PROBABILITY OF MISSINGNESS

Women’s History Month Lecture
St. Mary’s University
Thursday, March 30, 2017
Last days of Women's History Month, take this opportunity to raise the issue of Feminist Economics, which falls squarely in our studies on the various theories that inform economics beyond classical and neoclassical economics – perspectives that are standard and taken a given in many courses involving economic ideas.
WHAT IS FEMINIST ECONOMICS?

• “It encompasses debates about the relationship between feminism and economics on many levels: from applying mainstream economic methods to what feminist economists claim are under-researched "women's" areas, to questioning how mainstream economics values the reproductive sector, to examinations of economic epistemology and methodology.”

(https://www.academicroom.com/topics/what-is-feminist-economics)
• In International Economics we are interested in measuring economic activity and understanding its impact on the human condition.

• We talked about how GDP, or rather real GDP, was one of the key measurements. Now, after having discussed mainstream economic theory and the many faces and foci, we can return to the idea of GDP and critique it from a different theoretical perspective – feminist economics.

• The initial emphasis of feminist economists was to critique the established theory, methodology, and policy approaches.
• The critique began in microeconomics of the household and labor markets and spread to macroeconomics and international trade, leaving no field in economics untouched.
• Classical and Neoclassical economics focus on production for market exchange.
• The source of value is important.
• Price determined by the market – free market
COUNTING WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS

• GDP, RGDP, PER CAPITA GDP, Changes in these over time, differences between countries, composition of, distribution of in terms of which resources earn incomes from which activities linked to international trade.
• In other words GDP is center stage as a key statistic or measure.
• Measuring aggregate economic activity is really a 19th century phenomenon – Alfred Marshall’s Principles of Economics (1890) began process
• Great Depression and WWII generated need to quantify economic activity so it could me marshalled in the service of immediate needs
• Simon Kuznets creates first official accounts
Kuznets focused on both welfare and output to include the individual contributions on a daily basis.

As the conversation progressed, this aspect of measuring economic activity was left behind as government officials argued for governments needs.

Keynes further refined the number into what we now see as

- \( C + I + G + (X-M) \)
Born to tobacco farmers in the south, Henrietta Lacks, married with children found herself with would later be identified as a very virulent for of cervical cancer.

She went to Johns Hopkins where a special ward had been setup to treat blacks in the 1950s.

A biopsy was taken for the tumor without conformed consent.
• These HeLa cells were unique – at the time – and reproduced rapidly, resolving a cellular biology issue in the labs.

• From that time forward, the HeLa cells were cultivar and sold on to other labs for experimentation.

• “HeLa led to the understanding that normal human cells have 46 chromosomes. NASA launched HeLa into orbit to test how human cells behave in zero-gravity. The cells, in turn, helped launch virology as a field and shot medical research forward like a rocket.”

• “60 years later, Lacks' tissue has yielded an estimated 50 million metric tons of HeLa cells. Scientific and medical researchers add about 300 HeLa-related studies a month to the library of 60,000 studies.”
FEMINIST ECONOMICS AND GDP

“One prominent claim that feminist economists make is that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) does not adequately measure unpaid labor predominantly performed by women, such as housework, childcare, and eldercare. Since a large part of women's work is rendered invisible, they argue that policies meant to boost GDP can, in many instances, actually worsen the impoverishment of women, even if the intention is to increase prosperity.”
ADDITIONAL CRITIQUES

• Rhetorical approach of mainstream economics. Language, to include mathematics, are biased, therefore the discourse is biased and dominated by men.

• They have made critiques of many basic assumptions of mainstream economics, including the Homo economicus model – self interest and rational individuals

• They have been instrumental in creating alternative models, such as the Capability Approach and incorporating gender into the analysis of economic data.
• ...framework for a range of normative exercises, including most prominent the following:
  • (1) the assessment of individual well-being;
  • (2) the evaluation and assessment of social arrangements; and
  • (3) the design of policies and proposals about social change in society.

• ... the capability approach prioritizes certain of peoples' beings and doings and their opportunities to realize those beings and doings (such as their genuine opportunities to be educated, their ability to move around or to enjoy supportive social relationships).

• This stands in contrast to other accounts of well-being, which focus exclusively on subjective categories (such as happiness) or on the material means to well-being (such as resources like income or wealth).
ALTERNATIVES TO GDP OR A MORE INCLUSIVE MEASURE

• Many feminist economists argue that economic success cannot only be measured in terms of goods, but must also be measured by human well-being.

• To evaluate economic well-being, one cannot only look at distribution of wealth or income, but one must also look at individual entitlements and needs.

• Amartya Sen, Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, and other feminist economists have been involved in the development of alternatives to GDP, such as the Human Development Index.

• An important issue is education: with an increase in levels of education will come an increase in economic success.
HIDDEN ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT GENDER

• Subordination of women to men…inherent in pedagogy and theory
  • Leads to exclusion of women from certain activities
  • Women’s work is devalued or undervalued – child-rearing, care, community work
  • Language – hard and soft skills, masculine dreams v. feminine dreams.
NEW OR OTHER MEASURES

- Green GDP – China
- Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (OECD) (factors in negatives)
- Genuine Progress Indicator
- Happy Planet Index
- Gross National Happiness
- National Well-being Index
- Feed the Future – Women’s Empowerment Index
  - Production, Resources, Income, Leadership, Time use
THE MARIANIST CONTRIBUTION TO FEMINIST ECONOMICS

• First policy brief written for this course focused on Marianist philosophy and international economics

• In retrospect, we can see that the Marianist focus on Social Justice is clearly part of the heterodox approach to economic thinking, including feminist economics.

• Educate for Service, Peace and Justice
  • Educate for solidarity as well as justice and peace.
  • Attend to the poor and marginalized.
  • Promote the dignity and rights of women.
    • “each woman and man possesses the full dignity of the human person, with its corresponding rights and responsibilities. As women’s roles, both domestic and public, attain new stature and recognition, the Marianist school promotes women’s equality and encourages their contributions to the school’s mission and to the larger culture. The school assures equal treatment in educational opportunities such as leadership, representation and salaries, while helping advance women’s equality through programs of social awareness and development.”
This is a term from statistics that refers to missing or no data for a variable. Data often are missing in research in **economics**, **sociology**, and **political science** because governments choose not to, or fail to, report critical statistics.
• *Mis-measuring our live: Why GDP Doesn’t Add Up*, A. Stiglitz, A. Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi (2010)
• Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy – The Capabilities Approach
• The Marianist Family www.marianist.org, The Marianist Education
• ‘Alternative to the GDP’ – NY Times
  https://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/30/alternatives-to-the-gdp/
• Feed the Future https://feedthefuture.gov/lp/womens-empowerment-agriculture-index
• *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, R. Skloot, Gale Group, 2010