

# **HAS MACRO PROGRESSED?**

**By**

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**September 2009**

**COWLES FOUNDATION DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 1728**



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# Has Macro Progressed?

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## Abstract

There have been a number of recent papers arguing that there has been considerable convergence in macro research and to the good. This paper considers the question whether what has been converged to is good. Has progress been made in understanding how the macro economy works?

## 1 Introduction

There have been a number of recent papers arguing that there has been considerable convergence in macro research and to the good. Blanchard (2009, p. 2) states: "... after the explosion ... of the field in the 1970s, there has been enormous progress and substantial convergence. ... The state of macro is good." Woodford (2009, pp. 267, 269) states: "Has there been a convergence of views in macroeconomics? Of course," and "... it is now widely agreed that macroeconomic analysis should employ models with coherent intertemporal general-equilibrium foundations." Chari, Kehoe, and McGrattan (2009, p. 242) state: "Viewed from

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a distance, modern macroeconomists, whether New Keynesian or neoclassical, are all alike, at least in the sense that we use the same methodology, work with similar models, agree on which reduced-form shocks are needed for models to fit the data, and agree on broad principles for policy.” Galí and Gertler (2007, p. 26) in discussing the synthesis of the New Keynesian and real business cycle approaches state: “Overall, the progress has been remarkable. A decade ago it would have been unimaginable that a tightly structured macroeconometric model would have much hope of capturing real-world data, let alone of being of any use in the monetary policy process.”

It seems clear that there has been convergence. This “new” macro, which I will call “macro 2,” dominates the macro literature, and there is little controversy in refereed journals about the appropriate methodology to use. I have been working on macro models since the late 1960’s, where at that time the dominate methodology was what I will call the “Cowles Commission approach,” or “macro 1,” and I am still using this methodology. This paper is an evaluation of macro 2 from a macro 1 perspective. Has the movement to the new macro improved our understanding how the macro economy works?

Section 2 discusses the goals of macro research, where from the perspective of this paper the goal is to find the model that best approximates the macro economy. Section 3 discusses the data to be explained. One might wonder why such a section is needed, but, as discussed in Section 6, macro 2 is not as careful about data as is macro 1. Nitty gritty data work, which characterized macro 1 from the beginning, is largely missing from macro 2. Section 4 provides a brief review of macro 1, which provides a basis of comparison to macro 2 in Sections 5 and 6. Section 7

concludes by questioning the sensibility and feasibility of the macro 2 methodology and arguing for a return to macro 1.

## **2 Goals of Macro Research**

As in any discipline, there are many goals and interests in macro. Solow (2008, p. 246), for example, states: “My general preference is for small, transparent, tailored models, often partial equilibrium, usually aimed at understanding some little piece of the (macro-)economic mechanism.” This view is echoed in Blanchard (2009, p. 17), where one of his hopes/pleas is “for the rehabilitation of partial equilibrium modeling in macroeconomics.”

Although partial equilibrium models can shed light on important macroeconomic questions, the main goal of macro from the beginning has been to explain the entire economy—to develop models that can explain well fluctuations in all the key macroeconomic variables. This is true of both the new macro, where the emphasis is on general equilibrium models, and of the old, where complete models of the economy are specified and estimated. The focus of this paper is on complete models.

This emphasis on explaining fluctuations should not be confused with forecasting. It is sometimes said that a certain model may be good at forecasting, but does not correctly explain the economy. A correctly specified model, however, should not forecast worse than a misspecified model conditional on use of the same information. Real-time forecasting is something one may do after a model has been specified, estimated, and tested. It is of the nature of an after thought. In fact,

a correctly specified model does not necessarily forecast well. If, for example, changes in asset prices, like stock prices and housing prices, are essentially unforecastable and if asset values have important effects on aggregate consumption through household wealth effects, a model that correctly accounts for these wealth effects may not forecast well if it cannot forecast changes in asset prices.<sup>1</sup>

“Explaining fluctuations well” should also not be taken to be an interest only in short run issues. Ideally, a correctly specified model should explain both short run and long run movements in the macro variables. If a model has poor dynamic properties, it is not a good model even if can explain short run fluctuations well.

The issues of “explaining versus forecasting” and “short run versus long run” are related to Mankiw’s (2006) distinction between macroeconomists as scientists and as engineers. Although one might say that scientists are interested in the long run and in “explaining” while engineers are interested in the short run and in “forecasting,” this is not relevant for the choice of models. Both scientists and engineers should be concerned with developing and using the best model—the model that best explains economic fluctuations. A correctly specified model is of interest to both; the goal is to find and use the best model.

### **3 The Data**

Four key macroeconomic variables are real GDP, the GDP deflator, the unemployment rate, and a short term interest rate. A complete macro model must at least

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<sup>1</sup>The results in Fair (2009) suggest that five of the eight U.S. recessions since 1954 were driven by events that are essentially unforecastable.

explain these. The following discussion will focus on the United States. Quarterly national income and product accounts (NIPA) data are available from 1948 and quarterly flow of funds accounts (FFA) data are available from 1952. The U.S. population was about 158 million in 1952 and 307 million in 2009.

The NIPA provide data on GDP and many components. How much disaggregation is necessary to explain GDP? My experience is at a minimum nine categories: three consumption categories (services,  $c_1$ , nondurables,  $c_2$ , durables,  $c_3$ ), three investment categories (housing,  $i_1$ , plant and equipment,  $i_2$ , inventory,  $i_3$ ), imports,  $m$ , exports,  $x$ , and government spending,  $g$ . GDP,  $y$ , by definition is  $c_1 + c_2 + c_3 + i_1 + i_2 + i_3 - m + x + g + d$ , where  $d$  is a discrepancy term due to the use of chain-link price indices in constructing the data. Data on output of the private sector (called the “firm sector” below),  $y_f$ , are also available.

The NIPA also provide data on the GDP deflator and other aggregate price indices. For use below, let  $p_f$  denote the price deflator for firm output. Considerable data on the income side are available—wages, interest, dividends, profits, transfer payments, taxes. Finally, data on capital stocks are available—durables, housing, plant and equipment, and inventories.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides data on employment, hours, and the labor force. My experience is that at a minimum the labor force needs to be disaggregated into males 25-54, females 25-54, and all others 16 and over. Denote these  $l_1$ ,  $l_2$ , and  $l_3$ . Some people have two jobs, and from the data one can get an estimate of this number,  $n$ . Data are available on the number of jobs in the firm (private) sector,  $j_f$ , the number of jobs in the government sector (state and local, federal civilian, federal military),  $j_g$ , the number of hours worked per job in the

firm sector,  $h_f$ , and the number of hours worked per job in the government sector,  $h_g$ . The unemployment rate is by definition  $(l_1 + l_2 + l_3 - j_f - j_g + n)/(l_1 + l_2 + l_3)$ . Productivity in the firm sector is by definition  $y_f$  divided by  $j_f \cdot h_f$ . From NIPA wage data and BLS employment data, one can get estimates of wage rates. For use below, let  $w_f$  denote a wage rate index for the firm sector.

From the Federal Reserve one can get data on short term and long term interest rates. The FFA provide flow of funds data and financial stock data. It is possible to link the FFA data to the NIPA income-side data, which accounts for all financial flows among the sectors and all balance sheet constraints. A common aggregation of sectors is 1) household, 2) non financial firm, 3) financial firm, 4) state and local government, 5) federal government (including the monetary authority), and 6) foreign.

Considerable international data are available from the IMF and the OECD: exchange rates, oil prices, national income data for other countries, trade flows. A major change in empirical macro in the last 30 years has been an increase in these data. Multicountry models can now be easily estimated.

## **4 Macro 1**

Shimer (2009, p. 280) in his discussion of the convergence in macro argues that “. . . virtually all modern macroeconomic models build upon two foundations . . . First, households maximize expected utility subject to a budget constraint. Second, firms maximize expected profits.” In this respect the new macro does not differ from the old. The Cowles Commission (CC) approach that macro 1 follows uses theory to

choose left hand side and right hand side variables in equations to be estimated. The estimated equations are taken to be approximations to the decision equations of agents. Early examples are Tinbergen (1939) and Klein (1950). Theory was clearly important in this work. Nearly half of Klein's (1950) book is devoted to intertemporal optimizing models of households and firms.

Consider modeling household behavior. A household can be considered to solve a multiperiod maximization problem subject to a lifetime budget constraint. Given, say, the data outlined in Section 3, the main decision variables might be domestically-produced and foreign-produced purchases of services, nondurables, durable goods, and housing plus how much labor to supply. Taken as given by the household would be the initial stocks of durables and housing, the initial value of net financial wealth, and current and expected future values of wage rates, prices, interest rates, exchange rates, tax rates, and transfer payments and other non labor income. Age of household, life expectancy, and bequest values are also relevant.

In moving from this theory to econometric specifications is the realization that the data pertain to millions of households. The aim is to find equations that are consistent with the theory and explain the aggregate data well—good approximations to aggregate decision equations. Given the data in Section 3, there would be equations explaining  $c_1$ ,  $c_2$ ,  $c_3$ ,  $i_1$ ,  $m$ ,  $l_1$ ,  $l_2$ ,  $l_3$ , and  $n$ . The explanatory variables to try are those taken as given by the household in its maximization problem, including variables that affect its future expectations.

Considering now modeling firm behavior. A firm can also be considered to solve a multiperiod maximization problem, where the objective is the present discounted value of expected future after-tax cash flow. Assuming a monopolistically

competitive environment, the decision variables might be the firm's price, wage rate, output, investment, and employment. Taken as given by the firm would be its initial stocks of inventories and capital, current and expected future demand curves for its output and labor supply curves it faces, and current and expected future values of interest rates and tax rates. The expected demand and supply curves would reflect the firm's expectations of its competitors' behavior.

Given the data in Section 3, this theory would be used to specify equations explaining  $p_f$ ,  $w_f$ ,  $y_f$ ,  $i_2$ ,  $j_f$ , and  $h_f$ . Inventory investment,  $i_3$ , by definition is then  $y_f$  minus total sales of the firm sector. The explanatory variables to try are those taken as given by the firm in its maximization problem, including variables that affect its future expectations.

In moving from theory to empirical specifications, the CC approach uses lagged values freely, in particular lagged dependent variables. These are meant to pick up expectational effects if, say, expectations are adaptive or partial adjustment effects if there is psychological inertia in responding to changes. In a widely cited paper Griliches (1967) pointed out that it is difficult to distinguish in the data between adaptive expectations and partial adjustment. The difference has to do with serial correlation properties of the error term, and this is subtle to test. The CC approach generally ignores this distinction. If lagged variables are significant, this may be due to expectational effects, partial adjustment effects, or some combination of the two. The aim is to get good approximations to the decision equations, and the theory of household and firm behavior used to guide the specifications is taken to be compatible with either adaptive expectations or partial adjustment or both.

In this setup unemployment can be explained as follows. The maximization

problems of firms result in values of prices and wages and other variables (including the amount of labor demanded). These solutions are based on a certain set of expectations about product demand schedules and labor supply schedules. The maximization problems of households result in values of the consumption goods and labor supply. These solutions are based on a certain set of expectations about prices and wages. It may be that the total amount of labor demanded by firms (and by the government) is less than the amount that households want to supply. Assuming that firms only hire the amount of labor that they want, unemployment can be considered the difference between the amount households would like to supply from solving their maximization problems and the amount firms demand from solving their maximization problems. If this difference is positive, then the prices and wages set by firms would not be market clearing. Note that this lack of market clearing does not have to be from any stickiness in changing prices and wages. It may simply be from using expectations that turn out not to be right. Lack of market clearing in the goods market would take the form of unintended inventory investment.<sup>2</sup>

Moving now from household and firm behavior to the behavior of the monetary authority, both macro 1 and macro 2 deal with interest rate rules. These rules are

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<sup>2</sup>In the early 1970s there was a “disequilibrium” literature analyzing the consequences of prices and wages not being market clearing. A key paper was Barro and Grossman (1971). This literature took prices and wages as predetermined, and so it had limited appeal. In my theoretical work at this time—Fair (1974)—I endogenized prices and wages by assuming that firms behave in a monopolistically competitive environment and determine prices and wages along with other decision variables by solving multiperiod maximization problems. If expectations are not rational, this can lead to disequilibrium, as just outlined. This theory did not catch on. Interest began to be focused on the assumption of rational expectations, and it was not appealing to explain disequilibrium from expectation errors. Interest also began to be focused on price and wage rigidities like menu costs and Calvo pricing.

usually referred to as “Taylor rules,” from Taylor (1993), although they have a longer history. The first rule is in Dewald and Johnson (1963), who regressed the Treasury bill rate on a constant, the Treasury bill rate lagged once, real GNP, the unemployment rate, the balance-of-payments deficit, and the consumer price index. The next example is in Christian (1968). I added an interest rate rule to my U.S. model in Fair (1978). After this, McNees (1986, 1992) estimated rules in which some of the explanatory variables were the Fed’s internal forecasts of various updates. Khoury (1990) provides an extensive list of estimated rules through 1986.

The relationship between long term and short term interest rates is an important one in macro. Macro 1 models have long estimated “term structure” equations, where a long term rate is regressed on current and lagged values of a short term rate. The theory behind this is that long term rates depend on current and expected future short term rates, and the use of lagged values is meant to pick up expectational effects. Estimated term structure equations link long term rates to the short term rate that is determined by the interest rate rule.

There are usually many identities in macro 1 models, especially if the NIPA and FFA data are linked. There are identities relating changes in net financial assets to financial saving (or dissaving). For example, for the household sector the change in net financial assets is equal to the financial saving of the household sector plus capital gains or losses on stocks held by the household sector. This identity links changes in stock prices to changes in household financial wealth. For the federal government the change in its debt is equal to the federal deficit (plus or minus a few other items). Federal interest payments increase as the debt increases, and this can be modeled given data from the FFA on the federal debt and from the NIPA

on federal interest payments.

Other identities relate to the physical stock variables. For each stock variable, say the stock of housing, there is an identity that says that the stock of housing at the end of the current period is equal to one minus the depreciation rate times the stock at the end of the previous period plus housing investment in the current period. In other words, the stock variables change over time as a function of investment. Productivity is determined from the identity presented in Section 3, given decision equations determining output, jobs, and hours.

The equations to be estimated generally have right hand side endogenous variables and may have serially correlated errors. Two stage least squares, with possibly accounting for serial correlation, is a common method used to obtain consistent estimates. Identification is almost never a problem in this approach because many exogenous and lagged endogenous variables in the model are excluded from each equation. Sims (1980) questioned whether the exclusion restrictions are in fact sensible, but they are within the context of the theory. There are surely many variables that affect household maximization problems that do not affect firm maximization problems and vice versa. One would not add the lagged stock of inventories to consumption equations or the lagged stock of durable goods to employment demand equations.

The CC approach largely ignores potential unit-root problems. It simply assumes, at least implicitly, that all variables are trend stationary. If this assumption is wrong, the coefficient estimates are not affected, but the estimated standard errors and thus hypothesis testing are. Bootstrapping can, however, be used to test the accuracy of the estimated standard errors.

Many techniques are available for testing the estimated equations. Of particular concern is whether the coefficients change over time. How structurally stable are the estimated equations? The search for good fitting equations consistent with the theory is also subject to potential data mining problems if many specifications are tried. Outside sample tests are needed to check for this. The Lucas (1976) critique says that the coefficients may not be stable if they are based on expectations that change over time or change when a new policy regime replaces an old one. This problem is part of the larger problem of potential coefficient instability, and it may not be the most serious. If expectations are not rational or if regimes don't change very often or by very much, any instability caused by Lucas-critique related issues may be small relative to instabilities caused by other things, like the changing age distribution of the population. At any rate, testing is a critical part of the CC approach.

## **5 Macro 2**

The way in which theory is used in the CC approach has been rejected by the new macro. Also rejected is the CC approach to modeling expectations. In macro 2 the maximization problems are taken more seriously in that the aim is to directly estimate the parameters in these problems, and the maximization problems are specified using rational expectations. In early work the parameters were calibrated rather than estimated, but current work mostly uses Bayesian estimation. There is usually some calibration, but many of the parameters are estimated. The models that are estimated are called dynamic stochastic general equilibrium (DSGE)

models. Chari, Kehoe, and McGrattan (2009, p. 243) state: “An aphorism among macroeconomists today is that if you have a coherent story to propose, you can do it in a suitably elaborate DSGE model.”

Many of the current DSGE models are making assumptions about rigidities, habit persistence, and adjustment costs that would appeal to one following the CC approach. They are assumptions that seem theoretically appealing and help explain the data. However, they have an ad hoc flavor to them, which purists within the macro 2 community don't like. The main attack comes from Chari, Kehoe, and McGrattan (2009), who complain that there are too many free parameters in current DSGE models.

Whatever the differences within macro 2, they are dwarfed by the difference between the way DSGE models are estimated and the way macro 1 models are estimated. Regardless of how many assumptions of an ad hoc nature are used in DSGE models, the models are based on the estimation of parameters of maximization problems. There is no movement toward the way in which theory is used in the CC approach.

## **6 Macro 2 Models**

A key message, the main message, of macro 2 is that maximization problems should be specified using the assumption of rational expectations and the parameters of these problems should be directly estimated. To some people brought up under macro 1, this message seems completely loony. How could one think that one or a few maximization problems so well approximate how the aggregate data behave,

which are based on the decisions of millions of households and firms, that it is a good idea to try to estimate the parameters of the problems? And how could one think that households and firms know so much about how the economy works that the assumption of rational expectations is a good approximation? This is how I interpret Solow's Bonaparte comment as quoted in Mankiw (2006, p. 38) about why he does not engage the new classical economists. If the person sitting next to you thinks he is Napoleon Bonaparte, the last thing you want to do is get in a discussion of cavalry tactics.

Loony or not, one way of judging the macro 2 message is to examine the latest generation of DSGE models. The DSGE model of Smets and Wouters (2007) is often cited as a state of the art model, and so it is useful to consider. The estimation of the model uses quarterly data on seven variables for the 1966:1–2004:4 period: real GDP, real consumption, real investment, real wage, hours worked, inflation, and the federal funds rate.

Some of the construction of the variables for the model is problematic.<sup>3</sup> First, real consumption is taken to be nominal consumption divided by the GDP deflator, and real investment is taken to be nominal investment divided by the GDP deflator. The relative prices of consumption and investment change over time, and so real consumption and real investment in the model are not the same as in the NIPA. The best estimates of real consumption and real investment are not being used. Second, hours worked is taken to be average weekly hours of all persons in the nonfarm business sector times total civilian employment. This implicitly assumes

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<sup>3</sup>The following information is available from the on line data documentation for the published paper.

that government workers have the same average weekly hours as workers in the nonfarm business sector, which is not the case. But more important, civilian employment is used instead of jobs. Some people have two jobs, and so civilian employment underestimates the number of jobs in the economy. This is not just a level difference because the number of people with two jobs is a cyclical variable. In fact, as discussed in Section 4, one of the decision equations of households should be an equation explaining the number of people with two jobs,  $n$ .

Another problem, not related to variable construction, is the choice of aggregation. Three very different categories of consumption are aggregated, especially consumption of durable goods, and investment is the sum of housing and plant and equipment investment, which are quite different types of investment. Inventory investment is not modeled, nor is the level of imports. Not modeling imports is particularly serious because part of any change in consumption or investment is a change in imports, which is foreign production, not domestic production.

There is a capital stock variable in the model, but no direct data on the capital stock are used. Values of the capital stock variable are generated within the model given the data on the seven variables and a calibrated value of the depreciation rate. So direct data on the capital stock, which are available from the NIPA, are not used in the estimation.

Again, to people brought up under macro 1 it might seem astonishing that anyone could think that a macro model that uses data on seven variables could be taken seriously. Within the context of the discussion in Section 4, some of important missing features are: 1) no disaggregation of consumption, 2) no disaggregation of investment, 3) no modeling of inventory investment, 4) no modeling of imports, 5)

no use of data on physical stocks of durable goods, housing, plant and equipment, and inventories, 6) no use of financial wealth data of the household sector, 7) no use of data on tax rates and transfer payments of the state and local governments and the federal government, 8) no use of nonlabor income data like dividends from the firm sector and interest payments from the firm and government sectors, 9) no use of data or modeling of the labor force participation of households and the number of people holding two jobs, 10) no distinction between government employment and firm employment, and no distinction between firms' demand for jobs and demand for hours per job, 11) no long run interest rate in the model, and 12) no use of data on potential cost shock variables like oil prices and exchange rates.

The model thus seems highly misspecified. Assuming it is, then the use of the rational expectations assumption is more problematic than otherwise. It is not realistic to think that if agents are sophisticated enough to have rational expectations, they generate them using a highly misspecified model.

Another recent DSGE model is in Edge, Kiley, and Laforge (2008). This is one of the models used at the Federal Reserve Board. The estimation of the model uses quarterly data on eleven variables for the 1984:1–2004:4 period. The eleven variables from which the variables used in the model are constructed are: 1) nominal GDP, 2) nominal service and nondurable consumption except for service consumption of owner-occupied nonfarm dwellings and tenant-occupied nonfarm dwellings, 3) nominal durable consumption, 4) nominal housing investment, 5) nominal plant and equipment investment and inventory investment, 6) GDP deflator, 7) deflator pertaining to 2), 8) deflator pertaining to 3), 9) total hours, 10) wage

rate variable, and 11) federal funds rate.

This model has better disaggregation than the Smet-Wouters model. Service and nondurable consumption are combined, but durable consumption is treated separately. Plant and equipment investment and inventory investment are combined, but housing investment is treated separately. Also, the deflation issues are not as bad as they are in the Smet-Wouters model. The way the deflation is done, real housing investment and real non-housing investment do not match the NIPA data, but using two deflators gives somewhat more flexibility. There are stock variables in the model, but again no direct data on stocks are used. Values are generated within the model given the above data and calibrated depreciation rates. The missing features in this model are essentially the same as those in the Smets-Wouters model except that there are two consumption categories rather than one and two investment categories rather than one.

An open economy DSGE model is in Adolfson, Laséen, Lindé, and Villani (2007). It is a model of the Euro area, based on quarterly data for the 1970:1–2002:4 period. The model is based on data for fifteen variables: the GDP deflator, the real wage, consumption, investment, the real exchange rate, the short-term interest rate, employment, GDP, exports, imports, the consumption deflator, the investment deflator, foreign output, foreign inflation, and the foreign interest rate. The authors calibrate 8 parameters and estimate 51. This model endogenizes imports, which is clearly important to do. Otherwise, its missing features are similar to those discussed for the Smets-Wouters model.

A typical DSGE model has a key property that from my work seems wrong.<sup>4</sup> A good example is the model in Galí and Gertler (2007). In this model a positive price shock—a “cost push” shock (p. 38)—is explosive unless the Fed raises the nominal interest rate more than the increase in the inflation rate. In other words, positive price shocks with the nominal interest rate held constant are expansionary (because the real interest rate falls). In my work, however, they are contractionary. If there is a positive price shock like an oil price increase, nominal wages lag output prices, and so the real wage initially falls. This has a negative effect on consumption. In addition, household real wealth falls because nominal asset prices don’t initially rise as much as the price level. This has a negative effect on consumption through a wealth effect. There is little if any offset from lower real interest rates because households appear to respond more to nominal rates than to real rates. Positive price shocks are thus contractionary even if the Fed keeps the nominal interest rate unchanged. This property is important for a monetary authority in deciding how to respond to a positive price shock. If the authority used the Galí and Gertler (2007) model, it would likely raise the nominal interest rate too much thinking that the price shock is otherwise expansionary. Typical DSGE models are thus likely to be misleading for guiding monetary policy if this key property of the models is wrong.

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<sup>4</sup>See Fair (2004), Chapter 7.

## 7 Conclusion

There are two main criticisms that can be made regarding macro 2. The first is simply that its main message is not sensible. People obviously differ on this, and it is not directly testable. The second is that the models developed so far that follow its message are highly misspecified. This second criticism is a technical one, and it may be with more work good models will be generated. This can be tested in the long run by seeing what models develop.

There is, however, a concern about the feasibility of the macro 2 approach. One of the reasons I discussed in some detail in Sections 3 and 4 the data to be explained and the way the CC approach models the data is to emphasize that the macro economy is complicated. It is even more complicated than the above discussion suggests because I have mostly left out multicountry considerations. The list in Section 6 of important missing features of current DSGE models is not complete. In order for the macro 2 approach to have a chance of producing good models, many more variables need to be considered. Fernández-Villaverde (2008, pp. 693–694) has a good discussion of the difficulties of increasing the size of DSGE models. As observable variables are added, shocks or measurement errors have to be added, and this may become problematic with a large number of variables.

Another issue, which comes back in part to whether the macro 2 message is sensible, is the size of the maximization problems. As more and more variables are added, the maximization problems have to get larger and larger. As the problems become larger, the specifications may become more arbitrary. There is more choice

about what households and firms are doing. Complaints about free parameters, like those of Chari, Kehoe, and McGrattan (2009), may increase. The trouble with the macro 2 approach is that it is locked into a restrictive estimation framework. The estimation problems are tied to the exact specifications of the maximization problems (including the assumption of rational expectations), unlike in the CC approach where the theory is less restrictive. For the macro 2 approach to work, it will have to be the case that the aggregate data can truly be well modeled by assuming they are generated from solutions of specific maximization problems with agents having rational expectations.

If the macro 2 message is not sensible or its methodology is not feasible for estimating realistic models, it is perhaps time to move back to macro 1. This requires dropping the assumption of rational expectations and trusting the theory to impose exclusion restrictions. Otherwise, the CC approach provides considerable flexibility in specification, estimation, and testing. Size is also not a constraint. The cost of abandoning the rational expectations assumption seems small, since the assumption seems unlikely to be realistic, and to trust theory like that outlined in Section 4 to provide exclusion restrictions does not seem unreasonable.

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