



# Lived experience and the ideologies of preservice social studies teachers



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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Past experiences of authority in school reveal individuals' ideologies.
- Lived experiences of authority in schools influence teachers' ideologies.
- Authority, as enacted in the classroom, creates an implicit curriculum of citizenship.

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## ABSTRACT

Using narrative inquiry, this paper explores the lived experiences of six preservice social studies teachers. It uses these lived experiences to gain insight into these preservice teachers' orientations towards teaching social studies, particularly in regard to their ideological understanding of authority and citizenship. Each experience shared in the study both revealed and then shifted already established beliefs and assumptions in regards to school authority. The paper continues to the preservice teachers' own goals for their Social Studies classrooms and how their understanding of authority is present or absent in those goals.

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## 1. Introduction

Preservice teachers come to teacher education with a set of prior experiences involving schooling, teaching, and authority. They bring their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 2002), as well as pedagogical experiences with those in authority that took place outside of the walls of a classroom or school (Greenwalt, 2014): including those with teachers and administrators outside of school, with parents, and with other authority figures in students' lives. These experiences shape their ideologies, and within their ideologies, their ideas of who and what teachers can and should be. With these understandings of teaching, come beliefs about relations of authority in the classroom. All of these experiences, both in and outside of school, take place in a particular social, political, national, and cultural context, saturated with ideology. In this paper I define ideology as the values, norms of appropriate behavior, and beliefs about relational structures including how a citizen interacts with

their government. This paper looks at the intersection of ideology, authority, and social studies education in the United States.

Teachers, as a part of a government institution in many contexts, are the most immediate experience most students have with government authority. The relational structures within schools form a part of students' ideologies and their understanding of citizenship (Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2011). Teachers themselves have these past experiences of authority in pedagogical relationships that impact their ideologies. They enact these ideologies in their classrooms. This enacting of ideologies through the relations of authority creates an implicit curriculum of citizenship. In other words, it teaches children about the relationships of authority that can exist within institutions that they will participate in and navigate as citizens throughout their lives. This is true for all teachers, however, it is particularly salient for social studies teachers who are tasked with the teaching of citizenship both through the explicit and implicit curricula (Eisner, 1979, pp. 74–92). Thus, the way social studies teachers understand their relationship to their government structures in regards to agency, criticality, and levels of participation, impacts the way they teach their students both about and

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through (Kerr, 2002) citizenship.

This paper, which is part of a larger study, explores the ‘implicit curriculum’ of future social studies teachers’ lived experiences of authority. I contend that the implicit curriculum of student and teacher relations of authority informs preservice teachers’ ideologies of authority and that these ideologies are both revealed and further shaped through their lived experience. Furthermore, these preservice teachers go on to live out these ideologies of authority in their own teaching.

The larger study looked at lived experiences of preservice social studies teachers in regards to their ideologies of citizenship. One of the major findings was the role of experiences of authority in shaping and reflecting these ideologies. These experiences of authority both revealed and contributed to the participants’ ideologies. The paper also focuses on how these experiences gave meaning to their social studies teaching orientation. Looking at the experiences of three preservice secondary social studies teachers, this paper asks:

- What are some of the underlying assumptions about teacher authority that preservice teachers develop?
- How do those experiences of authority both reveal and construct the participants’ ideologies in regard to authority?
- How do their experiences reflect their ideology and intended teaching of social studies and citizenship?

To frame this research, I first discuss the concept of ideology as it is employed in this paper. Then I review different assumptions about authority in the United States as well as studies on how social science is taught both in the United States and in other countries. Although experiences of authority are not the sole determinant of one’s ideology, they do influence and reflect ideology. I view experiences of authority as one piece of individual ideology that is interwoven with others. Orientations in teaching social science are one way in which teachers live out their ideology in concrete and material ways. Following this framing of the research I share the study methods, findings, analysis, implications, and conclusions.

### 1.1. Ideolog(ies)

The term “ideology” has many changing and contested definitions (Eagleton, 1991). Here I understand ideology as encompassing the values, beliefs, and assumptions about the ways in which governments, citizens, and nations interact in society today. This includes the responsibilities and options individuals and communities have for maintaining the status quo or enacting change. I draw from Althusser’s (1972) explication of ideology and its connection to both subjectivity and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), of which schools are a part. For Althusser, individuals are interpellated, or drawn into ideology, and become subjects of that ideology. They then carry out that ideology in their material practice. I contend that dominant ideology both carries its own authority and that relations of authority, or beliefs and assumptions about relations of authority are a part of the dominant ideology in the United States. These expectations of authority work to maintain the authority of the ideology itself.

Schools play a role in interpellating individuals as subjects into dominant ideologies (Apple & King, 1979). The authority schools establish through both explicit and implicit curriculum is a component of this ideology (Eisner, 1979, pp. 74–92). An aspect of the dominant ideology of schooling in the United States is an assumption about the place of the pupil within an institution in relation to others and to knowledge itself: older people have authority over younger people, more educated people have authority over less educated people, the knowledge of adults has authority

over the knowledge of children, and the knowledge in books has authority over the knowledge gained through experience. In this way, ideology draws subjects into seeing themselves as teachers, students, and citizens within a particular structure. We are “put in our place” believing in the power of others and institutions over us.

I do not use ideology in the oft-attributed polemical sense, or as the thing used to accuse others of unreasoned thought (McCarthy, 1994). Ideology, here, is impacted by life experiences, built of an individual subject’s interactions with the Ideological State Apparatuses, and the demands of material existence (making a living: finding shelter, procuring food, and the like). I select ideology over “identity” because it has a distinctly political quality. I also select it because although we come to know everything through experience, ideology precedes the experience of the individual; it is a system that the individual becomes a part of. Experiences can refine an individual’s ideology, but it is an ideology that is already being enacted by institutions and subjects that are external to the individual.

Here it is helpful to divide ideology into two parts. There is the dominant capital “I” Ideology that is associated with dominant groups and maintains the status quo. Then there are the ideologies, small “i” of individual subjects (Leonardo, 2003; Mannheim, 1936). The two are related and neither is static. While dominant Ideology is more fixed, it is enacted through subjects and shifts to maintain power relations as culture and context change. Individual ideologies are born within the sea of the dominant Ideology. They are linked as individual subjects are drawn into dominant Ideology and yet, because they are created through and based in daily material existence, differ from subject to subject. Because of this, the lived experience of individual subjects gives insight into the often invisible dominant Ideology and individual ideologies that are functioning at a particular place and time.

In this study I explore undergraduate preservice social studies teachers and their lived experiences with the authority of schools and those in schools. At times, this authority is reinforced through the actions of teachers and administrators; at times such authority is thrown into question. These moments are memorable for the ways in which they go against the “implicit canonical script” (Bruner, 1991, p. 11) or in this case, the ideological script. These contradictions show how these experiences are not instances when the idea of authority was created for these individuals. Instead a pre-existing assumption about authority was disrupted. These new experiences add layers of ideological understanding to the participants’ individual ideologies.

Ideologies are manifested in our teaching in many ways. I will discuss two of those here. I include the first, the enactment of authority, because of its centrality to the experiences recounted in this paper. The second - orientations to teaching social studies - is one way in which the participants enacted their ideologies as they were becoming teachers.

### 1.2. Authority

Authority is one of the structures of relation that are central to the concept of ideology that I employ here. Enactments of authority become an implicit curriculum of ideology, they are one way ideology is lived out and perpetuated. In this article, experiences of authority both shape and reveal the ideologies of the participants. There are indeed many other aspects of everyday lived experience integrated into individual ideologies. Authority is one thread in the tapestry of ideology. Yet, it plays an important role in understanding one’s relation to government. In many countries, school is the first social institution, outside of the family, that most individuals navigate on their own. Teachers and their pedagogical relationships become an implicit curriculum of government and

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