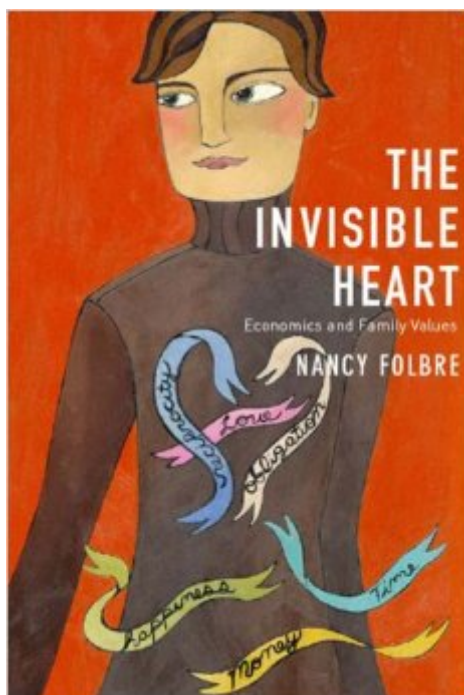


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The Invisible Heart: Economics And Family Values



Synopsis

A brilliant new approach to the economics of caregiving, from the MacArthur Award-winning economist. There has been much talk about family values in recent years, but little examination of the economic forces that are exploding family life and limiting the caregiving that families can provide. As Folbre points out in her provocative and insightful new book, every society must confront the problem of balancing self-interested pursuits with care for others—including children, the elderly, and the infirm. Historically, most societies enjoyed an increased supply of care by maintaining strict limits on women's freedom. But as these limits happily and inevitably give way, there are many consequences for those who still need care. Using the image of "the invisible heart" to evoke the forces of compassion that must temper the forces of self-interest, Folbre argues that if we don't establish a new set of rules defining our mutual responsibilities for caregiving, the penalties suffered by the needy—our very families—will increase. Intensified economic competition may drive altruism and families out of business. A leading feminist economist, Nancy Folbre writes in a lively, personal style—Molly Ivins cheek-to-cheek with John Kenneth Galbraith—and develops a distinctive approach to the economics of care. Unlike others who praise family values, Folbre acknowledges the complicated relationship between women and altruism. Her book offers new interpretations of such policy issues as welfare reform, school finance, and progressive taxation, and it confronts the challenges of globalization, outlining strategies for developing an economic system that rewards both individual achievement and care for others. Chapters include: The Milk of Human Kindness The Care Penalty Measuring Success The Nanny State Children as Pets Robin Hood School The Golden Eggs CorporNation Dancing in the Dark

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Customer Reviews

Anyone economist whom the Wall Street Journal takes a swipe at is doing something right in my book. I don't recall the exact quote but the Journal says something like Folbre is a "feminist economist who studies family economics (socialism)." Folbre wonders aloud if the Journal believes families are necessarily socialist. Judging from their characterization of Folbre's work, and their endorsement of strict neoclassical economic theory in their editorial section, it appears that the Journal and other business and economic theorists of their ilk would prefer to simply call families names than deal with their true economic and moral value in the realm of capitalism. Folbre's thesis is that capitalism has been enjoying a "free ride" on families and communities from very early on. She further argues that capitalism is changing the ways people and families conceive of themselves. Using memorable examples, she makes a convincing case for the inclusion of traditional women's work such as child rearing in such measures as the GDP. After all, don't corporations need smart well-trained workers? And don't smart well-trained workers grow up inside families who nurture, care, and educate them? Further, don't families and workers mostly pay for their training? Most economists are uncomfortable thinking about how the social and moral structure of society underpins capitalism. This is because they can't find ways to measure this "natural resource." Conservatives know that capitalism encourages radical individualism -- that's why they are always trying to impose "traditional values" on workers. Conservatives know that capitalism depletes people's sense of obligation and responsibility -- that's why they talk about it so much.

She attempts to make a feminist argument which is fine but she makes dozens upon dozens of claims without backing them up with any source or validity. This book was clearly not peer reviewed let alone proofread. There are better feminist writers (Naomi Wolf), better liberal writers (Alexander Cockburn) and better economists (Milton Friedman). Here are some of the logical errors w/ page numbers. Xix She rambles about some story about a drunk rich man that used to go hunting with her father and yet she says "I learned at a tender age that some very successful men couldn't always tell the difference between milk and mayonnaise" Well that's because he was a chronic drunk that happened to be rich! Talk about leaving a detail out or a general assumption....4. Her first stat is an automatic bias because it is quoting the economic department of UMass Boston Amherst of which she was the Chair16. Quotes whirlpool foundation's poll even though they are not a polling agency!22. She completely ignores the fact that there are other groups that were performing labor

for men. Now she obviously mentions women being a feminist and that's fine and she also mentions children. Child labor on the large scale ended in the USA in the 1930's...she fails to mention slavery...one could buy a slave when it was legal. There was however no buying of women,infact in the old dowry system it was often the opposite!40. States that mothers are often reluctant to threaten for fear that loss of contact with the father will harm the child...based on what...there's no statistic given here....no empirical data at all46 "Most families already have a hard time paying their child care bills" according to who? most? What a generalization here! "most" being what? 70%? 60%?

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