

Summary and Discussion  
of Findings

One of the purposes of this report has been to document the progress in the status of women in the past five years since the 1980 report. This report has looked at women's representation on Boards of Directors, on Executive Committees, as officers and as chairs of permanent committees.

Since 1980 there has been no statistically significant change in the overall percentages of women in these positions. There are indications, however, that within certain individual organizations, definite changes are occurring in the status of women. In 1985, five (5) organizations reported having a woman president, whereas in 1980 there was only one (1). A few of the women leaders who met with the AJC/NCJW Committee expressed the opinion that some organizations had taken dramatic steps to include women in the power structure, even though other organizations lagged behind. These individual differences between organizations are not evident when the data is aggregated. The size of the organization, the religious affiliation, and the type of organization--whether it be a school, a congregation, or a social service agency--may all be factors in the organization's ability and willingness to improve the status of women.

A possible problem in documenting change in the survey is that the five-year follow-up period may have been too short a time for drastic changes to have occurred in the leadership structure of organizations. A further concern is that forty-

eight (48) of the eighty-four (84) organizations polled did not respond to the survey. The status of women in those organizations is, therefore, not reported.

In addition to the above information, the 1985 survey requested data on various other areas of women's involvement in Jewish organizational life. It was found that women comprise seventy-four percent (74%) of the full-time employees and seventy-three (73%) of the part-time employees. Women, in addition, make up seventh-two percent (72%) of the full-time professional staff. However, fifty-six percent (56%) of the organizations reported that they had never had a woman Executive Director; overall women's salaries tended to be lower than men's; and sixty-six percent (66%) of the responding organizations reported no change in the position of women employees. On the positive side, however, forty-four percent (44%) of the organizations did report changes for women employees, such as more women in management and equality in hiring and promotion.

Many of the women leaders who consulted with the AJC/NCJW Committee suggested that, although dramatic outward changes may not be evident, perhaps some subtle changes are occurring. There was the suggestion that a new awareness has developed concerning women's role and involvement in organizational life. It was also suggested that, while women may not yet be equally represented with men in positions of power, more women are now on the ladder toward obtaining those positions.

One of the issues also raised in the discussion in the meeting was the question of the impact of separate organizations

for women, as opposed to combined organizations. There is some ambiguity in this issue. Although it seems apparent to many observers of the Jewish organizational and communal scene (as well as in the broader community) that separate women's organizations were often designed to keep women busy and useful to the organization, they also often were used as a means of keeping women from moving into active leadership within the main or parent organization. Therefore, as women have pressed for more visible and meaningful roles in the main stream, separate women's groups have tended to be viewed as less suitable or desirable. However, some of our informants noted that women have access to multiple opportunities to develop skills, leadership confidence, and experience in women's organizations. Therefore, separate women's organizations do have very positive consequences for women. This is an interesting and important point that bears further thought and study, in terms of the impact of "separate but possibly equal" organizational structures within the Jewish community, for women only.

One concern, however, was that perhaps after an initial flurry of bringing women into decision-making roles, a complacency has now developed around the efforts to promote further advances in the status of women. A slowdown is perhaps now occurring in the upward mobility of women and their entry into the leadership ranks.

The majority of Jewish organizations responding have not adopted a policy on the equal status of women. Most organizations have reported they have not adopted the AJC/NCJW principles on the nomination and appointment of lay leaders.

While many positive changes have occurred in the status of women in the past five years, there is still much work to be done to bring women into their rightful place as equal participants with men in Jewish life.

## Recommendations

The American Jewish Committee and the National Council of Jewish Women are committed to ending all manifestations of economic and social discrimination. With this commitment in mind, the AJC and NCJW set forth the following recommendations as a step for achieving equality for women within the Jewish community in Pittsburgh:

1. Establish a community-wide Women's Task Force. The activities of this Task Force would:

A. Encourage all Jewish organizations which have not yet done so to adopt a policy on Equal-Status-of-Women within the organization.

B. Encourage all organizations to follow the AJC/NCJW principles that women be considered equally with men.

C. Provide support and encouragement to qualified women to help them obtain leadership roles within organizations.

2. Develop a forum or network for the exchange of information on women's issues. Effective leadership and use of power is often based on the information and contacts gained through informal social networks.

In the past, women have not often had access to these informal social networks. A women's forum would provide an opportunity for women to share ideas and to learn from the leadership experiences of other women.

3. Develop coordinated, community wide leadership training and education programs open to all women in the Jewish community in order to enable women to develop their capacities fully and to build networks.

4. Develop through the AJC, the NCJW, and the proposed women's task force an agenda for future directions.

5. Develop plans for monitoring the status of women within Jewish organizations through AJC and NCJW and proposed women's task force and make recommendations for further progress as needed. This should include periodic studies and data collection to determine the progress made.

## Conclusions

The recommendations listed above suggest that there is still much work to be done to achieve social equality for women. Centuries of tradition and social conditioning are very strong and social change often happens very slowly. This report documents some changes that have occurred in the past five years. While not dramatic in nature, some changes, nonetheless, have occurred. A theme which evolved from this study is that there has been a consciousness-raising in Jewish organizations concerning the role of women. There appears to be an increased awareness that women have abilities and talents which can benefit the organization in all areas, including leadership.

While this report has focused largely on the status of women in leadership roles, the AJC and NCJW support equality for all women in all areas of social, economic, and organizational life. Democratic and humanitarian principles suggest that opportunities and rewards in a society be based on an individual's merit rather than the individual's sex. The goal of equal status for women, therefore, is a goal for a more humanized and democratic society.

As we move into the coming years, it is hoped that the Jewish community will continue in its role of leadership for social justice and will work toward the achievement of equality for women.