

INTRODUCING RACE AND GENDER INTO ECONOMICS

Robin L. Bartlett, Ed.
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BY LEIGH S.
BROWNHILL

Teachers of introductory economics courses should take an interest in Robin L. Bartlett's *Introducing Race and Gender Into Economics*. The text is aimed at correcting the omissions of race and gender in mainstream economics courses and texts, the majority of which, tend to put such issues into special chapters, and often treat them in stereotypic ways. For that matter, many of the lesson plans and critiques in the book would fit nicely into many introductory courses, from women's studies to sociology. The content is heavily weighted to material from the United States, but some of the data is international and/or applicable to students globally.

The 17 chapters are organized into four sections and each addresses race and/or gender issues in economics courses. Part I develops a framework for integrating gender and race into introductory courses. Bartlett details the process of transforming "a very traditional" syllabus into one with a "more balanced presentation of a more inclusive range of topics, a broader range of methodologies, and a greater mix of teaching and evaluative techniques." Part II offers six lesson plans for microeconomics, ranging from protective legislation and housing to affirmative action and risk analysis. Part III contains five lesson plans for macroeconomics, including a basic labor force model, the Asset Required Reserve Proposal, national accounting, the CPI (Consumer Price Index) and inflation. Part IV presents five chapters: a feminist critique of gender in

the study of economics, introducing race and gender into microeconomics courses, minimizing stereotyping among students and in course material, embracing students with various learning orientations, and questioning basic definitions underlying socio-demographic data.

Pamela J. Nickless and James D. Whitney's chapter, entitled "Protective labor legislation and women's employment," perfectly illustrates the practical uses of this text, as well as the limitations. The authors cite the "learned," decisions of the Supreme Court in 1905 and 1908 concerning protective legislation, which rest on sexist assumptions: "That woman's physical structure and the performance of maternal functions place her at a disadvantage in the struggle for existence is obvious (Muller). On the other hand, the activist opinion of a French suffragist in the 1890s illustrates the overlap between economics, labour politics and feminism: "...[women] newspaper folders ... are now authorized to wear themselves out for very little gain ... [yet] ... not women compositors. The inspectors received strict orders, and everywhere the women compositors were replaced by men" (Pognon). Nickless and Whitney put the debate in economic terms and cover important historical data. But they leave untouched the question of the exploitation inherent in the capitalist work structure. The lesson plans are useful within the context of mainstream capitalist economics; they fail to challenge the boundaries of that science, as many feminists and anti-racists have come to do.

After Marilyn Waring published her seminal text, *If Women Counted* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), and released the video version under the title *Whose Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies and Global Economics* (Toronto: National Film Board, 1995), anyone writing about the integration of race and gender analyses into the teaching of economics has a challenge cut out for her. Robin L. Bartlett's edited collec-

tion is a practical action-oriented book for teachers, many of whom have been steeped in race- and gender-blind classical economics for their whole lives: it is a step in the right direction. However, Waring's work is cited in only one chapter of Bartlett's book, Rachel A. Nugent's, "Critique of national accounting." The want of Waring's analysis in Bartlett's book points to a difference amongst the authors in the approaches to *application*. Whereas Waring promotes a women-centred social transformation embracing multiple forms of feminist action, most of the authors in Bartlett's collection seek rather to make adjustments to courses and texts, which they hope will make future economists more sensitive to and inclusive of the female and minority populations. Waring spotlights the devastating outcomes of the kind of economics that are taught and practiced in the schools and governments of the major world powers. Bartlett instead begins at the beginning of the "process of production" of economists—the introductory level economics course. While Bartlett's critique of the teaching of mainstream economics is convincing, the remedies that are offered do not go far enough in stemming the policy-related decisions that result from sexist and racist economics and have such an immediate effect on the entire world population, most directly and heavily, Third world women. Bartlett's text, however, could well be complemented by excerpts from Waring's work and videos such as the exposition on women's semi-slave labour in Tanzania, *These Hands* (directed by Flora M, mbugu-Schelling, California Newsreel, 1992) or the classic of women's war-time labour, *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (Clarity Educational Productions, 1980, distributed by Full Frame, Toronto).