

**Marion Fourcade-Gourinchas**

Department of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley

**American Economics between Professional Scientism and Scientific Professionalism<sup>1</sup>**

The crystallization of American economics around mathematical technologies and pro-market ideologies is the outcome of a complex historical process. While some have read this development as a settlement of scientific controversies between institutionalism and neoclassicism, I argue that the character of American economics must be understood as the product of a much broader process of professional institutionalization. The specialist-oriented nature of American administrative institutions and the centrality of market relations in organizing American economic life, I suggest, are of paramount importance to understand how American economics came to take its particular intellectual shape.

The paper relies on historical evidence about development of the American economic expertise industry during the twentieth century. I contend that by constructing their identity around professional functions carried out by specialists, and by bringing these specialists into the public domain via market-based expert industries, American administrative institutions contributed to define economics as a specialized professional undertaking based on the monopoly over certain distinctive skills. As a result, the identity of American economics has remained firmly located within universities, which provide those skills and grant credentials. In contrast to continental Europe, where economics was incorporated into a generalist form of technocratic expertise dominated by law, American economics developed largely as a technical and self-referential intellectual enterprise, ultimately giving rise to the strong scientific program that is still with us today. Being primarily based in universities, American economists mainly talked with each other. Being brought into the public domain as specialists, they were led to strengthen those technical abilities on which their legitimacy relied. Paradoxically, then, the forging of disciplinary strength and (relative) intellectual homogeneity within academia also contributed to reinforce the profession's jurisdictional power outside of academia. This perspective allows for a reconciliation of the common perception of economics as being "ivory tower" with Steven Brint's remark that economists have been among the most politically influential knowledge-based elites in post-World War II America.

**Contact**

Department of Sociology, University of California,  
Berkeley, Barrows Hall 410, Berkeley,  
CA 94720-1980, (510) 643 2707  
fourcade@berkeley.edu

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<sup>1</sup> The proposed paper is drawn from a larger book, *The National Trajectories of Economic Knowledge. Discipline and Profession in the United States, Great Britain and France*, to be published next year by Princeton University Press.