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Editor's Note

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Editor's Note

Padraig O'Malley

In 1990 the *New England Journal of Public Policy* published a special issue on Women. The subject was women & economic empowerment. The authors found that while women had made significant gains during the 1970s and 1980s in many spheres relating to the workplace, true equity with respect to their male peers was still elusive, and gender bias, despite remedial legislation, continued to be the acceptable norm.

That issue concluded:

Our society has too many women fighting basic economic impoverishment. From that vantage point, choices about becoming involved in children's education, getting good prenatal care, taking advantage of new training or apprenticeship programs, or choosing to live in a stable community are not really choices at all. Women with no economic power have few choices. Similarly if women are not running for public office because they are not on a level economic playing field, if they are leaving positions of leadership in corporations, law firms, professions, and academia because the personal costs are too high or the glass ceiling too real, then access for those coming along behind them is less sure.

Seventeen years on, another group of women, under the direction of guest editor Sherry H. Penney, herself a contributor to the 1990 journal, looks anew at some of these issues and expands the horizons of their inquiry to other fields where women have struggled to get access. The authors find that despite many gains (female students outnumber men at the undergraduate level and in many graduate and professional areas), bias is still deeply embedded in our socio/economic/political ethos, despite there being some very visible "firsts" — first Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi; and first female president of Harvard, Drew Gilpin Faust; and first female Democratic Party frontrunner for president, Hillary Clinton — there are still barriers that need to be razed, and old problems of inequality, whether questions of equal pay or access to tenure, that need to be addressed.

Padraig O'Malley is the John Joseph Moakley Distinguished Professor for Peace and Reconciliation at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

Sherry H. Penney is uniquely qualified to edit this issue. Former Chancellor of University of Massachusetts Boston and former President of the University of Massachusetts system, she now holds an endowed chair in leadership in the College of Management at the University of Massachusetts Boston and is the Founding Director of the Center for Collaborative Leadership there. Her most recent book, with co-author Jim Livingston, is *A Very Dangerous Woman: Martha Wright and Women's Rights*. Her fields of interest and research include leadership, women in higher education, and women's rights in the nineteenth century. She brings to this issue not just the gravitas of academic leadership at the highest level, but a career path that challenged established shibboleths at every level of advancement.