Ways of Being a Social Studies Teacher: What are Prospective Teachers Thinking?

Alicia R. Crowe
Todd S. Hawley
Elizabeth W. Brooks
Kent State University

In this study we explored prospective social studies teachers’ memories of their middle and high school social studies teachers. Our goal was to determine what lessons, if any, their apprenticeships of observation taught them about teaching. Analysis of interviews with these prospective teachers indicated they talked about five ways of being a social studies teacher: an information giver, a content knowledge expert, a “character”, a caring, committed teacher, and “powerful.” After discussing these five ways of being a social studies teacher we present implications for teacher educators interested in building upon prospective teachers' initial conceptions of powerful social studies teaching and learning.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Social Studies Education, Apprenticeship of Observation, Pre-service Teachers, Social Studies Teaching, Social Studies Teacher Education

Introduction

The concept of an “apprenticeship of observation” has been a presence in teacher educators’ thinking about teaching since Dan Lortie (1975) framed the idea. Addressing the complex nature of the apprenticeship of observation, Pam Grossman (1991) recognized while it is true that prospective teachers arrive in teacher education programs having completed an apprenticeship of observation, “no students share the same set of experiences; in essence, all have watched a different show” (p. 349). Prospective teachers’ “memories of the same general activity, may yield distinctly different understandings of what the activity involves” (p. 349). As teacher educators, we have listened to our students refer to their past experiences when talking about concepts and ideas in our social studies teaching courses. The experiences they remember become part of the curriculum of the course whether we intend for this to occur or not. In designing this study we drew on Grossman’s understanding of the complex nature of the memories our prospective teachers bring with them into our program. We sought to understand our prospective teachers' memories of their social studies teachers. In our view, memories are an entree into the lessons they have learned from their apprenticeships of observation. We ultimately hoped to use our new knowledge of such memories as a means to add to the literature in social studies teacher education and also to reframe our own practice as teacher educators.

Literature Review

In the teacher education literature there is wide acceptance of the idea that prospective teachers arrive with conceptions of teaching developed during their Kindergarten-12 education
(Adler, 1984; Grossman, 1991; Lanier & Little, 1986; Lortie, 1975; Mahlios & Maxson, 1995; Ross, 1987; Segall, 2002; Slekar, 1998). The “apprenticeship of observation” advocated by Lortie (1975) articulated a vision of prospective teachers, and of all students for that matter, as holding a limited understanding of teaching. Despite years of watching their teachers teach, Lortie recognized that without access to their teachers’ thinking and decision-making strategies, prospective teachers are “not likely to make useful linkages between teaching objectives and teacher actions; they will not perceive the teacher as someone making choices among teaching strategies” (p. 63). Given their limited access to teachers’ thinking, many prospective teachers are left without any rationale for, or with little ability to, analyze their former teachers’ pedagogical decision making.

Building on Lortie’s work, Daniel Liston and Kenneth Zeichner (1991) explained how prospective teachers:

have initial ideas about what it means to be a good teacher, what content ought to be taught, how it ought to be taught, and the kind of classroom ethos they would like to create. They do not walk into professional programs as blank slates but rather as former (and current) students and as individuals who have intuitions, ideas, and at times a lot of doubt about their own and others’ educational ideas and practices. (p. 56)

Liston and Zeichner also described how prospective teachers enter their education programs with conceptions of teaching that reflect the values and practices of the teachers they had in school. Given that they were taught by teachers representing a range of orientations, progressive, conservative, and occasionally radical, it is not surprising that prospective teachers “frequently come to teacher education programs with particular teachers, if not particular orientations, in mind” (p. 56-57). Teacher educators unfortunately, often are unaware of the memories and orientations prospective teachers bring with them into their teacher education programs (Mahlios & Maxson, 1995).

The concept of the apprenticeship of observation has led to research and conversations about beliefs. The literature on the influence of previously held beliefs on prospective teachers' initial thinking about teaching was examined by Sharon Feiman-Nemser (2001), who determined that beliefs often “mislead prospective teachers into thinking that they know more about teaching than they actually do and make it harder for them to form new ideas and new habits of thought and action” (p. 1016). There is general agreement in the literature that beliefs serve as barriers to transformative learning within teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Kagan, 1992; Labaree, 2000; Richardson, 1996). We agree that prospective teachers enter our program with beliefs about teaching and that these beliefs could for be barriers for some. However, we feel that the only way to reach transformative learning is to deeply understand the many beliefs prospective teachers come with. Some of these are important to teaching, but not directly about the act of teaching, (i.e., beliefs about students’ intellectually capabilities, about what learning means, about what an urban school is or could be) while others are about what good teaching is. To better understand one aspect of how our prospective teachers are thinking about teaching when they enter our first methods course, we focused on their memories of previous social studies teachers.
The literature on social studies teacher education includes studies designed to explore the influence previously held beliefs have on prospective teachers' experiences in their teacher education programs. Several studies (e.g. Adler, 1984; Angell, 1998; Ross, 1987; Wilson, Konopak, & Readence, 1994) investigated connections between prospective teachers' previously held beliefs and their development regarding the teaching of social studies. Susan Adler (1984) and E. Wayne Ross (1987) focused on prospective teachers as they completed their teacher education programs. This initial line of inquiry highlighted connections between the apprenticeship of observation and the ways prospective teachers respond to their coursework and field experiences. Adler's (1984) work resulted in two distinct perspectives: the constructivist and the realist perspectives. Then, Ross (1987) developed a model of the processes of teacher perspective development that outlined these connections and how they mediate the experience of learning to teach social studies.

Building on the work of Adler (1984) and Ross (1987), a second set of studies by Elizabeth Wilson, Bonnie Konopak, and John Readence (1994) and Ann Angell (1998) explored the influence of prospective teachers' previously held beliefs on their experiences in their coursework and student teaching. These studies focused on connections, or disconnections, between prospective teachers' stated beliefs about social studies teaching and learning and their practices as student teachers. This line of inquiry demonstrated specific ways previously held beliefs influenced the process of learning to teach social studies. Wilson, Konopak, and Readence (1994) found that prospective teachers held positive conceptions of social studies when they entered their programs yet, these beliefs were not evident during student teaching. Findings from Angell's (1998) work showed how “belief restructuring appeared to be influenced by program elements that overlapped, giving force to new ideas, and by the extent to which the individual was willing to consider change” (p. 527).

A third line of inquiry exists focusing specifically on the influence of the apprenticeship of observation on prospective teachers' beliefs. These studies drew from teacher education literature focused on the influence of the apprenticeship of observation on prospective teachers' thinking about good teaching prior to entering their programs (Grossman, 1991; Mahlios & Maxson, 1995). Rather than focusing on the ways previously held beliefs influence their experiences in their teacher education programs, Timothy Slekar (1998) and John Chiodo and Terrell Brown (2007) sought to develop a deeper understanding of the sources of these beliefs. Future elementary social studies teachers were interviewed by Slekar about their experiences in middle school, high school, and university history and social studies courses. He ultimately wanted to make connections between their apprenticeships of observation and the participants' views of teaching social studies. Slekar concluded that prospective teachers “will replicate their apprenticeship of observations if they are not provided with the opportunity to explore their prior beliefs about teaching and learning history, and actually witness and experiment with alternative approaches” (emphasis in original, p. 494). The work of Slekar is important for demonstrating the influence of the apprenticeship of observation on prospective elementary social studies teachers' thinking about teaching history.

While Slekar’s (1998) study focused primarily on connections between the apprenticeship of observation and the teaching of history, Chiodo and Brown (2007) looked
more broadly at prospective teachers' beliefs and perceptions about teaching and learning in social studies prior to entering their program. Their study focused on prospective secondary social studies teachers' memories of social studies teachers. The study was structured around the “Draw a Social Studies Teacher (DASST) Evaluation Sheet” (p. 14). Participants were asked to “draw a picture of yourself as a social studies teacher, teaching students... [and] explain in writing what is going on in the picture” (p. 15). Participants then were interviewed about the drawing and written comments. From their study, data analysis revealed that participants’ thinking regarding:

the position of the teacher, the arrangement of the room, and the activities students were engaged in, all had a direct relationship to memories of their previous experiences in elementary and secondary school. Throughout their formal education these prospective teachers had developed a very detailed image of what it means to be a social studies teacher. (p. 19)

The work of Chiodo and Brown demonstrated that prospective teachers come with images of what it means to be a social studies teacher and there is therefore a need for teacher educators to learn about their students’ memories of their social studies teachers as part of designing engaging, worthwhile teacher education programs.

Our work builds on the work of Slekar (1998) and Chiodo and Brown (2007) by examining our prospective teachers' memories as apprentices in social studies classrooms. Rather than just accepting that each arrived having experienced an apprenticeship of observation, we wanted to know how their apprenticeships varied. With a more nuanced picture of the apprenticeships that our students brought into the teacher education program, we hoped to enable them to draw upon and trouble their memories as they began to develop their own purposes for teaching social studies. Like Slekar and Chiodo and Brown, our goal was to examine the varieties of apprenticeships our prospective teachers brought with them into our program. We hope to spark more examination of these apprenticeships to better inform our work as teacher educators.

Research Design
The results presented in this article emerged from a focused analysis of data from a longitudinal study of a social studies teacher education program and how the prospective teachers in the program experienced it. The question we sought to explore in this paper was: How do these prospective teachers remember the social studies teaching they experienced as they entered their first social studies teaching course?

The larger study from which this piece comes drew on the traditions of both interpretative (Borko, Whitcomb & Byrnes, 2008) and practitioner research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The findings from this aspect of the study focused on learning about where our students began to add to the body of knowledge around social studies teacher education and to better inform our decisions for improvements.

The entire study occurred at a large, mid-western university within a program to prepare teachers for social studies licensure in grades 7 through 12. Before taking their first social studies methods course, prospective social studies teachers take at least two state-
required prerequisite courses, must be accepted into advanced standing, and must have taken a secondary education specific general teaching course. If they complete their program with their cohort group, they begin their first social studies methods course in their sixth semester of their higher education work, subsequently taking the second social studies specific course with a practicum in the fall of their final year immediately before student teaching in the spring term.

One of our interests was to understand how prospective teachers thought about social studies teaching as they began their first social studies education course. Three selection criteria were created: (1) participants should be undergraduate or post-undergraduate Integrated Social Studies (INSS) majors who (2) had completed the first advanced standing course within the program but had not taken any social studies methods courses, and (3) were scheduled to take the first social studies methods course the next semester. We solicited participation from INSS majors during the final weeks of the fall semester 2008 at the end of a class session in the first advanced standing course in the program. At least one researcher presented an overview of the study, expectations of participants, and the potential for risks and benefits from participating in the study to each group of INSS majors. Those interested were encouraged to sign-up for the first interview at the end of the presentation or email to learn more. There were a total of 36 potential participants; 19 of those (53%) signed-up and participated. The data analyzed for this paper were gathered between the prospective social studies teachers’ secondary education general teaching course and their first social studies specific teaching course.

Most of the 19 participants interviewed were born and raised in Ohio, focused on History as an area of emphasis, and identify as white and middle class, reflecting the typical population for this program. Six participants were female (Anne, Donna, Jessica, Lauren, Stella and Susan) and thirteen were male (Alex, Charles, Dan, Daniel, Dave, Jason, Jeremy, John, Latimer, Michael, Sebastian, Tim and Xavier). All names used are pseudonyms. This proportion of female to male participants reflects the typical population of prospective teachers in the program. Twelve participants described growing up in either rural or suburban communities in Ohio and 16 attended high school in Ohio. Fifteen participants had a History emphasis within their major (3 females, 12 males). Of the four remaining participants, one focused on Sociology (1 female), one on Economics (1 female), and two on Political Science (1 female and 1 male).

Standardized open-ended interviews (Patton, 2001) were conducted with each participant meeting our selection criteria before they entered their first social studies methods course (see Appendix A for the interview protocol). This type of interview enabled us to capture variety in the ways the participants described their experiences while remaining consistent in what we asked each of them. Interviews with one of the researchers occurred five to six weeks before they began their first social studies methods course. Each lasted 30-60 minutes, was audio taped and then transcribed. Participants received a copy of the transcript from their interview. They were asked to examine the record, provide any additions or changes, and remove from the record any comments that they wanted removed.

A constant-comparison method of analysis as described by Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss (2008) was used to explore the data in multiple ways over time. First, each of the three
researchers analyzed transcripts holistically using open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). We then discussed our initial codes, including similarities and differences, to gain a shared sense of what appeared across their comments. Four codes initially emerged from our analysis of what the participants remembered of their social studies experiences. These codes were used to re-examine each transcript and to identify patterns across participants’ memories. From this re-examination we found five ways of being a social studies teacher emerging across their memories. As we examined transcripts, and the ways of being emerged, we were careful not to name the ways of being as good or bad but rather to watch for how the participants referred to the teachers or the ways of being.

Findings

The participants’ varied apprenticeships taught them many lessons about what it means to be a teacher. In particular, the prospective teachers’ memories appeared to describe five ways of being a social studies teacher: (a) an information giver, (b) a content knowledge expert, (c) a “character”, (d) a caring, committed teacher, and (e) “powerful.” Sixteen of the 19 participants spoke of more than one way of being a social studies teacher as they recalled their experiences. Only one participant focused on a single way of being a social studies teacher, while two spoke of their past experiences in such broad generalities that their comments could not be easily categorized. Although we separate their memories into the five ways of being a social studies teacher, it is important to consider that participants were not separating aspects for a particular teacher (i.e., some described different ways of being while discussing the same teacher).

Being an Information Giver

Being an information giver describes participants’ memories of teachers who gave notes, lectured almost all of the time, and assigned readings from the book. The information giver was seen by most participants as only interested in covering content and less concerned with student engagement. Eleven of the nineteen participants remembered this aspect of being a social studies teacher. Five spoke either neutrally or positively about this way of being a social studies teacher, five spoke only negatively about it, and one described information givers in both positive and negative ways.

Donna, like most of the participants describing their teachers as being information givers, shared memories of her social studies teachers as having a focus on notes, with little variety or attempt to engage students. Donna described more than one experience in her explanation. She shared that there was:

A lot of lecture really. Lecture was the main focus of most of my history classes. Some were more effective than others. One of my ninth grade teachers just stood up there and just kind of spewed words that nobody understood. ... And then government class was lecture. He was a little more dynamic than my ninth grade teacher but very few projects.

Many of the participants remembered information givers as less than engaging. Jason pointed out how his teacher was “very dry” and relied on an overhead projector to give notes. As he saw it, the teacher was simply saying, “here’s the notes, write them down [and] there will be a multiple choice test.” Eventually, it got to the point where this teacher “would hand you
the notes from the overhead that day so you could just underline or highlight the notes as you went along.” Jason, noted how “there wasn’t a whole lot of multimedia or [any] different sorts of technology going on in the classroom.” While most of the descriptions of the information giver were not as extreme as Jason’s, they demonstrate the range of potential ways of being an information giver.

Jason, like Donna, demonstrated that the participants could point out ways in which the information giver could have made class more engaging. From their responses, it seemed some participants had begun to develop a sense that being an information giver was not a way of being a social studies teacher they wanted to embody.

**Being a Content Knowledge Expert**

Being a content knowledge expert was another way of being a social studies teacher participants recalled from their experiences as a student. The content knowledge expert was a teacher who participants remembered as knowing the content, and in one case to the point of appearing obsessed with certain time periods in history. Remembering a Civil War History course, Tim talked about how his teacher “was obsessed with Lincoln, he knew the tiniest details of the Civil War down to decorations and things like that.”

Only four participants spoke of former social studies teachers as being content knowledge experts. One of these four seemed to associate being a content knowledge expert with being an information giver while the others did not. Daniel, the participant who shared a complex memory of both content knowledge expert and information giver, recalled two social studies teachers. He shared:

> My world history class, the teacher was, this was the teacher that was sarcastic that I didn’t really like, but he knew his content. ... He was just a lot of PowerPoint™, getting down to the nitty gritty talking about just getting the facts to us so that we knew them and we could pass…. The teachers knew their material, they weren’t the best teachers but they got their content across.

The other three participants did not associate information giving with being a content knowledge expert. Discussing his Advanced Placement (AP) European History teacher, Alex remembered how “he was really good, he knew his content. He was kind of a goofball [who] made the whole getting into the AP program for the first time less daunting.” Anne recalled social studies experiences where her teachers “know the subject, they love the subject.”

**Being a Character**

Participants often spoke about teachers being characters. This included teachers who joked around in their classes, might be unpredictable, or were “conspiracy theorists.” Eight participants of the nineteen discussed this aspect of being a social studies teacher. While their memories of these experiences were generally positive, being a character was seen by some as creating a less demanding class than when being a content knowledge expert or being powerful. Stella’s description of her sophomore high school history teacher illustrates this way of being a social studies teacher, “he was a little crazy, but it was a really fun class as well. He was like a very conspiracy theory oriented kind of guy, so it was kind of cool class as well.”
character also might be “unpredictable” (Dave) and/or humorous. Jason recalled many teachers:

They were all very humorous I’d say. They found humor in everything. They’d tried to just incorporate [humor] ‘cause I think they realized it was more of a dry or dull subject and they wanted to keep the kids entertained so they would always find ways of making jokes about different things or just adding humor here and there to keep kids’ attention.

Though some perceived the character’s class as a less rigorous classroom, they saw the teachers who were being characters in a positive light. Describing his Global Studies teacher, Charles explained how:

he was a really cool guy and he does global studies as well ... he was just cool about the whole thing. If you knew the information, you could get an A basically, it wasn’t one of those things where it was a really tough class or really demanding. I probably enjoyed that class more than any class that I took.

Several participants echoed Charles’ description of the character as having an enjoyable classroom but not an academically challenging one. Discussing his middle school social studies teacher, Sebastian explained how a particular teacher was:

Just very comical, but I don’t know if he meant to be ... he always had, like, we would sit there and watch film reels, like with the old school film in the projector deal, and that is what we did in, like, current events. But he was really funny and it was an enjoyable class.

He describes the class as enjoyable though it might not have been a place of deep learning. This is part of the complex memories our participants brought with them to the study and into our program.

**Being Caring and Committed**

Thirteen of the nineteen participants’ interviews revealed that being caring and committed as a teacher was important. Eight participants recalled experiences where their teachers were caring and committed, four recalled examples of their teachers not being caring or committed and one gave examples of both. Both the positive and negative descriptions revealed that these participants were entering their social studies methods course with some sense that caring about the students, the students’ learning and the subject as well as being committed to both teaching and the students was an important way of being a social studies teacher. Listening to their comments showed that being caring and committed was to them a positive attribute of being a social studies teacher.

Anne and Dave described two of their teachers. Anne described how her economics teacher considered the needs of his students and accommodated his practice for this:

He always used transparency covers on his [overhead projector] light when he did his presentations. He would put either like a yellow or a light green transparency cover over the light because he had learned somewhere that just the white light made people tired so quickly that if you used a different color it didn’t tire the eyes so people were more likely to concentrate on what you were saying instead of getting exhausted just looking at the information.

Dave described several caring and committed teachers together. To him:
They weren’t afraid to challenge students. They weren’t afraid to be different. They had a presence about them that you know they really cared. They were passionate about the material and they were passionate about how students were doing. How it affected their lives and they were very professional teachers. These first two examples represent examples of the participants describing memories that had positive connotations. Lauren instead conveyed a negative example. Her tone and reflections on this teacher were not positive. Through this and her words she conveyed the idea that caring and committed was how to be. She shared that the teacher:

didn’t seem like he wanted to teach. He was there to coach sports so he chose social studies because I think probably a lot of people choose that one ‘cause they think it is easy. He didn’t really seem like he wanted to be a teacher. He was just there to coach sports.

**Being “Powerful”**

Eleven participants spoke of their experiences in a way we termed being powerful. This designation describes teachers who taught with a variety of teaching methods, connected content to the students’ lives, promoted active student engagement, and helped students use information in ways beyond tests. We chose the term “powerful” because the participants’ descriptions of their memories closely resembled aspects of the National Council for Social Studies’ (NCSS) *Vision of powerful teaching and learning in the social studies* (1994). Participants consistently described being powerful as a positive way of being a social studies teacher. Overall, their comments showed that these eleven prospective teachers were entering their first social studies teaching courses program with some of their beliefs being that teachers who engaged their students in active, challenging work were good teachers.

Talking about her teacher in ways reflective of the NCSS vision of powerful, Anne remembered how her history teacher “was the one who first emphasized the idea of learning the concepts of history not focusing as much on specific dates whenever you didn’t need to.” She remembered her teachers working to help students see that “history was conceptual and that it was a story of what happened in the past and that’s something that we can take into the future”. Susan remembered one of her teachers creating a classroom environment that “was more like a forum of ideas.” Like Susan, John discussed a former social studies teacher who focused more on ideas and student engagement than memorization or content coverage. John’s teacher incorporated projects and made connections between the classroom and the world outside of school. For John, “incorporating the outside world especially our world today into teaching government is big because there is only so much you could do with the textbook and reading the textbook and testing kids about that kind of stuff.” Latimer recalled a teacher being powerful as well. He shared how this teacher would:

Take everything he talked about and he would kind of tie it back into how it would affect us in some way ... he’d just relate stuff back like that in a way that you actually started to care ... He did activities outside of just lecture notes ... we would have to write about different topics that were happening in the world. ...

He continued by explaining how his “8th grade civics teacher did stuff that was kind of outside the box ... a constitutional convention ... stock market game....”
Discussion

Although typologies run the risk of providing too narrow of an understanding of a phenomenon, they can be useful for exploring the nuances within the complexity of an experience. These ways of being a social studies teacher help us recognize places to begin in pre-service teacher education. A variety of ways of being can help provide a vocabulary that the prospective teachers and a teacher educator can share and build on.

The typology of five ways of being a social studies teacher is not meant to be exhaustive but representative of the participants’ memories in this case and an example of what teacher educators might consider as they think about their prospective teachers as learners and plan learning opportunities for them. In this study, 16 of the 19 participants remembered more than one way of being a social studies teacher showing that for these prospective teachers their apprenticeships of observation taught them a variety of ways of being a social studies teacher. From our work with this group and others, we have learned that many of our prospective social studies teachers come into our methods courses with varied thinking about what it means to be a teacher. If many of our students do enter our programs with complex and multiple visions of what it means to be a social studies teacher, they could experience tension in deciding what type of teacher to be. For us, understanding the variety of apprenticeship helped us consider some of the tensions we have observed our students grappling with while in the program.

This group of prospective social studies only shared experiences that showed five ways of being a social studies teacher. They did not remember social studies teachers being radicals, leaders, political actors, or global thinkers. It is possible that they had few to no examples of their teachers exhibiting these ways of being a social studies teacher, or they had yet to develop ways of seeing or talking about it. This could be seen as a barrier to the work of some social studies teacher educators who want their graduates to be leaders or global thinkers for example. We prefer to see this as an opportunity to introduce prospective teachers to more ways of being a social studies teacher than what they have directly experienced.

We see, within the ways of being a social studies teacher that these prospective teachers bring, at least two places to start conversations as a teacher educator. Recognizing where they begin, we can help them work towards other ways of being a social studies teacher. First, most of the prospective social studies teachers who participated in this study recognized being powerful as a way of being a social studies teacher. All who recalled this way of being saw it as positive. This finding tell us that these prospective teachers bring an initial recognition that part of being a social studies teacher means that students should be active and engaged in the learning process and that the content being studied should be relevant and meaningful for the students. If they come to our program perceiving being active, engaging, relevant, and meaningful as positive, then as social studies teacher educators we can provide a variety of ways for them to create these opportunities in their classrooms. As they learn to do this, we can facilitate conversations to consider other aspects of what "powerful" can mean. For example, the teacher educator can help the prospective social studies teachers begin to contextualize their practices in a larger context of democratic purposes, if that is a goal of the program. As they begin to learn multiple ways to plan active, engaging, relevant and meaningful lessons we can have them begin to contemplate the purpose behind these
activities. Second, these prospective social studies teachers described being caring and committed as a way of being a social studies teacher. If prospective teachers begin social studies methods courses already thinking that being caring and committed is a part of what it means to "be" a teacher, then teacher educators can leverage this and help them consider options of what to care about and what to be committed to. If a program's focus is on democratic education, then as teacher educators we can start engaging in activities that help the our students see caring about and being committed to democratic discourse, democratic values, and democratic living as a part of what it means to be a good social studies teacher.

Looking across the findings as a whole we see that most of these prospective social studies teachers began with a sense of what being a social studies teacher means to them. These prospective social studies teachers had learned many lessons from their apprenticeships of observation. As social studies teacher educators, we can use an understanding of where they begin as an initial step in guiding the transformation of our prospective social studies teachers from teachers who like content and kids to teachers focused on educating for democratic living. In essence, understanding how prospective social studies teachers see teaching provides teacher educators a framework within (and from) which to work.

**Implications for Practice**

Based on our findings, and our own experiences revising our curriculum based on those findings, we provide two recommendations for fellow social studies teacher educators. The first recommendation is to get to know what your students see as powerful social studies teaching and learning from the first class. This will help you identify where your particular prospective social studies teachers are in terms of their understandings of powerful social studies teaching and learning. You can do this through both research and class-based activities. An activity the first day of class might be to ask them to think about the most powerful social studies experience they have had as a learner. They then can talk with a peer sharing the experience in more detail. Next, ask the prospective teachers, in small groups, to begin to name the characteristics they saw across their experiences. As they work, they can come to the board to write these characteristics (one or two word descriptions). As groups share, you can help them unpack their experiences by asking questions like: Which of these characteristics are about the teacher? Which characteristics are about the instructional activities? What types of decisions might these teachers have made to design these activities? A variety of follow-up activities are possible depending on your purposes. You could, for example, provide a reading or two and ask the prospective teachers’ to consider them in light of the initial activity or, you could ask them to read five to seven articles from *Social Education, The Social Studies, Social Studies Research and Practice* and *Theory and Research in Social Education* and relate them to their powerful experiences.

Our prospective social studies teachers’ apprenticeships of observation taught them about five ways of being a social studies teacher. Their apprenticeships, however, did not seem to teach them about purposes for teaching social studies. Because of this we chose to focus more on helping our prospective teachers develop a clear sense of purpose. The second recommendation, therefore, is to focus on purpose from the first day of the social studies methods course to the last. Focusing on purpose can occur in many ways and, in our view, the
more different ways we focus on purpose the better. One way is through modeling. As teacher educators, we can model how our purposes guide our decisions. In this way, prospective teachers can see what practice guided by purpose looks like. Within the social studies methods class, we can provide our own rationales for decisions and practices. These can be on assignment descriptions as well as in our day-to-day explanations in class of what we are doing and how it ties to a larger purpose. As social studies teacher educators, we developed a vision for our social studies teacher education program. Over the time of the study and as we continue, we find new ways through assignments, class activities, and readings to consistently connect back to the vision. This is one way in which we model using purpose to guide practice.

Another way to help prospective teachers begin to focus on purpose is to engage them in developing their own rationales for social studies teaching. The notion of articulating a rationale for teaching in social studies was introduced by James Shaver (1977) and Fred Newmann (1970, 1977). Recent examples are found in the works of Hilary Conklin (2009), Todd Dinkelman (2009), and Todd Hawley (2010). We incorporated the development of a rationale into our program and offer this as a way to help prospective social studies teachers focus on the purpose(s) of teaching social studies. Our social studies prospective teachers now develop a draft rationale in the middle of the first social studies methods course and then a final draft at the end of that course based on readings, class activities, and their experiences. The prospective social studies teachers are asked to consider their rationales as they complete their summer reading assignments that occur between the two social studies methods courses. We begin the second course by revisiting their rationales in small group discussions and again as we discuss the summer readings. We revisit the notion of their developing a rationale in class discussions throughout both methods courses. We ask questions about why they are making their choices and how those choices connect to their ultimate rationale for teaching social studies. In the first unit the prospective social studies teachers teach, they are asked to connect their decisions to their rationales. When they move to student teaching we ask them to revisit their rationales, consider how their teaching practice aligns with their rationale or how their rationales are evolving.

Conclusion

Apprenticeships of observation teach lessons to prospective social studies teachers that are an important part of the ways they then experience their teacher education program (Grossman, 1991). The apprenticeships of the participants in this study were not monolithic or uniform across individuals; each person had their own apprenticeship. These apprenticeships and the diversity within and across them are important to understand as teacher educators to then be able to teach prospective teachers. Working with these ways of being we find among our own students may be valuable places to start in social studies teacher education courses. Teacher educators may also want to engage in some form of practitioner inquiry to learn more about where their students are in their thinking as they begin their programs. Additionally, the ways of being might be used by teacher educators as they consider different activities in class, interactions with their prospective teachers, and how to debrief a prospective social studies teacher’s teaching.
References


**Author Bios**

**Alicia R. Crowe** is an Associate Professor at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. She teaches many prospective and current middle and secondary level social studies teachers at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Her areas of interests include social studies teacher education, self-study research, and technology in social studies education. E-mail: acrowe@kent.edu

**Todd S. Hawley** is an Assistant Professor at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. His research interests include rationale development as a core theme of social studies teacher education, the professional and pedagogical decision-making of beginning teachers, and the intersection of self-study methodology and social studies teacher education.

**Elizabeth W. Brooks** is an Assistant Professor of Social Studies Education at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. She is a social studies teacher educator and curriculum generalist with interests that include teachers and academic content standards, teacher beliefs, and the impact of field experience on teacher development.

**Appendix A**

**Initial Interview Questions**
Before beginning the interview please read the following statement: “Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Please know that you have the right to not answer any questions that make you uncomfortable or that you simply do not wish to answer. Please let me know if you would like to skip to the next question at any time during this interview.”

1. I would like to start by having you say some things about your own background. Could you talk about your family and how you were raised?
2. Tell me about your experience as a high school student.
3. What do you remember about your social studies classes? What do you remember about your social studies teachers? What do you remember about the content of your social studies classes? What do you remember about how you were taught the content of your social studies classes? What social studies courses did you take in middle school/high school/college?
4. Can you remember when you decided to go into teaching? Did you consider other options? What, in other words, is the history of your choice of teaching?
5. What was your family’s role in your decision to become a teacher? Did they encourage you or discourage you in any way? Were there teachers in your family or in your circle of family friends? What was your family’s attitude toward or beliefs about teachers and teaching?
6. Can you describe one or more teachers who influenced you to become a teacher? What was he or she like? What did he or she do to influence you? Can you give me an example of…?
7. Why did you decide to study at Kent State?
8. Please tell me about what you consider to be your purpose for teaching social studies?
9. When you hear “Powerful Social Studies Teaching and Learning” what do you think about?
10. Please describe for me what your idea social studies classroom would look like.
11. Please tell me what is one thing you would hope students would learn as a result of taking your social studies class.
12. Please tell me why you believe middle and high schools include social studies in the curriculum.