Journal of the History of Economic Thought,
Volume 42, Number 2, June 2020

ADDRESSING THE AUDIENCE: PAUL SAMUELSON, RADICAL ECONOMICS, AND TEXTBOOK MAKING, 1967–1973

BY

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Historians of economics rarely consider textbooks as more than passive receptacles of previously validated knowledge. Therefore, their active role in shaping the discipline and its image is seldom addressed. In this paper, I study the making of Paul Samuelson's successive editions of *Economics* from 1967 to 1973 as an instance of how textbooks stand at the crossroads between disciplinary knowledge, pedagogy, and larger political and societal concerns. In the mid-1960s, *Economics*, now at its sixth edition, was at the height of its success. Considered one cornerstone of modern economics, it was also at the center of a number of criticisms dealing with the current state of the economic discipline and its teaching in the universities. While the profession expressed its concern over the lack of relevance of economics to address the pressing issues of the day and pleaded for a new "problem-solving" approach to economic education, the late 1960s witnessed the emergence of a new generation of "radical" economists criticizing the economics orthodoxy. Their contention that mainstream theory had neglected the issues of class struggle and capitalist exploitation found a favorable echo among an increasingly politicized population. Using archival materials, I show how Samuelson, helped by his editorial team at McGraw-Hill, attempted to take into account these changes in order to ensure the continuing success of subsequent editions of his text in an increasingly competitive market. This study emphasizes Samuelson's ambiguous attitude toward his contenders, revealing, on the one hand, his apparent openness to discussion and outsiders' suggestions, and, on the other hand, his firm attachment to mildly liberal politics and aversion to Marxism, unchanged through revisions. It also helps refine a notion that is often invoked but never fully expounded in textbook studies: that of the audience.

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ISSN 1053-8372 print; ISSN 1469-9656 online/20/02000177-198 © The History of Economics Society, 2020
doi:10.1017/S1053837219000257

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837219000257 Published online by Cambridge University Press

I. INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of the year 1975, MIT economist Paul Samuelson (1915–2009) briefly contemplated the idea of ceasing to be the author of *Economics*.[1] The bestselling introductory text, which he had started to draft thirty years earlier, was now at its ninth edition and in need of the usual every-three-years update. Samuelson, though, was unwilling to carry on with yet another round of revisions of the 900-page doorstop and, instead, he envisioned his retirement from the textbook-writing business altogether. To McGraw-Hill's Publisher Howard Aksen, he wrote: "Now that I am about to turn sixty, my physician and I have taken a close and realistic look at my schedule. For years, I have been trying to crowd into it more than one person's quota of activities, and we are both agreed that the arrival of one's seventh decade of life is an appropriate time to remedy this situation."[2]

Although an arrangement was soon reached to ensure the pursuance of the enterprise, Samuelson's momentary fatigue is telling. Textbooks may be considered by practicing economists and historians of the discipline alike as less important in the development of knowledge than journal articles or extended essays, yet in one's academic life they can represent an exhausting sum of effort. Why would a renowned theorist—not to mention a recent Nobel Memorial Prize recipient—such as Samuelson accept to waste some precious research time in exchange for the dull work that the periodical revision of an undergraduate textbook demands, which includes the reading of a great number of reports, the checking of many details ranging from data updates to graphic flourishes, and the participation in promotional campaigns?

A possible answer is that textbooks, even introductory ones, play a far greater role than scientists and academics realize. Historian of science Marga Vicedo (2012) has made this claim by criticizing the received view that textbooks are only "passive receptacles" of past knowledge and by pointing to the many different ways in which they have participated in scientific developments. A non-exhaustive list includes: defining what good science is and explaining how it should be pursued; accompanying the development of new subfields of research; raising epistemological and larger societal concerns about knowledge; and attributing credit for scientific discoveries.[3] This observation is valid for any discipline at various points in its development, but it holds especially true for a field where knowledge is evolving rapidly and still wildly contested. Postwar economics, therefore, offers a very good occasion to study textbooks as active agents in the development of a field. Yet, while several contributions to the history of economics have attempted to trace the development of economic knowledge in the postwar period through different editions of *Economics*, only a handful have tried so far

[1]The textbook's full title was *Economics: An Introductory Analysis* when it was first published in 1948, before it was shortened to *Economics* from the eighth edition (1970) onwards. In the following we will use *Economics* for all the editions, as is customary.

[2]Samuelson to Howard Aksen, March 14, 1975, Paul A. Samuelson papers (hereafter cited as PASP), David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, Box 83, Folder "10th edition: draft, corrections."

[3]For illustrations of how textbooks have helped shape scientific knowledge, see Kaiser (2005, ch. 7) on postwar physics and Rocke (2010, ch. 4) on nineteenth-century chemistry. For a survey of the literature in the larger history of science, see Giraud (2018b).

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to understand how the textbook itself developed and all of them focused mostly on the making of the first edition (1948).[4] A notable exception, a book chapter by Arjo Klamer, retraces the changes in the successive editions of *Economics* from its first (1948) to its twelfth (1985) edition.[5] Klamer, performing a rhetorical analysis in the vein of Deirdre McCloskey (1985), depicts Samuelson's combination of two different personas in the textbook—on the one hand, the man of science appealing to objectivity and detachment, and, on the other hand, the witty man of letters appealing occasionally to the humanities. Samuelson's main motive for employing so dual a discourse—quite dishonestly and ineffectively, Klamer argues—is to persuade its audience. Yet, the author admits that the audience for textbooks is a complicated entity to consider because, while the end user is obviously the student, textbooks are first considered by "economic instructors at colleges and universities," who "choose their courses and review it for the publisher." Therefore, "textbook writers are severely constrained by the perceptions and expectations on the demand side for their market. The dehistorization of the subject may have been as much a product of those constraints as Samuelson's own conscious preference" (Klamer 1990, p. 151).

This paper, accordingly, offers a deeper account of how Samuelson has dealt with those constraints on the occasion of the revisions of *Economics* between 1967 and 1973. The period under scrutiny is relevant for two reasons: first, it is a period relatively well documented in Samuelson's archives, which reveal a lot about the practices of its publisher, McGraw-Hill; second, more substantially, it is a period when "mainstream" economics had come to maturity as a relatively coherent whole—what Mary Morgan and Malcolm Rutherford (1998) characterized as "postwar neoclassicism"—yet began to be strongly criticized by dissenters.[6] Samuelson, who had been depicted in the *New York Times* as the "leader of economic mainstream," whose "views, once radical," had "become establishment economics" (Reinhold 1970, p. 8), was the target of choice for these critics. His 'middle-of-the-road' version of economics, which earlier editions of the textbook had helped spread, was so ubiquitous that scholars and students interested in a more radical critique of the capitalist system would necessarily have to

[4]These accounts have often been critical of Samuelson's textbook, trying to emphasize his bias towards some ideological or methodological commitments, most notably its scientific rhetoric. See, for instance, Skousen (1997), Nelson (2001), and Levy and Peart (2011). Other accounts, such as Samuelson (1997) and Gottesman, Ramrattan, and Szenberg (2005), offer apologetic perspectives on the textbook. Other uses of *Economics*, along with other textbooks, to trace the development of economics concepts can be found in Pearce and Hoover (1995), Medema (2014), and Forder (2015). For an overview of US textbooks prior to Samuelson and of the influence of the latter in the postwar period, see Colander (2012). For an account of the early development of the textbook, see Giraud (2014) and Backhouse (2017a, chs. 25, 26, and 27). For a short survey of the literature dealing with or using Samuelson's *Economics*, see Giraud (2018a).

[5]The twelfth edition was the first to be co-authored by William Nordhaus.

[6]Past contributions have tried to define "mainstream" more precisely—for instance, Colander, Holt, and Rosser Jr. (2004), Davis (2006), and De Vroey and Pensieroso (2016). These contributions emphasize that mainstream and neoclassical economics are two different entities. In contrast to the more doctrinal "neoclassical," "mainstream" is depicted as pluralistic as it encompasses schools of thoughts and subfields of economics that were initially critical of neoclassical tenets. Our paper, however, does not adopt a precise definition, as the actors in our story use the word in ways that are themselves quite ambiguous (see below, section IV).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837219000257 Published online by Cambridge University Press

take him to task, looking first and foremost at his principles text to do so.[7] More specifically, my paper portrays the way the author, helped by his editorial team at McGraw-Hill, reacted to these attacks, as well as to the larger issues affecting economics education, at a time when the latter was seen by most practitioners as experiencing a crisis of relevance. Samuelson revised his textbook, sometimes quite extensively, but the central framework of his analysis was never altered: instead, Samuelson tried to promote the mainstream by showing it could still be useful in tackling an increasingly large range of pressing social issues—including those that the dissenting economists were addressing. For his opponents, on the contrary, mainstream economics was necessarily tied to bourgeois ideological values and therefore too committed to the status quo to tackle those issues satisfyingly. In addition, there was another important line of division between Samuelson and his critics: while the MIT professor was willing to comply with the constraints of an increasingly competitive textbook market in order to enforce his vision, dissenting economists criticized not only the substance of *Economics* but also what they perceived as Samuelson's own obedience to the laws of the textbook market.

II. SAMUELSON'S *ECONOMICS* IN THE MID-1960S AND THE CRISIS OF RELEVANCE

It is hardly debatable that in 1967 Paul Samuelson's *Economics* was still the most influential economics textbook in the United States. Not only had it been a clear success from the very beginning—selling more than 100,000 copies of its first 1948 edition, and quickly adopted in major US institutions of higher education—but its sales figures had also never ceased to increase with each new edition up to this point.[8] In addition, the way it taught introductory economics—separating macroeconomic and microeconomic concepts and tools, giving depictions of the US economy and devoting attention to issues of competing economic systems—had become the commonly accepted practice in the classroom.

However, new developments in economic education in the United States increasingly contributed to challenge the pre-eminence of Samuelson's text. The early 1960s had witnessed growing skepticism among practitioners over the state of economic education in colleges and high schools. Many economists expressed their dissatisfaction with the teaching of the introductory course, which they believed was insufficient in drawing students' interest. A 1958 conference at Grinnell College, co-sponsored by the Ford

[7]The term "middle of the road" has been used many times by Samuelson himself both in private correspondence and in publication—for instance, "I prefer to stick to middle-road of good, strong value" ("Money, Interest Rates and Economic Activity: Their Interrelationship in a Market Economy," in Merton 1972, p. 569). Its meaning, however, is ambiguous. While it is often equated with Samuelson's "neoclassical synthesis," a term that was coined by Samuelson in the third edition of *Economics* to designate a mix between Keynesian macroeconomics and neoclassical microeconomics, it can also be understood as a policy-oriented view, standing midway between laissez-faire and state planning. At the meta-level, "middle of the road" embodies Samuelson's general attitude towards economic expertise as a reasonable response to ideological extremes. See Giraud (2014) on how this attitude developed in reaction to conservative criticisms of the first edition of the textbook.

[8]Elzinga (1992) shows that 1967 represented a peak in *Economics*' sales, with 182,422 copies sold. From there, sales began to decrease though the textbook remained highly successful until the early 1980s.

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Foundation and the Joint Council on Economic Education, studied alternative approaches to economic education, other than the usual "principles-based" course. These studies, published in 1960, showed that most of the participating teachers believed in the superiority of the "problem-solving" approach. Unlike principles-based economics courses, which introduced theories to students before applying them to various problems, problem-solving courses worked in reverse, exposing the issues that the American society had to face before exposing the economic principles one could use to solve them.[9] Paradoxically, Samuelson's *Economics*, which was considered in 1948 as one of the first textbooks to confront students with the pressing issues of the day, was a decade later classified among the most theoretically loaded texts and accordingly challenged by more policy-oriented contenders. Among the most successful textbooks to adopt the problem-solving approach was George Leland Bach's *Economics: An Introduction to Analysis and Policy* (first edition in 1954). Its author, then the dean of the Carnegie-Mellon business school, was also much involved in the development of economic education, a field that had been vigorously supported by the American Economic Association since the beginning of the decade. In 1964, together with fellow economic educationist Phillip Saunders, Bach undertook a quantitative study of the impact of introductory courses on economic literacy, showing that such courses had no significant effect on success in a simple test of economic understanding submitted to a sample of high school social science teachers (Bach and Saunders 1965). The outcome of their study was a subsequent refinement of the test with slightly better results (Saunders and Bach 1970), but for the most, economic education was considered a quite depressing affair in the 1960s and the top-down approach of the principles-based textbook—which *Economics* exemplified—was often held responsible for the present situation.[10]

Despite these criticisms, *Economics* was judged as superior to its competitors due to its relative seniority and to the fact it benefitted from the numerous revisions that had been undertaken over the past decade.[11] Its main competitor in the period was Campbell McConnell's *Economics* (first published in 1960 as *Elementary Economics: Principles, Problems, and Policies*), which was also a McGraw-Hill product. McConnell's was considered a more policy-oriented introductory text, addressing American agricultural issues and economic inequalities through the prism of John Kenneth Galbraith's recently published *Affluent Society.* Yet these differences were more in general outlook than in actual content, so that an outsider could have seen McConnell's text as a relatively less technical version of Samuelson's. One can wonder why the publisher would want to keep similar textbooks in its selection, but the most plausible answer is basic: because texts were revised only every three years, there needed to be at least one McGraw-Hill

[9]On the birth of the problem-solving textbook and its legacy in economic education, see Fleury (2012). Note that the difference is significant enough that "principles" and "problems" are categories referred to in McGraw-Hill's internal surveys of the textbook literature, which helped position Samuelson's *Economics* in relation to its competitors (see below).

[10]See Knopf and Strauss (1960) and especially the final chapter written by Seymour Harris.

[11]This is how Samuelson's text was characterized in a detailed study of the textbook market written in 1965 for the New York State Council on Economic Education. The study was also used by McGraw-Hill as a way to survey competing texts and addressed to Samuelson to help him with his revisions for the seventh edition. "A Guide to the Selection of College Economics Textbook" by Laurence E. Leamer, September 1965, PASP, Box 81, Folder "7th edition correspondence 1 of 3."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837219000257 Published online by Cambridge University Press

textbook to fill the gap when some institutions had to opt for a newer, fresher book with updated data. The two textbooks were clearly leading the market in the 1960s, with McConnell's selling increasingly more copies than Samuelson's. While there is no direct archival evidence of Samuelson's actual opinion on the McConnell text, a controversy that occurred a few years later seems to suggest that the MIT economist resented the competition. At this period, a new textbook, Milton Spencer's *Contemporary Economics*, first published in 1971, was seen as plagiarizing McConnell. Samuelson was asked to testify in favor of McConnell. His affidavit, however, was far from a straightforward support of McConnell. Stating that he would "be better off to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars if Campbell McConnell had not chosen to write his very successful textbook," he noted that the latter "had been judged—correctly in [his] opinion—as most clearly like [his] book in its general educational content and viewpoint" and observed that "an author that has no original idea of his own might write a successful textbook and be immune of any charge of plagiarism." He subsequently noted Spencer's strong similarities with McConnell and declared that plagiarism may indeed have occurred; yet his testimony seemed to lack conviction, barely hiding his disdain for his main competitor.[12]

Besides McConnell, there were six other serious competitors to Samuelson in 1965, according to a market survey reported to the author by his editor, John Taylor.[13] A strong contender was Richard Lipsey and Peter Steiner's *Economics*, whose first edition was due the subsequent year. An American version of Lipsey's British bestseller *An Introduction to Positive Economics* (1963), it was described by Sidney Josephs, McGraw-Hill editor in England, as a serious contender to *Economics*, a "breakthrough" book that had already "replaced Samuelson wherever the emphasis is on the mathematical approach to economics" and could be soon adopted by most institutions as the field becomes more mathematical.[14] Despite the difference between American and British economic education, Samuelson's editors feared that a new textbook written by an author recognized as a talented young researcher could quickly establish itself as the new standard, pretty much in the same way Samuelson's text had done so back in 1948. Lipsey had indeed conceived his text out of his dissatisfaction with *Economics*, which he thought was insufficient on the microeconomic side.[15] Lipsey's plea for a more scientific, "positive" economics, along with some applications to the US economy provided by Steiner, was likely to attract a number of instructors and students who were repelled

[12]Samuelson's Affidavit in the *McGraw-Hill vs. Worth Publishers*' case, 22 September 1971, PASP, Box 87, Folder "McGraw-Hill-Spencer-McConnell case." Samuelson confided to one McGraw-Hill employee: "Lot of Mc[Connell] organizations were as close to my book as he claims Sp[encer] is to his book. I'll be surprised if they get far in a court of law, but then lots of people are cowards, and who knows." Samuelson to Mary Griffin, undated correspondence, PASP, Box 87, same folder.

[13]John Taylor to Samuelson, December 16, 1965, PASP, Box 81, Folder "7th edition correspondence 1 of 3."

[14]Sydney Josephs (UK senior editor at McGraw-Hill) to Bruce Keezer (US college division editor), December 9, 1965, PASP, Box 81, Folder "7th edition, Correspondence 1 of 3."

[15]See Lipsey (1997, p. x). The irony is that Lipsey was later dissatisfied with the American version of his textbook, about which he wrote: "It soon became clear … that *IPE* was too austere and too sophisticated for the typical first-year undergraduate.… This slowly gave way under enormous US market pressure to teach theory as something closer to revealed truth, particularly in micro. It was a painful process and, although a good but more orthodox book emerged, I felt at every stage that I was taking part in the dismemberment of my own baby" (ibid., p. xv).

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by Samuelson's chattier style.[16] Other notable competitors were Lloyd G. Reynolds's *Economics: A General Introduction*, whose second edition was to be published in 1966; the Bach textbook already referred to above, now in revision for its fifth edition; Charles Ferguson and Juanita Kreps's *Principles of Economics*, a "prestige textbook"—according to Taylor—now at its second edition; Armen Alchian and William Allen's *University Economics*, of which Samuelson's editor said that it "appeal[ed] to a certain faction"; and Lawrence Abbott's *Economics and the Modern World*, whose second edition was due in 1967. Taylor's letter was accompanied by a longer study that included sixteen other texts along with those already mentioned.[17] To cope with the growing competition, the usual round of revisions had to be undertaken.

Samuelson was not alone in performing this task. At McGraw-Hill, he was helped in this process by an experienced team of editors, assistants, publicists, and travelers, surveying the textbook market on a regular basis, providing newspapers, professional magazines, and institutions with the latest information and blurbs on the textbook, and collecting various field reports.[18] Particularly useful were the travelers who, as sales representatives, reported on the textbook demand in their local institutions and passed on to the editors the various reports that instructors wrote in response to the latest edition. While some of these were unsolicited comments and suggestions—including some minor corrections—there were also formal reports, which were used by McGraw-Hill in preparing the revision. These documents contained general comments as well as chapter-by-chapter detailed analysis. The comments concerned the technical aspects of the book as well as its tone and the various political recommendations it contained. Less frequently, they were accompanied by students' unflattering comments that ranged from "like dry toast" to "a little senile but interesting" or complained about the presence of "a lot of propaganda talk." What stood out from these various comments was that the book was too long and too detailed for a one- or two-semester course. Whereas, in the preceding decade, Samuelson was criticized for not taking into account the variety of economic thinking, the general opinion was that it failed to cut through the various existing theories. Apparently, this was especially the case with the microeconomic section, which was reduced to a minimum in the first edition, leading one instructor to write: "The book makes too much of an effort to mention all, or at least the great majority, of the various economic theories

[16]Samuelson later said of its "chatty style" that it was a conscious decision. To fellow McGraw-Hill mathematics textbook writer Ralph Agnew, he wrote: "In 1948, I deliberately tried to write a colloquial prose.… On the whole the popular tone of the book, which contrasted with its implicit rigor, was probably commercially advantageous." Samuelson to Agnew, May 16, 1961, PASP, Box 79, Folder "Economics 1946–2008, 2 of 2."

[17]Leamer, "A Guide to the Selection of College Economics Textbook," op. cit.

[18]It must be added that at MIT, Samuelson also benefitted from substantial help from a group of graduate students in charge of the preparation and the proofreading of the revised materials. A document from McGraw-Hill detailed the respective roles of "the publisher," "the assistant economist," and "the author." While the publisher was in charge of transmitting suggestions for changes at every level of the textbook, the assistant economist was in charge of those changes, and the author was responsible for the supervision of that work (PASP, Box 81, Folder "7th edition, Correspondence 1 of 3"). For the seventh edition, "the assistant economist" was in fact three graduate students, whom Samuelson thanked at the end of the preface: William Branson, George de Menil, and Ray C. Fair. Romney Robinson, of Brandeis University, who was in charge of the "Study Guide" accompanying the textbook, also seemed to be one of the main interlocutors of the publisher.

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which bear on various points."[19] Many readers, students and instructors alike, felt that there was a need for a shorter version of *Economics*, devoted to some particular branch of the audience, and the idea of splitting the text into a two-volume—micro and macro—book was discussed. What probably refrained Samuelson and his team from doing so was the fact that the synthesis between macro and micro was also seen as the book's main advantage in regards to competing texts.[20]

Another important concern was to make *Economics* appear as relevant on the policy side. In fact, these policy-oriented aspects were the main points that the editors put forth when promoting the book. The press release accompanying the publication of the seventh edition in 1967 focuses almost exclusively on these elements. The first page presented a number of newspaper headlines, then, on the second and third pages, some others were associated with a passage from Samuelson's textbook. For instance, a headline reading "Budget Director Sees 'No Doubt' of Economy Staying Strong if War Ends" was associated with a paragraph on page 768: "America's potential and actual growth rate, far from depending upon war preparations, would markedly increase by an end to the Cold War."[21] Obviously, McGraw-Hill wished to promote Samuelson as a policy expert rather than as a theoretician, building on his recent association with *Newsweek*, where he had begun writing columns the year before.[22] However, it is doubtful that Samuelson's version of political debates was what mainly interested young readers in the mid- to late 1960s. The policy content in *Economics* focused on comparative systems and macroeconomic issues, such as the inflation/employment debates between neo-Keynesians and Friedmanites. The seventh edition addressed contemporary issues, for instance the Vietnam War, but what was studied was the consequence of the conflict in terms of inflation and public expenditures, not its more political aspects such as economic imperialism and competing ideologies increasingly denounced on American campuses. Race and gender discrimination as well as environmental issues were not treated frontally.[23] While Samuelson was happy with that edition—much less with the revision process—the book itself was not an unqualified success: though it had sold more copies than any previous edition in its first year, it was also the first edition to sell fewer copies over its three-year run than the previous one.[24] In this increasingly challenging context for Samuelson's textbook, the appearance of radical criticisms of

[19]Gerald C. Spencer (McGraw-Hill editor) to Paul Samuelson, October 10, 1968, PASP, Box 81, Folder "Reviews of Text."

[20]Interestingly, as Pearce and Hoover (1995) have noted, Samuelson downplayed the "neoclassical synthesis" in the seventh edition, calling it instead "new economics," which referred to the more policy-oriented version of American Keynesianism promoted by Seymour Harris (1947) and, later, by the Kennedy economists (Tobin 1974). "Neoclassical synthesis" was therefore removed from the index in subsequent editions.

[21]Promotional leaflet, PASP, Box 81, Folder "Promotion of the Textbook 2 of 3."

[22]Backhouse (2017b) argues that Samuelson also conceived his textbook as a tool for teaching politicians, most notably John Kennedy.

[23]To be fair, sex and racial inequalities were evoked in Samuelson's book since its first edition (1948), at a time when none of his contemporaries did (see Backhouse and Cherrier 2019). That treatment was located in chapter 6, which dealt with poverty, and because that chapter was located in the first section of the book, which mostly consisted in presenting the economy and the basic concepts, the treatment was descriptive and not very analytical. In addition, that section had so far remained unchanged through revision.

[24]Samuelson had been very critical of the way his revisions for the seventh edition had been handled by his editors at McGraw-Hill and had written to Edward Booher, the publisher's president, to voice his discontent.

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mainstream economics would bring further challenges to Samuelson and lead to more revisions.

III. THE RISE OF RADICAL ECONOMICS AND ITS IMPACT ON SAMUELSON'S EIGHTH EDITION

Though the rise of radical economics in the late 1960s is often associated with a few names such as Samuel Bowles, Herbert Gintis, or Michael Zweig, and equated with the rebirth of Marxist thought in the field, it was in the beginning a larger emanation of several dissenting movements that encompassed racial, gender, and environmental issues, without a unified identity.[25] To make it clear, when these movements appeared in 1967, the issues they thought of as being the most important were exactly those that the latest edition of Samuelson's textbook had failed to address. In addition, the radicals' critique of establishment economics came from graduate students and young researchers who were deeply engaged in teaching and believed that the revolution should begin in the classroom. For this reason, they criticized not only the theories and the tools used in standard economics but also the way those were taught at the university. In addition, textbooks were easy targets because they incorporated a mix of technical and verbal economics that made the underlying ideological premises of the theory more obvious to the reader. Samuelson's defense of the mixed economy was not hidden between matrices and systems of equations but was offered quite openly to the critics. To textbook authors like Samuelson, radical economists were threatening, not so much because of their advocacy of a new framework in economic research but because their criticisms reinforced the crisis of relevance that economic education was facing at the time. Their response should consist in convincing their readers that the basic economic principles found in their introductory texts could be helpful to treat the most pressing issues of the day.

As Tiago Mata (2009a) has shown, radical economics began not in peripheral institutions but within institutions that were central in the development and teaching of mainstream economics: Harvard, MIT, and the University of Michigan. Though the Union for Radical Political Economy (URPE) had been created at the Ann Arbor campus, Harvard was where the activities of radical economists were the most publicized. There, a radical economics course titled "Social Sciences 125—The Capitalist System: Conflict and Power" was taught by Arthur MacEwan, Samuel Bowles, Herbert Gintis, and Thomas Weisskopf, who were all either young assistant professors or PhD

"Somebody once asked Alfred du Pont 'How many people work at DuPont?' He paused for a moment and answered 'I think about one half'. Well I think at M-H every other layer of your executive staff must be competent. And I'd better stop there." Although he did not state it explicitly in the letter, a draft version shows that his dissatisfaction was mostly directed at Bruce Keezer, who had replaced John Taylor, and whom Samuelson accused of poor communication and decisions. The draft version also made it clear that Samuelson had first been reluctant to handle these revisions ("I am not hungry for royalties") and had been persuaded by Taylor to go ahead. Accordingly, he worked on the next two editions with a new editor, Michael Elia (Samuelson to Booher, March 21, 1967, PASP, Box 81, Folder "7th edition Correspondence 2 of 3").

[25]On the construction of the identity of radical economists and their subsequent migration to specific economic departments, see Mata (2009a).

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students.[26] In November 1969, URPE organized there an important meeting whose aim was to initiate reflection on the establishment of an alternative paradigm in economics. Marxist economist Paul Sweezy, an old acquaintance of Samuelson when the latter was a graduate student at Harvard, was one of the main speakers. On November 17, 1969, Samuelson spoke about the radical critique at a symposium organized by the American Bankers Association. He was accompanied by Haverford College President John R. Coleman, a former colleague of his at the MIT economics department and one of the co-editors of his *Readings in Economics* volume. Coleman took a clear defense of the radical movement, asserting that students were pointing at issues of morality that, he argued, businessmen ought to take into account. In his talk, reported in an article from the *Washington Post*, he also criticized economic growth for its own sake and pleaded for a more equitable income distribution, "especially for blacks." Samuelson's comments were more critical of the radicals. "The over-riding problem of economics today," he wrote, "is that some of the best young minds will simply have tuned out from the study of conventional economics entirely." He estimated that the radical economics course at Harvard was selected by the students only to confirm "opinions already held" (Rowen 1969). Samuelson's critical comments, as reported in the newspaper, drew criticism from Samuel Bowles, who wrote to him: "Thanks for drumming up publicity for radical economics. I didn't much like the way you characterized our course (and its students) in your talk reported in the Post. Our students are generally interested in a different range of issues than that covered in Ec 1 but that can hardly be evidence of closed minds."[27] Samuelson responded: "In my speech, I referred to the danger that cafeteria-style a student with conservative leanings could take a course to his taste with radical leanings." After Samuelson sent him the full text of his talk—not included in the archives, unfortunately—Bowles recognized that "with the exception of the bold-head blurbs which must have been written by the editors of the journal," Samuelson's opinion was "[n]either hostile [n]or unfair." He nevertheless had disagreements with basic issues and exposed his conceptions of how social concerns should be addressed in the economics classroom:

> I have become increasingly skeptical that the kinds of tools which we teach in the basic graduate courses in theory, for example, are of much use in developing solutions to the kinds of problems which concern both of us. I am sure that you have been dealing with many of these problems in the process of revising your undergraduate text. What can you say about "the problem of poverty," the "dilemmas of urban blight and environmental pollution," about racism, about the military-industrial complex, and about the quality of life in a theoretical context, the main assumptions of which render technological change and personal preferences exogenous, and which continues [sic] to accept profit maximization as the main determinant of resources allocation in the private sector? ... It seems to me that we need a paradigm for economics which makes externalities and the endogenous nature of tastes and technological change central to

[26]That class was also offered to MIT students. According to Mata (2009a), a dozen of them attended it, among a total of 150 undergraduate and graduate students. They were not all economics students, though. The course materials were subsequently published as Edwards et al. (1971).

[27]Bowles to Samuelson, undated correspondence (November–December 1969), PASP, Box 61, Folder "Radical economists." Samuelson's answer to Bowles is handwritten on the same sheet.

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> our attention rather than the unwanted nuisances normally relegated to prefaces and footnotes. In any case, I look forward to seeing your new text.[28]

Admittedly, a number of mainstream economists recognized that the radicals had a point when it came to educational matters. In his 1970 appraisal of radical economics, Martin Bronfenbrenner observed that "radical economic education is a topic in which standard economists have much to learn." Among its beneficial characteristics, he noted that "class discussion and outside readings" were "more important than in corresponding standard courses," that the reading lists he had seen were "no more biased than standard reading lists," and that the courses were "highly structured" and "on a higher intellectual level" than the standard ones. He praised the "participation in surveys and research" and the "prolonged visits to both the slums (urban or rural) and the swankier suburbs" (Bronfenbrenner 1970, p. 757). Yet lauding the radicals' pedagogical schools was a two-edged remark as it also highlighted that they had little to offer on the research side. Among the most critical commenters, Robert Solow, Samuelson's colleague at MIT, wrote a virulent assessment of radical economics, noting that "as it is practiced" it "contains more cant, not less cant; more role-playing, not less role-playing; less facing of the facts, not more facing of the facts, than conventional economics," and concluding laconically, "I don't think a survey of the current state of economics needs to pay a lot of attention to radical economics" (Solow, Heilbroner, and Riecken 1971, pp. 63–65). Samuelson did not voice such disparaging comments towards radical economists in print, but his assessment of their research exuded skepticism.[29] Asked to review a grant proposal by Bowles for the Carnegie Corporation in the field of education economics, he replied:

> Sam Bowles is the "dean of radical economists." He is intelligent, well-trained and motivated. More surely of him than of any of his colleague can one predict that he will make a mark in academic life and economic research. If money cannot be found to support his research interests, a fortiori it will be difficult for many other radical economists to receive financial support for their research. And since economists of my generation are not slow to note that the glaring lack in connection with the movement toward a more radical economics is the almost total absence of any respectable research accomplishment, the radical young could be forgiven for developing some feeling of paranoia that the "interests" are out to suppress them.

On the research project itself, after expressing reservations over the novelty of a study showing that education aimed at reproducing material success in the American economy, he noted: "Some of the doubts that I might have concerning the new knowledge to be expected from this research is tempered by the consideration that in a great, pluralistic

[28]Bowles to Samuelson, December 22, 1969, PASP, Box 61, Folder "Radical economics."

[29]Of course, at this stage, both Samuelson and Solow were identified as the defenders of an American mainstream, a reputation they had acquired in the course of the so-called capital controversy. The recent publication of Geoffrey Harcourt's paper on that topic in the *Journal of Economic Literature* would serve as a catalyst for the development of a heterodox tradition that identified Cambridge, Massachusetts, as its main opponent (Mata 2004).

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society, any group's research is part of a vast adversary process, out of which may emerge greater wisdom than is inherent in any one of its parts."[30]

Samuelson's appeal to pluralism seemed more rhetorical than substantial, smoothing the rough edges of his critical stance on radical political economy. This rhetorical tone was also at work in the textbook, as Samuelson addressed the radicals' criticisms in the eighth edition. In the preface, Samuelson presented this novelty, as well as a few other ones, as "a change in the spirit of the book" that tried to clear out "complacency and smugness." He mentioned three critics on "the New Economics" whom his textbook would have to take into consideration: John Kenneth Galbraith and his views on "the new industrial state" as expressed in his 1967 book; the radical economists, who insisted "that every facet of our society be subjected to unsparing criticism"; and libertarian economists, "like Milton Friedman of the University of Chicago," who were challenging "the consensus of post-Keynesian analysis."[31] To these "cogent criticisms," *Economics* would offer "a dispassionate hearing" (Samuelson 1970, p. vi). In practice, the most obvious changes were the inclusion of two new chapters in part 6 of the textbook, devoted respectively to "Economic Inequality: Poverty, Affluence, and the Quality of Life" (chapter 39) and "Economic Problems of Race, Cities and the Polluted Environment" (chapter 40). To treat these issues, however, Samuelson did not use the concepts and wordings of radical economics but relied instead on the discipline's standard tools. In the first of these two chapters, Samuelson dismissed the idea that growth benefitted only the richest, providing graphical evidence that "all classes have shared in [the] century's progress" (Samuelson 1970, p. 765). In defense of the middle-of-the-road position against "[c]ritics of the system" on the one hand and "[d]isplaced conservatives" on the other hand, he advanced the fact that "Ford workers get real wages ten times what their great-grandfathers got because their productivity in Detroit enables that wage to be paid," and asserted that "[e]ven in the eastern academies of Eastern Europe it is now agreed that the mixed economies of Western Europe and North America are likely in 1999 to have real wages several times those prevailing in the 1970s" (ibid., p. 766). Further in the chapter, he also criticized Galbraith's prediction that the end of scarcity would happen at mid-century, and rather quoted extensively from John Maynard Keynes's "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren" (ibid., pp. 776–777). The second new chapter was mostly devoted to racial discrimination. Samuelson introduced it by noting: "Hitherto no economics textbook has grappled with the problems of the economics of race. And it ill becomes a white author to think that he can provide diagnoses and prognoses for a problem of this kind. But leaving the incomplete facts

[30]Samuelson to E. Alden Dunham (Carnegie Corporation), May 8th, 1970, PASP, Box 61, Folder "Radical economists."

[31]Contrary to what Samuelson's foreword seems to imply, Friedman and the Chicago School were not given in the textbook a treatment paralleling that which was given to Galbraith and the radicals. While the latter were depicted as critics of both mainstream economics and the capitalist system, therefore standing outside of the orthodoxy, Friedman and his allies were depicted as standard economists holding certain tenets, which the textbook author criticized. Evoking the inefficiency of current welfare programs (on p. 773), Samuelson designated James Tobin as Friedman's leftist counterpart, not Galbraith or any radical. His point was that, even though Tobin and Friedman had opposite political views, both agreed, like most standard economists, that inefficient welfare assistance should be replaced or supplemented by a policy that appeals to tax incentives. Most of the time, Friedman was used in Samuelson's textbook not as an enemy but as a measure of consensus in the economics profession.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837219000257 Published online by Cambridge University Press

behind and venturing suggestive speculations, one can hazard certain crude guesses about the process" (ibid., p. 788n). These "crude guesses" were obtained by using supply-and-demand analysis to show that racial discrimination led to lower wages for Black people and a lower total output of product (ibid., p. 791), and that urban discrimination would also lead to a situation in which "landlords as a class actually lose" (ibid., p. 791). Samuelson did not try to deny the problem of racial discrimination, yet he did not study it, as radical economists would have put it, as a product of power relations or as a defect of the capitalist system but as market failures. Those who discriminate may feel that they were acting for their own good, but instead they were creating a worse situation for everyone, including themselves. This remark pointed to the idea of a single economic framework able to address all current economic and social questions. Pollution, finally, was given little space at the end of the chapter and was treated, quite traditionally, as an externality. At some point in chapter 40, the author observed that most problems of racial inequalities could be studied with the same tools as worldwide inequalities, pointing to chapter 38, which dealt with economic growth and development. That observation hinted at Samuelson's larger objective in this edition. He had tried to handle the radical critique not by adopting its framework but by applying standard economics treatment to the new issues it addressed. Gender discrimination, however, did not benefit from the same elaborated treatment.[32]

Quite interesting is the way those changes were promoted by McGraw-Hill. A few months before the release of the eighth edition, the publisher printed a series of newsletters devoted to economic instructors that included the new material. The newsletter "on current economic teaching" was particularly unsophisticated, looking like a typewritten mimeograph, not unlike the drafts of the first edition that had circulated in various institutions and had contributed to its smash success in 1948 (Giraud 2014). The role of that newsletter was to "updat[e] material to help the transition from the aging Seventh Edition to the new 1970 Eighth Edition." It started with a number of current macroeconomic issues—"1969," it said, "is a great year to be teaching macroeconomics"—such as the recent decision of the Fed to hold down its money supply, then looked at the textbook's chapter 18 for tips on how this would affect the economy and teased the next edition's "expanded sections on 'monetarism' (Friedman, St Louis Fed, etc.)." Then the letter moved to microeconomic problems, using "elementary supply and demand" in order to compare the respective merits of "draft versus supply-demand volunteer army." Later in the newsletter, Samuelson evoked the new material on racial discrimination, reproducing a simple version of the diagrams included in chapter 40 of the forthcoming edition. "Here, again, I teased at the next newsletter for more materials on this topic." The newsletter ended with international economics issues and even with a discussion of the respective prices of the 1948 and 1967 editions that emphasized money illusion as well as substitution vs. income effects. That this newsletter was first and foremost intended as a promotional tool probably did not deceive anyone. Yet it shows how much effort was made in order to emphasize the policy relevance of the textbook, which amounted to showing that the simplest economic concepts could help to understand the latest trends of the economy. Commercially, though, the eighth edition did not

[32]Backhouse and Cherrier (2019) explain this by the fact that Samuelson was responding to the civil rights movement and Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty, noting that this happened precisely at a moment when a new wave of feminism emerged in the United States.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837219000257 Published online by Cambridge University Press

fare better than the seventh one: it was the first one to sell fewer copies during its first year than its predecessors, despite an important promotion campaign. In addition, some field reports by McGraw-Hill travelers suggested that certain institutions were unsatisfied with the textbook and had planned to have it replaced in the near future by a thinner, less sophisticated, and less expensive text.

IV. ADDRESSING THE RADICALS' CRITIQUE MORE SERIOUSLY, DEFENDING THE "MAINSTREAM": THE NINTH EDITION

While the eighth edition had brought a few novelties in reaction to the issues raised by radical economists, it was not exactly the kind of response that would deter criticism. Samuelson's foray into inequalities and racial discrimination did not convey that mainstream economics had its flaws but served as a demonstration that the basic principles espoused in the book could be applied to a large number of social problems. In the radical economist's mind, it was another instantiation of the patronizing tone that *Economics* adopted, showing to the younger generation that the tools of their predecessors alone would handle their problems. What was not addressed was the radicals' argument that issues over class struggles and capitalist exploitation could not be treated within the framework of standard economics. These are the issues that the ninth edition aimed at covering more explicitly.

Here again, the organization provided by McGraw-Hill was helpful. In order to get a more precise understanding of the radical audience's expectations, Samuelson had asked his editor Michael Elia to collect feedback from radical economists, although the editor replied to him that this segment represented only 5% of the profession, according to a *Wall Street Journal* study.[33] As it happened, only a handful of those were inclined to offer their views on the textbook and therefore participate in its improvement. The radicals' unwillingness to help could be explained by the fact that, since the publication of the eighth edition, Samuelson had adopted a more explicit skeptical stance against radical economics, most notoriously in his preface to Assar Lindbeck's 1971 *The Economics of the New Left.* Subtitled *An Outsider's View*—its author was both Swedish and an orthodox economist—this short book offered a critical overview of the radical critique, the latter being not exactly the views expressed by professional economists but rather the more general criticisms of Western societies expressed by radical intellectuals of the period. Lindbeck did not mention Bowles or Gintis but rather the older generation of left-wing economists such as Sweezy and Galbraith, as well as Herbert Marcuse, who was referred to as the main intellectual figure of the movement and subsequently discussed at length. Doing so surely undermined younger radicals whose ideas on economics were seen as merely reviving the past. In his foreword, Samuelson made it clear that what the book discussed were the views associated with political activists such as Ralph Nader rather than those of professional radical economists. As often, Samuelson's comments were two-edged, especially when he dealt with the textbook literature: "I may add that some unconventional economic textbooks, written by those proud to call themselves radical economists, are now on the way. This Lindbeck book will not lose in

[33]Elia to Samuelson, July 15, 1971, Box 80, Folder "Economics, sale reports."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837219000257 Published online by Cambridge University Press

usefulness in being assigned as collateral reading along with such new textbooks" (Samuelson in Lindbeck 1971, p. xiv).

It is therefore unsurprising that some of the radical instructors whom McGraw-Hill approached, especially those in the process of writing competing texts, simply refused to review *Economics*. For instance, James Weaver, a professor at the American University in Washington, DC, responded that reviewing the book was an impossible task because "[w]ithin the paradigm in which Professor Samuelson [was] working," it was excellent. But, to this instructor, *Economics* was "essentially engineering" and "as an attempt to explain human behavior, it [was] a complete failure." Then he added: "If one wishes to restructure society in order to achieve other values than maximizing output of material goods and services, Samuelson's book is no help at all."[34] The critical comments provided by Richard Roehl, an assistant professor at the University of California at Berkeley, were characteristic of the radical views. He characterized chapter 5, dealing with incomes and living standards, as "a major intellectual obfuscation"; he described chapter 7, which dealt with labor economics, as "wrong," "inadequate," and "myopic, biased, apologetic"; concerning the micro section, on the other hand, he argued that "much of neoclassical theory" was "unobjectionable to radicals"; he complained that chapter 29, devoted to wage determination, ignored "power relationships." Unsurprisingly, the theory of capital and profit determination was severely criticized. Turning to part 6—current economic problems—the author was almost entirely dismissive, found much material there "pointless," argued that it "fail[ed] to address the basic economic problems," and concluded that it was the "best example of what was wrong with the book." Some of these criticisms echoed those made by more conventional economists, who argued that the final section of the textbook appeared as a "potpourri" and that some of these materials should be dropped altogether or incorporated into other chapters. It was coherent with the general idea that the textbook had become too long.[35] Another reviewer noted that "for an author who claims to apply the criterion of relevance to all his revisions," Samuelson had "only 2 pages on urban blight and 2 on pollution."[36]

The revisions undertaken for the ninth edition reflected these remarks and criticisms. The chapters on environmental problems and discrimination were extended, referring in the first to the recent criticism of economic growth—the term "ecology" appeared in the chapter title and in the index—and discussing sex discrimination in the second. Yet the most important change made in the ninth edition was a more frontal acknowledgment of the critique of mainstream economics. In the introduction, Samuelson wrote:

> It is a scandal that, until recently, even majors in economics were taught nothing of Karl Marx except that he was an unsound fellow. This was not out of intimidation by the plutocratic interests, but rather reflection that such independent and impassioned teachers of the last generation as John Maynard Keynes thought Marx sterile and dull. In this edition I have tried to treat Karl Marx as neither God nor Devil—but as a secular scholar whom half the world's population deem important. The rudiments of mature

[34]Weaver to Elia, September 10, 1971, PASP, Box 82, Folder "Elia review of economics." On this, Samuelson's editor commented: "If economics is the dismal science, then from this speech, it appears to me that radical economics is a depressing art" (Elia to Samuelson, September 14, 1971, ibid.).
[35]Elia to Samuelson, January 6, 1972, PASP, Box 82, Folder "Elia review of economics."
[36]Elia to Samuelson, February 16, 1972, PASP, Box 82, Folder "Elia review of economics."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837219000257 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> Marxism, as well as the insights of the resurrected Young Marx, are newly discussed in this revision.[37]

This resulted in a new chapter, "Winds of Change: Evolution of Economic Doctrines" (chapter 42), which included a two-page treatment of radical economics.[38] This section consisted mostly in reproducing excerpts of a text that was deemed typical of radical economics: a critical piece written by Marxist economist John Gurley on the occasion of the 1970 American Economic Association meeting and subsequently reproduced in the *American Economic Review* (Gurley 1971). Yet Gurley's critique was counterbalanced by Solow's response in the same issue, which had some of the most brutal rebuttals of radical economics by a standard economist (see above, section III), and which was quoted in the textbook just after Gurley's comments. Samuelson concluded: "the radical economists are now still doing the research on which they would have the future judge them" (p. 851). He mentioned the Lindbeck book, reiterating his remark made previously in its preface that it was a survey of "the noneconomist New Left." Then he argued that "[t]he difference between the Old Left and the New Left should not be exaggerated." These remarks were followed by a three-page study of Marxism, supplemented by an eight-page mathematical analysis of "Marxian Economics," the conclusion of which stated that "Marxism may be too valuable to leave to the Marxists. It provides a critical prism through which mainstream economists can—to their own benefit—pass their analyses for audit" (p. 866).

In fact, as the preceding quote indicates, chapter 42 emphasized not so much radical and Marxian economics but its counterpart: "mainstream economics." Though never used in past editions of the textbook, it made its appearance prominently there, as the title of a section. Samuelson wrote: "The whole of this book has been devoted to modern post-Keynesian political economy—the mainstream economics that prevails in America and Scandinavia, in England and Holland; and that is coming to prevail increasingly in Japan, France, Italy, and most of the Western world. The fruits of post-Keynesian economics have been the better working of the mixed economy" (p. 845). "Mainstream," here, appeared as relatively vague, differing from today's acceptation of the term. It was not just a theoretical doctrine or a seemingly homogeneous body of knowledge but more largely a form of government's using the historically loaded "political economy," which made it even more ambiguous. In truth, "mainstream" was not so much defined positively by what it was than negatively through the critics, either the "conservative counterattacks against mainstream economics" articulated by "Chicago School Libertarian[s]" (p. 847), about whom very little was said, or the radicals to whom the remaining part of the chapter was devoted. Another interesting use of "mainstream" was found in the "family tree of economics" located in the inner cover of the book. A fixture from the fourth edition onward, the family tree changed between the eighth and the ninth editions, as to feature "Post-Keynes Mainstream Economics" in lieu of the "New Economics" of the previous edition. Here, "mainstream economics" appeared as the synthesis between Keynesian and neoclassical economics,

[37]Samuelson (1973, p. ix).

[38]It is interesting to compare Samuelson's ninth edition with McConnell's fifth edition of 1972. McConnell addressed topical issues such as racial discrimination, "social imbalance," and labor unions, but at no point did he evoke the New Left, which was absent in the index.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837219000257 Published online by Cambridge University Press

its rectangular form standing in contrast to the circles of past economic doctrines. On the other side, the added "New Left" synthesized the views of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, appearing as a quasi-political force along with China and the USSR. Mainstream economics, therefore, could be seen as the bulwark of 'economic science' against more ideological views of the economy.[39]

All in all, there was little here to dissipate the radicals' criticisms of *Economics* and much to attract new ones, as illustrated in Howard Sherman's review of the ninth edition in the September 1973 issue of *Challenge.* First, Sherman mocked what he considered a deceitful display of open-mindedness on Samuelson's part, calling the book "RRRRRadical" as it contained "every radical issue that [was] now fashionable at cocktail parties." To Sherman, the emphases on new issues such as ecology and racial discrimination were mainly cosmetic, and "in reality, however, Samuelson remain[ed] an apologist for the status quo, taking a cautiously liberal position on every issue—in favor of reforms but no drastic changes." Samuelson's style was questioned throughout the review. In the author's mind, it testified to his talking down to students and his overlooking Marxist analysis, which was treated more technically than most of the other sections in the text. On this, Sherman stated: "The curious question is why Samuelson has to bury his main exposition of Marx in an avalanche of mathematics. After all, this is a book for elementary students, and all of Marx's Capital was written in a straightforward literary manner with very few mathematical equations" (Peterson, Sherman, and McCloskey 1973, pp. 63–65). Also, the irony of treating the radicals' view through Lindbeck's attack was not lost on the reviewer. In some way, Sherman seemed to prefer Alchian and Allen's version of economics, as presented in their textbook *Exchange and Production*, which at least provided a straightforward reactionary position. It was Sherman's idea that the existing conflicting views were underwritten by incommensurable societal conceptions that left no place for a balanced, "middle-of-the-road" point of view. His opinion was representative of the radical economists' critique, which was directed at liberals rather than conservatives.

Another aspect of the radicals' reaction to the latest editions of *Economics* was their rejection of the commercial nature of the textbook. This was made explicit in Marc Linder's *Anti-Samuelson*, a systematic, two-volume critique of *Economics* whose American version was published in 1977.[40] As the author wrote in the introduction: "The inclusion in S's textbook of such diverse topics as pollution, racial discrimination, and the military-industrial complex was essentially a commercial response to the growing awareness, designed to consolidate S's position in the lucrative textbook market" (Linder 1977, vol. 1, p. vi). In addition to the bourgeois theory it vilified,

[39]Backhouse (2016) also notes this change in the "family tree," and Cherrier (2016), building on Backhouse's note and using quantitative data from JSTOR, speculates that these trees may have "exerted an influence on economists' identification and definition of a 'mainstream.'" Our paper does not help ground this claim but at least depicts the context in which Samuelson's book utilized the word.

[40]Though it appeared in the United States only in 1977, three years after the publication of a German four-volume edition, *Anti-Samuelson* had been initiated as early as 1970 during the heydays of the radical movement on US campuses. At the time, Linder was a graduate student in philosophy at Princeton University, writing a PhD dissertation entitled "Reification and the Consciousness of the Critics of Political Economy: Studies in the Development of Marx' Theory of Value." However, he did not get a permanent position before 1983 after he obtained a doctorate in law at Harvard.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837219000257 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Anti-Samuelson was a critique of the practice of textbook making, which was so embedded in the market process radical economists were criticizing. In an endnote, Linder emphasized the commercial aspects, quoting from a 1973 article in *Business Week*—a magazine that was, they insisted, "published by the same corporation (McGraw-Hill) which published the textbook"—that the textbook was "the central feature of a marketing package" that had become "a necessity in an increasingly competitive market." The authors also noted that "in 1970 the value of shipments of the printing and publishing industry amounted to more than $25 billion" and that "McGraw-Hill itself was the 292nd largest industrial corporation in the U.S. in 1972 with sales of about $430 million and profits of approximately $22.5 million" (ibid., vol. 1, pp. 367–368). Implicit in their view was the idea that a textbook obeying the laws of an increasingly competitive market and dominated by large corporations should be unable to deal with the social concerns radical economists were interested in denouncing. The radicals' repugnance to deal with this mainstream textbook market made Samuelson's attempts to address their criticisms a quite dull initiative.[41]

By this time, Samuelson had made another round of revisions for the tenth edition, although these were a lot lighter than usual. Following his letter of resignation to Aksen in March 1975 (cf. section I), it had been decided that Samuelson would barely revise the text but would be helped by his colleague at MIT Peter Temin, who would undertake a statistical revision of the ninth edition, check proofs, and incorporate the few changes that were specific to the new edition. Temin was a clever choice, and not just because of his credentials as an economic historian. In 1974, he had supervised the revision of the introductory courses of economics at MIT, a class that was still taught to economics students and engineers alike. His revisions, exposed in a memorandum, consisted in making the course more problem-oriented and in expanding the materials used in the class to non-academic texts such as newspapers and professional magazines articles.[42] With Temin on-board, Samuelson would serve only as a consultant and would be little involved in this new volume. Aksen even mentioned that McGraw-Hill could eventually buy the the rights to his text from him. While the eleventh edition (1979) would return to the single-author mode, subsequent editions would be co-signed by William Nordhaus, with Samuelson lending not much beyond his name to the collaboration.[43]

[41]On the other hand, it is interesting to compare Samuelson's long-lasting commercial success with the failure of Joan Robinson and John Eatwell's *An Introduction to Modern Economics*, which had been published the same year. King and Millmow's account of the textbook emphasizes the fact that Robinson, in particular, was unwilling to respond to the requirements of her publisher, the British branch of McGraw-Hill, as well as her lack of interest for the educational aspects of the textbook. The result was that the textbook was hardly suitable for her intended audience. "Its lack of success," they write, "symbolized the collapse of the radical attempt to challenge orthodox theory at the pedagogical level" (King and Millmow 2003, p. 105).

[42]Peter Temin, "14.01 and 14.02: Proposed revisions," Fall 1974, MIT Department of Economics Records, 1947–1982, AC 394, Box 1, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Institute Archives and Special Collections, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

[43]Though there is no direct evidence that Samuelson did not participate in the 'Samuelson and Nordhaus' version of the textbook, the absence of any material related to the revision of *Economics* after the eleventh edition in the archives seems to indicate that his involvement was slight at best.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837219000257 Published online by Cambridge University Press

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have given an account of Samuelson's endeavor to revise the textbook and address his audience at a time when principles-based texts were accused of providing an outdated method of economics education that placed insufficient emphasis on social and economic concerns. This challenge was reinforced by the radicals' critique that mainstream economics was unable to deal with gender and racial discrimination, environmental issues, and, more generally, power relations and the defects of the capitalist system. Samuelson's extension of his analysis to a broader range of problems, which was the main change accomplished during these years in the textbook, was therefore a consequence of these pedagogical and ideological debates, and not just an approach driven by the internal dynamics of the economic discipline. It is my hope that this narrative, which emphasizes not just the changes made in the textbook but also the process through which these changes were made and the context in which they occurred, has contributed to enrich the existing literature. In the following, I want to stress a number of larger historiographical points, which, I think, the present study addresses.

My first remark concerns the nature and role of "the audience." In my introduction, I have noted that existing studies of textbooks, even those that reject the traditional models of diffusion or vulgarization, rarely try to address the question of the audience for these texts, seeing the audience as a relatively homogeneous and identifiable entity whom the author is trying to persuade. The story I just told indeed depicts Samuelson's engagement with *some* audience, but not really with *the* audience in the abstract sense of the term. Samuelson receives comments and suggestions by readers, colleagues, or instructors, but most of his knowledge of "the audience" is largely mediated through sales figures and instructors' reports. Therefore, when we talk about "the audience" for textbooks, we should be aware that we are in fact dealing not with the actual reading community, too diverse and volatile to be fully known, but with a representation: the author's perception of the audience, itself shaped by his interactions—in real life or through published and unpublished writings—with members of the communities who read, study, and engage, sometimes critically, with his textbook.[44] How the author eventually decides to appeal to this perceived audience is therefore pretty much his doing.

This leaves us with the question of whether Samuelson was really willing to address the radicals' critique in the first place or whether he was merely interested in adding light touches of feigned openness in order to impose his vision and ensure continuing commercial success. Rhetorical analyses of Samuelson's discourse tend to insinuate that appeals to the humanities are hardly more than flourishes that are used, at best, as a way to sugarcoat economics' scientistic pill (Klamer 1990) or, at worst, as a means to conceal its scientific flaws (McCloskey 1985). Our historical understanding does not have the same judgmental overtone. First, we know from Roger Backhouse's intellectual biography (2017) of Samuelson that the latter had a long-standing interest in the humanities and in intellectual controversies (see also Giraud 2014). Second, it seems doubtful that a firm like McGraw-Hill would have invested so much effort and money into getting feedback from radical economists, a relatively minority group within the economics profession, if this were only to add rhetorical flourishes to the textbook. Therefore, we have to believe that

[44]Mata (2009b) makes a similar claim, even invoking "the death of the audience."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837219000257 Published online by Cambridge University Press

some of Samuelson's engagement with the radicals was genuine. However, it is also pretty clear that addressing the radicals' critique was not the same thing for Samuelson as making concessions to their claims. His assertion in the ninth edition that "Marxism may be too valuable to leave to the Marxists" (see above, section IV) suggests that he was more interested in using intellectual controversies with the radicals as a way to cement his own community of mainstream economists than in persuading his opponents.

Another concluding remark concerns Samuelson's exceptionalism. Most accounts that study Samuelson's *Economics* do so on the basis that because his book was popular and widely adopted for several decades, then it would represent a good entry point to the study of all that was standard in economics in the second half of the twentieth century. Samuelson himself, who liked to insinuate that mainstream economics as a whole could be easily reduced to his own person, has encouraged this view.[45] The preceding narrative, however, could help to question these endeavors. Suffice to look at *Economics*' main competitors—as identified by its editors—in the mid-1960s to see how Samuelson was in a unique position as a textbook author. McConnell, Reynolds, or Abbott were not particularly well known as practicing economists, and while Lipsey was a growing star in the economics profession and Alchian and Allen were eminent members of the Chicago School, none enjoyed Samuelson's lasting popularity. The latter had been under the spotlight since the publication of the first edition of his textbook, which came out just after his receiving the John Bates Clark medal, and his authority, inside and outside academia, had only grown with time. Most of his readers knew that whereas, in most other textbooks, names like Joseph Schumpeter or Galbraith were just passing references, in Samuelson's *Economics*, these were people the author had actually met and engaged with. Similarly, they were aware that he had lent his name to some of the tools presented in the text or participated in or at least inspired some of the current economic policies. Accordingly, they were not just looking at *Economics* for some hard-edged economic analysis but also for an insider's view of the economics community. Samuelson's active role in attributing credit and speaking for the profession in the textbook makes him a bad choice for a recording device of postwar economics. For the same reason, any attempt to generalize the present account of *Economics* to other textbook endeavors should be met with caution.

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[45]He wrote: "A historian of mainstream-economic doctrines, like a paleontologist who studies the bones and fossils in different layers of earth, could date the ebb and flow of ideas by analyzing how Edition 1 was revised to Edition 2 and, eventually, to Edition 14" (quoted in Skousen 1997, p. 138). This is consistent with Colander's recent assertion that most American introductory textbooks are "spinoffs of the Samuelson template" (Colander 2012, p. 337).

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