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Boys Club

Women are moving into New England leadership positions, but slowly

TERRI TENENBAUM

The 14-member Yale School of Management panel set up recently to explore the New Economy includes 13 men and one woman, revealing a striking similarity between the New Economy and the Old Economy—namely that a combination of gender stereotypes, child-rearing responsibilities and entrenched old boy networks continue to close women out of New England leadership positions.

But let's not pick on Yale. Consider a few of the region's technology-oriented business boards. The 40-member board of the Massachusetts High Technology Council includes just one woman. The 26-member board of the New Hampshire High Tech Council has two. The 23-member Connecticut Technology Council is something of an overachiever with five women members, including the chair and president.

Flip through the *Boston Business Journal's* weekly lists of the chief executives of the top companies in various Massachusetts industries and you will find that women are CEOs of only one of the top 25 manufacturers, one of the top 25 architectural firms, one of the top 25 engineering firms, just three of the 100 largest private

companies and three of the 100 fastest-growing companies. Only one of the 25 largest Massachusetts newspapers has a female publisher (though six have female editors) and only one woman ranks among the 100 highest-paid CEOs in Massachusetts.

No wonder 97 percent of women surveyed at the recent Leadership Conference for Women in Boston concurred that the restraints of the Old Economy have not been removed and that gender remains an obstacle to advancement.

Even in industries presumed to be more fertile ground for women, the *BBJ* data tell a story of underrepresentation: women serve as CEOs of just three of the top 25 nonprofit organizations, three of the top 25 advertising agencies, eight of the top 25 public

relations firms and nine of the top 25 travel agencies.

Not all the news is so grim. A recent United Nations report ranks the United States No. 1 for women's share in decision-making jobs in management and the economy. And New England is home to more than half a million women-owned businesses. Still, whatever the historical and cultural reasons behind gender inequity, women lag behind men in leadership positions in business, education and government. The Jeanne Shaheens are rare in New England politics. So are the Judith Ramaleys among New England college presidents and the Cathy Minehans among the region's economic leaders.

Campus inequity

The record of gender inequity in higher education is particularly disturbing considering the prominence of New England colleges and universities and the dominance of women among college students. Women have represented the majority of U.S. college students since 1979, and New



Massachusetts Higher Education Chancellor
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England's 450,000 female college students account for 56 percent of the region's total full- and part-time enrollment. Female enrollment continues to grow faster than male enrollment. The U.S. Education Department projects that by the year 2008, 9.4 million women will attend U.S. colleges, compared with 6.3 million men.

Women earned 63 percent of the associate degrees granted by New England colleges in 1997, 56 percent of bachelor's degrees and 59 percent of master's degrees, according to the most recent data available. The trouble starts at more advanced levels. Women earned 45 percent of first professional degrees in fields such as law and medicine that year and only 38 percent of doctoral degrees. (Women account for just 29 percent of U.S. lawyers and 17 percent of U.S. doctors.)

To be sure, women's share of first professional degrees and doctorates has grown in the past 15 years. In Vermont, for example, only six women or one fifth of all Ph.D. recipients were women in 1980. By 1997, 26 women received Ph.D.s, accounting for half the total.

Women are also underrepresented on college faculties and in key campus administrative posts. Men hold 59 percent of college faculty positions across the United States, and an estimated 72 percent of full-time male faculty have tenure compared with just over 50 percent of full-time female faculty.

The faculty imbalance is especially striking in science fields and at selective institutions. For example, just 25 percent of medical school faculty

What Share of College Presidents are Women?

	1979	1992	2000
New England	14%	20%	28%
United States	5%	12%	20%

Source: American Council on Education

nationally are women. At Harvard Medical School, women accounted for 50 percent of the class of 1999, but only 10 percent of full-time professors.

The typical college president also is male. Nationally, 20 percent of college presidents are women, up from 5 percent in 1975. In New England, the number of women presidents has roughly doubled from 37 in the late 1970s to 73 today—or 28 percent of the total

One way to increase the number of female college presidents is to increase female representation on presidential search committees. And indeed, the nine-member committee charged with finding a new Harvard president includes two women, one of whom is Sharon Gagnon, president of the Harvard Board of Overseers. The 17-member search committee at Brown includes five women, two of whom serve as *ex officio* members—Vice Chancellor Marie Langlois and Secretary Wendy Strothman.

Even at the K-12 level, women have not achieved parity. Nationally, women earned 75 percent of education degrees at all levels and account for 73 percent of U.S. elementary and secondary school teachers. Still, only 35 percent of U.S. principals and 12 percent of school superintendents are women.

Business women

Thanks to better education opportunities, women now fill two-thirds of all new jobs, but still report mainly to men. Women's share as executives, managers and administrative workers grew from 39 percent in 1988 to 44 percent in 1996, but they account for less than 5 percent of top executive positions.

Of the 100 members of the Commonwealth Institute, a forum for female CEOs in Boston, 22 lead high-tech companies, while 13 head marketing and communications firms and

nine run retail businesses.

Yet 70 percent of the 50 public New England technology companies surveyed by *Mass High Tech* do not have any women on their board of directors. Nationally, women held 11 percent of board seats in *Fortune 500* companies and 12 percent were corporate officers in 1999. "Property and money are still in the hands of men," says Vermont state Rep. Alice Miller, "and that is where the power lies."

This problem further manifests itself on the boards of various New England councils and trade associations. For instance, on the Massachusetts Interactive Media Council, seven of 36 board members are women (though the entire five-person staff is female). Also, women represent only 10 percent of the board members at the New England Council, the nation's oldest regional business group, though a woman chair and vice chair may change that.

One barrier to women's business achievement, according to Kathryn Hunt, editor of the University of Maine's *Maine Policy Review*, is that the model of a leader was designed by a man before women entered the working world. And women's leadership qualities often differ from men's, and therefore from what people expect. As more women become model leaders, and gain the history of success that their male counterparts have, this barrier will fall.

Lucretia P. Hunter noted in 1932: "Not only have women been successful in entering fields in which men are supposed to have a more natural aptitude, but they have created entirely new businesses." Indeed, women are starting businesses at twice the rate of men, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration. Furthermore, 38 percent of all firms in the United States are women-owned, accounting



Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
President **Cathy E. Minehan**.

for 9 million businesses, an increase of more than 2 million since 1992, according to the National Foundation for Women Business Owners. In Massachusetts, where Granite City Electrical Supply Co. of Quincy was founded in 1923 as one of the nation's first women-owned businesses, the foundation now counts more than 215,000 firms headed by women.

One factor easing the step into the CEO's shoes before women start families is that "longevity is no longer key in the New Economy," says New Hampshire radio talk show host Deborah "Arnie" Arnesen, a former state representative and gubernatorial candidate.

Madame Governor

Arnesen warns, "there's no New Economy in politics." Eighty years after Jeanette Rankin became the first woman in the U.S. House of Representatives, just 56 women serve in the 435-member House and nine in the 100-member U.S. Senate.

Two of the 56 women in the House today are New Englanders: Rosa DeLauro and Nancy Johnson, both of Connecticut. Two of the nine women in the U.S. Senate are also New Englanders: Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe, both of Maine.

Women in key state government posts in New England include: New Hampshire Gov. Jeanne Shaheen (one of three female governors nationally); Vermont Secretary of State Deborah Markowitz; Massachusetts Lt. Gov. Jane Swift and State Treasurer Shannon O'Brien; and Connecticut

What Share of State Legislators are Women?

	1979	1999	U.S. Rank (1999)
Connecticut	20%	29%	9
Maine	18%	28%	12
Massachusetts	8%	26%	14
New Hampshire	27%	32%	6
Rhode Island	9%	25%	19
Vermont	19%	32%	7
New England	19%	28%	
United States	10%	23%	

Source: Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University

Lt. Gov. M. Jodi Rell, Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz, State Treasurer Denise Nappier and State Comptroller Nancy Wyman.

Women hold 28 percent of state legislative seats in New England, compared with 23 percent nationally, according to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. The number of women in the region's state legislatures has grown by 150 percent since 1979. And New Hampshire and Vermont, which are among just six states that have never sent a woman to the U.S. Congress, rank No. 6 and No. 7, respectively, in electing women to the state legislature.

Moreover, women account for 25 percent of senate presidents, house speakers and majority and minority leaders in the region's state legislatures, compared with 11 percent nationally. Connecticut, New Hampshire and Maine rank Nos. 2, 3 and 4, respectively, with women occupying more than 30 percent of legislative leadership posts. Women account for 30 percent of committee chairs in New England legislatures, compared with 20 percent nationally. Maine and Vermont rank Nos. 3 and 4, respectively by this measure. Connecticut ranks No. 6, while Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Hampshire rank Nos. 12, 13 and 14, respectively.

Governing magazine's annual *State and Local Sourcebook*, lists the major decision-makers in every state. Two of the region's six chief administrative officers are women, according to the directory, as well as two state personnel officials, two state performance

measurement officials, two technology officials, two social service officials, two environmental officials, five health officials and five of 17 finance officers. Just one state economic development leader is a woman and one K-12 education commissioner. But none of the state attorney generals, state corrections officials or public works officials are women.

About 200, or 19 percent, of the nation's 1,101 city mayors are women. But while women have won New England mayoral contests from Greenwich, Conn., to Lewiston, Maine, they lead less than 2 percent of New England cities with populations greater than 30,000, according to the U.S. Conference of Mayors. And just one of the seven New England cities surveyed by *Governing*—Burlington, Vt.—has a woman police chief.

Beyond business and government, women fare only slightly better in the so-called third sector, or civil society. Women represent 33 percent of foundation board members, according to the Council on Foundations. In contrast, more than half of the nation's 667 foundation CEOs (and 92 percent of their support staff) are women. Among corporate foundations, 61 of 80 CEOs, or 76 percent, are women.

Just 8 percent of publishers and 10 percent of editors of the 90 daily newspapers in New England are women. No Roman Catholic, Latter-day Saints or Seventh-day Adventist priests are women. No Orthodox rabbis either. Look at leaders in almost any New England sector and you will find mostly men.



Nellie Mae Foundation President
Blenda Wilson.

Past stereotypes

Despite strides to reduce discrimination in the workplace, stereotypes still prevail. "Gender discrimination now is so deeply embedded in organizational life as to be virtually indiscernible, write Debra Meyerson and Joyce Fletcher in the January 2000 *Harvard Business Review*. "It's not the ceiling that's holding women back, it's the whole structure of the organizations in which we work." Since mothers tend to assume a greater portion of responsibility for child care, they are given fewer opportunities and less flexibility than men to advance in their careers. Furthermore, employers begrudge working mothers promotions and challenging assignments, concerned that they will leave the workplace, at least part-time, to take care of their family.

Girls as young as age six still eliminate certain careers because they do

not fit in with their proper "sextype." As a result, women make up 0.6 percent of auto mechanics, 0.9 percent of plumbers and 1 percent of electricians, but 99 percent of secretaries, 93 percent of registered nurses and 84 percent of elementary school teachers. Even in occupations with more gender balance, the scales tip in favor of men in high level, executive positions.

One recommendation to help women further their careers is to find a solid mentor. During a career's early stages, many women receive inadequate mentoring and support, discouraging them from a continued pursuit of that career. Additionally, women must possess several different qualities to move forward, such as variety of experiences, determination, capability for the job, confidence, problem-solving skills and critical-thinking. They should not internalize failure, but rather see it as an "opportunity to transition to the next moment," says Arnesen. Networking with other women who are at the top is also key. Continued pressure will help women pursue their goals, despite the stereotypes, or else "people will fall back to doing what is easy and familiar—looking to men to do the job," warns Deborah Hirsch, director of the New England Resource Center for Higher Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

The relatively few women in New England business leadership are turned to repeatedly to demonstrate

gender diversity on boards. So the woman executive vice president of Boston-based Frontier Capital Management Co., for example, is chair of the University of Massachusetts system trustees, chair of Zoo New England, director of the Commonwealth Institute and overseer of the Boston Center for Adult Education. To prevent this "recycling," Arnesen urges women who have made it to the top to recommend other women for spots on boards, rather than accept more appointments themselves.

Arnesen concludes that the female majority on New England college campuses will create a shift over the coming decade that will bring unprecedented numbers of women into leadership positions. Previously most women could not aspire to high-level occupations because they did not have the necessary educational background. Now they have the skills, the talent, the knowledge to perform any job as well as a man.

Hirsch predicts that since "the pool [of talented people] is aging and becoming exhausted, people [will] reach broadly and think deeply to find women of talent." And when they do, they will find a wealth of intellect and ability.

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• More than three-quarters of female medical school faculty nationwide believe gender discrimination exists in the workplace, and more than half of those women think it has hindered their professional advancement, according to a study published in June by the Boston University School of Medicine and Massachusetts General Hospital. By contrast, one of the study's authors noted, male medical school faculty see their advancement taking place in a "gender-free meritocracy." ...A variety of initiatives across New England aim to prepare women for careers in which they have been underrepresented. In April, Florence S. Weil established two full-tuition scholarships at Vermont Technical College for women who enroll in either civil engineering technology, computer engineering technology, electrical and electronics engineering technology, mechanical engineering technology or automotive technology. ... Ninety-six percent of men and women said both parents should share equally in raising children, and 68 percent said one parent should stay home during early childhood, according to a survey by the Radcliffe Public Policy Center. ... In 1972, Congress passed Title IX of the Higher Education Act, which prohibits discrimination of any kind in an educational program or activity, including athletics. Since then, female participation in intercollegiate athletics has soared by 400 percent. ...The 48-member New England Board of Higher Education includes 16 women, including the board's second female chair, Nancy I. Chard, who also chairs the Senate Education Committee of the Vermont Legislature. Brown University professor and former Rhode Island Higher Education Commissioner Eleanor M. McMahon served as the board's first woman chair in 1996. ...Women account for under 20 percent of New England school superintendents. Six of New Hampshire's 77 superintendents are women, 23 of 157 in Maine, 32 of 158 in Connecticut, 58 of 279 in Massachusetts, eight of 35 in Rhode Island, and 17 of 65 in Vermont.