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, 52(2), 153-161.
- Fierman, Jaclyn. (1990, July 30). Why women still don't hit the top. *Fortune*, 40-62.
- Fine, Marlene, Morrow, Allyn, & Quaglier, Phillip. (1990). Professional women in a male-dominated industry. *HR Horizons* 101, 54-60.
- GA Resolution. (1972). Changing the role of women in communal service. *GA Papers 1972*. New York: Council of Jewish Federations.
- GA Resolution. (1974). International women's year. *GA Papers 1974*. New York: Council of Jewish Federations.
- GA Resolution. (1975). Women's role in communal leadership and decision-making. *GA Papers 1975*. New York: Council of Jewish Federations.
- Kosmin, Barry A., & Scheckner, Jeffrey S. (1986, November). *The place of women in the leadership of federations*. New York: Council of Jewish Federations.
- Lawlor, Julia. (1995, May). Where are the women? *Working Mother*, 32-37.
- Levine, Jacqueline K. (1972). The changing role of women in the Jewish community. *GA Papers 1972*. New York: Council of Jewish Federations.
- Mixer, Joseph R. (1994). Women as professional fundraisers. In Odendahl & O'Neil (Eds.), *Women and power in the nonprofit sector*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ritz, Esther Leah. (1976). Women's communal service: Summary of sessions. *GA Papers 1976*. New York: Council of Jewish Federations.
- Schneider, Susan Weidman. (1993, Winter). Jewish women's philanthropy. *Lilith*.
- Schwartz, Felice N. (1992). *Breaking with tradition*. New York: Warner Books, Inc.
- Schwartz, Felice N. (1989, Jan-Feb). Management women and the new facts of life. *Harvard Business Review*, 65-76.
- Shaw, Sondra, & Taylor, Martha. (1995). *Re-inventing fundraising: Realizing the potential of women's philanthropy*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Wellington, Sheila. (1995, June 15). Women working: A century of change. *Vital Speeches of the Day*, LXI, 17, 516-517.