

## Activities/Critical Thinking Questions/Research Suggestions

### *The Global Economy: Connecting the Roots of a Holistic System*

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## Chapter 6. The Impact of Economic Globalization

### Section 6.1 Evaluating the Impact of Economic Globalization

#### 1. Evaluating the Impact of Economic Globalization

- a. Gather stories from different people that have been affected by economic globalization.
  1. Which ones have benefitted from economic globalization?
  2. Which ones have not?
- b. What criteria would you use to evaluate whether economic globalization is beneficial or detrimental as a strategy for directing the world economy? Explain why you selected each one.
- c. What is your top pick from question #b? Why?
- d. Do you agree with the author's #1 selection? Number 2 selection? Number 3 selection?

### Section 6.2 The Environment

#### 1. Environmental Issues

I think it is important that we address all of the environmental problems that we face. I wrote about different issues in this chapter but I imagine you know of others that you may wish to include as well. Just thinking about climate change often bogs us down into assuming it is the only environmental issue that we face. Although it is very important, in my opinion, we need to expand our conversation about the earth to include other important environmental issues such as the ones I mentioned in the book.

- a. Each student or group of students may pick at least one of the environmental problems that we are currently facing and conduct extensive research on the topic. Once the project is completed, the students may share their findings with each other to give a full mosaic of the environmental crisis.
- b. Research and create a power point style presentation or video about the many dire environmental problems that we face. I think it is always good to have suggestions on ways that individuals can help alleviate environmental problems, as well.
- c. Present this power point to as many groups, organizations, schools as possible.

#### 2. Introduction

- a. What is your reaction to the story "The Earth is an Island?"
- b. Write your own story on the order of the theme in "The Earth is an Island."
- c. How did the story make you feel?

#### 3. Desertification

- a. Conduct research to find examples of desertification around the world.
- b. Put together a video or slide presentation to show examples that you find.
- c. Are you experiencing desertification in your local or nearby community? If so, describe it.

#### 4. Deforestation

- a. Conduct research to find examples of deforestation around the world.
- b. What is being done, if anything, to stop deforestation today? Conduct research to find examples.
- c. What can you do in your local community to help counter deforestation?

#### 5. Fresh Water

We often don't think of the supply of fresh water as an environmental problem. It seems endless as it streams out of our faucets. But it isn't. Declining fresh water availability is an eye-opening and important issue to investigate and share what you have learned with others.

- a. Investigate where the fresh water source is in your local community and/or region.
  1. Is fresh water in short-supply in your local community?
  2. Design a diagram to show the different tracks that water navigates to get to your faucet.
- b. What does your local community mainly use fresh water for? (industry, agriculture, etc.) Find out the percentages.
- c. Many corporations consider fresh water to be the latest "hot" commodity. This means they are eager to transform water from a low-cost public service to a commodity with a price tag attached so that they can buy and sell it in the marketplace.
  1. Do you think fresh water should be a commodity that large companies charge users for? Explain.
  2. Conduct research to find if companies are trying to privatize the fresh water supply in your community? Or have companies already privatized your water supply?
  3. How do your legislators or regulators feel about water privatization? Investigate this issue by contacting your local representatives.
- d. What areas of the world are experiencing shortages of fresh water?
  1. Map their locations.
  2. How are they coping with the shortage? Pick one or two cases to study in more depth.
  3. Construct a graph that shows where fresh water is being used in several different countries. (Hint, India would be an interesting example.)
- e. What are the consequences of fresh water depletion?
- f. What can we do individually and collectively to reduce our consumption of fresh water?
  1. What is your community doing to conserve fresh water?
  2. What are you and your family doing to conserve fresh water?
  3. Are there other things that you could do conserve fresh water supplies?
- g. What is the impact of oil and natural gas fracking on fresh water reserves?
  1. Do you think fracking is a good choice in which to use limited fresh water reserves? Explain.

## 6. Climate Change

- a. Why is climate change such a critical environmental issue today?
- b. Why is climate change so difficult to solve?
- c. Draw a diagram to show the process of climate change using the systems thinking principles found in Chapter 1 of your book. How are all the parts interconnected?
- d. Do you think climate change has had an impact on your everyday life so far? Explain.
- e. How do you think people can best prepare for the changes we face in the future or for those facing the changes now?
- f. What are you doing to combat climate change?
- g. Conduct an interview or survey to find out how your friends, family, and neighbors feel about climate change. Chart your findings.
- h. There are many organizations that are working to combat climate change, perhaps you can join one of these organizations or start your own chapter.

## 7. Methane

The release of methane gas into the atmosphere is even more deadly than carbon dioxide. Yet, we do not hear very much about the destructive release of this gas into the atmosphere. Conduct research into finding out more about methane gas.

- a. What is methane gas?
- b. Where does methane come from? Map areas where it comes from in the U.S. and the world.
- c. Why is it such a deadly gas?

d. What can you do to help lessen the release of this deadly gas?

#### 8. Sea Levels

The rise of sea levels because of climate change is a foreboding problem.

- Chart the rising sea levels in different locations around the world: Suggestions: Bangladesh, New York City, Pacific Islands, Maldives.
- Chart the projections of future increases in sea levels in particular locations according to different projections of temperature increases.
- If you or your relatives live along the coastline, have you or they experienced any problems with rising sea levels? What is being done to counter the effects of rising sea levels on the coastlines?

#### 9. Soil Depletion

According to some studies, soil depletion is affecting the quality of the foods we eat?

- Conduct research into the effect of soil depletion on the nutritional quality of your foods.
- Why is soil depletion occurring?
- What can be done about soil depletion?
- What is being done about soil depletion?
- Is there a way to increase the nutritional quality of your foods if the quality is low?
- Chart the decrease or increase in soil quality in different areas of the world.
- Research to find the best ways to increase soil quality without using chemicals.
  - Where is this being done?
  - Why isn't it being done more?
- Start your own garden, a school garden, or a community garden; or join one already in place. What are some organic methods that can be used to increase soil productivity? Chart to see if these methods work.

#### 10. Carrying Capacity (Ecological Footprint)

Footprint Calculators:

Center for Sustainable Economy Ecological Footprint <http://myfootprint.org/>

Global Footprint Network Footprint Calculator

<http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculators/>

Global Ecological Footprint <http://ecologicalfootprint.org/Global%20Footprint%20Calculator/GFPCalc.html>

Our ecological footprint is a handy way to measure our impact on the environment. The above links are several different organizations that calculate your ecological footprint. Actually, for me, it is a rather depressing exercise to do. According to some of the calculations mine is quite high. I need about 5 planets to support my lifestyle! Although I am mostly vegetarian, work at my home office, have an old car with decent gas mileage, buy few consumer items, recycle everything, and even take quick showers. But I still have an 1800 square foot house, part of which is for my home office, and I fly a lot. I fly to see my children and for business related to my nonprofit, the Center for Global Awareness, but I still use jet fuel no matter how you look at it. I hope your footprint is better than mine, but if you live in the U.S. you are probably nearly as unsustainable as I am!

- Select people from around the world and see what their ecological footprint is.
- Calculate the footprint of your friends and family.
- How can you lower your individual ecological footprint?
- If you are an American, is it possible to lower your footprint while still maintaining the standard of living and way of life that many of us have?
- Why are we overshooting the carrying capacity of the earth?
- What will happen if we do overshoot our earth" carrying capacity?

g. Have you heard about overshooting and carrying capacity before? Has this knowledge changed your attitude about the environment? After reading this section in the book, do you feel more motivated to lower your ecological footprint? If yes, how will you do it?

### 11. Human Population

Our human population has skyrocketed in the last 50 years. The overriding question of our time is "Can our planet support this multitude of people and all their needs and wants?"

- a. Conduct research and then create a population chart to show human population growth from 10,000 years ago to the present.
  1. Make a chart to show the countries that have the highest population numbers.
  2. Make a chart to show the cities that have the highest population numbers.
- b. Conduct research and create a population chart to show human population growth in the last 50 years. The last 25 years.
- c. Can our planet support a population of 10 billion people? How?
- d. Do you see anything paradoxical about the world increase in population? Explain.
- e. What is happening to the population numbers where you live? What is driving these numbers?
- f. Create a big map charting the world population levels. Post it in a public place for all to see.
- g. How do you think human population levels can be reduced responsibly?
- h. Make a chart to show the forecast for future population growth.
  1. How many people can the earth hold?
  2. Why have populations increased in the last 50 years?

### 12. Natural Populations

- a. Select a particular animal or plant species and chart its numbers over the years.
- b. What has happened to the plant and animal species that are raised for human consumption and use (cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens, wheat, soybeans, corn, etc.)? Chart their increases.
- c. Create a power point presentation or video that shows the extinction of some species on the planet.
- d. Do you care that so many species are facing extinction? How does this make you feel?
- e. What can you do about the extinction of certain non-human related species?

### 13. The Environment and Growth

- a. Compare and contrast the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI).
  1. Make a chart to show your comparative research.
  2. Which one do you think is better suited for the U.S. economy? For the world economy? Explain.
  3. Have a debate in which each side takes the position of supporting one of the indicators.
- b. Devise your own type of GDP indicator.
  1. What indicators would you use to measure the well-being of your nation?
  2. How can these indicators be measured?
- c. Have a classroom discussion about how our ecological footprint will be reduced. Do you think that humans will have a choice in the matter?

### 14. Insights: The Environment

- a. What can you do individually to help support the health and livability of the Earth? What can we do collectively?
- b. Do you feel a sense of hopelessness and depression when you read about the environmental problems facing us all? Explain.
  1. Devise questions and conduct a survey to find out how people feel about the environment.
- c. If so inclined, find different organizations that you may want to join that support your ideas.
  1. Volunteer for these organizations or help raise money for them to carry out their mission.
- d. You and others may want to form your own organization to support the environment.

- e. Conduct some research into the Genuine Progress Indicator. Do you think this is a more environmental responsible way to rate the economic progress of our society? Explain.
- f. After reading this section on the environment, do you feel more likely to engage in some type of action – whether starting a recycling program at school or joining an organization – to help heal the environment?
  1. Describe your change in attitude.

### Section 6.3 The Growing Socioeconomic Gap Between Rich and Poor

#### 1. Introduction

- a. Give examples of the socioeconomic gap.
- b. What environmental problems or other issues arise when trying to increase the standard of living for everyone on the planet? Is this possible?
  1. Conduct a classroom discussion to talk about this issue.
  2. What conclusion have you come to individually concerning this question?
  3. How does this conclusion make you feel?
- c. Write a story about the socioeconomic gap – you can make up the characters or it can be based on people you know (you might want to change names though).

#### 2. Causes of Inequality

- a. Make a reinforcing feedback loop diagram that portrays the system trap of inequality.

#### 3. The World's Elite Class

- a. Conduct some research to find out about the world's 400 richest people?
  1. How did they obtain their wealth?
  2. If they are self-made elites, in what line of work did they make their fortune?
  3. If not self-made, how did other elites make their fortune?
  4. Where do they live?
- b. Find some graphs that show how much of the world's wealth the top 400 or 500 wealthiest people own.
  1. Create some visuals to show this fact.
- c. Do you think it is fair that so much of the wealth is concentrated at the top?
- d. Are you trying to become one of the world's elite?
  1. If so, what will you do to achieve this distinction?
  2. What will you do with all your money?
- e. How did you feel about the world's elite class after reading the short excerpt from "The Rich Today" by Chrystia Freeland?
  1. Did your attitude about the rich shift after reading the article? Explain.

#### 4. The World's Middle Class

- a. Those of you who live in the West, interview people that you consider to be in the middle class. Questions you may consider asking:
  1. Is it harder to keep up with a middle class way of life than in the past?
  2. What do you worry about the most as a middle class person?
  3. Do you think your children will be able to retain a middle class way of life?
  4. What are you doing to help your children attain a middle class way of life?
  5. What do you like the most in having a middle class way of life? The least?
- b. Those of you who live in the emerging or new middle class in Asia Pacific countries and elsewhere, interview people that you consider to be in the middle class. Questions you may consider asking:
  1. What was the most difficult obstacle in attaining middle class status?
  2. Is it difficult to stay in the middle class?
  3. What pressures do you face as a person in the middle class?

4. Do you think your children will be able to continue middle class status?
5. What are you doing to help your children attain a middle class way of life?
- c. In your estimation what values, physical comforts, attitudes, etc. do you think should make up a middle class way of life?

#### 5. The World's Poor

- a. Conduct research to add or make a new list of inequality facts. Make a chart or large display of the facts to post throughout your school or community buildings.
- b. Conduct interviews of different people and ask them what they think are the three most important ways to reduce poverty. Compile your results and share with others.
- c. Create a slide show of poverty around the world.
  1. First define poverty.
  2. Where is it most prevalent?
  3. What groups of people live in poverty the most?
- d. Do you think that economic growth will abolish poverty in the future? Explain. Has it worked in the past?

#### 6. Insights: The Socioeconomic Gap

- a. Why has it been a heresy for economists or politicians to question conventional ideas of economic growth?
- b. Conduct your own survey to find out if others also think that economic growth is the way to lift people out of poverty.
- c. As a group, discuss the questions posed about growth on page 245 in your book.

### Section 6.4 Well-Being

#### 1. Human Development Report

- a. What criteria is typically used to describe human development?
- b. Devise your own Human Development Report.
  1. What criteria will you use for human development?
  2. How will human development be measured?

#### 2. Well-Being

- a. Conduct research to find studies that show a relationship – either positive or negative – between well-being and economic growth.
- b. Develop your own life satisfaction survey.
  1. What questions would you include to measure this important topic?
- c. How would you evaluate the well-being of the !Kung people? (see the Smiling Girl photograph in your book)

#### 3. Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI)

- a. Conduct research to find out more about the GPI.
  1. How does the GPI work?
- a. Have a debate or discuss in a dialog circle which form of economic measurement is the best in your estimation, the GDP or GPI.

### Section 6.5 Two Nations and Economic Globalization

### 1. Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

a. Create a map that shows all the LDCs in the world.

1. Where are most of them located?

b. Have each student select one of the LDCs and write a report on the country. Have each student present a brief oral report with a visual slide show on the country to the class or a small group.

1. What problems does each country face?

2. What are the reasons for their LDC status?

3. Are their prospects for leaving the LDC status?

### 2. The Tragedy of the Congo

a. Put together a slide show or video of the history and the developments today in this country.

b. Discuss what you think may be solutions in helping to alleviate the misery of the Congolese people.

c. Paradoxically, the DRC's wealth is causing its misery. What does this mean? Do you agree?

d. Have you ever heard of the African World Wars?

1. If you never heard of them, why do you think that is the case?

2. Has your attitude changed about the DRC after learning about the wars? How has it changed?

### 3. The Hope of Bhutan

a. Put together a slide show or video of the history and the developments today in this country.

b. What do you think are the biggest challenges the Bhutanese people face as they implement the GNP principles?

c. Apply the criteria for ranking GNP to the country in which you live.

1. How does your country rank?

2. What do you think are the biggest challenges your country would face if it wanted to implement GNP principles?

3. Do you think it could be done?

## **Section 6.6 Concluding Insights: The Impact of Economic Globalization**

### 1. Tensions

a. What are the four tensions that have spread throughout the world?

1. List the tensions according to what you think are the most significant?

b. Can you think of other tensions resulting from the economic globalization process?