

Claudia Goldin

By Stan Engerman

I have known Claudia Goldin for over forty years – about two-thirds of her life and over fifty percent of mine. We met when she started working on the economics of slavery with Robert Fogel at the University of Chicago. From that initial meeting followed more or less continuous contacts at various meetings of the Cliometric Society (in Purdue and elsewhere), the Economic History Association and the American Economic Association, the latter two groups of which she subsequently became president. There was also the Development of the American Economy Program (DAE) of the National Bureau of Economic Research and its two annual meetings. At first, with Robert Fogel as DAE Director, Claudia and I were members of the DAE Advisory Committee, along with Lance Davis, Robert Gallman, and Clayne Pope. In return for service we were rewarded with a lavish dinner after each meeting. When Bob Fogel stepped down as DAE Director and Claudia took his place, Lance commented that this would be the end of the Advisory Committee and its lavish meals, and so it was. Let me add, however, as I will return to, that Claudia has done such a great job organizing and running the DAE program that clearly the advisory committee and the meals were expendable, and the NBER's money was put to much better use.

Although counting years is customary in personal relations, I realized that I could also have divided this period into the eras of three wonderful dogs. First, the long lived Kelso (no doubt named after the famous race horse – the fourth best thoroughbred of the twentieth

century according to Blood-Horse magazine). After that I may have missed one or two dogs before the sadly short-lived Prairie and the current Pika.

Claudia's educational background is quite interesting in that she was clearly part of the expansion of female education that she and Larry Katz subsequently wrote so much about:

- As a high school student, she was one of the few females attending the prestigious Bronx High School of Science – limited for its first years to males only. Its graduates have won eight Nobel Prizes, mostly in Physics (none, so far, in Economics). This is no doubt the greatest number of any high school in the United States and possibly the world. Bronx Science later began to admit more women among those who passed their stringent entrance exam but the gender ratio remained unbalanced. When in high school Claudia was interested in the sciences, which she later found made a useful contribution to her work as an economist.
- Claudia then moved on to Cornell, where she graduated with a major in Economics. This shift was influenced by Alfred Kahn, a distinguished scholar of industrial organization, considered by many to be the father of airline deregulation. At this time the share of women among Cornell undergraduates was only about one-quarter (statistic courtesy of George Boyer and Ronald Ehrenberg). In this regard, and in reference to Claudia's work on co-education: Cornell apparently had separate campuses for men and for women into the 1970s.

- Finally, Claudia went to the University of Chicago, receiving a PhD in 1972. From my observation the gender ratio at the time was quite different from more recent cohorts.

Since receiving her doctoral degree, Claudia has written in excess of one hundred articles, some co-authored, many singly done, and three important books. She also edited four conference volumes on a wide range of topics. Such impressive output and great breadth of subjects make it difficult to describe, let alone examine, all or many in this brief space. We are all quite familiar with her work on gender and educational issues – in particular, Understanding the Gender Gap: An Economic History of American Women (Goldin 1990) and The Race Between Education and Technology (Goldin and Katz 2008). Both are path-breaking works, as close to definitive as possible in these most contentious areas. Rather than focus on these, however, I want to return to some of Claudia's earlier important work on other topics – work that has demonstrated commendable staying power among historians, economists, and economic historians. This description should be especially useful to those who know her career based on her entry on Wikipedia, which has article summaries only after 1990.

Her first book, *Urban Slavery in the American South, 1820-1860: A Quantitative History* was an important contribution (Goldin 1975). Superficially, the book seems to start from a small issue, but one that has considerably broader implications. Previously, it was argued by historians of the American South that the decline in the share of slaves in southern cities (relative to the countryside) meant that slavery was proven to be inefficient and doomed to collapse fairly soon. By extensive primary archival research, collecting data on slave prices and

occupations, and with a clever application of supply-and-demand, she showed that the relative decline of slavery in the cities was not due to economic inefficiency but rather the opposite – demand was booming in the rural (cotton) sector. This argument has won the day among historians and the book may still be found on many reading lists in history and economic history, achieving a consensus, unlike other research on slavery at the time.

In the late 1970s and into the 1980s Claudia co-authored several excellent articles that have remained important to economics and economic history, all based on clever theoretical models, along with primary and secondary quantitative analyses. One, with Frank Lewis (Goldin and Lewis 1980), is a re-examination of the particular pattern of US economic growth after independence, which tested a frequent hypothesis of the time, the impact of exports on economic growth. Another, also with Frank Lewis, estimated the economic costs of the Civil War and the nature of the postwar recovery, showing that the costs were extremely high in both human and physical capital – much greater, for example, than the market value of slaves in 1860 (Goldin and Lewis 1975).

Two classic articles with the late Kenneth Sokoloff (Goldin and Sokoloff 1982, 1984) raised many issues for the study of antebellum economic growth and the effects of age-sex composition in the labor force, such as the size of industrial firms, and the role of patterns of crop production in leading to economic differences in agriculture between North and South. These articles opened up new bodies of research among economic historians, as well as development economists, and remain frequently cited.

In closing I will point to other types of significant contributions that Claudia has made to numerous students and colleagues with her very generous and helpful comments, suggestions, and encouragement. She has been a mentor to a large number of students. Some of her benefits to others came when she was editor of the Journal of Economic History, others from her teaching and advising, and still others with letters and discussions with colleagues and other economists.

Thus she has had a great impact on scholarship in economics and economic history going beyond her publications. In addition, as director of the DAE, her main focus has been to provide an entry for younger scholars into the profession along with opportunities to interact with senior members; and more generally, to demonstrate the central importance of economic history to economics as a scholarly discipline.

In all regards, Claudia Goldin has been a model of the scholarly life, worthy of emulation by all.

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