

PREFACES

Nancy F. Cott

Jonathan Trumbull Professor of American History, Harvard University

In the spring of 2000 when I went to see Linda Lorimer, the Secretary of the University, to express my worry that Yale's Tercentennial plans neglected women, I could not have envisioned that a live conference such as *Gender Matters*—or the Women Faculty Forum that produced it—would result. The several Tercentennial events marking women's presence at Yale went far beyond my initial imaginings. Their scope and success, culminating in the *Gender Matters* conference, showed the power of mobilizing Yale women.

Secretary Lorimer, director of Tercentennial activities, leapt at the provocation to point out women's presence in Yale's history. She immediately went about summoning an *ad hoc* committee, tapping women faculty in several schools, including Dolores Hayden from Architecture and Judith Resnik from Law. Before long, others joined in, and we were rolling. Women professors and staff from across the campus—from diverse fields in Yale College, the professional and graduate schools—came together during the tercentennial year to develop programs to highlight the role of women at Yale and beyond. The collectivity was refreshing—even thrilling—for most participants had never before at Yale enjoyed such a wealth of women colleagues in a joint effort.

We made plans for several events to attract mainly undergraduates in the spring of 2001, including a showing of "Boola Boola," a film about the early years of coeducation in Yale College, created as a senior-year project in 1989–90 by Julia Pimsleur '90 (now a professional filmmaker). Alumnae Sandra Boynton, Kathleen Cleaver, and Laura Scher participated in a panel discussion called Women at Yale and Beyond (WAYBeyond) especially aimed at current undergraduates. Members of the Women Faculty Forum also produced a two-part event at the University's April Tercentennial weekend. In the first segment, "Inventing Rights: Yale Law School, Women's Rights, and the Law of Sexual

Harassment,” Law School alumni and professors Anita Hill, Catharine MacKinnon, Jeffrey Rosen, Deborah Ashford, and Judith Resnik discussed the revolution in women’s rights law, especially focusing on controversies over the right to be free of sexual harassment at work. The second segment, “Pathbreaking in Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality,” featured students and faculty participants who created and pursued these new fields of inquiry in the Yale College curriculum from the late 1970s through 2001.

The conference *Gender Matters* was the culmination of the year’s events. It aimed to consider, through the stimulus of five panels, how the presence of women and the factor of gender have shaped disciplines and changed avenues of exploration, creativity, and policy. It showcased the huge and varied accomplishments among Yale alumnae: all speakers had Yale educations. It also aimed to raise the profile of women as teachers, students, and researchers at Yale. The audience included interested alumni/ae, scholars and educators from across the country as well as Yale faculty, administrators, and students, who took part with the Women Faculty Forum in what we hope will be an ongoing conversation.

The five panels focused on universities as institutions; on new issues in research; on the arts; on local and global structures of leadership; and on activism and entrepreneurship. The opening panel, “Women and Universities,” co-moderated by Elizabeth Dillon, Assistant Professor of English, and Judith Resnik, Arthur Liman Professor of Law, launched the conference by looking back at the impact of women on universities and universities on women, and by looking forward, to consider how women’s input would shape university life in the future. The speakers gave us their ideas on the structures within universities most hospitable—and most resistant—to rethinking of intellectual agendas in light of women’s participation in higher education. They set the conference tone by considering present and future challenges of gender equality in higher education.

The second panel, “Invention: New Research Questions,” co-moderated by Marianne LaFrance, Professor of Psychology and

Women’s and Gender Studies, Priyamvada Natarajan, Assistant Professor of Astronomy, and the late Naomi Schor, Benjamin F. Barge Professor of French, addressed the ways in which women scholars have raised new kinds of questions in subjects ranging from history to medicine, law to psychology. The speakers discussed how the inclusion of gender into their inquiries and the examination of the intersection of gender with class, race, and other categories of analysis have shaped and transformed their own personal research and that of others in their field.

The final panel in the morning session, “Imagination: Center of the Arts,” co-moderated by Dolores Hayden, Professor of Architecture, Urbanism, and American Studies, and Mary E. Miller, Vincent Scully Professor of History of Art, examined how artists, filmmakers, and writers have moved women’s life experiences to the center of attention in a variety of media. Speakers showed film clips and read excerpts of their poetry and fiction, revealing the interconnections of public and private life in many ways. Like the speakers in the previous panel, they considered the impact that gender has had on their own artistic, intellectual, and professional development.

In the afternoon, the fourth panel, “Leadership: Reinventing the Local and the Global,” co-moderated by Mary Clark, Visiting Associate Professor of Law at American University, and Kathleen Knafl, Professor of Nursing, focused on the ways in which women’s leadership and women’s issues have compelled a reassessment of the needs and opportunities for change in public policy at the local, national, and transnational levels. All four speakers underscored the value and power of women’s interventions in different areas of public policy: educational, environmental, health, and humanitarian law.

The last panel, “Founders, Entrepreneurs, and Activists,” co-moderated by Sharon Oster, Frederic D. Wolfe Professor of Economics and Management, and myself, featured alumnae who founded new ventures requiring managerial and administrative talent as well as creative vision. The three speakers came from very different arenas, and their intentions and experiences

spanned the worlds of activism, service, and both profit and not-for-profit enterprise. They highlighted why they had made the choices they did; changes they made along the way; what was most fruitful or most frustrating; and their directions for change. In this as well as the other panels, the speakers cast light on the experiences of women in particular as creators and as practitioners.

Participating in these Tercentennial events, we members of the Women Faculty Forum learned not only that we enjoyed working together but also that we could really accomplish something in collectivity. We foresaw a great deal more to do. The group has continued beyond 2001, with the support of the Yale administration, to foster community for the many women at Yale, and deepen our understandings of the effects and implications of gender on all fields of thought.