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**We Shall See:
Critical Theory and Structural Inequality in Economics**

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There was a Zen monk who lived outside a poor village

One day, the monk visited the village and came across a great celebration. He asked the revelers about the cause of their delight, and they replied that a family had won the lottery and purchased a new car. The car represented a source of status for the family as well as convenient transportation. “How fortunate that this family was able to purchase this car”, they said. The monk shrugged and said, “We shall see”

A few days later, the monk returned to find a group of people standing around the oldest son of the family that had bought the car. He was limping along with assistance due to a large cast on his leg. The bystanders noted that he had been in an automobile accident with a drunk driver. They remarked how awful it was that this great blessing had in fact been a curse, and how unjust the world was where an innocent person could be catastrophically injured in such a way. The monk shrugged and said, “We shall see”

Weeks later, the monk came back to the village and saw the family dancing with their son for joy, even with the cast still on his leg. As they moved down the street, the family saw the monk and communicated the news that the territories were going to war, but their son’s leg made it impossible for him to join the fight. His untimely injury had earned him a reprieve from the horrors of war and was worthy of celebration. The monk shrugged and said, “We shall see”

- *Adapted from a traditional Buddhist proverb*

The story above illustrates one of the great paradoxes of education, one that must be resolved if students at any level are to become critical interpreters of the world around them. While teachers and students often infuse current events and global and local issues into the curriculum, too often these events and issues are viewed ahistorically, or without attention to the structural forces that cause them. As the story progresses, the villagers alternate between joy and sorrow as random events dictate their conception of the justice of the world around them. From fortune to curse to celebration, their interpretation of the individual manifestations of events occludes any structural understanding of the world around them. The lottery is won via luck and the winnings are all positive, never mind that many lotteries function as ways to fund schools on the backs of poorer players rather than taxes on the wealthy. A drunk driving accident is a tragedy, never mind the lack



of public transportation or substance abuse services that might prevent an incident like this. Avoiding a draft is worthy of dance, not an occasion to question the justice of sending young men to fight and die for an unknown cause.

These responses indicate a structural blindness (Mills, 1997) to the forces that shape the world, a blindness that is often mirrored in Social Studies education. A thorough understanding of structural forces such as racism, sexism, and capitalism is necessary to undergird an analysis of contemporary issues. This parable exemplifies the ramifications of structural blindness and the way that students may come to view their world if this blindness is not addressed. By attributing events to random twists of fate, students may fail to take appropriate action to address underlying causes of the forces that shape their lives, thus leaving them shrugging like the monk, waiting for the next swing of the pendulum. In an effort to unmask this blindness, this article seeks to provide a course of action for educators attempting to address structural forces through a variety of lessons that make use of critical theory to explicate inequality along racial, gender, and geographic lines. These lessons, while situated in the discipline of economics, are applicable to a variety of Social Studies sub-disciplines, such as geography and history that include economic themes in their disciplinary analysis, and may serve as an important introduction to the idea of structural inequality along a variety of axes of oppression. They may also allow teacher educators an alternative means of broaching the idea of structural inequality among preservice teachers, many of whom may be unfamiliar with central tenets of critical theory. While no pedagogy or curriculum can be guaranteed to foment a critical consciousness and allow students to begin to see beyond the individualist lenses that are manifestations of hegemony; foregrounding the link between the individual and the structural via economic storytelling may represent an important tool for educators seeking to overcome the paradox of particularity (Wiegman, 1999).

Literature Review

Structural Blindness

Crowley and Smith (2015) identify three tensions in the field of teacher education relating to their students' inability to see structural aspects of race and racism. Their students experienced a difficulty of thinking structurally, which they attribute to a failure of Mills' (2000) *sociological imagination*, or the idea that "individuals think of themselves and the obstacles (or privileges) they encounter in individual terms, rather than through a structural, sociological framework" (Crowley & Smith, 2015, p. 171). Their second tension, that not all experience is useful, describes their students' "individualized arguments and . . . 'exceptions to the rule'" (p. 172) that were used to shield society from critique by allowing specific experiences to trump structural arguments, though they are quick to note that this manifestation of White privilege can also serve as a gateway to deconstructing race for those who identify their privilege in these same personal experiences. Finally, the authors identified the tension of thinking structurally, acting locally, a tension that



“lies at the intersection of a structural framing of the issue and our collective project of preparing teachers to teach” (p. 173). It is vital that teachers think about the world in a holistic way, yet remain committed to acting in the local dimension of the classroom and community. The warning that teacher educators must “deftly move from a structural framing back to their positions in classrooms” (p. 174) is important, yet made difficult by the way in which future teachers have been ideologically conditioned to think about issues of race, gender, economics, and geography.

Structural Blindness and Race

Teacher education literature is replete with examples of the challenges of preparing largely white middle class populations of preservice teachers to teach populations of students that reflect the diverse demographics of America. With regard to the challenge of revealing the role of structural racism, teachers can be confounded by white-talk, a conception of the individual as racist (which exonerates the system as racist), and a belief that racism is in the past or we are in a post-racial society. White talk, as defined by McIntyre (1997), is “[t]alk that serves to insulate white people from examining their/our individual and collective role(s) in the perpetuation of racism” (p. 45). This discourse allows preservice teachers to maintain deficit perspectives of students of color, associate whiteness with superiority, and call other individuals racist without recognizing the participation of one’s self in a fundamentally racist social structure (Marx, 2006). The problematic nature of this discourse is magnified by the tendency to see, as McIntosh (2000) puts it, “racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group” (p. 115). This can lead to historical and social understandings that racism is merely “bad men doing bad things” (Brown & Brown, 2010) and can either augment or absolve the phenomenon of white guilt which “blocks critical reflection because whites end up feeling individually blameworthy for racism” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 79). There is also a growing movement to see the United States as ‘post-racial’ which consigns racism to the past and makes it irrelevant in the present (Wells Cantiello, 2011) most specifically tied to the election of Barack Obama in 2008 (Smith & Brown, 2014). Failure by teachers and teacher educators to account for the interconnected challenges of white talk, individualistic conceptions of racism, and the relegation of racism to the past all have the potential to disrupt a curriculum that strives to address structural injustices with regard to race.

Structural Blindness and Gender

As deMarris (2000) asserts in her analysis of gender in schools, “[c]urrent school structures are based on hierarchical patriarchal models” (p. 168). Teachers who want to challenge these patriarchal norms must contend with a curricular landscape that removes women from the curriculum entirely, or normalizes them into the domestic sphere while providing little in the way of support for including women in more authentic ways. In addition to privileging male ways of being in classrooms (Henry, 2010), there is an absence of women in the curriculum (Loewen, 2008) or limited appearances “whether or not their presence is relevant” (Noddings, 1992, p. 230),



in some cases even garnering inclusion “for achievements that would go unrecognized if the subjects were male” (p. 230-231). This limited or trivialized inclusion of women in the formal curriculum means that preservice Social Studies teachers often have limited or negligible familiarity with women, and have to contend with a socialization process designed to ‘other’ women from the male norm (Lorber, 2003). The omission and trivialization of women is compounded by curriculum that binds women to the home (Schmidt, 2012) in ways that normalize whiteness, middle class lifestyles, and heterosexuality. Women “are valuable to the labour force when it needs them. Women’s work is predicated on external necessity and seems to preclude an internal desire of women to participate” (p. 716). Women are also often placed in the political arena in ways that ignore the radical history of the women’s movement and instead emphasize “the rhetoric of women as caretakers and moral barometers” (p. 717), thus further domesticizing and normalizing both women and femininity.

For preservice teachers exposed to this curriculum, or even for teacher educators preparing to teach against it, there is a challenge in finding materials that disrupt the patriarchy in a critical feminist fashion, as Schmeichel (2015) found when analyzing hundreds of articles that included instruction descriptors. She found very few (33) with gender descriptors, and fewer still (16) that were specific lesson plans with a focus on women. Of these lessons, half were focused on technical skills, several were designed to balance the curriculum in terms of gender, and only one was designed to work toward gender equity. Also, when analyzing the text of the lessons, there were “no references to gender bias, feminism, patriarchy, or sexism . . . [and] the word ‘feminist’ appears twice but only in references” (p. 15). Therefore, even when preservice teachers and teacher educators overcome the absence of women in the curriculum or their restriction to domestic spheres, the potential to introduce a critical feminist curriculum is limited in the published literature.

Structural Blindness and Geography

Finally, it can be a challenge to introduce students to the idea of geography as more than maps, and to consider place and space in ways that are critical to existing power structures while attending to the role of the citizen in geography. Helfenbein (2010) extends critical geography beyond maps, due to the “impossibility of representation” asking the important question: “How many maps would it take to be true?” (p. 305). In response, he chooses to emphasize spaces that speak, leak, and spaces of possibility to give new language to the “interrelationships of space, place, power, and identity” (p. 306). This interrelationship is important to understanding ways that students can begin to “question maps and mapping as problematic representations of ‘truth’”(Helfenbein, 2006a, p. 122) and start to test “the limits of a material space on people and the spaces of possibility that people create” (p. 124). These possibilities arise in history classes, geography classes, and economics classes, though as Schmidt (2011) argues, there is a need to avoid the fragmentation of Social Studies that can negate the role of the citizen and citizen identities in



these disciplines. To that end, she recommends exploring “the ways in which citizenship is necessarily situated with/in place and the reciprocal relationship between citizenship identity/engagement and place” (p. 107) as part of a broader project to consider geography and citizenship together. Thus, preservice teachers and teacher educators who utilize geography as something more than maps can address notions of citizenship and identity even as they deconstruct the ways that power and resistance manifest in place and space.

Economics Education

If teacher educators and teachers in general are looking for a place to address race, gender, and geography in a more critical way, they must do so throughout the Social Studies curriculum. One subject in particular that affords the opportunity to critique racism, sexism, and other power structures is economics. Unfortunately, the state of economics research within the Social Studies is not ideal. Economics has traditionally been an understudied area within Social Studies (Levstik & Tyson, 2008), and preservice teachers are generally unprepared to teach economics on the basis of college coursework (Miller & VanFossen, 2008). If teachers are not prepared with content-specific courses, one could perhaps expect Social Studies methods courses to fill these gaps. Unfortunately, as Joshi and Marri (2006) have found, “[m]ethods courses, the mainstays of preservice teacher education in social studies, are curiously understudied in general terms” (p. 198). If preservice teachers do receive methods training in economics, it would likely come in the rare form of an economics methods course taught by a faculty member in the field of economics (Joshi, 2003). Once in the field, practicing teachers receive more professional development in United States history, state history, world history, and general social studies methods than they do in economics (Halvorsen, 2013). In pursuit of a knowledgeable citizenry that takes part in economic decisions at the macro and micro level on a daily basis, it is troubling to consider the limited preparation of many high school graduates, even if they reside in one of the 20 states that actually require an economics course (Council for Economic Education, 2016). If these courses are taught by Social Studies teachers with little to no preparation in economics as a discipline, teachers can hardly be expected to have the pedagogical content knowledge necessary to teach students in ways that allow them to consider structural inequality in a meaningful or relevant to fashion.

Critical Economics

While it may be distressing to see a lack of research in economics education, there are economics researchers who have addressed some of the important structural themes in this paper (c.f. Agnello & Lucey, 2008; Feiner & Roberts, 1995; King & Finley, 2015; Lucey & Laney, 2009). First, however, it is important to note that mainstream, neoclassical economics often avoids social issues like race and gender as they tend to fall outside “the traditional belief in the healing effect of the ‘invisible hand of the market’” (Bendixen, 2010, p. 40) and “do not have anything to do with rationality” (p. 41). As Arestis, Charles, and Fontana (2015) put it: “In the neoclassical approach to



economics, individualization is in effect linked to free-market ideology, which celebrates the actions and fulfilment of an atomistic individual who does not belong to any class, gender, race, or age group” (p. 371). This false neutrality has a history in educational thought (Peart & Levy, 2005) and manifests in an academic community that is largely white (Albelda, 1995) and lacking in analysis of “economic outcomes by gender, race-ethnicity and other factors” (Power, 2012, p. 258). Therefore it should come as no surprise that students of color generally do worse in terms of grades in their economic coursework as early as high school (Rebeck & Walstad, 2015), and that textbooks marginalize the experiences of women and minorities (Feiner, 1993; Feiner & Roberts, 1990). Fortunately, there are opportunities for critical economic educators to address these disciplinary gaps.

A critical version of economics must follow a humanizing approach to education (Freire, 1993) that recognizes student voice, identifies prevalent economic themes, and allows students to transform society in a just way. It is vital that students get the opportunity to talk about their lives in economics class where, if given the opportunity, “[t]hey tell stories filled, not surprisingly, with concrete illustrations of the economic world that is portrayed in the literature of political economics” (Leclerc, Ford, & Ford, 2009, p. 201). This will increase relevance and allow students to “learn about the economic issues most pertinent to them” (Kim, 2012, p. 196), thus speaking to epochal themes, or the issues that dominate an era’s sociopolitical context (Freire, 2005). Our current era is beset by racism, sexism, poverty, and inequality, and economics educators should be prepared to address these themes as co-learners with students who are experiencing the effects of these phenomenon. Some examples of this response would be King and Finley’s (2015) use of Critical Race Theory to analyze federal highway policies, Miller’s (2012) use of student diaries to teach feminist economics, and McGoldrick and Zeigart’s (2002) use of service-learning to teach about economics while addressing poverty.

With this conception of critical economics in mind, and with the goal of addressing structural blindness in hand, the following lessons are designed to fulfill multiple purposes. First, they are intended to be a practical blueprint from which practicing teachers can begin to build a more critical curriculum in economics (and other Social Studies courses) that can address national standards (in the form of the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) C3 standards (2013)) and attend to critical perspectives in the areas of race, gender, economics, and geography. Two: they are intended to be applicable to a Social Studies methods course, to be deconstructed for elements of philosophy and pedagogy that are under consideration by the preservice teacher and teacher educator. Finally, they are intended to show that economics can and perhaps should serve as an ideal vehicle for integrating critical perspectives on race, gender, and geography into the secondary Social Studies classroom given the disciplinary tools that the subjects bring to bear on issues both historical and current. While the lessons are not meant to represent a perfect plan for every middle or high school classroom (an impossible ideal in any case) they are intended to start a conversation about how economics can start to “engage students in questions of justice, values,



and power” (Neumann, 2015, p. 242). Each lesson uses a compelling question to frame an inquiry arc designed to guide one 90-minute class session, and uses the C3 standards (NCSS, 2013) for economics to label concepts covered. These concepts were specifically chosen from concepts that are almost universally taught in economics courses and tend to be taught in ways that are banal or instructor-centered.

Lesson 1: What economic indicator tells YOUR story?

Objective: Students will critique the ostensibly neutral way that fiscal and monetary policy are typically thought to operate by conceptualizing economic indicators as part of a broad and complex economic story.

Product: Students will develop their own economic indicator and consider ways that monetary policy could be used to benefit them.

Standards (C3 Framework Dimension 2, Economics):

8 th Grade	D2.Eco.1.6-8. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society	D2.Eco.11.6-8. Use appropriate data to evaluate the state of employment, unemployment, inflation, total production, income, and economic growth in the economy	D2.Eco.12.6-8. Explain how inflation, deflation, and unemployment affect different groups.
12 th Grade	D2.Eco.1.9-12. Analyze how incentives influence choices that may result in policies with a range of costs and benefits for different groups	D2.Eco.11.9-12. Use economic indicators to analyze the current and future state of the economy	D2.Eco.12.9-12. Evaluate the selection of monetary and fiscal policies in a variety of economic conditions.

Rationale: Fiscal and monetary policy represent core concepts in macroeconomics (Saunders, Bach, Calderwood, Hansen & Joint Council on Economic Education, 1984) and represent one of the National Council on Economic Education’s 20 content standards for economics (2010). The dominant narrative of fiscal and monetary policy is that fiscal and monetary policies are designed to “influence the overall levels of employment, output, and prices” and pursue “goals of full employment, price stability, and economic growth” (National Council on Economic Education, 2010, p. 47). This lesson is designed to counter that narrative with an understanding that in terms of race (and gender) “differential unemployment effects do result from common governmental policy initiatives” and that “*white males* [benefit] from *macro-policies* more than any other category”



(Abell, 1991, p. 269). This lesson is designed to take place after an overview of important vocabulary including: monetary policy, federal funds rate, inflation, and unemployment rate. This lesson will also look exclusively at monetary policy, though a similar lesson could be conducted to teach fiscal policy.

Hook: Students play “Chair the Fed: A monetary policy game (“Chair the Fed Game,” n.d.) The game allows students to simulate Fed policy decisions regarding monetary policy and the resultant effects on the economy. They will track their changes to the federal funds rate in pursuit of the Fed’s twin goals of full employment and low inflation. They will then share with their partner the effect of raising and lowering the federal funds rate on inflation and unemployment. Further discussion questions include: Did changes take place immediately? Why or why not? What was the biggest challenge of this simulation? What is the current federal funds rate? What are the current inflation and unemployment rates? What should the Fed do with the funds rate right now? (10-15 minutes)

Body: The instructor starts by leading a class discussion on the nature of economic indicators, focusing on the indicators used in the monetary policy simulation. Key questions to answer include the following: what are the most important indicators to those shaping monetary policy? Why? What story do these indicators tell about our economy? What story (stories) do they not tell? Does the current unemployment rate reflect your community? Why or why not? Ideally, this discussion leads to a complexification of unemployment and inflation as economic indicators, and generates the desire to investigate unemployment along racial lines. This should also set the stage for the consideration of economic indicators as incomplete pictures of an economy, and that there is more to the economic story than these monolithic numbers. (5-10 minutes)

In groups, students will use the Internet to research the historical data from six economic indicators to be plotted on a graph on chart paper, a chalkboard, or through a computer-graphing program such as Microsoft Excel. Annual data from 1975-2015 should include the federal funds rate (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (US)), inflation rates (“Historical Inflation Rates,” 2008), total unemployment rate (“Bureau of Labor Statistics Data,” n.d.-a), and the White, Black, and Hispanic¹ unemployment rates (“Bureau of Labor Statistics Data,” n.d.-b, “Bureau of Labor Statistics Data,” n.d.-c). Note that the Bureau of Labor Statistics Data may take some searching and familiarity with the database tools in order to find the desired data. It may behoove the instructor to assign one group to each of the three racial/ethnic unemployment indicators and one group to the funds rate, inflation, and overall unemployment rate. If teachers choose, and it fits the class, this portion could be extended to include historical information and events that lead

¹ While race is a biologically unsound construction, and Hispanic is an ethnicity which may include multiple races, I use these categories due to their recording by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in an attempt to point out structural inadequacies in the economy, not to reify them as important ways of categorizing humans.



to and resulted from the economic changes mapped by these indicators. This might help address the critique of mainstream economics as ahistorical (c.f. Ötsch & Kapeller, 2010). (20-25 minutes)

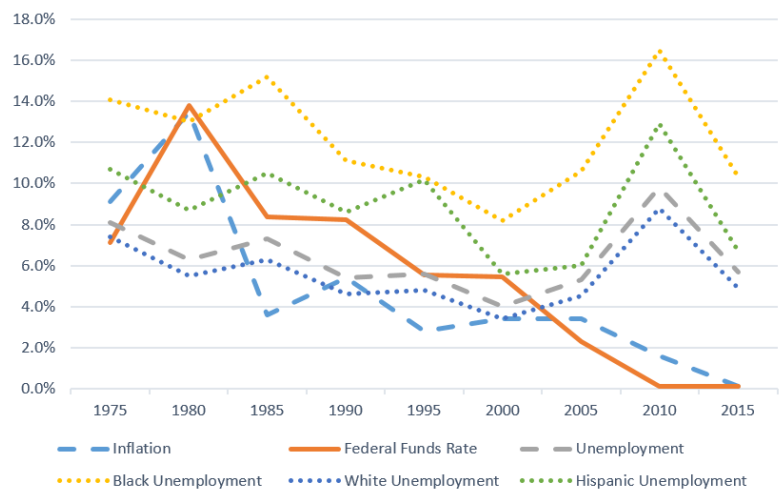
Students will plot their data on the graph (an example is presented in Figure 1 using data from every 5 years obtained from the sources listed above) and complete a quick ‘3-2-1 analysis’ where they individually write three statements they can make based on the data, two questions they still have, and one way this graph might help them answer the inquiry question of the day (“What economic indicator tells YOUR story”). They can then share with a partner their analysis, or the whole class can discuss (10-15 minutes). Sample responses might include the observation that there is a clear hierarchy in unemployment rates, with Whites always having a better rate than Blacks and Hispanics; the observation that the funds rate and inflation seem to move in sync, whereas there seems to be an inverse relationship to the funds rate and unemployment; or general questions about what was happening in the economy more broadly during these times. The data should also set the stage for

the conclusion of the lesson where students design their own indicator and justify why monetary policy should act on that indicator specifically.

Conclusion: Individually or in pairs, students will generate their own economic indicator (examples might be local unemployment rates, a ratio of the median income of Black families to White families, etc.) that more accurately reflects their economic story. If possible, they will track their indicator over time indicating when their economic story was at its zenith, and when it was at its nadir. They will then create a justification for why their chosen indicator should be considered by the Federal Reserve when enacting monetary policy. If there is time, students can present their indicator and justification for the class and discuss the relative merits of their constructions. (30-40 minutes)

Discussion: The lesson outlined above is first and foremost an effort to make an expansive, structural concept like monetary policy relatable to the individual. By simulating the Fed’s decision making, researching a more complex picture of the economy, and formulating new indicators that more closely relate to student realities, this economics lesson allows instructors to move beyond white talk (McIntyre, 1997), individualist notions of racism, or the idea that racism only operates

Historical Economic Indicators (Figure 1)



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in the past, and begin to see the way that the economy is structurally designed to benefit whites (particularly white males), and to suggest that “[i]t is simply not enough to target an overall unemployment rate goal in the hopes that if the goal is obtained all worker groups will benefit equally or even sufficiently” (Abell, 1991, p. 282). Student-generated inquiry can and should be a core component of this effort to pursue a more personal conception of the economy as a story, and they should have the opportunity to write that story as much as possible.

Lesson 2: Is Knowledge Power?

Objective: Students will consider popular messages about the link between education and earnings, and whether those messages apply equally to males and females. They will then evaluate the difference between financial and social capital as they think about ways to be agents of change in a patriarchal society.

Product: Students will create body maps (described in the lesson below) of themselves in the future as a visual demonstration of the variety of types of capital they hope to accumulate in the future as they pursue their goals.

Standards (C3 Framework Dimension 2, Economics):

8 th Grade	D2.Eco.1.6-8. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society.	D2.Eco.2.6-8. Evaluate alternative approaches or solutions to current economic issues in terms of benefits and costs for different groups and society as a whole.	D2.Eco.4.6-8. Describe the role of competition in the determination of prices and wages in a market economy.
12 th Grade	D2.Eco.1.9-12. Analyze how incentives influence choices that may result in policies with a range of costs and benefits for different groups.	D2.Eco.2.9-12. Use marginal benefits and marginal costs to construct an argument for or against an approach or solution to an economic issue.	D2.Eco.4.9-12. Evaluate the extent to which competition among sellers and among buyers exists in specific markets.

Rationale: Students of economics must understand that there are varying outcomes for individual choices on the basis of gender. While, for example, women have earned about sixty percent of all college degrees conferred this century (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.) they earn about 79 cents on the dollar of men’s earnings, even when controlling for differences in women and men’s life choices (American Association of University Women, 2016). While a conventional economic analysis of this injustice might write these figures off as a market failure (Saunders et al.,



1984), a more critical analysis should trouble the representation of income as “determined by the market value of . . . what they produce” (National Council on Economic Education, 2010, p. 31). This understanding of structural inequality is important, but is contained in the realm of human capital which considers “only educational monetary investments and profits or resources convertible into money” (Agnello & Knapp, 2012, p. 242) and does not give students a way to make sense of the “resources they possess in their families, schools, churches, neighborhoods, businesses, and other arenas involved in commercial and noncommercial exchange” (Agnello & Knapp, 2012, p. 242). This emphasis is not to divert attention from material redistribution, a critique that Fraser (2005) makes of the identity-politics phase of feminism, but to consider elements of social capital that might be effective means toward redistributing financial capital in more equitable ways.

Hook: Students should be split into two groups. One group will view all or part of videos from President Obama on the importance of education (President Barack Obama Makes Historic Speech to America’s Students,” 2009). This group will create a Vine or seven second video designed to illustrate the President’s idea of the importance of education, and what the purpose of education is. The other group will use information from a TED Talk by Sheryl Sandberg (2010) to create a Vine or seven second video that showcases inequality in the job market. They will then share their videos, and as a class, decide what President Obama might say to the information presented in the second video. (15-20 minutes)

Body: Students complete a questionnaire from the World Bank (Grootaert, 2004) modified as necessary for a given group or grade level designed to elicit elements of social capital they have access to. They then research a career they might be interested in, using data from the Occupational Outlook Handbook (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Students will then research both women who have had success in their chosen career field, and women who have advocated for more just and equitable treatment of women in general (Examples might include Lucy Stone, Emma Tenayuca, or Ella Baker). (35-45 minutes)

Conclusion: Students will create a body map of themselves on butcher paper designed to depict their future selves. This involves tracing the body, and drawing or writing particular attributes and information on certain parts of the body. This particular map will be split in half. On one half, they should graphically illustrate their future career in the shape of their bodies, and represent their research in the following ways: Underneath that foot, they should have information about successful women in their chosen fields as an illustration of the way that individual success within oppressive institutions builds on a foundation of pioneers in the past. The arm should embody their understanding of the gender wage gap in America (and in their chosen field if possible). The hand should embody the dominant narrative that more education equals more success, and that half of the head can depict the education needed to pursue their chosen career. On the other half of the body, students will illustrate efforts to work for justice outside of the employment system in



the following ways: Underneath that foot, they should have information about women who have advocated for justice and equality as an illustration of the way that collective success within oppressive institutions builds on a foundation of pioneers in the past. The arm should represent ways that they could use their documented social capital to address discrimination. The hand should embody the counter narrative that there are other sources of value besides economic success, and that half of the head can depict education that fits their conception of value outside of a career orientation. Finally, their heart (which is only on one side, anatomically) should symbolize the reasons they want to either pursue the career they have chosen or a cause they feel strongly about and why. (30-35 minutes) In a subsequent class, body maps could be hung up for a gallery walk and students and the instructor can write or talk about the juxtaposition between the two halves and what that means for American women.

Discussion: This lesson challenges the myth that more education leads to more income, with particular attention to the wage gap between men and women. It allows students to think about their futures within the context of an economy where men earn more than women for the same work despite women earning the majority of college degrees. By researching successful women in fields they are interested in, they are bringing into the curriculum a variety of women beyond a handful who “do not claim their own history” but are “explored to the extent they fit within men’s issues” (Schmidt, 2012, p. 708). By thinking about careers, women are moved out of the domestic sphere, and by having an explicit focus on cultural capital as amelioration for systemic inequality, students are provided with “tools with which to deconstruct and understand inequality, now and in the past, as well as strategies for creating spaces of resistance within oppressive structures” (Schmeichel, 2015, p. 2). This lesson does not, however, fulfill many important tenets of feminism that might be included in further curricula. There is no “emphasis on what we once called ‘private’ life as contrasted with ‘public’ life” (Noddings, 1992, p. 234); there is no real critique of capitalism as an oppressive system, nor its complicity in maintaining gender hierarchies (Fraser, 2005); and there is little/no emphasis on how “the relationship between historical or contemporary political, social, and economic conditions for women is rooted in systems of power” (Schmeichel, 2015, p. 21). Finally, there may be some concern that this is a research and mapping activity that is exclusively about women, which might cause consternation among male students. While this can be modified in some ways (considering how men can use their social capital for gender justice for example), it might be interesting to do the activity and see if male students feel out of place. If so, it could lead to a critical exploration of Social Studies curriculum for gender balance that might be worth the brief discomfort of the gender that is omnipresent in the formal curriculum.

Lesson 3: Is growth always good?

Objective: Students will evaluate the effect of gentrification on their community.



Product: Students will create a proposal based on maps they create to mitigate the negative aspects of gentrification on their community while maintaining the positives they associate with the growth that accompanies gentrification.

Standards (C3 Framework Dimension 2, Economics):

8 th Grade	D2.Eco.1.6-8. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society.	D2.Eco.2.6-8. Evaluate alternative approaches or solutions to current economic issues in terms of benefits and costs for different groups and society as a whole.	D2.Eco.6.6-8. Explain how changes in supply and demand cause changes in prices and quantities of goods and services, labor, credit, and foreign currencies.
12 th Grade	D2.Eco.1.9-12. Analyze how incentives influence choices that may result in policies with a range of costs and benefits for different groups.	D2.Eco.9.9-12. Describe the roles of institutions such as clearly defined property rights and the rule of law in a market economy	D2.Eco.13.9-12. Explain why advancements in technology and investments in capital goods and human capital increase economic growth and standards of living.

Rationale: In the Voluntary National Content Standards (Council for Economic Education, 2010) and many other economic textbooks and frameworks (e.g. Clayton, 2003; Saunders et al., 1984; NCSS, 2013), economic growth is presented as a central concept and relatively unchallenged as a positive outcome of a market economy. Growth occurs when individuals, corporations, and the government invest in resources today that will pay dividends in the future. In the case of gentrification, or “the transformation of a working class or vacant area of the central city into middle class residential and/or commercial use” (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008, p. xv), we see how this form of growth becomes more than a matter of financial resources going to a community where they were lacking. Economic growth can be a tool of white privilege and a force for white supremacy in housing patterns (Lees et al., 2008), it can have a toxic effect on schools in urban areas (Lipman, 2008), and through the schools can help reproduce inequality (DeSena & Ansalone, 2009). Students in urban areas affected by gentrification have an intimate understanding of the financial and cultural impact of this social process, but may or may not have a conduit from which to voice their understanding of the way their world is changing. In a traditional economics curriculum, growth (in the form of gentrification and elsewhere) is assumed to be good for everyone, this lesson seeks to problematize that assumption while allowing students to speak back at the particular ways that gentrification manifests in their community.

Hook: Students watch SNL’s Bushwick, Brooklyn sketch (Saturday Night Live, 2015) and attempt to construct a class definition of gentrification based on the depiction in the sketch. Explain that



this is an example of cultural gentrification. Facilitate a discussion on the financial impact of gentrification on communities of color in urban areas. Have students seen gentrification in their communities? How has it affected them, their families, their neighborhoods, etc.? (10-15 minutes)

Body: Students will seek out photos of their neighborhoods and communities that represent gentrification and the financial and cultural impact of growth. They can do this via a web search, or, if timing permits, they can take pictures themselves for homework and bring them back to class the next day. The pictures can then be uploaded to Scribblemaps or another map editing platform as a way to illustrate the financial and cultural effects of gentrification on their city visually. (25-30 minutes)

Students can then work to construct, within the same map or in a new map, a visual representation of spaces that speak back against gentrification, spaces where the cultural and financial power that is being exerted by gentrification is resisted or altered to ensure a more democratic or equitable space. (25-30 minutes)

Conclusion: Students will then write a proposal to be sent to the appropriate city governing agency about ways to address the issues of gentrification as they see them (agencies might include housing departments, city manager offices, development departments, neighborhood organizations, or planning and zoning boards). These proposals should include the student-generated maps as a way to document the fieldwork that underlies the students' recommendations, and should pay particular attention to the way that growth has affected the people in their community culturally, financially, and personally. The proposals should be shared with the class first, and students can offer feedback intended to enhance the messaging and impact of the proposal prior to its submission. (25-30 minutes)

Discussion: This lesson represents a confluence of geography and economics, using critical geography as a way to document how students “exist spatially, under forces not of [their] own making . . . in such formations as nations, city streets, neighborhoods, institutions, and bodies” (Helfenbein, 2006b, p. 92), and how “[u]rban spaces in the period of late capitalism no longer follow the simple maps of historical development but rather shift in ebbs and flows that include the complexities of gentrification, resegregation, social fragmentation, and distributed networks of production and consumption” (p. 98). Without a great deal of direction or specificity, students have the flexibility to creatively map and ‘name’ their world (Freire, 1993) as it shifts, a vital step towards a critical consciousness of the structural and individual effects of growth.

Conclusion

These lessons show how economics can be used to accomplish a number of goals related to the practical application of critical theory in the Social Studies. Broadly, economics taught this way



can help to tie the structural critique that undergirds much of critical theory to the individualist ways of knowing the world that many students are socialized to hold. More specifically, with respect to race, these economic lessons can help avoid the deleterious effect of white talk, considering racism as an individual phenomenon, and the perception of racism as bound to the history books. With regard to gender, they offer a place for women in the curriculum that goes beyond the domestic sphere while critiquing systemic bias in the workplace. Finally, they allow students to talk back to people in positions of power about the negative effects of gentrification as both a cultural and economic force. Through all of this, basic economic concepts such as monetary policy, wages and income, and economic growth are covered via methods that go beyond direct instruction and rote memorization.

To return to the parable that began this story, we must consider the way some critical theorists might view this project. We may be looking at the state of economics education, and Social Studies in general, like the family in mourning over their son's leg. We live in an unjust world that is reflected in the traditional curriculum of schools. A few minor economics lessons that are more relative, personal, and critical of structural inequality might cause us to celebrate as the family did when their son was spared from war. And yet, if history has shown us anything, it is that the forces of white supremacy, patriarchy, and hegemony do not vanish in the wake of progressive movements for justice. They reform, rearticulate, and continue to maintain oppression in new and more surreptitious ways. Yet by spreading an economics curriculum that builds from the personal to break down the structural, we can move beyond the day-to-day joy and sorrow of individual events and take aim at the structures that enforce inequality. In short, we no longer must shrug and await the winds of change, rather teachers and students can overcome structural blindness and boldly declare, "We shall see".



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