

# Her Equal Claiming

## Introduction

The quest for economic equality for women has been a long and arduous struggle, marked by both progress and setbacks. From the dawn of the industrial revolution to the present day, women have fought for the right to equal pay, equal opportunity, and equal treatment in the workplace.

In "Her Equal Claiming", we delve into the rich tapestry of this struggle, exploring the historical, social, and political forces that have shaped women's economic status in America. We trace the roots of gender bias in economic policy, examining how deeply embedded beliefs about women's roles and capabilities have limited their economic opportunities.

We examine the impact of landmark legislation, such as the New Deal and the Civil Rights Act, on women's economic well-being. We highlight the challenges faced by women in the workforce, including the persistent gender pay gap, the glass ceiling, and the lack of access to affordable childcare.

We also celebrate the triumphs of the women's movement, which has brought about significant gains in women's economic status. We explore the role of feminism in transforming women's roles in the family and the workplace, and we examine the impact of women's increasing participation in the labor force on the economy as a whole.

"Her Equal Claiming" is a comprehensive and thought-provoking examination of women's economic equality in America. It is a call to action for all who believe in justice and fairness to join the fight for a more equitable future for women.

## Book Description

In "Her Equal Claiming", Alice Kessler-Harris pierces the veil of social policy and legislation to reveal the deeply embedded gender bias that has shaped the economic experiences of women in America. From the New Deal to the 1970s, she traces the impact of seemingly neutral social legislation that, in reality, further limited women's freedom and equality.

Kessler-Harris argues that a "gendered imagination" has defined what men and women alike think of as fair and desirable. This imagination has led to policies that protect women from exploitation, even from employment itself, while simultaneously attaching the most important benefits to wage work. The result is a system that has historically excluded women from full economic citizenship.

Kessler-Harris's brilliant analysis sheds new light on the issues that continue to dominate headlines today,

from the marriage penalty in the tax code to the glass ceiling in corporate America. She shows how the legacy of gender bias continues to shape women's economic opportunities and argues for a comprehensive approach to achieving economic justice.

"Her Equal Claiming" is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of women's economic status in America, the challenges facing women in the workplace today, and the ongoing fight for gender equality. Kessler-Harris's insights are essential for understanding the roots of economic inequality and for creating a more just and equitable future for all.

# Chapter 1: A Legacy of Gender Bias

## Topic 1: The historical roots of gender bias in economic policy

Economic policy in the United States has long been shaped by gender bias, a legacy that can be traced back to the nation's founding. The belief that women's primary role is in the home, while men are the breadwinners, has been deeply embedded in American culture and law.

This gendered division of labor has had a profound impact on women's economic opportunities. Women have historically been excluded from many high-paying jobs, and they have been paid less than men for the same work. They have also been less likely to own property or to have access to credit.

The roots of this gender bias can be found in the common law, which denied women the right to own property, enter into contracts, or sue in their own

names. These legal restrictions made it difficult for women to participate in the economy on an equal footing with men.

In the early 20th century, the rise of industrialization led to new opportunities for women in the workforce. However, women were often relegated to low-paying jobs, such as factory work and domestic service. They were also excluded from many professions, such as law, medicine, and engineering.

Even when women did manage to enter the workforce, they faced discrimination and harassment. They were often paid less than men for the same work, and they were less likely to be promoted to positions of leadership.

The legacy of gender bias in economic policy has had a lasting impact on women's economic status in the United States. Women continue to earn less than men, and they are less likely to hold positions of power and influence. This gender wage gap and the lack of women

in leadership positions are not only unjust, but they also represent a significant loss of talent and potential for the economy.

# Chapter 1: A Legacy of Gender Bias

## Topic 2: How gender stereotypes have shaped social legislation

Gender stereotypes are deeply ingrained beliefs about the characteristics and behaviors that are considered appropriate for men and women. These stereotypes have been shaped by centuries of social, cultural, and economic factors, and they continue to exert a powerful influence on our lives.

In the realm of social legislation, gender stereotypes have played a significant role in shaping policies that affect women's economic opportunities. For example, the belief that women are primarily responsible for childcare and domestic work has led to policies that make it difficult for women to balance work and family life.

These policies include the lack of affordable childcare, the absence of paid family leave, and the gender pay



gap. They create a system in which women are often forced to choose between their careers and their families, and they contribute to the persistent undervaluation of women's work.

Gender stereotypes have also been used to justify laws that restrict women's access to employment. For example, in the early 20th century, many states had laws that prohibited women from working in certain occupations, such as law, medicine, and engineering. These laws were based on the belief that women were not capable of performing these jobs, and they served to reinforce the gendered division of labor.

Today, gender stereotypes continue to influence social legislation in a number of ways. For example, the gender pay gap is often justified by the argument that women are less productive than men. This argument is based on the stereotype that women are less ambitious, less competitive, and less capable than men.

Another example is the lack of paid family leave. The United States is the only developed country that does not have a national paid family leave policy. This is due in part to the stereotype that men are the breadwinners and women are the caregivers. This stereotype makes it difficult for policymakers to recognize the need for paid family leave, which would benefit both men and women.

Gender stereotypes are a barrier to economic equality for women. They shape social legislation in ways that limit women's opportunities and perpetuate the gender pay gap. Challenging these stereotypes is essential for creating a more just and equitable society.

# Chapter 1: A Legacy of Gender Bias

## Topic 3: The impact of gender bias on women's economic opportunities

Gender bias has a profound impact on women's economic opportunities, limiting their ability to participate fully in the workforce and achieve economic security. This bias is manifested in a variety of ways, including:

- **Occupational segregation:** Women are disproportionately concentrated in low-paying, low-status occupations, such as service jobs and clerical work. This segregation is often the result of discrimination, both overt and subtle, that steers women away from more lucrative and prestigious fields.
- **The gender pay gap:** Women earn less than men for the same work, even when they have the same qualifications and experience. This gap is

due to a variety of factors, including discrimination, occupational segregation, and the undervaluation of women's work.

- **Lack of access to leadership positions:** Women are underrepresented in leadership positions in business, government, and academia. This is due to a variety of factors, including discrimination, bias, and the lack of flexible work arrangements that would allow women to balance their work and family responsibilities.
- **The motherhood penalty:** Women who have children often face a motherhood penalty in the workplace, which means that they are paid less, promoted less often, and are more likely to be laid off than women who do not have children. This penalty is due to discrimination and the lack of affordable childcare.

These are just some of the ways that gender bias impacts women's economic opportunities. This bias has

a devastating effect on women's lives, making it more difficult for them to achieve economic security, independence, and equality.

**This extract presents the opening three sections of the first chapter.**

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