

Recruitment of the Best: A Study of Why Dallas Jewish Women Leaders Volunteer*

JEFFREY BECKER SCHWAMM, PH.D.

Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Social Work, The University of Texas at Arlington

Do Jewish communal agencies need to attract a different population to serve in leadership positions? The answer must take into account the needs of all Jews, especially Jewish women who do not fit the stereotype presented in the findings. In addition, the answer must take into account whether present Jewish communal services are meeting Jewish needs.

Introduction

The impact of cuts in federal funds for human service and income maintenance programs is certainly of critical dimensions in America. President Reagan has called upon the voluntary sector to assume a greater share in helping those in need. Because of social, political and economic events, however, the President's call becomes somewhat suspect; changes are occurring in the composition of volunteers and their depth of involvement. A problem is how to maintain a large enough reservoir of volunteers to effectively meet people's needs. In pursuit of such an objective, more information is in order on what influences an individual's decision to volunteer.

This study focuses on recruitment, a fundamental process for controlling the behavior of participants in any organization. It is assumed that the benefits or incentives presented to potential recruits to membership in voluntary organizations will influence their degree of participation; the shift from member to leader in a voluntary organization is shaped by instrumental and expressive benefits. "Instrumental benefits", according to Rothman, *et al.*, "provide

material, tangible, task-oriented returns. . . . Expressive benefits are intangible and psychological in character, such as increased friendships, personal satisfaction, or pride."¹

The American Jewish communal service system, a major sectarian, non-profit voluntary sector, has traditionally depended upon its volunteers and lay leaders in order to meet organizational and community goals. They are involved in activities ranging from organizational maintenance and direct service to programming and policy planning within the Jewish interorganizational network. It is in the latter realm of activities, where significant power is wielded and major decisions are made affecting individual agencies and the Jewish community. It is here that, historically, men have dominated policy-making and program planning in Jewish agencies; however, there are exceptions as evidenced in organizations clearly for women, e.g., Hadassah and the Council of Jewish Women. Control by men of board and committee positions goes beyond numerical superiority and to value judgments reflected in the attitudes and behaviors of Jewish men pertaining to the proper role of Jewish women. "Sexism," according to Wax-

* This paper was completed while the author was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Benjamin S. Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service, Brandeis University, 1982-83, with support from the Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis and the Dallas Jewish community.

¹ Jack Rothman, John Erlich, and Joseph Teresa, "Fostering Participation," in F. Cox, et. al. (ed.), *Strategies of Community Organization*, Itasca, Illinois: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1979, p. 385.

man, "has been functional for the psychological well-being of males . . . sexism in the decision-making arenas will persist so long as they are the major source of self-identity."² Male domination on policy-making bodies of Jewish agencies as well as in executive directorships only highlights more clearly the feminists' assessment of the pervasive exploitation of women in American society. This may be too harsh a judgment against all men but male domination certainly is a reality for most women; there are too many examples to suggest otherwise.

Jewish women, many of whom in the past could be counted on to supplement paid staff, can now be found increasing their education and entering the paid workforce. Although the significance of these and other trends involving women in the Jewish community and family has yet to be clearly documented, it has been suggested that the feminist movement, financial pressures, and demographic changes in the American Jewish community are major contributing factors.³

² Chaim Waxman, "The Impact of Feminism on American Jewish Communal Institutions," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Fall, 1980), p. 79.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-79; Donna Pressma, "The Changing Role of Jewish Women: Implications for Family Social Work Practice," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Fall, 1981), pp. 67-75; Janet Rosenberg, "From Patriarchy to Partnership—The Evolution of the Jewish Woman," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Summer, 1979), pp. 339-344; Barbara Easton, "Feminism and the Contemporary Family" *Socialist Review*, No. 39 (1978), pp. 11-36; Chaim Waxman, "The Family and the American Jewish Community on the Threshold of the 1980's: An Inventory for Research and Planning," in M. Sklare (ed.), pp. 163-185, *Understanding American Jewry*, Waltham, MA; Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis, 1982, pp. 163-85; Calvin Goldscheider, "Demography of Jewish Americans: Research Findings, Issues, and Challenges," in *Ibid.*, pp. 1-55; June Sochen, "Some Observations on the Role of American Jewish Women as Communal Volunteers," *American Jewish History*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (Sept., 1980), pp. 23-34.

Since 1975, the Dallas Jewish community has shown an increased interest in Jewish women in communal leadership positions. There are many qualified Jewish women who are not in leadership positions in the Dallas Jewish community. Jewish women comprise 26 percent of those women serving as officers and board members of Jewish organizations in Dallas; it has remained almost constant between the years 1978 to 1981. This is in sharp contrast to the much greater involvement of all women on Dallas City Council boards and commissions where they comprise 42 percent.⁴

Who are these Jewish women who, despite recent trends, are able to serve in leadership positions in the Dallas Jewish community? Why do they volunteer? Where do they volunteer? Is there any relationship between these volunteers and their incentives to participate? Is it necessary to expand the pool of Jewish women volunteers? And, if so, how? If it be an accurate statement that the organized Jewish community needs its volunteers in order to survive, then answers to these questions may serve as a springboard for more in-depth research on the problems facing Jewish women in particular and the organized American Jewish community. And, according to Huberman, answers to questions like these could help in leadership recruitment.⁵

Research Procedures

A survey instrument was developed by a subcommittee of the Urban Task Force of the Jewish Community Relations Council in Dallas, Texas, in which I participated. Many items in the ques-

⁴ *Annual Jewish Community Relations Council Survey of Women in Jewish Leadership*. Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas, March 26, 1981.

⁵ Steven Huberman, "Jewish Action Research," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Winter, 1982), pp. 116-125.

tionnaire were adopted from a doctoral dissertation by Polivy.⁶ Questions addressed respondents' backgrounds, and attitudes and behaviors on involvement in the organized Jewish and non-Jewish communities. These questions were aimed at increasing awareness of who are these leaders, and their very own subjective appraisal of their motivation for, and factors contributing to communal involvement.

The survey was conducted during the Spring of 1981. One hundred and thirty-eight Jewish women, either board officers or chairpersons of committees in Jewish organizations, were mailed a survey questionnaire. Follow-up post-cards were sent to all participants in the study. Ninety-three (67%) women responded. The organizations included the Federation, Jewish Family Services, Jewish Vocational Counseling Service, Jewish Community Center, Home for Jewish Aged, American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League, and all temples and synagogues.

A Profile of the Jewish Women Leaders

The Jewish women leaders in Dallas, according to Table 1, were a highly educated group with 72% having a bachelor's or superior degree; only 2% had not had some college education. The mean age was 46.2. The majority, 88%, were married, and though 64% had resided in the community twenty or more years, only 30% were born in the Dallas area. Type of residence and income levels indicated this to be an affluent group of women. Interestingly, almost two-thirds saw themselves as homemakers while one-half of them re-

TABLE 1
Sample Characteristics

	Percentage of Respondents
1. Marital Status	
Married	88
Single	3
Divorced	1
Widowed	8
2. Type of Residence	
Apartment, rented	3
Condominium, owned	2
Single family house, rented	1
Single family house, owned	94
3. Mean Age	46.2
4. Mean Number of Children	2.6
5. Education	
High school	2
1-3 years college	26
College graduate	49
Higher degree	23
6. Family Income	
10,000-19,999	3
20,000-29,999	4
30,000-39,999	9
40,000-49,999	6
50,000-74,999	17
75,000-99,999	25
100,000 and over	36
7. Dallas Residence	
1-4 years	6
5-9 years	8
10-19 years	22
20 and over	64
8. Employment	
Currently employed outside home	53
Full-time employment of those employed	54
Currently a student	9
9. Self-perception as	
Homemaker	63
Professional volunteer	51
Traditional Jewish woman	42
Career woman	40
Feminist	36

ported full or part time employment and little over 1/3 said they were "feminists" and 2/5 as career women.

Before addressing the incentives to volunteer and other volunteer patterns, it seems appropriate to get a fix on these leaders' Jewish identity. Some relationship may be drawn between such identity, the above demographic characteristics and the incentives of these leaders to participate as volunteers.

⁶ Deborah Kaplan Polivy, "The Differential Association of Jewish Volunteers Between Voluntary Community Organization Agencies: The Jewish Federation and the United Way," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1978.

Observation of certain religious rituals is shown in Table 2 to be relatively high, except for *kasruth*. Almost all belong to a synagogue or temple, light Sabbath candles, fast on Yom Kippur and eat only matzah on Passover. There was undoubted confusion among them on the definition of "traditional Jewish woman," some equating "traditional" with Orthodox and some defining it merely as keeping (some) traditions. Election by two-fifths of the designation of "traditional" can not be assessed, therefore. Of parallel interest is that 25% of these leaders exchange Christmas presents with family members.

Pattern of Volunteerism

Table 3 compares the years of leadership involvement in Jewish and non-Jewish organizations in Dallas and table 4 gives the monthly time commitment. Thirty-two percent of the respondents had given over 20 years of voluntary service in Jewish organizations, and a like percentage also indicated 6-10 years of involvement in Jewish organizations; this is fairly comparable to the 27% who gave 6-10 years in non-Jewish organizations.

Time commitment, according to Table 4, showed that the majority of leaders have given 0-5 hours monthly to synagogue, Jewish communal and non-sectarian voluntary activities with

TABLE 2
Religious Traditions

Item	Percentage of Respondents
1. Belong to a synagogue or temple	96
2. Keep kosher at home	19
3. Light Sabbath candles	83
4. Fast on Yom Kippur	78
5. Eat only matzah and no bread on Passover	82
6. Have Christmas tree in home	6
7. Exchange Christmas presents with family members	25

TABLE 3

Years of Involvement as Board Member/Officer in Jewish and Non-Jewish Organizations

Years	Percentage of Respondents	
	Jewish Organization	Non-Jewish Organization
1-5	18	27
6-10	32	27
11-15	3	11
16-20	15	11
21 and over	32	23

42%, 33% and 34%, respectively. In estimating a sizable amount of time commitment, 17% indicated 31 hours or more, in Jewish communal and some 17% in non-sectarian organizations, outdistancing the 9% who indicated similar intensity in synagogue activity.

Table 5 summarizes the responses of the leaders on 15 items pertaining to what motivates them to belong to a board or committee of Jewish or non-Jewish organization. "Intellectual stimulation" (#8), 55% and 51%, "dealing with problems that are challenging" (#9), 66% and 65%, and "self-actualization and personal growth" (#13), 55% and 55%, were felt to be very important by a majority of respondents in their agreeing to serve, respectively, in Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. "Desire to help the Jewish community" (#1), with a 75% response, was the most important motive for these leaders' willingness to involve themselves in Jewish organizations; this item headed the entire list for all organi-

TABLE 4

Average Monthly Voluntary Time Commitment in Jewish and Non-Jewish Organizations

Hours	Percentage of Respondents		
	Jewish Synagogue	Jewish Communal	Non-Sectarian
0-5	42	33	34
6-10	32	23	20
11-20	10	17	27
21-30	7	10	2
31 and over	9	17	17

TABLE 5
Incentives to Volunteer in Jewish and Non-Jewish Communal Organizations

Item	Percentages of Respondents					
	Jewish Organizations			Non-Jewish Organizations		
	Very Important	Important	Not So Important	Very Important	Important	Not So Important
1. Desire to help the Jewish Community	75	25	0	19	26	55
2. Desire to help the general community	43	44	13	72	28	0
3. Opportunity to meet other community leaders	27	47	26	28	49	23
4. Family tradition	40	25	35	25	28	47
5. Company policy encourages involvement in community affairs	1	2	97	4	2	94
6. Opportunity to further career	1	7	92	5	16	79
7. Opportunity for leadership	34	48	18	26	53	21
8. Intellectual stimulation	55	39	6	51	43	6
9. Dealing with problems that are challenging	66	32	2	65	31	4
10. Social recognition	7	33	60	1	37	62
11. Tangible financial rewards	0	0	100	0	0	100
12. Equal opportunity for all	22	38	40	37	32	31
13. Self-actualization and personal growth	55	35	10	55	40	5
14. Friendship	44	41	15	28	48	24

zations. The "desire to help the general community" (#2) received the next highest response of 72% for the leaders' involvement in non-Jewish organizations. One hundred percent of the respondents considered "tangible financial rewards" (#11) as not-so-important in participating in either Jewish or non-Jewish organizations; similarly, 92% and 79% felt the "opportunity to further career" (#6) as not-so-important in Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, respectively. "Social recognition" (#10) was not so important for the majority of these leaders with responses of 60% and 62%, respectively, for Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. Almost all respondents indicated that the item "company policy encourages involvement in community affairs" (#5) was "not-so-important." This may not be significant

in view of the fact that approximately 25% of the leaders work full-time.

Certain organizationally-related factors are identified in Table 6 which influence serving on boards and committees. Transportation, convenience of meeting location, alternative child-care arrangements represent no problem to almost all the respondents. An overwhelming 97% were asked to serve as officer or member or subcommittee chair/member in a Jewish organization compared to 73% for a non-Jewish organization. Of particular note is the 25% who responded that most channels for making decisions on Jewish boards and committees are not open to women; this is fairly comparable to the 30% who responded similarly to the question as related to non-Jewish boards and committees. Yet the majority of women

TABLE 6
Factors Facilitating Serving on Boards/Committees

Item	Percentage of Respondents		
	Yes	No	Opinion No
1. Prefer serving on a committee or board comprised only of women	1	41	58
2. Most channels for making decisions on Jewish boards and committees are open to women	63	12	25
3. Most channels for making decisions on non-Jewish boards and committees are open to women	38	32	30
4. Asked to serve as board officer/member or subcommittee chair/member in a Jewish organization	97	0	3
5. Asked to serve as board officer/member or subcommittee chair/member in a non-Jewish organization	73	4	23
6. Usually have transportation to board/committee meeting locations	100	0	0
7. Meetings usually held in a convenient location	83	8	9
8. Day care service usually needed to enable you to attend meetings	5	18	77

leaders, 58%, do not prefer serving on a committee or board comprised only of women.

Finally, 71% of the respondents felt women have special skills different from what men usually bring to leadership. This finding interestingly compares with Bubis' recent comments on the different qualities women bring to leadership.⁷

Discussion and Implications

Voluntary organizations are vulnerable to organizational processes that inhibit their effectiveness. The desire to maintain an adequate flow of resources frequently yields rule by a minority or what constitutes a "leadership elite." Consequently, full participation of the organization's membership is depressed as active leadership opportunities become a function of specialized skills, like fundraising, in addition to such factors as one's availability of time and personal temperament. In addition, these leaders, of similar backgrounds, attitudes and values, usually demonstrate a decision-making posture characterized

by consensus. A more heterogeneous leadership, on the other hand, may suggest potential conflict as perceptions on what is important to the organization will encounter differing interpretations not easily resolvable.

In general, the Jewish women active in communal service in Dallas are a fairly homogeneous population. Such a profile of Jewish women leaders as that presented in this study raises an important organizational and policy question with implications for many other Jewish communities: Do Jewish communal agencies need to attract a different population to serve in leadership positions? The answer must take into account the needs of all Jews, especially Jewish women who do not fit the stereotype presented in the findings. In addition, the answer must take into account whether present Jewish communal services are meeting Jewish needs. If, for example, it can be concluded that planning and delivering services to single-parent headed families requires parent input into the decision-making processes, then involvement at board and committee meetings is vital to such a charge. The findings here suggest that the women leaders in Dallas may not be broadly representative of Jewish women, espe-

⁷ Gerald Bubis, "Women in Leadership," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Spring, 1983), pp. 237-239.

cially many divorced and working mothers, many of whom do need transportation to meetings, day care services, and more convenient meeting locations. It is important to point out, however, that non-representativeness on boards and committees does not necessarily mean a lack of sensitivity to or understanding of the population-in-need. Being a woman may be enough to understand another woman's plight. Some men may also argue that being a feminist, man or woman, is the crucial factor in addressing the stated and unstated needs of all women.

When Jewish communal institutions permit themselves to be guided in large measure by men, and by a minority of women, many of whom fit the profile of women in this study, it becomes necessary to examine the policies, programs and other factors which have inhibited a broader-based involvement of Jews. Careful analysis should lay the groundwork for intervention in recruitment and elsewhere in order to remove barriers to more democratic decision-making processes. Individual motivation to participate in organizations is the primary basis for recruiting a cadre of volunteers. The pattern of incentives identified in this study were the basis for attracting a certain type of Jewish woman.

The incentives indicated by respondents in this study indicate a combination of both instrumental (i.e., material and anticipatory) and expressive (i.e., interpersonal and symbolic) benefits. Self-actualization and personal growth, the desire to help the Jewish and non-Jewish communities, intellectual stimulation, and dealing with problems that are challenging were the dominant motivators for these women leaders. What might be of even greater interest are those benefits not deemed very important, in fact, almost totally unimportant to involvement by the respon-

dents in Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. Three clearly instrumental benefits, tangible financial rewards, opportunity to further career, and company policy encourages involvement in community affairs, meant little to the Jewish women leaders. Thus, one might conclude that Jewish communal agencies in Dallas have controlled the organizational behavior of their women leaders primarily through benefits unrelated to the job market and career development. One might also speculate the reverse to be true for men. But suppose the cadre of women volunteers needs to be expanded for a variety of reasons—the single-parent syndrome being just one. Then executives and policymakers of Jewish communal agencies need to establish a recruitment process different in kind from what presently exists. Intellectual stimulation may not be sufficient inducement for single parents or career women to volunteer.

Viewing potential recruits as employees, which in fact many volunteers are, although unpaid, should move the Jewish communal organization to concentrate on instrumental benefits of a material or anticipatory kind. For many less- or un-involved women, the anticipation of tangible financial rewards could be a major, if not the major incentive for initial involvement in a voluntary organization. Greater attention to Jewish women entering, or already in, the workforce through the provision of a range of volunteer opportunities, makes them more competitive candidates to employers. In addition, such attention serves two other functions: it expands the volunteer pool, and it integrates women into the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Over time, the volunteer is socialized and integrated into the Jewish communal fabric through education and training programs, along with association with other committed

Jews, the latter being an important expressive benefit of an interpersonal kind. It is intended that these efforts will bring the recruits closer to the ideal type of volunteer in American Jewish communities—one whose primary incentives for participation are expressive.

In conclusion, successful recruitment into the organized Jewish communal structure, especially among women, should have its own "trickle down" effect, one would hope in more volunteers available to provide needed services. This may be a natural by-product of policies and recruitment procedures

aimed at achieving a more representative group of women (and men) on the boards and committees of Jewish communal organizations. As these decision-making bodies have failed at times to intervene in behalf of special populations or to meet special needs, appropriate change may only become a reality when Jewish leaders, understanding and sensitive to the problems of these special populations, are involved in interpreting these problems, recommending actions and implementing programs. Recruitment is a logical first step.

Correcting Misconceptions of U.J.A.

To the Editor:

I have been following the exchange between Charles Miller and Bernard Reisman (Fall and Winter, 1983) with great interest for it highlights fundamental differences in our professional community which may be determining factors in our future.

Unfortunately, Charles Miller bases his point of view on some assumptions which I believe are not correct.

He refers to the stabilization of income and trends preventing changes in the percentage to UJA resulting in reductions in budgets to local services.

The fact of the matter is quite the contrary. During recent years the UJA allocation has been reduced both in percentage and dollars. In fact the UJA percentage of the gross total raised dropped from 69% in 1972 to 57% in 1982. Where Charles Miller heard or learned of a contrary policy is beyond my experience.

He also refers to a younger generation which is less related to Jewish tradition, religion, Holocaust and community that contributes not at all or on minimal levels.

Due to this younger generation's search for roots and identity, UJA and Federations have not only developed successful Young Leadership programs but also productive and growing New Gift efforts on both national and local levels.

Charles Miller also refers to 80% of Jewish income coming from 20% of the contributors who are more concerned with overseas than local needs.

This statement might have been true thirty years ago but is certainly not the situation today. Large contributors in every federated community are as interested in local needs as they are in overseas needs. Yes, their giving was raised to extraordinary high levels due to the emotion and critical life or death factor involved in Israel's ingathering of refugees and fighting for its very life but when it has come to the point of allocating funds, their concern has been as much with Jewish needs at home as with overseas.

Finally, Charles Miller refers to the failure of the Institute for Jewish life. "We saw over \$2 million go down the drain and we continue to see the lingering effects of that failure."

If the Institute for Jewish Life failed, it wasn't because of the lack of dedication and commitment and desire of the lay people who proposed the program. If it failed and it did, it did so because of the lack of support, belief, dedication and commitment of the professionals who were mandated to carry out the program.

These very differences are still with us today as reflected in the debate between Miller and Reisman.

However, there are encouraging signs both in our Federations and in our schools. Professionals and students have a broader and deeper commitment to Jewish values, Jewish identity and Jewish continuity than was evident when I began my career in Jewish communal service almost forty years ago.

Irving Bernstein
United Jewish Appeal
New York, February 21, 1984