

# Introduction: History of Economics as History of Social Science

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Disciplinary discourses often contain versions of their own history that historians, when they bother to look, find too narrow. These self-contained narratives of a discipline's past emphasize the analytical power of the specific, creative works that have shaped the discipline, and pay little attention to whatever extradisciplinary engagements may have helped to inspire these acts of creativity. But historians rarely bother to look. They are usually content to leave to the discipline's own chroniclers the task of assigning historical meaning to pivotal innovations and classic texts.

—David A. Hollinger, “The Defense of Democracy and Robert K. Merton’s Formulation of the Scientific Ethos” (1996)

The history of economics (which is here taken as synonymous with the history of economic thought) has neglected the relationship between economics and the other social sciences since the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> Where they have looked outside, historians of economics have mostly looked to the natural sciences. The aim of this volume is therefore to widen the conversation about the history of economics both substantively and historiographically: it seeks to contribute to the neglected history of the interactions between economics and its neighbors, and to draw in historians

1. For accounts of the history of the field, see Backhouse 2004 and Goodwin 2008. Its current state is assessed in Weintraub 2002a. Note that the term *human sciences* is also used to denote some of the disciplines described under “social sciences.” See, for example, Isaac 2007.

of other social sciences, whose approaches to the writing of history will bring fresh perspectives to bear on the subject.

The standard riposte to this claim will be that economics has built its identity by isolating itself from its neighbors. Like Robert Solow (1997, 54), one can be “tempted to guess that economics has drawn further away from the other social sciences in the past half-century” or even to conclude that the “truth is that there was little or no interchange even in 1940 or 1950.” Disciplinary boundaries may have been nonexistent in the eighteenth century and fluid in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but by 1945 the modern social sciences had emerged as autonomous discourses with their own identities. Whereas after the Second World War sociologists, psychologists, and political scientists may have built their identities on pluralistic orientations, economists, for the most part, moved away from their interwar pluralism (see Morgan and Rutherford 1998). Insofar as economists failed to look outside their own discipline, concerning themselves solely with internally generated problems, there would appear to be support for setting aside the question of the relationships between economics and other social sciences. However, as we argue elsewhere (Backhouse and Fontaine 2010), this was not the case. The expansion of the social sciences after the Second World War was accompanied by a proliferation of cross-disciplinary ventures, a number of which involved economists. The economists who engaged in such projects (e.g., Kenneth Boulding, Anthony Downs, Albert Hirschman, Mancur Olson, Thomas Schelling, and Herbert Simon) were not exceptions in an otherwise secluded discipline. The strong identity of economics does not so much imply isolation from other social sciences as the silencing of dissenting voices within the discipline.

We start by establishing, in section 1, that there is a lacuna in the history of economics. Because of the disciplinary location of most of its practitioners, the historiography of economics has been influenced to minimize the significance of its interactions with other social sciences. We then establish, in section 2, that there is a significant literature on the history of the social sciences, knowledge of which can broaden the history of economics. In section 3 we take up the argument about how cross-disciplinary interactions have shaped disciplines as they exist today to explain why the history of economics needs to be placed in the context of the social sciences as a whole. From there we move into a discussion of what the essays in this volume add to the conversation about the history of economics since 1945.

## 1. The Neglect of Extradisciplinary Engagements in the History of Economics

Whatever the period being considered, references to the relationships between economics and other social sciences are almost universally incidental in general histories of economics. For example, Mark Blaug's highly influential *Economic Theory in Retrospect* (1997, 703) contains three sentences (in a book of over seven hundred pages) on economic sociology, merely to differentiate it from economics, and an inconsequential reference to John Maynard Keynes's economic history; aside from that, the other social sciences are not even mentioned in the index. There is a similar silence in more recent textbooks. Where the other social sciences are mentioned, coverage is limited. *The Ordinary Business of Life* (Backhouse 2002b) mentions the influence of psychology on late-nineteenth-century economic theory, the divorce of economics and economic history in Britain around 1900, the incursion of economics into the domains of other social sciences since the 1960s, and psychology as providing the methods used in recent experimental economics, but there is no suggestion of more widespread engagements with other social sciences.

A partial exception to this neglect is Joseph A. Schumpeter, one of the twentieth century's leading economists and author of the highly influential *History of Economic Analysis* (1954). He believed that economics had to be considered a social science and could write of "the 'fundamental field' of Economic Sociology in which neither economists nor sociologists can get very far without treading on one another's toes" (26); he likewise observed that "psychology is really the basis from which any social science must start and in terms of which all fundamental explanation must run" (27). When he wrote about his own time, however, he could hardly avoid the conclusion that

the modal economist and the modal sociologist know little and care less about what the other does, each preferring to use, respectively, a primitive sociology and a primitive economics of his own to accept one another's professional results. (26)

Schumpeter considered that economists made such psychological assumptions as they wished to make, ignoring professional psychologists.

The picture changes only slightly when we turn to journals in the field. Take as a sample the articles on the postwar era published since the millennium in the field's most prominent journals. Only three articles

concern the relationships between economics and other social sciences.<sup>2</sup> The most obvious example is Philip Mirowski's (2000) introduction to a symposium on economic anthropology, in which, however, the core paper (Pearson 2000) covers the prewar era. Another instance is an article by Esther-Mirjam Sent (2004) on recent behavioral economics that contains a section on relations between psychology and economics. Yet, as the author concedes, this is no more than a "crude overview of the historical connections between economics and psychology" (740). The remaining article, by Steven G. Medema (2000), traces the emergence of public choice in economics and political science.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, we need to consider the work by historians of economics published outside the main journals in the field, but here too there is not much on the relationships between economics and the other social sciences (see Fontaine 2002, 2010). There is likewise the work done by heterodox economists who have used historical narratives to argue that the problem with modern economics lies in the separation of economics from other social sciences (Hodgson 2001; Fine and Milonakis 2009; Milonakis and Fine 2009). However, such work can be viewed as advocacy rather than history. Finally, there are several articles that cite work by other social scientists but do not involve serious discussions of the relations between social science disciplines.

The picture that emerges is that for those contributing to the recent literature on the history of economic thought, interest in the other social sciences is essentially confined to economic anthropology, to the recent use of psychological ideas and methods to create "behavioral" or "experimental" economics, to some aspects of "economics imperialism"—the use of microeconomic tools to tackle problems within the social and political realms—and to the relationships between economics and sociology.<sup>4</sup> Even where historians of economics have tried to construct the contexts in

2. All were published in *HOPE*. We failed to find any relevant articles in the thirty-nine articles on recent economics published in the *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* or the twenty-six in the *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* in the same period. The figures for *HOPE* include the annual supplements, which account for fifty-eight of its ninety-one articles on recent economics. An article on the evolution of Friedrich Hayek's psychology from 1920 to 1952 has been omitted on the grounds that it is not clear how it relates to interdisciplinary interactions after 1945.

3. Consideration of the literature published between, say, 1950 and 2000 would probably bring in new references, but it would not change our overall conclusion that there is a neglect of the relationships between economics and other social sciences in the history of economics.

4. If law is considered a social science, then it should be added to this list.

which economic analysis took place, they have treated economics as essentially isolated among the social sciences, ignoring both the histories of other social sciences and the many cross-disciplinary projects that have taken place since 1945.

The most important reason for this neglect of the relationships of economics with other social sciences is probably ignorance: where historians of economics have experience of other disciplines, this is usually mathematics or, increasingly, the history and philosophy of science (which has normally meant natural science). It is not surprising, therefore, that in none of the symposia on historiography that have been published over the past decade has there been a contribution pointing to the importance of approaching the history of recent economics through the lens of intellectual history, by placing it alongside the other social sciences. It is notable that the *HOPE* supplement *The Future of the History of Economics*, edited by E. Roy Weintraub (2002a), contained no attempt to relate the situation of historians of economics to those of historians of other social sciences, let alone to explore the possibilities for collaboration. Thus in his reflection on the conference, Mirowski's (2002b, 382–86) consideration of “how disciplines have shed their histories” focuses on the natural, not the social, sciences, even though he is someone who, in his own work, has shown more awareness than many of developments in the social sciences.

This assumption that historians of economics should turn to those who describe themselves as doing “history of science” rather than “intellectual history” or history of social science has had historiographic consequences. This can be seen by drawing a contrast with the situation in relation to work on earlier centuries. The case has been made, drawing parallels with the history of political science, that the history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century economics needs to be approached as intellectual history, setting aside conventional views of disciplinary boundaries (see, e.g., Winch 1978, 1996, 2002, 2009). Indeed, what Donald Winch presented as his first foray into intellectual history was titled *Adam Smith's Politics*, citing the influence of his Sussex colleagues in changing his conception of history. This case has not yet been argued, however, in relation to the history of recent economics. The symposium cited above, “The Future of the History of Economics,” contains a paragraph (Backhouse 2002a, 95) that mentions the interest of historians (as opposed to historians of science) in economics, yet little significance was attached to that remark. Two articles on how we should write the history of twentieth-century economics (Weintraub 1999; Backhouse 2001), although presenting the need for economics

to be seen in context, failed to see the significance of intellectual history that went beyond science studies.

It can be argued that many historians who see their work in the context of the history or sociology of science are nonetheless influenced by economists' views of what is central to the discipline and where its boundaries lie. There is an emphasis on model building and on developing mathematical tools: thus the history of general equilibrium theory (Weintraub [1985] 1993, 1991, 2002b; Ingrao and Israel 1990) and econometrics (Morgan 1992; Klein 1997) are well covered, as is the use of those tools to solve practical problems (e.g., Mirowski 2002a; Mehrling 2005). This literature, much of which is historically aware, tends to minimize the "extradisciplinary engagements" alluded to by David A. Hollinger, at least as regards the social sciences. Although historians of economics have long advocated a history of economics as history of science (Schabas 1992, 2002), perhaps it is time to consider history of economics as history of social science.

## 2. The History of the Social Sciences

Given the enormous growth of the social sciences since the Second World War, it is remarkable how little work there is on the social sciences as a whole. One is Daniel Bell's *The Social Sciences since the Second World War* (1982). While identifying key innovative ideas and significant trends, Bell observed that the social sciences had moved away from their recurring ambition of unification. It is no wonder then that Bell regarded the question of the relationships between economics and the other social sciences as secondary and accordingly considers the former in isolation from the latter.

The more recent *The Modern Social Sciences* (2003), edited by Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross, in the Cambridge History of Science series, does not fall into the same category, yet its main orientation is in the traditional disciplinary history mode.<sup>5</sup> Thus in her essay on economics, Mary Morgan ignores the other social sciences, focusing on the rise of a view of economics as engineering, in which its relations with mathematics are more important. These disciplinary histories are integrated in an article by Ross and in eight articles on "the internationalization of the social sciences" and fourteen on "social science as discourse in public and

5. On the differences between "discipline history" and "intellectual history," see Collini 1985, 1988.

private life.”<sup>6</sup> This structure has much to commend it, but a consequence is that, although there are accounts of the social sciences in Latin America, Africa, and major Asian countries, there are no such accounts relating to North America or Europe, the main centers of academic social science in this period.<sup>7</sup>

The absence of synoptic histories of social science does not mean that there is no work on the other social sciences from which historians of economics can benefit. Although the Second World War is widely accepted as a turning point in the history of economics—“the economist’s war” in Paul Samuelson’s phrase of 1944 (Bernstein 2001, 73; Engerman 2007, 616; Guglielmo 2008, 111)—it was as much the *social scientist’s* war. The war encouraged problem-oriented approaches, which in turn opened the way for cross-disciplinary ventures. Psychology was transformed by the demand for its services in avoiding the psychological damage to recruits that had been encountered in the First World War (see Herman 1995; Loss 2005; Ash 2010). Wartime concerns with propaganda gelled with the concern of sociologists and political scientists, from Charles Merriam onward, with political communication. The need for intelligence about both countries being fought and countries in which fighting was taking place, some of which were profoundly unfamiliar, could be met only by turning to anthropologists and geographers (see Price 2008; Barnes 2006).

The same can be argued in relation to the ensuing Cold War, which, as has increasingly been recognized, was important for economics (e.g., Mirowski 2002a). The U.S. government needed economists to work out the capacity of the Soviet economy (Bonnell and Breslauer 2003; Engerman 2009) and to help develop military strategy (Leonard 1991; Mirowski 1991), but the Cold War was in large part a propaganda war, in which persuading citizens of communist and potentially communist countries was seen in many quarters as being as important as purely military activity (Simpson 1994, 1998; Robin 2001; Barnes 2008). Psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and geographers were all involved—indeed the boundaries between these groups were sometimes indefinable.

The changing system of funding, of which defense-related activities were a significant part, affected all the social sciences (Crowther-Heyck

6. These are the headings to parts 3 and 4 of the volume.

7. The possibility of a transnational history of the social sciences has been explored by Johan Heilbron, Nicolas Guilhot, and Laurent Jeanpierre (2008).

2006; see also Mirowski and Sent 2001). Funding came directly from the U.S. Air Force and Navy, both of which employed and granted research contracts to many social scientists besides economists, and the CIA. But it also came from bodies that were ostensibly free from such connections, notably the large charitable foundations—Carnegie, Rockefeller, Ford, and many others—and, from the 1950s, the National Science Foundation (NSF) (Stapleton 2003). The policies of such organizations, which were not completely independent of each other, affected the direction of social science research, influencing, among other things, the extent to which social scientists engaged in cross-disciplinary work.

Knowledge of these activities in neighboring disciplines is required not only because it places economists' involvements in a broader context but also because there were many activities that involved economists working alongside other social scientists. The two decades after the Second World War saw many attempts to institutionalize cross-disciplinary collaboration, comprising both multidisciplinary ventures (in which social scientists from different disciplinary backgrounds worked alongside each other to tackle common problems) and interdisciplinary ones (seeking integrative frameworks that transcended existing disciplinary boundaries). Interdisciplinary work might either putatively or actually lead to the emergence of new disciplines, such as cybernetics (Heims [1991] 1993; Bowker 1993) or communications studies (Pooley 2006), sometimes in ways not intended by those sponsoring it. For example, the MIT Center for International Studies originated in a project to bring social scientists together with engineers to solve problems of communicating with people behind the Iron Curtain in what was named "Project Troy" (Needell 1993, 1998; Blackmer 2002; Gilman 2003, chap. 5). Yet it became an organization in which economists occupied a prominent role, the remit of which extended significantly beyond that originally intended, notably into the field of economic development. Another type of collaboration is represented by area studies institutes, in which Soviet studies centers were particularly important, that grew out of the experience of the Office of Strategic Services, the Second World War forerunner of the CIA.

Even where they did not work alongside each other, economists and other social scientists were often responding to similar imperatives. The founding of the NSF raised many questions relating to the position of the social sciences and their status (Solovey 2004).<sup>8</sup> Economists have been

8. For a broader discussion of the significance of being "scientific," see Hollinger 1995.



concerned with methodological questions that the other social scientists have also confronted, even though such concerns may have surfaced in different guises.<sup>9</sup> For example, economists (and historians of economics) may believe that modernization theory in political science, with its focus on democracy (Merelman 2003), is remote from their concerns, yet there are clear parallels with work on development (linked above all with the name of Walt Rostow, of the Center for International Studies); moreover, the reasons for the demise of modernization theory in the late 1960s can be linked with the factors that lay behind changes in development economics that took place in the 1970s (see Gilman 2003).

To stress these direct links between economics and its neighbors is not to minimize the importance of broader cultural factors. The emergence of the view that economics should be analogous to engineering has already been mentioned, and while it may be only a minority of economists who have taken an interest in the philosophy of science, such discussions have taken place in the leading journals and involved economists at the top of the profession. This should immediately signal the potential relevance of the background to the emergence of postwar philosophy of science or intellectual influences impinging on all social sciences from the unity of science movement (Galison 1998; Wilson 1998; Mirowski 2005). Historians of the other social sciences have tackled problems of disciplinary identity and shifting disciplinary boundaries (Hollinger 1997; Lamont and Molnár 2002), as well as the challenges posed by radicalism, whether of Left or Right (Brick 2006; Plehwe, Walpen, and Neunhöffer 2006).

### 3. Economics as a Social Science

The reason why it is important to consider economics as a social science is not merely, as we argue elsewhere (Backhouse and Fontaine 2010), that the social sciences as a whole were shaped by shared political, social, and intellectual contexts and that there are therefore important parallels between their developments: it is that the identities of economics and other social sciences are the outcome of an ever-evolving process directly linked to their exchanges.

9. See, for example, Barnes 2001 and 2008 on geography's quantitative revolution, Hauptmann 2008 on the positive/empirical distinction in political theory, Cohen-Cole 2005 on reflexivity in cognitive psychology, and Igo 2007 on survey methods and the representation of society by statistical averages.

To see this point, consider the work of Richard Swedberg (1991). When he examines various forms of interaction between economics and sociology, and distinguishes between rational choice sociology, psycho-socio-anthropo-economics, economic sociology, and economics imperialism, the emphasis is on a synchronic approach, the characteristic of which is to retain only those attempts at cross-disciplinary engagements that produced visible and durable outcomes. It is thus no wonder that well-known scholars such as Jim Coleman, George Akerlof, Mark Granovetter, and Gary Becker can easily be fitted into this conceptual scheme.

A different approach is to recognize that the exchanges between social science disciplines, whatever form they have taken, are constitutive of their identities as much as supported by them.<sup>10</sup> It is no exaggeration to suggest that social scientists who have crossed disciplinary boundaries were at times comfortable with their own discipline's identity and at other times distinctly less so.

This point can be reinforced by considering what are apparently cross-disciplinary fields. Mentioning only ones that involve economics and other social sciences, it is clear that economic anthropology, economic psychology, economic geography, and economic sociology stand as recognized research fields with their own journals and associated communities. The fact that these subdisciplines have some independence makes them more than cross-disciplinary enterprises, pointing to the fluidity of disciplinary boundaries. They are not just a label helping describe conversations between economists and other social scientists or a place for exchanging tools, concepts, and theories. In general, they characterize initiatives launched by other social sciences because of their dissatisfaction with the way economists deal with certain issues.

This leads immediately to the observation that, whether one stresses the fixed or variable identity of social science disciplines, they clearly have not regarded the significance of their identity in the same way. Considering psychology and economics, for instance, one is struck by the difference between the protean disciplinary identity of the former (Capshew 1999, 54) and the strong intellectual unity of the latter (Hollinger 1997, 345). That difference is crucial to understanding the many cross-disciplinary research ventures undertaken in the two decades following the Second World War. Psychologists participated in almost all of them, but the mul-

10. To some extent Swedberg is aware of this, in that he sees one of the main objectives of his book as the redrawing of the boundaries between economics and sociology.

tiform identity of their discipline made it less of a problem for them to compromise over their disciplinary demands and as a result to play as readily a minor or major role in those ventures. Economists participated in such ventures to a lesser extent, but when they did they were keen on using their own analytical framework.

Behind the issue of identity lay the connected question of the variable degree of association of social science disciplines with the natural sciences. Not all social sciences claim with the same vigor that association, although in the immediate postwar era they all had a strong interest in taking a scientific posture. Needless to say, the impressive achievements of cross-disciplinary ventures in the natural sciences during the Second World War played no minor role in prompting similar ventures in the social sciences, with the hope that human forces could equally be subjected to a form of control. That overall context notwithstanding, it is hard to imagine, for instance, that the issue of the relationships between economics and the natural sciences is of the same nature as that of the relationships between human geography and the natural sciences. Although natural images have often been important in economics (Mirowski 1994a), there is no such thing as a physical, as opposed to human, economics. By contrast, even if human geographers believe the links between their subject and physical geography are tenuous, they can hardly pass them over in silence if only because the two disciplines share techniques and research procedures (Johnston and Sidaway 2004, ix). It is difficult to imagine that the nature of the relationships between human geography and the natural sciences has no bearing on its relationships with other social sciences.

Another significant aspect of the relationships between economics and other social disciplines is the existence of subidentities that correspond to the division of disciplines into subdisciplines, such as economic psychology, economic sociology, economic geography, or economic anthropology. Economics, perhaps because of its postwar success, has sometimes been described as the queen of the social sciences. Its analytical power has played no minor role in expanding its domain over the territories of other social sciences. Without suggesting that the subdisciplines above should be regarded as the outcome of some resistance on the side of disciplines whose territories were contested, in considering the relationships between economics and other social sciences, it seems reasonable to make allowance for the contribution of subdisciplines (claiming some economic identity) to the construction of the disciplines to which they were related. To take but one example, although neglect of anthropology is frequent in

economics (Mirowski 1994b), it should not be assumed that the history of economic anthropology is of no significance to the history of economics.

Finally, in thinking of the relationships between economics and other social sciences, it may be helpful to consider the level of fragmentation associated with every social science discipline. To take one example, it has become common in the postwar era to consider American political science as composed of American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and political theory. As these subdivisions correspond to research communities, it may well be that the relationships between economics and political science are completely different whether one puts emphasis on international relations or comparative politics.

Although historians of economics have been led to neglect economists' engagements with other social sciences, there have been exceptions associated with those cross-disciplinary activities that have entered the canon of recent economics. When it emerged in the early 1960s, public choice theory was a cross-disciplinary venture involving economists, political scientists, and political philosophers, but its interest for historians of economics has little to do with this cross-disciplinary orientation. Likewise, when Gary Becker started to apply economic techniques to analyzing problems outside the customary boundaries of economics, his engagement with other social sciences was greeted with skepticism. Now that his work is clearly established within the canon of the discipline, historians of economics have found "economics imperialism" worth exploring, but again it is unclear whether this has much to do with recognizing the historical significance of Becker's extradisciplinary engagements. Finally, the award of the Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel to the economist Vernon Smith and the decision theorist (usually described as a psychologist) Daniel Kahneman has brought wide attention to the boundary between economics and psychology, to the point that historians of economics have taken interest in what could be seen as another form of extradisciplinary engagement. Yet such interest is mostly motivated by the significance of this work for modern economics, not by the historical significance of this episode in terms of disciplinary identity. Our contention is that the agenda of historians of economics should not be dictated by the eventual recognition of extradisciplinary engagements in the canon of the discipline but that they should regard the construction of its identity after the Second World War as a complex process in which the other social sciences played a significant part.

#### 4. The Articles That Follow

The volume begins with articles on four of the central problems confronting Cold War America, for by 1945 the United States was unquestionably the center of activity in social science. First, perhaps surprisingly from today's perspective, mental health was a major problem, particularly among war veterans, research into which was well funded. For obvious reasons, the main cross-disciplinary contacts were between psychology and sociology, the boundary of which was blurred (social psychology had feet in both disciplines), but although economists' involvement with the problem of mental health was far more limited, there was concern with the problem, a significant book being published as early as 1958, several years before the widely cited article by Kenneth Arrow (1963) on the problem of health in general. The essay by Andrew Scull offers a case study of the way different social scientists tackled the problem of mental health, raising questions about why interaction across different boundaries within the social sciences took the forms that it did.

As much as mental health was widely recognized as one of the central postwar issues, poverty was largely underestimated before the publication of Michael Harrington's *The Other America* (1962). Romain Huret discusses the "invisible network" of researchers, comprising economists and experts in social policy, dealing with the latter problem in the 1950s and 1960s. This network existed in federal agencies where providing policy advice dominated disciplinary boundaries. In the 1950s it was generally believed that growth would eventually solve the problem of low income. When, by the late 1960s, poverty had been recognized as a social problem and the "war on poverty" was declared, these experts were sidelined, even though their work had laid the foundations for much of the research that was subsequently undertaken.

Tiago Mata deals with the "problem" of academia itself—with the social sciences' attempts to analyze their own profession when forced to do so by academic freedom cases. This was, of course, very much a Cold War problem, for these cases involved predominantly scholars on the left—Radicals and Marxists—the treatment of whom cannot be separated from the broader concern with communism. What emerges is the contrasting ways in which anthropology, sociology, economics, and history, as represented by their professional associations, tackled the problem. Yet in all this diversity, there was a marked reluctance to tackle the problem using the tools of social science.

The final article in this section, by Teresa Tomás Rangil, shows how economic analysis came to pervade the study of insurgency in Vietnam, during a period in which the U.S. defense department, led by Robert McNamara, sought to apply efficient management techniques to the conduct of war. It argues that this work played a role in the demise of modernization theory, the paradigm that had dominated political science and, to a considerable extent, development economics in the late 1950s and early 1960s. An important conclusion is that the economic analysis applied to the problem of insurgency was far from homogeneous, RAND's systems analysis, for instance, being different from the approach that came out of the public choice literature.

It is hard not to be aware that economics differs from the other social sciences in its attitude toward formal, predominantly mathematical tools. In the first of two essays on conflicts over the methods used in the social sciences after the Second World War, Joel Isaac explores the contrast through the notion of tool shock. In most of the social sciences, he argues, the disagreements that represent the symptoms of tool shock were most evident in the 1960s, but in economics the pattern was quite different. After the 1940s, when the discipline exhibited clear symptoms of tool shock, the new tools came very easily to be accepted as an integral part of the discipline. There might be disagreement over the space they left for more traditional methods, and there might be debates among the users of the new tools, but these were of a fundamentally different nature.

Heath Pearson's essay, on the other hand, finds a parallel between economics and anthropology. He discusses the case of Melville Herskovits, who sought to develop an economic anthropology that might have blurred the boundaries between the two disciplines. However, his project required greater methodological flexibility than either discipline was prepared to offer, both disciplines exhibiting what Pearson calls "methodological sclerosis," a commitment to theorizing based on a given set of assumptions about the world they were analyzing.

The volume then turns to explore some of the cross-disciplinary engagements in which economics has been involved. Jefferson Pooley and Mark Solovey focus on debates within the Ford Foundation in the early 1950s, to investigate the place of economics within the behavioral sciences movement. The Ford Foundation took up the notion of the behavioral sciences to provide the framework within which it was going to support what are generally termed the social sciences. Pooley and Solovey explore the process whereby economics ended up in a separate research area from the

other social sciences, showing that by the very early 1950s, economists saw themselves as standing apart from other social scientists.

The Cold War was the reason for the emergence of economic Sovietology, discussed in the next essay by David Engerman. It was an economic contest, in which economic statistics was one battleground. The Soviet Union claimed to have remarkably high growth rates—a crucial advertisement for socialist planning in a world where many third-world countries were deciding whether to adopt a Soviet or a Western model. It was also important for the United States to know whether the Soviet Union would, as it claimed, soon overtake it. Yet economists, many of whom studied the Soviet economy in cross-disciplinary Russian or Soviet studies institutes, alongside social scientist colleagues who understood how Soviet society worked, became skeptical about these figures, producing their own estimates that were much lower. Focusing on the Harvard economist Alexander Gerschenkron, Engerman shows how these debates developed. At one level economic Sovietology was a success: even Soviet officials came to accept that estimates of Soviet growth emanating from American universities might be more reliable than their own. Paradoxically, however, the price of this success was to render the work of Sovietology redundant, for the data meant that the Soviet Union no longer posed the same threat.

One feature of cross-disciplinary organizations is that they developed their own specialized competencies. Students of area studies developed skills specific to the analysis of the societies with which they were concerned, partly because of their interdisciplinarity and partly because of the barrier imposed by language requirements. This is the issue addressed by Ross Emmett in the context of the University of Chicago's Committee on Social Thought, where eminent economists worked in an environment intended to transcend disciplines. The paradoxical outcome was an institution that specialized in interdisciplinarity, which created its own set of competencies, achieved through its method of studying great books of the past. As in area studies, interdisciplinarity became a form of disciplinarity, even though many of those involved denied the reality of disciplines.

Part 4 explores the boundary between the economic and the social. Daniel Geary explores the changing nature of the relationship between economics and sociology. Two features affect this relationship: whether the disciplines are seen as complementary or competitive, and whether attention is paid to disciplines as purely scholarly enterprises or to disciplines' public faces. Using the resulting fourfold classification as a guide,

he traces the way the relationship between the two disciplines changed in the 1960s and 1970s.

Jean-Baptiste Fleury treats the boundary between the economic and the social more broadly, in that he tackles the relationship between economists and not only sociologists but also political scientists and psychologists concerned with the problem of poverty in the 1960s. Taking up the story where Huret leaves off, Fleury shows how debates over poverty helped redefine the boundaries between the economic and the social, and hence between economics and the other social sciences. Poverty was linked to discrimination, education, health, and many other social problems, prompting economists to tackle these fields and to explain why “economics imperialism” took off when it did.

Engagements between economics and the other social sciences since 1945 have been so extensive that these essays represent little more than a sample of the problems that historians can tackle. Cross-disciplinary engagements between economics and the other social sciences are important in their own right. However, as we argued earlier, they are important even to historians whose concern is simply with the history of economics. Not only were many economists involved in these activities—far more than is commonly believed—they helped shape the discipline’s identity in relation to the other social sciences. This problem is explored in our concluding essay, which discusses the identity of economics in relation to the disciplinary self-image that economists have created.

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# Part 1

## Central Issues in Cold War America

