

# Oral History Interview with Barbara Newell

**Barbara Newell, Ph.D.**

Former President, Wellesley College

**Layli Maparyan, Ph.D.**

Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College

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## Interview Overview

*During her time as president of Wellesley College, Barbara Newell, Ph.D., an economist and ardent advocate for women's education and economic equity, founded what would later become the Wellesley Centers for Women. In August 2018, Layli Maparyan, Ph.D., executive director of the Wellesley Centers for Women, interviewed Dr. Newell about her personal and professional life before Wellesley, what inspired her to start a gender-focused research center at Wellesley College, and what she hopes for the future of the Centers.*

**Layli Maparyan:** All right, Barbara, I want to thank you very much for allowing us to interview you as the first interview in the Wellesley Centers for Women Oral History Series that we're beginning in anticipation of our 50th anniversary. You've been so instrumental to the founding of the Centers and we couldn't begin to tell the story without having you tell that origin story. So, I want to begin by first asking you if you don't mind just stating your name and title for the camera and then we'll launch into the interview.

**Barbara Newell:** The name is Barbara Warne Newell, former president of Wellesley College and much admirer of the Center.

**Layli Maparyan:** Great. So, the first question that I'd like to ask you is just, can you tell the story of the founding of the Wellesley Centers for Women from your own perspective?

**Barbara Newell:** I'm going to tell you the long story because I think it really starts with the fact that I chose very well in my parents. My mother was really an early 20th century feminist and my mentor, and my father was a classic good father from a point of view of being an excellent supporter and mentor himself. So, I had a childhood that let me explore. My father was an academic and had been at the University of Pittsburgh, where he was an activist in labor issues and the like, and the founder, partial founder, of the ACLU because of labor problems in Pittsburgh, and my mother was involved with issues of hours and health for women in Pittsburgh industries. This was her particular interest, so that she defined herself as someone dedicated to issues of women's problems, health, hours of work, childcare. This is why I think she very much deserves the title of feminist. But also, as a part of the history, I remember as an early adolescent, my mother sat me down for a special conversation and it was because the Equal Rights Amendment was just being discussed in a revival, trying to get it passed. And she told me why she was against the Equal Rights Amendment. And it was because we work so hard to limit women's hours and protect women in the workplace. And we're so afraid that we're going to lose what we have gained over the years with an Equal Rights Amendment. So, as I paraded in Tallahassee years later, I had my mother's spirit chastising me at the time, but I think that life had changed. Another thing my mother taught me as a feminist was the difficulties of reentering the workforce after the family has left the nest. She tried to do just that in '47, '48, which was a very difficult labor market.

She found 1920s chemistry from Cornell as a Phi Bet was a fairy tale compared to what chemistry was in the late 1940s. So, she went back to school. This experience made me sensitive to issues of continuing education and the relationship of education and returning to work. My parents were great believers in coeducation and thought that I really fitted in a good small liberal arts college. But our house was a social center for the economics departments of Smith and Mount Holyoke, as well as Amherst. So, my childhood was peopled by a great number of professional women and I just took it for granted that this is where I was headed. I

also noted that the vast majority of women economists in the country were employed by women's colleges.

Mother had a good friend, the wife of the dean, who went to Vassar. She happened to have heard me on the radio speaking as the New England debate champion. When I finished the radio program, she gave me a call and said, admissions are closed at Vassar, but how would you like to go? I had only one recent picture of myself for the admissions process. So, I have a picture in the Vassar entry files, having just dug potatoes, with a basket of potatoes in my arms. But Vassar was a very good fit. Whenever I had spare time, I would go to the little gallery behind the desk and read the history of the college and the history of the women who had graduated from Vassar. This really was my introduction to the women's movement.

After graduation, the question was, where do I go for graduate school? Yale had an excellent labor economics program. They said, "We'd be happy to take you, but you cannot teach and you cannot do fieldwork. This is just not appropriate." Wisconsin accepted me and said "Anything you want, you're welcome." Wisconsin was a very, very good fit.

Two years after I arrived at Wisconsin, I met a historian, married, and we went to Mexico. He developed polio and five weeks after we were married, he died. It so completely turned me on my head that I just couldn't face going back to graduate school. After a summer at home, father put a hand on my back and gave me a shove and said, "I will pay for a year of your going to Wisconsin and doing whatever you want, but just get on your feet, get into it," for which I have been forever grateful. Wisconsin, at that juncture, had two men: one was head of the economics department, by the name of Young, and the other, a labor lawyer, Fleming. The two of them were best of friends. They said, "What are we going to do with this stray female?" During this year Fleming went to the Labor Institute at the University of Illinois. He found some money in the budget and so Young and Fleming arranged that I would do my dissertation first, paid for by the University of Illinois, and then I could come back and take my prelims and finish my degree.

You'll see that Bob Fleming is an important person in my life. After a couple of years, I married a physicist who was in the physics department at Illinois. And here, I learned about nepotism, because it was impossible for the University of Illinois to offer me, as a spouse of a university employee, any position, but they could hire me in cases of emergency and every semester they found a new emergency. So, I taught, I did research, I moved all over the campus. But, you know, it was just not a way really to build a career. Purdue University offered my husband a good niche and so I went to interview at Purdue to see if I could get an economics department appointment. By this point I had a book published, I had taught, I had done research. After a brief interview the Dean of the Business School said, "Well, we'd be glad to have you as an assistant."

And I was so amazed at the rank I was offered that I was just dumbfounded and didn't speak. He said, "Alright, alright, assistant professor." And that's how I began climbing the academic ranks. I was the only woman in the business school at that juncture. And they really did not know quite how to handle me. George Newell and I had six delightful years. And unfortunately, at six and a half years in, my husband developed cancer and died a month later. And there I was, with a one year old daughter, 27 acres of land in Indiana, and a part time teaching position. Well, the economics department said "We'll consider you for tenure, but we've never seen you work full time. We think in the seventh year you better work full time." So, then I had my daughter, and the death of my husband, and trial for tenure.

I'm delighted to say I made it, but I got a note from my friend Bob Fleming who had just gone to be chancellor of the University of Wisconsin and Bob wrote to say, "Would you like to be my assistant? I don't know what you'll do, but the job is there whether you get tenure or don't get tenure." My daughter, Pen, and I moved to Wisconsin the next year. I will tell you a little about Wisconsin. Wisconsin was an institution really built on the backs of the 19th century Social Democrats who migrated into Wisconsin and Michigan and Minnesota. It was in the seminars of the economics department there at Wisconsin that the workman's compensation bill was actually written. Wisconsin first passed the bill, and later so did the federal government. Social Security had much of its roots in Wisconsin. Almost every department in the institution had in some way been touched by this social democratic brush. But they weren't talking to each other! And Bob Fleming had the presence of mind to say, "Let's bring together people with common interests and goals to see whether we can create a center that really addresses issues of poverty." It happened to be at a time when the whole country was looking at poverty. This was the very first poverty center proposal. Mel Laird, a Wisconsin Republican in Congress, brought forward the bill to create the Poverty Center, and Bob asked me to do all the legwork on this project. So, I learned about the federal government and learned how the University of Wisconsin was structured.

It was exciting. We got the home economists to speak to the political science department. We got the economists to speak to the social work people. It truly changed the research base in this general area of addressing issues of poverty, and was copied as a model across the United States. Unfortunately, as the country's attention has moved away from poverty, most of the states have dropped their support for such centers. The Wisconsin Center is still going strong. It now has affiliation with Stanford and Columbia, Michigan, Kentucky, to name a few. But this is the core research group in the area of poverty.

Speaking of feminism, going back to the theme, on my very first week at Wisconsin, I filled out the employment papers and discovered that I was not eligible for insurance. No woman could have insurance. And so, within a matter of hours, Bob Fleming had changed that. Bob did not stay at Wisconsin very long. He was tapped to be president of University of Michigan and he asked me if I would like to go with him. Soon after we got to Michigan, the student activist movement reached high pitch. Bob decided he needed to change the person who was heading the student affairs division, and would I like to be head of student affairs? So, in the late 60s and early 70s, we had a hotline between Michigan and Berkeley, literally, and the criteria for success for a day was, did anyone die?

It was an incredible period of time. One of the more interesting sidelights, which you might be interested in, Layli, is that the Black students who were on the campus and 50 miles from Detroit thought the University of Michigan ought to be more responsive to minority needs of students and faculty. And they put on a six-week strike at Michigan. We did not get many headlines, which is what Bob Fleming wanted, because the state legislature was enraged, but the students made their point loud and clear, beating the tops of trash cans as they went from classroom to classroom. My favorite act of theirs was at rush hour one day in front of the student union when 500 students found themselves in the middle of the road. And when the police asked, "What are you doing here?" The answer was, "Mary lost her contact lens." There were promises made, there were changes made as a product of this six-week experience, and it certainly had an impact on me.

Well, as life became calmer from the point of view of student affairs, the federal government, under Title IX, decided to sue the University of Michigan on the basis of discrimination against

women. And since I was the only woman in central administration, all turned to me to do something. And so, I found myself deeply involved in Title IX issues with a woman's commission, trying to figure out what we do next. There was good reason that the Feds went after Michigan. For example, women could not walk through the front door of the student union. That's the way the charter read, and we obediently walked around to the back. Women could not swim in the college pool after 6:00 AM in the morning. That was the way of the men's teams could get ready for competition. Women could not walk on the turf of the football stadium, which really made a difference because the music department had a rule: if you're going to be a music major and were a man, you had to be in the band. If you're a woman, you couldn't be in the band.

We haven't even gotten to the question of employment. For example, the English department had a great many women graduate students, but no women faculty members. We had a long way to go. I worked hard on this, and one of the things I learned was when you're in affirmative action and you really want to get results, you want to change the way the English department behaves, you begin to burn the bridges you've built over a long period of time. I had a chance to stay and work on this project indefinitely, but I could see myself professionally at a dead end.

Well, I went to work in the job market and found myself at the University of Pittsburgh, which is ironic because that's where my father had been harassed for his activism, and I had the opportunity to go there to be in charge of research and graduate studies. It was while I was at Pitt that I got the call from Wellesley. The women's movement was just beginning. My Michigan involvement had introduced me to the substantial amount of research needed to make activists effective. A women's college at this point in history could be a place where you could really make a difference. So, I said "Yes" to a board of trustees, which at this point was very supportive of my direction because they wished the college to remain single sex. I later learned the faculty had just voted to go coed. Not only did I have this interesting conundrum, but I knew I was going into a college that was about to celebrate its centennial and I would need to fundraise in an economy that was in recession. But outside of those issues, Wellesley looked to be an interesting place at this moment in history. One thing that I have always believed in is that involvement in women's issues is cyclical. In the seventies, we were on the upswing of the woman's movement. And I said to myself, what kind of institution can we build in this moment of support that will help us when that support disappears? Women's colleges just by their existence, longevity and their focus have been the most stable institutions dedicated to women's concerns. And I thought to myself, here the country is building women's studies programs and we we're creating the curriculum as we go along. We're talking about equal employment, but we don't have the database for it. We're talking about a whole slew of things where we need to get the foundations right so that the policy programs that we put forward will truly meet the needs. So, I came to Wellesley with an idea in the back of my mind, that I would do for the women's movement what we've been able to successfully do with the poverty center.

**Layli Maparyan:** Lot of helpful context, and a great story of how that first idea came into being. So now I'm wondering if we couldn't put the magnifying glass right on that moment when you were there as president of Wellesley College, you had this idea, and you had this opportunity but you had to make it materialize. Can you talk us through some of the details of that materialization? What did it take and what are some of the things that happened along the way to get it up and running?

**Barbara Newell:** The devil of it is, my memory is not as good as it ought to be at this point. As I say, in the climate in which I entered Wellesley, the issue was basically whether Wellesley was going to stay single sex. If the Wellesley community did not think through what you mean by a women's college, then it might as well go ahead and be like everybody else. The Center in my mind was created to help defend Wellesley as a women's college. I think there's a lot about the learning process we don't know and should explore. One of the early examples of what I mean by examining learning was done by Alice Shafer in the math department. She came forward with an experimental idea to attract women who had turned away from the study of mathematics after they got to the college level, and as a result, limited their opportunities later in life. And she wanted to address that problem. So, she was willing to turn her classroom into an experiment. She also happened to be president of the women's mathematicians nationally, and so she had a readymade means of dissemination.

**Layli Maparyan:** You were just referring to...

**Barbara Newell:** The second example that comes to mind is the one with Blythe Clinchy and Claire Zimmerman, who were looking at issues of the impact of race, role and mentoring. I've always felt that this dream of getting faculty involvement to look at the learning process has been one area that has been most difficult, in part because of the way the Center was founded. But I also know that institutions change slowly and this is a bit of a challenge. The second role that I saw for the Women's Center is the inclusion of women's issues in the curriculum. As I say, I was worried about the women's studies program starting from scratch. One of the wonderful things about women's colleges, and I certainly learned that in the Vassar library, is that there's a long history of institutions looking to make sure that women were included. And I thought we could enrich all of the curriculum, not just women's study. I understand Peggy McIntosh's project to examine the broad question of women and race and curriculum is very much present.

The third thing that I view as a mission of the Center is the link between education and employment. And before the Center was started, Carolyn Bell of the economics department, working with Heidi Hartmann, put on a very large conference on occupational structure. The women's movement talks about changes in the labor force to accommodate women and we do not know what our base looks like. And so, the Center picked up from where Carolyn left off. One of the people I hope you interview is Bridget O'Farrell, because she was able to both bring unions and management together to look at issues of structure and discrimination at AT&T, issues of women in non-traditional employment and the whole issue of women returning to the labor force. A third thing that really came out of this employment description effort was we found ourselves looking at the structure of the family. And it was, I think one of the first times that people really began to see the change in American demographics as family structures shifted. Certainly, in our lifetime there's been a tremendous shift, and Wellesley was early in noting this shift. It also meant that we were a hotbed for the study of and advocacy for child care. I don't think I've ever been to the Center without people talking about the lack of American daycare. Well those are the major prongs of the Women's Center as we started it. And we got that pretty well launched when the Stone family came into the office. Over a two-hour period, I heard of the tragic loss of their adolescent daughter. It was obvious that they felt that there should have been better counseling for Wellesley students. And their answer, thank heavens, was to say, "How can we change what we know about supports for adolescent. Let's spend some time looking at what we presently have in counseling and how it should be shifted." It was a very "hands on" request, and at the same moment they recognized that to be able to do



this effectively, we've got to get some basic research. I think it was in part the success of the Women's Center that brought the Stones in.

**Layli Maparyan:** I see.

**Barbara Newell:** It helped frame what they had.

**Layli Maparyan:** That's an important piece of information, are you taping that? Okay.

**Barbara Newell:** The conversation with the Stones was just before I left Wellesley for Paris. So, I was not a party to setting up the Stone Center except to get the original grant and make the promise that we really will do something with their gift. In establishing both the Stone Center and the Women's Center, I worked through the board of trustees every inch of that way. The trustees were basically very, very supportive. We had a trustee representative on the Center board.

While I'm on the point of supporters, we had many faculty members involved in the women's caucus of their given discipline. Irene Tinker, who was the staff of the umbrella organization for these academic women's groups, was helpful at the beginning of the Center. And quite frankly, one of my visions of this was that it would be the Irene Tinkers of the world who would help bring to the attention of the Center the research projects that really needed to be addressed.

Irene Tinker was delighted with this combination. I noticed that when I talked to Carolyn Elliott about it today, she said yes, she worked with Tinker, but Irene was not deeply involved after the Center got started. I do know that Irene came to a number of functions prior to Carolyn's arrival.

Really in a way we're getting to the question of outreach, which I view as a critical part of the whole. One was the outreach to the professional groups; the second, an outreach to faculty on campus. We had faculty fellows.

And third was an outreach to the broader community. I see the luncheon series continues in good shape. We had lots of space in the beginning, and as a result we invited retired faculty and people on sabbatical to come use the facilities of the Women's Center. And that turned out to pay some interesting dividends. For example, a member of the faculty (and I do not remember her name, I'm sorry), but she did some of the very early work on aging and she aged in place at the Woman's Center. I think you ought to be able to find the name that goes with that. We had work study aids and student research interns, but I think the biggest source of stimulation for the center in its outreach program were the faculty wives of the Boston area institutions. There were a goodly number of couples where the husband was attracted east to MIT, Harvard, Brown, and the husbands brought with them educated wives who were really looking for an academic home.

I think one of our prize catches was Lilli Hornig, who was the wife of the president of Brown, and she had funding to try to place women on faculties of academic institutions. The HERS program just fell into the laps of the Woman's Center because we could provide her a niche. But Mary Jo Bane and number of people who really contributed mightily to the research output came from a very lively feminist trained group in the Boston area. A lot of the research avenues may not have been quite consistent with the Center's mission, but they were welcome and they certainly added to the whole. Now, going back to your question on funding, you were right in

saying that Carnegie started it. Mellon was a major contributor to the Center, and it was the Ford Foundation that funded our first international conference. Miriam Chamberlain of Ford, who has since died, was the mother of a great many foundation grants supporting women. So, she's the mother of them all. One of the things that was nice as a fundraiser for Wellesley was that the alums were just outstanding. I think they were interested in their alma mater, but they were really interested in the Women's Center. My line, which spoke to the friction that was in the women's movement in the seventies was that what we're trying to do is give women a choice, and the full-time homemakers would buy that as well as the professional women. One of the Wellesley graduates that you might like to look up, do you know Claudia Malone? She was at the Harvard Business School. I don't know if she's still alive or not, but she's considerably younger than I am, so she may be. I think she was the first African American hired by Harvard Business School. I could be wrong on that one, but, at any rate, she was a real help to us in terms of opening doors.

While we're talking about giving, we should tip our hat to the Cheevers because they gave the house you are now painting. My one real regret in our first renovation project was that this gracious 19th century house had a classic upper class 19th century kitchen and inside hanging room for the laundry. That whole area could have been a movie set. I wish we had somehow figured out how to preserve that piece of it as a monument to women's work. While we're talking about the opening of Cheever, it turned out the Tower Hall dormitory on campus was being renovated. So, your seminar table and chairs originally came from Tower Hall. The oriental rugs were really the product of Alice Ilchman and Carolyn snooping in the old store room. Pieces of history, I wanted to make sure you knew.

While we focus on the Center, I think we ought to also see it as a part of a campaign to keep a woman's college viable. Things were going on elsewhere on campus. In continuing education, we markedly increased that program that was begun beforehand. Joan Bishop (who I think has since died, I'm not sure) was a real pioneer in career services and placement. Upon her retirement, Barbara Lazarus came in. These two looked at questions of how to translate volunteerism skills to pay in the workforce, using alums as mentors and for placement. One of the things I learned from my assignment at Michigan was the problems caused by the use of only one name for a woman. If you got married after graduating, you were lost to the Michigan network. Wellesley solved that problem and I think we really were pioneers in trying to get that message out to other institutions.

We also worked very hard in the areas of admissions. I guess just a footnote because I'm proud of it, but it was the first time we had been able to establish income-blind admissions. And we were able to accomplish this partly because I sent the financial aid officer out to learn about federal programs. She knew nothing about it. She did very well in the end. We also had never tapped foundations. We had never tapped business. All of these were part of my attempt to support the institution during a recession, and the institution itself had never tapped those sources. One of the other things that came in during this period as we tried to increase campus diversity was an exchange with Spelman. Is that still going? I don't know.

**Layli Maparyan:** Let me ask you a question. A few. When you think about those years that you were president of Wellesley College and the Center for Research on women was being established and getting its first legs, what are some of your vivid memories that stand up, stand out, whether it's about events, whether it's about research successes, whether it's about crazy things that happen, you know, any vivid memories you have from that period that you'd be willing to just share those little vignettes of story with us?



**Barbara Newell:** Well, there's one piece of the early history that is very vivid in my mind, which isn't generally known. Then again, I give you the long story. When I came in and accepted the appointment, the woman who had been dean of the college had been a candidate for the presidency. She was a very well-liked soul and she came up and introduced herself to me and offered to stay on as dean. My first response among other things was, "I hope your offer to stay on for a year while we adjust isn't greatly inconveniencing you." And she interpreted that question as "So you don't want me." From this misunderstanding I found myself in the market for a new dean very early in my life at Wellesley. Maud Chaplin stepped in as interim dean, as she stepped into a lot of places, but I went out in the market to find somebody that was a good fit. In California, I found a friend of a friend, who really was a soulmate on the question of the Women's Center, women's issues, women's colleges. And her name was Alice Ilchman. And I remember having dinner with her in downtown San Francisco, which is always good setting. And I thought to myself, she has a light that ought to be used at Wellesley. So, Alice accepted and her husband came and picked up on jobs in the Boston area. Alice took a while before she was able to run a smooth operation. I was out in the field fundraising while she was at home. She obviously learned how to do it because she later became president of Sarah Lawrence.

**Barbara Newell:** Alice was a great soulmate in this process and Alice was really the one responsible for operations. The two of us would sit and conspire as to what we were trying to do and where we were going to go. And, early in the game the question came up, "Well, who's going to be the director of this dream of ours?" And we turned to Carolyn Elliott. Carolyn was at Santa Barbara and was interested in coming east; so, she took the slot. Well, Carolyn's background was in India, and Alice's background was in India. That's why the two of them knew each other. Together they put an international spin on the Women's Center. And it was this combination that went off to Ford and got the money for the first international conference. And I know I've told you about that affair, but what we learned from the fiasco that followed, was that at the height of the Cold War, even though you're all women fighting many of the same battles, the international outreach that Alice and Carolyn both wanted to express, just was not feasible. It was hard to live through because they had worked so hard on putting together an agenda and funding. Within an hour of opening the conference there were picket signs.

**Layli Maparyan:** You know, I wouldn't mind if you did tell a little bit more of the story about the international conference. I was going to do a pullout question on that because I've heard bits and pieces of details from different people and that was an important event even though it didn't go smoothly as hoped for. It was an important moment in the life of the Wellesley Centers for Women or the Center for Research on Women. So, I would actually love to hear your long form take on that conference, that effort and anything about it

**Donna Tambascio:** And if I could add on, what it meant to the discussions in the women's movement, going forward about intersectionality. I think, what that spearheaded.

**Barbara Newell:** Well, I think I have already mentioned the two key players and the Ford Foundation money. And those two, Alice and Carolyn, really were responsible for trying to get an agenda that would speak to all of the different kinds of concerns ranging from childcare to a harassment, and everything in between. They worked out an agenda which they handed to people upon registration. We had people from India, and Indonesia, and Middle East. It was not just a little local event or European event. This array of souls met in the Student Union, which was a nice venue for this, and the debate that started immediately was the accusation that the conference organizers reflect all capitalist societies. You have told us what to do, and what you've told us to does not meet what is the basic problem of our life in India, in Africa. It's

poverty, it's economic development. What we should be talking about is clean water and good schools and who owns the means of production. We had a cleavage between the Europeans, the Americans, the Canadians -- and almost everybody else with a few souls in between. But it was expressed with vigor. Carolyn's immediate response was, okay, let's rip up the agenda. Let's sit down and try to put together a new agenda. How do we meet what folks want? Well, what it meant was the next three days were dedicated to what should we be talking about. In the end, I would agree that it was a significant event, not because of the program but rather because people exchanged business cards and friendships developed out of that which were truly international. After the conference, you could send a letter to a person you had coffee with in the student union and they would answer it and you had an information base. The Center did a number of international projects. I do not know how much of this work was the product of the conference and how much of it was the fact that Carolyn and Alice were such internationalists themselves that they infected the environment in which they lived.

**Layli Maparyan:** Hmm. Did you attend some of the conference?

**Barbara Newell:** I did, yeah. Most of my life was spent out of a suitcase. So, a lot of things happened that I wasn't a party to.

**Layli Maparyan:** So, that's a good jumping off point for sort of a second thrust of the conversation, which is your thoughts on the actual impact of the Centers, both in terms of its existence and in terms of its actual work and output on the women's movement or public discourse in policy change in matters affecting women. So, we want to think about the impact this that the center has had.

**Barbara Newell:** I had one personal incident that describes the impact. The Center was long behind me. I was sitting in Florida working on curriculum and inclusion issues of K through 12. I remember a staff member of the Wellesley Center was the expert and worked through problems with the people who were making the decisions for the state of Florida. As you see it still warms me. I don't know about the women's movement. I'm not quite sure what the women's movement is. But, I think we've affected a lot of lives of people who were asking questions they wouldn't have otherwise. I have seen, for example, in the area of childcare, the major information that I saw used in national and local discussions came from the Women's Center. That is exactly the reason we started them Women's Center. I also saw its impact in the debate on bullying. I know the Center spent a fair amount of time long ago on issues of harassment. I have no idea if there's a connection between what we did and what we're seeing today. I'll let you answer your question.

**Layli Maparyan:** There is, there is definitely a connection and with the people who have been working there since I've been at the helm, I have definitely been able to isolate instances where their impact has been quite strong and I don't know as much about people who were there or work that was done before time, other than work done by the people who are there now or were there recently. One thing I heard you mentioned in your earlier story was about the AT&T related work. Could you tell that story a little more detail?

**Barbara Newell:** Well I think Bridget O'Farrell is the one who ought to. But what she was asked to do by both the Union and management -- it was a team that she was working with -- was to look at how you measure whether there's discrimination in the workplace, get some kind of quantitative measure of it. Then you can talk about whether you've been successful in making a

shift. And I do know that again this is an arena that I have seen the pioneering work in of the seventies in affirmative action provide the techniques used in the nineties.

**Layli Maparyan:** Well, you raise a good point just by pointing out that the mere fact of figuring out how to measure something that was just embedded in the culture and unremarked previously was a big addition to the social movement. So, that is something that the Centers has had a lot to do with. If you had to sort of think summarily and say, what do you think have been the Centers greatest accomplishments, whether under your term of leadership or, since that time, are there any that you would add?

**Barbara Newell:** I really haven't followed closely enough to answer that. I think the focus has really shifted markedly, with the merger of the two centers. You have a very different, common core, one strongly affected by the Stone Center, although your outreach and the international programs look familiar.

**Layli Maparyan:** Okay. When you think ahead to the future, what are your hopes for the Centers? If we were thinking ahead to audiences who might, for example, be hearing a 50th anniversary documentary about the Wellesley Centers for Women and its impact, what might you say you hope for, for the future?

**Barbara Newell:** I hope the Center continues. I take that as the base. Remember my comment on the cycles of the women's movement. The reason for the Center is to assure that somebody is focused on the problems that are urgent to women at all times. Those problems change over time, and therefore what you're going to be addressing and what is appropriate changes over time. But the fact that we have a research base is very important to me for the future, especially in the times of Trump. I think the present proves the point. I would have said at any other time that the international programming would have been increasingly important to the Center. I fear at the moment the U.S. is becoming so isolationist that it may be the women's centers that keep us in touch, but we don't have the leadership role as a nation that we had a couple of years ago.

**Layli Maparyan:** Hmm.

**Barbara Newell:** First of all, I think the Center is a reminder to the college as a whole that it is essential to keep in mind questions that relate to the needs of women. And I think this means curriculum, it means students supports, it means mentoring and hosting alums who share interests. I hope the Center continues to nurture faculty, I gather maybe more so today than sometimes in the past. In my time, those retiring and those who have been around longer were much more interested and more sympathetic to where the Center is going. That's not always the case.

**Barbara Newell:** I think one of aspects of the center that I enjoyed most was the sense of freshness and the introduction of new parameters and new ways of looking at issues. And I would hope that as you find yourself rebuilding, that you will be able to generate the kind of real excitement that was palpable at those seminars, and in the research, and the people who were brought to the Center. It was a magnet.

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*Learn more about the Wellesley Centers for Women at [wcwonline.org](http://wcwonline.org).*