

クロードティア・ゴールドデン

『ジェンダー・ギャップへの解釈』

— アメリカ女性の経済史 —

Claudia Goldin, *Understanding the Gender Gap: An Economic History of American Women*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, xviii+287 pp.

The last twenty years have seen dramatic changes in women's work in the United States. The percentage of women at work has passed 60%, and half of the women with small children are in the work force. Women have steadily entered managerial and professional fields which were only recently regarded as male work spheres. Active women's organizations have promoted new attitudes toward work and struggled to end various forms of discrimination based on gender in the work place. It is often argued that the changes we have seen in women's work over the last two decades are unprecedented in the history of American working women.

Claudia Goldin's sophisticated analysis of the economic and noneconomic factors that have affected women's work over the last century presents a much more mixed picture of working women in America. In place of the conventional picture which sees working women struggling against discrimination derived from traditional patriarchal customs of an earlier age, she shows how over the last century different generations of women workers have faced new forms of discrimination associated with changes in the industrial structure and managerial practices within firms.

The key to her analysis is a reconstruction of patterns of women's work based on birth cohorts. Her birth cohort analysis challenges the well-

known "M-shaped" curve which it is usually assumed describes the common pattern of women's participation in the labor force. The M-shaped curve which is a statistical abstraction of work participation through a single life cycle assumes high rates of work participation by young, unmarried women, then a sharp decline in participation upon marriage or birth of a first child, followed by a second peak associated with reentry into the labor force as the children become more independent, followed by a second decline at retirement age. What Goldin's work shows is rather a division between those within an age cohort who choose to work after marriage and those who do not. Among the married women who choose to work, labor market turnover is very low. What has accounted for the increasing rates of overall women's labor force participation are increases in the percentage of married women in each successive birth cohort who have chosen to remain in the labor force through their working years.

After clarifying the pattern of labor force participation, Goldin turns to the gender gap in earnings and occupations. She again begins with a sophisticated statistical analysis of existing data on the ratio of female to male earnings from 1815 to 1987. Her analysis shows a narrowing of the earnings gap between 1890 and 1930. During those years returns to higher levels of female education, increasing labor market experience of women, and mechanization which decreased the returns to physical strength all played roles in narrowing the gender gap in earnings. Although there were some ups and downs between the 1930s and 1980, the gender gap in earnings remained more or last stable: only in the 1980s has there again been a narrowing of the gender gap in earnings.

In looking at the past history of the earnings gap, Goldin discovers a number of interesting phenomenon which stand in sharp contrast to our normal assumptions. She associates wage discrimination with advances in education and changes in the occupational structure which led women to compete with men for jobs in the white collar sector. Wage discrimination in the clerical sector was much sharper than in manufacturing industries which had earlier drawn much of the female labor force. Goldin's study shows a gender gap in earnings in manufacture of 20% around 1900, but of 55% in office work in 1940.

Many of the forces which caused the changes in women's employment, factors including higher levels of education, lower birth rates, and the

emergence of office work were already apparent in the 1920s. The last part of her book is then devoted to a consideration of why change took so long. Although the depression of the 1930s had some effect, marriage bars—the banning of employment of married women—which were very common until the 1950s, were a more important cause. She argues that more than 87% of the school districts and 50% of the firms hiring clerical workers banned the employment of married women. Marriage bars began to appear in the 1930s. Goldin offers two major explanations for their appearance. The first, the attempt to ration work during the depression, assumed that with massive unemployment married women should be excluded from the work force in order to allow male household heads the opportunity to work. The second, based on an analysis of firm level data points to an additional factor. Within large firms with centralized hiring and promotion policies, firms wanted to encourage turnover in order to keep wage bills in line with productivity. Since the content of women's work was relatively stable, experience beyond a certain point did not contribute to greater productivity, although increased years of tenure did result in wage increases.

The shift away from marriage bars in the 1950s again was related to changes in the labor market. A long term decline in the birth rate had altered the population structure: young, unmarried women were a smaller part of the population in the 1950s and 1960s than they had been in the earlier part of the century. The gradual raising of educational levels and lowering of the marriage age resulted in a labor squeeze—more jobs than applicants, and this led to the end of the marriage bars.

Goldin's book can be read for what it says about the recent history of working women in America but it can also stand as a methodological guide for future studies of women's labor. In a field of study which is often influenced by emotional pleas and cries for justice, too little attention has been given to understanding the real patterns of development and causes of discrimination. Goldin's painstaking reconstruction of patterns of women's labor sets a standard for work in this field that will not soon be surpassed. Her critical examination of a number of common assumptions about the gender gap have revealed interesting new dimensions, pointing to new research directions in the field of American

women's history and posing a number of important comparative questions for those interested in the history of women's labor in Japan.

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