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FOREWORD

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY (OR THE LACK THEREOF) IN THE ECONOMICS PROFESSION IN LATIN AMERICA

Jimena Hurtado and Erich Pinzón-Fuchs

Guest editors

Economics abides in what could be seen as a paradox regarding discrimination: the economics of discrimination has received a lot of attention especially during the second half of the 20th century but discrimination within the field has been much less of a topic of discussion and even less of a research topic. The contrast between the well-established subfield of the economics of discrimination and the rather recent attempts of the professional community to contend with its own professional practices is striking when we consider economists have been working on discrimination in the labour market at least since the mid-20th century and official attempts to address and change discriminatory practices within the profession are relatively recent. It is as if economists saw the straw in another's eye but not the beam in their own.

In 2018 the American Economic Association conducted a survey on the climate in the economics profession. The results, published in 2019 (see Allgood et al., 2019), were stark and have produced a series of initiatives and reactions to what are perceived as discriminatory, aggressive, and toxic environments in a profession that has been characterised by its lack of diversity. These initiatives are not

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new. In 1968 the Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession was created; the following year, the National Economics Association, product of the Caucus of Black Economists, was founded; in 1971, the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP) was created¹; more recently, in 2002 the American Society of Hispanic Economists was founded; and in 2019 the Association for Economic Research of Indigenous People began operating. All these initiatives are set forth in the United States. There are also international initiatives such as the International Association for Feminist Economics, founded in 1992, and D-Econ: Diversifying and Decolonising Economics, created in 2019. Little is to be found concerning similar initiatives in Latin America. Collectives of women economists and students have raised their voices and denounced sex discrimination in countries such as Colombia, but regional and national professional associations have, thus far, been unsuccessful in providing a systematic examination of the state of discrimination in the discipline in the region.²

In spite of these long-term efforts the lack of diversity and the toxic environment still prevail, in particular for economists who are not or do not identify themselves as white men, (Allgood et al., 2019). In the last five years the situation has attracted the attention of the media, again especially in the U.S. and in several European countries. Articles in the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and other media outlets such as The Economist, VoxEu, or Planet Money have been devoted to this topic. A quick search on Google shows far fewer results in Spanish and Portuguese, however.

Different types of inequalities and stereotyping related to gender, ethnic, racial, and class identities, among others, are some of the most pressing issues in the economics discipline and profession today. Indeed, recent work has shown that important barriers exist for women and other minorities upon entering a traditionally white – and male – dominated profession such as economics (see Bayer and Rouse, 2016;). Other works have recently evidenced how minorities, particularly women, are held to higher standards of evaluation when submitting their papers

¹ Cherrier (2017) traces the story of the creation of the CSWEP and the resolutions the American Economic Association adopted on the occasion. Cherrier (2017), drawing on research by women historians of economic thought, offers an account of how the participation of women in economics has been irregular in the 20th century but commenced with a strong participation at the outset of the 20th century in the U.S. Women economists had to apply strategies of adaptation to overcome cultural barriers and were more inclined, as still seems to be the case, to be applied economists. This, suggests Cherrier (2017), would explain why there is so little mention of them and their work in the profession and its history. Women economists, according to Cherrier's hypothesis, work in topics that, until recently, received less attention from academic economics and therefore have been pursued outside academia.

² Some of the collectives of women economists and students that have raised their voices to denounce discrimination in Colombia and which have been founded in recent years are MÍA Uniandes (https://econexpertas.org/quienes-somos/), EconomistaA_UN (https://sites.google.com/view/gihpte/actividades/economistaa_un), Épicas (Universidad del Rosario), Mesa de Economía Feminista (https://www.mesaeconomiafeminista.org/), and Asociación Colombiana de Economistas Negras, to mention only a few.

for publication (Hengel 2018), and how stereotypes represent an important barrier for women entering the economists' job market (Wu, 2020).

Yet these works have focused mostly on the situation these minorities face in the United States and, in some cases, in Europe. There are no systematic studies of the situation regarding the economics profession and discipline in Latin America. The purpose of this special issue is to propose a first attempt at understanding how stereotyping and discrimination of different types affect the organisation of our discipline and profession in the region. In particular, the special issue aims at bringing to light the situation of women in economics and hopes to pose the question with regards to what can be said of diversity, in general, in the economics profession in Latin America. The articles in the special issue evidence that the situation for women economists is not that different from what is registered in studies from other parts of the world; there is still much to be done in terms of sex composition and, more broadly, to promote diversity.

Two related questions inform this special issue and try to address the apparent paradox stated before: why has economics remained a rather homogeneous field in terms of identity and what do we know about this lack of diversity and discrimination in Latin America? We shall attempt a partial answer to the first question in this introduction and the articles that make up this special issue will address the second, focusing especially on the situation of women economists.

As Castellanos reminds us in his article "Diversifying the economics profession: The long way to overcome discrimination and sub-representation of Hispanics and African Americans. An Analysis for the United States between 1995-2019" mainstream economics has used two principal approaches for dealing with discrimination, especially in the labour market. According to Gary Becker's (1957) canonical model, discrimination would be related to preferences, that is, economic agents would have a taste for discrimination leading workers from discriminated groups to receive lower salaries. Taste-based discrimination would explain the wage gap between workers from minority and non-minority groups. However, according to this view, discrimination was an inefficient behaviour that could raise production costs and make discriminating firms less competitive as non-discriminating employers would be able to hire equally or more productive but discriminated workers at lower wages.

The good news then, according to this model, is that a competitive market would take care of agents with a taste for discrimination and thus discrimination would disappear. However, the good news remains to be seen. The persistence of discrimination led economists to assert that some type of market imperfection was at work; asymmetric information or unobservable characteristics could play a role in hiring decisions. In 1971 Kenneth Arrow introduced statistical discrimination so as to understand the persistence of this phenomenon. According to this approach, external identity characteristics, for Arrow (1971) sex, would be used as a proxy for unobservable characteristics. In other words, cultural beliefs and incomplete information would lead people to use these identity characteristics to account for expected behaviour and performance. This approach would mean that stereotypes play an important role in hiring decisions that result in discrimination.

Other criticisms of the Beckerian model, mainly from Marxist and feminist economists also supported the influence of cultural and institutional barriers that made rational decision theory inappropriate for understanding identity discrimination (see Bergmann, 1995; 2005). There are other forces at play, social, cultural, political, that cannot be ignored when analysing discrimination. These criticisms point to implicit and explicit bias, identity expectations, and power relations as the major drivers of discrimination. Adaptation strategies and hard work would not be enough for discriminated individuals and groups to deal with and eventually overcome their situation.

Cherrier et al. (2018) trace these approaches to a vivid exchange between Carolyn Shaw Bell, a major figure in the creation of the CSWEP, and Milton Friedman on the occasion of the organisation of a session at the 1973 meeting of the Allied Social Sciences Association to discuss the findings of the first annual survey of women economists. Bell, as the inaugural chairperson of the CSWEP, wanted to present and discuss the results of the survey with economists from different and contrasting backgrounds and perspectives. Cherrier et al. (2018) reconstruct this exchange to show that the way economists were thinking with regards to discrimination in the economy characterised the way they thought about women in the economics profession. Bell's position was more in line with those that advanced imperfect information, beliefs, and expectations, whereas Friedman favored an efficient market approach to the problem.

Bell's views regarding the labour market can be traced further back in the history of economics. In *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (WN), Adam Smith associated the differences among people not to natural causes but to the division of labour. In modern parlance, it is an individual's cultural, social, and economic capital that determines, to a great extent, their human capital. Access to education and labour opportunities is highly dependent upon the place (geographical, social, cultural, political, religious, and economic) a person is born and brought up in. The difference between a street porter and a great philosopher, says Smith (1981 [1776], WN I.ii.4), is much less than we are aware of and "seems to arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom, and education" (1981 [1776], WN I.ii.4). What Smith was implying (c.f. McLean, 2006; Peart & Levy, 2008, Nimura, 2016) is human equality. Inequality, and we might add, discrimination are cultural constructions³.

No doubt, the common view on Smith would also trace Friedman's position to the Scottish thinker. However, Smith did not seem to believe the labour market was

³ On Smith's moral egalitarianism and his defense of the equality of human dignity see Darwall (1999), Griswold (1999), Rothschild (2001), Fleischacker (2004a; 2004b; 2013), Debes (2012), Herzog (2014) and Anderson (2016).

a competitive one. Not only did he fear the possible and almost inevitable collusion of employers (1981 [1776], WN I.x.c.27), Smith also saw the greater political influence employers could exercise against the free decision of labourers. We should not forget, as one of the most improbable defenders of Smith reminds us (Menger, 2016)⁴, that among the reasons Smith favoured markets was that they had allowed for overcoming servitude and the increasing division of labour, associated with the expansion of commerce, had improved the living conditions of the labouring poor at least in the UK and North America. The market had allowed workers to become visible in society and had given them the opportunity to make choices. As far and utopian as this might sound today, Smith did believe that the market had worked as an equaliser of sorts and that the government and legislation should promote the conditions needed for workers to exercise their free choice, at least as to their occupation.

The point here is that since Smith equality has become an important value in economics. Equality and freedom. John Stuart Mill attests to this commitment. Not only was he one of the most influential economists of his time, but in collaboration with Harriet Taylor, advanced the interests of minorities, especially women. Mill and Taylor were known for their engagement concerning votes for women, women's participation in the labour market, and changes in marriage laws. They were also known for their involvement in the anti-slavery movement to the point that conservatives deemed political economy as the dismal science, a science that wanted to make equality real, treat individuals equally and promote equal freedom (Peart & Levy, 2001). Other economists at the turn of the 20th century, such as Beatrice Webb, founder of the London School of Economics, were also deeply committed to advancing the equality of rights and freedom for culturally and historically discriminated groups.

The down side of this commitment was that mainstream economics, especially after the second half of the 20th century and with the formal revolution of the 1950s, became difference or diversity blind.⁵ This blindness was anchored both in economic theory and methodology, and in the way the discipline was socially and institutionally organised. In particular, economic theories such as rational choice theory, erased all possible identity characteristics and differences in economic agents. Diversity blindness plus assumptions such as free information and exoge-

⁴ Improbable because in this text Menger defends Smith from those who accused him of being a steadfast advocate of laissez-faire and unregulated markets. In this newspaper article Menger presents Smith as a defender of the interests of the working class: "In every conflict of interest between the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, Smith sides without exception with the latter" (Menger, 2016, p. 474, italics in the original). Menger, also contrary to the common vision of the Austrian School of Economics, sided with Smith.

⁵ But some of the systemic problems that account for the blindness of economists on issues of discrimination, date back to the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the founders of the American Economic Society defended particular views regarding science, expert knowledge, and the way they wanted to organise the social world and the discipline of economics that were based on race science, eugenics, and misogyny, and that excluded "the disabled, immigrants, African Americans, and women [both] from the [...] work force" and their discipline (Leonard, 2016, p. xi).

nous tastes led to an agent that, as has been vastly discussed and criticised, resembles more an algorithm than a human being. Those who could have responded to this blindness, non-white, non-male, non-North-Western, non-binary economists, were driven out of the field or were never really able to enter it. The typical economist remained a white, upper-middle class or upper-class male, and the topics, questions, and methods that were considered to appertain to the core of the discipline, remained to be the topics that interested these white males. That is how, women, for example, were omitted from the main theoretical discussion and became involved in applied and empirical economics and, in particular, developed fields such as home economics (Le Tollec, 2020; Philippy, 2021) making their voices less perceptible and subduing their contributions to economics as a whole.

Topics such as education, discrimination, or household and family behaviour remained outside the boundaries of the discipline at least until the second half of the twentieth century. Indeed, these topics only entered the core of the discipline and became "proper economics" in the 1970s or 1980s when economists such as Paul A. Samuelson, Milton Friedman, James Duesenberry, Jacob Mincer, Theodore Schultz, and Gary Becker incorporated them as part of their research agendas (Le Tollec, 2020). However, the women who had traditionally studied these topics such as Margaret Reid, Elizabeth Hoyt and Jessica Peixotto, among many others, remained, in many cases, excluded from traditional Economics Departments, absent from decision-making and institutionally powerful positions, and extrinsic to the disciplinary boundaries (see Cookingham, 1987; Forget, 2011).8 Likewise for their methods and the interdisciplinarity that characterised their approaches to these topics (Le Tollec, 2020). Although more diverse topics and objects of study that had not been considered "proper economics" were able to enter the discipline at some point following WWII, and although the postwar period represented the onset of some opportunities for women economists to enter government and university positions (mostly as technical analysts and in support positions) (Forget, 2011), the kinds of people and methods that defined the discipline did not change accordingly, and the discipline did not gain in terms of diversity. Depart-

⁶ For an analysis of how certain economic assumptions "have deafened most economists to the possibility that economic [and other] motives help explain inequality between the sexes", see Folbre and Hartman (1988).

⁷ There were, of course, important women such as Joan Robinson or Rosa Luxemburg who were central figures in theoretical discussions. However, most of the work done by women economists consisted of applied and empirical work that sometimes was considered either as being outside the scope of economics (such as home economics or social work) or as fulfilling "supporting roles" consisting, for example, in assisting forecasters and statistical workers such as Roger Babson (Friedman, 2014, chapter 1), Wassily Leontief, or other quantitative researchers in institutions such as the Cowles Commission.

⁸ Some women became Professors in Economics Departments that belonged to women's colleges such as Wellesley or Radcliffe (see Forget, 2011). However, these women, their ideas, objects of study, and methods, were not allowed to enter into the core of the discipline represented in the most central economics departments and institutions. For a discussion on how place matters for the construction of scientific authority and the shaping of disciplinary boundaries in a field such as economics, see Mata (2009).

mental, editorial, and leading positions were retained, for the most part, by the same kind of people who had defined the core of the discipline for decades, both institutionally, sociologically, and methodologically.

Diversity blindness seems to have gone from papers, models, and research into the everyday practice of economists within the professional community, prompting the situation to appear closer to statistical discrimination than to taste-based discrimination. Economists regard external identity markers as proxies of unobservable characteristics of their colleagues. When this is combined with implicit bias and identity expectations of behaviour and performance, we find the perfect mix for an inhospitable environment for economists who do not fit into a mainly white, male, binary, North-Western identity (see Allgood et al., 2019; Wu, 2020).

Those who have prevailed and resisted, as shown in Fernández's interview in this issue with Maria Concieção Tavares, a leading economist at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), resorted to adaptation strategies that made them appear aggressive and strong, or in the stereotypical imagery, unfeminine. The interview is fascinating not only as a testimony of this economist's contributions to Latin American economic thought and her views on the region's economy, but also because it alludes to, as Fernández notes, a generational shift. Tavares is a role model and part of the obscured figures of economics, but she does not acknowledge gender issues as part of her main concerns in her career as an academic or as a practitioner. According to Tavares, gender was not an issue though at times she admits she had to speak out loudly in a male dominated world.

This paper is the perfect exemplification that recognising scientific credit and raising awareness of hidden figures in the history of Latin American economic thought is of paramount importance, not only to attribute the recognition "forgotten" female economists deserve, but also as a way of understanding how these women and other people dealt with their lives as scientists, and how their lives as scientists affected the kind of knowledge they produced. However important, recovering these obscured figures is only the first step that Latin American historians of economics need to take. Indeed, if we are to really understand the systemic problems in the organisation of our discipline, we must rethink the history of our discipline from a broader point of view. This broader point of view might go beyond recovering the hidden figures and consider other categories of analysis such as gender —not just women—¹⁰, class, ethnicity, and other relations

⁹ For a discussion on how scientific biographies that take the issue of scientific credit seriously into account might yield historical narratives that combine the personal trajectories of scientists that unfold within scientific fields that are understood as social structures, see Düppe and Weintraub (2014).

¹⁰It should be clear that adopting a gender approach does not have to do exclusively with "women's issues". Indeed, as Julie Nelson has explained "male is a gender too" and we need to understand both how different representations of masculinities play a role in discrimination, and how masculinities can and must play a role in changing the discipline and the profession.

of power that characterise Latin American societies and that affect the experience of economists, their visions regarding the world, and the kind of knowledge they produce. Here, again, geographically and historically placing what it means to be a woman, a man, a *campesinx*, an indigenous person, or an Afro-Latin American in our countries and throughout our history is essential to producing historical narratives that truly relate our realities.

These narratives, however, should go beyond the separate analysis of these categories and take the intersections of these experiences which mark our Latin American reality seriously into account. In this sense, these narratives should consider what it meant to be an Afro-Latin American female economist in a country like Brazil in the 1980s, for example, or an indigenous non-binary economist in Peru during the 2000s, or a mestizo male economist in Mexico in the 1970s. As Crenshaw (1989, p. 138) explains, "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism", and so, it is important that we understand these experiences in their entirety throughout the development of specific and suitable categories of analysis. Indeed, these suitable categories of analysis will help us to both better understand our own experiences and translate our problems into concrete policy demands and actions (Crenshaw, 1989) that could effectively mitigate problems of discrimination within the economics discipline in Latin America. In this sense, an intersectional analysis should not be taken as a rigid framework of analysis, but rather as an open and empirical question that needs to be historically and geographically placed.11

Rethinking categories of analysis and research questions in our own terms, should lead us to exploring other sources of information that are somehow not necessarily considered obvious or legitimate in our profession. Understanding our reality and borrowing from the knowledge already acquired by sociologists, historians, and gender and feminist scholars regarding these categories, will allow us to identify unsuspected sources and relate other histories about the production of economic knowledge in our region. These other histories might not comply with the standard histories told in other latitudes of the history of economics, because they might not be in congruence with definitions of what it means, traditionally, to be an economist or to produce economic knowledge. Yet, these other histories might allow us to better understand the history of the profession in our own terms and provide us with powerful elements to unravel what diversity actually means to us, as well as what we, Latin American economists, have done (or failed to do) to promote

¹¹For a systematic discussion on the extent and limits of the intersectional approach see Crenshaw (1989); for a genealogy of its origins and the debates concerning this analytical tool see Viveros Vigoya (2016).

¹²The contemporary historiography of economics has explored different kinds of sources, methods, and topics in recent years, too. As Chassonnery-Zaïgouche and Herfeld (2019) and Chassonnery-Zaïgouche et al. (2018) evidence, there has been a broadening in the scope of the history of economics and economists are now "working on topics, locations, institutional sites, time periods, and objects that would have not received much attention in the past" Chassonnery-Zaïgouche et al. (2018, p. 3).

the inclusion of more diverse people, viewpoints, and approaches to our discipline and profession.

These narratives need to be understood as necessarily embracing a political element. Just as feminists and Latin American scholars have taught us, a gender, or intersectional approach to the history of our discipline that considers these categories as mere categories of analysis is devoid of sense. Indeed, gender, class, ethnicity, and their intersection are categories of analysis. But they are also relations of power to which individuals are subjected in their daily lives, and so they should be expounded and, above all, changed. This is the role that our historical narratives can play: they can serve as tools to promote change.

Bucheli et al. in their article manifest how this male dominated world has changed in Uruguay with the steady proliferation of women in economics. However, women economists still publish fewer articles in journals, even if they produce working papers at par with male economists. Given the importance of academic publication for career progress and peer recognition this would suggest that women economists might be held to higher publishing standards than their male colleagues as has been evidenced for other parts of the world (see Hengel, 2018; 2020). Bucheli et al. also find that Uruguayan male economists co-author more with nonlocal colleagues, which might have an impact on the publication possibilities of their research and affect their international networks and recognition. Despite these results, as the authors remark, the atypical steady growth in the participation of women in economics in Uruguay should draw more attention and research to understanding the conditions and environment that have led more women to engage in the field in this country than elsewhere.

Rocha et al. in this issue address the situation of women economists in Brazil. They discern under-representation and a leaky pipeline by way of revising acceptance to the most important Brazilian economic conference and the results of the ANPEC examination for graduate studies. Their article relates to the importance of assessing the non-neutrality of the definition of excellence in the profession as another obstacle women face in their careers as academic economists (c.f. Zacchia, 2021).

Increasing diversity in economics is also related to the way we teach future generations of economists. As Villaveces and Torres document in their article, even if economic professors are aware of the under-representation of women among economic students and know of the importance of role models, the authors explored in the syllabi and readings assigned in the economic history classes in Colombia show little diversity. Female professors tend to include more texts written by women economists, more content related to women and women issues but the question remains whether this also transpires with other population groups apart from the economics profession.

Both papers, Rocha et al., and Villaveces and Torres, touch on a decisive topic: understanding the lack of diversity in the economics profession in Latin America:

The way in which economics programmes and departments are built and organised, and how economics students are socialised as economists. Indeed, the contents of our formal courses and syllabi, teach economics students how economic science is carried out, what are the questions that matter, and what are the methods considered appropriate in the profession. But economics students learn much more than this in the classrooms. They also learn, implicitly, what it means to be an economist, the role of economists in society, what are the most important institutions, journals, and associations that organise our profession, how economists should behave and talk, and what values and self-image economists should have.¹³ In this sense, economics education and training might serve as a mechanism for reproducing cultural, political, social, and moral values;¹⁴ it might serve as a way of transmitting to the very core of our discipline stereotypes based on cultural representations of gender, class, or ethnicity. These cultural values then, might be reflected in the way we organise our discipline, in the way we treat each other, in the way we centralise or distribute power, or even, as Julie Nelson explains, in our conception of the world and in our cognitive system (Nelson, 1992; 2010; 2014).

To be sure, both formal education in universities and informal training in government, think tanks, research centers, etc., transmit the values of the economics discipline to economics students, molding their identity as economists. But what are the values that are transmitted and that form the economists' identity? In their study, Fourcade et al. (2015) found that, compared to other (social) sciences, economics is a more male-dominated, insular, hierarchical, and intellectually self-confident discipline that has well-defined authorities and other formal and informal mechanisms that transmit the idea of the "superiority of economists" and centralises power in the discipline. One such mechanism, for example, is publication in the "top five" economics journals, which is not only "a powerful determinant of tenure in academic economics" but also "influences the choices of topics on which young economists work" (Heckman & Moktan, 2020, 462).¹⁵ These values of self-confidence and superiority are reflected in the widespread idea that "economics is the most scientific of the social sciences", in part, because of the quantitative work (Colander, 2005, p. 186) which is often "interpreted as a sign of higher intellectual capabilities" (Fourcade et al. 2015, p. 90).

In a highly international discipline that is so hierarchical and that has mechanisms of this sort to concentrate power, it is not unreasonable to assume that many of the values and structures that are at play at the center of the discipline, are also reproduced at the periphery. The economics profession in Latin America is definitely

¹³See Kaiser (2005) for a study of the importance of pedagogy and training in the formation of scientists in general and Colander and Klamer (1987) and Colander (2005) for an analysis of how formal and informal training molds economists.

¹⁴For an explanation of how cultural, political, and social values are reproduced by education see Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Arum & Beattie (2000).

¹⁵The "top five" journals in economics are, according to Heckman and Moktan (2020, p. 420), *The American Economic Review, Econometrica*, the *Journal of Political Economy*, the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, and the *Review of Economic Studies*.

permeated by these powerful disciplinary structures, reproducing at regional and national levels, the insularity, hierarchies, and the centralisation of power characteristic of our discipline. This rigid organisation of economics has cognitive consequences that affect the way in which economists produce knowledge, observe and understand the world, and make policy recommendations. ¹⁶

Lack of diversity, as has been pointed out on numerous occasions, has negative consequences for the professional community. The loss or neglect of perspectives, approaches and research topics that diverse economists could bring to the professional community causes it to become narrow and out of touch with many pressing economic, social, cultural and political issues. Economics, as David Hume would have it, should be a useful knowledge in the sense that it should aim at documenting, understanding and proposing solutions to the issues that impact people's lives and well-being. To do so, economics must have a broad and inclusive perspective to identify and recognise those issues and translate people's demands into analytical and analysable economic problems. What we see and what we understand is determined not only by who we are and where we are but also by our capacity to broaden our vision and truly see others.

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¹⁶For an analysis of the way the organisation of the economics discipline has cognitive consequences on economists, see Nelson (1992; 2010; 2014). For a more general analysis on how gender (and other types of) representations affect the production of knowledge in the sciences, see Keller (1986), Harding (1986), Jordanova (1993), and Scott (1986; 2008).

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