Addressing the Invitations: Are Jewish Women on the List?

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Twenty-five years ago, women around the globe started pooling their resources into a network of foundations to change the lives of women and girls. These women recognized their collective power to transform the world. You could become a part of this story. We know you have given generously to multiple causes over the years. Today, we are inviting you to a new level of giving—to elevate women and girls to the top of your philanthropic list and to invest in them with even greater commitment. Why? Because when women prosper, communities thrive; and when communities thrive, the world becomes a better place for everyone

http://www.womenmovingmillions.org/our_story.html)

This invitation, addressed to visitors to the Women's Funding Network (WFN) Web site, has inspired donations of more than $95 million just since 2006. WFN's Women Moving Millions program invites women philanthropists to commit a $1 million gift to their local women's fund (philanthropic collectives). These funds, in turn, direct their grants to advance women and girls and strive to change the systemic problems that drag women below the poverty line. "For the first time in history, women are funding women in greater numbers and at significant levels – millions of dollars" (www.womenmovingmillions.org).

This recent dramatic surge in women's major giving to nonmainstream causes represents their entrée, en masse, into the world of independent philanthropy. This article explores the following questions: Have Jewish women yet entered the "independent philanthropy" fray with major dollars? What, if anything, differentiates women donors to the Jewish community from their non-Jewish peers who donate to nonsectarian funds? If Jewish women are not yet reaching this philanthropic milestone, have they been invited, encouraged, and challenged (as above) to give commensurate with their abilities in the Jewish world? In short, are Jewish women moving millions? And to where are they moving them?

Nancy Schwartz Sternoff*, director of the Dobkin Family Foundation, comes to this question with decades of experience in the Jewish federation and foundations world. She brings an expertise on sectarian and nonsectarian feminist funding and applies it to a close analysis of one donor's philanthropic journey. We believe her experienced practitioner's eye also brings fresh insights to the formal qualitative research conducted by co-author* ***Deborah Skolnick Einhorn****. Deborah is a doctoral candidate in Brandeis's Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Department who has been collecting data through in-depth interviews with 70 Jewish women philanthropists over the past year.*

In the context of this journal issue, which is devoted to examining the changing role of independent Jewish philanthropy, our investigation centers on women who are primary philanthropic decision makers and who give heavily outside of mainstream Jewish institutions. To consider the role of Jewish women funders in this new paradigm, our article combines the experiences of a veteran practitioner with the findings of a graduate student researcher. It begins with an overview of related research and a brief examination of several Jewish women who fall into the category of independent philanthropists. We also explore the related phenomenon of Jewish women's funds and examine whether they have succeeded in creating more (or less) independent Jewish philanthropy. In a connected piece, Nancy Schwartz Sternoff creates a close reading of Barbara D. Dobkin's philanthropic journey, illustrating the key issues of Jewish women's independent philanthropy today.

RELATED RESEARCH

American women have become potent income producers in their own right over the past 15 years. According to a 2005 IRS Report, with the transfer of intergenerational wealth, women have become nearly 50% of the wealth holders—individual, family, inherited, shared—in the United States. The potential to make a difference in communities lies in the hands of women as never before. Despite these dramatic statistics, women's progress in the Jewish community has been painstakingly slow (Horowitz, Beck, & Kadushin, 1997). Women who leverage major gifts—and therefore act as leaders of the largest communal organizations—remain limited to a tiny percentage of the donor pool.

Despite intense popular interest in the subject of Jewish women's philanthropy (as evidenced by countless articles in the Jewish press, as well as a very widely read series in *LILITH*), minimal scholarly research has been done on women's giving in the Jewish community. In the 1993 *LILITH* article, Susan Weidman Schneider lamented the "egregious background of neglect" of this issue and challenged scholars to pursue formal research: "We hope that our research – broad though not formally statistical – will encourage social scientists to take the next step" (Schneider, 1993, p. 7). A follow-up article in 2002 concluded that women were still setting the bar too low: "One of the problems with women's funding is that we think too small. It's the *balesboste* 'mistress of the house' mentality, calling forth our historical role models…. The amounts Jewish women give (and the amounts Jewish women's projects ask for) probably are too low" (Schneider, 2002, p. 17). Although several scholars have answered Schneider's earlier call for research and undertaken micro-studies in the field, only one recent project has attempted to broach women's giving more broadly.

Joan Kaye's 2004 doctoral dissertation is the only book-length exploration of contemporary Jewish women's philanthropy. Kaye looked closely at elite Jewish women's giving through interviews of 18 major women donors (with annual gifts ranging from $100,000 to $20 million). This very specific sample—and the use of a modified portraiture methodology—yielded some excellent questions for broader research about Jewish women's giving. Among the implications of her research, Kaye found that "another path to engaging their interest would be

providing them with a challenge: asking for their help and special skills; asking them to work as partners. And they are the ones who must be asked" (Kaye, 2004, p. 174).

Several qualitative studies of American women's philanthropy help us understand the challenges and opportunities of women's funding more broadly (for example, Clift, 2005). These studies tend to be focused on elite women's giving, giving to universities and cultural institutions, and feminist funding. *The New York Times* recently reported on a new quantitative study (sample of 10,000) that examines women's giving in comparison with men's (Olson, 2008). The study, analyzed by Melissa Brown and presented at a recent conference, found more women giving but still giving less than their male counterparts (except for single women, who give more than single men). Notably, though, in the $100,000-plus income bracket, women's giving outpaced men's (Brown, 2008, p. 21).

INDEPENDENT GIVING—BEYOND THE MAINSTREAM

To begin our exploration of independent women's giving, we quickly surveyed the better known Jewish philanthropists and foundations. A few of these women of wealth in the Jewish community have been the source of a small but potent revolution over the past decade. They have accepted—or simply seized—their invitations to the Jewish philanthropy party. Although they are a distinct minority, their impact on the institutional Jewish world has been immense. Each reported struggles to be heard and to be valued by mainstream organizations along the way. Their reactions vary from leaving the Jewish funding world altogether, to creating new institutions within the community, to continuing to push forward—with some compromise on both sides—in the mainstream. Common to all these paths, though, is a commitment to collaboration and to change in the Jewish community.

For example, Barbara Dobkin (chair of the Dobkin Family Foundation, of which co-author Nancy Sternoff is the director) has initiated and continued to support *Ma'yan: The Jewish Women's Project* at the Manhattan JCC. She went on to provide start-up and maintenance funding for the *Jewish Women's Archive*, as well as *Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community* (AWP). Despite the fact that she "really believe[s] in communal giving" she has become frustrated with the conservativism of Jewish institutions: "I think it's hard to be progressive in any Jewish organization now because they've all become so much more conservative" (Dobkin, personal communication). Communal maintenance of the status quo has often made her feel disinvited. Dobkin's progressive, feminist agenda has thus distanced her from mainstream Jewish funding and propelled her into her own institution building on the margins of Jewish life.

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Sally Gottesman has founded and funded *Moving Traditions*, as well as *Kolot: The Gender Studies Institute* at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. "I'm interested in the intersection of gender and Judaism, so it sort of worked perfectly for me." She also sits on the board of American Jewish World Service. The common thread in her philanthropy is that the organizations she supports are "all small organizations" committed to "Israel, women, Jewish" because she sees herself as willing to take funding risks (Gottesman, personal communication). *Achayot Or*, an annual Jewish women's retreat group, served as one of Gottesman's

memorable invitations to begin giving at higher levels, more commensurate with her means:

That made a big difference to me—talking to people from different class situations about money. And for me, I think it had a really particularly important influence on my thinking about philanthropy because suddenly I was with people who were earning so much less money than I have and who were giving it away…. It started making me think more about "how much money should I give away?" "How do I think about my philanthropy?" and those kind of issues (Gottesman, personal communication).

Belda Lindenbaum was a major funding force behind the birth of the *Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance* (JOFA). That organization sits in a liminal and complicated position between mainstream Orthodoxy and Jewish feminism. JOFA works to reshape, within the bounds of *halakhah* (Jewish law), women's role in the Orthodox community. "You don't accommodate to the latest style" but "when a worldview changes," it is obligatory to examine that shift (Lindenbaum, personal communication). The education of Jewish women is the common thread of Lindenbaum's philanthropy, and she seeks "equity and justice for women" as "a Jewish religious norm" (http://jwa.org/feminism/). The Drisha Institute for Jewish Education became her first major philanthropic project when she was approached by David Silber, its founder, who "was looking for partners."

Dobkin, Gottesman and Lindenbaum are three examples of philanthropists who are insisting that the Jewish community shift to a more egalitarian and inclusive model. These women's primary impact has been in creating *new* initiatives and organizations to reshape the landscape—particularly the gender landscape—of Jewish life.

Each of these three donors recalled the gender boundaries that affected their early philanthropy. Notably because they are funding feminist causes, it is exactly those frustrations that deepened their conviction about the need for change in communal gender norms. For them, instead of acting as a barrier to giving Jewishly (like it did for Levinson and Levitt; see below), those boundaries actually acted as a catalyst for giving, albeit to new initiatives and in unconventional ways. Some of their challenges and frustrations with the community served as effective, if not terribly cordial "invitations."

They advocate for a major increase in programs for women and girls and for changes in existing institutions, in which women are still excluded at the top echelons of leadership. Through their work, they hope to create a communal gender lens. Their dollars therefore go toward adapting and shifting existing institutions, as well as toward creating new initiatives to address needs that would likely never be met by mainstream Jewish organizations. They have all accepted their varied invitations and moved millions. Dobkin, Gottesman and Lindenbaum have also issued invitations of their own for others to follow in their footsteps by sustaining the organizations they have helped found.

Some Jewish feminist philanthropists have been unwilling to work in what they consider an unfriendly environment for women donors. Although a committed Jewish day school parent and donor, Kathy Levinson (former CEO and president of E*Trade), for example, directs most of her advocacy and philanthropy outside the Jewish community, toward gay and lesbian inclusion. The late

Maddy Levitt, who presaged the emergence of modern feminist philanthropy, ceased funding all organizations she deemed sexist or misogynist—and stopped donating to Jewish institutions altogether based on that standard. These women refused to come uninvited, to "crash" the party where women were not included at the top of the guest list.

Another group of major women funders—who have remained within the Jewish communal framework—have focused on other types of inclusion as they create new initiatives and shift old norms. These women, many of whom have assumed the mantle of leadership in their large family foundations, are working particularly toward the integration of the next generation into Jewish life, as well as on other diversity issues (gay and lesbian advocacy, interdenominational dialogue, Israeli–Arab relations).

Lynn Schusterman, perhaps the most widely known Jewish woman philanthropist, was ahead of the curve in thinking about such issues of diversity and inclusion. Under the auspices of the Advancing Women Professionals initiative, and with Shifra Bronznick and Angelica Berrie of the Berrie Family Foundation, Schusterman organized the 2007 Conference for Change "to address the challenges of inclusivity in the Jewish community" (www.schusterman.org). Further, she has focused her giving on the "importance of service and getting young people involved" (Schusterman, personal communication). Through Birthright Israel research and follow-up, she has been able to alter mainstream thinking about reaching the next generation. While remaining true to the roots of her work with her late husband at the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, she has also found her own philanthropic voice.

Like Schusterman's initiatives, several other new programs created by women donors have begun to gain traction in the Jewish world. Mem Bernstein has given the gift of Nextbook, which marries Jewish culture to the most sophisticated advances in technology. Nextbook, with the tag line "a new read on Jewish culture," hopes to appeal particularly to young people seeking a cultural (and technological) entryway into Jewish life (Bernstein, personal communication). This effort seems to be a departure from her late husband's better known work at the AVI CHAI Foundation, which focuses on Jewish continuity through more traditional Jewish educational projects. In another example, Elisa Spungen Bildner, with her husband Rob Bildner, built almost single-handedly the Foundation for Jewish Camp with its emphasis on building tomorrow's leaders. These donors are working to change the face of Jewish life through their inclusion work, particularly focused on the next generation of Jews.

Only through persistence and deep pockets have these women been able to make their names as visible, influential *major* funders in the Jewish organizational world. Although all clearly expressed struggles as women donors, their almost unconditional commitment to Jewish life has kept them within Jewish bounds, as they have demanded an invitation or invited themselves to the funding table. Each of these major donors to Jewish causes seeks an inclusive Jewish community. To achieve that vision, the women have established their own proactive funding priorities—often separate from their partners or families. Widows, in particular, often seem to take their family philanthropy in some new directions once they are the sole (or primary) decision makers.

Although these extraordinary women are an essential piece of this story, they represent an extremely small slice of the communal pie. Are these independent Jewish women donors a rare exception? Or, are they pioneers on a slow-moving frontier? If the latter, where are other major-donors-in-waiting taking their dollars today? Has anyone issued an invitation in recognition of their means? Are there structures in place to help them invite themselves into major, individual donations inside or outside of mainstream Jewish institutions?

In addition to her work to obtain independent feminist philanthropic partners, Dopkin has also been mindful of women's propensity to work collaboratively and of the success of women's collectives. Seeing the flourishing of the nonsectarian pooled women's funds flourish, she has championed the growth of the Jewish women's foundation movement. She has issued an invitation to these fledgling funds by hosting conferences, offering technical assistance, cheering their successes, and cajoling them to be ever more discerning as feminists through their grant making. The Jewish women's funds have accepted that initial invitation and have taken first steps toward social change work on behalf of women and girls. Yet the activists in the Jewish women's funds have yet to invite each other to "move millions." We explore this movement more deeply in the next section, trying to understand whether the funds have inspired women to give more as independent donors or to give in major ways through the collectives.

SMALL COLLECTIVE PHILANTHROPY

Women have always been responsive to longstanding and well-established organizations in the Jewish community. Women's membership institutions like Hadassah, B'nai B'rith Women, and National Council of Jewish Women have earned women's support since the 19th century. Local Jewish federations and, in smaller measure, synagogues and other direct service institutions have also been beneficiaries of women's dollars. Jewish fundraising organizations have for decades used the strategy of women's giving circles and affinity groups within larger institutions. Although they were effective in raising more dollars by creating bonds among members and donors, these giving circles were simply that—giving circles without the benefit of authority, shared leadership, or power

Jewish women's funds seek to change this dynamic by marrying the dollars to the decisions. The groups typically develop either under the aegis of Jewish host institutions (often federations) or, in a few cases, independently or within large, nonsectarian foundations; for example, the Jewish Women's Fund of Colorado. Raquel Newman, who first wrote about this phenomenon in the *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* in 1998 (p. 233), attributed their emergence to the fact "that their needs are not being met currently by their federations." Jewish women's foundations were birthed from a desire to have more control over the disbursement of dollars, to begin the communal shift in priorities toward the needs of women and girls, and to democratize the allocations process.

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These pooled "giant giving circles" are collective and collaborative funding mechanisms with two overarching goals (Eikenberry, 2006). First, they are designed to benefit grantee organizations whose work promulgates social change for and about women and girls. Second, the funds empower the donors themselves through more democratic infrastructures, decision-making systems, and power sharing. Both goals are considered a complement—or an antidote—to

mainstream Jewish philanthropies that have historically underfunded projects for women and girls and in which women have struggled to gain decision-making power.

Today, there are well over 20 such Jewish women's funds across North America. The Hadassah Foundation, established in 1998 with a $10 million endowment, is the largest. This foundation was established under the presidency of Marlene Post, catalyzed by Daniel Elazar's environmental scan commissioned by the organization. Others are part of their Jewish federations in communities as diverse as Chicago and Raleigh/Durham. For the most part, these Jewish women's funds take proposals and allocate grants on an annual basis. They typically operate as endowments, using interest income to deliver grants to grassroots programs and projects in their home communities, in Israel, and, in a few cases, around the world.

Most of the women's funds, particularly those hosted by local federations in major cities, are structured in a similar way. To gain trustee voting rights, the donor must make a $10,000 threshold gift, payable over 5 years. Each trustee, regardless of her giving level, gets one vote to determine the grants docket. Rarely are women asked for larger contributions, and in fact they fear losing the intimacy and democracy that come with uniform, collective giving.

Unlike the Women's Funding Network, none of these women's funds has issued the call—or invited themselves—to move millions in this context. Although they have established a framework to change the equation for women and girls, the groups seem to have internalized the mainstream assumption that women are not major donors. Kathy LeMay (founder and president of Raising Change, LLC), a philanthropic consultant with Jewish women's foundations among her clients, articulated this hurdle for women's giving: "Women have an extraordinary vision of what the world could and should look like. Women are not afraid to think big. But women are terrified to ask for the big dollars to fuel that vision and then we wonder why that vision isn't moving forward. Doing the work is not just creating the program—a big part of the work is asking for the big gifts. We're just not doing that part of the work" (LeMay personal communication). Just as in women's divisions and departments, the solicitation of women of means has remained at the thresholds of capacity rather than reaching for ceilings.

Yet, the Jewish women's foundations have generated tremendous goodwill and enthusiasm among their members. They have had significant success in empowering women to make grants strategically and in connecting them with other like-minded donors. However, as a result of the lack of "big asks" and big gifts, the total dollars available for grant making continue to be small; their reach therefore remains limited. Thus, Hadassah, the largest of the foundations (with a $10 million endowment), granted $730,000 in 2007. The average foundation allocation in the major cities averages between $100,000 and $150,000. For example, the New York Jewish Women's Foundation (one of the oldest and largest) dispersed $113,000 in grants in 2007, plus a $300,000 one-time disbursement in honor of its tenth anniversary. Smaller communities, on average, grant less than $25,000 annually. One major Jewish woman donor, who does not give through the funds, admired their goals but questioned the impact: "They seem to give women a lot of *kavod* for giving away very little money…. I

get the theory. They're supposed to move people to give more money. But if this is what they're doing, I don't see that happening" (anonymous, personal communication).

The reasons for that limited reach are threefold. First, Jewish women's foundations still have a small number of donors or trustees. Second, many foundations inadvertently put a ceiling on giving through lifetime "membership" and even lifetime family membership/voting rights. Further, they may be soliciting their peers for donations that are not commensurate with their ability to contribute. Third, the funds typically make grants from endowment interest, which inherently limits the dollars available.

The dramatic Women Moving Millions campaign—compared with the Jewish funds' fundraising struggles and ceilings discussed above—highlights the significant gap between the work of the Jewish women's funds and nonsectarian women's funds more broadly. The Jewish funds remain focused on the important work of women's empowerment, but at the cost of aggressive solicitations and larger and more impactful grants. The value of a collective, feminist voice in the Jewish community cannot be understated. Still, this movement will only be a significant force if it is inclusive of both more people and more of their dollars for grant making.

The Jewish women's foundations movement also has two additional, implicit agendas, aside from their immediate social change funding work. First, they hope to shift their host institutions' funding patterns to better reflect the gender balance in their communities. According to their professionals and donors, they have not yet succeeded in influencing the power brokers and general allocations at their host institutions. The issues therefore remain marginal, albeit somewhat better funded. This goal of "infiltration" does, however, make clear the rationale for positioning themselves within mainstream institutions.

Second, the funds also have the potential to act as a launching pad for women's independent philanthropy. By engaging women in a research-oriented and hands-on grant-making process, and thereby introducing them to progressive grantees, the funds have the potential to spur individual giving as well as collective philanthropy. So far, though, the collectives have not acted as catalysts for major, independent philanthropy as they have has in the Women's Funding Network. This comparison begs the question of whether Jewish women's funds will soon issue those invitations for larger independent gifts and higher impact collective philanthropy among women in the Jewish world.

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CONCLUSION

Has anyone ever asked you for a gift [to Hadassah]?

No…. I give in honor of somebody, in memory of somebody. You know, I often give a $100 gift for something. It adds up but it's not huge, huge money. But no one's ever solicited me for anything.

This question of invitation, and whether anyone ever asked, is a common element in discussions of communal participation dynamics, particularly as they

interact with gender. In fact, it is the exact language used by recent leaders in the Reform movement to discuss conversion to Judaism (primarily of non-Jewish female spouses with husbands in the movement). In speaking about Jewish outreach and conversion, Rabbi Alex Schindler, former president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, reminded his constituents: "We need to ask. We must not forget to ask." So too for philanthropy.

In recounting his predecessor's approach to outreach, Rabbi Eric Yoffie went further in his invitation:

We need to say to the potential converts in our midst: "We would love to have you." And, in fact, we owe them an apology for not having said it sooner. Special sensitivities are required. Ask, but do not pressure. Encourage, but do not insist. And if someone says, "I'm not ready," listen. If we pursue conversion with a heavy hand, the result could be to generate resentment. And yes, there will be those for whom conversion will never be an option. But none of this is a reason for inaction (http://urj.org/yoffie/biennialsermon05/).

This dynamic is an excellent example of how to reach out to potential donors. But, like conversion, philanthropy is not a one-way street, running from the development professional to the potential donor. Women must challenge themselves and their peers to give, and they need to continue to influence Jewish mainstream and alternative channels to ask women, according to their styles, their passions, and their means. Some will say "no" or "yes, but just not this year," but none will be able to say "no one ever asked."

A new crop of professional "askers" might help shift this trend. When the Ma'yan study was conducted in 1997, professional leadership in the 30 national organizations that responded was completely imbalanced vis-à-vis gender. In "the five highest salaried positions 53% had no women in their highest salaried positions, 27% had one, 13% had two, 7% had three and only one had a women in the highest salaried position…. These statistics were particularly striking given that two-thirds of the employees of these organizations were women" (Horowitz et al., 1997, p. 5). Today, however, women in top professional positions have the influence to shift gender norms among lay leaders. For example, Ruth Messinger, who has spent the last decade leading the American Jewish World Service, is joined by Elise Berhardt at the Foundation for Jewish Culture and Rabbi Julie Schoenfeld at the Rabbinical Assembly in top spots. These professionals are in the position to wield their influence, to issue major invitations to women as donors and leaders, and to encourage women to invite their peers to give commensurate with their means. In so doing, they have the potential to pioneer a dramatic shift in the entrenched gender dynamics of Jewish communal giving.

Changing the current model, where women are often assumed to be minor donors or secondary lay leaders, requires a shift in Jewish communal norms.

Funding by women in the Jewish community still requires the stamina and persistence that each of the major female donors describe when characterizing their donor experience. Invitations to give are not always polite or welcoming, but might ultimately be received as a welcome challenge. But changing the current model, where women are often assumed to be minor donors or secondary lay leaders, requires a shift in Jewish communal norms. A new guest list must be created, with men, women, and couples all represented, according to their true means and capacity as leaders and philanthropists.

A Closer Look at Barbara D. Dobkin

Nancy Sternoff

One donor exemplifies a woman "moving millions" inside and outside of the Jewish world as an independent philanthropist. Her story is illustrative because she has accepted the invitation to give to her nonsectarian women's fund, has given without invitation to create new Jewish forums for women, and has issued countless invitations to inspire other women donors. She is among the few major Jewish crossover donors to women's causes—giving millions simultaneously to feminist and Jewish feminist causes. Her experiences illustrate both why some women have fled from Jewish institutional philanthropy and why others have remained. They further demonstrate the Jewish gender dynamics at the highest levels of giving and communal leadership.

Barbara Dobkin has spent the past 20 years fighting and giving simultaneously on several fronts. Despite being disinvited repeatedly from the board rooms of mainstream Jewish institutions, Dobkin has persisted in her efforts to advance women as leaders in the Jewish community. She continues to advocate for Jewish women to receive their invitations into both traditional and alternative Jewish funding streams. She has also sought to find feminist partners—through mentoring and supporting collectives—who will allocate major dollars to women's and girls' issues. She has worked to apply lessons learned from the women's funding movement and to encourage more women to move their millions in a Jewish context.

After having been active in her local PTA and League of Women Voters, Barbara Dobkin began her Jewish philanthropy career as a volunteer and donor at the UJA-Federation of New York. As her gift to the annual federated campaign grew (alongside her volunteer commitment), and as her husband's capacity to participate in the Wall Street Division campaign accelerated, so grew her frustration at the lack of women's presence within the leadership hierarchy. Women's contributions, it seemed to her, were not highly valued and sometimes were not even acknowledged.

For example, Dobkin frequently refers to the method of solicitation for the Dobkin gift: the solicitor would either call on her alone, or on her husband Eric and her together. She determined the gift and wrote the check, but the salutation on the acknowledgment letter read: "Dear Eric." Although Barbara Dobkin had been the one to "RSVP" to the family invitation and to choose the gift, the thank you note went only to her husband.

Approximately 15 years ago, Dobkin decided to stop waiting for her invitation and so took her first major step toward bringing women's voices into Jewish life. She called on the executive director of the UJA-Federation to offer $1,000,000, and her expertise, to initiate a Jewish women's resource center. The donation—and thus her idea—was rejected by the largest Jewish grant-making institution in her area.

So she proceeded to invite herself to the then-fledgling JCC on the Upper West Side and partnered with its leadership to create Ma'yan in 1993. During its early years, Ma'yan and its leader Eve Landau worked side by side with Dobkin to give visibility to Jewish women's scholarship and rituals. The renowned Ma'yan seder (1994) was the forebear of women's seders and haggadot across North America. The proliferation of women's Rosh Chodesh groups, baby naming ceremonies, and other feminist rituals can also be traced to Ma'yan's work. In partnership with the Jewish Women's Archive (JWA), Ma'yan published and disseminated widely its poster series. The posters depicting the lives and contributions of eighteen 20th-century American Jewish women decorated schools, libraries, and JCCs nationwide. That series, dubbed by Judith Ginsberg as the "best stealth campaign in history," ignited the Jewish Women's Archive's work "to uncover, chronicle and transmit" the accomplishments of Jewish women across the spectrum of contemporary life (JWA mission statement). Dobkin provided the seed funding and served as the founding chair of JWA.

As this work expanded, Dobkin's experiences confirmed the absence of women in seats of power across Jewish America. So in addition to its work on women's scholarship, in 1997 Ma'yan commissioned Drs. Bethamie Horowitz, Pearl Beck, and Charles Kadushin to conduct a study of national Jewish organizations. They surveyed the Jewish

institutional landscape to document the participation, or lack thereof, of women on boards of directors and women's roles as chairs of major Jewish organizations, including federations. The results were dismal. The 1999 report *Power and Parity* reported that of the 45 national Jewish organizations interviewed, 23 of those boards had less than a 25% representation of women. In terms of the top position of lay leadership in national, coed membership organizations, 36 of 41 had a male chair of the board, 4 had a female head, and one had male and female co-chairs (Horowitz et al., 1999, p. 4). Together with change consultant Shifra Bronznick, Ma'yan began its campaign to ensure that women, who were the foot soldiers of nearly every organization, could find their seat at the board table.

These voices have propelled a mini-revolution in American Jewish life. Bronznick worked with organizations to shift their cultures to include women leaders. Dobkin spoke everywhere she could get a platform, and her foundation director Nancy Schwartz Sternoff wrote letters and called organizations on their nonegalitarian practices. Then in 2001, Shifra Bronznick, with seed funding and a commitment to a long-term partnership with the Dobkin Family Foundation, birthed Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community. Bronznick and her team have begun to move Jewish life to include the intellectual capital of its women professionals. She has fought for equal representation in leadership positions, job share, flex time, and family leave policies that will enable women to both raise their families and contribute to the growth of their organizations and their communities.

These women and their growing band of allies have been gadflies and, in the words of Dr. Katharine Henderson, have been "God's Troublemakers." They work to ensure that Jewish organizations look like Jewish America, populated with the best of both its men and our women. Although a follow-up study has not been done, progress has been made in inviting women to the heads of Jewish board rooms. For example, the Anti-Defamation League, AIPAC, New Israel Fund, American Jewish World Service (incoming), and the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organization have all had female chairs since Ma'yan's 1997 research.

Considered a maverick and not a team player by the establishment, Barbara Dobkin has labored to encourage, persuade, and even embarrass Jewish women into fighting for their rightful roles as co-leaders of shaping the Jewish world. There have been small victories and larger hurdles. Among the least successful has been the effort to lead women to be more forceful advocates for egalitarian organizations, to put large sums of money into feminist Jewish organizations, and to put their philanthropic dollars into those institutions that share power, both in their professional and their lay leadership. Dobkin has pursued innovation and daring initiatives in a community that does not value her outspokenness; waiting for others to join her has been a long and frustrating endeavor.

A major exception, which seems to affirm that Jewish women will answer generously and vigorously when invited, was the Jewish Women's Archive's 1998–1999 *Fund for the Future* campaign. With the guidance of Kathy LeMay, president of Raising Change, Inc., JWA's solicitation team raised more than $13 million from a handful of donors. Dobkin was a lead donor and issued many of the "invitations" to other prospects herself. Supporters of JWA who had previously given gifts in the $10,000–50,000 range, responded with gifts of up to $2 million—an overwhelming success for a women's organization less than 10 years old and whose annual budget is under $2 million.

Despite all the independent work on the margins of the system, Dobkin has not given up on funding and changing the Jewish world. She continues to fund, to advocate, and to put money into the work to change the landscape of Jewish life in America and in Israel. Even as she has jumped into advocacy in the non-Jewish community in partnership with organizations such as the Ms. Foundation for Women, the Women's Funding Network, the Global Fund for Women, the White House Project, and the Women's Sports Foundation, and even as she has assumed a leadership role in American Jewish World Service's work to empower women in the developing world, she continues to work to change the patriarchy in which Jewish institutional life is mired.

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