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Service-learning for preservice teachers:
ethical dilemmas for practice

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Abstract

Increasingly in the United States, service-learning is being used to educate preservice teachers. Service varies greatly in its ethical foundation, however, and service-learning presents new teachers with a variety of dilemmas revealing the moral and political nature of teaching and service. This article presents one case of four preservice teachers writing curriculum as a service to a community agency hoping to promote service geared toward social justice among high school students. The case highlights ethical dilemmas faced by teachers in the process and illustrates the potential of service-learning to educate teachers for the moral imperative of their profession. © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Service-learning; Preservice teacher education

In the last several years, service-learning, the integration of academic learning with meeting the community's needs to the benefits of both students and community, has captured the attention of teachers, administrators, and educational reformers in the United States. As described by its advocates, service-learning improves students' education, boosts civic engagement, and provides much needed service to communities. In addition to participating in hands-on service, students learning through service reflect on that experience to further their knowledge in school subjects from the humanities to the sciences. In secondary schools,

students might analyze pollution levels in local creeks and report the results to government agencies as part of a chemistry class or they might translate the menu of a soup kitchen or the policy handbook of their school as part of a Spanish class. Elementary school students might write letters to elderly residents of a nearby nursing home while middle school students read to younger children as part of their language arts classes. By serving others, students learn more, think creatively and critically, develop empathy, appreciate personal and social responsibility, and grow in self-esteem, according to service-learning's proponents (Conrad & Hedin, 1991).

As service-learning has found a place in secondary and elementary schools, it has also gained the attention of teacher educators in the US. Recent guides to service-learning (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1995; Erickson & Anderson, 1997;

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Wade, 1997) describe several teacher education institutions offering comprehensive programs combining courses and fieldwork in service-learning. In addition, a variety of public and private, large and small teacher education programs have incorporated service-learning into a single course, ranging from methods and foundations in education classes to elective classes on service-learning.

Because these service-learning projects in teacher education are far from comparable, drawing general conclusions about them is problematic. Service-learning for preservice teachers varies greatly with regard to purpose, type of service, as well as length and commitment required. Perhaps most significantly, it varies in its ethical foundation, the values that determine why and how teachers use service-learning. Variations in how service-learning is grounded have implications for how service-learning is defined and implemented. These variations also have moral and political implications for what students learn and what, if any, benefits accrue to the community. Reich (1994) notes the "vast disparity of definitions that faculty can bring to service-learning—from what is basically the charity basket approach to the revolutionary..." (p. 5). How do preservice teachers define service-learning? How do preservice teachers make sense of the moral and political implications of service-learning and what are the consequences for their emerging thinking and practice? In particular, how do they define the ethical foundation that grounds their own service-learning curriculum? What dilemmas do they face in the process?

In this article, I focus on a case of preservice teachers working as a group on a service-learning project to write curriculum for a local community organization, the Third World Women's Center. That curriculum was, in turn, to promote service-learning or some form of involvement in the community by secondary school students. The service-learning curriculum writing project for preservice teachers was an assignment in an English and social studies curriculum and instruction course which I taught during the 1996-97 academic year at a small private liberal arts college in California.

Drawing on this case, I describe and analyze how new teachers manage the ethical dilemmas raised by writing curriculum that incorporated

service-learning. Of course, planning the next day's lessons can present many of the same dilemmas, but too often keeping up with the day-to-day demands of teaching leaves little time for reflecting on practice. By contrast, the time devoted to this project allowed teachers to think about their curriculum. In addition, writing this curriculum as part of a service-learning project meant these teachers' lessons were influenced not only by their own beliefs and experiences with student teaching, but by community agencies and the teacher education program, making these dilemmas more difficult to manage. By analyzing new teachers' responses to ethical dilemmas in service-learning and curriculum writing, I intend to illustrate how service-learning has the potential to make explicit for new teachers the political and moral nature of teaching, an aspect of teaching that Goodlad (1990) found absent or lacking in many teacher education programs in the United States. Through examining these aspects of teaching, teacher educators can better prepare new teachers for the realities of working in classrooms in general, and implementing thoughtful service-learning in particular.

1. Conceptual framework

This study draws on literature analyzing the moral and political basis of service-learning. Battistoni (1997) identifies two ethical foundations for service-learning: philanthropic and civic. He describes philanthropic service-learning as an "exercise in altruism: the nurturing of giving either in terms of 'paying back' or 'gratitude.' This approach "emphasizes character building and a kind of compensatory justice where the well-off feel obligated to help the less advantaged, though they do not conceive of those served as being part of their own communities." By contrast "civic" service-learning "emphasizes mutual responsibility and the interdependence of rights and responsibilities, and it focuses not on altruism but on enlightened self-interest" (p. 151). When successful, civic service-learning connects students to the community and creates a shared sense of purpose in working towards social justice. It requires those serving to be equal partners with those being served in

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addressing community needs. This kind of mutuality based on consensus about purpose and means of service is not easily achieved as this case will illustrate.

Kahne and Westheimer (1996) use the terms “change” and “charity” to describe similar differences. According to these authors, teachers using service-learning oriented towards charity emphasize giving—helping others and countering self-centeredness. They foster “responsive citizens”—giving back to the community and developing a sense of altruism and responsibility to help others. They value service-learning because it is an authentic and active means of learning and because it has the potential to raise students’ self-esteem and provide new experiences for students.

On the other hand, teachers oriented towards change emphasize caring over giving—developing reciprocal relationships with the persons they are serving, apprehending the reality of the persons being served, and building a greater sense of community. They see service fostering “critical democrats”—questioning the status quo; challenging social, political, and economic structures that allow injustice; and engaging in dialog with others about the purpose, method, and meaning of service. They value service-learning because it contains the seeds of social transformation—critically examining service in light of the need to address the causes of injustice. Because “change” best characterizes one of the goals of most preservice teachers where I work and because it captures my own motivation for using service-learning, I will use the terms charity and change to refer to this important distinction in service-learning throughout the rest of this study.¹

Change-oriented service might be labeled activism by some. Federal legislation and many school

policies promoting service specifically exclude partisan political activity or activism from their definitions of service. Scholars of service (Coles, 1993) and service-learning (Wade, 1997) have recognized activism as a form of service, however. Motivated by the same idealism and inspired by similar goals, activism differs from other forms of service by explicitly challenging societal norms, engaging the public, and seeking solutions to problems through the political process. Certainly opinions vary as to what types of activism qualify as service. Forty years ago, few persons in the United States would have equated black and white students sitting together at lunch counters with service. Today, Coles and Wade both refer to the civil rights movement as a form of service.

Battistoni’s and Kahne and Westheimer’s attention to the ethical foundations of service-learning illustrate something that is not always acknowledged in the literature: service-learning is inherently value-laden and those values are not without controversy. Such an understanding informs the analysis in this article. As Battistoni observes, “where a philanthropic, charity-based model [of service-learning] lacks a focus on the larger society and its needs, the civic [or change-oriented] emphasis may be too connected to the public, political sphere, rendering it more controversial in the public school setting” (p. 151). Indeed, examples of service-learning in published literature are more likely to include “planting a garden, testing a local stream, recycling, or working to solve traffic control problems near the school” (Battistoni, 1997, p. 153) than creating a school-wide campaign against homophobia or petitioning the city council with students’ opinions about a proposed youth curfew, for example.

Any service, though, can be the starting point for controversial political and moral questions. Compare asking students to reflect on the question “How did you feel after testing the stream?” versus “Why are the streams in our community polluted?” The former question is likely to raise uncontroversial feelings of efficacy and self-esteem. The latter question could lead to more controversial questions about inappropriate industrial development, run-off from lawns and driveways, cutbacks in spending on public services like water treatment, as

¹ While charity can have negative connotations, I do not want to imply that charity is always bad or change always good. While ending the root causes of hunger is an important goal for all concerned citizens, it may not be achieved before lunch tomorrow. Meeting the equally important goal of providing people with enough to eat in the short term may require charity. Balancing charity and change, not choosing one over the other, to meet short- and long-term needs is required for addressing a range of problems from hunger and homelessness to human rights and health care.

well as the role students or their families play in contributing to the problem. As this example demonstrates, the questions for reflection, not the service, define service-learning as oriented towards charity or change. Testing a stream is not in and of itself clearly a charity or change service, but a teacher's intention behind assigning such a task shapes the way students reflect on the service, directing their learning towards one orientation or the other. Focusing on students' feelings of efficacy or responsibility orients the service towards charity; questioning the reasons behind why the stream is polluted orients the service towards change.

2. Rationale for the service-learning project

Many preservice teachers with whom I work seek to bridge teaching and social change, a goal I share with them. For this reason, I was attracted by the possibilities of service-learning to connect teaching and work towards social justice. Because service-learning needs to be connected to academic content, I decided that preservice teachers in my class would write curriculum as their service to the community. While giving blood or ladling soup at a homeless shelter are much more common images of service, many non-profit organizations provide materials, including lessons, for use in classrooms. Because most rely on volunteers to develop these materials, curriculum writing can be a valuable form of service.

My interest in service-learning in teacher education began as I considered how to integrate a number of concerns in the curriculum and instruction course: teaching new teachers about service-learning, exposing them to community concerns and perspectives, preparing them to teach students from diverse backgrounds, and creating curriculum that encouraged participation in civic life by students. While no single project, service-learning or otherwise, could possibly fully meet all these goals, I kept all in mind as I devised a service-learning project that would fit with my curriculum and instruction course.

My intention was that by helping student teachers make explicit how they learned from a service-learning experience, such as writing curriculum

for a non-profit organization, they might also learn how to develop service-learning projects appropriate for the students they would teach in middle and high schools, meeting the first of my goals for the project. By having preservice teachers write curriculum for community agencies, I also hoped they would gain a window on community perspectives beyond what they might gain at the schools where they student taught, meeting another goal. To better prepare these new teachers to work with people from backgrounds other than their own, mostly white and middle class, I found community organizations that worked primarily with people of color or with low incomes as partners for the project. Finally, because I wanted new teachers to think about curriculum that promoted citizenship in the broadest sense, not just voting but participating in the discussion and framing of local, national, and international issues, I chose community agency partners that had a history of advocacy or addressing the causes of social injustice rather than, or in addition to, ameliorating them. The assignment was given at the beginning of the first semester and completed early in the second semester.

3. Methodology

The four preservice teachers in this study were enrolled in a fifth-year teacher education program, completing the requirements for a credential to teach secondary school English or social studies. All were young, middle class, white women who had limited or no exposure to service-learning. Their beliefs about and experiences with service were quite heterogeneous, however. Most had participated in some form of what they called service, ranging from tutoring children at a homeless shelter to organizing anti-war and anti-apartheid protests. Based on their preference, the four preservice teachers discussed in this article were matched with the Third World Women's Center to fulfill the service-learning assignment in my course.

This study employs a case study design to capture the moral and political questions that new teachers considered in the process of developing curriculum promoting students' involvement in civic life. Case studies can provide detailed portraits

great idea

of preservice teachers' emerging thinking, an important consideration for researchers and practitioners who are developing theoretical conceptualizations of service-learning. This approach also adds a different perspective to a small but growing body of literature on preservice teachers and service-learning. Much of that literature examines a one-way process of how service-learning influences teachers' beliefs while paying less attention to how teachers' beliefs might influence service-learning. This case study portrays a two-way interaction where teachers affect service-learning as much as they are affected by it.

In writing this case, I used multiple sources of data, including preservice teachers' reflective writing, their service-learning curriculum, field notes on meetings between preservice teachers and community agencies, and interviews with each teacher as well as the agency director. These data were then coded for examples of dilemmas arising from service-learning. These dilemmas were also coded for the factors to which they were connected: preservice teachers' prior beliefs and experiences, their student teaching placement, the community agency where they served, and the teacher education program. Categories were developed inductively based on close reading of the data.

Based on this analysis, I wrote the narrative case study examining dilemmas for the group of preservice teachers partnered with the Third World Women's Center. The narrative provides a portrait of their work as well as my own interpretation. The narrative ties data to interpretation, allowing the reader to judge the analyses and conclusions. The narrative was shared with informants and feedback was incorporated into the final version.

4. Defining the service in service-learning

Four teachers—Abby, Heather, Jennifer, and Tara²—co-wrote two lessons for the Third World Women's Center about girls' and women's economic rights. The first lesson focuses on domestic labor, students' own lives, and the US context; the

second addresses multinational corporations, women's working conditions, and the international context. The lessons were part of the Center's two-year curriculum project based on the Platform for Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. The project aims to help high school students see girls' and women's rights as human rights. In keeping with the Center's wishes to incorporate service-learning in the curriculum, each of the two lessons ends with some "action" or "service" component.

Writing these two lessons for the Women's Center presented the preservice teachers with several dilemmas, including addressing a wide variety of students' experiences and backgrounds and, most vexingly for the group, defining the boundaries of service for their students. In terms of addressing students' varied experiences, Abby said she initially wanted to look at how race and class affected domestic labor because "some of the books I was reading while I was brainstorming were women's history books and about laundry workers and plus at the same time I was also teaching about the black migration. And most of the jobs that women got at that time were domestic".³ That idea for the lesson was discarded, however, because of concerns about writing curriculum suitable for schools in many different communities and fears of offending somebody. Abby said,

But then the unfortunate part is ... race and class became so secondary to the whole thing, so touchy and almost really sensitive that you couldn't really talk. We were trying to picture the schools that they would be doing the lessons in. And in some schools, the parents of the children would be the ones who are the domestic laborers. And in other schools, kids don't do any work because they have these people in their houses to clean, so it was like how do we address that, and that became hard to do.

The group addressed those differences by allowing students to collect and analyze their own data.

² All names are pseudonyms.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all preservice teachers' quotations are from interviews conducted between April and July 1997.

One week before the lesson begins, each student completes a log recording the work he or she does, noting the amount of time and whether the work was remunerated.⁴ On the day of the lesson, groups of students compare and discuss their data. Then the whole class convenes to compile and examine its data. Guiding questions ask students to look for differences between work done by boys and girls, work that is paid and unpaid, and to look for patterns among those differences. They also consider how different kinds of families (large, small, single-parent, two-parent) manage domestic work and draw general conclusions about the sexual division of labor. As a class, students then compare their data to national statistics about domestic labor. This strategy appealed to these four teachers partly because they supported connecting curriculum to students' experiences and partly because they desired to make the curriculum safe, less potentially offensive or demeaning to anyone.

For the teachers working at the Third World Women's Center, safety was one of the defining criteria for the group's largest dilemma: defining the boundaries of service. While the teachers were concerned about safety in terms of not offending any students, they were also concerned about safety in terms of not putting students at physical and psychological risk if they asked them to raise fundamental questions about gender at home. Such a concern shaped the "service" activity for the domestic labor lesson. It instructs teachers to:

Brainstorm ideas with the class or end with a free write that addresses this question: In your opinion, what is the ideal way to divide household work among family members? What chores should each person be responsible for, and why?

You may wish to suggest that students who feel comfortable doing so share their writing with their parents or guardians and discuss these conversations the next day in class.

⁴The work included: school work, child care, elder care, animal care, cleaning, food shopping, cooking, dishes, yard work, laundry, house repairs, car maintenance, paying bills, community service, language interpreting, chauffeuring, garbage, sewing, paid employment, and others.

The action remains a suggestion because teachers in the group could not agree whether this was a safe activity or not. Tara remembers that the group discussed how:

it could be really dangerous for kids to bring that [the gender division of domestic labor] up with their parents because it questions some really fundamental things about families and gender and the kids could really get themselves in trouble by questioning that in their own families. We didn't want to put them in any danger is what we came to decide ... I think someone in the group had had that experience, that she had this realization, went home, brought it up, and something terrible happened ... So, we decided not to ask kids to put themselves in that position but to just bring up the issues and let them take it.

Heather said, "I guess I feel kind of protective of the students. I don't want to get them in trouble with their parents. I don't want to make their parents mad." But she also recognized, "At the same time, I think that these things are very worth thinking about. The questions are worth asking." Abby, who was the most comfortable among the group with activism in a school context, said that originally the group was going "to do some political thing like: confront your father ... to get off the couch and do blah, blah, blah" but changed its mind because of Heather's concerns. She felt the compromise was acceptable though she would not have "suggested" the homework. Instead, as part of the homework, she would have included the need to discuss the issue with parents or guardians along with a note to the teacher warning about possible repercussions at home.

The "service" assignment for the lesson on women and multinational corporations also brought up different opinions in the group. That lesson ends with students reading a *New York Times* article, "Central American Free Trade Zones Exploit Girls" and considering a question raised in the article: "Is a Gap shirt worth it?"⁵ The lesson

⁵The Gap is a US-based chain of clothing stores that are particularly popular with young people.

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concludes by asking:

What would happen if you stopped buying products made in *maquiladoras*?⁶ What would happen if people all around the country stopped buying them?

The following day, invite volunteers to share their responses. Lead a discussion in which students consider the effectiveness of individual and collective actions such as boycotts.

While the first lesson's action raised issues of safety, this action about boycotts and their effectiveness to change the labor practices of overseas manufacturers raised issues of appropriateness in a school context.

Tara maintained that she saw herself as an activist and said, "I feel comfortable modeling that. But I don't feel comfortable saying, 'Here's what you should do. You should write a letter. You should go out on this protest march or let's have a hunger strike.' My role is to be supportive if they say, 'Let's do that' and I can say, 'I'm doing that this weekend.'" When asked if she would be comfortable asking students "what should we do?" about some social injustice, she responded, "That's a good question. I think I would be comfortable telling them, 'Here are things people do when they want to fight against injustice. These are ways people use.' But I wouldn't say, 'Here's what we should do.'" Tara believed the Center had:

more of an activist approach to [curriculum] than I feel comfortable with ... I don't feel comfortable asking students to take that extra step. I felt a little uncomfortable about it even in the curriculum we wrote. We originally thought maybe we would have them do this boycott [of the Gap] or participate in something like that. [Instead], they talk about the effectiveness of boycotts and then it's left up to them. If they talked about it and

decided that they're very effective and what a great idea, then perhaps they'll take the next step and participate in one. But it seemed to me that the Third World Women's Center would have wanted us to say "Go ahead and do a boycott."

Nothing in my field notes indicates Jean, the Director of the Third World Women's Center, encouraged such "service," though Tara may be remembering Jean's desire to include a service or "action" component for students and examples of women's "activism" in the curriculum. Jean gave the preservice teachers a great degree of autonomy while they wrote the curriculum, meeting with them only four times during the course of the project. She expected the preservice teachers to "work independently, having some knowledge that what they shaped, [the Center] would do some editing on."

While Jean was unaware of the group's internal dynamics and discussions of appropriate service, she did appreciate the difficulty of defining such service. Although the preservice teachers assumed the Center held an "activist" position on service, Jean was aware that teachers might shape the service portion of the curriculum to meet their particular contexts. "It's [the Center's] assumption that when the curriculum goes out, that educators will feel more or less comfortable with the action component of it and some may choose to push it and some may not." That flexibility was not understood by the four students. Perhaps because the Center is involved in advocacy work and because they have a clearly defined, left-of-center position on social, economic, and political issues facing women, Tara assumed that meant the lesson should guide students towards activism.

Jennifer also perceived that the Women's Center's desire for students to take action influenced their curriculum: "Well, it was definitely not just write a lesson, but what can they [students] do about it [the exploitation of women]. That was something that we needed to always think about ... with the lesson about international concerns." Unlike Tara, however, Jennifer found the activity about a Gap shirt to be appropriate for a school context.

I was really pleased when we came up with the last article that said, "Is a Gap shirt worth

⁶ *Maquiladoras* are Mexican assembly plants along the United States border where parts are assembled and shipped as finished goods to foreign markets. Wages and working conditions are well below those in US assembly plants, causing US unions to fear the loss of higher paying assembly jobs north of the border.

it?" So the idea was to get kids to question the norms, question what is going on, suggest the possibilities for their participation. I mean that was really critical. So I thought that was good about it.

Heather, too, struggled with the question of what is appropriate service, but was unable to find a position with which she could be comfortable as Tara and Jennifer had.

I guess something that I've been confused about throughout my learning of service-learning is what kind of things can you not do? Where are the boundaries? I didn't really understand that... And I kind of still don't... I'm kind of torn about that. A lot of people will make a lot of value judgments in classes. And I don't know if that's right. I have no idea. I feel like maybe it is. Maybe you have to. And maybe it's dumb to try not to. But then again, maybe student opinions can be squelched so easily and stuff like that. So I felt like that influenced our curriculum.

Abby, who used the curriculum on multinational corporations during her student teaching placement, generally doesn't shy away from activism. She adapted the lesson to her classroom but still found it did not raise the questions about social responsibility that she believed were important. In Abby's judgment, the lesson was:

kind of related to service, but it's more related to history and more related to looking at imperialism than it is to service. It's a bit of raising awareness which is also a part of service... It's not really strong service because there's no action component, one. I guess that's one, two, three, and four. There's no action component at all.

From Tara's and Heather's concerns about pushing students too far, to Jennifer's belief that the activity hit just the right note, to Abby's assessment that the activity was too limited, this case illustrates the dilemma of defining the boundaries of service, especially service geared towards social change.

For many, service is uncomplicated and uncontroversial; it comes down to giving help to those in

need. In surveying the role of service in US history, Wade (1997) begins by describing the kinds of service to which no one objects. "For the early colonists of the United States, service to others was a necessity. Raising a neighbor's roof, providing enough food for community members during a long winter, and caring for the sick and elderly were tasks that had to be shared by many" (p. 66). However, she then includes some of the most contentious advocacy movements as part of the same tradition of service: "the abolition of slavery, the women's suffrage movement, and the civil rights movements" (p. 66). Of course, the goals of these movements are not controversial now, but in their time, they split the nation as no other issues had and even today it is no easy task to define what was "service" in the name of those causes. For the sake of abolition, who performed "service": Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave who told his story to an international audience? William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*? John Brown, the leader of a failed attempt to seize a government armory and ignite a slave rebellion? Nat Turner, a slave who led a rebellion resulting in the deaths of sixty white persons? Defining the boundaries of service in the name of a cause is more complicated than defining the boundaries for service to individuals.

Wade defines three types of service—direct, indirect, and advocacy—the last type covering service for a cause. "Advocacy requires students to engage in social action, to assess not just the ways they can help others through existing structures but how they can work to eliminate the causes of a problem or inform the public about the issues involved" (p. 69). She further notes, "Advocacy projects often involve working on controversial issues... It is likely for this reason that teachers do not include advocacy in the curriculum as often as direct and indirect service activities" (p. 69).

The preservice teachers working with the Third World Women's Center were not so much worried about controversy in defining the boundaries of service. Rather they were wrestling with a more fundamental issue: the ethical role of the teacher in addressing moral and political issues through curriculum. Bigelow (1997) describes teaching a unit on multinational corporations similar to the one

developed by the four teachers from the Center. He writes:

Two concerns flirted uncomfortably throughout the unit. On the one hand, I had no desire to feign neutrality... To pretend that I was a mere dispenser of information would be dishonest, but worse, it would imply that being a spectator is an ethical response to injustice... On the other hand, I never want my social concerns to suffocate student inquiry or to prevent students from thoughtfully considering opposing views. (p. 14)

Bigelow articulates the struggle over conflicting values faced by all four teachers at the Center. All were opposed to global sweatshops. But Heather was entirely confused about her role in shaping students' perspectives. Tara wanted to take as minimal a role as possible for fear of coercion. Jennifer thought the group achieved the right balance by asking students to consider the effectiveness of direct action like boycotts, while Abby believed the lesson fell short by not requiring students to take action. All of these new teachers might have eventually faced dilemmas about teaching controversial issues and taking action or encouraging students to do so in the face of injustice, but working on the service-learning project for a change-oriented institution brought this issue to the fore at the beginning of their career. It also provided them with an opportunity to discuss one aspect of the moral imperative of teaching and examine different perspectives. Their curriculum represents a compromise between their differing perspectives based on ideas that were still emerging and evolving at the time as well as the perspectives of the teacher education program and community agency.

5. Implications: service-learning and the moral imperative of teaching

Given the dilemmas posed in this case, critics who worry that teacher education is crowded enough with requirements may wonder whether service-learning should even have a place in the education of teachers. While many advocates of

service-learning in teacher education might claim its value by citing preservice teachers' statements about learning how to implement service-learning, I am less inclined to do so, in part because, as I found in the larger study (Donahue, 1998) from which this case is taken, preservice teachers identified shortcomings to learning about how to implement service-learning.⁷ Rather I would point to what students found problematic in the course of their service-learning—wrestling with ethical dilemmas, in particular responding to students' varied backgrounds and experiences and defining the boundaries of service—as the basis for justifying service-learning in teacher education.

Service-learning as curriculum writing for community agencies created real dilemmas for preservice teachers. Such dilemmas offer preservice teachers an authentic opportunity to appreciate teaching as a political and moral endeavor that is not without contention. Preparing new teachers to think about and manage such dilemmas is an important part of preparing them for classrooms in communities with diverse constituencies. It requires them to think of teaching not as a technical activity of laying out objectives irrespective of students and community and delivering neatly packaged one-size fits all instruction as if all students were the same but rather as an activity that is shaped by many different contexts and that requires choices with moral and political implications. In this sense, I depart from some advocates of service-learning who view the strategy as apolitical or promoting values for which broad consensus exists. Even concepts such as responsibility, empowerment, and community can have very different meanings for different service-learning practitioners, although such concepts are often identified as those to which everyone subscribes.

Of course, more than enough ethical dilemmas exist in teaching, even without service-learning. All

⁷ In particular, although they said they valued service-learning and learned a lot about it, their learning was fragmented. Few felt confident about using service-learning as teachers and those who did were among the few who had cooperating teachers using service-learning.

teachers make value-laden choices such as what content to include in the curriculum or how to establish classroom rules defining good citizenship. Unfortunately, not all teachers thoughtfully examine the moral and political implications of such choices. Even when they do, powerful constraints such as state and local curriculum guidelines or school disciplinary policies limit their choices. Certainly service-learning in public schools is not without constraints, but because it is a relatively new strategy, the teachers in this study found themselves facing a number of, what were for them, difficult questions defining the boundaries of service. These questions are particularly important for preservice teachers who are strongly attracted to teaching as a vehicle towards social reconstruction.

Through the curriculum and instruction class, questions about service in schools then became the basis for examining the moral dimensions of teaching faced by all teachers, not just teachers using service-learning. Questions about defining service connected to larger questions about developing meaningful goals for student learning, challenging oppression and injustice through curriculum, and developing lessons that incorporate community perspectives. Service-learning became one, though not the only, vehicle for questioning the norms of classrooms and re-imagining schools.

Teacher educators must help new teachers manage the ethical dilemmas of teaching while promoting their students' moral development. In his study of the education of teachers, Goodlad (1990) found that much of preservice teachers' coursework does not confront them "with situations that bring values to the surface—especially not conflicting or contradictory values" (p. 206). He describes how "the idea of moral imperatives for teachers was virtually foreign in concept and strange in language" (p. 264) for most future teachers. He concludes, "After grappling with this issue of moral discourse required of teachers..., I am convinced that the necessary educating cannot be accomplished in lecture type courses and with the conventional reading list" (p. 293). Instead, he recommends discussing and analyzing case studies of teaching dilemmas, including case studies drawn from preservice teachers' own experience.

Although not the only means of educating teachers who understand the moral imperative of their profession, service-learning can play a valuable role towards this end. While service-learning may not make sense for every teacher education course, it can highlight the complexity of curriculum and create opportunities to explore ethical dilemmas inherent in teaching. To accomplish these goals, teacher educators should pay special attention to how new teachers reflect on their service, prompting them to question assumptions about service and examine the contexts and consequences for different kinds of service-learning. In addition, teacher educators should examine their own beliefs about the purpose, methods, and meaning of service. Because teachers using service-learning need to reflect on why and how they use service, teacher educators should set a model of how to think about such concerns. Without such reflection, teacher educators run the risk of presenting service-learning as only another teaching strategy among many—one that requires considerable extra work without any clear reason for putting in additional effort. How much better to present service-learning as a pedagogy for examining complex moral and political dilemmas with thoughtfulness, sophistication, and responsibility.

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