

“The Focus Axiom and Poverty: On the Co-existence of Precise Language and Ambiguous Meaning in Economic Measurement”

Economics: MS 591

This paper claims that supporting the focus axiom in the measurement of poverty entails that a poverty index should be sensitive only to changes in the income distribution of the poor population. Consequently, the index should satisfy an “income-focus” axiom and a “population-focus” axiom. Most of the poverty measures introduced in the literature, although income-focused, are not population-focused. The paper provides examples of measures that either fulfil the two axioms or violate both. The author argues that these measures are consistent and coherent meaning with the underlying conception of poverty.

The paper deals with an issue I find quite challenging. In addition it is well-written and the presentation is very clear.

Some minor questions:

- * pg 5 line 16: “For all $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbf{D}$, we shall take $n(\mathbf{x})$ to be large enough...”. I find this sentence a bit confusing. We cannot choose $n(\mathbf{x})$ if \mathbf{x} is given. I would remove this sentence since it is not crucial in the text. When it is necessary to take a distribution with $n(\mathbf{x})$ big enough is stated explicitly.
- * pg 12, third line of the last paragraph: write “ m^2 ” instead of “ m_1^2 ”.
- * In the fuzzy section: I am not completely convinced that the choice of Z is not essential.
- * pg 17, example 4: perhaps once more, the poverty line should be specified.