

## Neil Graham Shanks

### A Dominant Narrative in Economics?: Preservice Teachers and Pluralism in a Social Studies Methods Class

- The literature concluding neoclassical economics is a dominant narrative in economics education.
- Data reveals preservice teachers' conceptualization of the dominant narrative in economics.
- Preservice teachers built progressive counter-narratives, but without pluralist critique.
- In some cases content knowledge decreased with conventional coverage of neoclassical topics.
- More attention should be given to how pluralist perspectives are included in methods courses.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to evaluate one effort to challenge the problematic assumptions of the dominant narrative of neoclassical economics within a teacher preparation program that focuses on addressing dominant narratives throughout the social studies curriculum.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Utilizing a theoretical framework that intersects Pedagogical Content Knowledge and pluralist economics, this study consists of a general interpretive study conducted in a master's plus certification social studies methods course. Data was collected from several class sessions, including observational and artifact data, as well as semi-structured interviews with participants after the conclusion of the class.

**Findings:** Preservice teachers were able to spell out a dominant narrative in economics that exposed the effect of the narrative, but rarely critiqued its epistemology. Second, the fluctuations in content and curricular knowledge as well as the broader challenge of explaining pluralism in a relevant way meant the observed pedagogical content knowledge in economics was devoid of pluralist content.

**Research limitations/implications:** Implications from this study include the need to explicitly critique the epistemological foundations of neoclassical theory, the value of appreciative stances toward preservice teacher content knowledge, and the need to strategically integrate pluralism into economics methods courses

#### Keywords:

Pluralism, Economics education, social studies methods, PCK, dominant narrative

#### 1 Introduction

"Would you repeat, Dr. Seldon, your thoughts concerning the future of Trantor?"

A. I have said, and I say again, that Trantor will lie in ruins within the next five centuries.

Q. You do not consider your statement a disloyal one?"

A. No, sir. Scientific truth is beyond loyalty and disloyalty.

Q. You are sure that your statement represents scientific truth?"

A. I am.

Q. On what basis?"

A. On the basis of the mathematics of psychohistory."  
(Asimov, 1983, p. 25)

Issac Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy has been heralded as one of the great achievements in science fiction. The winner of the Hugo award for best all-time series ("1966 Hugo Awards," 2007) is a landmark "upon which a vast structure of stories [have] been built" (Gunn, 1982, p. 21). In the series, the mathematician Hari Seldon devises the science of psychohistory, or "that branch of mathematics which deals with the reactions of human conglomerates to fixed social and economic stimuli" (Asimov,

1983, p. 17) in order to determine the course of the galactic future. It is used to predict the fall of the Galactic Empire (with 92.5% certainty) and to engender the conditions necessary to rebuild a more stable galactic society. As with all literary works, the concepts embedded in this work stem from the author's social and political context, and much has been made of the overwhelmingly modernist rationalism at play in this work which began in the shadow of World War II and concluded in the early Cold War (Kakela, 2011). The fictional science of psychohistory, which is designed to discount the "vagaries of an individual" (p. 30) in favor of the "broad sweeps of economics and sociology" (p. 195) embodies much of the modernist perspective in the discipline of history itself. History as a discipline has been (and in many cases still is) considered a search for an objective truth that is "just lay[ing] there, deeply entombed in archival deposits, but only awaiting discovery and the kiss of life by worthy knight-errant historians" (Southgate, 2005, p. 85); it presupposes progress that "would be in qualities already known to be good in themselves" (Bebbington, 1979, p. 69); and it offers a chance to shape the future as evidenced by the well-worn axiom that 'those who fail to learn history are doomed to repeat it'. In terms of historiographical scholarship, these entrenched philosophies have been addressed, and the effect of the critique on the dominant narrative of objectivity, progress, and prediction has made its way to the study of history education, in the form of criticisms of textbooks, teach-

Neil Shanks is a PhD Candidate at the University of Texas at Austin and a former high school economics teacher. He can be reached at 1515 Columbus Ave. Waco, TX 76701 or via email: [neilqshanks@gmail.com](mailto:neilqshanks@gmail.com)



ing methods, and the overarching ideology that guides these choices (Apple, 2004; Loewen, 2008; Wineburg, 2012).

That same intellectual changing of the guard has begun to enter into a different discipline within social studies, though the rationalist impulse holds greater sway in the most 'scientific' of the social sciences: economics. A fundamental debate is occurring between those who consider economics to be, like Seldon's psychohistory, a mathematic exploration of the mass will of individual actors, where the market is guided in a mechanistic fashion by an invisible hand that is value-free and positive (Brant, 2016); and those who want to consider uncertainties (Mikl-Horke, 2010), alternatives (Kim, 2012), and cultural diversity (Bendixen, 2010) as a way to disrupt the neo-classical model where the "combined assumptions of maximizing behavior, market equilibrium, and stable preferences, used relentlessly and unflinchingly, form the heart of the economic approach" (Becker, 1976, p. 5). Moving beyond the dominant narrative of the neo-classical paradigm is as imperative as it has been to move beyond dominant narratives in history education. This paper aims to outline the neoclassical narrative and its impact in economic education, analyze the way that preservice teachers conceptualize the dominant narrative in economics, and evaluate one effort to trouble the narrative via pluralist economics in a social studies methods class.

## 2 Literature review

In the field of social studies education there has been a great deal of attention paid to the role of narrative in history education. Wertsch (2000) contends that narratives are sociocultural tools that enable a polity to make sense of the world, affording them the opportunity to understand "sets of temporally distributed events into interpretable wholes" while also constraining possibilities by "inherently [limiting] one's perspective" (p. 515). In the realm of history education, narratives in the United States have often attempted to bring temporally distributed events into an interpretable whole that glorifies individual achievement, freedom, and national progress (Barton & Levstik, 2004). They have also constrained the possibility of working for a more just society by promoting the myth of meritocracy (McNamee & Miller, 2004), or suggesting we are in a post-racial society (Akom, 2008; Smith & Brown, 2014). Troubling these narratives requires a

"skilled and sophisticated reading of historical evidence that may construct nuanced, complex and sometimes contradictory historical conclusions than those found in the official history curriculum" (Salinas & Blevins, 2014, p. 37).

As historians and history education scholars have worked to combat dominant narratives through more humanizing counter-narratives (Loewen, 2010; Salinas, Fránquiz, & Rodríguez, 2016; Takaki, 2008; Zinn, 2010), so too must economic educators conceptualize and

counter the pervasive dominant narrative that exists in both the field of economics and in economics education.

## 3 The dominant narrative in Economics

The dominant narrative in economics upholds the neo-classical version of economics as the only real form of economic analysis, and has done so for decades (Fine, 2008; Freeman, 2010; Keen, 2011; Lee & Keen, 2004). By outlining the core tenets of this narrative, and their prevalence in economics standards and textbooks, educators can better explore the consequences of a narrative so ingrained in economic thought as to function as the field entire rather than one of many potential versions of economics.

### 3.1 Basic assumptions

The most significant assumption that undergirds the dominant narrative in economics involves an assumption about the nature of human beings. For neoclassical economics to 'work' (i.e. for the myriad models to function analytically and predictively), human beings must make choices based exclusively on "individual material self-interest" (R. Miller, 1993, p. 29). These choices assume humans are "insatiably acquisitive" and ignore "[a]ll other prior moral incentives, such as community and family welfare" (p. 29). That rational and isolated view of human beings allows neoclassical economics to fetishize the market (c.f. Jo, Chester, & King, 2012) as "central coordination device of economic activities" (Ötsch & Kapeller, 2010, p. 19). Markets and the models they spawn increase the prestige of economics by making it less of a social, or soft, science, and more in keeping with positivist, scientific inquiry (Adams, Keane, Dutton, & Steinmetz, 2005; Brant, 2016) where "the world is objective in the sense that it is independent of its knowers and by using scientific method it is possible to discover universal laws" (Brant, 2016, p. 9). By emphasizing positivist scientific inquiry founded on Cartesian rationality, economics as a discipline believes itself to be a predictive science with universal 'laws' in the tradition of 'hard' sciences like physics (Cameron & Astrid Siegmann, 2012).

### 3.2 The prevalence of the narrative in K-12 economic education

Neoclassical economics *is* economics if one analyzes economics standards and textbooks that are prevalent in American K-12 classrooms. The Council for Economic Education's (2010) *Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics (VNCE)* replicate curriculum recommendations that have been included in economic curriculum for decades (Walstad & Watts, 2015) and are recommended as "essential principle[s] of economics that an economically literate student should know" (MacDonald & Siegfried, 2012, p. 310). These national standards make up the basis of almost all state standards (MacDonald & Siegfried, 2012), and are also implemented in the majority of economic classrooms (Khayum, Valentine, & Friesner, 2006). The authors of the *Standards* make no bones about their allegiance to



the neoclassical narrative, writing that the standards “reflect the view of a large majority of economists today in favor of a ‘neoclassical model’ of economic behavior” (Siegried & Krueger, 2010, p. vi). They explicitly confirm that they exclude other paradigms because “[i]ncluding strongly held minority views of economic processes and concepts would have confused and frustrated teachers and students” (p. vi). Thus, neoclassical norms pervade classrooms around the country, functioning as an unquestioned narrative due to the perceived inability of teachers and students to grapple with alternatives, alternatives which might be more relevant or meaningful as will be discussed in the sections that follow.

The *VNCE* form the content basis for economics textbooks throughout the country. According to Lee and Lopus’s (2007) analysis, “all [high school] textbooks cover most of the 20 Voluntary National Standards” and most come close to covering all 20 (p. 203), a finding that is replicated in many undergraduate and graduate textbooks (Lee & Keen, 2004). Textbooks in social studies are physical representations of official knowledge (Apple, 2000), and dominate history classes (Loewen, 2008) with problematic representations of national history (Axtell, 1987; Brown & Brown, 2010; Cargill & Mayer, 1998). In economics, the ideological stakes of textbook control are high. Authors of textbooks are not simply trying to sell more books, but “[b]y their own account, they are much more invested in the struggle for the best minds in our society” (Graupe, 2012, p. 62). Paul Samuelson, author of *Economics* which sold four million copies over five decades (Skousen, 1997) is widely quoted as saying, “I don’t care who writes a nation’s laws — or crafts its advanced treatises — if I can write its economics textbooks” (Saunders & Walstad, 1990, p. ix). This is an acknowledgement by America’s first Nobel laureate in economics and “the foremost academic economist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Weinstein, 2009, para. 1) that the fundamental assumptions of the dominant narrative can supersede politics, diplomacy, and even democracy itself.

The narrowing of economic curriculum in K-12 settings has a negative effect on the potential for pluralism in K-12 economics classrooms and a negative effect on the discipline itself, as many students are turned off when it seems that “[m]ainstream economics really [has] nothing to say of any intelligence about the economic relations characterizing the life I had led at home . . . Human connections, human needs, and the appropriate ethical responses . . . were left to other fields” (Nelson, 2010, p. 27). The integration of as many pluralist perspectives as possible as early as possible would have the effect of showing students that there are more than one way to see the world economically and contribute to diversity in the field.

### 3.3 Consequences of the Dominant Narrative

Ötsch and Kapeller (2012) acknowledge neoclassical economics as the dominating (“orthodox”), core theory of current “mainstream” economics while acknowledging that the commitment to the central tenets of neoclassical economics varies within the mainstream” (p.

1036) This is a vital point to acknowledge in what follows. Neoclassical economists are often self-reflective about the nature of their place in the discipline and attempt to address these consequences within their chosen economic paradigm. For example, neoclassical economics do critique some of the mathematization and model fetishism in neoclassical theory (Rodrick, 2017a). They acknowledge the occasional disparity between how economics is discussed in seminar rooms of academia and in public (Rodrick, 2017b). They also often attend to issues of inequality (CORE, 2017; Shanks, 2017), environmental cost (Krugman & Wells, 2012, and ethics (Wight & Morton, 2007). Given the overwhelming adherence to limited notions of neoclassicism in K-12 education described in the previous section, however, the following critique attends to the deleterious effects of neoclassicism in its most basic form, which is the form in which most students of economics and preservice teachers with limited economics exposure (Ayers, 2016; Joshi & Marri, 2006) encounter economics. This is not an attempt to construct strawman, but rather an attempt to use the axioms of neoclassical economics to explore the problematic ways they could be used to see the world and illustrate the need for pluralist perspectives (Arnsperger & Varoufakis, 2006).

Neoclassical economics hinges on ‘man’, or homo economicus, as both “a self-interested utility maximizer [and] rational agent” (Lutz & Lux, 1988, p. 104) and a robotic operator within the technical functioning of the market (Graupe, 2012). This reifies notions of individualism over collectivism (Remmele, 2010, 2011), and denies the agency of social institutions, interpersonal relationships, and communal processes and systems (Hunt, 2005). A social studies teacher looking to integrate economics into their curriculum is then left with a vision of ‘man’ devoid of ethics (Rider, 1999) and without “gender, biography, emotions, religion, location, and preferences” (Bögenhold, 2010, p. 1571), effectively rendering economics separate from any other social studies discipline seeking to interrogate these elements. Additionally this individualism is “in effect linked to free-market ideology, which celebrates the actions and fulfillment of an atomistic individual who does not belong to any class, gender, race, or age group” (Arestis, Charles, & Fontana, 2015, p. 371).

Economics has long attempted to be the most ‘scientific’ of the social sciences (Henderson, 1989; Jo et al., 2012). In the Eurocentric milieu of positivistic epistemology, that requires the construction of theoretical ‘laws’ that track and predict markets in the same way physics tracks and predicts motion (Cameron & Astrid Siegmann, 2012). While the market is a core concept throughout economic curricula, it is often left undefined in economics classes, or when it is, the lexicon surrounding its definition leaves one to believe that ‘market’ is “the keyword on the register of freedom, from now on first in front of the register of equality. The reality of ‘market’ as means of social regulation is never questioned, it is obvious” (Blanchard & Coléno, 2016, p. 23). The market then, discursively represents freedom and

equality (Mikl-Horke, 2010), disabusing students of any attempt to analyze markets as “social fields in which people with different interests, status and power fight for the appropriation of profit” (p. 7). When students of economics cannot see markets as man-made and socially constructed (Cech & Marks, 2007), they likewise cannot be subjects that act to change the way markets operate, and are left as objects acted upon the forces that maintain hegemony.

The collective impact of a narrative that adheres to “angloceltic liberal individualism” (Arnsperger & Varoufakis, 2006, p. 8) and reveres markets (Pilkington, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2000; Williamson, 1985) is the enshrinement of neoliberal policies as not only preferred, but the only logical and rational choices for economic decision makers (Wright-Maley & Davis, 2016). This subverts democracy by assuming that “individual decisions are theoretically based on personal utility maximization” and therefore “politics can only be regarded by mainstream economics as a constraint on individual economic rationality” (Courlet Branco, 2016, pp. 378–379) and “political debates [become] purely ‘economic’ questions to be answered by experts” (Earle et al., 2016, Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 2). The recent financial crisis throws the consequences of the dominant narrative in relief, by showing that the economic norms of individualism and rationalism were not disbanded as a result of the crisis, indeed “the capitalist value of economic self-interests and particular masculine ideals such as risk-taking and authoritative action have merged in a way to sustain the norm of high status/high earnings leading to the Great Recession” (Arestis et al., 2015, p. 382). As social studies teachers and teacher educators seek to evaluate the ramifications of neoliberalism and counter its destructive potential (Blevins & Talbert, 2015; Magill & Rodriguez, 2017; Schmeichel, 2011), they must consider the way that the dominant narrative in economics allows market fundamentalism to guide policy at the expense of democracy.

### 3.4 Pedagogical content knowledge

One way to conceptualize teacher knowledge is through Shulman’s (2004) typology of *content knowledge*, *general pedagogical knowledge*, *curriculum knowledge*, and *pedagogical content knowledge*. Shulman, drawing on Schwab (1982) describes content knowledge as subject knowledge that “include both the substantive and the syntactic structures” (Shulman, 2004, p. 202) of a discipline, requiring teachers to “not only be capable of defining for students the accepted truths in a domain” but to “be able to explain why a particular proposition is deemed warranted, why it is worth knowing, and how it relates to other propositions, both within the discipline and without, both in theory and in practice” (Shulman, 2004, p. 202). Attempting to enhance the limited content knowledge in economics, then, requires attention to the function of the dominant narrative and counter-narratives that would challenge it.

*Curricular knowledge* includes the “particular grasp of the materials and programs that serve as ‘tools of the

trade’ for teachers” (Shulman, 2004, p. 227). This includes not only the traditional curriculum in a discipline but an understanding of “the curricular alternatives available for instruction” (Shulman, 2004, p. 204) as well as an understanding of the curriculum in other subjects and in previous and future grade levels. The emphasis on an expansive grasp of curriculum in a discipline is essential to thinking about ways to counter the dominant narrative in economics and must be attended to by teacher educators seeking to challenge the neoclassical norm.

*Curricular knowledge* and *content knowledge* come together in Shulman’s description of *pedagogical content knowledge*, or “that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding” (Shulman, 2004, p. 227). This form of knowledge includes analogies, illustrations and representations that have been proven effective and an understanding of what makes learning easy or difficult in a subject based on student preconceptions. Often “those preconceptions are misconceptions” so “teachers need knowledge of the strategies most likely to be fruitful in reorganizing the understanding of learners” (Shulman, 2004, p. 203). An understanding of the prevailing misconception that neoclassical economics *is* economics has to be fundamental to addressing *pedagogical content knowledge* in preservice social studies teachers.

### 3.5 Pluralism as a component of a counter narrative”

If social studies teacher educators are aware of the function of the dominant narrative as it relates to *content*, *curricular*, and *pedagogical content knowledge*, they must consider an alternative that will challenge the dominant propositions, expand the curriculum, and address misconceptions about economics. In attempting to illustrate one way to meet this challenge, this paper intersects *content*, *curricular*, and *pedagogical content knowledge* with economic *pluralism* as one potential counter-narrative to the dominant, neoclassical order.

According to Freeman (2009), pluralism “restores the lost academic principle of controversy to economics” by making “explicit the alternative theoretical approaches to any given problem” and “presenting the different solutions and policies which might arise from each approach, the presuppositions on which it rests, and the basis – in any given case – for choosing between them” (p. 24). Often referred to as heterodoxy (c.f. Lee, 2012), pluralism as a descriptive is preferable as it removes the concomitant supposition that there is an ‘orthodoxy’ that is superior. In either case, pluralism and heterodoxy have a literature base that attempt to include a range of neoclassical alternatives including neo-Keynesianism, Marxism, institutionalism, feminism, Austrianism, and many more (Denis, 2009). Economic educators should be familiar with these alternatives and their tenets (c.f. Proctor et al., 2017) when attempting to counter the dominant narrative, but more importantly, they should understand the significant departures between neoclassical and pluralist economics. Jeziorski, Legardez, &

Valente (2013) explain the biggest difference between neoclassical and heterodox economics as being in the treatment of certainty. Neoclassical economists attempt to impose certainty in their models and understanding of the world (Arnsperger & Varoufakis, 2006), whereas heterodox economists, from Keynes to Marx, include uncertainty in their models and at different levels of economic thought. By recognizing the socially constructed and uncertain nature of economic theory, economic educators can begin to think of individuals as contextualized and socialized (Bendixen, 2010), their behavior as driven by more than the profit motive (Moorhouse, 2009), and their environment as something to be sustained (Nelson & Goodwin, 2009). They may also begin to explore structural inequality by excavating neoclassical standards for their underlying value systems (Vickery, Holmes, & Brown, 2015), utilize Critical Race Theory to critique political applications of neoclassical theory (L. King & Finley, 2015), and think about the impact of theorizing using an individual as opposed to a community (Cumbers & McMaster, 2012; Nichols, 2016). While *pluralism* is by no means the only way to trouble the dominant narrative in economics, it should be the first way to counter the narrative given the explicit focus on a critique of the foundations of neoclassical thought.

By integrating *content, curricular, and pedagogical content knowledge* with economic *pluralism*, this study represents an attempt to ameliorate the limited amount of research on economics within social studies (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008), within social studies teacher education literature (Ayers, 2015; Joshi & Marri, 2006), and the absence of pluralist economics literature for preservice teachers. Understanding what teachers know about economics early in their teaching preparation and how they respond to a deliberate critique of the dominant narrative with the inclusion of pluralism as a counter-narrative is essential for teacher educators who wish to avoid the deleterious ramifications of neoclassicism.

#### 4 Methods

This study seeks to understand the way preservice teachers conceptualize the dominant narrative in economics, and how their PCK in economics impacts their ability to utilize pluralism to trouble the dominant narrative. In pursuit of this understanding, a qualitative study was used to analyze preservice teachers in a program that offers a master's degree in curriculum and instruction in conjunction with a teaching certificate. The sections that follow illustrate the design of the study, the considerations that went into selecting the group under study, the way that data was collected, and the methods by which it was analyzed.

##### 4.1 Research Design

Due to research questions that sought to understand the thinking of preservice teachers and their implementation of their conceptualization, a general interpretive study was used in the tradition of qualitative research design. Qualitative research was desirable due to the emphasis

on a specific group of preservice teachers, the attempt to explore their ideas in-depth, and to understand the way that their beliefs were implemented (Mertens, 2015). Drawing from the Interpretivist tradition was also purposeful, as interpretive inquiry affords the researcher the ability to engage with "complexities and particularities of people's actions", a "multiplicity of voices and visions", and may also "inspire others to perceive, believe, or act in different ways" (Glesne, 2011, p. 24). The deep understanding and analysis of teachers' views on dominant narratives and their implementation of counter-narratives necessitated the use of this design due to its affordance of understanding a unique situation in a rigorous and profound way.

##### 4.2 Setting and participants

The preservice teachers in this study attended a large, public university in the southwest. The program that offered them a master's degree in conjunction with teacher certification had an explicit emphasis on preparing teachers to succeed in urban contexts by valuing the linguistic and cultural diversity of students in urban schools (Yosso, 2005), drawing on their funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) as part of an asset-oriented perspective to combat traditional deficit perspectives about students in urban schools (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008). Additionally, the program emphasizes critical multicultural citizenship (Castro, 2013) as part of a desire to utilize the diverse strengths of urban students to work toward a more just and equitable society.

Purposefully sampling justice-oriented preservice teachers in this program was the result of a desire to "discover, understand, and gain insight . . . from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). The intent to explore conceptualizations of dominant narratives lead to the selection of a group of preservice teachers who opted to enroll in a program that explicitly challenges these narratives, and supports the continued countering of those narratives throughout the course sequence. This study took place in the second semester of a two year program, where in addition to coursework, preservice teachers were in their second semester of fieldwork. Their fieldwork requirements included a minimum of 45 hours in a public school throughout the semester. The course attached to the fieldwork was the second of two secondary social studies methods courses in the degree plan. The course was designed to continue the work of the previous methods course by further exploring dominant narratives in social studies, and countering them in both curriculum and pedagogy. Importantly, the course was structured according to the following outline: two weeks on knowledge construction and instructional design, two weeks on teaching economics, two weeks on discussion and collaboration techniques, two weeks on world history, four weeks on historical inquiry, and two weeks on geography. This limited time for economics methods is typical of social studies preparation programs (Joshi & Marri, 2006) and thus represents an ideal (yet limited) timeframe to



explore the potential for pluralist integration. The nine participants included three males and six females. Of these, six identified as white, two as Latinx, and one as Black.

My positionality informs both the research that I pursue, and the data and findings that result from that research. My time spent teaching economics in an urban school lead to questions about the utility and relativity of neoclassical economics to the marginalized students in my classroom. In particular, the explicit emphasis on the benefits of free-market capitalism, the myth of meritocracy, and the absence of race in the state standards seemed to be directly in opposition to the lived reality of the Black and Brown children whose families worked hard and yet were caught in cyclical poverty. Additionally, while much of my teaching used relatable examples and explored real-world issues, I often feel I failed as a classroom teacher to critique the neoclassical model as the foundation of these harmful concepts, and rather pursued a progressive curriculum that was critical of current systems through neoclassical lenses.

I am also white, male, cisgendered and conform to normative ideals of ability and sexuality. This means that while I explicitly endeavor to teach an anti-racist, feminist, inclusive curriculum, I still earn the wages of whiteness (Roediger, 1999) and other unearned privileges in my social interactions which may color the data collected as well as my analysis of that data. Additionally, I had formerly served as assistant instructor to these students and was a Teaching Assistant in the course, thus I cannot be sure that my authority, however meliorated by my attempt to foster a co-learning (Freire, 1993) environment does not alter the data I collected.

#### 4.3 Data collection

In the Spring of 2017, preservice teachers participated in two (2) class sessions on economics methods. The first class assigned readings about the state of economics education (Walstad & Watts, 2015), and a description of an economic methods course including the challenges contained therein (Joshi & Marri, 2006). The in-class work focused on telling stories with economics, and included preservice teacher-generated stories, an exploration of the content knowledge necessary to teach their story, an overview of the Council for Economic Education's (2010) *Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics*, and a discussion on their perceived pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge in economics including a survey of the *Standards* where they indicated their familiarity with each of the twenty standards and their ability to teach it. The second class assigned Graupe's (2012) piece that troubles the neoclassical perspective on man, and assigned each individual to read about an economic perspective on the Network for Pluralist Economics' (n.d.) website that outlines each perspective's core elements, terminology, ontology, epistemology, and methodology. The in-class activities involved teaching three core components of economics (Law of demand, fiscal policy, and income) via modeling

traditional, neoclassical methods. Preservice teachers then split into groups to discuss their assigned economic perspective and how the lesson modeling conformed to the neoclassical model. They wrote about the neoclassical ontology, epistemology, methodology, and values on post-its and added them to posters representing the three core concepts. They then considered ways to trouble the dominant narrative that they had described within these concepts. The sessions were recorded and transcribed for analysis and student artifacts were collected from the class. In addition, preservice teacher-generated lesson plans were assigned after the two classes, and were collected. Finally, digitally recorded, semi-structured interviews were conducted to further interrogate preservice teacher attitudes and to member check preliminary data findings from class activities and artifacts.

#### 4.4 Data analysis

Upon completion of data collection, qualitative methods were used to analyze discussion postings, class dialogue, unit artifacts and interviews. In this method of qualitative inquiry, "the researcher focuses analytical techniques on searching through the data for themes and patterns" (Glesne, 2011, p. 187). Transcripts of interviews were manually coded as well as audio data from the class sessions and discussion postings and analyzed them as Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014) suggest by noting patterns and themes, arriving at comparisons and contrasts and determining conceptual explanations of the observations. For example, preservice teachers were regularly critiqued the consequences of the dominant narrative by criticizing the ubiquity of free-market capitalism (Feiner, 1994b), yet often lacked the *pedagogical content knowledge* (Shulman, 2004) to critique the underlying epistemology of neoclassical economics in their approaches to teaching economics. The patterns, themes, and comparisons of interview, observation, and artifact data lead to the findings included in this paper. The data and resultant themes were then interpreted, and checked with participants through a series of member checks to verify that conclusions matched their perspectives, and to help develop new ideas and interpretations.

#### 5 Results

An exploration of the way that preservice teachers conceptualize the dominant narrative in economics and how their PCK affects the use of pluralism as a counter narrative revealed two important themes. First, preservice teachers were able to spell out a dominant narrative in economics that took into account the effect of the narrative, but rarely included a critique of epistemology. Second, the fluctuations in *content knowledge* as well as the broader challenge of explaining pluralism in a relevant way meant the observed *pedagogical content knowledge* in economics was devoid of pluralism.

### 5.1 Effect over epistemology

Due to the explicit emphasis in this teacher preparation program on the critique of dominant narratives in other disciplines (history, geography, citizenship, etc.), it should be no surprise that preservice teachers in this study were able to quickly and easily articulate a dominant narrative in economics. However, their limited exposure to critiques of economic theory and economic theory itself meant that their descriptions focused on the effects of the dominant narrative rather than the way the narrative functions within the discipline. This conceptualization had a similar effect on their articulations of a “counter narrative”, which often was critical of the structure of the economy, but rarely explored ways that the discipline of economics was culpable in that structure.

### 5.2 The dominant narrative as unfettered capitalism

In interviews and class activities, preservice teachers revealed their impression of the dominant narrative in economics as one that emphasized the rampant destructive potential of capitalism, particularly with respect to the way that government policy pursues the goals of capitalism. Christa described the dominant narrative in terms of capitalist priorities, saying the narrative was “basically, like profit, and increasing profit overall by any means necessary. It’s sort of a mathematical algorithm that equals this goal or this output. Whatever the process in between is irrelevant. It doesn’t matter who is at a disadvantage” (interview, 6/14/17). Fanny’s portrayal of the dominant narrative ascribed specific fiscal choices to those conservative policies. She talked about the federal budget and

“[h]ow much we spend on the military compared with education . . . why [income] tax is higher than capital gains tax” leading to “a dominant narrative to me of a United States economy that is more supportive toward people who hold wealth” (interview, 6/22/17).

The way these preservice teachers described the narrative as emphasizing political means of enforcing capital and protecting entrenched wealth were demonstrated in class activities as well. When asked to tell stories with economics, groups produced a variety of stories that critiqued the intersection of capitalism and politics in the past and the present. In one economic story, preservice teachers documented the effect of capitalist rationality on “mill towns of New England” (class artifact, 1/31/17) and how the subsequent “offshoring” to China and the Philippines lead to “lack of opportunity . . . blight, [and] poverty” (class artifact, 1/31/17). Another economic story described the impact of the oil industry in West Texas where a boom in oil prices lead to investment in towns, businesses and jobs; but the reliance on a single, extractive industry meant that the drop in crude prices lead to unemployment, poverty, and transient living situations. Finally, the third economic story called attention to the juxtaposition of the traditional role of the Secretary of State as a promoter of peace and equality, with the 2017 appointment of Rex Tillerson, former

Exxon CEO to that office. This choice was depicted as having the effect of installing an oil derrick on top of the globe, emphasizing the global hegemony between the United States and Russia, and promoting dollar signs over peace signs.

By telling stories and describing narratives of acquisitiveness, free markets, and conservative economic policies, preservice teachers demonstrated an understanding of the ramifications of a neoclassical vision of economics (Wright-Maley & Davis, 2016), in that the technocratic rationality of neoclassicism informs the neoliberal agenda (Krätke & Thomas, 2011; Lucey, Agnello & Laney, 2017), however this critical vision fails to explore the underlying disciplinary narrative that maintains the outcomes they identified. The focus on profits over people (Chomsky, 1999) is a fundamental tenet of the neoclassical vision of economics that emphasizes “the ubiquity of self-interest, the primacy of competition over cooperation, and the primacy of efficiency concerns over concerns for equity” (Ferber & Nelson, 2003, p. 7). When this view of humans is applied to markets or the economy writ large it promotes the belief that “money, profits, markets, and corporations are parts of an ‘economic machine’” that “operates in an automatic fashion, following inexorable and amoral ‘laws’” (Nelson, 2010, p. 1) that, according to some neoclassical theorists are best regulated by no regulation at all (Earle et al., 2016; Ferber & Nelson, 2003; Johnson, 2016; Sober, 2016) Preservice teachers in this study, however, largely failed to make the link between the effects of capitalism and the underlying philosophy that promotes it in the discipline of economics.

### 5.3 Progressive counter-narratives without the pluralism

In interviews and class sessions, preservice teachers were decidedly enthusiastic about teaching a version of economics that spoke back to the capitalist, neoliberal policies they identified as the dominant narrative. These counter-narratives were grounded in a vision of economics and social studies education that pursued justice and equality, but largely failed to critique neoclassicism as a disciplinary structure that maintained an unjust and unequal economic order.

In describing the purpose of their economic stories, Vince and Sturgill, who created the story about commodity prices and their ramifications for oil-dependent communities, said they wanted their counter-narrative to show the challenges faced by people who made long-term decisions about education, investments, and lifestyle based on the short-term fluctuations of oil prices. While this story could have been used to critique the neoclassical reliance on rational decision-making in order to ensure the functionality of models (c.f. Thaler, 1994), instead their stated purpose for telling the story was to show “a story of a lot of people [we] graduated with” who chose to forgo education in order to “stay and work in the oil fields, and for about five or six months that was great for them, but then everything went down, they lost their jobs and it’s just up and down when people depend

on oil for economic security” (class observation, 1/31/17). Fanny and Seth’s economic story similarly drew from their experiences living in New England as they outlined the consistent challenges of working-class life in mill towns. Whether it was the ‘radium girls’ of the early industrial era or the minimum wage workers in the mill, their story was intended to be critical of the effects of job movement leaving it full of “blight and poverty and it’s really just bleak driving around” and the ramifications of “economic turmoil, specifically, to quote the Sex Pistols, there’s ‘Noooo future for you’” (class observation, 1/31/17). The frustration with companies like “GE moving its headquarters from Connecticut to Boston” (class observation, 1/31/17) was the extent of the critique, as opposed to the neoclassical theory that undergirds policies that promote the free movement of capital as companies ‘race to the bottom’ (Rudra, 2008) in pursuit of cheap labor.

When asked specifically about counter-narratives in interviews, preservice teachers continued to critique the status quo, but still struggled to link neoclassicism with the policies they were critical of. Christa talked about the counter-narrative she and Fanny tried to project in their lesson on Katrina:

“What houses were being re-built, and who was paying for that, and the presence of non-profits in New Orleans all of a sudden versus which areas got re-built first; and by that time I was like, well, it’s a tourist area. Was it built first because it generates revenue so that the prioritizing once again, revenue over people. Right?” (interview, 6/14/17)

Fanny also talked about how they were “able to challenge some of the dominant narratives of how we go about in the United States rebuilding cities and what revitalization looks like and how gentrification eventually sneaks into.” (interview, 6/22/17), however when asked if pluralism or alternative economic perspectives were present she said, “not outright obviously . . . That’d be interesting to look at it from that perspective, but that’s not something that [we were] able to do” (interview, 6/22/17). She and others found the array of pluralist theories to be intimidating, and thus the counter-narratives in economics that were created in this case were limited to superficial, progressive critiques of the effects of capitalism.

#### **5.4 Vanishing content and pedagogical knowledge and the limits of PCK**

Economics can be an intimidating subject for many social studies teachers given the fact that many teachers of economics are prepared to teach comprehensive social studies (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008) and lack coursework explicitly in economics (Aske, 2003; Walstad, 2001). In this study, economics content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge was relatively low among most participants, reflecting previous findings in the literature (Ayers, 2016; Joshi & Marri, 2006), however, some teachers described specific reasons for their intimidation in economics that advance previous findings.

Additionally, according to at least one measure, the attempt to teach specific concepts in a critical manner *lowered* self-assessed confidence in content knowledge, while increasing content knowledge that was covered, signifying that perhaps the deep dive into specific content areas reveals a missing depth of knowledge in other areas. Finally, economic lessons reveal that preservice teachers were able to excavate restrictive state standards (Vickery et al., 2015) for material that critiqued the dominant narrative as they saw it, though pluralism was not specifically a technique used in that critique.

#### **5.5 Where did all the content knowledge go?**

Aside from Susan, an exceptional member of the case, the remaining participants all indicated they had fewer than three total courses in economics when combining both high school and college. Most had a single semester in high school and a few had a semester or two in college. Interview and survey data revealed that preservice teachers in this study held a relatively low level of confidence in their economic content knowledge and that knowledge diminished after studying specific concepts. In interviews, preservice teachers compared their economic content knowledge to other social studies disciplines by saying it was “somewhere in the middle” (Christa, interview, 6/14/17), “toward the bottom” (Vivian, interview, 6/13/17), below “history or geography” (Fanny, interview, 6/22/17), and as “more familiar with history . . . geography . . . and political science” (Seth, interview, 6/12/17). In class, participants initially rated their understanding of economic concepts relatively high. On the first day, seven of the participants took a brief survey of their understanding of the 20 VNCE standards. The majority of the class (four or more) indicated familiarity with 16 of the standards, with only Allocation, Specialization, Government Failure, and Economic Fluctuation receiving less than half of the group’s indication of familiarity. Four of the standards were familiar to six of the seven participants: Markets and Prices, Competition and Market Structure, Institutions, and Income. They were also able to attach economic concepts to the stories they wrote. For example, when Christa and Vivian presented a story on cyclical poverty and the role of credit, they attributed economic concepts of “decision making, institutions, money and inflation, interest rates, and government failure” (class artifact 1/31/17) as necessary concepts to teach about their story. In describing the economic content that they were most familiar with, many responses centered upon supply and demand or practical economics. Christa described her familiarity with “supply and demand, the curves, the different kinds of graphs” (interview, 6/14/17), Seth likewise was familiar with “supply and demand, obviously” as well as more concrete concepts like “how the stock market works, the ideas behind minimum wage and what you pay your workers, how it affects the economy, a little bit about inflation for example. I’d say, maybe most of my familiarity with economics is in current events though” (interview, 6/12/17). These interviews and class data show a conflicting



portrait of preservice teacher content knowledge that may become clear later on. While superficially, teachers were familiar with many concepts and could attach them to economic lessons, their knowledge was often limited and on a surface level compared to other disciplines. This superficiality would play a significant role in the disappearance of content knowledge after the second week of economics instruction

As described earlier, the second class session modeled the teaching of three economic concepts in a deeper way. These concepts were the law of demand, fiscal policy, and income. In the initial survey, six out of seven preservice teachers indicated they were familiar with the concept of income. After spending time in a traditional way of teaching income, creating a logo for the concept, breaking down the way that neoclassical and pluralist perspectives might address the concept in terms of ontology, epistemology, methodology, and values; the following day found that only four teachers were familiar with the content. A similar finding emerged with respect to the law of demand. 'Markets and prices' as defined in the *VNCE* (Siegfried & Krueger, 2010) was another concept that six preservice teachers felt familiar with in an initial survey, yet after a sample lesson and neoclassical critique, only 5 felt comfortable with the concept. Fiscal policy likewise dropped from five respondents indicating familiarity to three. To explain this seeming disappearance, Christa deserves to be quoted at length. Her response encapsulates the feelings of a number of participants who looked at the concepts listed in the *VNCE* and felt confident in their knowledge, only for that confidence to be undermined via a more thorough exploration.

"With economics, I would struggle with my own anxieties about what I don't understand about the economy or certain stocks because I feel like that was always a white man's understanding of economics was stocks. Even if I have and I have learned about it, I'm still very self-conscious about starting that conversation with especially my male students or colleagues or whatever because I don't want to seem like I'm uninformed, which I am, because that was how women and men are socialized differently in certain jobs and tasks. . . . Because of that, I'd have less confidence in teaching that subject in general because of my own insecurities about the content knowledge. Even if I did study it and teach it for a few years, there would still be that underlining fear, I guess, in teaching it." (interview, 6/14/17)

When asked about this in class, teachers commented on the fact that they had initially felt that they had personal experience with a lot of standards, but then realized through our activities that they didn't understand them in the depth they were presented. For them, it was unlikely that "teachers would have taken seven economics classes unless you were an economics major" (class observation, 1/31/17) and it appeared that the standards didn't really account for "student background knowledge" (class observation, 1/31/17) in the way they expected upon first glance at the standards. Thus

confidence in *content knowledge* was highly dependent on when and how content was presented, and also varied based on positionality and interpretation of the discipline of economics.

### 5.6 PCK and counter-narratives without the pluralism

In interviews and lesson plans, preservice teachers revealed a desire to challenge the dominant narrative in economics as they saw it, yet struggled to implement a counter-narrative that utilized their nascent understanding of pluralism. In one lesson, preservice teachers sought to "Identify the impact of Hurricane Katrina on diverse economic populations of New Orleans" and to "challenge the dominant narrative of financial/economic literacy that influences fiscal policy" (class artifact, 2/26/17). Students in this lesson would use *A.D. New Orleans after the deluge* (Neufeld, 2009), a graphic novel about Katrina as a starting point to research the socio-economic backgrounds of various characters using primary sources. They would then create storyboards to tell a story of what it would have been like to rebuild based on a variety of factors including race and class. This was explicitly designed to counter the dominant narrative as it questioned the priorities of the rebuilding effort. However, when asked whether this challenge, which could have explored the neoclassical emphasis on growth (or re-growth) at all costs, included elements of pluralism, Fanny said, "Not outright obviously. I don't know if I would try -- That'd be interesting to look at it from that perspective, but that's not something that I was trying to do" (interview, 6/22/17). The authors of this lesson clearly had a desire to critique the priorities involved in rebuilding New Orleans, yet they could not make the connection to the underlying economic epistemology that promoted rebuilding through free market principles such as charter schools (Buras, 2011), and denied the social costs to communities of both migration into and out of New Orleans (McCarthy, Peterson, Sastry, & Pollard, 2006).

Another created lesson had a similar inability to explicitly call out neoclassical epistemology. In a lesson designed to "explain the concept of comparative advantage" and evaluate the benefits and costs of free trade" (class artifact, 2/25/17), preservice teachers implemented a student centered, active lesson, where students answered flash cards about sports or art in varying quantities designed to show the benefits of comparative advantage. They then performed some specific calculations about comparative and absolute advantage and the benefits of free trade. Finally, they journaled their response to a quote by Karl Marx about the ramifications of free trade. The goal of this lesson was to show that:

"...free trade doesn't help . . . if one group is like good at making corn . . . like America . . . they can push all of the corn production from say Mexico . . . using a country's strength to their economic benefit." (Vivian, interview 6/13/17)

While there was some “comparative and socialist” (Vivian, interview, 6/13/17) work using the Marx quote, the preservice teachers were struck by the difficulty of working with explicitly neoclassical standards, saying:

“Do I have to make them do these freaking models? I didn’t want to and I didn’t even want to teach about it. I just wanted to simulate it and then discuss the simulation and I felt like that. But then I did. I did include all of the stuff and do the models. So, that was not good. It was like literally like a thing where I’m sitting there going, “I shouldn’t do this,” but then I did do it.” (Susan, interview, 6/2/17)

Following up on this, Susan remarked that she did include some counter-narratives in the lesson, but struggled to put even her significant understanding of pluralism into practice:

“We simulated that and then had the students disrupt that by saying, ‘Okay, well what happens if this country is good at making everything? What happens to country B? What happens if country B puts a tax on things? . . . So we just tried to throw in some of those real-life situations where it’s like, actually is this good for the people there? And I feel like people who have less of the neo-classical exposure are probably more apt to be like, ‘No, obviously not.’ Because they haven’t been indoctrinated.” (Susan, interview, 6/2/17)

Her hypothesis that less neoclassical exposure might lead to a greater awareness of the general inability of the neoclassical model to address the individual ramifications of free trade (Schneider & Shackelford, 2001) was perhaps correct, given that many of the preservice teachers in this study had little exposure to economics and yet felt strongly that there were serious problems with the discipline. However, despite this their critiques often rested on a political or social level, failing to grab economic theory at its neoclassical root to be pulled out and replanted with pluralism.

## 6 Findings

In this study, preservice teachers were able to fashion a counter-narrative that critiqued the effects of the neo-classical dominant narrative, but that challenge often failed to get at the epistemological foundations of the narrative they critiqued. Additionally, some content knowledge was enhanced through methods instruction, but their confidence in teaching other concepts decreased. The failure of an epistemological counter-narrative reared its head when planning lessons, showing that the pedagogical content knowledge of these preservice teachers was critical of social forces informed by neo-classical theory, but could not challenge the orthodoxy without further practice.

These results are instructive in several ways. Given the context of this study, in a teacher preparation program that has an explicit emphasis on criticizing dominant narratives, teachers in this study were able to quickly conceptualize a dominant narrative in economics, and develop lessons to counter that dominant narrative even when their content knowledge was limited. While these

counter-narratives rarely promoted pluralism as a remedy for neoclassical theory, they did speak back against free market orthodoxy and the ramifications of unfettered capitalism. The clear denunciation of these policies and the ease at which preservice teachers planned lessons to challenge them shows that when economics education is embedded in a comprehensive, programmatic emphasis on critique and “counter narrative”, a lack of content knowledge is not necessarily a barrier to a more critical vision of economic education. Therefore, it appears that an alignment of program purpose, teacher purpose, and methods emphasis can assist in assuring that preservice teachers can surmount their limitations of content knowledge and pursue critical social studies teaching.

The support necessary to attend to limited content knowledge must be carefully considered, and is most effective when it draws on the elements of preservice teachers’ lived experiences that relate to economics. Confidence in self-evaluated content and curricular knowledge was at its peak among preservice teachers after a class session in which they created their own economic stories, described the purpose of those stories, and determined the economic standards that would be implicated in those stories. This shows that an appreciative stance to preservice teacher background knowledge has an important role to play in confidence, but also the implementation of a critical rationale. However, *after* specific methods were taught that aligned with *VNCE* standards and after they dove deeply into pluralist economic theory, their broader confidence was wounded with the exception of the specific content covered in class. This shows that a straightforward emphasis on new content and methods may be harmful if not accompanied with an emphasis on the knowledge and strengths that preservice teachers bring to the table. Additionally, the stereotype threat that several students reported with respect to the whiteness and maleness of the discipline of economics shows that context is an important consideration when addressing economic content.

Finally, the impetus to include pluralism as a counter-narrative was clearly too much and too fast. Preservice teachers struggled to apprehend their assigned pluralist perspective and thus it was no surprise when they struggled to implement pluralism in their planned lessons. The approach of using a jigsaw to cover every pluralist perspective possible meant that some perspectives were covered in greater depth than others, and meant that some individuals understood the critique of the neoclassical perspective and others struggled. Regardless of how well preservice teachers understood their assigned perspective, however, they were unable to integrate a pluralist critique of neoclassical theory into their lessons. Even with the specific intention to lay out neoclassical concepts, critique them, and provide coherent alternatives, the lasting impact of this pluralist exploration was limited several months later. While it should be no surprise that a critique that has failed to gain broad acceptance in the field of economics was

challenging to implement in a limited way in a social studies methods course, this well-intentioned attempt fell short.

### 7 Implications and recommendations

First and foremost, social studies educators and teacher educators who are already challenging dominant narratives in history (Hall, 2005; Salinas et al., 2016; Sleeter, 2002), geography (Schmidt & Kenreich, 2015), media literacy (Duncan-Andrade, 2007), and elsewhere, must consider the dominant narrative in economics. The neo-classical paradigm holds so much power over the discipline of economics, particularly at the high school level. If teacher educators are concerned about the neoliberal policies that are implemented under the faux-neutral guise of neoclassical theory, they must begin to address neoclassical hegemony in some way as part of their social studies teacher preparation program.

As teacher educators pursue this critical stance in their methods courses and elsewhere, attention should be paid to the role of an appreciative stance toward preservice teachers' background and experience with economics. Rather than seeing preservice teachers' lack of specific content knowledge as a deficit, an asset-oriented stance might build content knowledge on the back of the economic stories that students are familiar with, thus increasing their confidence with unfamiliar terminology and engendering confidence in economic curricular knowledge as well. Utilizing these experiences may also help combat the pervasive failure of economics to attend to race, class, and gender and thus make students comfortable with a curriculum that, in neoclassical theory, often ignores their very existence.

Finally, while pluralism is an essential component of a counter-narrative to neoclassical theory (Dobusch & Kapeller, 2012), the way in which it is integrated in a broader critique of economics is deserving of scrutiny. While teacher education programs concerned with structural inequality will likely find preservice teachers willing to critique the economic system as it exists, the theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of this system are much harder to apprehend. Thus, one important takeaway from this study might be to minimize the pluralist perspectives under study, focusing on one perspective at a time, and carefully selected for its utility and harmony with student context. For instance, a class of preservice teachers where a number of members have been affected by climate change might use ecological economics to critique neoclassical approaches to addressing environmental costs (c.f. Jacobs, 2013). Similar scenarios might invite a specific integration of feminist or behavioral economics, but by focusing on one critique rather than trying to cover all, teacher educators may avoid this study's struggle with implementing pluralism beyond the walls of the methods course.

### 8 Conclusion

"Can the future be changed, Dr. Seldon?"

A. Obviously. This courtroom may explode in the next few hours, or it may not. If it did, the future would undoubtedly be changed in some minor respects.

Q. You quibble, Dr. Seldon. Can the overall history of the human race be changed?

A. Yes.

Q. Easily?

A. No. With great difficulty.

Q. Why?

A. The psychohistoric trend of a planet-full of people contains a huge inertia. Either as many people must be concerned, or if the number of people be relatively small, enormous time for change must be allowed. Do you understand?" (Asimov, 1983, p. 26-27).

To challenge a dominant narrative is to challenge inertia. For years social studies educators and teacher educators have worked to dismantle the overwhelming force of a nationalist, imperialist, white supremacist dominant narrative in history. Vestiges of this narrative are still being challenged, yet little attention has been paid to the function of the neoclassical narrative in economics. Unlike history, the weight of this narrative is felt beyond the K-12 classroom and into academia, further entrenching a perspective that glorifies individualism, justifies neoliberal policies, and dehumanizes those outside the mythical norm. While this exploration showed that pluralism as a counter-narrative was a challenge to implement in a short time-frame, the impetus is there for more social studies teacher educators to consider the role of the neoclassical narrative in the way they prepare teachers for critical purposes in their classrooms. Preservice teachers can conceptualize dominant narratives, and even offer counter-narratives, but further thought must be given to the way that narrative is challenged. Without a firm grasp of the epistemology of neoclassicism, without support that builds on students' economic experiences, and without a more focused and deliberate approach to implementing pluralist content, economics education may take an enormous time to change the status quo, or may only change it in some minor respects. Asimov's fictional psychohistory considered it "risky . . . to introduce the vagaries of an individual in the psychohistoric equations" (Asimov, 1983, p. 30), yet it is incumbent upon each individual social studies teacher educator to critique, challenge, and counter the dominant narrative of economics in order for a more humanizing version of economics to spread.

### References

1966 Hugo Awards. (2007, July 26). Retrieved July 26, 2016, from <http://www.thehugoawards.org/hugo-history/1966-hugo-awards/>

Adams, J., Keane, W., Dutton, M., & Steinmetz, G. (2005). *The politics of method in the human sciences: Positivism and its epistemological others*. Duke University Press.

Akom, A. a. (2008). Ameritocracy and infra-racial racism: Racializing social and cultural reproduction theory in the twenty-first century. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 11*(3), 205–230.

Apple, M. W. (2000). *Official knowledge*. Routledge New York.

Apple, M. W. (2004). *Ideology and curriculum*. New York: Routledge.

Arestis, P., Charles, A., & Fontana, G. (2015). Power, intergroup conflicts and social stratification in the United States: What has the global crisis taught us? *Review of Social Economy, 73*(4), 370–387.

Arnsperger, C., & Varoufakis, Y. (2006). What Is Neoclassical Economics? The three axioms responsible for its theoretical oeuvre, practical irrelevance and, thus, discursive power. *Panoeconomicus, 53*(1), 5–18.

Asimov, I. (1983). *Foundation*. New York: Ballantine.

Aske, D. R. (2003). How prepared are prospective high school social studies teachers to infuse economics in social studies courses? *Journal of Social Studies Research, 27*(1), 23.

Axtell, J. (1987). Europeans, Indians, and the age of discovery in American history textbooks. *The American Historical Review, 92*(3), 621–632.

Ayers, C. A. (2015). *A qualitative study of the pedagogical content knowledge and personal orientations toward economics of award-winning secondary economics teachers* (Ph.D.). The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, United States -- North Carolina.

Ayers, C. A. (2016). Developing preservice and inservice teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in economics. *Social Studies Research & Practice, 11*(1), 73–92.

Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2004). *Teaching history for the common good*. Routledge.

Bebbington, D. W. (1979). *Patterns in history*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.

Becker, G. S. (1976). *The economic approach to human behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bendixen, P. (2010). The rationale of crisis management: On the handling of coincidence in economic situation. *Journal of Social Science Education, 9*(1), 39–48.

Blanchard, H., & Coléno, Y.-P. (2016). About the use of the word "market" in the teaching of economics: The lexicon at work at the high school and at the university. *Journal of Social Science Education, 14*(4), 17–26.

Blevins, B., & Talbert, T. (2015). Challenging neoliberal perspectives: A framework for humanizing Social Studies teacher education. In A. R. Crowe & A. Cuenca (Eds.), *Rethinking Social Studies teacher education in the twenty-first century* (pp. 23–40). Springer.

Bögenhold, D. (2010). From heterodoxy to orthodoxy and vice versa: Economics and social sciences in the division of academic work. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 69*(5), 1566–1590.

Bomer, R., Dworin, J. E., May, L., & Semingson, P. (2008). Miseducating teachers about the poor: A critical analysis of Ruby Payne's claims about poverty. *Teachers College Record, 110*(12), 2497–2531.

Brant, J. (2016). What's wrong with secondary school economics and how teachers can make it right - Methodological critique and pedagogical possibilities. *Journal of Social Science Education, 14*(4), 7–16.

Brown, A. L., & Brown, K. (2010). Strange fruit indeed: Interrogating contemporary textbook representations of racial violence toward African Americans. *The Teachers College Record, 112*(1), 31–67.

Buras, K. (2011). Race, charter schools, and conscious capitalism: On the spatial politics of whiteness as property (and the unconscionable assault on black New Orleans). *Harvard Educational Review, 81*(2), 296–331.

Cameron, J., & Astrid Siegmann, K. (2012). Why did mainstream economics miss the crisis? The role of epistemological and methodological blinkers. *On the Horizon, 20*(3), 164–171.

Cargill, T. F., & Mayer, T. (1998). The great depression and history textbooks. *The History Teacher, 31*(4), 441–458.

Castro, A. J. (2013). What makes a citizen? Critical and multicultural citizenship and preservice teachers' understanding of citizenship skills. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 41*(2), 219–246.

Cech, R., & Marks, M. B. (2007). Pedagogical tools for teaching supply and demand using lessons from transitional economies. *The Social Studies, 98*(1), 3–7.

Chomsky, N. (1999). *Profit over people: Neoliberalism and global order*. Seven Stories Press.

CORE. (2017). *The economy: Economics for a changing world*. Oxford University Press.

Couret Branco, M. (2016). Economics for substantive democracy. *Review of Social Economy, 74*(4), 369–389.

Cumbers, A., & McMaster, R. (2012). Rethinking public ownership and participation. *On the Horizon, 20*(3), 172–181.

Denis, A. (2009). Editorial: Pluralism in Economics education. *Pluralism in Economics Education, 8*(2), 6–22.

Dobusch, L., & Kapeller, J. (2012). Heterodox United vs. Mainstream City? Sketching a framework for interested pluralism in economics. *Journal of Economic Issues, 46*(4), 1035–1058.

- Duncan-Andrade, J. M. R. (2007). Urban youth and the counter-narration of inequality. *Transforming Anthropology*, 15(1), 26–37.
- Earle, J., Moran, C., & Ward-Perkins, Z. (2016). *The Econocracy: The perils of leaving economics to the experts* (1 edition). Manchester University Press.
- Feiner, S. F. (1994). Three economic paradigms: The conservative/free market, the liberal/imperfectionist, and the radical/exploitation schools. In S. F. Feiner (Ed.), *Race and gender in the American Economy: Views from across the spectrum* (pp. 22–27). Prentice Hall.
- Ferber, M. A., & Nelson, J. A. (2003). *Feminist economics today: Beyond economic man*. University of Chicago Press.
- Fine, B. (2008). Vicissitudes of Economics imperialism. *Review of Social Economy*, 66(2), 235–240.
- Freeman, A. (2009). The Economists of tomorrow: The case for a pluralist subject benchmark statement for Economics. *Pluralism in Economics Education*, 8(2), 23–40.
- Freeman, A. (2010). The economists of tomorrow: The case for assertive pluralism in economics education. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 69(5), 1591–1613.
- Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (New rev. 20th-Anniversary ed). New York: Continuum.
- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed). Boston: Pearson.
- Graupe, S. (2012). The power of ideas: The teaching of Economics and its image of man. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 11(2), 60–83.
- Gunn, J. E. (1982). *Isaac Asimov, the foundations of science fiction*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hall, J. D. (2005). The long Civil Rights Movement and the political uses of the past. *Journal of American History*, 91(4), 1233–1263.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3660172>
- Henderson, J. P. (1989). “The relation of ethics to Economics”: JS Mackenzie’s challenge to neoclassical Economics. *Review of Social Economy*, 47(3), 239–265.
- Hunt, E. K. (2005). The normative foundations of social theory: An essay on the criteria defining social economics. *Review of Social Economy*, 63(3), 423–445.
- Jacobs, M. (2013). The limits of neoclassicism: Towards an institutional environmental economics. In T. Benton & M. Redclift (Eds.), *Social theory and the global environment* (1st ed., Vol. eBook, pp. 67–91). London: Routledge.
- Jeziorski, A., Legardez, A., & Valente, D. (2013). Taking into account knowledge representations about the crisis, uncertainty and risk in the teaching perspective: A comparative study of European students in economics programmes. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 12(2), 31–41.
- Jo, T., Chester, L., & King, M. C. (2012). Beyond market-fundamentalist economics: An agenda for heterodox economics to change the dominant narrative. *On the Horizon*, 20(3), 155–163.
- Johnson, M. E. (2016). Emancipatory and pluralist perspectives on democracy and economic inequality in social studies and citizenship education. In C. Wright-Maley & T. Davis (Eds.), *Teaching for Democracy in an Age of Economic Disparity* (pp. 42–58). New York: Routledge.
- Joshi, P., & Marri, A. R. (2006). An economics methods course?: Challenges of teaching an economics education methods course for secondary social studies preservice teachers. *The Social Studies*, 97(5), 197–202.
- Kakela, J. (2011). Enlightened sense of wonder? Sublimity and rationality in Asimov’s Foundation series. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 22(2), 171+.
- Keen, S. (2011). *Debunking Economics : The naked emperor dethroned? (2nd Edition)*. London, GBR: Zed Books.
- Khayum, M., Valentine, G. P., & Friesner, D. (2006). A response of high school teachers to the adoption of state economic standards. *Journal of Economics and Economic Education Research*, 7(2), 47–72.
- Kim, M. (2012). Teaching popular economics to less-educated adults: Principles and examples for teaching heterodox and critical economics. *On the Horizon*, 20(3), 194–205.
- King, L., & Finley, S. (2015). Race is a highway: Towards a critical race approach in economics classrooms. In P. T. Chandler (Ed.), *Doing race in Social Studies: Critical perspectives* (pp. 195–228). Charlotte, United States: Information Age Publishing.
- Krätke, M. R., & Thomas, P. (2011). Antonio Gramsci’s contribution to a critical economics. *Historical Materialism*, 19(3), 63–105.
- Krugman, P., & Wells, R. (2012). *Microeconomics* (Third edition). New York, NY: Worth Publishers.
- Lee, F. S. (2012). Heterodox economics and its critics. *Review of Political Economy*, 24(2), 337–351.
- Lee, F. S., & Keen, S. (2004). The incoherent emperor: A heterodox critique of neoclassical microeconomic theory. *Review of Social Economy*, 62(2), 169–199.
- Leet, D. R., & Lopus, J. S. (2007). Ten observations on high school economics textbooks. *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, 7(3), 201–214.

- Loewen, J. W. (2008). *Lies my teacher told me : Everything your American History textbook got wrong*. New York: New Press, The.
- Loewen, J. W. (2010). *Teaching what really happened: How to avoid the tyranny of textbooks and get students excited about doing history*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lucey, T., Agnello, M. F., & Laney, J. D. (2017). Outside in: a critically compassionate approach to education for civic engagement. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 12(3), 295–309.
- Lutz, M. A., & Lux, K. (1988). *Humanistic economics: The new challenge*. New York, N.Y: Bootstrap Press.
- MacDonald, R. A., & Siegfried, J. J. (2012). Refreshing the Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics. *The Journal of Economic Education*, 43(3), 308–314.
- Magill, K. R., & Rodriguez, A. (2017). *Imagining education: Beyond the logic Of global neoliberal capitalism*. IAP.
- McCarthy, K. F., Peterson, D. J., Sastry, N., & Pollard, M. (2006). *The repopulation of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina*. Rand Corporation.
- McNamee, S. J., & Miller, R. K. (2004). *The meritocracy myth*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Mertens, D. M. (2015). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (4 edition). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Mikl-Horke, G. (2010). Social knowledge for financial markets. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 9(2), 6–15.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (Third edition). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Miller, R. C. (1993). In order to save the world for human habitation, we must stop teaching Economics! *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 21(1), 25–48.
- Miller, S. L., & VanFossen, P. J. (2008). Recent research on the teaching and learning of pre-collegiate economics. In L. Levstik & C. Tyson (Eds.), *Handbook of research in social studies education* (pp. 284–304). New York: Routledge.
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice*, 31(2), 132–141.
- Moorhouse, E. A. (2009). Teaching the implicit assumptions underlying firm behavior in the neoclassical model. *Forum for Social Economics*, 38(2–3), 111–116.
- Nelson, J. A. (2010). *Economics for humans*. University of Chicago Press.
- Nelson, J. A., & Goodwin, N. (2009). Teaching ecological and feminist Economics in the principles course. *Forum for Social Economics*, 38(2–3), 173–187.
- Network for Pluralist Economics. (n.d.). Orientation. Retrieved September 10, 2017, from <https://www.exploring-economics.org/en/orientation/>
- Neufeld, J. (2009). *A.D.: New Orleans after the deluge*. Pantheon Books.
- Nichols, J. R. (2016). The economic citizen: Civic education and its discontents. In C. Wright-Maley & T. Davis (Eds.), *Teaching for democracy in an age of economic disparity* (pp. 25–41). Routledge.
- Ötsch, W. O., & Kapeller, J. (2010). Perpetuating the failure: Economic education and the current crisis. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 9(2), 16–25.
- Pilkington, M. (2012). Economics as a polymorphic discursive construct: Heterodoxy and pluralism. *On the Horizon*, 20(3), 239–252.
- Proctor, J. C., Fischer, L., Hasell, J., Uwakwe, D., Perkins, Z. W., & Watson, C. (Eds.). (2017). *Rethinking Economics: An introduction to Pluralist Economics*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Remmele, B. (2010). Two peculiarities of economic education. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 9(4), 26–44.
- Remmele, B. (2011). The intersubjective turn and its consequences for economics education. *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, 10(2), 129.
- Rider, C. (1999). Art, ethics, and economics. *Review of Social Economy*, 57(3), 263–277.
- Rodrik, D. (2017a). Rescuing economics from neoliberalism. *Boston Review*. Retrieved from [//bostonreview.net/class-inequality/dani-rodrik-rescuing-economics-neoliberalism](http://bostonreview.net/class-inequality/dani-rodrik-rescuing-economics-neoliberalism)
- Rodrik, D. (2017b). The economics debate, again and again. Retrieved from [//rodrik.typepad.com/dani\\_rodriks\\_weblog/2017/12/the-economics-debate-again-and-again.html](http://rodrik.typepad.com/dani_rodriks_weblog/2017/12/the-economics-debate-again-and-again.html)
- Roediger, D. R. (1999). *The wages of whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class*. Verso.
- Rosenbaum, E. F. (2000). What is a market? On the methodology of a contested concept. *Review of Social Economy*, 58(4), 455–482.
- Rudra, N. (2008). *Globalization and the race to the bottom in eveloping countries*. Cambridge University Press.

- Salinas, C., & Blevins, B. (2014). Critical historical inquiry: How might pre-service teachers confront master historical narratives? *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 9(3), 35–50.
- Salinas, C., Fránquiz, M. E., & Rodríguez, N. N. (2016). Writing Latina/o historical narratives: Narratives at the intersection of critical historical inquiry and LatCrit. *The Urban Review*, 48(3), 419–439.
- Saunders, P., & Walstad, W. B. (1990). *The principles of Economics course: A handbook for instructors*. McGraw-Hill.
- Schmeichel, M. (2011). Feminism, neoliberalism, and social studies. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 39(1), 6–31.
- Schneider, G., & Shackelford, J. (2001). Economics standards and lists: Proposed antidotes for feminist economists. *Feminist Economics*, 7(2), 77–89.
- Schmidt, S. J., & Kenreich, T. W. (2015). In a space but not of it: Uncovering racial narratives through geography. In P. T. Chandler (Ed.), *Doing race in Social Studies: Critical perspectives* (pp. 229–252). Charlotte, United States: Information Age Publishing.
- Schwab, J. J. (1982). *Science, curriculum, and liberal education: Selected essays*. University of Chicago Press.
- Shanks, N. G. (2017). We shall see: Critical theory and structural inequality in economics. *The Councilor: A Journal of the Social Studies*, 78(1).
- Shulman, L. S. (2004). *The wisdom of practice: Essays on teaching, learning, and learning to teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Siegried, J., & Krueger, A. (2010). *Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics* (No. 2nd Edition) (p. 58). National Council for Economic Education. Retrieved from <http://www.councilforeconed.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/voluntary-national-content-standards-2010.pdf>
- Skousen, M. (1997). The perseverance of Paul Samuelson's Economics. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 11(2), 137–152.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2002). State curriculum standards and the shaping of student consciousness. *Social Justice*, 29(4), 8–25.
- Smith, W. L., & Brown, A. L. (2014). Beyond post-racial narratives: Barack Obama and the (re)shaping of racial memory in US schools and society. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 17(2), 153–175.
- Sober, T. L. (2016). Teaching about Economics and Moneyed Interests in Twenty-First-Century Democracy. In C. Wright-Maley & T. Davis (Eds.), *Teaching for Democracy in an Age of Economic Disparity* (pp. 79–94). New York: Routledge.
- Southgate, B. C. (2005). *What is history for?* London ; New York: Routledge.
- Takaki, R. T. (2008). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America* (1st rev. ed). New York: Back Bay Books/Little, Brown, and Co.
- Thaler, R. H. (1994). *Quasi rational economics*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Vickery, A., Holmes, K., & Brown, A. (2015). Excavating critical racial knowledge in economics and world geography. In P. T. Chandler (Ed.), *Doing race in social studies: Critical perspectives* (pp. 253–282). Charlotte, United States: Information Age Publishing.
- Walstad, W. B. (2001). Economic education in U.S. high schools. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 15(3), 195–210.
- Walstad, W. B., & Watts, M. (2015). Perspectives on economics in the school curriculum: coursework, content, and research. *The Journal of Economic Education*, 46(3), 324–339.
- Weinstein, M. M. (2009, December 14). Paul A. Samuelson, Economist, Dies at 94. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/14/business/economy/14samuelson.html>
- Wertsch, J. V. (2000). Narratives as cultural tools in sociocultural analysis: Official history in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. *Ethos*, 28(4), 511–533.
- Wight, J. B., & Morton, J. S. (2007). *Teaching the ethical foundations of economics*. New York: Council for Economic Education.
- Wineburg, S. (2012). *Historical thinking : Charting the future of teaching the past*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Williamson, O. E. (1985). *The economic institutions of capitalism*. New York: The Free Press.
- Wright-Maley, C., & Davis, T. (2016). Introduction. In C. Wright-Maley & T. Davis (Eds.), *Teaching for democracy in an age of economic disparity* (pp. 1–10). Routledge.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91.
- Zinn, H. (2010). *You can't be neutral on a moving train: A personal history of our times*. Beacon Press.