PEA Newsletter

Journey Through Economics

Mary Jo Milford

I was asked to share the story of my journey that led me to the study of Economics and my participation in the PEA Conference. As I began to really reflect on my story, I began to realize how much this is not only my story to share. It is the story of a combination of all of the people in my life and a combination of what we have shared throughout the years. When I think of Economics, I personally do not become passionate about running regressions, collecting data, or explaining the methods and models that were used. Of course, these are the extremely important mechanicals of it, however, to me, that is the boring part of it, to be quite honest. No, when I think of Economics I think of the impact that it has on the people that live in small communities, cities and countries. I become passionate about changing people’s lives and improving their perspective that they may have on their part of the world or parts that may be foreign to them. When I read or witness things such as a country suffering from diseases that could be treated, women and children that are victims of domestic violence, discrimination of minorities in a country, and people that may be suffering from PTSD/Depression that just do not know … (continued on page 2)

How to Submit Papers for Publication

The Pennsylvania Economic Review, a publication of the Pennsylvania Economic Association (PEA), publishes scholarly articles and book reviews submitted from anywhere in the world and in all economic areas. The PER also welcomes submissions containing an analysis of the Pennsylvania economy. It encourages members of the Pennsylvania Economic Association who present papers at the Association’s Annual Conferences to submit their papers for possible publication. Referees evaluate articles that authors submit for possible publication. The editors, assisted by the recommendations of the referees and the editorial board, accept or reject an article for publication.

Initial submissions may be made with a cover letter indicating that the manuscript is not currently being considered at another publication. Also include a complete electronic copy of the paper in MSWord on a Flash Drive or CD, or email the file to the Editor. There is a $25 fee for all paper submissions.

Send submissions along with payment to: Orhan Kara & Thomas Tolin, Editor, Pennsylvania Economic Review, 309 Anderson Hall, West Chester University, West Chester, PA 19383.

More information on how to submit papers can be found at: http://www.econpea.org/pub/review.html.

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PEA Mission

The purpose of the Association is to: (1) foster economic scholarship and fellowship among persons interested in economics and who reside or work in Pennsylvania; (2) publish the proceedings of the annual meetings; (3) publish a biannual refereed journal (Pennsylvania Economic Review); and (4) encourage freedom of economic decision. The Association as such will not take any partisan attitude, nor will it commit its members to any position on practical economic questions.
Journey Through Economics (cnt.)

how to move on from the traumas that have affected their lives, that creates a movement in me to do what I do. Economics helps us to create an awareness to these issues by gathering the facts and the hard evidence. By combining the data with currently existing research we can prove the necessity of why world leaders need to take action to improve the standard of living of their people.

When reading an Economics paper from an established journal, you get to see the end product of a vision that once started out as a question or a curiosity in a particular Economist. However, the most important parts of the journey are the ones that are only seen by a select few. They are the moments when a professor or an undergraduate student are at their most stressed point. It’s when they have taken months or even years to collect data, have read countless numbers of written journals or articles, have tried to piece it all together but have somehow, after all of the struggle, frustration, and at some point, tears, have lost all hope to come to a logical conclusion. Then out of nowhere, while they are outside spending time with their kids, or driving down a dirt road with no destination, or walking down the street and happen to run into someone they haven’t seen for a while, it happens. Something someone said or during a physical activity, or simply, in the middle of the night while they are asleep, it comes to them. This could be a stroke of genius, a coincidence in a kind word, a series of serendipitous experiences, or just plain luck. That specific moment is the motivation that keeps me pursuing Economics. The in-between moments for me are filled with daily quotes that I have collected over the years from Pinterest and spending time with my daughter and family. These are the activities that have kept me going and have helped me through some of the worst times of my life and softened the symptoms of PTSD and Depression. I was originally supposed to attend the PEA Conference in 2012 as well as graduate college. My self-confidence was so low that I did not believe in myself enough to accomplish it. I also was not able to pass a class that kept me from getting my Bachelor’s degree as well. As time passed, I knew I would one day go back to college and participate in the PEA Conference. There was a drive in me so strong that I could not and would not fail again. Within the four years I was fired from a job, but was hired by Beverage Air. I started out on the assembly line then moved into an office job for the Engineering department. It was there that I gained my self-confidence and empowerment, along with some help from life-long friends and family. The employees helped me to accomplish work goals that otherwise would have gone unfinished. The thing is, when you build someone up enough to the point where they start to believe again, the sky is the limit. Also, when you help other people succeed and achieve their dreams, there is a good possibility that they will in turn help you when you need it the most. This is not because they feel they owe you anything or because it is their duty, but it is because in their heart they know you could also use a helping hand and need to be believed in again. We are all human and make mistakes or bad decisions, but what you do with it is what really matters. My advice, start believing in yourself again because you never know when someone might need you. Personally, my future studies will most likely be focused on rural Pennsylvania so I can give back to the people that have helped me. Although it has been a four-year journey for me so far, I am looking forward to continuing my journey so I can one day help another person that may have a similar story as mine.

“There was a drive in me so strong that I could not and would not fail again.”

Mary Jo presented her paper “Natural Disasters and the Open Macro Economy in the United States, Japan, and Haiti” at the PEA Conference 2016 this past summer at Slippery Rock University.
Benefits of PEA Conference

Recently, I attended an international conference in Chicago that was highly recommended by my colleagues. While the conference was okay, in hindsight I wish I had chosen PEA’s 2016 annual conference instead. In short, it was much more expensive to attend this conference in Chicago (more expensive travel and hotel) and I didn’t get as much out of it relative to past PEA conferences. My session did not have discussants, and when there were discussants at a few of the other sessions, the feedback was often less in-depth and not well prepared. In contrast, discussant feedback at PEA is always excellent! The goal is to leave a conference with valuable feedback on your research, and each year PEA delivers. Plus, PEA has great luncheon speakers (the other conference had no speakers) and I always enjoy hearing the speakers from the Fed. While I won’t be attending PEA this year now that my travel budget is shot, next year I plan to return! In my mind (and thinking like an economist), PEA conferences offer unmatched value!

John Walker

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Dr. Tamsir Cham, Research Economist at the Islamic Development Bank has been presenting his research at the PEA conference in the last two years.

Student’s Participation in Social Research Social Justice Conference

Tahereh Alavi Hojjat—DeSales University

Three students from Global Economic Issues (EC.400) class at DeSales University in Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania presented their research paper at the 13th Annual Social Research Social Justice (SRSJ) Conference at Muhlenburg College on April 8, 2016. The following students were among the presenters:

◊ Brendan Illis: “How to Increase Access to Medicine in Less Developed Countries—Role of Pharmaceutical Industry”.
◊ Kellie Dietrich, “China’s One Child Policy, Human Rights and Reform” and
◊ Emily Stuart: “Economic Consequences of Lack of Upward Social Mobility. All session were well attended.

At this Conference 29 faculty from LVAIC participated as a moderator to manage concurrent sessions with 43 papers being presented. Students did a marvelous job with their presentations, it was a great experience for them to listen to other presenters and also engaging with the key note speaker on “Project Imagine”. Dr. Tahereh Alavi Hojjat, a member of PEA, was faculty moderator for one session on “Economic Inequalities and Labor Histories”. The Social Research Social Justice Conference provides undergraduate a forum for sharing innovative, excellent research addressing some of the most challenging issues of social justice in both contemporary and historical contexts. It provides important opportunities for LVAIC and beyond to come together in critical conversations about the social justice issues that matter to them most. This certainly is helpful in creation of more just and humane societies.

John Walker
New Book: “Islamic Economy and Social Mobility: Cultural and Religious Considerations”

_Tahereh Alavi Hojjat_

Given the post-9/11 climate of global uncertainties, fears, and hostilities, the interest in the relationship between economics and religion, politics, and social behavior is alive and well. In particular, considerable attention is being paid to the dominant role religion is playing in economic behavior and performance. A fresh outlook at the historical, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions of what is known as the Islamic economic system and society are elaborated in our book co-authored with Dr. Hasan Shahpari entitled “Islamic Economy and Social Mobility: Cultural and Religious Considerations.” This book is the result of a long-term collaboration between two authors who originally came from the Middle East and were trained in the fields of Economics and Sociology.

In the last decade or so, the world has noticed active movements in the Islamic world, numerous conferences and discussions have been organized to understand the problems and how to find a remedy for the Islamic world. In order to explore this interconnection, a detailed discussion of the complex meanings of Islam, social mobility, stratification in Islamic societies, within an institutional analysis composed of economy, the family, education, politics and religion are required. Our synthetic perspective and investigative approach attempt to provide a groundbreaking survey of historical, philosophical, sociological and economic outlooks based on interactions between culture, politics, religion and economy in Islamic societies in order to explore such interconnection.

The present work is unique in its scope and findings in both the fields of Middle East studies, and in the wide range of works on Islamic studies, history, politics and economics.

In this book, we review all possible sociological and historical texts that have anything to do with “Islamic Economy and Social Mobility” over the past fifteen centuries. We provided a detailed explanation on the entire foundations of the current economic and sociological realities on the ground in light of the 1977 to 1979 Iranian Revolution, the 2010 Tunisian Uprising, and the 2011 to 2014 Egyptian Arab Spring not to mention the emergence of a dozen or so tangential jihadist/Islamist military/militia organizations dressed out in “Islamic” black flags and caliphal if not genocidal aspirations in parts of West, East, and Central Africa, and in the Fertile Crescent of the Arab world’s Mediterranean and West Asian region. We present different concepts that show that today’s Islamophobia is harmful to the formation of a complex multicultural society in which Islam is a recognized and meaningful part of Western and non-Western societies.

This book also reflects on the emerging global economy under the rubric of globalization and how such process affects the Islamic economy. The process of the socio-political economic aspects of the Islamic economy of various countries are discussed in fourteen chapters. The book is published by IGI Global publisher (www.igi-global.com) and will be in the market by February 2016.
Service Learning Program

This proposal has been funded for up to $4,000 for the 2015-16 academic year and an additional $3,500 in the 2016-17 academic year. We believe that higher education is the most powerful tool to improve the opportunities of less privileged Americans, giving them a shot at harnessing a fast-changing job market and building a more equitable, inclusive community for all of us. This proposal is an initial step to help and encourage high school students to attend colleges.

This college mentoring pilot project will connect William Allen High School (WAHS) juniors and seniors living in the Allentown School District with current undergraduate students at LVAIC colleges. Undergraduate students, with recent first-hand experience with the college admission process, will work with individual or pairs of students from the WAHS who have expressed interest in attending a two or four-year college, and would like additional guidance identifying available college options and scholarships, and who need support writing college essays, completing the Common Application, and navigating the higher education landscape. We anticipate that this program will build a multi-campus alliance to serve some of the Lehigh Valley’s most needy children.

The objectives of this program for LVAIC students are to:

1) broaden students’ understanding of human difference,
2) develop civic skills necessary for participation in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world, and
3) enhance students’ interpersonal communication and other “soft skills” critical to career success.

Our objectives for WAHS program participants are to:

1) motivate program participants to reach graduation and increase their employment opportunities;
2) increase the number of students applying for and enrolling in college; and
3) increase the number of AHS students applying for and receiving scholarships.

“We believe that higher education is the most powerful tool to improve the opportunities of less privileged Americans.”  -Tahereh Alavi Hojjat

“Attending the Annual Pennsylvania Economics Association Conference was one of the most enriching experiences that I had the pleasure of being involved in. As a freshman, I did not think I would have an opportunity to attend any conferences until I was an upperclassman, so having the opportunity to listen to professors and students present their economic research at an early stage in my education was a valuable experience that really opened my eyes to the opportunities within the economics field. It was a great joy being able to watch a Derek Hanley, a senior at IUP, present his econometric research and win the top prize. Overall, the conference was an amazing opportunity to network with faculty from other universities and meet other high aspiring economics students that changed the course of my career.”

-Anthony Maticic, sophomore International Business and Economics major from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.