

Goldin

Marshall Poe

Welcome to the New Books Network.

Hello, everybody. This is Marshall Poe. I'm the editor of the New Books Network, and you are listening to an episode in the Princeton University Press Ideas Podcast, brought to you by the New Books Network and Princeton University Press. And today, I'm delighted to say we have Claudia Goldin on the show, and we'll be talking about her terrific book, *Career and Family: Women's Century-Long Journey toward Equity*. It's out from PUP just this year. Claudia, welcome to the show.

Claudia Goldin

I'm very, very glad to be here.

Marshall Poe

Could you begin the interview by telling us a little bit about yourself?

Claudia Goldin

Certainly. I am a professor of Economics. I've been at Harvard since 1990. I'm from the Bronx, and that should be clear in my accent a bit. But I went to The Bronx High School of Science, and then I went to Cornell University for my B.A.. I had always intended to be a scientist. I believe I am. And then I went to the University of Chicago for my PhD.

Within the field of economics, I specialize in economic history and also in labor economics. My work interprets the present through the lens of the past. I'm known for my writings on the US Labor Market, including the history of economic inequality, also the history of education. But less well-known is that I also worked on and wrote a book on slavery in antebellum U.S. cities on emancipation plans and on the economic costs of the U.S. Civil War. I'm probably best known though for my work on the rise of women in the labor force, particularly in the US, and also on gender inequality.

It is on those issues that the current book focuses.

Marshall Poe

And thank you, that's what we're talking about today. Again, the book is *Career and Family: Women's Century-Long Journey toward Equity*. Let's begin by talking about the problem that is at the center of the book—and to simplify a bit, it's that women in the US, though they've made a lot of progress, do not do as well in the labor market as men. Can you begin by sketching for the listeners the current dimensions of this inequality?

Claudia Goldin

Certainly. So, there are gender differences in pay that have been greatly reduced over time and largely because of women's education and training has been greatly improved.

Women come to the labor market, let's call it, with more education, greater credentials, deeper training. They stay employed for longer, and in addition, many of the obvious—and I'll call them man-made barriers—have been removed, such as what are called marriage bars, which believe it or not existed in many school districts and in many offices until around 1950 and barred women who were married from being employed in those places. There were nepotism bans, and all of the fact that education and training have improved—women stay in the labor force longer—all of that

means that their earnings are higher, but that has certainly allowed us to see in some sense what the real barrier are, and that's a main part of the book.

Marshall Poe

Yeah, we'll get to that in just a second. Before we do, I want to digress on one point because you hear a lot about the gender pay gap, the quote-unquote gender pay gap. And I like the way you put this—the gender pay gap, as we normally understand it, is women actually receiving lower pay for equal work. And you say in the book that this has significantly diminished, if not actually disappeared. This is a little bit controversial. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Claudia Goldin

Certainly. In some sense, it's not really controversial. And let me point out that much of the literature—and it's a huge literature on this subject—has been written by a large number of people, not me. So, I'm not referring to my own work, but when we generally expressed the gender gap by a single number, the gender earnings gap—and what I mean by 'we' is actually the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics—it is generally expressed as the ratio of female to male weekly earnings for those working full-time year-round. And furthermore, the ratio is the earnings of the median woman divided by the earnings of the median man. Now, that is a mouthful. Okay, but that's what it is. It's a single number, when in fact the earnings gap is a ton of different numbers. It's a different number when you're just out of college. It's a different number when you're just out of law school, then it is 10 years or 15 years later.

Now, the number that the BLS produces that we generally use—and there's a good reason why it's expressed in this way—is in some sense a lot less than one might say the actual numbers would be because there's some attempt to control for hours of work. And also, there is an attempt in using the median to sort of trim, what we call the long, right tail of earnings, which is occupied disproportionately by men.

Now, the progress that's been made in this ratio has occurred in various moments. In particular, in the 1980s and the 1990s, there was a very large set of changes. And much of the progress, as I said, has come about because education levels for women advance. And not just education, but the preparation. So, majoring in engineering is different from majoring in comparative literature in terms of one's enjoyment and in terms of what one might earn in the labor market. So, women began to prepare more after like 1960s, 1970s, they began to prepare themselves for the more demanding jobs.

They stayed in the workforce longer, their labor force participation increased. Thus, in many ways, there has been considerable progress. I don't think that anyone who has studied this area would not agree with that. But in addition, there is considerable frustration. And this frustration bubbles up at various moments; it certainly bubbled up enormously in the early 1970s, late 60s, early 1970s, we know that. And it has bubbled up in the mid two thousand teens as well.

And the frustration has been expressed in terms of, let's do something about it. Let's do something about sexual harassment. Let's do something about biased managers. Let's do something about empowering women to bargain more effectively in their jobs. And by the way, I think bargaining more effectively at home would be even better.

So, although these are really noble goals, and they are ones that I certainly fully support and will do everything I can to put forward, they are not going to make as big a difference in closing the remaining gender gap in earnings as many people think. And the reason is largely due to the impact of greedy work and how couples adjust to it in terms of figuring out who takes which job and who is the on-call parent at home.

Marshall Poe

That's a great segue to my next question, which is precisely about greedy work, which is a very insightful way to put a modern predicament that I think many of our listeners have faced. I have personally in my own life faced the choice of whether to do greedy work or not. Can you tell us what greedy work is?

Claudia Goldin

Certainly. The first thing is that I picked up the term from a piece that Claire Cain Miller wrote, and Claire Cain Miller writes for *The New York Times*. She is an absolutely brilliant journalist. I figured out that she picked up the term from a sociologist in the more distant past. So, I am absolutely pleased to use the term. I did not create the term.

Marshall Poe

That's very nice of you to say, let me say that.

Claudia Goldin

The employee who is willing to work at many different hours—let's say in the evenings, weekends, vacations. That employee, the employee who we think of as on-call at the office, is the worker who gets the bigger rewards.

And when these rewards are disproportionate to the time that's put in—and that means that if I doubled the hours, I would more than double the amount that this person gets paid—and when that happens, I would call it greedy work. Now, that said it isn't necessarily the number of hours. That's just an easy way of thinking about it. It's often which hours, so it may be that you and someone else both work 45 hours a week or 40 hours a week, but the other person knows that they have to jump at two in the morning to fix someone's air conditioning unit, as someone did for me once.

So, it's often, which hours. Are they the weekend hours, the vacation hours, the dinnertime hours, the evening hours? And also, the relationship can be dynamic and be part of what we think of as an upper out system that exists. It's common to many of the high-end jobs: work more now, and get the big rewards in the future. What are they? Making partner. Getting tenure. Getting that very important first promotion.

So, why is this of importance to this issue? Well, if an individual has children or other family responsibilities—they could be any care responsibilities—and that person has to be on-call at home, even if that person has a job, then that person doesn't have as much flexibility. So, if we think about a couple, they are going to have to make a choice between if they have kids, then those children are going to at some point need to have a parent who's on call at home, even if that parent has a highly demanding job.

So, the on-call at home person will take a position that enables that, that has more flexibility, is somewhat less demanding, and in consequence, pays less even on if we divided it a per hour basis. And women are generally the ones who are on-call at home, and that produces what I call couple inequity. Thus, the flipside to couple inequity in heterosexual couples is gender inequality. Even same-sex couples with children encounter a strong pull toward this type of specialization, and they also often jettison couple equity because of greedy work, but they do not add to gender inequality.

And one might wonder well, why can't dual-career families just share the joys and the duties of parenting equally? And that's a very good question. And the answer is they could, but if they did, they would probably be leaving some amount of money on the table. And it just depends upon that

amount. So, the 50/50 couple might be happier, but if they have jobs that are greedy, they would be somewhat poor.

Marshall Poe

Yeah, there's one point that you made that I want to emphasize a little bit. It's important to understand, and that is that the returns to the investment of additional time don't scale linearly. That is, that extra couple of hours could make you twice as much money. Not just an incremental, two more hours of work. Is that right?

Claudia Goldin

Well, it may larger, and it may be shifting the firm. So, if we think about law firms, the big-ticket law firms that require that you work many hours, that you travel a lot, that you're there in the evening—it used to be to go out for drinks—

Marshall Poe

They don't do that anymore.

Claudia Goldin

—with the big-ticket client. Those law firms have considerably higher hourly fees, okay. But if you work for the boutique law firm, you could put in more hours. Your hourly fee would not be as high. You've already opted for the job that isn't as demanding.

Marshall Poe

I see just what you mean. Yeah, I think that's an important point. So, I think it would be helpful to give an example. And in the book, you give the example of Isabel and Lucas. Can you talk a little bit about Isabel and Lucas?

Claudia Goldin

Sure, let's put some faces on the issue. So, consider here it's a heterosexual couple. They're both Engineers. They both graduated from the same institution with the same degrees. Let's say they have a master's in electrical engineering.

They marry, they plan to have children, but they enter the job market and each of them lands a job at the same IT firm. And they both take a job that begins with a salary of let's say 90,000 a year, and it's a job that does require that they be on-call several evenings. Maybe they'll never be called, but maybe they will be called to fix someone's equipment. The total number of hours is the same as it might be in a regular job, but they have to jump when they're asked to jump.

This goes on for a while, they're very happy. And then they have children. They have, let's say one, two children. And they realize that both of them can't be on-call at the office. One of them, you know, every now and then would have to say to the firm, 'I can't be there at 1:00 in the morning. I, in fact, can't be there at 7:00 at night.'

And so, one of them—and it's as I said, it's disproportionately the woman—takes the job in the same firm that doesn't require those on-call hours. She has greater flexibility. She has greater predictability. She can contribute. Both in terms of she can control her hours more, and she also knows that she's not going to be called at various hours. She's not going to disappoint.

And that job, let's say, pays less. Let's say it pays seventy-two thousand a year. That's still pretty good. They're doing well. That's 80% of what he's making. Now, they could both take that job, but then they would be leaving 18,000 on the table every year. So, that's the example.

Marshall Poe

So, this is a kind of division of labor—to use an old economic term—within the household?

Claudia Goldin

Right, and so we can think back to the old sitcoms of, let's say, *Father Knows Best* or *Leave it to Beaver*. And there, the specialization was rather extreme. There was one person, was not just on-call at home—one person was at home. And one person wasn't just on call at the office; that person was in the office. This is certainly far less extreme than that.

Marshall Poe

So, let's turn to the basic narrative of the book, and this will explain to the listeners how we got from wherever we were to greedy work. And if I could just speak for a moment, you talk about five successive cohorts of women, and they are defined very crudely—and I'm sorry for the simplification—by college or not and when, married or not and when, borne children or not and when, and then finally their participation in the workforce or not, and at various points in their lives and with various aims. And the five cohorts, let's begin with the very first one. And this is the years that they went to college, from 1900 to 1919, and you call this family or career. Can you tell us about them?

Claudia Goldin

Sure. So, there are five groups, and you're correct that they are divided up in some reasonable logical manner in terms of various outcomes. So, if the audience could see—and I hope that they get the book and then they will see—the fraction of whoever married, the ages at which they marry, the fraction of who had children, when they had children, their jobs, their labor force participation. You would see that they divided up into sort of five logical groups, and the groups, in terms of their aspirations and in terms of what they achieved, they morph from a group that begins with Group 1, as you said graduated, went to college, in the first two decades in the 20th century.

This was a group that had, in some sense, either family or career. It was absolutely rare for them to have both, and the numbers in terms of their achievement of one or the other are really quite extreme. So, for example, 50% of this group, of the entire group, and this isn't just women who went to Vassar. This is, in fact, the majority of women went to state institutions of higher education and graduated from them. Around 50% of this group never had or never adopted a child, and about 1/3 never married. So, that's pretty extreme. They had family or career, and if I can, let me just fast-forward to group 3 and skip over group two in the interest of time and to make certain that readers or listeners are not confused. So, group 1 and group 3 could not be more different. So, group 3, graduated from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s. Almost all of them married. It's an astoundingly large number of like 91%, and the vast majority of them had children. So, they couldn't be more different.

And what's interesting is that even though the fraction of the US population who went to and graduated from college increased by quite a lot over the 20th century, the differences across these groups are not due to that type of selection. In fact, the elite changed along with the hoi polloi. So, these changes were ones that sort of swept the nation like a tidal wave.

And so, this group, group 3, they are the women of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. They are the mothers of the baby boom. They gave birth to the baby boom rather than being the baby boom, and they had, quite clearly, they had family first. They married at ages that my students, when I show them the numbers, are shocked. They married right after college, a year, two years, after. The median age at first marriage for this group was just below 23, which is pretty, that's frightening. And they had family, but then they—you know, Betty Friedan captured their emotions when they were sort of at home in this mode of real specialization, but in many ways, they had their get-out-of-jail-

free cards sitting around because the vast majority majored in fields that they would, they knew they would re-enter at some point. So, they had family, then job, and a few of them, because life is long, managed also to have a career when the kids were out of the house. And let's then fast forward again to the latest group, which is group 5.

And for group 5—and I'll say a little bit about group 4, which is my group—group 5, for group 5, both children and marriage are considerably delayed. Their fraction of having kids is certainly not as great as it was for the baby boom mothers, for sure. But everything is simply delayed, and it's this delay that began with group 4, who had career and then family, that is so important. Group 5 looked at group 4 and said, you wanted family, but you failed at it. 27% of you have not had kids by the time you were 45. We're going to do better. And indeed, they have done better. Their career and family success is certainly greater, so that there have been enormous changes across these groups from one to the next. I think of them as well as overlapping generations, mothers and daughters, nieces and aunts, granddaughters and grandmothers.

There have been enormous changes, and I think of them in some sense as running a race and passing the baton from one to the next—a baton that contained advice, statements, about the problems you're going to face along the way. How to change the world. The changes from one to the next are largely due to a host of major fundamental technological changes, and one that I feel very strongly about and have written about is the pill, but I'll end there.

Marshall Poe

I should tell listeners that, you should definitely pick this book up because you will find, not only yourself in it, but you will find your parents in it and your grandparents in it. If I could just talk a little bit about the third group family then job. That's my mom. My mom went to college—this is in Kansas—and she dropped out of college to get married.

Then after kind of a messy divorce, she realized she had to earn money. So, she went back to college when I was young and became a certified teacher. And she worked as a certified teacher for 30 years. Now, here's an interesting thing about my mom: she told me till the day she died that she never wanted to work. She had no intention of ever working. She wanted to be June Cleaver. And I mean, she had a very rewarding career, she was a great teacher, her students loved her. But she was not pursuing any career and did not want one.

So then if we can skip forward to career then family—this is 66 to 79 or a little bit later, I would say—this is my sister. My sister graduated from college, became a journalist, worked in a corporation, and then met a guy who is an engineer. He works at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, very successful guy. He also happened to play for the Red Sox—quite a guy. And she realized that she just really had to quit in order to raise kids. Um, and then the third group, career and family, that's me. Because I've tried to balance these things, and let me tell you, it's been very, very difficult. And I think as people pick the book up, they will find themselves in it in many places and their mothers and fathers.

So, I wonder if we could talk a little bit about the future of 3D work and where we are today. One of the things you say in the book is that in order to get us out of the—I think I can call it a problem—the problem of greedy work and its inequity, we need to change the structure of work. What would that look like?

Claudia Goldin

Sure. Well, the first thing is that we have a sense of what the problem is. Then that there are many problems that are difficult—climate change? Difficult. Cancer? Difficult. COVID? Well, we figured out

what the problem was, and we've done a pretty good job. Obviously the virus is smarter than we are.

Marshall Poe

Yeah, I agree with that.

Claudia Goldin

But certainly, knowing what the problem is, is part of the solution. So, but a solution is really needed. Let me just give a quotation from the book that I think will get people to see why a solution is so important.

Marshall Poe

By all means.

Claudia Goldin

So, I said: "Men are able to have a family and step up because women step back from their careers to provide more time for the family, but both are deprived. Men forgo time with the family, and women forgo career."

So, what to do, what to do? So, there are sort of two parts of this, at least. So, first of all, every couple on their own has to make a decision to have more equity. So, as everyone who is in a relationship knows, the happiness of the relationship is equal to the minimum level of happiness from one member of the couple. So, there's no way out, okay.

I had a student in my class a long time ago who was a time when I was first thinking about some of these issues, certainly not as deep as I got in the book, and I would go around the room and I would say to my students, what sort of future do you want? I think if I did that now, they would all say a job on Wall Street, but at that point—which was like 25 years ago—this woman said that the most important thing is to find a spouse who wants what you want.

Marshall Poe

Huh.

Claudia Goldin

And that is absolutely not something that you can write on OkCupid or Tinder, or [inaudible] you want, and I don't think you can get very far.

Marshall Poe

No, you're not going to do well with that, no.

Claudia Goldin

No. So, that's the first part, but the second one is to make it easier for a couples to do that because obviously, when greedy work is paying so much more, then couples are in some sense enticed to have this division of labor, to have this type of specialization, and therefore to wind up, as I said, where women step back from their careers to provide more time for family. So, men are able to have both.

So, what exactly—how can we sort of change the market? That's certainly harder, and it involves sort of reducing the price of flexibility. That's sort of a very difficult concept because most people would say, oh, we should just have more flexible jobs. My answer is, I can take any job and make it flexible. And I can also make it pay very little, okay. I have a lower bound, which is the minimum wage.

Marshall Poe

Yeah.

Claudia Goldin

So other than that, so it's actually reducing the price of flexibility. And just so that listeners think that there is going to be something good at the end of what I'm going to say, let me say that there really has been a silver lining to this dark cloud that descended on us in March of 2020. And that is that in many ways, the price of flexibility has gone down. The one thing that we want to guard against is to make certain that, if work is hybrid and some people are home two days a week, that work from home does not become a female ghetto. But certainly, the fact that in many jobs—that handshake that you used to have to do in person in Korea, or the contract that you used to have to sign in person in Japan and go every two weeks—that we know is being done less by flying over the Pacific or flying over the Atlantic, if you were doing that in Oslo, and more through a range of different means. And so, that is certainly one aspect of reducing the price of flexibility, that there are jobs that parents particularly women couldn't take because they knew that they couldn't fly every other weekend. And now, they will be able to take those jobs. So, there is this silver lining to this very, very dark cloud, but let me just talk a little bit more about what I mean by changing the price of flexibility because I understand that this is hard to wrap your head around, and there are many jobs that people have where they think, there's no way this is going to happen in my job. So, let me give you a couple of examples.

So, if you need to be at a meeting at 11 a.m. on Thursday, but you also need to be the parent at the parent-teacher conference, really all you need is just one really great substitute, and jobs that have efficient teams of substitutes enable flexibility and reduce the greediness of work. But how did these come about? Some of these changes have actually happened sort of organically and not for any of the reasons that I've been discussing, and the example of pharmacists and pharmacy comes to mind. There was a time when the pharmacist owned his own business—

Marshall Poe

I worked in one of those briefly.

Claudia Goldin

—he was the residual claimant, and that took a lot of effort and a lot of work. And it meant that, you know, if the roof was leaking at one in the morning—

Marshall Poe

Yeah, you were there.

Claudia Goldin

—or get someone to fix it, and such pharmacists often hired other pharmacists as assistants. Very often that pharmacist was a woman, so in fact, the relative earnings of women to men who were pharmacist 1970 was really, really lower, as today it's almost, you know, equal. The rise of the corporate model associated with CVS and Walgreens and Rite Aid changed all of that and pharmacists became much better substitutes for each other through also the standardization of drugs, the elaborate information technologies that they use. They no longer receive the financial rewards or have the time demands of ownership, and the gender earnings gap for hourly earnings in pharmacy is among the lowest in the high-paying professions, and they are in the group of very high paying professions.

And I hope that everyone understands just how important pharmacists are for you. They are not pill counters. They are the people who are your first line of defense against many different diseases and disorders. We saw how they were in the front lines of the fight against COVID.

Marshall Poe

Yeah, they gave us all covid shots. They gave me a COVID shot, two of them.

Claudia Goldin

Yeah. And in fact, the fact that the gender earnings gap in pharmacy is fairly low is even though a substantial fraction of female pharmacists work part-time at least at some point in their career, and the fraction female among pharmacists is somewhere between 55 and 60 something percent. A very different set of reasons for change is found in fields like pediatrics.

Many pediatricians, independent of their gender, wanted to be with their own children. After all, if they want to be with your children, certainly they want to be with their own children. At least, when their children are not teenagers.

Marshall Poe

Yeah.

Claudia Goldin

So, many of them wanted more flexibility, and they formed group practices that enabled them to better choose their schedules. And their clients could get to know various pediatricians in the group so that their children would be less upset if the doctor they saw last time was not the doc on-call this time. And similar changes occurred in veterinary medicine, by the way. In 1970, if Muffy got sick or injured—and Muffy's either a cat or a dog—

Marshall Poe

Yeah.

Claudia Goldin

—you called up your veterinarian. Maybe you even woke up your veterinarian because there were no regional hospitals, or very few. Now, regional veterinary hospitals that are corporate owned—and I'm not saying that the people who work there love those corporations, by the way.

Marshall Poe

Sure.

Claudia Goldin

Many of them do, and the corporations are in some sense good for clients, and there may also be good for the professionals as well. So, with the advent of these regional veterinary hospitals, it means that the clinic, that veterinarian—who I possibly called in 1975 for my dog, whose name was not Muffy—

Marshall Poe

Yeah.

Claudia Goldin

—that veterinarian no longer has to be on-call. In fact, when I call my veterinarian now, I get after hours. I am told which regional hospital to go to. It's the same thing with your primary care physician. When you get sick, you don't call your primary care physician.

Marshall Poe

Yeah, you don't do that.

Claudia Goldin

You call the group, or the hospital. So, there are many different ways. One could go through case after case. But let me also say that another aspect of what has happened since March of 2020 that I never could have predicted was that we have come together as a nation in talking about caregiving, both for children and for older individuals, or anyone who is disabled or sick. Universal preschool as a national commitment has advanced. It's part of the national discussion. It was not part of the national discussion before March of 2020.

In addition, notions about issues about after school care. For example, the school day still ends before 3 p.m. Almost no work day ends at that time.

Marshall Poe

Mine doesn't.

Claudia Goldin

Yeah, so there's also a greater discussion about after school programs. These policies could reduce the hours that one parent must be on-call. They are not certainly the full solution.

Marshall Poe

I would say nothing is the full solution. I want to circle back to something you said earlier about the silver lining to COVID, and it seems to me that we have been, I'll use the word, beneficiaries of an enormous natural experiment. And suddenly, we couldn't go to work anymore. And what would we do? And I think this has really changed the way people think about going into the office, just speaking anecdotally.

Actually, a funny anecdote. I was on a Zoom call with about five people at a big corporation—this is a couple of weeks ago—and one of them was in office. And we all stopped and said, hey, he's in an office. Because I hadn't seen anyone in an office for a year, and it's like, wow, he's in an office, how do you like that? He's like, yeah, you know, it's nice to see people, watercooler, blah, blah, blah. But it will be interesting to see whether things spring back—I don't think they will—to go into the office and be there at 9:00 and leave at 5:00, or whether corporate America and these individual proprietors start to work more flexibly. Are there economists working on this problem now?

Claudia Goldin

Absolutely.

Marshall Poe

Yeah, I bet.

Claudia Goldin

So, but we can't work on it because no one's made decisions. Things are still quite up in the air. Although, let me back up and say that we are very lucky people. So, we know from current population survey data that began to be collected in May of 2020, the fraction of individuals who could work at home and actually the fraction of individuals who did work at home, and there's an enormous divide by education. So, college graduates, you know, 70% were immediately working at home, full-time at home. And for those who were not B.A.'s, okay, did not have a four-year degree—

Marshall Poe

Yeah.

Claudia Goldin

—it was, you know, less than half that. And those are the individuals who are in the front lines, those are the individuals who are more exposed. So, the, you know, so I think that we have to realize that this isn't exactly a choice that everyone has. I am in my office right now.

Marshall Poe

Yeah.

Claudia Goldin

At Harvard. I just went out to the quote water cooler. I had to put a mask on, I saw another faculty member, someone who I'm very close with, who prior to COVID, we would have hugged, we would have gone through the touch and the sensation of we're there together. And we can't do that now. So, the water cooler is a little cooler than it used to be.

Marshall Poe

Yeah, well said.

Claudia Goldin

But one of the things that I am going to be working on as soon as I finish a lot of different podcasts and interviews is the issue of what happens next. And I bumped into a friend of mine, who's in Cambridge city government, and she said, everyone is back five days a week, but that's not going to last. And the reason it's not going to last is precisely what Marshall just said, which is that lots of firms are saying, well, we can go to a two, three or three, two—

Marshall Poe

Yeah, that's what I'm seeing too.

Claudia Goldin

—and firms have discovered that this can be very, very good in lots of ways. They can reduce their footprint to the extent that they can get out of commercial contracts.

Marshall Poe

Right.

Claudia Goldin

They can enable workers who were commuting to actually, you know, they were commuting two hours a day. That's two additional hours of their day they could be doing good work. They were spending a lot of money on parking in big cities. They were spending a lot of money on their housing. They could live in a lovely Northampton rather than living in Boston.

Marshall Poe

Right.

Claudia Goldin

So, we are in a period of flux, and we're going to see how things shake out when we're back to normal.

Marshall Poe

Yeah, I think you made a very important point about us. Let's just say you and me, the set of 2. We are very lucky people. A clever friend of mine calls this, the Zoom class, but not everybody is in the Zoom class. And I know a lot of people who are not, I know a lot of people in the construction trades.

I work renovating houses sometimes, and they are not, and they have to show up. There's no substitute. There's no dialing it in when you're renovating a house. Similarly, if you work at a restaurant or in the service industries—especially the sort of face-to-face service industries—these people have it hard.

Claudia Goldin

But what was amazing, and still amazes me, is just how many jobs that we never thought could be done remotely can be done remotely, and many of them have led to gains from clients as well. Telemedicine may not be perfect, but for many people in rural areas, it's a lot better than no medicine.

Marshall Poe

Yeah, yeah, I agree with you completely. Again, this is a natural experiment, and the results of it are still coming in, but they look pretty good. Just to give you another example, I have a friend who works as an executive recruiter, and in executive recruiting, it was common to fly to Houston for a 20-minute meeting.

He doesn't do that anymore, and neither does anybody on his team. So now, they simply have a Zoom call or something, and the savings involved with that, the increase in productivity, is tremendous. Now that everybody understands that this kind of thing can be done remotely, and you know, say what you will about Zoom and so on and so forth, it does have incredible economies, which we are—at least if you're in the Zoom class—tremendous beneficiaries of. Let me ask you—thank you very much for being on the show, it's been a fascinating discussion—let me ask you, what is the traditional final question—and you kind of already answered it—on the New Books Network, and that is, what are you working on now?

Claudia Goldin

So, I'm working on several different things. One has to do with universal preschool in the past. So, I'm studying the preschools, also known as nurseries, set up during World War II to enable at-home moms to work in the nation's factories. And the program was known as the Lanham Act nurseries. Although, the Lanham Act itself was an infrastructure spending bill, which is just a wonderful twist since people were complaining that we had an infrastructure bill that had universal preschools as part of it. And in fact, the Lanham Act is a very good example of that.

And so my team is tracking as many of these nurseries as we can through newspapers. Believe it or not, the government never took down where these nurseries were. They gave money to municipalities; municipalities gave it away as fast as they could. We were at war. I mean—

Marshall Poe

Yeah, yeah, there were things to do.

Claudia Goldin

Yeah, and so what we're going to be doing is then through the magic of modern social science, we are going to be getting the group of children in 1940 who could have gone to these schools—

Marshall Poe

Fascinating.

Claudia Goldin

—and we're going to track them over time versus a group of children who could not have gone to these schools.

Marshall Poe

Wow, that's cool.

Claudia Goldin

And so that's part of it. And then the other part is exactly what we were just talking about, about the role of the pandemic and women's employment and labor force participation.

Marshall Poe

Well, thank you very much for that. Let me tell everybody that we've been talking to Claudia Goldin about her terrific book, *Career and Family: Women's Century-Long Journey Toward Equity*. This is Marshall Poe, I'm the editor of the New Books Network, and I want to thank everybody for listening, but especially I want to thank Claudia for being on the show. Thank you very much.