*Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*
*Volume 11 Number 3 2012*
*www.wwwords.co.uk/CSEE*

Citizenship
Social and Economics Education

# One Size Does Not Fit All: conceptual concerns and moral imperatives surrounding gender-inclusive financial literacy education

**LAURA ELIZABETH PINTO**
*College of Education, Niagara University, Toronto, Canada*

ABSTRACT In the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis, financial literacy education received increased political attention worldwide as an important policy solution to achieve a variety of ends. Cloaked in the neoliberal language of value-neutrality, financial literacy education takes on a gender-blind character, presuming a level playing field. Through its naivety, financial literacy education perpetuates the false impression that men and women experience economic participation, decisions and outcomes in the same ways. This article explores how attention to gender justice is an important moral obligation if we are to achieve inclusive financial literacy education and recommends feminist pedagogies to counter dominant and uncritical approaches to financial literacy in classrooms.

## Introduction: Financial Literacy, Citizenship Education and Gender Justice

In the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis, financial literacy education received increased political attention worldwide as an important policy solution to achieve a variety of ends. The American government released *Promoting Financial Success in the United States: National Strategy 2011* and many states have mandated financial literacy curricula. Australia launched a National Financial Literacy Strategy in March 2011 to help 'individuals and families to make the most of opportunities, meet their goals and secure their financial wellbeing, as well as contribute to the economic health of society' (Australian Securities and Investments Commission [ASIC], n.d.). The United Kingdom's Financial Services Act 2010 established the Consumer Financial Education Body (CFEB) to coordinate national efforts, though this was not overtly tied to the economic crisis. The Canadian federal government addressed the issue with the establishment of the Task Force on Financial Literacy (2010) in 2009, and several provincial ministries of education commenced the development of compulsory kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) financial literacy curriculum policy. Internationally, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2012) introduced the first large-scale international study to assess the financial literacy among 15-year-olds in 2012, included within the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). As with other long-standing components of PISA (such as literacy, science and mathematics rankings), once international financial literacy scores are released, political attention to the topic of financial education is likely.

In a general sense, literacy is a socially constructed activity that simultaneously contributes to creating the reality in which it operates, and is influenced by that reality; 'each has a part in the construction of the other' (Gee, 1990, p. 5). Thus, a critical examination of any form of literacy requires an investigation of its operation within social contexts, and how the social contexts influence (and are influenced by) individuals' understandings. Financial literacy can be defined as 'an individual's ability to obtain, understand and evaluate the relevant information necessary to make decisions with an awareness of the likely financial consequences' and involves making meaning within existing social structures (Mason & Wilson, 2000, p. 31). A financially literate

 http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/csee.2012.11.3.177

individual, therefore, has some general understanding of financial systems and knows how to carry out routine tasks and transactions – but more importantly, the financially literate individual recognizes how his/her social position creates unique opportunities and challenges, and how financial systems can privilege and marginalize various individuals and groups (Arthur, 2011; Pinto & Coulson, 2012).

But what is especially unique about financial literacy education in contemporary global policy and rhetoric is that it is increasingly connected to citizenship education (Arthur, 2011). In this view, citizenship is portrayed as responsible consumption. It is recoded under neoliberalism in such a way that individual consumption of financial products becomes a 'civic duty and pseudo-collective risk management strategy' (Arthur, 2011, p. 195). This market-driven and perfunctory understanding of citizenship through financial literacy fails to address very real broader social, systemic and economic complexities, particularly those related to gender difference. As Arnot (2009) observes, this strong link between neoliberal conceptions of globalization and the ethic of personalized freedom focuses on markets and individual choice rather than collective action and attention to justice.

By contrast, within a richer conception of citizenship, financial literacy education and the curriculum materials that support it have the potential to draw attention to issues of gender justice, and ultimately contribute to greater equity through understanding. By acknowledging women's unique experiences in economic, cultural and political participation, this article seeks to critically analyse financial literacy from the perspective of gender politics, and offer insight into the pedagogical approaches to financial literacy that might approach a more inclusive and democratic conception in the classroom.

## Women's Unique Experiences in Economic Participation

Gender affects a person's ability to equitably participate in financial activity, especially the ability to build wealth. This article focuses solely on women and financial literacy, though I acknowledge that many other groups experience economic marginalization (Barnhill, 2005; Pinto & Chan, 2010). I recognize the ways in which intersectionality (Collins, 1998; Delgado, 2011) calls attention to events and forces operating at the intersection of two or more categories, such as race and gender. While exploration of how inequity within financial literacy discourses operates beyond binary categories of male/female, black/white is warranted, it is beyond the scope of this article.

Consideration of women's marginalization relevant to financial literacy requires that we distinguish between equity and equality. While equality implies that all individuals have the same opportunities or distribution of goods, equity implies that opportunities are distributed in a way that may be unequal, but compensates for differences that disadvantage one group or person over another. Within financial literacy education, participatory parity as defined by Fraser (2007) is a measure of gender justice. Participatory parity requires both cultural equity (recognition) and material equity (redistribution).

Women are subject to the tensions of bivalent modes of collectivity (Fraser, 1997; Arnot, 2006) that complicate participatory parity. As a bivalent collectivity, women suffer socioeconomic maldistribution and cultural misrecognition simultaneously, where neither of these can be reduced to an effect of the other. Gender inequity requires that the economic, the cultural and the political must be simultaneously addressed through both redistribution and recognition (Fraser 1997, 2005).

Women experience marginalization in their economic participation in many ways. Various pervasive societal barriers restrict women's self-determination, resulting in a lack of internal or external power to exercise autonomy. Nussbaum (1999) explains this fact using women's oppression as an example. Women have a legal right to education, though they may not have the financial or material resources to exercise that right. This can occur in repressive marriages or traditional community hierarchies that prevent a woman from 'true choices'. As well, social constructions about women's roles prevent them from pursuing such opportunities. Thus, women's inequities are viewed not as individual choice, but as systemic barriers that prevent women from taking on a particular job, dictate how many hours they can devote to jobs, or prevent them from working without hiatus.

This highlights the fundamental gender division between paid 'productive' labour and unpaid 'reproductive' and domestic labour, with women primarily responsible for the latter (Fraser, 1997). Time off for childcare is only one part of the unpaid labour typically undertaken by women that is not accounted for in financial literacy education (Pinto & Coulson, 2012). In Canada, for example, wives put in 46% of the total time couples spent at jobs and 62% of time spent on housework (Marshall, 2006). Caregiving for older adult family members is an inequitable burden on women, with women responsible for nearly three times the commitment, resulting in substantial employment-related consequences (Pyper, 2006). Together, these circumstances detract from a woman's ability to enjoy the same sorts of professional (and therefore economic) choices as a man.

Beyond the consequences of sociocultural representation and recognition in reproductive, unpaid labour, women also face systemic barriers in 'occupational ghettos' (Charles & Grusky, 2007). Women continue to face both horizontal and vertical forms of segregation within occupations that further limit parity (Charles & Grusky, 2007). On the horizontal axis representing occupational type, women are over-represented in service-oriented occupations and men in physically demanding manual occupations (Charles & Grusky, 2007). Further segregation of women persists in nurturant occupations (e.g. teaching, nursing) and men in technical occupations (e.g. engineering, technology) (Charles & Grusky, 2007). The vertical axis concerns itself with hierarchical representation in leadership positions. On the vertical axis, men are over-represented in managerial and professional occupations that typically carry higher incomes. The research points to systemic and cultural entrenchment in these segregation patterns internationally, thus sustaining male privilege and reinforcing women's occupational ghettoization (Charles & Grusky, 2007). These cultural and systemic barriers limit women's occupational choice, and further exacerbate gender inequity in economic, cultural and political realms.

When taken as a whole, research reveals that, while women may have equal opportunity to earn and save money, these opportunities are far from equitable given social and political realities. Women have 'equal' opportunity to apply for jobs (and the legal right to hold jobs), but hiring practices mean that women remain under-represented in higher-paying jobs (Charles & Grusky, 2007). Regardless of occupation, women still face lower pay for equal work (about 30% less than men [Canadian Labor Congress, 2008]), and the wage gap seems to be growing despite women's higher educational achievement compared to men (Calhoun, 2008). These factors mean that while women are able to earn money, the level of compensation will be unequal because of their gender. Lower wages through pay inequity and occupational ghettoization, then, mean that women's ability to save is unequal to men's, even if all other factors are equal. Given long-standing occupational segregation and wage inequities coupled with false choices (i.e. situations in which women are pushed to make a less than ideal choice because no other viable options exist) for participation, differences in wealth accumulation by gender are not surprising. In 2005, the median net worth of Canadian families headed by a woman as the main income recipient was approximately 40% lower than those headed by a man, with a trend of increased disparity (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Women's disadvantage is exacerbated by seemingly 'fair' economic policy, another issue central to financial literacy. This is an important deficit of gender equity in political representation and recognition. Because of the wage and employment disparities just described, women tend to derive less benefit than men from 'equal' economic policies (Yalnizyan, 2007). This is especially true of retirement savings and income policy. While policies of 'equal' retirement contributions may appear on the surface to be equitable since they allow equal opportunity for all to participate at the same rate, women's lower incomes put them at a disadvantage (Russell, 2005). Interestingly, when Canadian men's and women's retirement savings participation rates were compared within the same income brackets, women had higher rates of participation in every bracket (Palameta, 2001), but because of lower earnings as a group women derived less benefit.[1]

Finally, attention to gender justice recognizes that girls and women experience financial literacy education differently from men. In their study of over 5000 American high school students, Danes and Haberman (2007) found significant differences between male and female students, consistent with other, similar research (Ford & Kent, 2010). This parallels research describing the cultural construction of gender roles and mathematics that ensures girls are less likely to succeed, and to have less confidence in their abilities (Hottinger, 2011). Danes and Haberman (2007) noted that males reinforced existing knowledge, while females learned more from financial literacy education. Females believed that managing money affected their future more than males, but were less confident making money decisions. This difference in educational experience points to the need for financial literacy curricula and pedagogies that acknowledge gender inequities both in life and in learning. If we accept that women have a right to both recognition and representation in the curriculum (Arnot, 2006), then financial literacy education must address those differences.

### Problematizing Neutrality and Choice in Financial Literacy Education

The very real barriers to gender parity just described persist internationally, and ought to be addressed within financial literacy policy and curricula. However, existing financial literacy policy and curricula tend to present financial issues as value-neutral (Pinto & Coulson, 2012). The notion that curricula ought to be value-neutral has 'made something of a comeback in recent years in many countries' (Roberts, 1998, p. 30), particularly within neoliberal education policy (Roberts, 1998; Eyre, 2002). This position is problematic because outcomes are cast as value-neutral, when in actuality they are one-sided and interest-serving. Value-neutrality is alluring in that it suggests one can avoid controversy in education. However, deciding what is 'worth knowing' or 'most important' are value-laden acts, especially within the context of financial literacy.

Those items appearing in the explicit [2] financial literacy curriculum privilege certain knowledge, skills and attitudes, while marginalizing the null curriculum (those things omitted). A hidden curriculum thus emerges in the form of the underlying assumptions and explicit values transmitted (Portelli, 1993; Skelton, 1997). Moreover, the false notion of value-neutrality ignores the issue of equity entirely (gender or otherwise). Equity is trivialized by over-emphasis of measurable, brief snippets of information (Wrigley, 2003) that conceal gender issues and reinforce male primacy. Policy examples of this hidden curriculum are evident in the OECD's (2012) *PISA 2012 Financial Literacy Assessment Framework*, which defines financial literacy and identifies outcomes, but fails to address gender.[3] Similarly, Canada's Task Force on Financial Literacy (2010), which attempts to set the course for the nation's financial literacy education strategy, also fails to mention gender. Through these omissions, the OECD (2012) and Task Force (2010) convey the false impression of gender neutrality. Financial literacy education ensconced in this sort of false neutrality omits important discussion of women's unique financial experience and perpetuates a myth that women have equal choice in economic, cultural and political participation, especially wealth accumulation. This is simply misleading to those participating in financial literacy education. Issues of equity, and the social problems that reinforce them, are intimately tied to financial literacy, which is in no way neutral.

Recall the example of women's inequity in retirement savings policy. To address gender equity, policy or curricula should call attention to how gender changes the way the individual experiences long-term savings and their benefits. Yet, the OECD, in its neutrality, positions these issues as though they were the same for all in its learning outcomes, which they describe as follows:

> – recognise the benefit of planning for retirement from a young age, and the importance of building reserves to buffer shocks;
>
> – understand the benefits of saving for other long term goals or anticipated changes in circumstance (such as living independently);
>
> – can assess the investment advantages and disadvantages of building human capital through different types of education and training (OECD, 2012, p. 18)
>
> – understand how the ability to build wealth or access credit depends on economic factors such as interest rates, inflation and credit scores;
>
> – understand that a range of external factors, such as advertising and peer pressure, can affect people's financial choices. (OECD, 2012, p. 21)

When taken as a whole, the phrasing of these outcomes calls attention to how the OECD's policy fails to recognize gender difference by presenting implicit gender neutrality. It is worth noting that while the OECD cites 'external factors' (p. 21), rather than considering gender issues as part of broader systemic factors, it reduces them to (comparatively neutral) factors such as advertising and peer pressure.

This neutrality reflects 'gender-blindness' that ignores real differences (Eyre, 2002; Arnot, 2006). Gender-blindness, rooted in neoliberalism, perpetuates a set of beliefs that positions inequity as non-existent, treating male ways of being, knowing and experiencing as 'normal'. As such, gender-blindness operates in more subtle ways that make inequity less obvious than traditional, overt forms of discrimination. Gender-blindness also relies on the guise of meritocracy – rather than acknowledging the reality that individuals receive advantages based on social position and gender. Therefore, gender-blindness perpetuates the misconception that privileges are earned based on merit. The OECD learning outcomes contain some overt examples of assuming meritocracy, such as 'can assess the investment advantages and disadvantages of building human capital through different types of education and training' (2012, p. 18). This implies that individuals derive the same 'investment benefits' from education, without addressing empirically grounded gender income differences resulting from occupational ghettos discussed earlier.

Following that example, when women are disadvantaged, that disadvantage is reduced to a lack of qualifications in dominant discourses. Meritocratic thinking eliminates any acknowledgement of privilege, and denies the existence of inequity. This legitimizes expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of male privilege and primacy through meritocracy. By contrast, gender justice requires participatory parity for women and relies on cultural, material and political equity. This absence of open acknowledgement of women's realities through neutrality creates a false impression of economic equity. Misinforming both young men and women about the absence of equal choice and equal opportunity serves to reproduce power inequities and marginalization.

Contemporary financial literacy education policy and curricula emphasize 'choice' and taking responsibility for one's finances (Arthur, 2011; Pinto & Coulson, 2012) as key features within neutrality. For example, in its definition of financial literacy, the OECD emphasizes that 'individuals have choices in spending and saving and each action can have consequences' (2012, p. 21). Canada's Task Force (2010) defines financial literacy as knowledge, skills and confidence to make 'responsible financial decisions', which it explicitly defines as 'the ability of individuals to use the knowledge, skills and confidence they have gained to make choices appropriate to their own circumstances' (Task Force, 2010, p. 10). This choice discourse is consistent with neoliberal language that focuses on 'the market'. It emphasizes competition, prioritizing individual liberty over collective good (Olssen, 1996; Apple, 2005).

This conception of the role of choice reinforces hegemonic power structures by pathologizing individuals who may, by no fault of their 'choices', find themselves in an unfavourable financial situation. This line of argument falls into the trap of the fallacy of composition in that it ignores the crucial role of financial systems in producing economic outcomes, instead erroneously overlooking 'the structuring influences on individual action which are inherent to capitalism' (Arthur 2011, p. 194). An opportunity exists to take other factors into account that can account for financial misfortune – circumstances that might be well beyond an individual's control, and particularly systemic factors that affect women. Lister's (2008) articulation of inclusive citizenship calls for a gendered re-articulation of the public–private divide that perpetuates injustice through a variety of factors, including the impact of unpaid care labour.

Without a doubt, market criteria under the guise of 'choice' are simply insufficient to address social problems, especially gender inequity, given that 'criteria for fairness and competition are insufficient for achieving social justice' (Rizvi, 1998, p. 54). Similarly, Beilharz (1989, p. 93) argues that social justice is a non sequitur outside the logic of markets:

> The dominant usages of 'social justice' are not interested in arguments about needs, but rather in facilitating the pursuit of desert of fairness principles within the matrix of existing market relations. (Beilharz, 1989, p. 95)

As such, the choice discourses ignore difference, and more importantly, inequity. All of this is consistent with Marshall and Arnot's (2008) observations that gender remains well hidden in the discourses of equal opportunity; women simply cannot find a place in these discourses. Choice discourses also ignore the role that power plays within systemic barriers that restrict individual agency to participate economically, socially and politically. In this way, discourses of choice reinforce gender injustice. While those systemic barriers affect many individuals and groups, I will highlight some of those that are specific to gender justice.

## Replication of Inequity and Reframing Financial Literacy Education

Financial literacy education relies on a false neutrality construct that reifies and reproduces inequities in society. Assumptions that all individuals come to financial life on an equal playing field are naive. They ignore the very different circumstances that cause individuals and groups to experience personal finance in very different ways. Unless gender justice is addressed within financial literacy policy, curriculum and pedagogy, it simply replicates inequity.

Policy and curriculum must include affirmation and transformation to remedy gender injustice (Arnot, 2006), simultaneously negotiating the tensions between the politics of recognition and the politics of difference (Garrat & Piper, 2010). When financial problems are cast within a broader societal context, the role of citizenship education as a tool to overcome some of the root causes of debt cannot be underestimated. This is especially true when financial literacy is cast as a component of civic education. The gender-blind approach described here denies anything but individual choice. Aside from the fact that this is simply inaccurate, this approach is both punitive and harmful to women, since they are left to bear the anxiety of marginalization themselves (Eyre, 2002). Rather, financial literacy education acts in the interest of the privileged male position (Arnot, 2006), by masking men's social advantage as the norm.

If financial literacy is a social construction that requires individuals to make decisions within social structures, then a clear understanding of how women experience financial life differently ought to be an essential component. If we expect that men and women should benefit equally (if not equitably) from financial literacy education, these differences must be addressed in curricula and pedagogy. More importantly, a socially just curriculum (financial or otherwise) would call on students to explore how students-as-citizens can move to equity over equality of opportunity when it comes to gender. Only by acknowledging difference can we begin to approach an understanding of gender (in)justice and how it is perpetuated in financial literacy education.

No conventional financial literacy curriculum resource has addressed issues critical to understanding and overcoming gender inequity, nor women's unique experiences as learners of financial literacy (Pinto & Coulson, 2012). The current OECD (2012) policy also fails to set the stage for inclusion of women's issues in financial literacy. Rather, policy and curriculum ought to emphasize critical inquiry by students so that they identify how current financial structures and economic policies privilege some while marginalizing others, and ways in which society can move towards greater economic equity for all.

## Critical Feminist Pedagogies and Financial Literacy in the Civic Education Classroom

The challenge of addressing the tensions within the bivalent nature of gender inequity while simultaneously addressing both redistribution and recognition require feminist pedagogies to disrupt dominant discourses though a 'critical transformative pedagogy of difference' (Arnot, 2006, p. 145). Such pedagogy necessarily and explicitly acknowledges gender injustice in the course of financial literacy education, and actively encourages students' critical interrogation of the problems that underlie gender injustice.

A number of liberatory pedagogical strategies in the feminist tradition are available to address gender justice in financial literacy. First, given the role of special interests in designing some financial literacy curricula (Pinto & Coulson, 2012), critical media literacy education must be employed to help students identify who developed financial literacy education materials, as well as to comprehend, criticize and challenge corporate pedagogies (Saltman, 2004; Norris, 2011). For example, credit card company Visa Canada widely distributes its comprehensive financial literacy package, *Choices and Decisions*, to teachers at professional conferences, by mail and electronically. Pinto and Coulson's (2012) discourse analysis identified a number of shortcomings in *Choices and Decisions* having to do with its failure to address issues of gender. To address shortcomings of corporate-sponsored resources such as this one, class discussion might include questions such as: What does this curriculum ask you to believe about financial literacy, the financial industry, and about yourself? Who produced the materials? How does the content relate to other materials on financial literacy? What sort of social values are proposed within this version of financial literacy? Are these universal?

Media literacy strategies can also be applied when popular culture is used as a vehicle for financial literacy learning. Media used must be appropriate to students and their interests, so the suggestions offered here may not be relevant beyond 2013, and certainly would not be engaging for all communities of learners. Television series such as the popular *New Girl* (IMDb, 2012; Meriwether, 2012) and *2 Broke Girl$* (King & Cummings, 2012) both address issues related to financial literacy education.[4] In multi-episode story arcs related to unemployment, male and female characters experience the process of job loss and attempts to secure income differently (Jess and Winston both find themselves unemployed in *New Girl*; *2 Broke Girl$*'s Caroline and Max attempt to escape poverty by starting a business). Both programmes also reinforce occupational ghettos, with women in nurturant and low-wage jobs (teachers, waitresses), and men in white-collar and managerial jobs. Students can compare the characters' experiences to the content of conventional financial literacy materials in class. They can critically assess how women's employment options and opportunities in the programme differ from men's – and how both programmes reinforce gendered occupational ghettos. After viewing employment themes in these programmes, students can then conduct research to connect media content and statistical data collected. Students should be encouraged to consider how the social roles assumed by characters in both programmes reflect or refract their own observations and how gendered social roles affect economic participation in both positive and negative ways.

Effective feminist pedagogy also relies on critical engagement with dominant views and perspectives while teaching complexity (Eidoo et al, 2011). Such engagement can be achieved by inviting students to take an oppositional reading of financial literacy texts used in class, with emphasis on the hidden curriculum of gender inequity.[5] Most students have spent much of their time in school encouraged to accept text content as truth, without the opportunity to bring their own perspectives, experience and inquiry to the content (Pinto et al, 2011). Yet, all texts are open to multiple readings, depending upon the teacher, the reader, and the approach to making sense of the content. By inviting students to challenge hegemonic text content through oppositional reading, teachers can distribute authority and engage students through a sense of empowerment. An oppositional reading of a text is characterized by several features defined by Pinto et al (2011). First, oppositional readers view a text as a whole, identifying whose or what perspectives are included and excluded – in this case, with emphasis on gender equity. Second, readers unpack underlying assumptions implicit in the text. Third, readers investigate whether competing conceptions of text topics exist, and what those competing conceptions are. This approach offers teachers a way to work with existing or mandated curriculum materials, but provides a framework for students to actively question and resist hegemonic content. This can be applied to materials such as Visa's *Choices and Decisions*, or to materials such as banking guides distributed by financial institutions.

Humour and satire represent yet another approach to applying feminist pedagogies to counter hegemonic financial literacy education (Copp & Kleinman, 2008). Feminist humour, at its best, can 'make the familiar strange' (Copp & Kleinman, 2008, p. 112) in ways that disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions. The efficacy of satire and humour as tools for both engagement in and understanding of political issues has been empirically documented (George, 1989; Beavers, 2011; Glazier, 2011). When done well, satire can bring attention to very serious political issues, especially gender politics, and challenge students' thinking about taken-for-granted assumptions in ways that are consistent with critical pedagogy (Armstrong, 2005; Beavers, 2011) and critical feminist perspectives. For example, *The Onion's* (2005) satirical article, 'CEO Barbie Criticized for Promoting Unrealistic Career Images' encourages, through humour, discussion about the (mis)representation of women in the workplace. A fictional expert quoted in the article observes, 'Any girl who thinks that she can run a large corporation when she grows up is in for a bitter disappointment, and it is simply shameful that Mattel would seek to cash in on impressionable young girls this way'. The article ends with this passage:

> 'When your daughter comes home crying because she was passed over for a promotion for the fourth time, what are you going to tell her?' Lang asked. 'It would be easier if she'd been raised with dolls like Glass Ceiling American Girl, Service Sector Bratz, or Maria the White House Maid.' (*The Onion*, 2005)

This type of satire engages students directly with discussions about gender equity, and in the case of this article, intersectionality and bivalent collectivity. Similarly, some of the humorous feminist memes created by Henderson (2012) can be used in the classroom to raise awareness of issues pertinent to women's financial experiences.

As a feminist pedagogy, drama has the potential to 'generate powerful insights into the values and dynamics of groups and communities' (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education [NACCCE], 1999, p. 113). Given women's marginalization in economic participation, Augusto Boal's (1979) theatre of the oppressed is a fruitful approach. It is a type of forum theatre, in which audience members are allowed to intervene directly in the living play (unscripted and in the moment). The spectators (that is, audience of peers) also become actors. Using drama in this way allows for meaningful dialogue in a safe, empowering and equitable environment (Boal, 1979; Placha, 2007). It lends itself well to re-scripting historical events from multiple perspectives, and can be used to address issues within the classroom or school as they arise (Placha, 2007).

Applying Boal's theatre of the oppressed can either begin with student-generated scenarios, or teachers can provide vignettes as a basis for unscripted drama that relate to gender inequities applicable to financial literacy education. The data presented in this article lends itself to the creation of fictional scenarios. Alternately, Gajardo and Ryckman's (2013) collection of narratives in *Becoming Feminists* offer a variety of possible scenarios. Students should have had prior access to data on the inequities raised in the scenarios so that they are able to contextualize the situation and engage in critical reflection. Some relevant vignettes include:

- A small group of employees are sitting together in a break room. They begin talking about their recent paychecks, and learn that the men in the room are all making more than the women for the same job, despite similar education and seniority.
- A woman gets a job at the fire and rescue unit and is the first female firefighter in the community. She quickly learns that there are no women's fire-retardant boots or coats to fit her, which is a problem because the smallest ones are so wide that they slip off her feet when she climbs the ladder. She calls the uniform supplier and is told they do not make women's boots, so she'll just have to make do. Her co-workers tell her it is because this is a man's job.
- A male/female couple is arguing over how they will divide the housework and look after their aging parents, who require visits and help a few nights a week. Both have demanding jobs, and their chances of promotion are limited if they can't work overtime. The man points out that he earns more, so his job should take precedence.

When students use theatre of the oppressed, the original actors begin the scenes, but the audience may interrupt. Teachers may also jump in to offer information or data to help students contextualize the issues at hand. Students should be encouraged to explore various conclusions to the drama, and to think about alternatives and broader implications of their suggestions. Discussion relevant to the scenarios offered here might include concepts such as the effect of unpaid caregiving on careers, unequal pay/pay equity, and occupational ghettos. All of these issues lend themselves to further discussion about their implications on longer-term financial consequences.

## Conclusion

The inevitable inclusion of mandatory financial literacy curricula creates an important opportunity to bring issues of gender injustice to the fore. By incorporating counter-hegemonic texts as well as critical feminist pedagogies, teachers and students can begin to confront the ways in which systems perpetuate gender injustice, and shatter false beliefs about financial literacy education that not only pathologize the individual and absolve systems of their role, but contribute to sustained inequity.

Gender politics play an important role in an individual's participation in economic life. If the goal of financial literacy education is to identify the causes of financial problems in order to 'fix' them, then much more work must be done, and gender equity must be centred as a serious and important problem that goes beyond the economics of personal finance. So long as financial literacy continues to be presented as a gender-blind, neutral construct, and individual economic prosperity simply boils down to 'choice', gender justice will not be achieved.

This article calls attention to several areas for further research and action. First, additional analysis of existing curriculum policy and materials related to financial literacy education would offer insight into the dominant discourses in classrooms. Investigation of how both students and teachers negotiate the 'official' curriculum, and how they accept and resist those dominant discourses would also offer greater understanding of the kinds of the financial literacy education experience. Finally, empirical investigation into the efficacy of the various feminist pedagogies suggested here, when applied to financial literacy education, would offer educators and systems a better understanding of how to resist dominant discourse in ways that have the greatest positive impacts on students. Finally, teachers must be provided with strategies and resources to support counter-hegemonic financial literacy education, either through a non-profit organization, or a collective such as an engaged professional learning community.

## Notes

[1] To illustrate how this operates in a more concrete way, consider that working Canadians are entitled to contribute up to 18% of their total income or a maximum of $21,000 to a Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP). This allows equal opportunity for all Canadians to participate at the same rate and receive deferred tax benefits on the contributions. To 'max out' this RRSP ceiling, a person would have to earn approximately $116,000 annually. In 2005, this only accounted for 6.5% or just over half a million Canadians earning $116,000 or more (Statistics Canada, 2008). In 2004, Revenue Canada reported that 77% of those who earned over $100,000 were men (Yalnizyan, 2007) – allowing men to reap the lion's share of RRSP benefit since they tend to earn higher wages.

[2] That is, perspectives, skills, and information that are presented to students in classrooms via curriculum resources.

[3] The OECD (2012) made one mention of gender, but it was in relation to the PISA literacy test.

[4] Teachers who use these programmes should edit content carefully so that any clips shown are appropriate for the age of the students since both programmes cited contain mature content at times. *2 Broke Girl$* also contains questionable portrayals of ethnicity (Nussbaum, 2011), so media literacy techniques should be used to ensure that students viewing it reflect upon and critique the way in which various intersectionalities are represented. Teachers should also recognize that these programmes centre on white, predominantly middle-class women, part of a broader absence of diversity in television (Lotz, 2006), and therefore may not reflect students' perspectives and experiences.

[5] Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) identify three ways in which readers interact with texts: dominated, negotiated, oppositional. In the dominated approach, the reader accepts the message at face value. In a classroom, this involves positioning information in the text as 'fact' or 'truth', and neither seeking alternate perspectives nor questioning its content or underlying assumptions. This reduces students' readings of texts to knowledge acquisition and comprehension. In the negotiated approach, the reader may dispute portions of the text, but accepts the overall interpretations presented as valid or true, with the focus remaining on knowledge and comprehension rather than thinking and inquiry. Finally, in the oppositional approach, the reader repositions themself in relation to the text, and challenges its content, interpretation or the perspective(s) it employs or presupposes. In a classroom, this involves questioning, or encouraging students to question, overt and hidden messages in the text, and seeking out alternative conceptions and information (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991).

## References

Apple, M.W. (2005) Education, Markets, and an Audit Culture, *Critical Quarterly,* 47(1-2), 11-29. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.0011-1562.2005.00611.x

Apple, M.W. & Christian-Smith, L.K. (1991) The Politics of the Textbook, in M.W. Apple & L.K. Christian-Smith (Eds) *The Politics of the Textbook*, pp. 1-22. London: Routledge.

Armstrong, P. (2005) Satire as Critical Pedagogy. Paper delivered at the 3rd International Conference on Research in Lifelong Learning, University of Stirling, Scotland.

Arnot, M. (2006) Gender Equality, Pedagogy and Citizenship: affirmative and transformative approaches in the UK, *Theory and Research in Education,* 4(2), 131-150. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1477878506064539

Arnot, M. (2009) A Global Conscience Collective? Incorporating Gender Injustices into Global Citizenship Education, *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice,* 4(2), 117-132. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1746197909103932

Arthur, C. (2011) Financial Literacy in Ontario: neoliberalism, Pierre Bourdieu and the citizen, *Journal of Critical Education Policy Studies,* 9(1), 189-222.

Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) (n.d.) Home Page. http://www.financialliteracy.gov.au

Barnhill, J.A. (2005) Market Injustice: the case of the disadvantaged consumer, *Journal of Consumer Affairs,* 6(1), 78-83. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6606.1972.tb00501.x

Beavers, S.L. (2011) Getting Political Science in on the Joke: using *The Daily Show* and other comedy to teach politics, *Political Science,* 44(2), 415-419. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511000266

Beilharz, P. (1989) Social Democracy and Social Justice, *Journal of Sociology,* 25(1), 85-99. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/144078338902500105

Boal, A. (1979) *Theater of the Oppressed*. English translation. New York: Theatre Communications Group.

Calhoun, S. (2008) *Wage Gap Widest for University-educated Women*. Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (BPW Canada). http:// www.bpwcanada.com

Canadian Labor Congress (2008) Women in the Workforce: still a long way from equality. http://canadianlabor.ca/en/women-workforce-still-a-long-way-equality

Charles, M. & Grusky, D. (2007) Egalitarianism and Gender Inequality, in D. Grusky & S. Szelényi (Eds) *Inequality: contemporary and foundational readings in race, class, and gender*, pp. 327-342. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Collins, P.H. (1998) It's All in the Family: intersections of gender, race, and nation, *Hypatia*, 62, 73-74.

Copp, M. & Kleinman, S. (2008) Practicing What We Teach: feminist strategies for teaching about sexism, *Feminist Teacher,* 18(2), 101-124. http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/ftr.2008.0007

Danes, S.M. & Haberman, H.R. (2007) Teen Financial Knowledge, Self-efficacy, and Behavior: a gendered view, *Financial Counseling and Planning,* 18(2), 48-60.

Delgado, R. (2011) Rodrigo's Reconsideration: intersectionality and the future of critical race theory, *Iowa Law Review*, 96, 1247-1288.

Eidoo, S., Ingram, L., MacDonald, A., Nabavi, M., Pashby, K. & Stille, S. (2011) 'Through the Kaleidoscope': intersections between theoretical perspectives and classroom implications in critical global citizenship education, *Canadian Journal of Education,* 34(4), 59-85.

Eyre, L. (2002) 'No Strings Attached'? Corporate Involvement in Curriculum, *Canadian Journal of Education,* 27(1), 61-80. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1602188

Ford, M.W. & Kent, D.W. (2010) Gender Differences in Student Financial Market Attitudes and Awareness: an exploratory study, *Journal of Education for Business,* 85(1), 7-12.

Fraser, N. (1997) *Justice Interruptus*. New York: Routledge.

Fraser, N. (2005) Reframing Justice in a Globalizing World, *New Left Review,* 36, 69-88.

Fraser, N. (2007) Feminist Politics in the Age of Recognition: a two-dimensional approach to gender justice, *Studies in Social Justice,* 1(1), 23-35.

Gajardo, L.M. & Ryckman, J. (2013) *Becoming Feminists*. Toronto: Innana Publications.

Garratt, D. & Piper, H. (2010) Heterotopian Cosmopolitan Citizenship Education? *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice,* 5(1), 43-55. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1746197909353568

Gee, J. (1990) *Socio Linguistics and Literacies*. Basingstoke: Falmer Press.

George, W. (1989) Teaching Satire and Satirists, *English Journal,* 78(3), 38-43. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/819447

Glazier, R. (2011) Satire and Efficacy in the Political Science Classroom. Paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Seattle, Washington.

Henderson, D. (2012) *Feminist Ryan Gosling: feminist theory (as imagined) from your favorite sensitive movie dude*. New York: Running Press.

Hottinger, S. (2011) Mathematics and the Flight from the Feminine: the discursive construction of gendered subjectivity in mathematics textbooks, *Feminist Teacher,* 21(1), 54-74. http://dx.doi.org/10.5406/femteacher.21.1.0054

IMDb (2012) *New Girl Season 2 Ratings*. http://www.imdb.com/news/ni37243830/

King, M.P. & Cummings, W. (Producers) (2012) *2 Broke Girl$*. Television series. Hollywood, CA: MPK Productions & Warner Bros Television.

Lister, R. (2008) Inclusive Citizenship, Gender and Poverty: some implications for education for citizenship, *Citizenship Teaching and Learning,* 4(1), 3-18.

Lotz, A.D. (2006) *Redesigning Women: television after the network era*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Marshall, K. (2006) Converging Gender Roles, *Perspectives on Labor and Income,* 7(7). Statistics Canada. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/10706/4168755-eng.htm

Marshall, H. & Arnot, M. (2008) The Gender Agenda: the limits and possibilities of global and national citizenship education, in J. Zajda, L. Davies & S. Majhanovich (Eds) *Globalisation, Comparative Education and Policy Research,* vol. 2, pp. 103-123. Dordrecht: Springer.

Mason, C.L.J. & Wilson, R.M.S. (2000) Conceptualising Financial Literacy. Occasional Paper, 2000:7. Loughborough: Business School, Loughborough University.

Meriwether, E. (Producer) (2012) *New Girl*. Television series. Hollywood, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Television.

National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) (1999) *All Our Futures: creativity, culture and education*. Report to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. London: NACCCE.

Norris, T. (2011) *Consuming Schools: commercialism and the end of politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Nussbaum, E. (2011) Crass Warfare, *The New Yorker,* 87(35), 72-74.

Nussbaum, M. (1999) Women and Equality: the capabilities approach, *International Labor Review,* 138(3), 227-251. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1564-913X.1999.tb00386.x

Olssen, M. (1996) In Defense of the Welfare State and of Publicly Provided Education, *Journal of Education Policy*, 11(3), 337-362. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0268093960110305

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2012) PISA 2012 Financial Literacy Assessment Framework. http://www.oecd.org

Palameta, B. (2001) *Who Contributes to RRSPs? A Re-examination*. Perspectives on Labor and Income. Statistics Canada. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/00701/4095709-eng.html

Pinto, L.E. & Chan, H. (2010) Social Justice and Financial Literacy, *Our Schools/Our Selves,* 19(2), 61-78.

Pinto, L.E. & Coulson, E. (2012) Social Justice and the Gender Politics of Financial Literacy Education, *Canadian Journal of the Association for Curriculum Studies,* 9(2), 54-85.

Pinto, L.E., McDonough, G. & Boyd, D. (2011) High School Philosophy Teachers' Use of Textbooks: critical thinking or teaching to the text? *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction,* 5(2), 45-78. http://dx.doi.org/10.3776/joci.2011.v5n2p45-78

Placha, T. (2007) Teaching for Democracy: the risks and benefits of teaching in the danger zone, *Journal of Thought,* 42(1-2), 123-138.

Portelli, J.P. (1993) Exposing the Hidden Curriculum, *Journal of Curriculum Studies,* 25(4), 343-358. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0022027930250404

Pyper, W. (2006) Balancing Career and Care, *Perspectives on Labor and Income,* 7(11). Statistics Canada. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/11106/4096756-eng.htm

Russell, E. (2005) Ladies Get in Free? Not Even Close, *This Magazine,* November/December. http://www.thismagazine.ca/issues/2005/11/

Rizvi, F. (1998) Some Thoughts on Contemporary Theories of Social Justice, in B. Atweh, S. Kemmis & P. Weeks (Eds) *Action Research in Practice: partnerships for social justice in education*, pp. 47-56. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Roberts, P. (1998) The Politics of Curriculum Reform in New Zealand, *Curriculum Studies,* 6(1), 29-46.

Saltman, K.J. (2004) Coca-Cola's Global Lessons: from education for corporate globalization to education for global justice, *Teacher Education Quarterly,* 31(1), 155-172.

Skelton, A. (1997) Studying Hidden Curricula: developing a perspective in the light of postmodern insights, *Curriculum Studies,* 5(2), 177-193.

Statistics Canada (2006) *The Wealth of Canadians: an overview of the results of the Survey of Financial Security 2005*. Pension and Wealth Research Paper Series. Ottawa: Statistics Canada (Cat. No. 13F0026MIE-No. 001).

Statistics Canada (2008) 2006 Census: earnings, income and shelter costs, *The Daily*, May 1. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/080501/dq080501a-eng.htm

Task Force on Financial Literacy (2010) Report of Recommendations on Financial Literacy: Canadians and their money. Building a Brighter Financial Future. http://www.financialliteracyincanada.com

*The Onion* (2005) CEO Barbie Criticized for Promoting Unrealistic Career Images. http://www.theonion.com/articles/ceo-barbie-criticized-for-promoting-unrealistic-ca,1787/

Visa Canada (2009) *Choices and Decisions: taking charge of your life*. Toronto: Visa Canada.

Wrigley, T. (2003) Is 'School Effectiveness' Anti-democratic? *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 51(2), 89-112. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-8527.t01-4-00228

Yalnizyan, A. (2007) The Rich and the Rest of Us: the changing face of Canada's growing gap. Report. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. http://www.growinggap.ca/files/RichandtheRestofUs.pdf

---

**LAURA ELIZABETH PINTO** is an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at Niagara University in Ontario and Associate Member of the Graduate Faculty at OISE/ University of Toronto, Canada. Her research focuses on politics and policy in education, with particular attention to financial literacy education and democratic processes. Her latest book from University of Toronto Press is *Curriculum Reform in Ontario: 'common sense' processes and democratic possibilities*. *Correspondence*: laura.pinto@utoronto.ca