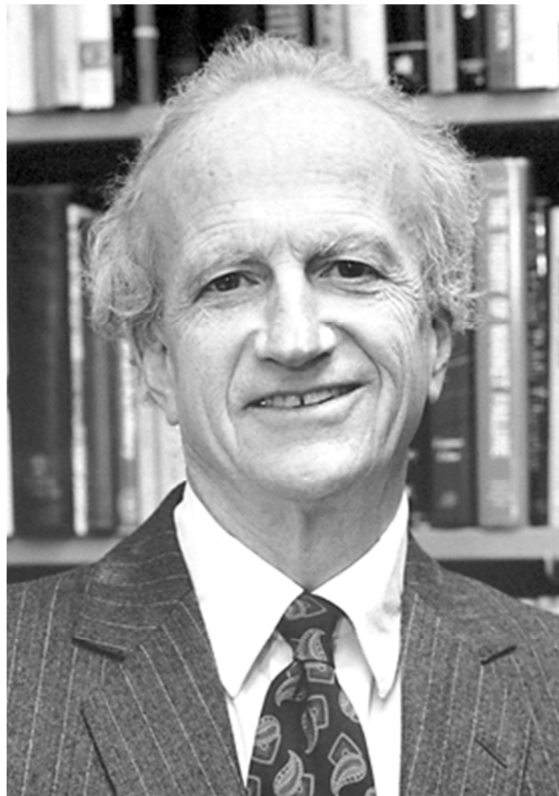

OBITUARY



Gary S. Becker

Born December 2, 1930 in Pottsville, Pennsylvania

Died May 3, 2014 in Chicago, Illinois

Gary S. Becker, University Professor of Economics and of Sociology at the University of Chicago, died on May 3 following complications from a recent surgery. Becker was one of the most influential labor economists of our time, combining economics and social sciences to understand diverse motivating factors of human behavior. His current research focused on habits and addictions, formation of preferences, human capital, and population growth.

Becker won the 1992 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences for having extended the domain of microeconomic analysis to a wide range of human behavior and interaction, including non-market behavior. He authored more than 12 books and more than 50 articles.

“Gary Becker was one of the greatest economic minds, and a dear friend, who has done so much for our field. He also was a strong supporter of IZA from the beginning. He will always be with us through his work and in our memories.” (*Editor-in-Chief Klaus F. Zimmermann*)

“Gary Becker challenged every economist he encountered – colleagues, students, seminar speakers, and journalists – to understand human behavior through the lens of optimization and market equilibrium. [...] His legacy is written in the pages of every journal, newspaper, and blog that features labor economics. He will be deeply missed.”

(*SOLE President Lawrence Katz and President-elect John M. Abowd*)

Becker completed his mathematics undergraduate studies 1951 at Princeton University *summa cum laude*. He earned a master's degree and a PhD from the University of Chicago, which was awarded in 1955. He held 16 Honorary Degrees from several institutions, such as Princeton University, Hebrew University (Jerusalem), Harvard University and Hitotsubashi University (Japan).

The Journal of Population Economics published his article “Fertility and the economy” (1992, Issue 5(3), p. 185-201). In the article he relates the demand for children to parental incomes, to investments in their human capital and to other dimension of the so called quality of children. He shows that fertility depends on several variables, including child and adult mortality, uncertainty about the sex of children — if there is a preference for boys, girls, or for variety — uncertainty about how long it takes to produce a conception.

He was a founding member of the National Academy of Education and a fellow in the American Statistical Association, the Econometric Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. Becker joined IZA as a Research Fellow in December 2001.

For additional sources, please see the links below.

James J. Heckmann (2014) [Private Notes on Gary Becker](#), IZA DP No. 8200

[CV of Gary Becker](#) available at http://www.iza.org/files/becker_cv