Table of Contents .................................................................................................................. 2
Guidelines for Manuscripts ................................................................................................... 3
Review Panel Members ......................................................................................................... 4
Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies Information ..................................................... 4
Editors’ Note .......................................................................................................................... 5

Articles
Teaching the economics of race and racism: Slavery, the cotton industry, and the Panic of 1837
Jill Beccaris-Pescatore ........................................................................................................ 6

Exploring master and counter narratives of economics through simulations with elementary teacher candidates
Jennifer Gallagher and Christina Tschida ............................................................................... 21

Thinking like which economists?: Powerful and authentic social studies through transformative perspectives in economics education
Neil Shanks ............................................................................................................................. 31

A critical look at Studies Weekly’s Pennsylvania kindergarten materials
Stephanie Schroeder and Mark T. Kissling ........................................................................... 45
Guidelines for Manuscripts

Aims and Scope

The Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies seeks to publish manuscripts in the Journal that focus on any of the following:

- Creative ways of teaching social studies at the elementary, secondary, and higher education levels
- Research articles
- Explanations of new types of materials and/or equipment that directly relate to social studies teaching, particularly those developed and/or implemented by teachers
- Explanations of teacher developed projects that help social studies students and teachers work with community groups
- Reviews of books and other media that are relevant to the teaching of social studies
- Analysis of how other academic disciplines relate to the teaching of social studies

Instructions for Authors

All manuscripts must adhere to the following formatting guidelines. Manuscripts that do not meet the guidelines will be returned to the author without going out for peer review. The editors of Social Studies Journal accept submissions on a rolling basis. However, calls for manuscripts are issued for both regular and special issues.

- Type and double-space submissions using 12-point font and one-inch margins
- Include any figures and/or images at the end of the article
- Authors are responsible for obtaining copyright permission for all images
- Average manuscript length is between five and fifteen pages, though exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis
- Follow guidelines of the current Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association
- Do not include author name(s) or other identifying information in the text or references of the paper
- Include a separate title page that contains the title of the article, author(s) name(s), institution(s), and email address(es)
- With submission email, authors must attest that the manuscript is original, not under review elsewhere, and not published previously
- Papers must be submitted as Word documents to the editors at: editors.ssj@gmail.com

Journal Information

Social Studies Journal is a biannual publication of the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies. The Journal seeks to provide a space for the exchange of ideas among social studies educators and scholars in Pennsylvania and beyond. The editors encourage authors both in and out of Pennsylvania to submit to the Journal.

All manuscripts go through a blinded peer-review process. In order to encourage and assist writers, the reviewers make suggestions and notations for revisions that are shared with the author before papers are accepted for final publication. The editors encourage authors in both K-12 and higher education settings to consider submitting to Social Studies Journal.
Social Studies Journal Review Panel

Jill Beccaris-Pescatore, Montgomery County Community College
Marc Brasof, Arcadia University
John Broome, University of Mary Washington
Jennifer Burke, Millersville University
Amy Cherwesnowsky, Athens Area School District
Lauren Colley, University of Cincinnati
Jeremiah Clabough, The University of Alabama - Birmingham
Stephen Croft, Wilson Area School District
Jason Endacott, University of Arkansas
Thomas Fallace, William Patterson University
Rachel Finley-Bowman, Elizabethtown College

Anne-Lise Halvorsen, Michigan State University
Dennis Henderson, Manchester Academic Charter School
Dan Krutka, University of North Texas
Theresa McDevitt, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Scott Metzger, Penn State University
Timothy Patterson, Temple University
Mark Previte, University of Pittsburgh - Johnstown
Jason Raia, Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge
Sarah Shear, Penn State Altoona
Leo West, Retired, East Allegheny Schools
Christine Woyshner, Temple University

Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies
Affiliated with the National Council for the Social Studies

Officers

President, Rachel Finley-Bowman, Elizabethtown College
President-Elect, Jason Raia, Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge
Executive Secretary, David Keller Trevaskis, Pennsylvania Bar Association
Recording Secretary, Gabriele Miller Wagner, Pennsylvania Bar Association
Past President, Amy Cherwesnowsky, Athens Area School District

Amy Cohen, History Making Productions
Brian Foster, LEAP-Kids
Dennis Henderson, Manchester Academic Charter School
Kristy L. Snyder, Pocono Mountain School District
Chris Zanoni, Somerset Area School District 2020-2023
Keith Bailey, International House Bogota
Lindsay Bowman, Harrisburg Academy
Michael Perrotti, California University of Pennsylvania
Beth Specker, Rendell Center for Civics and Government
Roberta West, School District of Philadelphia

PCSS Membership and Publication Information

Membership in the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies is currently free. Correspondence about membership should go
to Executive Secretary, David Trevaskis: david@leapkids.com.

The Journal is currently available for free, open access on the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies website: www.pcssonline.org. Correspondence about editorial matters should be directed to the editors at: editors.ssj@gmail.com.

Social Studies Journal (ISSN 0886-86) is published biannually. Copyright 2010, Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies, indexed by the Current Index to Journals in Education and listed in Cabell’s Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Education. The Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies is a non-profit organization under IRS Code 501(c)(3). A copy of our financial statement is available upon request from the Executive Secretary. Documents and information submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of State, Bureau of Charitable Organizations, PO BOX 8723, Harrisburg, PA 17105 are available from that address for the cost of copying and postage.

From the Editors

We are excited to share the Fall 2020 issue of Social Studies Journal (SSJ), a publication of the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies. Given the challenges presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic and how it has affected education around the globe, we want to first and foremost thank our authors for their diligent effort to help us bring this issue to fruition while balancing many other obligations.

Economics is often the neglected social science of the social studies. As methods instructors, we have had many students over the years express fear, discomfort, or apathy about teaching economics. And yet, economics undergirds every aspect of our social world and every discipline included in the social studies. As such, we wanted to showcase work that highlights how we understand and teach economics.

This fall, the editors of SSJ welcomed a guest editor, Jill Beccaris-Pescatore, Associate Professor of Economics at Montgomery County Community College (PA) to join our team. As an economics educator, Jill helped us to recruit quality articles and work with authors; she also wrote the leading paper in this issue of SSJ. Jill’s article is an extension of her work that is featured in C3 Teachers about how to teach the historic roots of systemic racism in the American economic system.

Three other articles are included in this issue. Jennifer Gallagher and Christina Tschida invite us to take a close look at the economics narratives that economic simulations promote in the classroom. Their piece details several economic simulations and explores how these illuminate master and counter narratives of economics and the tensions between them. They advocate for approaches that can help students understand, navigate, and critique economic systems and, ultimately contribute to more just economic outcomes.

Neil Shanks asks readers to consider which economists we are asking students to “think like” when we say: “think like an economist.” As with any social studies discipline, what and how we teach upholds or disrupts established structures that privilege some while oppressing others; this article encourages us to explore how traditional and nontraditional approaches to teaching economics make a difference in our students’ understanding of how to be effective citizens that promote democratic ideals.

The final piece of this issue offers an analysis of the kindergarten materials created by Studies Weekly for Pennsylvania. As school districts and even entire states are moving to adopt this curriculum resource, Stephanie Schroeder and Mark Kissling examine how well these materials support meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging and active social studies curriculum for young learners.

Sincerely,
Jessica B. Schocker, Editor
Sarah Brooks, Associate Editor
Who would think helicopters flying over your house would lead to an inquiry about slavery, the cotton industry, and the Panic of 1837? Then again, it is 2020. I live in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania near the iconic Philadelphia Museum of Art. The “Art Museum” is a gathering place for celebrations, running up the “Rocky” steps, and protests. Helicopters hovering in my neighborhood in the summer of 2020 signaled the latter. I was moved to tears as I joined the Black Lives Matter protests in response to systemic racism and the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many more people of color. As a white female educator, marching and being emotionally invested was not enough. I wanted to examine my role as an economics instructor and how I could be part of the solution rather than just acknowledging the problem. I needed to turn thought into action through meaningful curriculum development. I decided to apply the C3 Framework to create an inquiry using the Inquiry Design Model (IDM) (Swan, Grant, & Lee, 2019) to answer the compelling question: How did cotton sow the seeds of panic? This broad question provided a framework for students to research the economic connections between slavery, the cotton industry and the Panic of 1837.

This article has four goals. The first is to provide background on the C3 Framework and IDM as applied to teaching economics. The second is to illustrate the development of an inquiry using the IDM. The third is to outline the formative and summative performance tasks included in this inquiry, and the fourth is to explore the taking of “informed action” to complete the inquiry. A link to the full IDM is included in the Appendix. In what follows I detail an inquiry project in which I have engaged my students. I also provide my reflections on the impact of this instruction based on student evidence and offer suggestions for teachers on how they can implement and expand on what I have already done.

The College, Career, and Civic Life Framework and Inquiry Design Model

The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards provides guidance to connect state standards with analysis and application of concepts to prepare students to become active citizens. The foundation of the C3 Framework is the inquiry arc. The inquiry arc creates opportunities for deep learning in social studies disciplines such as economics through big questions that drive student inquiry. The compelling question is a broad question that is answered through student research on a series of supporting questions (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013).

The inquiry arc is the process by which teacher and students move from developing a research strategy, sourcing and interpreting evidence, creating an argument that answers the compelling question, and then taking informed action with what they have learned (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). The IDM is a blueprint or guide for teacher and students to move through the inquiry. Each supporting question is accompanied by formative performance tasks which serve as assessment along the path to answering the broader (summative) compelling question (Swan, Grant, & Lee, 2019). The content focus of this inquiry is
economics, with an emphasis on the following standards or C3 indicators:

- Describe the consequences of competition in specific markets (D2.Eco.5.9-12)
- Explain how current globalization trends and policies affect economic growth, labor markets, rights of citizens, the environment, and resource and income distribution in different nations (D2.Eco.15.9-12)

There are a variety of ways to develop an inquiry based on the degree of scaffolding necessary to answer the compelling and supporting questions. The following IDM weaves together guided and student-directed inquiry. Guided inquiry combines differing degrees of scaffolding to support students through the inquiry. Teachers can select sources for students and then guide them to add more sources as they become more independent in the process. Student-directed inquiry gives students increased agency in their learning. This pedagogical approach allows students to answer the compelling and supporting questions with sources that they discover through the inquiry process or even develop their own questions (Swan, Grant, & Lee, 2019).

**Primary Sources in the Economics Classroom**

I’ve been a community college economics instructor for thirteen years and a middle school social studies teacher for five years prior to that. As a social studies teacher, I was taught how to use primary source analysis to engage my students through strategies such as close looking and juxtaposition (Woyshner, 2012). My students enjoyed being immersed in a variety of primary sources (images, cartoons, newspapers, and music), and it infused the classroom with an energy to find the answers to questions. Austin and Thompson (2015) note, “we have found that readers and audiences of all kinds respond emotionally and viscerally to imagery and to authentic voices. These evidences of our past evoke a personal reaction...in a way that straight narrative and lists of facts simply cannot” (p. 9). Primary sources are successfully implemented by history teachers, so why not use them in the economics classroom? As a social science, the study of economics is concerned with how individuals, businesses and society make decisions under conditions of scarcity (McConnell, Brue & Flynn, 2021).

Economics is the study of making choices or decisions. Through the implementation of primary source analysis, I engaged economic students in authentic examination of primary sources which connect people and the decisions they make with economic outcomes. In essence, I wanted my students to think about how and why people made decisions using primary sources as evidence in their learning. I also hoped that primary source analysis in macroeconomics and microeconomics would reduce the barriers many students experienced when learning economic concepts created by a traditional mathematically based curriculum.

A low stakes activity to get students started is to ask them to find a primary source which illustrates a market. Using the Library of Congress analysis tool as a guide, prompt the students with the following:

- List everything you observe connected to the buyers’ side of the market.
- List everything you observe connected sellers’ side of the market
- What is being exchanged in this market?
- Who is benefitting from the exchange?

---

1 The Library of Congress Teacher’s Guides and downloadable tool is found at

Students compare their findings and graph the supply and demand of the market and determine what other questions they would like to research related to the source. As students become more familiar with sourcing in economics, they can use primary sources as evidence for shocks which cause changes in aggregate demand and supply linked to phases in the business cycle. Students can also find primary source evidence of fiscal and monetary policy in a macroeconomics course. In a microeconomics course, primary source analysis is useful for research in the areas of environmental policy, immigration reform, health care, and public health crises such as the current pandemic and the debate over mask mandates and business shutdowns.

By implementing primary source analysis in my classes, I discovered that students who were normally disengaged by graphical analysis increased their level of participation and understanding. According to the Library of Congress, “Using primary sources builds student skills related to generating meaningful questions, considering multiple perspectives, and evaluating sources” (n.d., Par. 4). Students can use the Library of Congress’s primary source analysis tool to observe, reflect, question and connect their findings to economic concepts. These strategies allow students to make connections between historical events and the economic impact which follows. Most importantly, students discover that decisions people make have economic implications, and under different circumstances, those decisions can change. Primary sources enable students to “do economics” with equitable access to the content regardless of their math proficiency.

Developing the Inquiry

The events surrounding the BLM movement in the summer of 2020 caused me to deeply reflect on our country’s economic system and its connection to systemic racism and marginalization of people of color. I read (and listened to) The New York Times Magazine’s “The 1619 Project” (Hannah-Jones, 2019) and then watched the PBS Documentary Series, “Race: The Power of Illusion” (Pounder, et. al, 2003). A portion of “The 1619 Project” focuses on American economic history leading up to and immediately following the economic Panic of 1837. This part of our economic history is particularly gut wrenching. It features increased brutality of enslaved people in the name of labor productivity during the rise of the cotton industry. Rampant land speculation spread across the South and gave rise to the notion that the cotton industry was too big to fail. Why? Banks accepted enslaved labor as collateral on plantation mortgages (Hannah-Jones, Interlandi, Lee, & Morris, 2019). I further researched how the use of enslaved workers during these times translated into the racism which exists today. “Race: The Power of Illusion” connected how the notion of race as a social and economic construct in America set the stage for political and economic policies that limited the ability for African Americans to exercise their right to vote, access strong education, obtain quality healthcare, and procure loans. The effects of these structured policies continue to inhibit the ability of African Americans to pass wealth on to their children and attain upward mobility like their white counterparts (Rothstein, 2017). This research illuminates the economic connections between the enslavement of African Americans and the systematic racism that the Black Lives Matter movement is fighting against today. I brainstormed ideas for creating a meaningful details for creating this lesson. I recommend this book for historic background knowledge.
student inquiry to investigate connections between slavery and the American economy. As a former social studies teacher and economist, I was embarrassed that I had not included racism and its economic legacy in my economics classes before. That was about to change.

I was supported in my research for this inquiry by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources team (Library of Congress, n.d.). I read books, newspapers, maps, charts and political cartoons to find the right mix of resources (see Appendix) to stage the compelling question and provide strong sources for the four supporting questions of the inquiry.

Key Components for Student Instruction

Compelling and supporting questions. The compelling question – How did cotton sow the seeds of panic? – is a broad question that puts students in the middle of a time period when the productivity/labor of enslaved African Americans was essential for meeting the demand and profits of the growing US cotton industry. Focusing on this compelling question, students build an argument supported by evidence as they move through four supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured primary sources for each question. Each formative performance task is an activity which answers its corresponding supporting question and builds upon the knowledge students create from the previous task.

The supporting questions are key for students to break down the compelling question into smaller chunks and then synthesize the research to create a summative performance task to answer the compelling question. Ultimately, students will use the new knowledge to create a “call to action” and extend their research into civic engagement (Swan, Grant, & Lee, 2018). The supporting questions for this inquiry are:

1. What market forces impacted the demand for cotton in the 1800s?
2. What market forces impacted the supply of cotton in the 1800s?
3. How did the growth of the cotton industry, trade & speculation contribute to the brutality of slavery on plantations?
4. What additional economic and political factors contributed to the Panic of 1837?

This inquiry leads students through an economic investigation of the mid to late 1800s. Students identify the market forces of demand and supply at play in the boom and bust of the cotton industry. They learn how these forces impacted the treatment of enslaved persons in the United States leading up to the Panic of 1837. Students discover connections between the cotton gin, domestic slave trade, manufacturing of cotton in the United States and abroad, and land speculation spurred on by President Andrew Jackson’s domestic policies. Students learn about the many shocks that lead to a recession which can then be classified as a panic. The depth of this inquiry is in the reflection on what role reliance on enslaved people as labor played in the economic growth of the United States. This emphasizes that the choices we make as individuals and institutions can lead to the exploitation of a group or individuals. This realization is vital to understanding that the choices students themselves make have far reaching opportunity costs.

The featured sources. I suggest teachers have students brainstorm why a recession would be described as a panic. Then, introduce the New York Times 1619 Project to students and post the four

3 Developing compelling and supporting questions requires many revisions and the support of librarians cannot be overstated. The librarians at the Library of Congress were essential in sourcing this inquiry.
supporting questions so students can easily refer to them for the duration of the inquiry. Next, have students listen to or read Episode 2: *The Economy That Slavery Built* (Hannah-Jones, N., Interlandi, J., Lee, T., & Morris, W. (2019, August 18) and create a class KWL. The following prompts are useful to stage the compelling question:

- List what you know about the role of slavery in the economy.
- What more would you like to know about the connection between the economy and slavery?
- What struck you as a concept that is new to you as you listen or read?
- What market forces of supply and demand can you identify or would you like to know more about?
- What do you recognize as underlying shocks which might lead to a recession described as a “panic?”

My students had many questions about why so many people ignored what was happening to enslaved African Americans during this time in the United States. We discussed some ideas why this was the case and added to the KWL.

For supporting questions one and two, the featured sources⁴ include an excerpt from a speech by Henry Clay, “The defence of the American System, against the British Colonial System, delivered in the Senate of the United States on the 2nd, 3rd and 6th of February 1832,” as a firsthand account of the underlying disagreement between members of Congress during this time period. Also included are images of the United States Slave Trade (ca. 1830), which provide evidence for students to address the forces of supply and demand in the cotton market.

For supporting questions three and four, students turn their focus to finding economic and political factors that contributed to the increased brutality of slavery and those that influenced the Panic of 1837. The featured sources for these questions include the Digital Scholarship Lab’s interactive map called “The Forced Migration of Enslaved People in the United States” (2011) and Clay and Robinson’s political cartoon, “New Edition of MacBeth. Bank-oh’s! Ghost,” which draws parallels between Shakespeare’s MacBeth and the political landscape of 1837. Other key sources are graphs of cotton production from 1800-1840 (National Bureau of Economic Research) obtained from St. Louis Federal Reserve (FRED). Analysis of these sources allow students to complete the formative performance task associated with each of the four supporting questions.

**Formative performance tasks.** Using guided and student-directed inquiry, students answer the supporting questions by completing four formative performance tasks. These tasks build on each other ultimately prepare students to answer the compelling question.

1. Construct a demand and supply T-chart and add examples of demand side market forces supported with evidence from the featured sources for supporting question one.
2. Using the T-chart created in task one, add examples of supply side market forces supported with evidence from the featured sources for supporting question one and two. Summarize the T-chart findings and graph the cotton industry market.
3. Construct an annotated timeline that portrays key political and economic events that influenced slavery focusing on 1800 through 1840.
4. Add to the annotated timeline from task 3 with evidence of political and economic events that lead to the Panic of 1837.

---

⁴ A full list of featured sources for each supporting question is found on the linked IDM in the Appendix.
In my experience, small groups promote deeper student engagement when completing formative performance tasks. Instructor modeling of primary source analysis is key to the success of this inquiry. It is important for students to see their teacher struggle with facing more questions than answers as we embark on these activities. A method called “close looking” to guide students’ primary source inquiry (Woyshner, 2006) coupled with the Library of Congress primary source analysis tool leads to better student engagement (Library of Congress, n.d.). Teachers implement “close looking” by instructing students to slow down and independently observe details, big and small, in their primary sources (Woyshner, 2006). This should last for at least a minute as students write these observations in the first column of the Library of Congress’ primary source analysis tool. Students can then be asked to reflect upon how their observations connect with the particular goals of each task. Further, student groups can compare their observations and reflections to complete the tasks and then add to the KWL they have already created.

Students should be instructed to create a T-chart of determinants of demand and supply in the cotton industry and identify examples of cotton industry demand and supply market forces through analysis of the featured sources (See Figure 4). Using their findings, students graphically analyze the cotton market and write a summary of their conclusions. In answering supporting questions three and four, student groups create a timeline illustrating key events related to the cotton industry, slave trade, land speculation, and international trade from 1830-1840. At this time, students are asked to revisit the KWL and add details. The last task continues to build on the first four by asking students to analyze primary sources in a jigsaw format. Student groups receive a variety of primary sources with the task of constructing an evidence-based table of economic and political factors contributing to the Panic of 1837.

**Summative performance task.** In order to reach the summative performance task, students have exercised a range of cognitive skills including interpretation, evaluation, analysis and synthesis of sources. Students will likely have more success in answering the compelling question if given a choice of delivery as they engage and monitor cognitive processes involved in their own learning (Pretorius, van Mourik, & Barrat, 2017). They can choose to write an essay or create a detailed outline, poster, or video that addresses the question, “How did cotton sow the seeds of panic?” Through the summative performance task, students demonstrate the depth and breadth of their understanding and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. Students’ arguments will likely vary but could include any of the following examples:

- The growth of the cotton industry led to increased pressure for slaves to harvest cotton in order to keep pace with cotton’s increasing profitability. When the economy collapsed, plantation owners couldn’t pay loans with slaves as collateral. Cheap land and the quest for profits on plantations led to an increase in the price of slaves and collateralized them to support loans for land based on the prediction of cotton prices always increasing. The drive for profits led to increased brutality of slaves because slave owners viewed them as an investment that needed to be punished if they were not meeting their quota of cotton picked. This led to uncertainty in the economy and caused the Panic of 1837.
- There were other factors in play, including the underlying divisions between slave states and free states. Arguments over debt and the reliance on slave labor to drive the manufacturing of cotton in northern states spread the blame across the nation. President Jackson’s banking policies lead to uncertainty by Americans which
contributed to a run on banks inciting the Panic of 1837.

- Rampant land speculation, state debt, banking crisis and inconsistent banking laws led to the collapse of the economy. Slavery played a role but debt, tariffs and reliance on trade with England and a collapsing cotton market spread across both slave states and free states. The American economy was tied to the economy of England and when their economy fell, they spent less on imports, causing the price of cotton to drop. This led to the Panic of 1837.

As an extension activity, student groups reread or relisten to excerpts of “The 1619 Project” and add any additional details to the KWL. If students have studied the market forces which triggered The Great Recession, an extension of this inquiry is to have students compare and contrast the cotton industry during Panic of 1837 with the housing and banking industry during The Great Recession. They can further examine the lasting impacts of both of these recessions on African Americans. This creates a bridge between the past and present in United States economic history.

Providing students with rubrics and checklists for each of the tasks described above gives ownership of learning to the students and allows for peer review as well as student-teacher conferences on progress. Teachers can differentiate the inquiry for students who are independent learners or want to explore the material more deeply. Students can begin with teacher support in a guided inquiry and shift to a student-directed approach to the research, ultimately adding to the collection of featured sources (Swan, Grant, & Lee, 2019).

**Taking Informed Action**

Students take informed action by identifying a current issue that involves the exploitation of a group for the gain of others. Having identified an issue, students brainstorm and create an action list to increase awareness of this issue. Students rank the action list and implement letter writing, protest, social media campaigns or other ideas for individual or group action.

Prior to taking this action, my students debriefed through full class discussion about the challenges they faced in their research process. This was a vital component to get to the final step of the inquiry. Included below are some of their thoughts depicting their inner struggles discussing enslaved human beings as resource inputs. One student said:

“I found it really difficult to write captions in a PowerPoint and then record my voice for the presentation saying that slave labor was used because it kept labor costs low and threatening beatings increased productivity. It wasn’t until we discussed this more in class that writing and saying what really happened to enslaved African Americans during this time is the first step to having deeper more real discussion and understanding why Black Americans are protesting today.”

Another student articulated: “It was really hard because I don’t want anyone to be treated that way and then beat for a situation they didn’t choose to be in.” This student connected the Panic of 1837 with The Great Recession: “Why would banks let slaves be collateral for loans if they didn’t have the intention to take the slaves from the owners if they defaulted on loans? I mean, it was horrible in 2007 when banks took the homes of people who didn’t really know about their mortgages.” This comment was in reference to a comparison to foreclosures during The Great Recession.

The connection between the use of beatings as an incentive to increase productivity when cotton prices increased is a barbaric revelation as shown by a student who said,

“I knew I was supposed to shift the supply curve for cotton to the right when we saw the
productivity of enslaved workers increase, but it was really hard to do when I thought of the way they were increasing productivity. I graphed using examples in the book but they were just numbers, I didn’t think of them as people.”

When students concluded that much of the debt in the cotton industry was forgiven because collateral was actually enslaved people, it was gut wrenching and, in their words, “disgusting.”

Having to face our own implicit biases is difficult. Many of us feel paralyzed and wonder what we can even do to be part of the solution. My students felt the same way. This is where the “taking informed action” component of the IDM provides a much needed debrief. Students reflected back on the KWL they created in this inquiry and identified common threads in the decisions that individuals, businesses, and society make to the benefit of some and the detriment of others. This discussion opened the door for students to understand that even though we define decision makers as rational in economics, there are many factors which influence what we do under different conditions.

My students chose to take action by focusing on Black Lives Matter and voter suppression. Their course of action included getting one friend to register to vote, to safely participate in peaceful marches, and to volunteer for their candidate of choice through phone banks, text banks and poll working. They also felt that it was important to encourage people through social media to listen to “The 1619 Project” and watch “Race: The Power of Illusion.” Students thought it would be easier to talk about the issues that Americans of color are facing if there was a frame of reference. That way they did not have to have all of the answers.

I understand the paralysis that comes from so much injustice. Creating an environment where students can create actionable items was more valuable than I anticipated when I began designing this inquiry. We all felt we were left with many more questions than answers, and that is uncomfortable. It is our job as teachers to support students as they sit with these uncomfortable truths and help them engage in meaningful evidence-based action. The use of College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards through the IDM provides guidance to connect state standards with analysis and application of concepts to prepare students for active citizenship. Teaching economics through the framework allows students to be immersed in inquiry and take agency in their learning. Students completed the inquiry described in this piece ready to apply the knowledge and skills they gained through a study of decision making in the 1800s and its connection to racial complexities in the United States today.

References
National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS).
(2013). *The college, career, and civic life (C3) framework for social studies state standards*. Silver Spring, MD: NCSS.


*About the Author*: Jill Beccaris-Pescatore is an Associate Professor of Economics at Montgomery County Community College (PA). She can be reached via email at jbeccari@mc3.edu
Appendix

Figure 1: Inquiry Design Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Economics of Slavery Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How Did Cotton Sow the Seeds of Panic?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C3 Framework Indicator</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staging the Compelling Question</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Question 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formative Performance Task</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Featured Sources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Question 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formative Performance Task</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Featured Sources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Question 3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formative Performance Task</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Question 4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formative Performance Task</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summative Performance Task**
ARGUMENT: How Did Cotton Sow the Seeds of Panic? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that discusses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical and contemporary sources while acknowledging competing views.

EXTENSION. Compare and contrast the Panic of 1837 and the 2008 Great Recession.

**Taking Informed Action**
UNDERSTAND Students identify a current issue where a group is exploited for the gain of others.
ASSESS Brainstorm and create an action list to increase awareness of this issue.
ACT Rank the action list and implement letter writing, protest, social media campaign or other ideas for students to act upon.

The complete IDM (with functioning links) as published for C3 Teachers can be found at this link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bADXHK02BSu9Hi_vmCptuLxqDHp57nEV-Bb7SbEYZcU/edit
Figure 2: Supporting Question 1, Featured Source D


In the third column of the front page of the newspaper is a Speech of Henry Clay, “*The defence of the American System, against the British Colonial System, delivered in the Senate of the United States on the 2nd, 3d and 6th, of February 1832.*” This is an informative firsthand account of the underlying disagreement between members of Congress during this time period. This source can be downloaded as an image, PDF or text can be edited for students to juxtapose with the image.
Figure 3: Supporting Question 2, Featured Source C:


This image provides a visual representation of the slave trade in the 1830s. Students should notice the location of the slave trade and wrestle with the notion of free-states and slave-states during the early to mid 1800s.
Figure 4: Formative Performance Task 1 and 2 T-Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinants of Demand</th>
<th>Example - Evidence (Featured Source Letter)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in Number of Buyers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Consumer Taste and Preferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Consumer Expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Price of Substitute Goods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Price of Complementary Goods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinants of Supply</th>
<th>Example - Evidence (Featured Source Letter)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in Number of Sellers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Resource Input Prices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Profitability of Alternative Pursuits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Taxes or Subsidies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Regulatory Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Producer Expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Write a summary below describing how the market forces of demand and supply influenced the market for cotton leading up to and immediately following the Panic of 1837.

Draw a Demand and Supply Graph of the Cotton Market showing equilibrium price and quantity before and after the changes in the determinants of demand and supply.

This document can also be viewed at the following link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GuhU4DGvwWU5wjWh93MayXoD8cAouley m18X-VDwtBg/edit
Figure 5: Supporting Question 4, Source A:


This source is a satirical cartoon on the Panic of 1837 focusing on the very unpopular “Specie Circular.” Students studying MacBeth will find that the symbolism creates connections between MacBeth and Presidents Jackson and VanBuren.
Additional Resources


EXPLORING MASTER AND COUNTER NARRATIVES OF ECONOMICS THROUGH SIMULATIONS WITH ELEMENTARY TEACHER CANDIDATES

Jennifer Gallagher, East Carolina University & Christina M. Tschida, Appalachian State University

Within the already marginalized subject of elementary social studies (Fitchett, Heafner & VanFossen, 2014), economics often receives the least amount of attention from teachers. Researchers have documented a number of possible reasons for this phenomenon, including the lack of confidence pre-service teachers feel in their economics content knowledge (Anthony, Smith, & Miller, 2015). As elementary teacher educators, who primarily focus on social studies education, we devote at least one to two weeks to meeting three economics education goals with our teacher candidates.

We want our teacher candidates to feel confident in understanding the economic concepts and skills that are required in their state standards. These standards often include a strong focus on needs versus wants, although some economic educators discourage it (e.g. Gallagher & Hodges, 2010). The concepts of goods and services, producers and consumers, and supply and demand also take much of the space during the teaching of elementary economics. While these are important building blocks for student understanding of economics as the study of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services; there are usually very few opportunities for elementary students to consider how society uses the limited resources available and critically examine how resources are distributed among people. Therefore, we also want to engage our elementary teacher candidates in economic thinking, so they understand the benefit of the discipline to our work as citizenship educators (Lucey & Giannangelo, 2017). The C3 framework (NCSS, 2013) encourages teachers to frame the teaching of economic thinking skills and concepts through the exploration of compelling questions that are of civic importance and pre-service teachers’ limited content knowledge with economics can inhibit them from applying economics to more robust civic goals (Shanks, 2019a).

Importantly, we want our elementary teacher candidates to be able to navigate the debates between opposing narratives of economic thought. The most engaging and effective way we have found to meet all three of our goals is through facilitating and debriefing a number of simulations that illuminate the tensions between master and counter narratives of economics. Navigating these tensions are especially important to us because the state and national standards are largely framed within master narratives of the field (Adams, 2019a; Adams, 2019b). Thus, without deliberate opportunities to explore counter narratives of economics in teacher education or other professional development, elementary teachers might go their whole career without including other perspectives of economics in their teaching. In particular, Angello and Lucey (2008) argued that teachers need knowledge, skills, and resources to deal with issues of economic inequality and other critical economic issues that traditional economics standards, curriculum, and resources often avoid.

Shanks (2018) wrote that “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” (p. 22). What we offer below is a strategy to meet that call.

Master vs. Counter Narratives

Social studies scholars have pointed out for years, that the social narratives transmitted in textbooks and schools have been shaped by the dominant group as the official narrative, while other narratives have been silenced or marginalized (Demoiny & Ferraras-Stone, 2018; Salinas, Blevins, & Sullivan, 2012; Trouillot, 1995). Loewen (2007) argued that history textbooks present a sanitized version of events that leave out controversy and conflict in the name of patriotism and an attempt to indoctrinate the readers. The master narrative then is reduced to one-dimensional heroes, a message of national victories and progress, and events that are static rather than dynamic. They further reduce history to a set of isolated facts to be memorized rather than complex social relationships and events. The counter narrative, however, brings forward the voices that have been silenced; discrimination, injustice, and failures of our leaders and our country (VanSledright, 2008); and multiple perspectives on events making them more complex and dynamic.

While there has been a strong focus of master and counter narratives in history education, opposing narratives about how the world works, and how it should work, are prevalent in economics education as well (i.e., Shanks, 2018). In fact, differences in paradigms of economic thought are as diverse as the political traditions from which they are grounded (Shiller & Shiller, 2011). Juxtaposing master and counter narratives is a helpful framework to guide teacher candidates through this debate as neoclassical, market-based economics has been a dominant narrative that has authoritatively constrained economics education at the K-12 level (Adams, 2019a; Adams, 2019b) as well as constrained scholarly attention to it (Adams, 2020).

Other paradigms of economic thought (i.e. Shanks, 2019b) or critiques of neoclassical, market-based economics serve as important counter narratives from which young citizens and their teachers can also think about the social world. For example, while market-based economics focuses on the value of efficiency, counter narratives focus on the value of equity or environmental sustainability. These counter narratives can help young citizens (and their teachers) resist and critique popular discourses that operate within the master narrative, such as the focus of achieving the “American Dream” through pulling up one’s “bootstraps” (the suggestion that only hard work plays a role in wealth creation). Exposure to counter narratives can also help them better interrogate economic policy framed through master narratives, such as “trickle-down” regressive tax structures.

Simulations

Simulations have been researched and practiced within and outside social studies education for several decades (Wright-Maley, 2015b). While there are many variations in definitions, which sometimes cause confusion (Wright-Maley, 2015a), for purposes of this article we use Wright-Maley’s (2015a) broad definition of simulations as “pedagogically mediated activities used to reflect the dynamism of real life events, processes, or phenomena, in which students participate as active agents whose actions are consequential.
to the outcome of the activity” (p. 70). Simulations can be very concrete in that they attempt to imitate phenomena as realistically as possible or simulations can be more abstract in that parts of the simulation can have symbolic or metaphoric meaning. Simulations can also be facilitated in both computer-based or real life, face-to-face contexts. Many social studies educators have found simulations to be an effective way to learn economic concepts and provide opportunities to teach economics and practice economic thinking (Lewis, 1974; Porter, Riley, & Ruffer, 2004). Scholars from other educational fields have also found simulations provide context within which learners can construct knowledge and even prepare learners for careers (Harkins, 2000).

In any conversation about simulations with children or adults, it is important to provide some guidance on what NOT to simulate or consider the ways in which simulations can become problematic, traumatic, or counter-productive. Teachers should carefully consider the pedagogic implications of simulations that imitate violent or otherwise oppressive realities—especially simulations that treat those realities trivially or inauthentically (i.e., Bell, 2019; Drake, 2008; Koenig, 2009).

Do Simulations Support Particular Economic Narratives?

Simulations are not a direct instruction method in that they are not meant to transmit knowledge in behaviorist ways. They are instead consistent with constructivist teaching in that they allow students to construct their own meaning from experience. However, this does not mean simulations are not framed within particular economic narratives that influence the way meaning is constructed. Take, for example, the classic assembly line simulation where a teacher has some students create a product individually and also has some students form an assembly line to create the same product. If a teacher focuses the reflection after the number of products created by both groups, students will recognize the efficiency of the assembly line group, which supports a narrative about the value of efficiency in economic systems. A teacher might also focus the de-briefing on comparing the quality of products. Whereas the assembly line, which affords specialization, might produce a more consistent product, the artisan’s products are unique. Both of these first options focus the economic narrative on the goods produced in the economic system. However, if the teacher facilitates the simulation and the post-simulation reflection to illuminate the differences between assembly line workers’ and artisans’ labor experiences, this supports a counter economic narrative that highlights and values how labor is experienced within an economic system.

The simulations shared in this article have been gathered over many years of learning from other educators in various ways, such as attending workshops and garnering resources online. In many cases, they have been adapted to serve the purpose of illuminating master or counter narratives of economics. One simulation shared (Going Fishing) is especially effective for illuminating the tensions between opposing narratives. We have cited resources for published simulations to both recognize authorship and to provide resources where readers can find more details, instructions, and ideas for implementing the simulations. When appropriate, we have noted where we have revised simulations or post-simulation reflections that deviate from the way they were originally published or presented. The time spent in the one to two weeks that we engage teacher candidates in these economics simulations, supports dual objectives: 1) to model for our students how to facilitate simulations as a teaching strategy and 2) to
engage teacher candidates in the tensions between master and counter narratives of economics.

The ways in which the simulations highlight master or counter narratives of economics are explained below. In some cases, simulations, when aptly framed and reflected upon, can illuminate fundamental tensions between these economic narratives.

**A Master Narrative Simulation**

Master Neo-Classical Economic Narratives assume rational choices by individuals in which they first and foremost employ self-interest (Shanks, 2018). The narrative that follows means that when making decisions because of scarcity, individuals rationally weigh the costs and benefits when deciding between Choice A or Choice B. When individuals make Choice A, they are refusing Choice B. Choice B is then referred to as the Opportunity Cost of Choice A. The costs and benefits of choices operate as incentives. Another assumption made by master narrative economics is that when individuals make choices they respond to or are motivated by incentives. It follows, that if someone is using economic thinking, they can influence individuals’ choices by changing the incentive structure. The simulation below is meant to illuminate to our students what opportunity cost is and how changing incentives can influence changes in choices.

**Singing for Supper: Rational individual choice, opportunity cost and incentives**. “Singing for Supper” is a very short simulation that operates within a lecture/facilitated discussion of basic master narrative economic concepts such as scarcity, choice, and cost. Afterwards, teacher candidates can apply these basic economic thinking assumptions to elementary students and classrooms.

**Directions.** This first simulation is rather quick and requires the use of two of the same type of candy bars. We only show one candy bar to the students and ask how many of them would be willing to walk up to the front and take the candy bar if it was “free”. Usually quite a few students raise their hand. We make reference to the concept of scarcity, how there is not enough candy bar to satisfy all the wants of the candy bar and therefore decisions must be made in the distribution of it. We do not get into the costs and benefits of different types of distribution mechanisms with this particular simulation because it is not our main learning objective. We then say whoever would like to come and get the candy bar may do so. Usually the class realizes that the closest person who wants the candy bar is easily able to take it; that person does so and this first result is pretty anticlimactic. After the first candy bar is claimed, we let the students know that the candy bar is not the only scarce thing in this simulation. Their time and energy are also scarce. They had to decide if they wanted to spend their limited amount of time and energy walking up to the front of the room to get the candy bar or use their time and energy to stay in their seat. We have them explain to us what the benefit and cost of each choice is (i.e., staying seated or walking up to get the candy bar). Since many of them say they would be willing to make the choice to walk up and get the candy bar, we focus on the opportunity cost, or the best foregone alternative, of that decision. The opportunity cost is not very high because staying seated does not seem that appealing when compared to simply walking up to retrieve the candy bar. In this first short simulation, most students agree that the benefit of the choice to

---

6 Information about this simulation was originally obtained through the following presentation: Brock, J. (2019, April). Exploring Economics [Teacher Workshop]. Junior Achievement Workshop, Colorado
walk up and take the candy bar (X) is greater than the cost of (X) which is staying seated and not getting the candy bar. We write: First Simulation: $B(X) > C(X)$ on the board.

We then ask if they would like to play again and we pull out another of the exact same type of candy bar. Usually the students at the front of the room sit up a little when they think that they will have the best chance of getting it. We explain that we are going to change the incentives to see if we can change their choices. We say this time to get the candy bar you have to walk up and sing an entire song (to really impact the incentive, we choose a challenging song). We ask for a show of hands of how many people would make the choice to come get the candy bar by singing a full song to the rest of their class. Usually, a fewer number of students raise their hands that they would make the choice to sing the song for the candy bar (sometimes only one person does). We explain that the first person to come up and sing the song can have the candy bar. After the candy bar has been claimed, we discuss the costs and benefits of each choice, emphasizing that the opportunity cost of staying seated increased with the new incentive structure and many people changed their choices. Therefore, for most of the students in the second simulation the $C(X) > B(X)$.

**Post-simulation reflection questions.**
At the conclusion of the simulation, we explain that our first three economic assumptions (that scarcity implies choice, that choices have costs, and that people respond to choices based on incentives) can also help us think about elementary classrooms and children beyond our social studies curriculum. We ask the teacher candidates to discuss with their group four prompts:

- How do elementary students experience scarcity?
- How do elementary students make choices based on costs and benefits?
- What are some examples of how elementary teachers change incentive structures to try to influence students’ choices?
- If students learn how to think metacognitively about their own economic thinking, might they make “better” choices?
- Do all students respond the same way to changes in incentive structure?

**Reflections of practice.** “Singing for Supper” operates as a very short simulation within a facilitated lecture/discussion about how people make choices due to scarcity and how those choices are influenced by incentives. It generally goes very smoothly and teacher candidates can immediately apply the propositions about economic thinking/behavior to elementary classrooms and students. They often will refer to positive behavior support systems\(^7\) that they have already observed in schools during their practicum experiences. We try to let these basic assumptions from a master narrative of economics set in before we complicate them with ideas from counter perspectives. However, often teacher candidates will already begin to problematize notions of individual rational choice when they discuss. For instance, they reflect on elementary students’ “choices” to complete homework. Reflective teacher candidates will often question the choices available to resource-laden students as opposed to the constrained choices of resource-deprived students in the decision to complete or not complete assigned homework. Later we will follow-up their questions with two counter narrative simulations that explore such constrained

---

\(^7\) Positive behavior support systems, although varied, generally refer to systems that attempt to improve behavior outcomes through positive incentives.
choices and the influence of social, cultural and financial capital on availability of choices.

Two Counter Narrative Simulations

**SPENT: Constrained choices.** Spent (McKinney, Urban Ministries of Durham, 2011) is a virtual simulation created to highlight the constrained choices that workers in low wage jobs must make. It is a virtual experience that leads participants through a number of questions that someone earning a low wage in a large city would have to make—such as choosing between a housing location that is more expensive but walkable to work or a further housing location that is cheaper but increases transportation costs. As students work their way through the simulation they are confronted by challenges and decisions that impact their income, health, and family. For example, they must decide between taking time off of work to attend their child’s school play or not, which can affect their relationship with their child or cause teachers to view them as a disengaged and uncaring parent. There are also choices about going to the doctor or risking one’s health, fixing a car or sink that needs repair, and decisions on how to earn extra income.

**Directions.** Spent can be accessed at [http://playspent.org/](http://playspent.org/). The objective of the simulation is to make it through the month on a low income and have enough money, after multiple decision points, to pay next month’s rent on the first of the month. Students can do this simulation in class in groups or outside of class as homework and reflect on it during class. The simulation can take approximately 20-25 minutes for students to complete.

**Post-simulation reflection questions.** Once they are done, we ask students to reflect on the following questions in groups and then as a whole class:

- What kinds of choices did you have to make during the simulation?
- What did you think about the choices you had to make?
- Did the simulation make you think differently about how individuals make choices based on incentives? Why or why not? How are our choices in life often constrained by external factors?
- How does this new perspective apply to our work as teachers?

**Reflections on practice.** Prior to this, the teacher candidates in our class have read or listened to Paul Gorski’s work on the myth of the culture of poverty (Gorski, 2008; Krutka & Milton, 2016). They often connect heavily to this reading in their reflections of playing Spent. The group reflection often leads to a discussion of the master narrative of meritocracy or the American Dream and to what extent individuals starting with constrained choices can achieve it. The simulation and ensuing reflection provide an important counter narrative that questions the master narrative of meritocracy in a market-based capitalist economy.

**M&M Simulation: The effect of social, cultural, and financial capital on available choices.** The M&M Simulation was published by Williams (1993). In short, students receive an initial endowment of colored M&Ms that, when calculated through a specific protocol on a worksheet, have various values. The students spend two rounds of trading M&Ms to see if they can increase their wealth. In the original article, Williams (1993) goes into detail about the variety of uses the simulation can serve. For the purposes of our course, we use the M&M simulation to support William’s 2nd objective: to illustrate “the role of unequal financial endowments in affecting market opportunities” (p. 325). Because of the computation used to determine the value of the M&Ms, there are exchanges possible that are mutually beneficial to all parties involved. However, there are more opportunities for
beneficial exchanges available to those who have a higher initial endowment than others with a lower initial endowment.

**Directions.** Detailed instructions and supplemental materials for the simulation can be found in Williams (1993). We have the teacher candidates work through the simulation in pairs so they can strategize together and make their thinking more explicit. In order to introduce the simulation, one person from each pair reaches into a large paper bag and pulls out one Ziploc bag of their initial endowment of M&Ms. There are a small number of baggies that represent upper class capital, a few more that represent the middle class and the majority of the bags contain an amount of M&Ms that represent lower, working class capital. We have adapted Williams (1993) directions to also use this opportunity to teach our students about different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 2011). We tell them that we are all born into certain economic situations (our family, our neighborhood, the schools we are assigned to). In this simulation, this bag of M&Ms represents all of the capital you have access to through birth and family circumstance. We then summarize financial capital as the monetary resources their family has; social capital as the friends, religious organization, and other social networks their family has; and cultural capital as the language and other various forms of cultural skills and knowledge their family can access (Bourdieu, 2011). Their baggie full of M&Ms represents the value of all of those forms of capital put together. But, since we live in a society with high “economic freedom,” they have the opportunity to improve their economic status through exchanges of that capital.

We then walk them through calculating their initial endowment of capital using the simple calculations on the worksheet in Williams (1993). Once each pair has found their initial endowment value, they write it on a post-it note. They place their initial endowment amount on a number line on the chalkboard for everyone to see. Because their ultimate goal is to raise their value and improve their status, we explain that they will have two opportunities to exchange M&Ms with the other groups in the classroom. If they are “smart and work hard” they should be able to improve their status. We tell them that there are various strategies for exchanging M&Ms in ways that will benefit both parties.

The class then goes through two rounds of trading M&Ms in order to try to increase the value of their capital. After each round, students recalculate their net worth, record it on a post-it note (you might use a different color post-it for each round), and mark the number line with their new values. We do not let students share with other groups their strategy for making trades that will increase their wealth while they are doing the simulation.

**Reflections of practice.** At the conclusion of this simulation, the students often have many reflections about its connections to real-life economics. Therefore, our first question is always simply, “What connections can you make from the simulation to real life?” Students often reflect on how the groups with higher initial endowments are able to stay seated during the exchange and wait for other groups to come to them, meaning they did not have to work as hard to increase their wealth. It was also easier for these groups to figure out trades that would benefit them because they had more to work with (i.e., M&Ms with higher numerical values). While most groups increased their capital, the groups with higher initial endowments tended to increase their capital at a higher rate. The students make these initial reflections and then we prompt them to compare that to actual economic realities. They often connect the simulation experience to the reality that those with more disposable income have the ability to take
more risks in investing and thus have the opportunity to increase their capital at higher rates. They also often bring up what it felt like to participate in a game where the initial playing field was already skewed—a reflection they often connect to elementary students’ experiences in schools.

One Simulation and the Tension Between Economic Narratives

Going Fishing: Ultimately, what’s the economic problem? Going Fishing is a simulation that can take a variety of forms. It is most often used to illustrate the increase of efficiency with private property. In our methods course, we use the simulation to illuminate different economic problems and the inherent political values tension between them.

Directions. We facilitate this simulation after having students contemplate various economic goals and values that might be considered in an economic system. Although there are many, we introduce teacher candidates to economic growth (increased GDP/standard of living), equity (fairness/people get what they need), stability (low unemployment/low inflation), freedom (choice in jobs/choice in spending) and efficiency (resources are not wasted). We ask for four volunteers to gather around a table while the rest of the class watches. We explain that they are playing a game that requires them to “go fishing” for the Swedish fish that will be tossed onto the table. The winner will earn a whole extra bag of Swedish fish. However, there are rules to the game. After the fish are tossed on the table, they are worth 1 point for the first 15 seconds and worth 2 points for the second 15 seconds. Whoever has the most points at the end will win the game. We throw out a handful of fish and begin counting. Every time we have run the simulation, all of the fish are scooped up immediately or at least during the first 15 seconds.

After this first round, we led a discussion asking the players why they did not wait until the fish were worth more points. Then with the full class we facilitate a discussion about the ways in which they were assuming everyone was operating in self-interest. We then calculate the number of points that would have been awarded had they all waited and how many were actually awarded. This helps students to realize that there were points left unawarded and thus wasted. We asked them if they had a lot of freedom in deciding what to do (to which they respond yes) but we stress that the economic system was inefficient because there were a larger number of points available than points awarded because no one waited for the fish to be worth more.

We play the simulation again but this time we introduce one new rule: private property. This time, we separate the table with two pieces of yarn so that there are four parts of the table. we explain that the rules are going to be the exact same. Fish in the first 15 seconds are worth 1 point, fish in the second 15 seconds are worth 2 points except this time, they can only pick up fish within their property (and we assign them each a square). We then place unequal amounts of fish on each property and we play the game again. All participants (whom have fish on their property) wait until the 16th second and then pick up their fish. We then debrief, did they have as much freedom as in the first round? On one hand, they were restricted to their own private property and those with no fish on their property felt they had no freedom to

8 Information about this simulation was originally obtained through the following presentation: Brock, J. (2019, April). Exploring Economics [Teacher Workshop]. Junior Achievement Workshop, Colorado Springs, CO. It has been modified from its original form to illuminate different economic narratives or viewpoints.
do anything. BUT, for those who did have resources on their property, they could wait longer for the fish to increase in value before they picked them up so no points were wasted and there was more efficiency. So, what was the new economic problem? Equity. While some participants had several fish with which they could exercise economic freedom, others had no or few fish with which to exercise any economic freedom at all.

**Reflections on practice.** After running the simulation both ways, we discuss as a class that master and counter narratives focus on addressing different economic problems. The master narrative of neo-classical, market-based economics focuses on improving efficiency of the markets. Counter narratives of economics are often focused on equity, or the lack of equity, within economic systems. “Going Fishing” also illustrates that the value of “economic freedom” can be construed in different ways within economic narratives. Within the master narrative, economic freedom is the ability to do what one wants. Within a system of private property, one has the ability to do what one wants with his/her property. By contrast, a counter narrative questions how much economic freedom one has if they start with no fish at all.

**Conclusion**

Our goal in this article is to share ideas for using economic simulations in ways that illuminate the differences between master and counter narratives of economics and the tensions between them. Social studies teacher candidates need to learn how to navigate these tensions because they will be teaching economics within their social studies curriculum. They need to be aware of how they might be operationalizing different economic narratives within their worldview as teachers. The simulations we have explained above could also be great resources for high school economics teachers who want to help their students think through the value-based assumptions of different economic narratives. Economics is a field that needs more robust and rigorous reflection about its purposes and goals to meet the characteristics of value-based Powerful Social Studies (National Council for Social Studies, 2017). In this article we have shared simulation strategies that allow teacher candidates to consider the value-based assumptions and value-based implications of different economic narratives. It is our hope that teachers who can unpack these complexities can use simulations and other strategies to teach young citizens how to understand, navigate, and critique economic systems and, hopefully, create more just economic outcomes.

**References**


historical master and counter narratives in picture books. The Social Studies, 109(2), 64-73.
Koenig, K (2009). “It was so much fun! We died of massive blood loss.” Rethinking Schools, 23(4), 64-67.

About the Authors. Jennifer Gallagher is Assistant Professor of Education at East Carolina University. She can be reached via email at: gallagherj17@ecu.edu. Christina M. Tschida is Associate Professor of Education at Appalachian State University. She can be reached via email at: tschidacm@appstate.edu.
THINKING LIKE WHICH ECONOMISTS?: POWERFUL AND AUTHENTIC SOCIAL STUDIES THROUGH TRANSFORMATIVE PERSPECTIVES IN ECONOMICS EDUCATION

Neil Shanks, Baylor University

The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) asserts that “an excellent education in social studies is essential to civic competence and the maintenance and enhancement of a free and democratic society” (NCSS, 2016, p. 180). The implication in this statement is that the orientation and quality of instruction in social sciences has direct ramifications for the orientation and quality of our society. Yet, throughout the history of social studies, debate has raged over this orientation. To put it simply, the question has been whether social studies should “transmit or transform the social order” (Stanley, 2005, p. 282). The history of schooling in the United States has traditionally shown an adherence to the transmission side of this question, and served to maintain the status quo (Stanley, 2005). The result of this status quo has been a school system wedded to ideas of white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism (Apple, 2004; Au, 2012; Bowles & Gintis; 2011; McLaren, 2015). Scholars of social studies education have offered transformative perspectives on the discipline to address racism, sexism, and inequality (Chandler, 2015; Ladson-Billings 2003; Schmeichel, 2015; Wright-Maley & Davis; 2016). These challenges to the existing order rest on critiques of the philosophical foundations of the subdisciplines of social studies such as history, geography, and civics.

In history, quality teaching involves thinking like a historian (Wineberg, 2001), but transformative history education involves applying historical thinking to “introduce other narratives and other perspectives – to go beyond transmission” (Blevins & Salinas, 2012, p. 19). In geography, teachers are tasked with developing spatial literacy (McInerney, 2008), but transformative geography begins with the “premise that power and inequality often have spatial landscapes” (Kenreich, 2013, p. 1) and should be explored through geographic lenses. Civics by definition addresses the development of good citizens, yet there are consistent calls to question the type of citizen that results from this pursuit (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) and opportunities to teach for transformational citizenship (Banks, 2008). Thus, as social studies teachers consider the question of whether to transmit or transform the status quo, they have disciplinary-specific choices to make about the philosophical foundation of their subdiscipline.

Teaching students to think like an economist is considered by many economics educators and researchers as “the primary goal of economic education” (Ayers, 2015, p. 38) and is intended to “empower students with the economic reasoning skills needed to make more rational and productive decisions for themselves and society at large, thereby more successfully fulfilling their roles as democratic citizens” (p. 39). But what does it mean to think like an economist? What kind of social studies results from this pursuit? What elements of our social structure are dependent on maintaining the status quo via this way of thinking? And what would be the outcome of thinking like an economist through new and marginalized perspectives? This paper gives an overview and critique of traditional notions of thinking like an economist and offers several alternative ways of thinking that might be appealing to social studies teachers and teacher educators who seek to promote a systemic change via powerful, authentic social studies. Specifically, economic teachers should consider that thinking like an economist
involves thinking communally, thinking religiously, and thinking narratively.

Thinking Like an Economist in a Traditional Sense

The National Council on Economic Education (2000) lists six key assumptions that foster the ability to think like an economist:

- People choose …
- People’s choices involve costs …
- People respond to incentives in predictable ways …
- People create economic systems that influence individual choices and incentives …
- People gain when they trade voluntarily …
- People’s choices have consequences that lie in the future … (p. 3).

This list of assumptions promotes what is sometimes known as the economic way of thinking (EWT). The EWT is considered to be important for democratic citizenship preparation (Ayers, 2019; VanFossen, 2005) and is designed to “empower students with the critical thinking skills needed to make more rational and productive decisions for themselves and society at large” (Ayers, 2016, p. 59). Framed this way, the EWT implies that economics is not just about money and the economy, but a “framework for thinking about human behavior” (Imazeki, 2013, p. 39) that can be useful in analysis in “virtually all forms of human activity” (Boulding, 1971 in Anderton & Carter, 2006, p. 456). Importantly, it provides a way of thinking about human behavior that is systematic and allows for analysis of decision making at levels from the macro to the micro.

The EWT has been the focus of instruction among award-winning instructors (Ayers, 2018). It is seen as an important way to connect economics to the Common Core State Standards (Kozdras & Day, 2013), and a vital tool in understanding the persistent social issues that face students and citizens in the modern era (VanFossen & McGrew, 2011). Notably, the more economics coursework one takes, the greater students align with the majority of economists’ reported attitudes on issues of public policy (Allgood et al., 2012), which indicates that EWT has substantial implications for not only economic education, but for electoral policies and civic engagement (Crowley & Swan, 2018; VanFossen, 2005).

While some might see this as a positive, the implication could be troubling, if one believes, as Winter (2013) did, that the EWT leads to a “sidestep [of] some of the moral, ethical, or legal arguments that often are used in public policy debate” (p. xv). By divorcing these elements from economic reasoning, students taught the EWT are left to assume that in a variety of political situations, market-based forms of governing should replace collective or democratic governance (Weeks, 2018; Zuidhof, 2014). This results in what Earle et al. (2016) have termed an ‘econocracy’, or a government system where “power is given to economic experts . . . to shape political goals and means of achieving them” (p. 14).

In addition to limiting acceptable political debate, thinking like an economist in traditional terms has the potential to reinscribe status quo assumptions about race and sex (Adams, 2019a; Adams, 2019b; King & Finley, 2015). Consider the CEE’s (2000) six assumptions of the traditional EWT listed at the beginning of the section (People choose ..., etc.) Using the raceless and sexless term people immediately obfuscates the intersectional nature of identity and associated systems of oppression that act on these components of identity. It should then come as no surprise that economics as a discipline is disproportionately white and male compared to other social sciences (Bayer & Rouse, 2016), and economic analysis often ignores race and sex (Feiner, 1994; King & Finley, 2015;
Thus, without alternate ways of thinking economically, students of economics will have a hard time conceptualizing these vital elements of understanding society in an economic sense, and thus will have an incomplete picture of how to take action to address these issues.

In K-12 economics education, standards and goals for economic education have remained relatively stable over the course of the last fifty years (Walstad & Watts, 2015). As Colander and McGoldrick (2009) put it, “introductory economics is being taught in a time warp” (p. 32), essentially teaching the EWT of decades ago, even as economists started to think differently in light of modern evidence, methods, and theory. Thus, even for those instructors who promote the EWT, it is “not at all clear that [they] are teaching students to think like a modern economist if they focus on older models while neglecting current research” (Schneider, 2012, p. 289). Paradigms such as behavioral economics have gained much attention in recent years in the field of economics more broadly, but K-12 standards, textbooks, and classroom practices remain wedded to the status quo assumptions of the EWT. Therefore, it is beneficial for teachers of economics to become familiar with alternative ways of thinking in economics. Specifically, the following sections outline some important advancements in economic thought through economists who have thought differently about the discipline of economics, its purpose, or its outcomes. Then, ideas are proposed that might integrate these ways of thinking into the K-12 classroom. Finally, implications of these ideas are discussed for teaching powerful and authentic social studies.

---

9 “The Prize in Economic Sciences is not a Nobel Prize. In 1968, Sveriges Riksbank (Sweden’s central bank) instituted “The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel”, and it has since been awarded by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences according to the same principles as for the Nobel Prizes that have been awarded since 1901” (Facts on the Prize in Economic Sciences, n.d.).
Illustrating the benefit to the economics discipline of a more demographically representative professional landscape, Elinor Ostrom, was awarded the prize “for her analysis of economic governance, especially the commons” (*The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel* 2009, n.d.). Essentially, her empirical work documented the way that property could be shared and managed by a community without either state intervention or privatization, undermining the idea of the ‘tragedy of the commons’ that had often been used to promote privatization (Ostrom, 1990/2015). By undermining the EWT that assumes humans should maximize expected utility at all times, she showed “potentially cooperative and sharing economic behavior was possible” (Wall, 2017, p. 54) provided that trust and cooperation were nurtured. Elements of these communal tenets show up in other paradigms of economic thought such as behavioral and institutional economics (Fischer et al., 2017), but these alternative perspectives are rarely a part of K-12 economics curriculum (Adams, 2019b; Gans, 2015; Marglin, 2012).

Thinking like an economist then, might not be about insatiably pursuing one’s best interest. The corollary to this is that markets and governments might not be the best way to coordinate these desires. Ostrom used the concept of a common-pool resource (CPR) to show how humans have shared water, forest, fisheries, and other resources. Getting students to think like an economist in this case requires us to set up and explore situations where students cooperate and coordinate their activity for the good of the group. What CPRs have students seen in their lives? What necessities for human life and flourishing might be converted into a CPR for the betterment of the community? Which of the conditions that Ostrom identifies as vital to avoiding the tragedy of the commons are most important? Who benefits from a continued emphasis on individualism and optimization prevalent in traditional economic education curriculum? These questions illustrate the opportunity to infuse broader questions into economics education with the application of a bigger toolbox of economic thought (Nelson, 2011).

**A communal lesson.** For an economics class to move beyond the individualistic norms of the traditional EWT, there must be a curricular emphasis on the value of community and the potential for resources to be shared for the good of the group. Therefore, cooperation and collaboration should be a constant in the way the class functions and be an explicit emphasis when discussing procedures, expectations, and norms. However, we must also design economic lessons to allow students to construct their own knowledge about the way resources are managed through a variety of EWT.

This lesson gives students the opportunity to test the tragedy of the commons and reflect on the costs and benefits of three different ways to manage communal resources. Split the class into three groups. Each group receives a Lego set, ideally the same one for all three groups. Tell students they will be graded individually based on their design and construction skills. You might give examples of a final design that would be an “A”, a “B”, etc. An “A” grade should be for a design that either uses all of the pieces or follows the directions included in the set. Descending grades should go to designs that are buildable with the majority of Lego pieces found in a set, with lower grades reserved for designs that use minimal pieces. Once students are in groups with their sets, distribute to each group the following rules for acquiring resources. See Table 1 in Appendix.

In Group 1, the privatization group, students who can access materials earliest will have the best chance of building an
interesting design but will likely not have enough resources to earn an “A” or even a “B” with their final product. This helps to demonstrate that even in a supposedly neutral system, there are inherent advantages and disadvantages based on historical circumstances and structures. In Group 2, government intervention, the instructor will reveal that the ‘director’s’ pieces will not be useable in the final product due to the cost of running the ‘government. This group member should be identified by the instructor after the resources have been acquired. They will have to produce a design together without the ‘overhead’ involved in running the government. Group 3 has free reign to cooperate and create together. Final grades can be awarded in a ceremony where each student brings their creation to the instructor to receive a grade in manner outlined in Table 2 in Appendix.

The debrief of the activity should include evaluations of the systems they simulated and a critical analysis of the existing economic system. Use the following questions to guide the evaluation of the simulation:

1. How did it feel to work in your economic system?
2. What were the benefits and drawbacks to how you acquired resources? How did these benefits and drawbacks affect the outcome?
3. Were you satisfied with your grade?
4. What would you do differently in your group next time?
5. How would advance knowledge of the rules affect your future choices?
6. If you could change the rules, how would you do it?

Further questions that would help guide a critical analysis of our existing economic system might include:

1. Which of the groups is most like our economy today?
2. Where do you see examples of the other groups?
3. What ‘rules’ are in place in our economic system?
4. How are those rules enforced?
5. What are some ways that people can change those rules?

Follow up lessons could allow students to seek to change these rules, or to research economic systems that align with their preferences from the game.

**Thinking like an economist through a religious perspective.** The combined global population of Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists represents more than half of the world’s people. These religions have important teachings that relate to ways of thinking like economists. Concepts such as reciprocity (Raworth, 2017), justice (Reardon et al., 2018), and love and compassion (Benería et al., 2016) are incompatible with traditional EWT, yet are vital components in many faith traditions. By excluding these concepts, traditional ways of thinking like an economist can deny closely held beliefs to promote ways of being at odds with centuries of religious teachings in Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism.

Traditional ways of thinking like an economist assume that people make choices in response to incentives. This component of the EWT is used to justify the neoclassical axiom of optimization (Arnsperger & Varoufakis, 2006). In short, optimization is the principle that “all behaviour is preference-driven or, more precisely, it is to be understood as a means for maximising preference-satisfaction” (p. 8). Generally, this results in a picture of an economic actor that is insatiably making choices that increase satisfaction. Unfortunately, the traditional EWT struggles to account for preferences that do not have a monetary attachment (Graupe, 2012; Schneider & Shackelford, 2001), thus ignoring the voluminous reasons one might make a decision, and particularly a decision that is not in one’s best financial interest. The work of scholars who apply theological lenses
to economic behavior can help sort out these choices and, given the significance of religion to human activity, provide a relevant way of thinking to economics students from a variety of faith traditions.

Hay’s (2004) Christian analysis of economics offers several principles that stand in contrast to traditional EWT notions of self-interest. He explores biblical passages relating to stewardship of resources, or “the insistence of the Law that the land ultimately belonged to God (Leviticus 25)” (Hays, 2004, p. 73); work, where “[Paul] writes to the Thessalonians: ‘... we urge you ... to work with your hands, just as we told you’ (1 Thessalonians 4:10-11)” (Hays, 2004, p. 55); and distribution of wealth:

the condemnation of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21) ... the rich man ... (Luke 16:19-31) ... the teaching about covetousness, forbidden in the tenth commandment, and paced by Jesus in the same list with such evils as murder and adultery (Mark 7:22) (Hays, 2004, p. 76)

Through these textual interpretations, he shows how a Christian might make the economic choice to protect the environment rather than profit; to cooperate and apply their talents for the good of society, rather than their own net worth; or to delimit the amount of profit one person can accrue so that all can share in God’s abundance. While some may critique his theological interpretations of specific passages (Preston, 1990), his thoughtful application of biblical teaching offers a crucial expansion of economic thought for Christian and non-Christian economic students alike and challenge the notion that to be human is to constantly seek maximum utility.

A final religious tradition that might challenge the acquisitiveness inherent in the EWT conception of optimization is Buddhism. Buddhist economics contains several contrasting principles to traditional forms of the EWT including minimizing suffering, simplifying desires, practicing non-violence, genuine care, and generosity (Zsolnai, 2007). While the EWT leads to assumptions about an economic framework that will “maximize profit, desires, market, instrumental use, and self-interest and tends to build a world where ‘bigger is better’ and ‘more is more’” (p. 152), Buddhist economics offers an EWT that emphasizes minimalism (Schumacher, 2010) and proposes that humans are interdependent with nature and one another (Brown & Zsolnai, 2018). For students of economics, this EWT might open the door to recognizing that optimization through endless consumption and production and compounding interest stand in contrast to a physical world of entropy; finance as an industry produces no tangible goods yet is considered a priority for our economic survival; and fractional reserve banking puts the power of money creation into private hands. Given that Islamic teachings and religious texts prohibit usury (a concept that is also addressed in Christian and Judaic texts, among others), a banking structure based on Islamic tenets would avoid the deleterious consequences of interest in the economic system. An Islamic banking structure would share profit, eradicate fractional reserve banking, and create a new economic system that is more stable and charitable (El-Diwany, 2003; Lasn, 2013). The financial system has evolved to allow people to pursue their best interest and is a representation of traditional EWT in the way that it produces the opportunity to optimize one’s choices. Islamic ways of thinking economically provide a useful tool to question the faith that is put in these systems to coordinate decisions.
will have destructive ends for the environment and the self.

A religious lesson. The drawbacks to an EWT based on optimization can be addressed through the use of religious analysis of economic behaviors. There are opportunities to explore these concepts in classes where major religions are studied. Often, in geography, students explore the theology of a variety of faiths. Yet there is rarely attention to tenets of faith that relate to economic behaviors. By first addressing the way economic principles are addressed in holy texts, social studies teachers can then further address the way beliefs might manifest in economic systems that align with many faith traditions. As described above, in Christianity this includes cooperation, applying talents for the good of society, and limiting individual profits; for Islam, this includes the prohibition of usury and the resulting emphasis on economic stability and charity; for Buddhism, this includes prioritizing minimalism and satisfaction achieved without relentless consumption.

With these tenets in mind, students will take part in a comparative activity using the game Monopoly. In groups, students should play the game through the rules as written. While this game was originally conceived of as a critique of the fundamental injustice of capitalism (Pilon, 2015), it has become a how-to for capital acquisition, private property rights, and the insatiable pursuit of profit. After absorbing the lessons of the game as written, groups should be instructed to develop their own set of rules for the game that align with a specific faith tradition’s economic way of thinking. Studying tenets of religious thought that relate to economics thoroughly, and from a variety of perspectives, might lead to some interesting outcomes. For example, students might develop rules for Christian Monopoly that could include a wealth ceiling that redistributes profits to ‘the least of these’. Student-generated rules for Muslim Monopoly might allow for interest-free loans and zakat from the profits derived thereof designated for the good of the community. Buddhist economics might result in students disallowing development on properties to sustain existing resources. Certainly, student creativity will supersede these novice ideas, but discussion afterward can be focused on the following:

1. Why are these tenets rarely present in our economic system as represented by traditional Monopoly rules?
2. Who benefits from the absence of religion in economic discourse?
3. How could these tenets be applied in a system that is more aligned with the original rules of Monopoly?
4. What actions can we take on a micro scale to live out the values and beliefs of our culture?

Further lessons might explore other religious economists or lead to the creation of a social business (c.f. Whitlock, 2015, 2017) that aligns with religious tenets that are widespread.

Thinking like an economist through a storytelling perspective. If students of K-12 economics walk away from their class knowing one concept, it may be supply and demand. The simplicity of the two lines, the ease of computation from the graph, and the concept of equilibrium seem to be intuitive. Yet, as Strassman and Polanyi (1995) remind us: "[I]lying just below the surface of apparently simple illustrative examples of economics writing is a complex of interwoven assumptions about the world" (p. 129). Equilibrium is important to the traditional EWT (Arnsperger & Varoufakis, 2006) because it allows economists (and economic

10 The idea for Monopoly rule alteration came from Dan Krutka, PhD on the Visions of Education podcast.
students) to make predictions about how behavior is likely to respond when a balanced system is stimulated in some way. Whether equilibrium actually exists in the world is usually left unquestioned (Bögenhold, 2010; Ötsch & Kapeller, 2010), and often there is an added supposition that “supply and demand will transform inherent conflict between producers and buyers into a beneficent equilibrium” (Reardon et al., 2018, p. 6). Given that equilibrium is seen as beneficent, a market is ideal under these assumptions as it will allow for the most freedom and growth (Rai & Waylen, 2013) and interference in these markets for the purpose of provisioning would alter those conditions negatively (Feiner & Roberts, 1999; Nelson, 1992, 1996).

The traditional EWT tells a story of equilibrium and markets, but casts it as a universal truth. Economic thinkers who have used rhetorical analysis to deconstruct these assumptions have an EWT as well: one that shows the complex, interwoven nature of economic storytelling.

A vital critique of the story of the traditional EWT is McCloskey’s (1998) rhetorical analysis of the discourse of economics. By recognizing that the models, statistics, and arguments that make up economic discourse are really “figures of speech – metaphors, analogies, and appeals to authority” (p. xix), we can begin to see a story take shape. Importantly, this rhetoric holds power, for using terms “such as ‘model,’ ‘theory,’ or ‘law’ are borrowed from the natural sciences and connote scientific credibility” (Strassmann, 1993, p. 158). One can see this play out in terms of equilibrium under the traditional EWT. Routinely, when policies are proposed, and their outcomes are evaluated, some “economist will complain, saying ‘It's not an equilibrium.’ ‘Not an equilibrium’ is the economist's way of saying that she disputes the ending proposed by some untutored person” (McCloskey, 1998, p. 14). By ceding the power of storytelling to economists schooled in the traditional EWT, possible political solutions to a variety of public issues are constrained to specific endings found in one genre of story, neoclassicism. Giving students the tools to construct their own economic stories can be a powerful step to opening the range of possibilities for civic action in social studies (Author, 2019).

A storytelling lesson. Counterstorytelling is an element of a variety of transformative approaches to teaching that seek to disrupt dominant narratives in schools and society (Brayboy, 2006; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Demoiny & Ferraras-Stone, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso, 2013). Thinking like an economist who recognizes the dominant narrative inherent in traditional EWT (Author, 2018) carries with it the obligation to tell counterstories of an EWT that doesn’t assume equilibrium and promote free market capitalism to sustain it (Reardon et al., 2018). Counterstorytelling has the potential to be relevant and humanizing in economics and if properly implemented can connect critical emphases in social studies to economic pedagogy (Author, 2019).

This lesson uses the concept of a minimum wage to both deconstruct the traditional story of equilibrium and to offer students the opportunity to write their own economic stories. Traditional economic discourse assumes a labor market in equilibrium, thus “the amount of labour demanded by firms decreases, while the amount of labour supplied by workers increases, cumulatively causing unemployment” (Reardon et al., 2018, p. 36). Rather than begin a lesson on minimum wage from this point, students should do their own research on what it means to live on the minimum wage. Important data to be included in this research would in include the minimum wage in their state or municipality, what a full-time worker takes home from a minimum wage job and the cost of living in
their local area, including housing, food, utilities, transportation, healthcare, childcare, etc.

They can then write a story about surviving on this wage. Importantly, this story should include the considerations they need to make to survive on this income. Teachers might also want to provide a standpoint from which to write this story. For example, a single person in their early twenties might write a story about finding roommates or living in a studio apartment, options that wouldn’t be available to a single parent.

Finally, students should research minimum wage trends, changes in their local cost of living and determine the minimum wage necessary to live a fulfilling life. They might even write a contrasting story about life on this wage. These reports and stories can be presented to appropriate political authorities as advocacy for raising the minimum wage. Given the specious and disputed connection between unemployment and minimum wage (Card & Krueger, 1995; Doucouliagos & Stanley, 2009), these stories are a more humanizing way to influence policy than the assumption-laden narrative that has driven minimum wage policy debates in the past. Students can then ask broader questions about the stories told in traditional EWT such as:

1. Who is included in these narratives? Who is missing?
2. What elements of human flourishing are included and excluded?
3. What are the economic priorities that go unspoken in this EWT?
4. What has been the net impact of the traditional EWT?
5. What other stories can we tell that would illustrate new ways of thinking?

Further lessons should ask students to critically evaluate the ramifications of this narrative as it relates to a variety of policies and offer new narratives that could inform civic action.

Powerful, Authentic Social Studies and New Economic Ways of Thinking

Thinking like a range of economists is a vital pursuit in social studies classes concerned with teaching powerful and authentic social studies. As laid out by the NCSS (2016), teaching and learning powerful and authentic social studies means that social studies is meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging and active. If we fail to consider alternative EWT in favor of exclusive adherence to traditional EWT, we cannot fulfill these admirable goals for social studies education. If social studies is to be meaningful, teachers must be “well informed about the nature and purposes of social studies [and] have a continually growing understanding of the disciplines they teach” (NCSS, 2016, p. 181). The National Council for Economic Education (NCEE) remains committed to traditional EWT because they believe that alternatives beyond neoclassical economics would leave teachers and students “confused and frustrated” (NCEE, 2010, p. vi) by unfamiliar concepts. On the contrary, EWT that include community, religion, and storytelling might be more relevant and they have much to offer in terms of the purpose of social studies. Integrative learning in social studies includes integration of the various social studies disciplines, to be sure, but also includes balancing “the immediate social environment of students and the larger social world, through examining multiple viewpoints” (NCSS, 2016, p. 181). These viewpoints in economics are expansive and deserving of greater examination.

Traditional EWT based on neoclassical principles has been critiqued by some as unrealistic and impersonal (Adams, 2019a) and a way to enforce disciplinary rigidity (Nelson, 2001; Schneider & Shackelford,

Adams, E. C. (2019b). Twenty years of economics curriculum: Trends, issues, and transformations?


Bögenhold, D. (2010). From heterodoxy to orthodoxy and vice versa: Economics and social sciences in


way of thinking”: Approaches and curricula for teaching about social issues through economics. In S. Totten & J. Pedersen (Eds.), Teaching and Studying Social Issues: Major Programs and Approaches (pp. 169–194). IAP.


About the Author. Neil Shanks is a Clinical Asisstant Professor at Baylor University. He can be reached via email at: Neil_Shanks@baylor.edu.
Appendix

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1 - Privatization</th>
<th>Group 2 – Government Intervention</th>
<th>Group 3 – Communal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In alphabetical order, each group member can take one handful of Lego pieces out of the entire set to build their design.</td>
<td>This group will also grab pieces in alphabetical order, but one group member will be able to direct the group to build a design together.</td>
<td>They do not have restrictions on how to acquire materials and are simply given the opportunity to build a design together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this system, individuals are responsible for acquisition of resources, labor required to turn the resources into finished goods, and the eventual ‘profit’ in the form of a grade.</td>
<td>In this system, there is a command structure that doesn’t include control over the collection of materials, but does allow for centralized planning of the use of resources and the outcome.</td>
<td>This system does not involve a centralized planning structure or a command structure, but institutes Common-Pool Resources (CPRs) and gives students the opportunity to collaborate for the betterment of the group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1 – Privatization</th>
<th>Group 2 – Government Intervention AND Group 3 - Communal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members bring their individual creations to the instructor with letter or point grades awarded individually</td>
<td>Members are also graded individually, but one at a time, allowing each group member to bring up the collaborative creation for the instructor to evaluate. In this way, members of both the government intervention and communal groups receive the same grades, but through their cooperation they all have access to their shared product. The difference between the two is the acknowledgement of the efficiency of Group 3’s CPR use over the command structure implemented in Group 2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Studies Weekly is a Utah-based publishing company that creates curriculum materials for elementary- and middle-level science and social studies classrooms. According to the company’s website (https://www.studiesweekly.com/about-us/), Studies Weekly was founded in 1984 by a fourth-grade teacher named Paul Thompson and as of December 2019 there were 6,050 school districts, 13,479 schools, and 4,341,719 students “using Studies Weekly.” In 2017, California and Florida, two of the three states in the U.S. with the highest public-school student populations, became the seventh and eighth states to adopt the company’s social studies materials (Mogilevsky, 2017). Noted prominently at the top of the website, the company’s mission reads: “Studies Weekly is a customized, standards-based curriculum founded on deep learning strategies designed to increase student knowledge, skills, and dispositions for well-being” (emphasis original). Given that Studies Weekly has become more prominent in classrooms across the United States, this article explores the Pennsylvania Studies Weekly kindergarten curriculum, seeking to understand its content, structure, and pedagogical underpinnings.

Studies Weekly is a highly visible component of National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) annual meetings. At the 2018 gathering in Chicago, attendees who wore their name badges explicitly endorsed the company as the top of the NCSS-issued badges read, “StudiesWeekly®,” next to the company’s partial-apple logo. Underneath, it read, “STANDARDS-BASED CURRICULUM.” On the attached blue lanyard, the same messaging repeated with one addition: “Learn to live!™” No other messaging—from another conference sponsor or about anything else—was visible on the badge and lanyard. At the 2017 NCSS annual meeting in San Francisco, attendees wore the exact same badge and lanyard. At the 2015 meeting in New Orleans, there was a slight modification: the top of the badge had the company’s full-apple logo next to “StudiesWeekly®” and underneath, it read, “America’s New Textbook.” The lanyard had the repeated messaging of the apple logo and the statement “LET FREEDOM RING!” From these badges, it is clear that Studies Weekly has been a major sponsor of NCSS annual meetings; this makes sense as meeting attendees are a prime audience for Studies Weekly.

Studies Weekly has also moved into the spotlight of the popular press. In 2018, a school district in Indiana “officially severed ties with the Studies Weekly materials vendor” (Kruse, 2018, para. 6) after parents complained that the materials asked their children to simulate slavery. These complaints led to the company conducting an internal review of its materials, which “found more than 400 examples of racial or ethnic bias, historical inaccuracies, age-inappropriate content, and other errors in the materials” (Schwartz, 2019, para. 5). The review prompted the company to form a “diversity board” that Studies Weekly CEO John McCurdy said was charged “to help us find these problems, fix them and better serve students and teachers across the nation” (Studies Weekly, 2019, para. 3).

Despite this recent controversial history of the company as well as its prominence at NCSS annual meetings and in U.S. classrooms, we are aware of no independent, published research regarding the content or use of Studies Weekly.
Therefore, in this article, we examine the content and presentation of the kindergarten series of Studies Weekly materials created for Pennsylvania schools and how the content, structure, and pedagogical underpinnings fit within prominent approaches to social studies education. We focus our research on the Pennsylvania materials because Studies Weekly contends that it “writes its curriculum to align with the standards of each state it services” (Studies Weekly, 2019, para. 2). We are Pennsylvania residents and work closely with students, in-service teachers, and pre-service teachers across the state. This is also why we have sought to publish this research in Social Studies Journal, the journal of the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies. We focus on kindergarten because it is the introductory grade level for most Pennsylvania elementary schools as well as the beginning point of Studies Weekly’s curriculum sequence. Further, in the limited reporting that we have found related to parent criticisms of Studies Weekly’s materials (e.g., Kruse, 2018; Schwartz, 2019), there has been no mention of kindergarten.

We begin the following section by reviewing prominent approaches to social studies education: powerful teaching and learning in social studies as outlined by NCSS, inquiry-based instruction as represented in the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework (C3 Framework), as well as Freire’s banking concept of education (1970/2005), which we found to be an important theoretical construct as we carried out this work. We then turn to our “manifest analysis” of the Studies Weekly materials, in which, as Bengtsson (2016) notes, the researcher “stays very close to the text, uses the words themselves, and describes the visible and obvious in the text” (p. 10).11 We conclude with a discussion of our central finding that Studies Weekly’s materials promote a haphazard, banking-style approach to education while failing to connect with Pennsylvania-specific standards.

**Powerful, Inquiry-Based Social Studies**

Over the past decade, the National Council for the Social Studies has made clear its stance on the characteristics of high-quality social studies curriculum. In 2017, NCSS released a position statement entitled “Powerful, Purposeful Pedagogy in Elementary School Social Studies” that laid out five essential characteristics of elementary social studies curriculum: meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging and active. We see these characteristics as critical components of excellent social studies instruction at the elementary level. According to NCSS, meaningful social studies is organized around students’ interests, is culturally relevant, and is differentiated. It is also coherent and comprehensive. In an apparent effort to push back against a heroes- and-holidays approach to elementary social studies, NCSS (2017) asserts, “Exclusive focus on food, fun, festivals, flags, and films is not an effective framework for social studies teaching and learning” (p. 187). Integrative social studies focuses on important social issues, requiring teachers and students to cross “disciplinary boundaries to address topics in ways that promote understanding and civic efficacy” (p. 187). Integrative social studies units incorporate standards from across the disciplines, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the social world. Students engage in “authentic action,” which inevitably leads to interaction with other content areas and is not “a grab bag of

11 In conducting this qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; White & Marsh, 2006), we work within a long history of textbook critique (e.g., Anyon, 1979; Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Kissling, 2015; Loewen, 2007).
random social studies experiences” (p. 187). Value-based social studies acknowledges that young students must “make daily decisions about democratic concepts and principles that are respectful of the dignity and rights of individuals and the common good” (p. 187). Democracy and its values must be taught, and learning experiences that engage students in democracy must be provided. This includes engaging with controversial issues, critical thinking, and the analysis of multiple perspectives. Challenging social studies asks students to engage in “research, debates, discussions, projects...and simulations that require application of critical thinking skills” (p. 188). Young children can and should grapple with compelling questions that have no easy answers. This challenging curriculum is inevitably active, engaging students in discovery learning where they must think critically. Teachers of active social studies “guide and facilitate rather than dictate learning” (p. 188). The elementary position statement encourages deep engagement with relevant social studies material. It builds on the NCSS vision laid out in the Early Childhood in the Social Studies Context position statement, which states that social studies is “best presented as part of inquiry-based learning experiences that put children’s interests at the heart of learning” (NCSS, 2019, para. 7).

The vision of social studies instruction described above aligns with NCSS’ College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework (2013). The C3 Framework follows an inquiry arc that allows students to pursue answers to compelling or enduring questions through varying disciplinary lenses and careful analysis of primary and secondary sources. The inquiry arc of the C3 Framework is a planning framework for the teaching of social studies and includes four dimensions: 1) the development of questions, 2) the application of social studies disciplinary skills, 3) the evaluation of sources and usage of evidence, and 4) the communication of conclusions (Grant, 2013). Made up of these components, the framework supports “students as they develop the capacity to know, analyze, explain, and argue about interdisciplinary challenges in our social world” (p. 6). As Grant (2013), an author of the C3 Framework, writes, the C3 Framework’s “inquiry arc...offers teachers multiple opportunities to involve students in powerful learning opportunities and to develop as thoughtful, engaged citizens” (p. 325). This kind of inquiry-based teaching invites curiosity and “divergent thinking” as students seek to understand the world around them through enduring questions designed by teachers and students (Marston & Handler, 2016, p. 365).

The C3 Framework is meant to be used across all grade-levels and corresponds with the meaningful, integrative, values-based, challenging, and active curriculum outlined in the NCSS elementary social studies position statement. Compelling questions in the C3 Framework, which are meant to guide the trajectory of the inquiry arc, are written around big ideas that ideally make the content being studied meaningful to students. Inquiry units integrate social studies with other subject areas, not only with language arts and literacy skills, but with relevant, real-world experiences. Values of critical democracy are embedded within the C3 Framework, as the inquiry arc concludes with students taking informed action. Finally, the acts of engaging in inquiry, investigating questions, and analyzing primary sources to find textual evidence to support arguments and action are all challenging and active endeavors. NCSS, then, clearly advocates for an active and engaged social studies.

Banking education. Grant (2013) notes that “the Inquiry Arc challenges some basic and long-held instructional practices” (p. 325). Indeed, the powerful, inquiry-based social studies for which NCSS advocates is at odds with a transmission, or “banking,”
method of education, wherein the teacher simply transfers “knowledge into the head of the students” (Veugelers, 2017, p. 414). In this model of education, “the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (Freire, 1970/2005, p. 72). Darder (2012) notes that this type of pedagogy is a “domesticating pedagogy” (p. 423), in which people are asked to “uncritically adopt the hegemonic language and cultural system imposed upon them by the dominant culture of the school” (2013, p. 26). Thus, humans become objects, not subjects, and only “have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store” (Freire, 1970/2005, p. 72). Banking education bypasses student choice, problem-posing, or other inquiry-oriented methods of instruction, wherein students grapple with critical questions related to their social worlds. This authoritarian style of education is at odds with NCSS’ social studies vision.

Despite numerous calls for powerful, inquiry-based, and justice-oriented approaches to social studies (Agarwal-Rangnath, Dover, & Henning, 2016; Busey & Waters, 2016; Castro, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2003; NCSS, 2013, 2017; Sibbett & Au, 2018), elementary educators find teaching social studies in robust ways—or teaching social studies at all—to be a challenge (Boyle-Baise, Hsu, Johnson, Serriere, & Stewart, 2008; Fitchett, Heafner, & Lambert, 2014; Heafner, 2018; VanFossen, 2005). Due to the limited time available to teach social studies in an elementary school day that is dominated by reading and math instruction (Ollila & Macy, 2018; VanFossen, 2005), social studies has been integrated into language arts by “happenstance” (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008, p. 233) or reduced to a focus on the stereotypical great figures of American history and national and religious holidays (Bolgatz, 2007; Lee, Menkart, & Okazawa-Rey, 2006). The introduction of the C3 Framework is one attempt from the social studies field to challenge these troubling approaches to the subject area. Still, readymade curriculum materials abound. Boasting total alignment to each state’s individual state standards and integration with English Language Arts standards, Studies Weekly represents one way that districts can attempt to ensure that social studies will be taught, even if through time meant for the teaching of English Language Arts.

**Studies Weekly’s 2018-2019 Pennsylvania Kindergarten Materials**

**Newspaper structure.** The curriculum comprises 24 weekly newspapers for students and one 48-page “Teacher Resource” booklet for teachers. The newspapers are organized into four quarters with six newspapers in each quarter. According to the “Weekly Curriculum Map” in the teacher booklet (pp. 2-3), the first quarter is meant for August-September; the second, October-December; the third, January-February; and the fourth, March-May. Each newspaper is four pages in length, resulting in 96 total pages across the series. As the teacher booklet makes clear, the structure of the four pages in each newspaper is the same: “Cover Story” (first page), “Look & Learn” (second and third pages), and “Fun And Games” (fourth page).

At the top of each first page, a banner reads “Kindergarten Studies Weekly” and notes the quarter and week number. Beneath the banner, each newspaper features a unique title as well as a related, brief textual passage. The title and textual passage typically overlay a picture or series of pictures possessing some relation to the title. For example, in the Week 1 newspaper, “Fun at School” (the title) and “We have fun at school. We like to learn!” (textual passage) are juxtaposed with a large picture of a smiling student sitting at a table holding scissors and paper while looking at the camera. On each first page is also a small
graphic that directs the reader to “Primary-Source Related Media” on a specified website (though none of the provided links went to actual websites). Much of the newspaper is graphic, but there are also many text features, which is a concern for kindergarten students, many of whom likely do not enter the grade with the ability to read such text.

The “Look & Learn” pages contain an assortment of pictures and texts that are ostensibly related to the theme of the newspaper. The newspaper’s title reappears at the top of each second page, and a small box at the bottom of that same page pertains to content standards. Common language at the top of this box reads,

These standards are representative of common kindergarten social studies curriculum standards. Please use them as a guideline to determine which of your state’s standards are addressed. You may view a detailed correlation of your state’s social studies standards with this publication at studiesweekly.com.

Beneath this common language is a bulleted list of standards related to that week’s topical focus. However, it is not clear from where these standards are derived. When we attempted to access the standards correlation for Pennsylvania noted in the common language, we found an empty page for kindergarten.12

A box with a line for students to write their names accompanies the title on all of the “Fun And Games” pages. Beneath this heading, a variety of activities across the 24 newspapers involve circling, coloring, drawing, matching, ordering, etc. In four of the newspapers—Weeks 1, 4, 10, 18—in the bottom righthand corner of the page, there is a recurring section titled “American Stories,” printed over a wavy U.S. flag. The section is introduced in Week 1:

Hi! This year Studies Weekly will tell you the story of our amazing country—the United States of America. You will learn about some American heroes and how they helped America become a great country. We hope you enjoy reading our “American Stories.”13

The three ensuing stories of the section are about the historical figures George Washington (W4), William Bradford (W10), and Salem Poor (W18). Additionally, one advertisement is printed on this back page of the newspaper, from Week 7, encouraging students to visit Studies Weekly’s website to “see cool videos, play fun games and earn reward points for reading articles online…”

Across the newspapers. Considering the 24 newspapers as a whole, there is no clear logic to the content progression. In the first quarter, the topical focus moves from “Fun at School” (W1) to “Where Are You?” (W2) to “Follow the Rules” (W3) to “Responsibility” (W4) to “Time” (W5) to “What is History?” (W6). While most of these topics are understandable as introductory to school and the subject of social studies, there is no apparent coherence in their progression. Rather, it is scattershot. The second quarter is similarly haphazard. The history focus at the end of the first quarter quickly shifts to geography (“Where Do You Live,” W7) but then moves back toward history (“Timelines,” W8). Then comes “Needs and Wants” (W9) before returning to history (“The First Thanksgiving,” W10). “The Earth” (W11) harkens back to Week 7, as does

12 There were also empty webpages for first grade and second grade in Pennsylvania; third grade and fourth grade did have Pennsylvania-related standards-correlation pages.

13 This pronouncement about learning “the story of our amazing country” is reminiscent of Harold Rugg and Louise Krueger’s prominent, then-controversial elementary- and middle-school textbooks of the 1930s (see Kissling, 2015).
“Seasons” (W12). The third quarter begins topically where the second left off, with “Weather” (W13), but then the following week’s focus is “Good Citizens” (W14) before returning to geography (“Maps and Globes,” W15; “Which Way?,” W16; “Holidays Around the World,” W17). After this three-week geography sequence—that is not explicitly named as a progression for students nor teachers—six of the final seven weeks focus overtly on the United States, across topics such as famous leaders, holidays, consumption, work, and money. Therefore, across the 24 newspapers, many weeks see topics unrelated to the prior week, and, for weeks when there is some semblance of continuity, there is no explicit connection building on what had come before. Conceptual coherence simply is not a priority.

Despite the company’s motto “STANDARDS-BASED CURRICULUM,” the weekly progression does not correspond to a curricular logic that is specific to the state or another organizing feature. The standards listed on the second page of each newspaper do not correspond to Pennsylvania standards, nor any explicit scope and sequence organization. With respect to the four main disciplines of social studies— civics, economics, geography, history—the progression jumps back and forth (See Table 1). In sum, eight newspapers focus primarily on geography, six on civics, six on history, and four on economics.

| Table 1: Disciplinary Focus of the Newspapers Within Each Quarter |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                         | Q 1 | Q 2 | Q 3 | Q 4 | Total |
| Civics                   | 3   | 0   | 1   | 2   | 6       |
| Economics                | 0   | 1   | 0   | 3   | 4       |
| Geography                | 1   | 3   | 4   | 0   | 8       |
| History                  | 2   | 2   | 1   | 1   | 6       |
| **Total**                | 6   | 6   | 6   | 6   | 24      |

While haphazard, the progression does revisit disciplines and topics, which suggests that the curriculum authors may be following Bruner’s (1960) spiral curriculum, returning multiple times to similar content (e.g., kindergarten students are asked four times over the year to find their state on the map and color it). Yet it appears that the writers might most value the curriculum’s relevance to holidays and the United States over coherence. Columbus Day, Thanksgiving, winter holidays (including the celebrations of Christian, Jewish, and Hindu religions), Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Black History Month, Valentine’s Day, and President’s Day are represented in some form. The newspaper weeks in which these holidays are presented do not necessarily correspond to when the holidays take place during the year as the newspaper weeks are not explicitly aligned with actual weeks of the year. Perhaps this is caused by the curriculum’s attempt to apply to students across Pennsylvania and its 500 unified school districts, but the result is incoherence. With respect to an overt focus on the United States, 17 of the 24 newspapers explicitly attend to U.S.-related topics (See Table 2).

| Table 2: U.S. Focus Within Disciplines in the Newspapers Each Quarter |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                         | Q 1 | Q 2 | Q 3 | Q 4 | Total |
| Civics                   | 2   | 0   | 0   | 2   | 4       |
| Economics                | 0   | 0   | 0   | 2   | 2       |
| Geography                | 1   | 2   | 3   | 0   | 6       |
| History                  | 1   | 2   | 1   | 1   | 5       |
| **Total**                | 4   | 4   | 4   | 5   | 17      |

In comparison to the overwhelming focus on the national scale, not one of the newspapers is specific to Pennsylvania, even though the company touts its materials as state-specific.

Within individual newspapers. In some of the newspapers, the listed standards and content are unrelated to the week’s topical focus. For example, the first newspaper, titled “Fun at School,” with a first-page textual passage of “We have fun at school. We like to learn!” presents somewhat-related statements on the second
page—e.g., “Our teachers help us learn new things every day” and “Friends share. Friends care. Friends take turns. Friends are fair.”—alongside photos of happy, interested students. The third page, though, shows a full-page photo of children crossing their hearts with their hands while silently staring at a foregrounded U.S. flag. The words of the Pledge of Allegiance are printed at the top of the page. The fourth page, then, asks students to match pictures from different places of a school, including a flag detached from its classroom flagpole, as well as to color “the hidden picture” (a U.S. flag) with numbered directions for where red, white, and blue go. The final part of the page is the introduction to the “American Stories” section mentioned above. For these four pages, the listed standards on the bottom of the second page read:

- Recognize the importance of U.S. symbols.
- Describe the relative location of people, places and things by using positional words.
- Describe the different kinds of jobs that people do and the tools or equipment used.
- Demonstrate the characteristics of being a good citizen.

The only listed standard that applies to the content of the newspaper is the first one, as the U.S. flag is presented as a symbol (although there is nothing that explains what a symbol is or why the flag qualifies as one). None of these standards has any connection to the “Fun At School” title, showing how there is a lack of coherence—and alignment with stated standards—in individual newspapers as well as across the entire set of newspapers.

Pedagogical presentation. Looking across all 96 pages of the newspapers, it is clear that the curriculum is scripted. That is, it is pre-planned and packaged, with the entire set of materials shipped off to teachers prior to the start of the school year. This orientation, then, is a curriculum focused foremost on particular subject matter—what Aoki (1991/2005) called “curriculum-as-plan” (p. 159)—and not a curriculum focused foremost on students and their unfolding experiences—what Aoki called “curriculum-as-lived-experience” (p. 160). It is difficult for any scripted curriculum to be attuned to specific children’s interests. Mass produced and created for state-wide audiences (or nation-wide audiences, as appears to be the case with the kindergarten newspapers), Studies Weekly on its own is not culturally relevant nor suited to individual students’ interests. Although it is replete with text-to-self connections and activities meant for students to connect content with their prior knowledge (e.g., the second page of Week 4’s newspaper asks, “What responsibilities do you have at home?” and “What responsibilities do you have at school?”), true culturally relevant curriculum develops in students a critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995) of the world around them and connects meaningfully with children’s lives. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), critical consciousness is the “broader sociopolitical consciousness” that enables students “to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (p. 162). These Studies Weekly materials do no such thing.

Throughout the newspapers, there is an obscured-yet-commanding, seemingly-omniscient, authorial voice. It is an authoritative voice that declares “We have fun at school” (W1) and “A citizen is someone who lives in a city, town or country” (W3) and “Patriots are people who love their country” (W18). The voice is never named or contextualized; it just is. What this means, then, is that the content is presented as Truth with a capital T—fixed, certain, unquestionable—even though, for example, not everyone has fun at school and citizens
and patriots can be—and are—conceived of in many different ways.

Resulting from this authorial voice, social studies is implicitly framed akin to the banking concept of education, in which there is set content to be dumped into students’ empty-receptacle brains. It is merely acquisition of uncomplicated knowledge. There is no critical inquiry nor concern for higher-order thinking. For example, the Week 6 newspaper celebrates Christopher Columbus in five simple sentences:

Christopher Columbus was a famous explorer. An explorer is someone who looks for new places. On Columbus Day, Americans honor Christopher Columbus. Columbus Day is the second Monday in October. Christopher Columbus was born in Italy.

There is no acknowledgment or question-raising about the injustices of colonialism, the brutality of Columbus and his men toward Indigenous peoples, and the present-day resistance by many U.S. citizens, cities, and states to Columbus Day. This presentation of Columbus and other topics (e.g., Pilgrims, W10; “Presidents and Patriots,” W18; “Money,” W24) is what Seixas (2000) names as the “best-story approach,” in which a grand narrative washes away complexity in favor of a simplistic, moralizing, mythologizing lesson that students are not asked to question or explore but to accept as Truth.

Another off-shoot of the authorial voice’s banking approach involves the ways in which students are directed to complete work on the “Fun And Games” page of each newspaper. All tasks are framed through imperatives. For example, in the Week 14 newspaper about “Good Citizens,” students are asked to “listen and follow along while your teacher reads each sentence,” then “Circle yes if the sentence is correct. Circle no if the sentence is not correct” (emphasis original). The three sentences are: “Good citizens obey the laws,” “Voting is a fair way to decide,” and “Good citizens are not kind and helpful.” The authorial voice laying out these commands is one that most students likely know well. We contend that there is a host of implicit messaging in such commands, as well as in the larger presentation of content in the newspapers.

Critically Considering the Studies Weekly Materials

Mindful of calls for powerful, inquiry-based, active, and challenging social studies curricula, we are concerned that Studies Weekly’s Pennsylvania kindergarten materials fail to meet the aims of a rigorous elementary social studies experience or even to meet content standards to which they claim to be aligned. The curriculum does not correspond to the powerful and purposeful approaches to elementary social studies as outlined by NCSS (2017) or inquiry-based teaching as outlined in the C3 Framework and instead is more reminiscent of a banking style of education. We found no signs of the five criteria for powerful and purposeful social studies, as the meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active characteristics are absent in the kindergarten materials. For instance, NCSS promotes curricula that are meaningful and relevant to students, while Studies Weekly is difficult to make relevant because of its one-size-fits-all design. Moreover, the kindergarten curriculum of Studies Weekly appears as more of “a grab bag” (NCSS, 2017, p. 187) of social studies than an integrated and thoughtful approach to social or classroom issues. NCSS (2017) promotes curricula that engage young people in “frequent opportunities to make daily decisions about democratic concepts and principles” (p. 187) and “transcends the simplistic ‘character virtues’ approach to values education in elementary schools” (p. 188). Yet Studies Weekly offers students no
opportunities to engage in decision-making, instead using an authoritarian pedagogical voice to tell students what to think and believe rather than to ask them to co-construct knowledge. Lastly, NCSS encourages an active and diverse pedagogy but Studies Weekly is designed for banking-style education. If conceived of as discrete activities, no activity in any Studies Weekly newspaper fits NCSS’s definition of challenging or active social studies. Indeed, the curriculum is devoid of controversy, simulation, multiple perspectives, or project-based learning.

Moreover, many social studies teacher educators who advocate for inquiry-based teaching in their pre-service education classes and professional learning experiences already find it difficult to cultivate inquiry-oriented thinking and teaching in pre-service teachers who have been socialized into more didactic, authoritarian modes of teaching. Field experiences do little to cultivate such teaching, as “all too often field placements do not provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to practice what they have been taught in methods classes” (Crocco & Marino, 2017, p. 3). Santau and Ritter (2013) also explain that because social studies is dominated by “student memorization of a seemingly endless number of disconnected facts” (pp. 255-6), it can be difficult to shift teachers’ understandings of the subject. As a result, “much of what actually happens in classrooms is influenced by such traditional understandings” (p. 258). Studies Weekly, neatly packaged for a teacher to hand out and use immediately with students with minimal preparation, encourages traditional ways of teaching—like the banking-style of education—that NCSS wishes to leave behind. Further, we see Studies Weekly’s own claim that it is a “customized, standards-based curriculum founded on deep learning strategies designed to increase student knowledge, skills, and dispositions for well-being” (emphasis original) as a falsehood. The curriculum is instead one-size-fits all, and aligned to a generalized set of standards that does not align with Pennsylvania’s state standards specifically. The deep learning strategies defined by NCSS as ideal are also not present. Thus, we posit that a field dedicated to transforming traditional modes of teaching should find Studies Weekly and its popularity across the United States concerning.

Ultimately, social studies educators must question if Studies Weekly’s curricular materials are an appropriate way for young students to be introduced to social studies and learn to become effective citizens. As entire states and individual schools continue to adopt these materials, we must question how teachers, schools, teacher educators, curriculum developers, and researchers can work alongside each other to more fully understand this curriculum, to challenge decision-makers to seek out powerful alternatives, and, when those actions fail, teach pre-service teachers how to use ready-made curriculum materials in ways that are in alignment with the powerful, inquiry-oriented goals of the social studies field.

References


National Council for the Social Studies. (2013). *The college, career, and civic life (C3) framework for social studies state standards: Guidance for enhancing the rigor of K-12 civics, economics, geography, and history*. Silver Spring, MD: NCSS.


Seixas, P. (2000). Schweigen! die kinder! or, does
postmodern history have a place in the schools? In P. N. Stearns, P. Seixas, and S. Wineburg (Eds.), Knowing, teaching, and learning history (pp. 19-37). New York, NY: New York University Press.


About the Authors. Stephanie Schroeder is Assistant Professor of Education at The Pennsylvania State University. She can be reached via email at: ses572@psu.edu. Mark Kissling is Associate Professor of Education at The Pennsylvania State University. He can be reached via email at: mtk16@psu.edu.