

# Introduction

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This issue of *Dædalus* focuses on women in the world today: in politics, the economy, and society more broadly. Its publication at the centennial of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution celebrates victory in the battle for suffrage everywhere.

Winning the right to vote was a significant step in the effort to achieve equality for women. Yet the achievement of economic self-sufficiency is equally important. And as the burgeoning #MeToo movement reminds us, freeing women from the threat of sexual harassment and abuse is another crucial goal.

Mary Wollstonecraft struck a recognizably modern tone in her 1792 work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* when she wrote that women's dependence on men for sustenance and survival degrades their character. "You can't expect virtue from women until they are to some extent independent of men; indeed, you can't expect the strength of natural affection that would make them good wives and good mothers. While they absolutely depend on their husbands, they will be cunning, mean, and selfish."<sup>1</sup>

Virginia Woolf made a similar argument more than a century later in *A Room of One's Own*, concluding that financial dependence on men has meant that the great majority of women can be neither creative nor secure. "Women have had less intellectual freedom than the sons of Athenian slaves. . . . That is why I have laid so much stress on money and a room of one's own."<sup>2</sup> No one should be surprised when a woman who has no economic resources of her own adapts to the man's world in ways that reflect not her nature, but her need.

In some parts of the world, women still occupy profoundly subservient positions across political, economic, and social domains. Women in many countries have secured the right to vote. But suffrage alone does not bring access to political power on equal terms with men, economic equality remains elusive everywhere, and much remains to be done to protect women from sexual harassment and assault. This volume, therefore, is not only a celebration, but also an invitation to further reflection, and a call to action.

The path forward is illuminated by the many successes of the past. This collection offers assessments – some cool-headed, some passionate – of the remaining

obstacles to equality and points a way toward workable solutions. The essays tap deep stores of insight from academic researchers and from practitioners who experience every day what it is to be a woman in today's world, or understand these dilemmas as sympathetic male observers. The kaleidoscopic picture offered in these pages reflects the complexities of context, but the overall message is clear: the striking progress of our forebears offers hope for the rest of the journey.

**O**f the many societal changes of the second half of the twentieth century, few were as profound in their implications as the changing role of women. To understand how quickly that change occurred, we need only look through two earlier volumes of this journal. There have been only two issues of *Daedalus* in its sixty-five-year history on topics pertaining to the situation of women: one in 1964 and the second in 1987.<sup>3</sup> The difference in the themes, tone, content, and contributors for these two issues, compiled only two decades apart, is a succinct account of the impact of second-wave feminism.

"The Woman in America," published in spring 1964, focused on the challenges and new opportunities of juggling career and marriage, the patterns of women's lives in the home and the workplace, and the distinctive psychology of women. The most prominent authors were male social scientists. The concepts of power and politics were effectively absent.

Fast forward to 1987, and we are in a completely different world. "Learning About Women: Gender, Politics, and Power" centered not on "the woman" but *women*, recognizing that not all women are alike. Most of the authors were distinguished female social scientists and historians. Several of the essays are specifically about political themes, including conversations with Elizabeth Holtzman and Shirley Williams, prominent political leaders in New York City and the United Kingdom.

Carl Degler, the only author other than Jill K. Conway to contribute to both volumes, wrote the concluding essay, entitled "On Rereading 'The Woman in America,'" for the 1987 issue. He had earlier emphasized the absence of any guiding principles that would reflect goals and commitments held by women. As he admitted in 1987, he had been completely wrong about this: what he called "ideology" – such as the beliefs and commitments of second-wave feminists – was just not yet visible in 1964.<sup>4</sup>

The one exception to Degler's generalization was Alice Rossi's 1964 essay entitled, with a nod to Jonathan Swift, "Equality Between the Sexes: An Immodest Proposal." This essay was widely cited and included in many syllabi for courses in women's studies in the succeeding decades. Rossi found "practically no feminist spark left among American women." There were "few Noras in contemporary society" because women seem to "have deluded themselves that the doll's house is large enough to find complete personal fulfillment within it." Rossi's argument

is more radical than Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, published a year earlier in 1963. Rossi's major thesis, so familiar now, was then rarely voiced: "that we need to reassert the claim to sex equality and to search for the means by which it can be achieved."<sup>5</sup>

Rossi's definition of sex equality was "a socially androgynous conception of the roles of men and women, in which they are equal and similar in such spheres as intellectual, artistic, political and occupational interests and participation, complementary only in spheres dictated by physiological differences between the sexes." She continues: "An androgynous conception of sex role means that each sex will cultivate some of the characteristics usually associated with the other in traditional sex role definitions. This means that tenderness and expressiveness should be cultivated in boys and socially approved in men," and that "achievement need, workmanship and constructive aggression should be cultivated in girls and that a female of any age would be similarly free to express these qualities." Rossi describes this goal as "the enlargement of the common ground on which men and women base their lives together by changing the social definitions of approved characteristics and behavior for both sexes."<sup>6</sup>

An author making the same point today might use the term "gender." In the early 1960s, however, the concept of gender was characterized by Talcott Parsons's views of the biological bases of the divisions of labor in society, not associated with cultural roles. By 1987, it was received wisdom that gender is a cultural, rather than a biological, phenomenon. Gender patterns were viewed as fluid, changing over time.

The introduction to the 1987 volume, written by Jill K. Conway, Susan C. Bourque, and Joan W. Scott, focuses specifically on this topic. The work of gender is "the production of culturally appropriate forms of male and female behavior," mediated by the various institutions of any society. The authors emphasize that "gender systems – regardless of historical time period – are binary systems that oppose male to female, masculine to feminine, usually not on an equal basis but in hierarchical order."<sup>7</sup>

Such a rigidly binary understanding of sex and gender stands in stark contrast to the concept of gender today. The fluidity that authors noted in 1987 has become much more pervasive, effacing the binary divisions between the sexes that have dominated human understanding for millennia. Notions of transgender identity, bisexuality, and other variations on the binary theme would have been alien to the authors (and almost all readers) of both volumes.

Several of the essays in this volume, and especially Anne Marie Goetz's, include thoughtful discussions of gender, but the prominence of gender fluidity in 2020 has led us not to use the word in the title of this volume. An issue of *Dædalus* on the theme of "gender" would be fascinating; but this is not that volume. Our interest is in the situation of *women* in the world today, and we are not concerned

with how any individual has come to the self-understanding and presentation of self as female. We are more interested in what has come to be known as “intersectionality,” the ways in which differences among human beings – including race, ethnicity, class, and sexual identification – both divide and unite women in all societies today.<sup>8</sup>

It is a blot on the history of women’s suffrage in the United States that the most prominent leaders of the effort failed to fight for minority women and men. Confronted with racism in the electorate and fearing that Southern states would refuse to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment, White suffragists retreated from promoting equality for Black Americans. The contributions of eloquent and dedicated Black suffragists including Frances Ellen Watkins Parker, Mary Church Terrell, and Mary Ann Shadd Cary were ignored or downplayed by White leaders such as Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt.<sup>9</sup> This betrayal meant that Black people would have to wait until the civil rights movement of the 1960s for an explicit recognition that Jim Crow violated political equality for Black Americans as effectively as the absence of women’s voting rights had excluded women from politics.

Racism is deep in America, and it motivates public unwillingness to invest in education, health, and welfare in minority neighborhoods. But underinvestment is a vicious cycle that underpins continuing, long-term, and pernicious statistical discrimination against minorities in America. The pattern is well documented in employment: identical resumes with minority-sounding names are routinely given lower marks by potential employers.<sup>10</sup> This parallels discrimination against prospective women applicants for many kinds of jobs.<sup>11</sup>

Employers may assume that minorities are poorly educated, and many are, often because of fiscal neglect. Even individuals who transcend bad circumstances often face a wall of prejudice. Statistical discrimination, in which people judge individuals based on population averages, produces widespread implicit bias.<sup>12</sup> The legacies of racism as well as sexism continue to afflict minority women today, and thus they face a “double bind.” Severe statistical discrimination against Black men and mass incarceration of Black fathers has often left Black women to support their families. Black women entered the workforce earlier and in far larger numbers than their White counterparts, although typically in low-paying jobs such as housecleaning and childcare.<sup>13</sup>

The concept of intersectionality includes class as well as race, gender, and sexual identity. Another blot on the history of feminism, as Dara Strolovitch and others have pointed out, is the sustained blindness of privileged women in many countries to the women with fewer economic advantages who care for the children of the more privileged, cleaning their houses and doing other domestic duties so that their employers can do the professional work they have chosen.<sup>14</sup> The “consciousness raising” that was the signature activity of second-wave feminism

did not include raising our consciousness about class cleavages. And as the split in the leadership of the Women's March organization attests, the impact of race remains a significant challenge to the women's movement in the United States today.<sup>15</sup> Much remains to be done in both these areas before we can wholeheartedly celebrate progress in the movement for equality.

The essays in this collection address four themes: political participation, economic equality, changing social norms, and the path forward. As Dawn Teele points out in "Women & the Vote," the centrality of the act of voting in democratic governments means that women were not fully citizens in any democracy until the mid-nineteenth century. The struggle for suffrage around the world sparked what has been called the "first wave" of the modern feminist movement. The leadership of committed activists in the struggle for suffrage is a prime example of the power of women focused on the pursuit of a specific goal, although the delays in granting the vote provide evidence of the stubborn obstacles. Crucially, the suffragists built bridges to powerful men who were committed to their cause or saw ways to benefit from women allies in pursuing their own goals.

Teele reminds us of the tensions between the more radical women leaders, including Emmeline Pankhurst in the United Kingdom and Alice Paul in the United States, and the more cautious leaders, such as Millicent Fawcett and Carrie Chapman Catt. Both sides contributed to achieving the goal, not in direct collaboration but in the neat convergence of their strategies: the demands of radical women made the pleas of the centrists seem reasonable by comparison. As Teele notes, there are lessons here for the continuing struggle for equality: rights for women do not automatically emerge but must be fought for and preserved.

The fight for suffrage was carried out not only to give women the vote, but also to make it possible to stand for political office. Further obstacles must be surmounted before women have an equal share in representative government. As Joan Scott put it in her 1987 essay in *Daedalus*, referring to gender and race, "The difficulties experienced by the bearers of these marks of difference indicate that access is more than a matter of 'getting through the door.'"<sup>16</sup> Kira Sanbonmatsu in her contribution to this volume, "Women's Underrepresentation in the U.S. Congress," discusses the current situation of women officeholders in the United States. Even though American women have voted at a higher rate than men for four decades and held the majority of seats in city councils and statewide offices in some areas, men still outnumber women significantly in the posts with the greatest power and prestige.

Sanbonmatsu identifies three types of factors that help explain this persistent gap in office-holding: social and psychological; political; and racial. Under the first heading, age-old stereotypes that associate leadership with masculinity and emphasize the traditional sexual division of labor continue to stand as obstacles.

However, once a woman decides to run for statewide office or Congress, she is about as likely as a male candidate to succeed. Persuading more women to stand for office is thus a crucial goal.

The striking increase in the number of women candidates for office in the 2018 U.S. midterm elections and the continuing efforts to influence local, state, and national politics have been disproportionately within the Democratic Party. Whatever their party affiliation, racial prejudice and stereotypes mean that Black and Latina women face an especially daunting challenge in being elected. However, as Sanbonmatsu points out, given their position at the intersection of two major categories – race and gender – minority women can sometimes hope to build broader coalitions than those available to White women or Black men.

Despite the uptick in 2018, only 24 percent of the members of the U.S. Congress today are female, compared with 30 to 50 percent in Western Europe, and even more in female parliamentary majorities in Rwanda, Cuba, and Bolivia. The proportional representation systems of Europe are conducive to gender parity because parties rather than individuals compete for office. By contrast, women are at a comparative disadvantage in weak party systems such as in the United States, where it is consequential to lose seniority on account of child-rearing and to possess weaker fundraising networks on account of lower-wage jobs.<sup>17</sup>

Rafaela Dancygier's essay, "Another Progressive's Dilemma: Immigration, the Radical Right & Threats to Gender Equality," offers a striking demonstration of the gap between left- and right-wing parties in support for women's interests. Radical right-wing parties in Europe are in most cases dominated by men, even though several prominent women head such organizations. Male leaders, particularly in parties appealing to Muslim voters, support policies that preserve traditional gender roles. Dancygier demonstrates that in this situation, left-wing parties that would like to show cosmopolitan values by putting ethnically diverse candidates on the ballot risk undermining another set of progressive values: those in support of gender equality.

Traditional right-wing parties rarely advance women as candidates for office. Dancygier shows that, where voter mobilization and turnout matter for parties' electoral success, the consequences are dire for women of minority groups with patriarchal norms. Party leaders steer clear of nominating women from these groups for party lists because they must rely on powerful community leaders, almost always men, to get out the vote.

Susan Chira offers a vivid account of the surge of women's political activism in the United States following the 2016 election, in what she calls "Donald Trump's Gift to Feminism: The Resistance." The intensive organizing, protesting, and recruiting of women candidates in the two years following Trump's election paved the way for the record-shattering participation of women in 2018. Although many leaders of this effort identified as Democrats, women of both parties, including



record numbers of women of color, were mobilized to back the cause. Nonetheless, partisan lines held strong for those Republican women who enthusiastically supported Trump.

As Chira points out, all women do not define their self-interest, or their political priorities, in the same ways. This was clear in the 1920s, when newly enfranchised women did not vote as a group for what might be interpreted as “the interests of women.” Women who might be expected to bond around experiencing harassment or discrimination in the workplace may give a higher priority to other aspects of their identities based on race, class, sexual identity, or religious affiliation.

Chira discusses some of the ways in which women wield power once they obtain it. As she puts it: “Nancy Pelosi has offered a master class in the patient acquisition and exuberant flexing of power.” Yet the stereotypes have not been dissolved: the run-up to the 2020 U.S. presidential election, with unprecedented numbers of women candidates, has revived the familiar dilemmas about how women running for office are described and assessed.

One of the most striking developments of the past few years has been the #MeToo movement, prompted in part by revulsion to Trump’s misogynistic statements. Chira – and, in another essay in this volume, Anita Jivani – reminds us that the movement had been launched a decade earlier by a Black woman, Tarana Burke, although it was a tweet by Alyssa Milano that generated immediate, mass exposure. The “outing” of abusive men and visibility accorded to stories of sexual assault have been unprecedented, and the reverberations have been profound. Several of the essays in this issue allude to the movement and its consequences.

The motivating energies of the #MeToo movement were foreshadowed in February 1990, when the *Des Moines Register* published a series of pathbreaking articles on rape. The crucial decision by the editor, Geneva Overholser, was to list the woman’s name. Instead of remaining silent and hiding her identity, as rape victims had traditionally done, Nancy Ziegenmeyer wanted her story of sexual assault told in detail and wanted that story to be broadly heard. The story also showed the terrible effects of the rape on the man convicted of the crime, a Black resident of Ziegenmeyer’s town with a wife and two small children, sentenced to a long term in prison. Jane Shorer’s series entitled “It Couldn’t Happen to Me: One Woman’s Story” won a Pulitzer Prize for the *Register*.

The #MeToo movement has had several unintended consequences. Some men are now reluctant to mentor women, lest their actions be misinterpreted; others use the movement as a convenient excuse for failing to support women employees. Either case makes it more difficult for women to receive a promotion. Men are sometimes wrongly identified as perpetrators of assault and suffer the consequences. Women who step forward, from Anita Hill to Christine Blasey Ford, may be broadly vilified and attacked. Even more basic, the norms of the #MeToo

movement can lead women to identify themselves as victims rather than promote a sense of empowerment and agency to find allies and fight back.

However, the advantages of the movement are also clear: women suffering from abuse and assault are more willing to name themselves and their accusers and receive support from other women around the world. Workplace organizations engage in training to make employees more conscious of the dimensions of sexual harassment and assault. And thoughtful men ponder the messages conveyed by the movement and reflect on behavior that may hurt women, behavior that a man may have taken for granted in the world around him.

**T**he hard-fought victory for suffrage is surely worth celebrating. But equality at the ballot box did not translate into equality for women in the workplace. Black women confront pervasive prejudice; all women deal with social expectations that “a woman’s place is in the home.” Women who choose to work outside the home face significant barriers in many professions.

Neoclassical economists argue that discrimination against women will gradually disappear because it is inefficient to recruit and promote a mediocre man rather than a highly qualified woman.<sup>18</sup> This argument ignores a familiar set of calculations that work in the opposite direction. When a young woman launches a career, employers as well as family members often expect that she will give highest priority to family and take time off when a child is born. A whole cascade of self-enforcing incentives follows from this initial actuarially based expectation, affecting an individual woman’s prospects regardless of whether she plans to have children.

Parents may not invest in their daughter’s professional readiness. Accepting for herself the appropriateness of the traditional roles, a young woman may lower her sights for employment or a career. The cycle of statistical discrimination is reinforced: employers would be right, on average, in placing their bets on hiring and promoting men. Ambitious and professionally committed young women are thus at a significant disadvantage in many fields compared with men of comparable ambition and training.

Not all women (or men) want to work outside the home. Especially where the option is a low-wage job requiring rote performance rather than the challenges of a profession, a parent may choose to take care of young children and find challenges and opportunities in the home, rather than the workplace. However, given the falling marriage rates and frequency of divorce, a woman caring for children who lacks job training or experience may face serious economic hardship. Multiple alternative patterns that would make it possible for each family to choose its own distinctive course are unavailable.

One obvious solution would be the widespread availability of high-quality, affordable childcare. Other policies associated with more employment opportunities for women include flexible hours, maternity and paternity leave, and the



ability to work from home. Yet the situation is more complex than it may at first appear. Legislation requiring firms to offer parental leave, without paying the costs of replacement labor for those taking the leave, potentially saddles firms with a big bill for hiring and promoting women, as long as women are more likely to take leave. Unless the government covers these costs, this kind of policy amounts to an “unfunded mandate” that reduces firms’ motivation to hire women. It is important to consider the unintended consequences of well-meaning policies.

Torben Iversen, Frances McCall Rosenbluth, and Øyvind Skorge illustrate this problem of unintended consequences in their essay “The Dilemma of Gender Equality: How Labor Market Regulation Divides Women by Class.” Men are generally expected to be able to work long hours and be available for assignments nights and weekends. And given that productivity in management roles – unlike productivity in some lower-wage jobs – is positively correlated with the hours you devote to the job, working long hours is one good way of showing that you are ready for the rigors of management. Yet these long hours disadvantage any woman (or man) who has significant responsibilities in the home. Limiting working hours is therefore generally seen as a good way to level the playing field for women.

Paradoxically, however, heavily regulated labor markets in Europe that impose restrictions on hours worked yield a smaller share of women in top management positions than less regulated economies such as the United States’. Such regulations do support women workers in lower-wage jobs, assuring them a better income and a limit on the hours they are expected to work. But the same restrictions make it more difficult for a woman to signal how productive she is capable of being. Although ambitious men are limited in the same way, they do not face the powerful stereotypes that many employers use in determining how valuable an employee will be. Men can signal their readiness for management in other ways, whereas for a woman, disadvantaged from the start in expectations about her likely future performance, there are few ways as effective as working longer hours to demonstrate her value to her employer.

This finding goes a long way toward explaining the surprising fact that there are lower proportions of women in management positions in the private sector in Scandinavia than there are in the United States, although the same Nordic countries have more women in political leadership positions and women there fare better in lower-wage jobs. Class is therefore relevant to this analysis as one form of intersectionality.

Jamila Michener and Margaret Brower show how race factors heavily into economic inequality in the United States in their contribution “What’s Policy Got to Do with It? Race, Gender & Economic Inequality in the United States.” Like Iversen, Rosenbluth, and Skorge, they focus on the impact of public policies. Well-designed public policies can improve the situation of disadvantaged groups; but such groups may be further disadvantaged by other policies that favor some

sectors of society over others. The concept of intersectionality grounds this analysis, showing the interlocking effects of race, ethnicity, class, and gender.

Michener and Brower remind us that the Social Security program initially excluded nine out of ten African American women because domestic and agricultural workers were not covered by the policies. Similarly, the provisions and implementation of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, a crucial part of the U.S. social safety net, have yielded systematic racial disparity. Michener and Brower also show how the restructuring of the U.S. economy between 1970 and the 1990s disproportionately disadvantaged young Black women in both industrial and white-collar jobs. Policies such as disability insurance or unemployment compensation may affect Black, Latina, and White women differently because of other circumstances in their lives.

The essay by Sara Lowes, “Kinship Structure & Women: Evidence from Economics,” demonstrates the importance of economics to the status of women in a very different context: matrilineal and patrilineal societies in the Democratic Republic of Congo today. She shows how these two different forms of kinship have markedly different implications for women, even in ethnic groups in close geographical proximity that share similar economic situations.

Women in ethnic groups structured so that property and family identity are traced through the female line remain close to the menfolk in their family of origin. Brothers and uncles are important potential allies and supporters, whereas a woman in a patrilineal kin group is absorbed into her husband’s extended family. Lowes shows how this difference leads to significant disparities in the attitudes and behaviors of women in the two different systems. Women in patrilineal systems choose to compete less than men in a research setting. But in matrilineal systems, women are as likely to choose competition or take risky gambles as men.

Lowes finds that women in matrilineal structures have more self-confidence and generally report being happier than those in patrilineal societies. They are more likely to believe that women should have some autonomy in decision-making; they are less likely to believe domestic violence is justified, and experience less of it. Women in matrilineal societies are more likely to participate in politics and invest in their children. Lowes shows how cultural practices such as payment of bride-price and location of residence can help explain these disparities.

Anita Jivani shifts our focus to the future of women workers in the United States. In “Gender Lens to the Future of Work,” Jivani explores the likely impact on women of technological shifts that will shape the future of work. As she notes, women now graduate from college at higher rates than men, yet men are more likely to be hired into promising jobs and are much more likely to be recruited into management positions down the line. The fact that women are much less likely than men to be educated in the STEM disciplines becomes a particular liability in an age in which technological skills are central in a growing number of fields.

Jivani discusses various kinds of retraining and “upskilling” provided by companies these days, as well as the ways in which computer science and engineering can be made more appealing to girls and young women in high school and college. As she points out, however, if retraining is provided “offline” so that it requires time after work or extra hours, this becomes yet another burden on working women. The service and caretaking sectors, comprising mainly female workers and not requiring much in the way of technological skills, are growing today. But such jobs usually pay less, have less status in society, and offer fewer opportunities for advancement than those stemming from new technologies.

Jivani’s argument parallels that of Iversen, Rosenbluth, and Skorge in showing how job flexibility can be a two-edged sword in terms of the advancement of women. On the one hand, the opportunity provided by innovative technologies to work from home or to set one’s own hours can be very valuable for women (or men) juggling career and family. But the unpredictability of contingent work arrangements or the gig economy in financial outcomes, job security, and the reliability of work schedules for planning one’s time may make things harder for such workers. And the lack of “face time” may make the work less rewarding by removing stimulating contacts with colleagues and reduce opportunities for promotion and selection into management.

**T**he social norms that order and channel our lives are changing, though slowly and unevenly. As Mala Htun and Francesca Jensenius recount in “Fighting Violence Against Women: Laws, Norms & Challenges Ahead,” women in societies across history and cultures remain vulnerable to diverse forms of physical threat including rape, intimate partner violence, sex trafficking, honor killings, and genital mutilation. Htun and Jensenius show how such behavior has been taken for granted in many societies and demonstrate the importance of tackling this profound problem as a violation of fundamental human rights.

As a result of reenvisioning violence against women in terms of rights in the 1960s and 1970s, laws have been passed in many societies that subject such behaviors to criminal penalties. Enforcing the laws and expanding the number of countries where such laws are in effect has been an uphill battle. The prevalence of violence against women reflects and reinforces women’s subordinate status. Yet pushing hard to eliminate this behavior with heavy penalties can lead to a backlash, including underreporting and concerns about violating other human rights. As Htun and Jensenius make clear, the goal should be to find an appropriate balance.

In “The New Competition in Multilateral Norm-Setting: Transnational Feminists & the Illiberal Backlash,” Anne Marie Goetz extends the topic of multinational norm-setting from human rights to feminist norms in other areas

including the structure of the family, caregiving, and the broadened understanding of the concept of gender. She notes that progress can easily be reversed through “norm-spoiling” by conservative leaders and activists opposed to changes in the traditional status of women. As Goetz points out, domestic political developments based on either religious or market fundamentalism can turn states that have historically been supportive of women’s advancement into norm-spoilers, including the United States, Brazil, some East European states, and Turkey. Others – Australia, New Zealand, the Nordic countries, most of the European Union, and South Africa – continue to be strong allies. International feminists today are also cultivating emerging champions, especially some smaller states in Africa and Latin America.

Progress in validating norms that support women reached a high point in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, but has receded since. Goetz discusses several tensions in international feminism in dealing with this situation and specifically calls out the pitfalls of a policy that identifies women as victims. Through a set of interviews with international feminist activists, she documents the evolution of strategies for the next steps of the work in 2020 and beyond, reminding us that although the United Nations has uniquely important convening power, other kinds of multinational organizations devoted to improving the status of women can bring interested groups together and set significant goals.

We might hope that women in rich democracies, and especially those in leadership positions in those countries, have created a new environment that protects women from assault. The evidence is not so sanguine, as Olle Folke, Johanna Rickne, Seiki Tanaka, and Yasuka Tateishi find in “Sexual Harassment of Women Leaders.” Drawing on surveys of women in the workplace in Sweden, Japan, and the United States, the authors show that women’s risk of harassment grows dramatically with the share of men in an occupation. Women entering male-dominated professions and workplaces are significantly more likely to face sexual harassment than in professions that employ more women. This increase may in part be probabilistic in the sense that a larger number of male coworkers increases the likelihood that some will be opportunistic harassers. It may also be that male-dominated workplaces are more prone toward a toxic culture of negative masculinity.

Folke, Rickne, Tanaka, and Tateishi turn up an even more startling and counterintuitive finding. In all three countries, female managers are *more likely* to suffer harassment than female workers. This is surprising because corporate leadership should, one might think, confer the power to report and thereby deter harassment. Instead, the authors find that many women leaders are disinclined to report harassment for fear that their competence will be judged negatively if they do so. Climbing the corporate ladder does not confer immunity from harassment; it increases its likelihood in relatively gender-equal Sweden, as well as in the United

States and Japan. This is grim evidence of the extent and severity of obstacles lying in the path of women who launch ambitious careers in the world of men.

Also slow to change are norms about parenting and the requirements of caregiving. Opportunities for women in management are becoming more available in many sectors, despite problems such as those identified in these essays; yet the expectations for parenting have also become more demanding, especially in middle- and upper-middle-class households. Several professions have become more “greedy,” requiring those who hold such jobs to work very long hours and be available to clients whenever they are needed. At the same time, super-parenting is also on the ascendancy.

In urban communities in the United States today, it is uncommon for children to play after school in the neighborhood with their friends; instead, someone (usually the mom) is expected to drive the kids to soccer, music lessons, baseball, or ballet several afternoons a week. For middle- to upper-class families, the process of preparing for college admission is increasingly competitive, fueling a perception that excelling in sports and other activities will help a student get into one of the most selective institutions. As a result, it has become even more difficult for today’s young families to balance work and family life.

In her essay on “Cooperation & Conflict in the Patriarchal Labyrinth,” Nancy Folbre argues that the establishment of gender-neutral laws can never, by itself, achieve gender equality. Contestation and bargaining are essential aspects of the struggle for equality. But women will always be at a disadvantage in such bargaining because of their greater commitment to reproduction, in the broadest sense of “the creation and maintenance of human capabilities.” Therefore, only the establishment of new institutions to replace those bequeathed to us by centuries of patriarchy can do the job.

Folbre uses the ancient term “labyrinth” to describe the patriarchal structures that channel and constrain the activities of women, as Alice Eagly and Linda Carli do in *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth about How Women Become Leaders* (2007).<sup>19</sup> Folbre defines institutions as rules-based practices that encompass a large proportion of the settings in which humans engage in social activity. She sees capitalism, for example, as a “particular class-based institutional structure.” Her main interests are in the distributional aspects of these institutions, allocating goods and services to some members of society and not to others. She focuses particularly on caregiving, an essential human activity disproportionately carried out by women. This includes not only childcare, but also care for elderly parents and partners who become ill or disabled. As Folbre notes, “both patriarchal and capitalist institutional structures enable people in general and men in particular to free ride on caregivers.”

In such settings, partnerships with men offer women many economic and other benefits. However, these partnerships may also constrain a woman’s ability to



bargain for different arrangements and seek rewards outside the home. Norms that institutionalize such relationships favor those already in an advantaged position and reinforce inequality. Folbre discusses some of the broader implications of women's larger role in caregiving, including a different perspective on welfare provisions, which helps explain the gender gap in political preferences.

Folbre's argument points to the importance of building new structures to replace the age-old patriarchal labyrinth. But how can we accomplish this? The institutions that structure our lives are accretions of deeply embedded assumptions and practices. Norms and institutions are notoriously resistant to deliberate change, yet innovations are surely required if women are to proceed further along the path toward equality with men.

Feminist theorists and activists have wrestled with this difficulty across centuries. Audre Lorde famously articulated the dilemma with her warning that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."<sup>20</sup> In the same spirit, many radical feminists have asserted that the instruments for social change now ready to hand – theorizing, political reform, coalition-building, revolution – are all part of patriarchy's toolkit and spoiled for the purpose of advancing the equality of women by their past use in contexts heavily dominated by men. Where, then, will we find tools to reconstruct a world of institutions structured by patriarchy to make it more commodious and welcoming for women as well as men?

**T**he authors in this issue of *Dædalus* proceed from the assumption that our goal should not be to "dismantle the master's house" of patriarchy, even if such a thing were possible, but instead to renovate and open up that structure to create new pathways for women. Not all tools are spoiled by their past use, and many familiar strategies and practices for social change are valuable in the work for women's equality or can be made so with little alteration.

Taking the next steps toward equality for women will require removing stubborn impediments to the ability of women throughout the world to define and pursue a better life for themselves and their families. Men of course face obstacles also; it is a rare human being who can state and then achieve a set of life goals in an unimpeded fashion. But as this set of essays has shown, women face an *additional* set of obstacles that are distinctive to our sex.

How can these obstacles be tackled and removed as we work to advance the condition and prospects of all human beings? Many factors need to come together to make such a venture possible. In the final section of this volume, we consider three such factors.

First, a theoretical task: we need a clearer understanding of what "equality" means in this context to get a better sense of what is worth striving for. Throughout this volume, we have implicitly assumed that equality is a "good thing" and that it is appropriate that women should come closer to it. But what does this



mean, conceptually? Equality has for millennia been a fraught concept in political philosophy and practice, often posed as a value to be achieved for humanity, but notoriously defined in many different ways.

Catharine MacKinnon's essay "Equality" unpacks one of the most familiar definitions of this term, that offered by Aristotle: formal equality means treating likes alike, and unlikes unlike.<sup>21</sup> The dilemma has always been to figure out in what respects two objects are alike or unlike, and then what counts as "like treatment." MacKinnon points out that women throughout history have been "unlike" men in multiple ways, most obviously in reproductive capacities and organs. With biology as background, applying the Aristotelian definition brands women as "unlike" men and therefore appropriately treated in dissimilar ways. And in practice this has meant treating females as inferior to males.

MacKinnon documents some of the settings in which women have been denied social privileges by this "unlikeness," including being prevented from undertaking certain kinds of work, or routinely paid less than men for doing the same job. She also explores how the definition plays out in laws concerning sexual harassment. "Women can be impoverished, stigmatized, violated with impunity, and otherwise disadvantaged and still be considered treated equally" under the Aristotelian rubric, because of our "unlikeness." Regarding women as "different from men" easily transforms women into the "other" and makes maleness the norm.

The root of the problem, as MacKinnon makes clear, is that this way of structuring the world has meant that "the core meaning of inequality" is "not difference, but hierarchy." One way to avoid this outcome is to reject Aristotle's definition. There are multiple definitions on offer, including "equality of opportunity" and equality of respect or dignity.<sup>22</sup> Alternatively, we might retain Aristotle's definition but interpret the meaning of "likeness" more broadly and emphasize that women, like men, are human beings, and we should therefore be treated "alike" in fundamental ways. This leads to the human rights framework discussed in the earlier section.

MacKinnon provides a valuable alternative to the Aristotelian notion of formal equality with the concept of "substantive equality," articulated in her essays and speeches, and now formulated into legal systems in Canada and elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> One important consequence of her recasting of the concept is that sexual harassment law can more effectively address hierarchically imposed sexuality. This allows us to address "the vicious social imperative to exchange sex for survival, or its possibility," whether this occurs in workplace expectations of sexual favors in return for employment or promotion, or in its most glaring form, prostitution.

Having defined what we mean by equality, we must determine the best way to approach the goal. Collaboration with like-minded men is one crucial part of the work. The most radical versions of second-wave feminism saw men as the enemy, stereotyping all males as threats to the safety and personal development of

women. More reasoned and purposeful instances of feminism involve male feminists as advocates and costrategists. This was the approach of the first-wave feminism of the suffrage movement; it has consistently been chosen by most second-wave feminists as well.

Debora Spar argues that it needs to be our strategy today. “Good Fellows: Men’s Role & Reason in the Fight for Gender Equality” brings to our attention some of the male theorists who have argued for a broader understanding of the “nature” of women and activities appropriate for female individuals. Several ignored or undermined these claims in other parts of their work, including John Locke and Frederick Engels. Nonetheless, their occasional insights imply that they “understood women’s standing as a necessary component of a just political order.”

Spar discusses arguments that explain why men should work for equality between the sexes. One set focuses on issues that interest men. Including women in the workplace has demonstrably improved performance in numerous settings: greater economic opportunities for women lead to greater prosperity for all. Women today have far more power to control their own reproductive activities than has ever been true before, weakening substantially the age-old link between sex and procreation. Men who want children will need to relate to women in different terms, investing more in their happiness and prosperity than would often have been true in the past.

There are also arguments for including men based on the needs and ambitions of women, who are still a distinct minority in most situations where power lies. In order to get a seat at the table, struggling from the sidelines will only carry us so far. We need to form alliances with well-intentioned, well-placed men.

Spar offers several suggestions for how men may work as effective allies: learning what sexual harassment is and how to stop it, calling out those who engage in sexual violence or assault. Men can also sponsor women around them in the workplace, investing in them as colleagues. They can support policies that identify parenting as gender-neutral and affirm their own commitments to their families. This will involve recasting the traditional division of labor so that men take on more of the household chores.

Like Alice Rossi’s essay in 1964, Spar’s is a radical vision, arguing for a fundamental “reformulation” of the way gender roles are developed and conceived, not just rejiggering what we are doing now or expanding the size of the pie. And as she notes, such a transformation cannot be carried on by women alone. To make this possible, we all need to reenvision masculinity, learning more about the distinctive issues men face in our society, and how their identities and roles are changing.

The final essay in the collection explores a third factor we must keep in mind: female leadership and our deliberate use of power to attain our goals. Nannerl Keohane’s essay on “Women, Power & Leadership” notes that there are more women in positions of significant leadership today than would ever have been

true in the past. She identifies factors that help explain how this has happened in the past half-century or so, addresses some of the obstacles to further advancement, and concludes with a brief look at the future that we might envision.

As Keohane points out, despite “the stubborn linkage between leadership and maleness,” women have often proved capable of wielding power and authority in those few auspicious settings that have allowed for female leadership. She identifies several developments since the late nineteenth century that have made it possible for many more women to be leaders. Yet as this issue of *Dædalus* demonstrates, quite a few obstacles still impede a woman’s path. These include primary responsibility for childcare and homemaking; the paucity of family-friendly policies that would make it easier to combine career and family; gender stereotypes perpetuated in much of popular culture; and in some parts of the world, continuing practices that deny women education or opportunities outside the home.

Some observers question whether women are in fact ambitious for positions of authority and power. Keohane considers evidence that shows that few women are anxious to hold such posts, preferring to support male leaders or work behind the scenes. But there is ample evidence on the other side of this debate, some of it documented in this volume. In any case, we cannot know “whether women are ‘naturally’ interested in top leadership posts until women everywhere can attain such positions without making personal and family sacrifices radically disproportionate to those faced by men.” She concludes her essay by reflecting on the historic tensions between feminism and power, and how these might be transcended by creative feminist theorizing and shrewd, strategic activism.

Quoting one of the great feminist theorists and activists, Simone de Beauvoir, Keohane reminds us that it is very hard to anticipate clearly things we have not seen; we should be wary “lest our lack of imagination impoverish the future.”<sup>24</sup> Beauvoir was convinced that we can be optimistic about the prospects for “the free woman” who is “just being born.” Although “women’s possibilities” have in the past too often “been stifled and lost to humanity,” it is in the interest of all of us that each woman should be “left to take her own chances” and forge her own path.<sup>25</sup> This ringing peroration might serve as a watchword for our volume.

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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>3</sup> See *Dædalus* 93 (2) (Spring 1964), "The Woman in America"; and *Dædalus* 116 (4) (Fall 1987), "Learning about Women: Gender, Politics, and Power."
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