



**The “Other” Participants:
Dilemmas Faced by Middle School Service-Learning Teachers**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	vii
Executive Summary	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Purpose of the Study	1
Rationale for the Study.....	1
Significance of the Study	2
Theoretical Framework.....	3
Overview of the Report	5
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature	6
Rationale for Service-Learning	6
Academic and Social Benefits	7
Community and Home	8
School Reform.....	9
Dilemma Emerging from the Varied Rationales	10
Teachers' Beliefs and Experiences.....	10
Teachers' Previous Experiences with Community Service	11
Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning	11
Teachers' Knowledge about Service-Learning as a Pedagogy.....	12
Dilemmas in a Broader Context	13
Dilemmas in Service-Learning Literature.....	13
Importance of Dilemma Language for Service-Learning.....	14

Chapter 3: Method.....	15
Research Questions.....	15
Research Design.....	15
Developing the Interview Protocol.....	16
Setting.....	17
Sample.....	19
Data Collection	19
Data Analysis	21
Chapter 4: Findings	23
Teachers' Views on Dilemmas.....	23
Needs of the Server vs. Needs of the Served	24
Service Site Selection at Urban Middle School	24
Needs of the Service Sites.....	26
Goals of the Participants	27
Service Site and Teacher Expectations.....	29
Standardized vs. Experiential Education.....	32
Testing	32
Student Progress	34
Benefits Accrued by Students	36
Teacher Control vs. Student Independence.....	37
Service Benefits Middle School Students	38
Students' Motivations to Serve.....	39
Student Independence	39

Chapter 5: Conclusions & Recommendations.....	42
Conclusions.....	42
Nature of Service and Learning at Urban Middle School.....	42
Nature of Dilemmas at Urban Middle School.....	43
Recommendations.....	44
Appendix A: Piloted Interview Protocol	48
Appendix B: Interview Protocols.....	49
Interviews of Service-Learning Teachers	49
Interview 1	49
Interview 2.....	49
Interview 3.....	50
Interview 4.....	50
Focus Group	51
Interviews of Additional Educators.....	52
Bibliography	53

ABSTRACT

Service-learning is becoming an increasingly common component of elementary and secondary education, as is evidenced by the development of new service-learning programs in schools, the creation of additional sources of state, federal, and foundation funding, and the increases in the number of related books, articles, and conferences. There has not been, however, a similar increase in scholarly empirical studies. While this dearth of research has recently begun to be remedied by a new focus on providing empirical evidence of service-learning's impacts on students, the experiences of teachers, possibly the most influential participants in service-learning programs, have been almost entirely absent from the research literature. This qualitative case study of one urban middle school set out to remedy this situation by investigating what dilemmas service-learning teachers face and how they manage the dilemmas they encounter.

Through an analysis of interview, observation, and document data gathered over a five-month period, three broad dilemmas emerged: needs of the server vs. needs of the served, traditional vs. experiential education, and teacher control vs. student independence. These dilemmas arose as teachers at the middle school attempted to reconcile the expectations of a variety of educational stakeholders, including parents, administrators, and state and local school boards, the needs of those at the service sites, and their own beliefs about teachers, teaching, and students.

The conclusions from this study are a result of considering these dilemmas within the specific context in which teachers at this middle school work and attempt to implement service-learning. The dilemmas that teachers experience are caused, or at least exacerbated by the following characteristics of the school: goals and expectations for service are poorly defined, service-learning is relegated to one ninety-minute block per week, service is not closely integrated with the academic curriculum, and the student body is made up of 10 to 14-year old students who have previously not been successful in school, yet they are held to the uniform standards established by state and local school boards.

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations from this study can be valuable for preservice and in-service teacher educators, grant-making organizations, researchers, and teachers and administrators in K-12 schools. Once teachers' experiences with service-learning have been documented through research, appropriate supports can be put in place to provide teachers with the assistance they need as they attempt to implement quality service-learning in their classrooms.

For more information about this study, please contact the author at kathie_k@hotmail.com or visit the website for the Corporation for National and Community Service at www.nationalservice.org.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Problem/Research Question

One area that has been virtually ignored in the empirical research on service-learning is teachers' experiences with service-learning in their schools. This scarcity exists despite a widely accepted understanding that teachers play a major role in the success or failure of service-learning programs in schools. While researchers assert that training programs need to address specific issues identified by teachers of service-learning, at the present time there is almost no research that specifically documents these concerns. In an attempt to respond to the need for empirical study on service-learning and contribute to the existing knowledge on service-learning teachers, this study considered two main research questions:

- In an urban middle school, what dilemmas do teachers of service-learning experience, and how do they describe them?
- What shapes how these teachers manage the dilemmas they encounter?
 - What aspects of the school do they view as contributing to the development of these dilemmas?
 - What roles do they perceive they have in the creation and management of the dilemmas they experience?

This study was grounded in the belief that teachers are active participants within the contexts of their work environments. The theoretical framework that provided the basis for this study led to the preliminary supposition that teachers would struggle to deal with the dilemmas that occurred as a result of conflicting belief systems and demands from within and outside the school context in which they worked.

II. Methodology

In order to explore the dilemmas faced by middle school service-learning teachers, as well as the ways teachers understand and manage these dilemmas, I identified an urban middle school in a large east coast school district where service-learning was purported to be an integral part of the structure and focus of the school. The school opened in 1992 with the goal of providing a non-traditional education to students in grades five through eight. For the 2000-2001 school year, there were 159 students and 12 teachers, including eight advisory or homeroom teachers who accompanied their students to service sites each week.

This research utilized an embedded case study approach. One middle school served as the primary case and four service-learning teachers were specifically considered as important actors within the larger context of the school. Although all eight advisory teachers at the school were invited to participate, four chose to take part in the study.

Over the five-month data collection period, four 45-minute interviews were conducted with each of the four teachers, approximately one each month. One additional interview was also conducted with the principal, and another with a service site coordinator. These

interviews were semi-structured. With the teachers, for all interviews after the first one, some questions were based on the responses the participants gave during the previous interviews, as well as on observations and preliminary data analyses. Each teacher was also observed formally for eight to twelve hours, during activities related to service-learning, including preparation and reflection, as well as during the course of teachers' "normal" days. Field notes were written during each observation and typed immediately after, with an emphasis on gaining a context for understanding the teachers' daily lives. Informal observations occurred during lunch and passing periods, and at a service-learning dinner. Field notes were written on these informal observations immediately after leaving the site. Documents, including school and service site publications, a school video, newspaper articles, and school and district annual reports were also reviewed in order to help better understand the context in which the teachers work. Documents were gathered primarily through conversations with participants, although internet searches provided additional information. A focus group with three of the four primary participants was also conducted at the end of the data collection process in order to discuss tentative analyses.

The information gathered from each advisory teacher was first analyzed separately, with the goal of identifying major themes that could be applied to the larger case. The first coding separated the data according to topics that arose in interviews or during observations. After this first analysis, additional codes were developed based on the major topics identified, and focused on the dilemmas the teachers experienced and how they managed them. Once the data was coded, the information was compared to information gathered on the school environment, and findings and conclusions were drawn.

III. Discussion of Data and Key Findings

The results of this study demonstrate that as teachers engage their students in service-learning, they continually negotiate the confluence of their own beliefs about teachers, teaching, and students, while remaining mindful of the expectations of parents, those at the service sites, and the administration, as well as the mandates of state and local school boards. The convergence of these expectations results in three fundamental dilemmas: needs of the served vs. needs of the server, standardized vs. experiential education, and teacher control vs. student independence.

Needs of the Served vs. Needs of the Server

Nature of the Dilemma: Teachers find it difficult to meet a genuine need of the community and provide an educative experience for their students.

Reasons for the Dilemma: Often, those who are served are ambivalent about the service they receive. Also, service site and middle school goals and expectations may be different and at times contradictory.

Managing the Dilemma: Teachers are hesitant to discuss their concerns with those at the service sites because they feel the acceptance of the middle school students is somewhat precarious. It also became clear in reviewing the data that teachers were better able to

manage this dilemma if they had a close, positive relationship with the teachers and administrators at the service site.

Standardized vs. Experiential Education

Nature of the Dilemma: Teachers see the value of service-learning, yet struggle to find a balance between the standardized curriculum and the experiential pedagogy of service-learning.

Reasons for the Dilemma: Service-learning may lead to outcomes that are not easily assessed on standardized tests or are not valued within the current educational climate. Teachers may also question the value of service-learning for students who are struggling academically.

Managing the Dilemma: Teachers see students who may not be successful in traditional academic subjects benefiting from service and are thus reluctant to exclude them from the activities. Also, the school opened with the premise that all students would participate in service-learning and teachers and administrators are disinclined to alter this commitment.

Teacher Control vs. Student Independence

Nature of the Dilemma: Teachers understand that student independence is an important component of service-learning pedagogy. When students are given freedom to make choices regarding their service activities, however, teachers are often disappointed with the results. They also express concern that without teacher intervention, students may not have positive, educative experiences.

Reasons for the Dilemma: Teachers readily admit that service-learning provides unique benefits for middle school students, but the students' age-specific needs also make service-learning particularly challenging for teachers.

Managing the Dilemma: Teachers attempt to shape students' attitudes and behaviors by helping them realize the broader goals of service. This is done through reflective journals, class discussions, and individual conversations.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions in this report are derived from the interplay of the data and findings with the theoretical and methodological frameworks that provide the foundation for this study. One of the primary purposes of this study was to consider the everyday lives of teachers within the contexts in which they work, and the conclusions, therefore, are a result of considering the dilemmas faced by teachers through the lens provided by their specific environments. These dilemmas, therefore, are inextricably linked to a context that includes undefined goals and expectations, a student population with specific-age appropriate needs, and service-sites that prohibit close supervision. Three broad conclusions are summarized below:

- The structure and schedule of the school makes it difficult for teachers to have flexibility in their work at service sites, and thus finding quality service sites is difficult.
- The school's goals for service are unclear and teachers are unsure of what they expected to accomplish. Teachers therefore struggle to make the connections between service and learning, and often emphasize social and civic development over academic growth.
- The school was designed to meet the academic needs of 10 to 14-year old students who had previously performed poorly in school, but teachers struggle to meet the specific age-related needs of students within the context of the service-learning program.

The data gathered and resulting conclusions provide case-based information for practitioners directly involved with service-learning and those who prepare or assist teachers who will be or are using service-learning in their classrooms. Eight recommendations are outlined below:

1. Teachers must be assisted in developing a strong connection between the service the students provide and the academic curriculum they are expected to master.
2. Schools must be assisted in identifying a variety of service sites that have a genuine need that can be met by a school's population of students.
3. Teachers and researchers must investigate when negative student outcomes might result from problematic service-learning programs.
4. Conceptions of assessment and accountability must be broadened to include measures beyond standardized tests.
5. Practitioners and researchers must work together to identify the age-specific needs of students involved in service-learning, and design service-learning programs accordingly.
6. Teachers need worthwhile professional development and time to collaborate with their colleagues as they strive to understand and implement both the theory and practice of quality service-learning.
7. Support for service-learning programs in schools must be ongoing, not just limited to the adoption and implementation phases.
8. The service-learning research agenda must be expanded to include studies on the experiences of teachers.

While all contexts are unique, a consideration of issues related to balancing the needs of all involved in the service activities, managing progressive educational practices like service-learning within a climate of strict standards, and meeting teachers' needs for control of their students while still allowing for student independence can provide a starting point for a valuable dialogue about the complexities of service-learning implementation.

The findings from this study also have implications for service-learning research. The service-learning research agenda must include studies on the experiences of teachers: those at the forefront of service-learning implementation. Research must be both qualitative and quantitative in design, thus allowing for the gathering of a body of knowledge about service-learning teachers that has both depth and breadth.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 38 percent of middle schools had students engaged in service-learning¹ during the 1998-1999 academic year (Skinner & Chapman, 1999) and Shumer and Cook (1999) state that 2.5 million middle school students were involved in service-learning in 1997. Leading these millions of middle school students in service-learning are an undetermined number of teachers. Despite an understanding, however, that teachers play a major role in the success or failure of service-learning in schools, there is still a dearth of empirical research that considers the experiences of teachers as they implement service-learning in their classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

This study, therefore, was designed to respond to the current interest in service-learning and the gaps in the existing research literature by studying one readily agreed upon essential component of successful service-learning—the teacher. Specifically, this study explored the unique dilemmas faced by middle school teachers in their work with service-learning, as well as how their school context contributed to the development of these dilemmas. Once these dilemmas are identified, service-learning practitioners will be better able to understand teachers' primary areas of difficulty as they implement service-learning, and therefore will have the information necessary to plan appropriate and worthwhile support and development.

Rationale for the Study

Service-learning is becoming an increasingly common component of elementary and secondary education as evidenced by the development of new service-learning programs in schools, the creation of additional sources of state, federal, and foundation funding, and the increases in the number of related books, articles, and conferences (Claus & Ogden, 1999b; Ogden & Claus, 1997). Often, however, the result has been an increase in the number of publications dealing with the “how-to” of service-learning (e.g., Duits & Dorman, 1998; Fertman, 1994; Pardo, 1997; Schukar, Johnson, & Singleton, 1996; Wade, 1997a) without a similar increase in scholarly empirical studies. Serow (1997), for example, notes: “The basic documents in the field...are derived mainly from theories of experiential education and from the accumulated wisdom of many years of practice” (p. 13). This relative scarcity of empirical literature on service-learning has led to concern among researchers and practitioners (e.g., Billig, 2000; Jones & Gentry, 1993; Lipka, 1997) that without serious consideration of, and research on, service-learning as it exists in schools today, the resulting programs might not meet the expectations of those who promote them.

In books published as recently as 2002, researchers continue to lament the dearth of empirical research on service-learning. In *Service-Learning: The Essence of the*

¹ In my writing, I will follow the editorial guidelines set forth by the Corporation for National and Community Service and hyphenate the term “service-learning.” I will not, however, alter direct quotes or titles to follow this convention.

Pedagogy (2002) editors Andrew Furco and Shelley H. Billig assert: “Despite a growing number of research studies in the field, the research on service-learning remains scant” (Furco & Billig, 2002, p. vii). This book, the first in the *Advances in Service-Learning Research* series, also sets forth a research agenda developed in July 2001 by a group of 24 researchers. This agenda for K-12 service-learning research focuses on “three broad areas: impact of service-learning on students’ academic achievement, civic engagement, and personal/social development” (Billig & Furco, 2002, p. 272).

This research agenda, and the current scope of service-learning research, virtually ignore teachers’ experiences with service-learning in their schools. This scarcity exists despite a widely accepted understanding that teachers play a major role in the success or failure of service-learning. Wade (1997b), for example, states: “Teachers are central to the practice of service-learning in American schools...Invariably teachers have the primary responsibility for guiding their students in serving the community and learning from the process of doing so” (p. 77). Nathan and Kielsmeier (1991) make a similar point when they claim that “teacher creativity” (p. 742) is central to the efforts to incorporate service-learning in schools, and in her discussion of service-learning Seigel (1997) asserts: “Teachers, who function as change agents, are central to the process of school reform...[and] teachers have a significant impact on the quality of student learning” (p. 197).

Significance of the Study

Some authors, accepting the importance of the roles teachers play in the success or failure of service-learning, assert the importance of preservice and in-service training for teachers who will use, or are using, service-learning in their classrooms (e.g., Carter, 1997; Kinsley, 1993; McPherson, 1991; Scales & Koppelman, 1997; Wade et al., 1999; Zeldin & Tarlov, 1997). Scales & Koppelman (1997), for example, state:

Questions that customarily arise in implementing service-learning in the school should be addressed in both preservice and in-service programs. Because it is often a new field for teachers already in the classroom, as well as for those preparing to teach, not only the philosophical basis for service-learning but the day-to-day issues and realities involved in service-learning should figure prominently in teacher preparation. (p. 124)

While researchers assert that training programs need to address specific issues identified by teachers of service-learning, at the present time there is almost no research literature that specifically documents these concerns. This study attempts to remedy this situation by not only identifying the dilemmas faced by middle school service-learning teachers, but also by detailing the ways that teachers address these dilemmas within the context of the institutions of schooling.

While authors on the topic of teachers of service-learning have not specifically called for a consideration of dilemmas faced by teachers of service-learning or the school contexts in which they work, the work of educational researchers and theorists on the subject of

dilemmas in education demonstrates the importance of such considerations. This study, therefore, not only adds to the existing empirical literature on service-learning, but also can serve to ground the work of those involved in all preservice and in-service teacher education. While the specific area of study is middle school teachers of service-learning, the resulting conclusions on dilemmas can guide the work of all educators who are interested in understanding how a school's institutionalized nature influences the dilemmas faced by teachers, and how these dilemmas are understood and managed by classroom teachers. Furthermore, educational issues such as professional development, the sustainability of educational reforms, a school's relationship to the community, and assessment are each considered during the process of exploring dilemmas faced by teachers of service-learning. The results, therefore, may lead to a greater understanding of teachers' lived experiences within the context of the school.

Although this study was a local undertaking, the implications for research have broader significance. First, this study provides more extensive information than might be available through a national survey. During the five months I spent researching in the school, I developed an in-depth understanding of the teachers' contexts and experiences. This provides case-based information for those involved in educating service-learning teachers, as well as those involved in preservice and in-service teacher education. Second, this study may provide the basis for further investigations of teachers of service-learning, an area of research that is almost completely absent from educational literature. The information provided about one middle school, and its teachers, can provide the basis for additional research, such as a national survey of K-12 service-learning teachers, and may provide assistance to subsequent researchers as they plan methodologies or survey protocols.

Theoretical Framework

A middle school teacher identified this dilemma: at a local elementary school where students provide service once a week, several pairs of students are asked to assist the elementary teacher with clerical tasks, including stapling and cutting paper. While the middle school teacher understands that the students are there to provide a service to the school, and should perform tasks that meet the needs of the school and its teachers, his goal, and the goal of the middle school in general, is to have the students interacting with and assisting the younger children. The middle school teacher is unsure whether to discuss his concerns with the teachers at the service site, at the risk of alienating these teachers and appearing to be unconcerned about providing a needed service, or to accept the current situation, even though it does not fulfill his expectations or the program's goals as articulated by the middle school principal. This dilemma, identified by a participant in this study, is just one example of a dilemma faced by a service-learning teacher.

Dilemmas, as described in this study, "are conflict-filled situations that require choices because competing, highly prized values cannot be fully satisfied" (Cuban, 1992, p. 6). Dilemmas occur when "as the teacher considers alternative solutions to any particular problem, she cannot hope to arrive at the 'right' alternative in the sense that a theory built on valid and reliable empirical data can be said to be right" (Lampert, 1985, p. 181).

Lampert and Cuban, as well as numerous other authors (e.g. Dimmock, 1999; Haas, 1992) emphasize that many of the problems of teaching are actually dilemmas. Unlike problems, dilemmas cannot be “solved” because competing values lead to situations in which all “possible ‘solutions’ lead to problems” (Lampert, 1985, p. 181). The notion conveyed by these authors, that dilemmas are characterized by the inability of the person faced with the dilemma to arrive at a solution because all alternatives result in additional difficulties, is grounded in the work of Berlak and Berlak (1981), early pioneers in the exploration of dilemmas in education.

Berlak and Berlak (1981) assert that a consideration of dilemmas in education can serve as a starting point for a “language of schooling” (p. ix) that simplifies “the complexity [of schooling] without over-generalizing or distorting the nuances and problems of school life” (p. 107). The authors found that describing the classrooms they observed “in terms of the familiar ‘informal v. formal’, ‘progressive v. traditional’, [or] ‘teacher centered v. student directed’” (p. 107) dichotomies distorted the realities of classroom life. They assert that teachers’ behaviors and classrooms could not be described as either progressive or traditional, for example, or even as somewhere along a continuum between traditional and progressive because of the observed “regularities and uncertainties, constancies and apparent contradictions of everyday social behavior of teachers” (p. 107). The use of dilemmas as a “language of schooling” for describing classrooms and teachers, however, allowed the authors to deal with these uncertainties and contradictions. Instead of describing teachers in dichotomous terms, the authors explained how teachers dealt with dilemmas such as “whole child v. child as student” (p. 136), while making it clear that “teachers may resolve each of the dilemmas differently for different children, at different times of the day or year, and for different subjects or domains of children’s development” (p. 136).

The authors also assert that the experiences of teachers must be considered within the broader contexts in which they work. They state that the language of dilemmas allows one to consider “the larger issues that are embedded in the particulars of the everyday schooling experience” (p. 4). They also assert: “Dilemmas focus on the contradictions...that are encapsulated in daily encounters of teachers with children in the social setting of the schools (p. 124). These characterizations provide for an understanding of dilemmas of schooling grounded in the assumption that the work of educators in the classroom cannot be separated from their greater environments.

The concept of “curriculum as institutionalized text” explicated by Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (1995) is directly related to Berlak and Berlak’s (1981) conceptualization of dilemmas. Both sets of authors emphasize the importance of understanding the institutions and bureaucracies in which teachers function. Pinar et al. assert the importance of “understanding curriculum as it functions bureaucratically” and explain that understanding curriculum as an institutionalized text is an “approach linked explicitly to the everyday functioning of the institution” (p. 661). Understanding curriculum within the context of the ever-present bureaucracy also provides a basis from which the greater complexities of schooling can be considered.

Teachers of service-learning, like all teachers, are responsible to a variety of “constituencies” (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 669) who make demands that originate from their thinking about education and the needs of children. In considering the unique dilemmas faced by teachers of service-learning, the typical demands placed on teachers by parents, students, and administrators are exacerbated when students and teachers enter the community for service activities. The community becomes a laboratory for students participating in service-learning and the traditional buffers between teachers and the community—the walls of the school and the classrooms—are removed. Teachers thus encounter dilemmas when they try to teach in a way that fits with their beliefs about education and schooling while addressing the needs, concerns, and mandates of parents, administrators, state and local educational authorities, and now those at the service-learning sites.

The work of Berlak and Berlak (1981), other subsequent authors on the topic of dilemmas in education (e.g. Clark, 1988; Clark & Lampert, 1986; Cuban, 1992; Dimmock, 1999; Haas, 1992; Lampert, 1985), as well as theories of curriculum as an institutionalized text explicated by Pinar et al. (1995) provide the theoretical foundation for this study. This study is grounded in the belief that teachers are active participants within the institution of schooling, especially when dealing with the dilemmas that occur as a result of conflicting belief systems and demands from within and outside the institution of the school. Also fundamental to the concept of dilemmas in this study is the understanding, articulated by Berlak and Berlak, as well as Pinar et al., that it is impossible to separate the work of the teacher in the classroom from the school and institutional and bureaucratic contexts in which schooling occurs.

Overview of the Report

The subsequent chapters in this report address the literature relevant to this study, the research questions and methodology, the findings, and finally the conclusions and recommendations. Readers will find the literature review in Chapter 2, the research questions and a description of this study’s qualitative methodology in Chapter 3, a detailed description of the three dilemmas identified in this study in Chapter 4, and a discussion of conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In considering the body of literature on service-learning four areas emerge as relevant to understanding dilemmas faced by middle school service-learning teachers. These are:

- Motivations for making service-learning part of K-12 education
- Teachers' experiences with and beliefs about service
- Dilemmas within the broader contexts of educational research
- Service-learning practitioners' difficulties already identified in service-learning literature

First, the literature promoting the use of service-learning in schools provides many examples of benefits accrued by students, schools, and communities when service-learning is included as an integral part of the workings of a school. In attempting to achieve these benefits, teachers may experience dilemmas when the needs of one stakeholder or group of stakeholders stand in contradiction to the needs of another. Second, literature on teachers of service-learning provides preliminary findings on why teachers choose to use service-learning in their classrooms. This literature also contributes to an understanding of dilemmas faced by teachers because while trying to meet the expectations of all educational stakeholders, teachers must also remain true to their own educational philosophies, such as those that are explicated in the literature on teachers of service-learning. Third, a consideration of the topic of dilemmas within the broader contexts of educational research provides a rationale for considering the contexts in which dilemmas occur. Fourth, considering how service-learning literature addresses problems faced by service-learning practitioners provides a background for considering the dilemmas faced by the middle school teachers in this study.

Rationale for Service-Learning

Much of the literature on service-learning can be characterized as anecdotal descriptions of service-learning in one school or one classroom, or general discussions about the benefits of including service-learning in a school's curriculum. While this literature does not provide the intellectual warrant of empirical research studies, when these works are considered as a body of literature, numerous similarities are found and patterns emerge.

Many proponents of service-learning argue that it increases academic learning, encourages personal growth, and provides important benefits to the community. Waterman (1997a), for example, asserts that student involvement in service-learning leads to benefits in four broad categories: "(a) enhancement in the learning of material that is part of the traditional in-school curriculum, (b) promoting personal development, (c) fostering the development of civic responsibility and other values of citizenship, and (d) benefits accruing to the community" (p. 3).

These sweeping generalizations are common within literature that advocates service-learning. For example, in her conclusion to a volume of the yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education devoted to service-learning, Schine (1997) essentially

argues that without service experiences in schools, children will have a difficult time becoming capable, productive adults. She says:

If our children are to become competent adults and effective citizens, if they are to be prepared to meet the challenges that lie ahead, then public education must seek to combine rigorous academic instruction with an equally rigorous and demanding experience of learning through service to the community. (Schine, 1997, p. 186)

Perrone makes a similar assertion, grounded in a list of societal concerns he believes schools are not currently addressing:

The revival of interest in service learning has many roots--concerns about a growing age stratification, a youth culture that has too few connections to civic life, feelings among youth of having no critical and acknowledged place in society, disturbing voting patterns in the 18- to 24-year old population, growing school-work transitional difficulties, a deterioration of communities as settings for social growth, an enlarging set of social service needs, increased pessimism about the future, and a belief that schooling is not powerful enough to evoke deep commitments to learning, among others. (Perrone, 1993, p. 5)

Perrone and Schine, like many other authors, base their justification of the need for service-learning on the assumption that young people are currently disconnected from their academic work and their communities. Service-learning, these authors assert, is the solution to this complex set of problems.

Academic & Social Benefits

One common theme in the existing literature is the powerful impact service-learning often has on students' academic achievement and social development. In her discussion of service-learning in her classroom of elementary special education students, Ellis (1993) asserts that the inclusion of service-learning projects in her classroom enhanced students' academic and social development and led to a positive community atmosphere in the classroom. Similarly, in her discussion of service-learning at her middle school, Pardo (1997), a school service-learning coordinator, attributes students' growth in a variety of academic and social domains, including pre-career and interpersonal skills, as well as responsibility, patience, and perseverance, to service-learning. These are just two examples of educational practitioners who ground their advocacy of service-learning in their own experiences.

In addition to these anecdotal stories of success in individual classrooms and schools, numerous other stakeholders in the educational arena emphasize service-learning's academic and social benefits. Madeleine M. Kunin (1997), former Deputy Secretary in the U.S. Department of Education, argues that service-learning is an important tool for increasing both student achievement and personal growth. Nathan and Kielsmeier (1991) make a similar point when they state: "Combining classroom work with service/social action projects can help produce dramatic improvements in student attitudes, motivation,

and achievement” (p. 739) and Zeldin and Tarlov (1997) argue that service-learning is a way for youth to develop positive aspects of identity and areas of ability that are expected of young people. These aspects of identity and ability are both social and academic. Similarly, referring to numerous benefits of service-learning, Billig (2000) states: “Service learning has an impact on its participants in terms of personal and social development, academic achievement, development of civic responsibility and career exploration” (p. 15)

While Billig (2000) makes passing reference to the development of civic responsibility, within the area of personal growth, some authors choose to focus exclusively on the civic benefits accrued by students who participate in service-learning. Boyte (1991), for example, asserts that service-learning has the capacity to help students become active participants in the political process. He states that when students are taught problem-solving skills in the context of service to the community, not only can they achieve the often-stated goals of “connecting with other cultures, experiential learning, [and] personal growth” (p. 766) but they can also become more involved in the political process.

Community & Home

Service-learning is also seen as a remedy for societal issues that affect students and their communities. Unlike the authors mentioned previously, authors who advocate service-learning from this perspective see the problems faced by youth as originating with the home or the community, not the school. They do, however, see the school as responsible for a solution. For example, one author sees service-learning as a way “to make up for the absence of a constructive home life for children” (Eberly, 1997, p. 28). Similarly, Kleinbard (1997) contends that service-learning is a way to make up for “limited interaction with adults other than teachers [which] has reduced informal educational opportunities for young people” (pp. 4-5). Keith (1997) sees schools as a way to integrate school and community. She argues: “Service learning can be an important catalyst in breaking down the barriers between school and community, making the school a bridge between the local community and the outside world, and reintegrating the school as a community institution” (p. 143). In addition to these general assertions about benefits resulting from students’ opportunities for interaction with adults in the community, numerous authors consider how service-learning has been advantageous within specific cultural contexts.

Hall, for example, considers the role of service-learning within Native American communities. He says that the “Gadugi” model of service-learning acts “as a natural extension of the Native Americans’ traditional sense of communal responsibility” and as a “significant step toward breaking the cycle of dependence in which many Native Americans feel themselves trapped” (Hall, 1991, p. 755). Miller (1997) also sees service-learning as providing benefits specific to the needs of a community. He asserts that service-learning can help address the unique needs of rural areas:

If rural communities are to be seen as viable and meaningful places to live, rural youth must learn to see their communities as a positive choice among many in which to live and work. This can be accomplished by providing youth with

service-learning opportunities to become active, responsible members of a community that works together. (p. 124)

Miller, like Hall, argues that service-learning can address specific needs of a specific population by developing within young people a commitment to serve their communities.

A somewhat different approach to the argument that service-learning can provide significant community benefits can be found in the writings of Briscoe (1991) and Smilow (1993). They do not view service-learning as a way to make up for deficits in schooling, home, or community, but instead they see it as a way to transform children from dependent members of society to active contributors. Briscoe, for example, says that service-learning leads to a “profound shift in our perspective on youth” (Briscoe, 1991, p. 766). Instead of viewing young people as a source of problems, service-learning allows them to be viewed as valuable participants who can play an important role in community development. Similarly, Smilow (1993) argues that with service-learning, "children, traditionally viewed as 'consumers of educational services' are becoming contributors" (p. 23).

School Reform

While most authors emphasize the benefits to students, and by extension, the community, that result from service-learning, others emphasize that it can be a substantial piece of a larger movement toward fundamental school reform. After summarizing current research on systemic school reform, Bhaerman (1995) states:

Service-learning holds a great deal of potential for contributing to this new [educational] system. The concept is highly consistent with the elements of systemic educational reform, particularly the common focus on transforming relationships between schools and communities; linking curriculum/instruction/assessment; developing integrated, cohesive curricula; and improving instruction by having students demonstrate what they know, and, through application, what they can do. (p. 55)

Supported by references to current literature on school reform, Bhaerman asserts that service-learning has the capacity to play a major role in a systemic change in our educational system. Educators and politicians alike echo this assertion.

Senator Edward Kennedy, for example, says: "Service-learning should be the central component of current efforts to reform education" (Kennedy, 1991, p. 772). Similarly, Smilow (1993) argues: "Community service and community service learning have captured a place at the center of the educational reform movement as more and more teachers open the doors of their classrooms to the communities beyond" (p. 22). Haynes and Comer (1997) argue that service-learning fits into a school reform model where “adults and children coexist in challenging and mutually respectful learning communities where good citizenship is encouraged, supported, and rewarded” (p. 81) and where students and adults “practice socially responsible behaviors” (p. 88).

In four anecdotal reports on efforts to implement service-learning, educators argue that service-learning played a major role in reform efforts in their schools and districts. In describing reform in their district, educators from Springfield, Massachusetts explain that service-learning can help schools achieve the agendas set forth in current school reform literature which include an emphasis on “creating effective, caring schools that will provide active learning opportunities for students, develop learning communities, expand learning into the community, foster collegiality among staff members, and encourage teachers to become 'orchestra conductors' in the classroom rather than lecturers” (Anderson, Kinsley, Negroni, & Price, 1991, pp. 761-762). Similarly, MacNichol (1993) argues: “Service learning is the right thing to do for professional renewal, enrichment, and meaning” (p. 9) and Berman (2000) comments: “Service learning can have a broad and powerful impact on the student performance and school culture if it is integrated into curriculum and instructional practices on a consistent basis” (p. 20). Yet another author explains that the implementation of a service program in his high school not only changed education for the students but also provided the impetus for school reform: “The Lincoln experience shows that community service has the power to galvanize an entire school community and possibly fuel the engine of reform” (Silcox, 1991, p. 759).

Dilemmas Emerging from the Varied Rationales

While authors may choose to emphasize specific context-appropriate benefits from service-learning, the abundance of anecdotal and theoretical literature on service-learning makes a clear argument that under certain circumstances a variety of benefits can occur. It is in trying to meet these expectations, however, that teachers may experience dilemmas. Throughout the existing literature, service-learning is routinely purported to bring academic and social benefits to students, provide for community revitalization, and serve as a tool for fundamental educational reform. Teachers of service-learning are challenged to teach in such a way that provides for all of these benefits, while addressing the needs of students, administrators, parents, and community members, and remaining true to their own beliefs about education. It is in this confluence of differing expectations and needs, from a variety of stakeholders, and sometimes from within one stakeholder, that dilemmas may occur. For example, in teaching for an individual child’s academic and social development, a teacher may have to disregard some of what may be best for the community as a whole, or the teacher may have to confront administrative requirements which were put in place to allow for the greatest good for the majority of students. Teachers are often at the center of negotiating these dilemmas and for this reason it is essential to understand the dilemmas they face in their work with service-learning as well as the school context in which these dilemmas occur.

Teachers’ Beliefs and Experiences

Much of the available literature on teachers of service-learning takes a prescriptive approach to the topic. Instead of considering specifics about the role of the teacher, many authors provide guidelines for teachers’ behaviors (e.g., Bradley, 1997; Keith, 1997; Miller, 1997) or arguments in favor of adequate training for preservice and in-service teachers (e.g., Carter, 1997; Kinsley, 1993; McPherson, 1991; Scales & Koppelman, 1997; Zeldin &

Tarlov, 1997). This is problematic because without an adequate understanding of the experiences of service-learning teachers and the contexts in which they work, the guidelines and training may reflect only unsubstantiated assumptions about teachers' experiences with service-learning.

There is, however, a small body of literature related to the principles and beliefs that guide teachers involved in service-learning. Unfortunately, within this body of literature, researchers tend to rely heavily on samples obtained from earlier studies. This results in authors drawing similar conclusions, often describing the beliefs and goals of the teachers in exactly the same words. With this caveat in mind, however, a review of the few studies that exist leads to the identification of three factors that guide educators in their work with service-learning in their schools and classrooms. These factors are teachers' "previous experiences with community service, beliefs about teaching and learning, and knowledge about service-learning as a pedagogy" (Seigel, 1997, p. 199). Due to the limited scope of these studies, and the overall scarcity of literature on teachers of service-learning, these factors, detailed below, are limited in their broader application. The few existing studies fit nicely into this categorization, and this review of the literature on teachers of service-learning will consider the findings of the studies in these three categories. However, the relative lack of empirical evidence makes it difficult to view these studies as representative of the experiences and beliefs of service-learning teachers.

Teachers' Previous Experiences with Community Service

Wade (1997b) studied 84 teachers, aged 26 to 59 years old, who had taught between two and 34 years. The teachers were approximately split between early, middle, and late career teachers, and they were from rural, suburban, and urban settings in the Midwest. The teachers were diverse in age, experience, and school setting, but the large majority was composed of White females. Within this group, many teachers were new to service-learning and almost all were involved with service-learning programs for four years or less. Wade noted that three-fourths of the teachers had previous service experiences as a child or adult, but since there were no data available on service experiences from the general population, she was not able to conclude that this proportion was unique to this group of teachers. She did, however, make the assumption that these service experiences motivated teachers to include service in their classrooms, although "most teachers did not say so overtly" (p. 81). Like many of the assertions found in the existing literature on teachers of service-learning, further research would be needed in order for this claim to be viewed as having warrant.

Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

In addition to identifying a possible connection between teachers' previous service experiences and their use of service-learning in the classroom, Wade (1997b) and Seigel (1997) also identified commonalities in teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. In response to a question about why they used service-learning in the classroom, "the most common response involved reference to the compatibility between service-learning and the teachers' beliefs about teaching and life" (Seigel, 1997, p. 200; Wade, 1997b, p. 80).

Specifically, the teachers tended to focus on the compatibility between service-learning and their beliefs about the importance of involving students in experiences outside of the classroom.

In her report on teachers of service-learning, Seigel (1997) combines data from two other authors with data from her own study of six middle school teachers in the Midwest. Seigel also found that teachers included service-learning in their classrooms because they felt that it was compatible with their ideas about teaching and learning. For example, Seigel explained that one teacher said she was attracted to service-learning because it “was consistent with her individual beliefs about student learning and the needs of adolescents. She believed that it was difficult for these students to be confined within a classroom throughout the entire day” (p. 200).

Teachers’ Knowledge about Service-Learning as a Pedagogy

Researchers also conclude that many teachers not only include service-learning in their schools and classrooms because it is compatible with their beliefs about teaching and learning but also because they were familiar with the benefits accrued by students when teachers included service-learning methods in their classrooms. When asked why they decided to include service-learning in their curricula, many educators mentioned that it helped instill “a sense of caring, social responsibility, and self-esteem in their students” (Seigel, 1997, p. 199; Wade, 1997b, p. 80). Wade (1997b) also noted that many teachers mentioned “connections between service-learning and their students’ academic development” (p. 81) as well as the “satisfaction they feel from seeing students motivated to learn and help others” (p. 83). Seigel (1997) also noted: “The most rewarding aspect of service-learning is the changes that teachers observe in their students...Teachers are particularly rewarded when students with behavior problems change as a result of participating in a service-learning project” (p. 210).

Shumer (1997), in his analysis of the study of exemplary practices in service-learning sponsored by the Corporation for National Service in 1993, identified specific beliefs about the value of service-learning that motivated teachers to include it in their classrooms. He asserted that because educators attributed students’ academic and social gains to service-learning, they were willing to stay involved, despite difficulties. Among these beliefs were that students demonstrated “increased motivation...increased sensitivity to others, and improved ability to apply learning to new contexts” (Shumer, 1997, p. 35). Therefore, because teachers were guided by the belief that service-learning led to positive student outcomes, they remained committed to using it in their classrooms. This assertion is supported by the work of Seigel (1997), and Wade (1997b), and while it is not immune from the challenges mentioned previously, anecdotal literature on service-learning demonstrates teachers’ commitment to service-learning, despite the difficulties associated with its implementation, because of the wide range of benefits accrued by students.

Dilemmas in a Broader Context

Many studies of teachers of service-learning reflect a consideration of a much broader topic within educational research: teacher thinking. The authors consider what teachers think about service-learning as a basis for understanding why they choose to include service-learning in their classrooms. Within the larger subset of research on teacher thinking, calls are repeatedly made for considering the larger environments in which teaching occurs. Berlak and Berlak (1981) might call this considering the macro within the micro, while researchers on teacher thinking often refer to it as considering the contexts for teaching. Elbaz (1991) states:

Teachers cannot function in a totally idiosyncratic fashion: what they do, and how they account for it, have to make sense both in the context of the practice of teaching...and in the context of the society and its traditions of what it means to teach, learn and become educated. (p. 6)

This same emphasis on understanding the broader contexts of teaching is repeated by Mitchell and Marland (1989) who speak of the “danger of studying teaching thinking in isolation from its social and professional context” (p. 116) and Carlgren and Lindblad state (1991): “As a teacher, you are confronted with societal facts that have an impact on teaching and which you have to respond to” (p. 512). It is in considering these contexts and societal influences to which teachers must respond that the topic of dilemmas arises within teacher thinking literature.

While not specifically using dilemma language, McNamara’s (1990) discussion of what researchers choose to investigate about teachers’ thinking includes issues that form the basis for many of Berlak and Berlak’s (1981) dilemmas, including “general purposes of education or how to foster equality of treatment within the classroom [and] the appropriate ways to relate to children and the adoption of teaching styles” (p. 150). Other authors, however, specifically consider dilemmas within the broader context of teacher thinking. Clark (1988), for example, explains that a consideration of dilemmas “concerns the very nature of the teaching situation itself. Not ‘what works,’ but ‘what it is really like out there,’ as seen through the eyes of teachers themselves...Teaching as experienced is *complex, uncertain*, and peppered with *dilemmas*” (emphasis in original, p. 9). Similarly, Clark and Lampert (1986) state: “Teachers work in situations where they are expected to accomplish complex and even conflicting goals...Such conflicts among teachers’ multiple commitments lead to practical dilemmas that must be managed” (p. 28). A consideration of dilemmas faced by teachers of service-learning, while representing a relatively narrow topic within educational research, draws upon previous research in teacher thinking which emphasizes the importance of considering the contexts in which teachers work.

Dilemmas in Service-Learning Literature

Viewing the existing anecdotal literature on teachers of service-learning through the lens provided by teacher thinking literature which demands a consideration of the broader contexts in which teaching occurs, provides insight into possible dilemmas faced by

educators dedicated to service-learning. Pickeral and Bray (2000), for example, show that dilemmas may occur when a desire to include service-learning in an academic program conflicts with the increasing demands imposed on teachers and students by state and local education departments. They ask, “Where does service learning fit” in a climate of “tough academic standards” (p. 6)? They wonder if the “richness of service learning may become reduced with a strict alignment to standards” (p. 10). Service-learning teachers asking themselves the same question might find themselves experiencing a dilemma.

Teachers may also experience dilemmas around the idea of “mandatory” service. In at least three appeals court cases, “litigants argued that mandatory community service amounted to involuntary servitude, or slavery, which is unconstitutional under the 13th Amendment” (Loupe, 2000, p. 36). While courts in all three cases found in favor of the school districts, and this argument is less likely to be asserted when service is included as an integral component of a learning experience, much like laboratory experiments are included in a science class, teachers might voice concerns about the appropriateness of compelling students to participate in service activities.

Other dilemmas faced by teachers might occur as a result of practical concerns. The allocation of resources, both monetary and personnel, may be an issue that teachers are asked to confront as they implement service-learning. Teachers may also be asked to consider issues related to liability and insurance (Melchior, 2000). Safety issues, especially when students “venture into unfamiliar neighborhoods” may need to be addressed (Loupe, 2000, p. 38). While these practical issues may fall under the category of “problems” as defined by Cuban (1992) and Lampert (1985) they may also be dilemmas because teachers may need to consider the needs of various constituencies, and there may not be a “solution” to be found.

Importance of Dilemma Language for Service-Learning

The authors who considered teachers of service-learning, as well as Berlak and Berlak (1981), demonstrate a common understanding of the important roles teachers play in the successes and failures of classrooms. While these authors do not speak specifically to the importance of a consideration of dilemmas faced by teachers of service-learning, the understanding that teachers of service-learning need to be adequately prepared speaks to the importance of such a consideration. Teachers, as well as all other advocates of service-learning, can benefit from the identification of dilemmas and the considerations of the contexts in which they occur. While dilemmas, by definition, will not be easily solved, research that details the contexts and environments that influence how teachers teach helps educators and service-learning practitioners understand the complexities of the teachers’ work.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

This study was designed to respond to the current interest in service-learning, as well as the need for empirical research on teachers who use service-learning in their classrooms. While recently there has been a proliferation of empirical studies on the effectiveness of service-learning, there is still a dearth of studies on teachers and the contexts in which they work. While researchers agree that teachers are an invaluable component of the successful design and implementation of service-learning, and that they must receive adequate preservice and in-service training, there is still very little literature to inform those who provide this training. This study, therefore, attempts to alleviate this difficulty by using a methodology that allows for in-depth information to be gathered about service-learning teachers and the school in which they work.

Research Questions

In an attempt to respond to the need for empirical study on service-learning and contribute to the existing knowledge on teachers of service-learning, this study considered two main research questions:

- In an urban middle school, what dilemmas do teachers of service-learning experience, and how do they describe them?
- What shapes how these teachers manage the dilemmas they encounter?
 - What aspects of the school do they view as contributing to the development of these dilemmas?
 - What roles do they perceive they have in the creation and management of the dilemmas they experience?

Research Design

Although much of the research on service-learning utilizes quantitative methodologies, (e.g., Melchior, 1998; Melchior & Bailis, 2002; Pritchard, 2002; Social Science Education Consortium, 1996) researchers within the field have expressed concerns about the limitations of such research. Serow (1997), for example, says that many researchers in the field of service-learning take “an unduly restrictive view of what constitutes good research and evaluation” (p. 13). He then argues that “holistic assessment” is needed in order to consider not only the “service related activity but also the broader particulars of human lives” (p. 14). This assertion ties in directly to the concept of dilemmas elucidated by Berlak and Berlak (1981). Just as these authors critique the macro/micro distinction that separates teachers’ work in their classrooms from broader societal concerns, service-learning researchers such as Serow (1997) believe that the broader contexts of human life cannot be separated from the work of service-learning teachers in the classroom.

My work within this study begins with the belief that individuals construct meaning about the realities of their lives. This belief is best expressed through constructivist theory, an approach to inquiry where the aim is the “*understanding and reconstruction* of the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold” (emphasis in original, Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 211). In studying the nature of the dilemmas faced by teachers

involved in service-learning, I seek to portray a “local and specific constructed reality” (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 203). Although not specifically arguing for research guided by constructivist theories, Conrad and Hedin (1991) make a case for this type of research when they comment on the unique challenges of research on service-learning: “The fundamental difficulty is that service is not a single, easily definable activity like taking notes in a lecture” (p. 746). The variety of meanings associated with service-learning therefore necessitate a theoretical orientation and resulting methodology that allow the researcher to consider the meanings and realities of individuals within a specific situation. My goal, therefore, was to construct, through interviews, observations, and document analysis one interpretation of teachers’ beliefs about the dilemmas they face as teachers of service-learning and one portrayal of the school context in which they work, while understanding that there are “multiple, often conflicting constructions, and all (at least potentially) are meaningful” (Schwandt, 1998, p. 243).

This study uses an embedded case study approach (Yin, 1994) where both the larger unit of analysis (the school) and the smaller units (the teachers) are emphasized. In this study, one middle school serves as the case and four service-learning teachers are specifically considered as relevant and important actors within the larger context of the school. Peshkin (1993) states: “The assumption behind the story of any particular life is that there’s something worth learning” (p. 25). For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that both the stories of the teachers, and the school as a whole, contain “something worth learning.” A consideration of the dilemmas faced by each teacher will “add significant opportunities for extensive analysis, enhancing insights into the single case” (Yin, 1994, p. 44). The goal of this analysis is to provide readers with a “thick description,” a method of coming to understand a culture attributed to Clifford Geertz (1988). Stake (1995) describes it as trying to “establish an empathetic understanding for the reader through description...conveying to the reader what experience itself would convey” (p. 39). However, thick description goes beyond helping the reader to envision the culture and experiences of the participants at the setting. The emphasis of such description must be on portraying the language, customs, concerns, beliefs and values of those who are being studied (Erickson, 1986; Geertz, 1988; Stake, 1995). While I attempt to portray the culture of the teachers and the school as a whole, as the researcher, I also add an additional perspective and provide interpretation. This is a difficult balance to achieve, but the methodology of this study, which included numerous opportunities for the participants and me to discuss the nature of service-learning dilemmas at the school, and the transcription of all interview dialogue for the purpose of faithfully representing the words of the participants, helped me find this balance.

Developing the Interview Protocol

Before entering the school I had identified as the setting for my research, two pilot studies were completed for the purpose of narrowing the research topic and developing and testing the interview protocols. The preliminary pilot for this study was completed at a different urban middle school in the same large city. While the research questions for the first pilot study were more general, they provided preliminary data from interviews and observations on the types of dilemmas faced by teachers of service-learning. Among the dilemmas

identified by teachers at this middle school were: integrating service into a standards-driven curriculum, balancing service experiences with the other academic needs of students, meeting the educational needs of students while remaining mindful of the needs of the individuals at the service sites, and working within the structures imposed by the board of education such as the city and state standardized testing mandates.

A second pilot was completed at a second urban middle school in the same large city. The purpose of this pilot was to test the interview protocol with a teacher who was teaching in a similar urban middle school. While only the first interview was piloted, the questions specifically related to dilemmas were also included (see appendix A). The participant seemed somewhat confused by the dilemma questions, possibly because they were so different from the previous questions that asked her to discuss her personal experiences. As a result of this difficulty, during this study, I added an additional introduction to those questions. Instead of simply asking the questions, I explained to the participant that the questions required some introduction, and proceeded to provide an example of a dilemma that did not include service-learning. I chose to use an example not related to service-learning because I did not want the participants to feel that they needed to reaffirm the service-learning example, or to be limited to considering service-learning dilemmas within the context of my example.

An analysis of the data from the second pilot study also supported the belief that teachers experience dilemmas when they are unable to meet the needs of all involved with service-learning. For example, this teacher specifically mentioned that she experienced a dilemma when she had to limit the number of students who could participate in the activity. While the needs of the service site dictated that a small number of students should attend, as an educator, the teacher wanted to be able to allow all eligible students to participate in this valuable activity.

Setting

In order to explore the dilemmas faced by middle school service-learning teachers, as well as the ways teachers understand and manage these dilemmas within a broader school context, I identified an urban middle school in a large east coast school district where service-learning is an integral part of the structure and focus of the school. Urban Middle School² opened in 1992 with the goal of providing a non-traditional education to students in grades five through eight. Organized as a magnet school, all students in the district are eligible to apply to attend the school. Ideally, the faculty and administration hope to attract students who are not succeeding in their schools at the present time, and will benefit from the small school environment and the small class sizes.

For the 2000-2001 school year, the last year for which data are available, there were 159 students and 13 full-time teachers. As indicated in the chart below, the ethnicities of the students were as follows: 45% were White, 24% were Hispanic, 15% were Black, and 16% were Asian and others, including Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Natives, and Native

² In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, all proper names have been replaced by pseudonyms.

Americans. Compared to other schools in the city and district, this school has a substantially greater proportion of White students. As a district magnet school, the goal is for the school to represent the ethnic makeup of the district. However, because parents apply to have their students attend this school, the ethnic makeup of the school more closely mirrors the ethnic distribution of the applications received, not necessarily the student population in the entire district.

2000-2001 Student Background Information: A Comparison Chart³

	School	District	City
Ethnicity of Student Population (Percentages)			
White	45	26	16
Black	15	8	34
Hispanic	24	25	38
Asian and Others	16	41	12
Student poverty, English Language Learners, Special Education Status (Percentages)			
Free lunch	32	51	74
English Language Learners	1	17	14
Special Education-Part Time	11	6	6
Special Education-Full Time	0	4	6

The students are organized into eight classes. Fifth and sixth graders are taught in cross-graded classes and seventh and eighth graders are taught separately. The school is unique in that the classes of approximately 20 students are significantly smaller than those in other city schools. At the same time, it is similar to other city schools in that its students are expected to meet the same standards and must take the same standardized tests as the rest of the city's students. Fifth, sixth, and seventh grade students each take three standardized tests. Eighth graders, however, are required to take five state-mandated tests in English-language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and technology. Teachers are under enormous pressure to ensure that their students do well on these tests. Schools that consistently perform low on these tests risk being "taken over" by the board of education. These tests, therefore, are often on the minds of all educators at the school, even as they engage in progressive activities such as service-learning.

All 159 students spend 60 minutes each week at service sites under the direction of their advisory or "homeroom" teachers. At the present time, most students are involved with service to physically, mentally, and emotionally disabled children at nine local private and public preschool and elementary schools. Service is connected to the students' academic curriculum in two ways. First, students complete activities before and after the service, such as writing résumés to describe their skills to the coordinators at the service sites and writing reflective journals after the service experience. Second, students may prepare activities in their academic classes for use at the service site, such as designing a fire safety

³ Data in this chart come from annual school reports available on-line from the school district. To maintain the confidentiality of the school, a full reference is not included. Additional information about the origin of this data can be obtained by contacting the author.

poster to share with the children at the service site or practicing presentation and oral reading skills in order to read a children's book to a group of students.

Sample

The sample for this study included four advisory teachers who are directly involved in the preparation for, supervision of, and reflection after the service activities. All eight advisory teachers were asked to participate but four declined to participate, citing a variety of reasons; including concern that in such a small school, confidentiality would be hard to maintain. I also interviewed the principal and a service site director, because each provided additional data toward understanding the contextual underpinnings of the dilemmas identified by the service-learning teachers. Also, as integral parts of the service-learning implementation, their insights were essential to understanding the larger context of service-learning at Urban Middle School, and the specifics on the service-learning teachers' negotiations of the dilemmas they experienced.

With assistance from the principal, who agreed to support my research, I introduced myself to the teachers at two different meetings set up during their lunch period. At these meetings I explained the details of the study, as well as handed out cover letters and informed consent documents. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions after reviewing the informed consent documents that explained the extent of their commitment as well as the precautions I planned to take to keep the gathered data confidential and to protect them from any harm.

Four teachers agreed to be the primary participants in this study. Anne and Lynn both taught all subjects to their cross-graded fifth/sixth classes. Anne had five years experience and Lynn had 30. Lynn was also the informal service-learning coordinator at the school, and held an administrative position with the teachers' union. Chloe was a first-year English teacher who taught seventh and eighth grade and accompanied her eighth grade homeroom to their service site. Al was an eleven-year veteran who taught social studies to seventh and eighth graders and accompanied his seventh grade homeroom to their service site. Mike, the school principal, also participated in an interview, as did Barbara, the director of a local preschool that served as a site for one seventh grade homeroom.

Data Collection

The data collection occurred over a five-month period. During this period a series of four 45-minute interviews, approximately one each month, were conducted with each of the four primary participants. This time period allowed data to be gathered during different periods of the school year, but also avoided the months at the beginning of the year when students and teachers are not involved in service activities, and the last several weeks of the school year when the students no longer performed service and the teachers were involved in a variety of end of the year activities. During this time I also conducted interviews with the principal and a service-site director. The interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix B for the interview protocols), beginning with "grand tour" questions (Spradley, 1979) designed to encourage the teachers and the other participants to speak candidly about

their experiences with service-learning. Follow-up questions (Seidman, 1998) were used to clarify or gain additional information related to topics or issues mentioned by the participants. With the teachers, for all interviews after the first one, some questions were based on the responses the participants gave during the previous interviews, as well as observations and preliminary data analyses. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed shortly after they were completed, and I kept a journal of methodological and theoretical notes that assisted me in preparing for future interviews, as well as in the data analysis process. Interview transcripts were provided to the participants so that they could make clarifications or corrections as needed, and tentative themes were discussed with the participants at subsequent interviews so that the final analyses and conclusions reflected the “meaning held by the participants in the setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 154).

Observations (Adler & Adler, 1994) were conducted in the classroom during activities related to service-learning, including preparation and reflection, and at the service sites. I also observed each teacher for a full day, in order to gain a greater understanding of the day-to-day experiences of the teachers. Each teacher was observed formally for eight to 12 hours. I also completed additional informal observations while at lunch with the teachers, during a service-learning dinner, and while spending time in the hallways and library between interviews. These observations provided me with information about the school, as well as a context for understanding the comments made by participants during the interviews. Field notes were written during each observation with an emphasis on developing a broad picture of the intricacies of the teachers’ daily lives. These observations were “holistic descriptions of events and behaviors” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 107) instead of more structured checklists of observed behaviors.

In order to provide context as I strived to understand the data gathered through interviews and observations, I also reviewed relevant documents. Marshall & Rossman (1999) explain the importance of document analysis when they state: “History and context surrounding a specific setting come, in part, from reviewing documents.” Newspaper articles, service-site and school brochures, school and district annual reports, and a school video were all analyzed for data relevant to understanding the school and the context in which service-learning occurs. These documents helped illuminate the specific historical context of this school, and provided additional insights into my understanding of the entire case, and the words and actions of the teachers.

Upon completion of the individual interviews, observations, and document analysis, one focus group interview was held with three of the four primary participants in order to discuss the tentative themes I had identified. As the goal of this study is to understand the unique dilemmas faced by teachers of service-learning at this school and the school context in which these dilemmas occur, the focus group allowed me to receive feedback on my tentative analyses. Morgan (1997) explains that focus groups are valuable when they are used to present the “researcher’s tentative conclusions to the participants as topics in the focus group discussion” (p. 24).

The four advisory teachers were invited to participate in the focus group, and all but one of the participants was able to attend. The art teacher, who works part time at the middle

school and part time at the high school was also present for the focus group and eagerly participated in the discussions. The focus group used a “more structured” approach (Morgan, 1997, p. 39) since the purpose of the group was to get feedback on the specific tentative themes identified. An interview guide was designed after a preliminary data analysis and the teachers were asked to discuss their reactions to the preliminary themes I identified.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data began during the data collection process in order to facilitate the creation of an interpretation that constructed the meaning of the participants, instead of that of the researcher. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) explain the importance of analysis throughout the entire research process: “The process of analysis should not be seen as a distinct stage of research; rather, it is a reflexive activity that should inform data collection, writing, further data collection, and so forth” (p. 6). The interviews, therefore, were used as an opportunity to discuss tentative themes and further the data analysis.

The information gathered from each advisory teacher was first analyzed separately, with the goal of identifying major themes that could then be applied to the entire case. The first coding separated the data according to broad topics mentioned during the interviews or noteworthy events that occurred during observations. Subsequent codes were developed around these themes, and focused on the dilemmas the teachers experienced and how they managed them. Information about the institutional characteristics of the school was also coded. Once the codings were completed, I compared the information on the school to the relevant dilemmas, and looked for connections. The categories established by Berlak and Berlak (1981) provided preliminary guidance for data analysis. However, their conclusions were drawn primarily from observations of teachers with minimal time spent talking with the teachers about their beliefs about the dilemmas they faced. As the focus in this study was the conceptions of teachers, many of Berlak and Berlak’s dilemmas were not relevant to the participants’ experiences. Also, the inclusion of service-learning into the curriculum created dilemmas that were not present in the schools that these authors studied. Although I did not use most of their specific categories of dilemmas, I did, however, make use of their conception of “examining the macro in the micro” (Berlak & Berlak, 1981, p. 4) as I generated themes. These themes reflect the understanding that in discussing schooling, it is impossible to separate the work of the teachers from its institutional contexts.

In addition to working throughout the data collection process to identify tentative themes and generalizations about data, it was also essential to pay particular attention to data that did not fit within these themes. In later stages of analysis, codes were chosen that had relevance to the preponderance of the data, but the “exceptions, misfits and ‘negative’ findings” were seen “as having as much importance to the process of coding as do the easily coded data” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 47); and in the presentation of the data, I attempt to clarify why some teachers may not experience the dilemmas in the same ways that others do. This particularly challenging aspect of the data analysis, however, also demanded certain behaviors during data collection. Erickson (1986) describes the “problem of premature typification” (p. 144) that may occur when a researcher draws

conclusions early in the research and then proceeds to only record evidence that supports these conclusions. In order to prevent this, I made “deliberate searches for disconfirming evidence” (p. 144) in my observations, interviews, and document analysis. In observations and document analysis, this required me to train my attention on topics and activities that originally may have seemed irrelevant. Similarly, in interviews, probing, open-ended questions allowed the participants to contribute ideas that might be outside of the themes I tentatively identified. Also, in later interviews, after the participants had developed a level of comfort with my questioning techniques, I asked specifically about dilemmas I had identified. The participants, because of their comfort level, seemed very willing to let me know when they did not think the dilemmas I identified typified their experiences.

Once dilemmas were identified for the service-learning teachers, data gathered from the principal and the service site coordinator was coded, and I looked for additional information that helped characterize the dilemmas, or served as disconfirming evidence. While this stage occurred after the development of tentative themes, throughout the data collection process there was an almost constant “back and forth” process between considering the broader contexts of the school and service sites and considering the teachers. Because the broader context of the school, the experiences of the teachers as individuals, and the experiences of the teachers as a group were all essential to this study, my analysis process placed equal weight on each of these.

Analysis also occurred throughout the writing process, from the initial stages of writing after the data had been collected until the final report was completed. Using quotations from interviews and relevant documents, and making use of the data gathered through observations, I worked to convey the meaning of the participants in the setting. In order to facilitate preliminary data analysis I also engaged in what Erickson (1986) refers to as a “leap to narration” (p. 151). With this technique I began to process the data early in the analysis process by writing initial analyses of the data. While some of these analyses did not appear relevant after all of the data was collected and analyzed, the process of writing up preliminary analyses assisted me as I attempted to make sense of the data collected.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

On a daily basis, the teachers at Urban Middle School must consider the expectations of a variety of educational stakeholders as they engage in the planning for, implementation of, and evaluation of their service-learning program. The principal, with the assistance of Lynn, a fifth/sixth grade teacher and informal service-learning coordinator, decides the logistical and programmatic details. He tells the teachers which service sites to go to, which day to go, and how long to stay there. At the service site, the teachers who receive the student volunteers exercise their rights to determine what the students will do while they are there and what roles the middle school teachers will play in their classrooms. As they engage their students in service-learning, the middle school teachers must also consider their own beliefs about teachers, teaching, and students while remaining mindful of the expectations of parents and the mandates of state and local school boards. The confluence of these expectations results in three fundamental dilemmas, which must be negotiated by these middle school teachers: needs of the server vs. needs of the served, standardized vs. experiential education, teacher control vs. student independence.

Teachers' Views on Dilemmas

As one of the goals of this study was to provide information about teachers' experiences with service-learning that previously has been missing from the body of empirical literature on this topic, it was important to consider how the teachers felt about the concept of dilemmas as a way to represent their experiences. In order to accomplish this goal, I provided the teachers with a brief explanation of the term and used a non service-learning example to illustrate a possible educational application. I then asked for their comments on whether they felt that the term dilemma was appropriate for describing their experiences as service-learning teachers.

Chloe: It reminds me of a catch-22 situation where you—when you choose one then you lose out on the other...I would rather use the word dilemma [instead of problem] because you don't know which...solution would be more feasible, would work out better in the end.⁴

Anne: I've never heard that term coined...[but] it made me think: "You know, she's right. There's really no solution to [a dilemma] when you're dealing with education and kids"...Sometimes I think it all depends on the children you're dealing with that year, it depends on the teacher, it depends on the way the teacher does things, so you almost just go with the flow.

Lynn: [It's] a dilemma only because no matter what I do there's going to be a problem. There's no solution...There's no solution so my approach is to try any different solution that comes along that seems sensible.

⁴ All quotations included in this report are from interviews and the focus group conducted between February and June 2002.

The teachers focused on, and seemed most satisfied with the components of the definition of dilemma that conveyed that there were no solutions. They quickly agreed that in education in general, and with much of their service-learning work, they faced many challenges that could not be solved, because each possible solution created additional difficulties. Anne also spoke specifically to the idea that teachers may deal with dilemmas differently depending on the needs of the particular group of children they are working with in a particular year. While Al was a little less verbose in his response to the question about the appropriateness of the term dilemma, he did say that it was “fine” because it “implies a problem or something that needs to be resolved.”

Needs of the Server vs. Needs of the Served

Within the field of service-learning, it is generally accepted that in the process of serving, students should meet a genuine need of the school or community while also furthering their own academic growth (Duits & Dorman, 1998; Luce, 1988; Schukar et al., 1996; Waterman, 1997b). Buchanan, Baldwin, & Rudisill (2002) further this assertion when they state: “Community partners reap benefits from the program while student participants gain valuable knowledge and skills” (p. 28). While their work focused on service-learning within teacher education, the assumption that in service-learning students and the recipients of service should both receive benefits is a central theme within the service-learning philosophy. In the implementation of service-learning at Urban Middle School, however, it becomes clear that this desire for mutual benefit is easier stated in theory than achieved in practice.

The dilemma of “needs of the server vs. needs of the served” is grounded in the unique interplay between participants that characterizes service-learning. Because service-learning usually originates from a school, one emphasis is on providing educative experiences to further the academic and social development of the students. As the teachers and students leave the school to perform a service, they encounter those at the service sites who have the expectation that their needs will be met. While these two sets of expectations can often be met when students perform a service that is closely integrated with their academic curriculum, sometimes the goals of the teachers and the needs of those at the service site are not closely aligned, and tensions may result.

Service Site Selection at Urban Middle School

In order to understand how the teachers at Urban Middle School experience and manage the dilemma of the needs of the server vs. the needs of the served, it is important to consider first the nature of service-learning implementation at the school. One of the issues that all of the teachers mentioned was the difficulty in finding sites that met the needs of the middle school and were willing to accept the service that a group of approximately 20 middle school students could provide once a week.

Historically, at Urban Middle School, the teachers and administration have attempted to provide a variety of different types of service. Several years ago, the goal was to have half of the students serve at local senior citizens’ homes, and half of the students serve at

elementary and preschools, but parents resisted the idea of their students serving the senior population in the community. Mike, the principal, explained: “I got resistance from parents who were under the mistaken impression that we were going to be cleaning bed pans...as opposed to doing recreation type activities with the senior citizens.” Even if the concerns of the parents could have been overcome, Mike explained that this idea for service eventually was abandoned when they were told that all of the children would have to have tests for tuberculosis before they could serve at the senior citizens’ homes.

Several years ago, the eighth grade students also served as junior docents at a local science museum, but this service was discontinued because although the program worked reasonably well the first year, the second year a new volunteer coordinator at the site and the culture of the group of students led to insurmountable obstacles. Mike detailed the school’s experiences at this site:

[The first year] it really worked out fairly well. We had a very agreeable coordinator of volunteer services, and it was a good bunch of kids...It was nice because it was kind of a culminating experience for them...The second year, there was a change in administration, a change in the volunteer coordinator. She was much more demanding, and...to be perfectly blunt, the kids were just not as well behaved. I also came to the realization that they may have been put in situations that were uncomfortable for them...It’s a science playground and my kids were in a position of acting as these docents to kids that were potentially the same age or even older than them, and it was intimidating to them.

Lynn, who helped the teacher find an alternative site for her students to perform service after they stopped serving at the science museum, reiterated Mike’s comments about the difficulties there. She said: “They really couldn’t provide enough of the activities for the children that the children felt good about doing, and the director was incredibly insensitive to the children and to the teacher.”

Because of the numerous difficulties associated with finding appropriate sites, the middle school students are currently limited to serving at local elementary and preschools. These schools have similar schedules to the middle school, and enough classrooms that when the middle school students are paired with a partner, there are places for each pair to serve. Although teachers acknowledged the school’s difficulties finding service locations that were appropriate and acceptable, did not place undue burdens on the school, or cause conflicts with parents, all teachers who participated in this study expressed concerns about the current scope of service. They explained that having students serve at elementary and preschools for four years becomes somewhat tedious and repetitive. Many expressed a desire to expand the sphere of service, but explained that their ideas had been squelched for a variety of reasons. Anne described her experience when she suggested alternatives to the current service activities:

We tried to do it in the past and usually there’s something that we can’t do. We’ve suggested the parks and we were told: “Well, you know, they’re just not picking up paper and things like that. You never know what’s on the ground, especially...in

[this] city.” You know, so you have things like that they can’t do. We had talked about possibly cleaning off graffiti, and we were told we couldn’t do that because of the chemicals that are used. We talked about doing work here, and they said: “Well it’s hard because, you know, we are a small school, so there wouldn’t be enough placements for each child to do something.”

She explained that for every possibility she or other teachers suggested, there were always reasons why it could not be done.

This situation, the difficulty finding suitable service sites that are willing to accept 20 middle school students for one hour each week, influences how the teachers deal with the dilemma of meeting the needs of those at the site while still providing their students with educative experiences. An outsider might question why the teachers do not simply leave these sites and find ones where this dilemma does not exist, or is not so prevalent. These teachers, as Anne illustrated, feel that there are limited opportunities for their students to perform service, and since they are dedicated to the service-learning program at their school, they may choose to remain in less than ideal situations rather than risk leaving a site and not finding an acceptable replacement.

Needs of the Service Sites

One of the primary tenets of service-learning is that students provide a service to meet a genuine need of the school or community. A consideration of the teachers’ thoughts on their experiences at the service sites, however, illustrates that this characteristic is not as unambiguous as it might originally appear. Throughout the interviews, three of the four teachers expressed concerns that the presence of their middle school students is met with ambivalence, at best, by some of the teachers the students ostensibly serve.

Al: Some of the teachers are very enthusiastic about getting the kids; others you kind of sense they’ve been coerced so they just sort of said, “Ok, I’ll take them.”

Anne: [The service site coordinator] needs at least 10 teachers from her building that are willing to do this and unfortunately there will be those one or two teachers that will say: “Ok, I’ll do it, but I don’t want any of the extras.”

Chloe: Some of [the teachers] might appreciate the fact that these students come to teach, come to help them out. Some of them might not.

If the teachers at the service sites, or the service site itself, refused the assistance of the middle school students, this issue would not exist. It would be clear that the service sites did not have a need that the students could meet, or that they were unwilling to accept the assistance. The middle school teachers would then have to find other service opportunities for their students. This, however, is not the case.

In contrast to the teachers’ concerns that the services provided by their students were not valued by the teachers at the service sites, each teacher also commented that many

teachers at the service sites appreciated the roles the students play in their classrooms, and are reaping the benefits of the assistance.

Al: Some of them are pretty enthusiastic and want some help.

Anne: The teachers in general who participate in the program love it. They look forward to us coming.

Chloe: I heard from some of the teachers that they are so happy that these kids were there. That makes you feel good, that they are that helpful.

Lynn: Some of the teachers are extremely warm and they make sure that every time they see me they tell me how great their kid is doing: “This kid is so great, the best I ever had. I wish I could keep him or her.”

Part of this dilemma, therefore, is embedded in the juxtaposition of attitudes displayed in these two sets of quotations. The teachers must negotiate situations in which the assistance of their students is met with attitudes that are at times contradictory. They continue to question whether they are providing a worthwhile service at the site, and by extension, they also question the overall value of their service-learning program.

It is important to note, however, that just as the dilemma language of Berlak and Berlak (1981) has been used to explain that these middle school teachers might behave in different and sometimes contradictory ways depending on circumstances, this same understanding must be applied to the teachers at the service-learning sites. They might value the assistance more on certain days, or in certain years, or with certain students. Lynn, for example, says: “I’ve never come across a teacher here who said every single year, ‘I won’t do it.’ It depends on the [preschool] children who are placed with them.” Considering the behaviors of the middle school teachers through the lens provided by Berlak and Berlak, it is clear that to describe them as either meeting the needs of the served or the needs of the server would neglect to represent the complexities of their lived experiences. Similarly, it is equally important to realize that to say the teachers at the service site are either positively or negatively inclined toward receiving service or that the students are either performing a genuine service or not, is to ignore the contradictions “that are encapsulated in daily encounters of teachers” (Berlak & Berlak, 1981, p. 124).

Goals of the Participants

In considering the dilemma of the needs of the server vs. the needs of the served, a consideration of what outcomes the teachers hope to achieve is also relevant. When the teachers at Urban Middle School were asked to describe their goals for service-learning, their answers were telling. In each case, the teachers first explained what they hoped their students would gain from the experience, as opposed to how those at the service sites would benefit.

Al: I think it's to give the kids a sense that there is something greater than they are: something other than themselves in the world. And it's to encourage them to help others and to see it's important to help others. And I think there are goals beyond that. I think we want them to continue with that idea after they leave here.

Anne: I think the largest goal is to have the children be sensitive to other people's needs...especially since most of the sites we go to have a lot of children with severe disabilities...Also to realize that even though they are young and they're not on their own, that they can actually make a difference by doing this, by working with other children, by giving back to the community and also giving to themselves.

Chloe: The main goal is to learn how to be a citizen and to give to others, to pass on things and to volunteer, to build character. That all encompasses citizenship, and what we aspire to be as an American citizen.

Lynn: The broadest [goal] is to become the kind of citizen in the future that we want to have. You know, we don't have a model citizenry; we have a lot of problems. We want to educate children who will become whole, productive, contributing citizens...by helping them become aware of what a community is, and what it is to give to the community, to volunteer in a community, to make it a better place for everyone.

Even though the teachers spoke about their desire to build the students' sense of civic duty, and to develop in the students a proclivity toward lifelong service, the goals were still described in terms of what they hoped their students would gain. Even Barbara, a service site coordinator interviewed in this study, spoke first about what she thought the middle school students gained from the experience; not what her site was gaining:

It was a wonderful opportunity that they are being given to go out into a world outside school life, to be able to have the opportunity to work in a professional setting, and helping, and seeing that they have a meaningful purpose outside their typical routine school day. And what this also means is that they're giving of themselves; they're volunteering, and that it isn't just getting out of school for an hour, which I know they love, but they're doing something responsible and meaningful and they can make a difference in a child's day.

Noticeably, none of the teachers mentioned that one of their goals for service-learning was to provide a needed service to those at the service site, although Lynn did comment that her students begin to see that they can "help little children so much, and then what they do is they realize that by giving to these, these little children will grown up and give to others."

As teachers negotiate this dilemma, and attempt to find a balance between providing an educative experience for their students and meeting a genuine need at the service site, it is

clear that the emphasis is on their goals for the middle school students first. While in many cases the needs of the site can be met, a service can be provided, and the students can achieve the goals listed above, this is not always the case. The middle school teachers' understandings of what is best for their students may not always be compatible with the expectations of those at the service sites.

Service Site and Teacher Expectations

Each teacher, and the principal, mentioned situations when the needs of the teachers at the service site conflicted with what they felt were the best interests of the middle school children. They also cited instances where the existing structures at the service site did not allow for the most educative experiences for the middle school students. While these conflicts were not so severe as to cause reconsideration of the program, the unanimity of the responses indicates that these occurrences are indeed significant. They exemplify the dilemma of the needs of the served vs. the needs of the server because they illustrate how easily the needs of those at the service site can come into conflict with the middle school educators' beliefs about what is best for their students.

Al: The others are doing stuff like monitor work. They're shuffling papers, or stapling...I think some of them spend a lot of their time really just observing.

Anne: There was a teacher a few years ago I had a disagreement with. She had my students doing what I felt were inappropriate things, such as taking the smaller kids to the bathroom. I had told her: "I don't mind if they walked the children to the bathroom, and then the children, if they were able to go by themselves..." but I explained to her, for health and safety reasons this was not something fifth and sixth graders should be doing.

Chloe: I thought that some of the teachers would help them out, basically let them teach also...but they're not really in charge of the class. I thought that was going to happen, but [they're] basically just helping the teachers.

Lynn: They don't want to see the same thing every week. They want unpredictable things...They don't want to have circle time, snack time, computer time, go home. They want activities switched for them, which usually cannot be because they have a schedule.

Mike: [Sometimes] they'll give my kids clerical work to do in class. I prefer if they didn't do that. I mean, they're helping, but I would prefer that they are working with an individual child or small groups. I had one group that for the time that they were there all they did was snack. You know, they walked in at snack time and they helped them with the snack, and that wasn't terribly productive.

Beginning with the premise that a goal of service-learning is to provide assistance to meet a genuine need of the community, those at the service site might say that the service-

learning activities meet the needs of the teachers at the service sites, who, as educators, play an important role in the community. They might argue that activities such as helping with snack, assisting with clerical tasks, or even taking children to the restroom meet their genuine needs. Al speaks specifically to this issue:

It may be that that's what the teacher needs done, and that may free up the teacher to do work with kids which she wouldn't normally be able to do. So they are...helping in an important job even though what they may be doing is menial.

The middle school teachers and principal, however, have other ideas of how their students can best make use of the experience while still being of service. Chloe, for example, wanted her students to have an opportunity to teach lessons and Mike made it clear that he saw value in the interaction of the middle school students with the younger children.

Just as the middle school teachers, and the teachers at the service site have different views on what the students should be doing at the service sites, some of the middle school teachers also have experienced conflicts with regard to their roles at the service site. Anne, for example, explained that while some teachers at the service site welcome her into their classrooms, others have told her directly that they find her presence disruptive. She says:

There are some teachers who've been part of the program since the beginning because they love it; our goals are somewhat similar. They're very open about sharing what's happening in their classroom with me and I do the same. Whereas there are other teachers that look at it as: "We don't mind having [the students] in the classroom, but we want nothing to do with you. We don't want you in here. We don't want to be bothered."

While the other middle school teachers may not have been told this so bluntly, they understand that the teachers at the service sites may be uncomfortable with their presence.

Al: No teacher has even said ["Stay out of my classroom"] to me, but I know what it is to be a teacher with a class, and you really don't want to be interrupted...It's really my choice based on my perception that a teacher doesn't really want to be interrupted.

Chloe: They're not comfortable with the fact that there's going to be someone else [in the classroom.]

Lynn: The only thing I ever worry about there is that the teachers feel uncomfortable with having me in the room, but after all these years, most of them know me...I don't think they're bothered by the relationship at all.

Again these experiences speak to the dilemma of the needs of the served vs. the needs of the server because if the teachers' primary emphasis is on meeting the needs of those at the service sites, then they may choose to remain outside of the classrooms because this is what is best for those being served. If their main goal is to provide the middle school students with experiences that support their social development and help them develop a sense of civic duty, however, then the teachers might need to play a larger role in what goes on at the service site so that they can monitor and encourage their students, and evaluate the effectiveness of each service-learning placement.

In dealing with the issues of needs, goals, and expectations as they relate to this dilemma, all teachers' behaviors must be viewed within the context of their beliefs that the continued acceptance of the middle school students at the service sites is somewhat precarious. Because they realize their service is not enthusiastically welcomed by some of the teachers who accept the students in their classrooms, the middle school teachers, for the most part, remain silent when conflicts occur. Al, for example, does not protest the students' inclusion in activities that might not meet his goals. He chooses, based on his own assumptions about teachers, to stay out of the classrooms in order to inconvenience the teachers as little as possible. Chloe also chooses not to push the teachers to allow the middle school students to teach, but she does explain that she moves around to each classroom, observing what they are doing. Anne, for the most part, also concedes to the wishes of the teachers at the service site. For example, she often asks the students to create projects to share with the young children at the service sites. However, if the teachers there do not want the students to bring in projects they created at the middle school, they do not. If she is not wanted in certain classrooms, she remains outside. However, when her students were being asked to accompany the young children to the restroom, a situation that put them at risk, she intervened.

Lynn was the most vocal in saying that the needs and expectations of the service site must come before the needs of her students, and she was the only one who couched her explanations of her behaviors at the site in terms of meeting the needs of those being served. The rest of the teachers spoke of not wanting to impose on the teachers, who may or may not have wanted the middle school students in their classroom in the first place. Lynn, however, focused on meeting the needs of the site, and helping her students get a positive experience within the guidelines set by the site. She says:

I would always put what the site wants first and then adapt my program around that... I've had teachers say: "Please don't send them with projects. I have no time to do them." Then I wouldn't...I think the important part is that the site gets what they want and what they need and that our children find a way to provide that service and still not lose academically.

For example, Lynn explains that when her children find themselves in classrooms where they are given very little responsibility, she advises the students to "make up for it by really getting involved with the children, and helping the children directly...So they get their fulfillment there. They may not get it as a teacher's assistant, but they get it in another way."

It is also important to note, however, that of the four teachers, Lynn has the strongest relationship with her site. She has accompanied students to serve at this preschool since the middle school opened in 1992, and she routinely commented on the positive relationships she had with the director and the teachers at the site. In considering why Lynn might resolve the dilemma of the needs of the served vs. the needs of the server differently, or using a different mindset from the other teachers, it is important to consider the context in which her students are serving. Unlike many of the other teachers, she feels that her students' are wanted at the site, and she has a positive network to draw upon when there are difficulties. The rest of the teachers interviewed, however, made decisions based on the knowledge that the teachers are not necessarily welcoming of the middle school students.

Standardized vs. Experiential Education

Teachers at Urban Middle School struggle to meet their students' needs at the service site while also remaining mindful of the needs and expectations of the teachers there. Similarly, these teachers must also balance the conflicts that inevitably arise when they engage in a traditionally unfamiliar educational activity, service-learning, in school and societal environments that focus on quantifiable evidence of student progress toward uniform goals as measured by standardized tests. The foundation of this dilemma exists in the tensions between the desire for quantitative measures of students' academic progress toward state educational goals, and the realization that the educators' experiences sometimes speak to a different type of student progress. Similarly, the teachers may also endure an internal struggle because they realize the value of the service experiences, but wonder if it is acceptable to take so much time away from "academics."

Testing

Mike, the principal at Urban Middle School, says that when grant money is provided to the school by service-learning organizations, they often want proof of students' academic growth, usually in the form of quantitative analyses of test scores. Mike explains that this can be problematic not only because improvement in test scores might be related to factors other than service-learning, but also because the growth that occurs might not be academic. Further, it most likely will not be easily measured by a pre/post test design. He said:

[The grant making body] of course wanted quantifiable results and I guess we could sit down and take test scores, and compare them point A and point B. I'm not quite sure service-learning is the reason why the test scores increased; I think we give the kids a lot of responsibility... We make them good citizens, people who will be able to take responsibility. I said if they come out of it with higher self-esteem and a good heart and a good understanding of the human condition... I think that's been a greater plus.

As a principal in a large urban district where academic performance, as measured on yearly standardized tests, is an ever-present concern, Mike is not downplaying the

importance of academic success for his students. He is instead emphasizing that the benefits of service-learning may go beyond additional points on a standardized test.

While Mike's comments about service-learning make it clear that he is proud of the resulting student outcomes, teachers at the school seem conflicted about spending time away from academics. Al, for example, expresses concern about the amount of teaching time that is lost when students are at the service-learning site:

It does take time away from academic subjects. Presumably the time we spend at a service site, they would be in class. It's losing two periods of teaching time, whatever those classes might be, and over the course of the eight months we are there, it's a lot of time.

Al also explains that he has heard other teachers express similar reservations, especially considering the increasing pressures on teachers to demonstrate students' academic achievement on standardized tests:

I think when teachers say that [service-learning is not valuable] they mean that the time is better spent on academics, especially with all the standardized testing now. There's so little time as it is, so to take the kids out of the school for half of a morning, or most of the morning, you're losing some time, you just are.

Al is not alone in expressing his concerns. All of the teachers expressed some reservations about the time spent away from the classroom, and in each case the concern was embedded in a concern about meeting the required standards and having the students perform well on the standardized tests.

Chloe: You don't have...enough time to teach when you have service-learning and if you're trying to retain the standards of what the state requires and the city requires then you know what? You need the whole year to be teaching...all these standards.

Anne: It's hard because you go to service-learning, you're expected to do all these things with them, but then...you also have to do the reading, and you also have to do the writing, and then, oh, these tests are coming up really soon, and you have to get that done too, and it's very difficult.

Lynn: One of the things that I have trouble with is the writing part because writing to me is really, really, really important. It's something that is part of every subject area and it takes a great deal of time to teach writing correctly. And because service-learning is such a huge time commitment, between the hours that we're out of the classroom, on the bus here, and the hours that we're preparing and following up, that takes away from other subject time that includes writing. So my writing program is squeezed, and all my other academic programs are squeezed...So I feel obligated to find ways to make up for time that I'm taking away from other subjects, and that's a tremendous pressure on me. I feel that I'm

not giving them everything they need, and sometimes I work it out by integrating a lot, and enriching a lot, but it's difficult.

Lynn said she felt like she was not giving the students “everything they need.” This quote adequately portrays the attitudes of the teachers interviewed at this school. They feel that they “need” to prepare the students academically to meet the standards and pass the standardized tests. Service-learning, while beneficial, is not a “need” and for that reason the teachers feel conflicted about the time spent in service related activities.

In context, these concerns about academic achievement are easily understood. Standardized test pressure in this city is immense. Fifth, sixth, and seventh grade students each take three standardized tests a year. Eighth graders take five state-mandated tests in English-language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and technology. Teachers are under enormous pressure to ensure that their students do well. Schools that consistently perform low on these tests risk being “taken over” by the local board of education and students who do not pass the tests may be held back or required to attend summer school.

For the teachers, this concern about academic progress and standards is particularly oppressive when considering those students who are clearly not meeting the state expectations. Several teachers questioned whether all children should participate in service-learning, or if it would be more beneficial for some to remain at the school to do work or receive additional assistance.

Student Progress

The issue of students' academic progress is particularly exigent at Urban Middle School, because many of the students who apply to attend there do so because they have not been successful at their previous schools. In many cases, these are students whose academic potential is high, but for whatever reason they are not meeting that potential. The small classes and small school atmosphere are designed to meet the needs of these struggling students. A local newspaper article⁵, published in December 1992, several months after the school opened, explained:

The gifted and talented students seemed to get plenty of attention. So did the students with clearly identifiable problems. But the ones who fell somewhere in the middle were drifting away, and educators in [this district] wanted to change all that. So they created a brand-new school, aimed at that child in the middle, the one for whom parents and teachers had high hopes—along with some anxiety. The student most likely to be labeled, “not working up to his or her potential.”

Chloe, who this year participated in the application review process, reiterated that nine years after the school's opening, this philosophy still exists:

⁵ To maintain the confidentiality of the school and the participants, a full reference is not included for this article. Additional information about the quotation can be obtained by contacting the author.

Most of the students that apply to these schools are kids who are in the middle of certain standardized test scores, or falling behind, and we see the principal's and teachers' recommendations too and they say that they will probably be more efficient or they would work better in an environment where there're smaller classes, and that's really the biggest reason why the students apply to--why the parents apply to these schools, this school, because it's a small school.

In this environment, teachers are charged with the task of helping students who previously had not been successful in school, to achieve the uniform standards set forth by the city and state. This often leads to the concern among teachers that while service-learning might be beneficial, some students might be better served by spending additional time at school. Anne, for example, explains that some teachers feel that service-learning, because it takes away from academic time, should be limited to certain students. She stated:

Some feel that although the aspect of service-learning is good, they feel that it should only be for those children who are achieving to level academically, whereas the other ones could use the time here at school.

She also said:

Going back to the standard tests...the state outlines what we have to do, what we're supposed to be doing with the kids, what they need to meet in order to graduate and go on to the next grade, and of course I would say personally speaking there are times when I feel guilty saying, well there are maybe five children who really, really would be better off, staying here, working on their reading or working on their writing, rather than going to service-learning...There's always a struggle, because I'm very pro service-learning but then on the other hand, if these kids aren't meeting exactly what the standards say they're supposed to meet, then there's that struggle. Ok, what do I do? Do I leave them here to do that extra work? Do I leave the class back entirely to do that extra lesson with them academically? Or do we say, ok, we can give that up for now and go on to service-learning?

Lynn, like Anne, struggles with issues related to the time spent at service-learning. She realizes that students may be benefiting from service-learning, but she expresses the concern that they may also be losing out on the academic time that they so desperately need. She said:

We're taking time away from other things that they need to be doing, and yet, for some children, there's no tradeoff. They will just continue to benefit. The ones who need it the most may be losing the most and that's the dilemma there.

In her last statement she also expresses the understanding that the students who may benefit, or need service-learning the most, are also the ones who may be losing out academically by not having the extra time in the classroom.

The dilemma that teachers experience is exacerbated by the context in which they work. These teachers work with struggling students, yet district, city, and state education authorities judge student achievement, and thus teacher performance, based on results on uniform standardized tests. These criteria do not consider issues such as students' previous educational experiences, their social or emotional growth, or whether or not they have learned to be active participants in their community. Similarly, grades are given for academic subjects, but not for service-learning, and parents, as Al explained, are concerned about letter grades and graduation:

Even though [service-learning] is emphasized in the school, it's not a major subject. It's just something they do once a week. They only get a letter grade... There's no test at the end of the year. It's not required for graduation and we can emphasize it, but parents are concerned about test grades and graduation.

Al expresses the belief that because students only receive a letter grade (E, S, N, U) in service-learning and it is not tested, nor required for graduation, issues related to whether a child is progressing in service-learning are not prominent in parents' minds.

Benefits Accrued by Students

The middle school teachers are clearly concerned about whether the time spent in service-learning detracts from students' academic learning, and they understand that parents, education authorities, and grant-making agencies look for academic progress to the detriment of considerations of the social and emotional development of students participating in service-learning. However, when asked about vivid experiences with service-learning, teachers are quick to discuss their students' success stories, especially the successes of students who struggle either academically or socially away from the service-learning site.

Al: We have success stories for students who are not succeeding here in any way, but they are succeeding over there, and every year I'll hear something like that from a teacher. I've heard that this year, and it was a kid who is failing practically everything, and last year it was the same thing--the teachers going out of their way to compliment some kid who really can't do much here as really doing a good job there for whatever reason.

Anne: I had one student, a little boy, [who] was very, very, very shy [and] very, very afraid of making friends or actually doing anything... It wasn't until maybe March or April, and usually every time I passed the room I would... just see him being a quiet participant... I happened just to be passing... and he was actually sitting in a chair, with maybe six or seven students around him, and he happened to be sharing a project that he happened to do on his own that I didn't ask him to do. What he did was he brought a book in, and he was reading the story... it had to do with colors and shapes, and he had actually made a poster with all the different colors and shapes. He was asking the children as he came to that particular point in the book to point to it and they were very excited.

Chloe: I have this kid, I guess you can call him a problem kid in my class. He seems to behave really well at the service-learning site, and that's the interesting part about it.

Lynn: Some of them come to us and the only positive part of the week that they own is service-learning and they get a lot of recognition there...So that's an oasis for them, and it's a chance to really be peaceful and happy, and to produce what they can produce on their terms...So those children might benefit in a totally different way.

It is examples like these that contribute to the dilemma of standardized vs. experiential education experienced by these teachers. Pressures from parents and state and local school boards, as well as their own beliefs about the purposes of schooling all contribute to how teachers view the value of service-learning. The first inclination seems to be to consider the academic aspects of students' development, to view service-learning with suspicion because it takes time away from the academic subjects, and to question the logic behind removing academically struggling students from classrooms for 90 minutes each week. Still, the teachers also see the benefit of putting students in situations where they can be successful, even if the standardized testing requirements and parental pressures encourage them to see academic learning as the only valuable learning.

A combination of success stories and the understanding that Urban Middle School was founded on the philosophy that all approximately 160 students would participate in service-learning weekly has led the teachers to continue to allow all students to attend service each week. The only exceptions are in the rare instances of students with such severe behavior problems that they were not welcome at the service-learning sites. The teachers continue to question this decision, even to the point of considering alternatives for the upcoming year, but at the present time they manage this dilemma by remaining true to the founding principles of the school.

Teacher Control vs. Student Independence

One of the common themes found in service-learning literature is that students should play a major role in making decisions about service-learning activities. Pritchard (2002) states that one characteristic of service-learning programs is "student involvement in selecting or designing the service activity" (p. 7) and Zeldin and Tarlov (1997) assert that one of the benefits of service-learning is that students have the opportunity to "make decisions and contributions" and "take on new and progressively more complex roles and responsibilities" (p. 177). In discussing teachers' experiences, and observing them as they interacted with their students at service sites, it is clear that this goal is not easily attained, and that the teachers struggle with how much responsibility to give their middle school students.

Service Benefits Middle School Students

Just as the Carnegie Corporation report, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (1989), described the specific needs of young adolescents, ages 10 to 15, and stated that youth service in the community was one way to address these specific needs, teachers at Urban Middle School assert that for their students, service-learning is a particularly valuable experience. Anne, for example, speaks specifically to the empowerment her students feel when they realize they have the ability to impact their community through their service. She said:

A lot of times they don't understand how they can actually effect, or make an impact on something. When we talk about the outside world they look at it as this big thing that's out of reach and they don't realize that [with] the minor things that they're doing, they're actually making an impact...whether it's the children, whether it's the teacher, simply just helping the teacher, [or] whether it's just benefiting them.

Anne speaks specifically to the gains that students make when they realize that they can have a positive impact on their environment through helping the teachers or children at the school where they perform their service. Chloe and Lynn, on the other hand, both speak about adolescence as a time in which the students undergo great change, and begin to solidify their identities. Service, they assert, influences this process positively. Chloe, for example, stated:

I think during adolescence you're in a stage of getting to know yourself and hormones are just out there. You're really trying to mold yourself and I think that by going to service-learning sites or volunteering that that's just one more thing that you gain.

Just as Chloe spoke of adolescents beginning to “mold” themselves, and service as a positive force in this shaping process, Lynn spoke in a similar manner about the gains that students accrue through service-learning, even if they are not necessarily willing learners. She said:

It's just a natural act for--I think especially middle school because of the kind of attention to emerging needs of adolescents and the changes that they're going through, a way of bridging the gap between childhood and adolescence, giving the children something meaningful to do with peers or others while learning the skills that they may not want to learn, but they're learning.

While the teachers generally agree that service has a positive impact on students that is unique to the middle school age, it is ironic that many of the same characteristics that make service particularly valuable for middle school students, also make it challenging.

Students' Motivations to Serve

The teachers at Urban Middle School clearly understood that the middle school years were a unique time to have an impact on their students. Students are beginning to mature out of childhood. However, just as the teachers see service as an important part of the maturation process, inherent in this belief is the realization that their students are really just children, who in many cases are self-centered and primarily interested in having an enjoyable time. Many of the teachers expressed concern that their students were only interested in going on a trip on the school bus, or playing at the service sites. Anne, for example, said:

They think at this point it's a time to be out of the school building. They look at it as a free trip once a week. They look at it almost as if it is a time for them to play. It's hard here at our school because we don't have an outside playground, so although we're technically... a middle school, we're still dealing with fifth and sixth graders who are elementary students. So there's no time for that recess time; there's no time for them to be outside. So I think in the beginning they look at it as: "It's my play time. I can really go out and I can have fun."

Lynn made a very similar comment when she discussed the struggles she faces each year in trying to help her students understand the importance of their service. She said:

Well, every year I have a few children who consider going to service-learning on a par with going to the playground--no responsibility and no school...So that's a disappointment because I want to feel in September that I'm going to be able to reach every child, and I'm still hearing [in April], "Oh goody, we're going on the bus" and "Oh goody, I don't have to do anything for an hour and a half."

Al speaks for all of the teachers when he explains that although his students are focused on "How can I have fun? What I am I going to enjoy?" he feels that it is his responsibility to teach the children the value of service. He states: "I think my place is dealing with my kids, so I try to convince them to accept their role, or if possible to change it, to change their attitude, or whatever it may be." The service-learning teachers want their students to acquire a proclivity toward service, or at least an understanding of the value of service, and they see it as their responsibility to see that this happens.

In addition to dealing with attitudes that may not be conducive to educative service-learning experiences, the teachers also deal with the difficulties that may occur when students are given significant responsibility or freedom at the service sites. For example, students are often allowed to work with minimal teacher oversight, either in preparation for service, or actually at the service sites.

Student Independence

One common theme in Lynn's responses was that she felt that her students often took advantage of the freedom they were allowed at the service site. She explains in the following quotation that she has had to deal with a child who caused a minor panic at the

service site and at the middle school when she decided to go to another classroom without notifying Lynn, or the teacher whom she usually served at the service site. She also mentions two of her students who took advantage of the freedom they are given at the service sites and used the time to meet up with one another to socialize. She explained:

[This student] decided that she was going to go to another class. I quickly looked in every room. [The service site director] did a more thorough search and came up with her, but how do you get them to respect the fact that they have responsibility? Matthew and Nat are across the hall from each other and Matthew has been caught in the hall by me going to the bathroom with Nat, and going into Nat's room to check what time we leave, when I announce what time we leave to everybody... There's a rule about not congregating with other kids, staying in your own classroom, but there are children who are going to make their own rules.

Inherent in this school's service-learning program is a certain amount of student responsibility because at the sites the students work individually or in pairs to assist the teachers at the elementary and preschools. Although the middle school teachers circulate around the building and occasionally observe in the rooms where their students are serving, more often than not the students are not supervised by their middle school teacher. This leads to many opportunities for the students to engage in behavior that is unacceptable by the teachers' standards.

Similarly, the teachers also struggle when they choose to give students choices, and the students are not able to follow through with a task, or do not make choices that are likely to provide them with the most educative experiences. Anne explains her frustration when, at the end of the year, she allowed her students to design a project that they would bring to the service site. She said:

This is the first time that I let them choose a project on their own, and of course you think, ok, throughout the year you're doing these projects and you're giving them guidelines, they're going to choose a wonderful project to do and they're going to know exactly how to apply it, and exactly what to do. A lot of them... just didn't take what they learned the whole year and apply it to the last project.

Anne clearly felt that she had provided her students with enough assistance over the course of the year that they could complete this assignment successfully. She was disappointed when it did not happen and struggled with issues related to maintaining control so that her students are successful in what they do, but also wanting to allow them to take on additional responsibilities.

Chloe also explains her concerns after she asked her students for their preferences regarding where to serve at their service site, a local elementary school. She explains: "I had one student who wanted to help in a sixth grade math class and I knew that he wasn't apt to do it, you know and I had to basically coax him into a lower grade." Chloe

allowed her students to make significant choices with regard to their placement at the service-learning site, but then faced a dilemma when a student's choice conflicted with what she thought would be the best environment for him, and the best way for the site to have its needs met.

Just as with the other dilemmas the teachers experienced, teachers manage this dilemma in different ways. Lynn and Anne, working with the younger children, focus on using reflective journals as a way to help their students think about the greater issues related to service. They believe that this is one way for the students to come to realize some of the broader goals associated with service. Al, the seventh grade teacher, focuses on getting his students to understand the importance of service through conversations he has with them during their homeroom periods. In observing Chloe, it became clear that she does not address issues related to service with the class as a whole. Instead, she uses her time on the bus, and immediately before and after service to speak with students individually. During these conversations, she attempts to help them come to an understanding of the value of what they do.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

As described previously, teachers at Urban Middle School are confronted by three dilemmas: (a) needs of the server vs. needs of the served, (b) standardized vs. experiential education, and (c) teacher control vs. student independence. It is not enough, however, to name and describe these dilemmas, or even to consider how the teachers deal with them as they negotiate the expectations of the principal, state and local school boards, those at the service sites, and parents, all while considering their own beliefs about teaching and learning. It is essential to push this consideration one step further: to consider the implications of these dilemmas for service-learning practitioners, theoreticians, and researchers.

At Urban Middle School there are a myriad of concerns about the implementation of service-learning at the school. The concerns are found in the interview transcripts, where teachers describe their beliefs that their students are accepted reluctantly in some classrooms or wonder if the results justify the time and energy put into the program. These concerns are also reflected in the principal's comment that something needs to be done to "reinvigorate" the program and the teachers. From these concerns, and from others, come the broader dilemmas described previously. The recommendations outlined below are drawn specifically from the words and experiences of teachers at Urban Middle School. However, just as the dilemmas described previously may reflect the lived experiences of teachers at other schools who are attempting to utilize service-learning in their classrooms, these recommendations should be considered for their possible relevance to all involved with service-learning.

Conclusions

The conclusions below are derived from the interplay of the findings previously discussed with the theoretical and methodological frameworks on which this study was based. Berlak and Berlak (1981) emphasized "examining the macro in the micro, the larger issues that are embedded in the particulars of the everyday schooling experience" (p. 4) and Guba and Lincoln (1998) spoke of identifying a "local and specific constructed reality" (p. 203). The conclusions, therefore, are a result of considering the larger issues that are inextricably embedded in the everyday lives of the teachers in this study, but are not intended to be generalizable to a larger school population. They are a result of the reality the teachers and I constructed and are specific to their local context.

Nature of Service and Learning at Urban Middle School

Although many researchers and practitioners often draw clear distinctions between service-learning, community service, and volunteering (e.g., Schukar et al., 1996), at Urban Middle School the distinction is much less clear. Teachers, and even the profile used to describe the school to perspective students and their parents, often use the terms interchangeably. The school profile, for example, states: "In addition to our regular academic instruction and support services, our theme of "*Service Learning*" is an integral part of our structure and focus...The theme of "*Community Service*" is carried through

many curriculum areas” (emphasis added). While simply interchanging terms is not inherently problematic, it is indicative of the nature of the service program at the school.

First, it is unclear whether Urban Middle School is striving to have a service-learning program, where service supports learning and learning supports service, or a community service program, where students have the opportunity to experience the benefits of service to the community. This is evident in the extent to which teachers attempt to make connections between the service activities and the academic curriculum. Some ask the students to create projects that further the students’ learning about a curriculum topic or subject area and can be of use to the service site. Others see reflective journals or conversations as an academic component that moves community service into the realm of service-learning. Others make no attempts at connections between service and the academic curriculum. The school does not have a set definition for service-learning or clear goals or expectations for the service program, and teachers are unclear about what it is they are expected to accomplish. Students’ experiences with service during their four years at Urban Middle School are quite different depending on which teacher guides them through their service activities.

Second, when the teachers and principal were speaking, it was clear that their focus was not on the academic benefits students might accrue from participation in service-learning. The primary emphasis was on the social and emotional development of students, and in Lynn’s case, on providing a needed service. Numerous authors (e.g., Buchanan, Baldwin, & Rudisill, 2002; Duits & Dorman, 1998; Luce, 1988; Schukar et al., 1996; Waterman, 1997b) emphasize that service-learning should provide for students’ academic achievement, yet at this school, service-learning is far removed from the standard academic curriculum. The teachers explain that the students are learning; they are learning to be better people and to participate actively in their community, but the service is not directly tied to academic subjects. These characteristics of service-learning at Urban Middle School, the school’s undefined definition of and goals for service-learning, and the impact these have on teachers’ expectations and practice with regard to the service-learning program, are inextricably connected to the dilemmas identified in this report, and also with the recommendations outlined below.

Nature of Dilemmas at Urban Middle School

The dilemmas experienced by the teachers at Urban Middle School cannot be separated from the contexts in which they occur. In considering the needs of the served vs. the needs of the server, for example, it is important to realize that part of the difficulty in finding service sites might be a direct result of service-learning’s “place” in the school schedule, and this schedule stems from some of the school’s unique characteristics as well as state directives. Urban Middle School shares its building with a local high school, so physical education and computer classes, as well as lunch and passing periods, are timed precisely so that middle and high school students each have their “time” in the shared spaces. Once these periods are negotiated, Urban Middle School bases the remainder of its schedule on state mandates for the amount of time students spend learning each subject. This results in service-learning being relegated to a 90 minute

block on the schedule. Allowing for transportation time, students have approximately one hour to spend at the service sites each week. While it might be easier to find quality service sites, where the students meet a genuine need and participate in activities that connect more closely to their academic curriculum, if this schedule were more flexible, at the moment the school's framework does not allow for this flexibility.

As discussed above, service and academic learning at Urban Middle School are often isolated from one another, with the teachers seeing little connection between the service activities and their students' academic growth. This context is important in understanding the second dilemma, standardized vs. experiential education. In another situation, where a school has endeavored to define what it means by service-learning, set reasonable goals based on this definition, and connect service with state and city mandates, this dilemma might not occur, or it might be less oppressive.

The third dilemma, teacher vs. student control, is also inextricably linked to the characteristics of Urban Middle School. This school was designed specifically to meet the needs of 10 to 14-year olds as they transition from elementary to secondary education. One of the founding principles of the school was that in a small school, with a small student-to-teacher ratio, the unique needs of young adolescents could be met. However, it is important to note that this group of young adolescents includes 10 and 11-year-old students, who are, in many school districts, still considered elementary students. They are often given responsibilities, but are not necessarily mature enough to handle them. Similarly, at the current service sites, advisory teachers do not supervise their students closely because the middle school students are working individually or in pairs to serve the teachers at the service site.

In considering the dilemmas outlined in this report, and in reviewing the implications below, it is important, as Berlak & Berlak (1981) assert, to consider the macro in the micro. In this case, the micro is the teachers in this study, and their classroom environments. The macro is the larger school and societal contexts in which they work. These dilemmas exist in a context that includes a lack of defined goals and expectations, an inflexible schedule, a student population with specific age-appropriate needs, and service sites that prohibit close supervision.

Recommendations

1. *Teachers must be assisted in developing a strong connection between the service the students provide and the academic curriculum they are expected to master.*

An emphasis must be placed on developing a strong connection between the service students provide and the academic curriculum they are expected to master. Teachers clearly recognize the value of service-learning for their students in terms of social and emotional benefits. They describe in vivid detail the successes that some of their most difficult students have experienced, yet they question service-learning's impacts on academic achievement. They see service-learning as a time consuming activity with, in this case, undefined expectations. They are torn between the need to demonstrate

academic success, mandated by state and local school boards and expected by the parents and the principal, and the desire to allow students, even struggling ones, to participate in service activities. This tension occurs because teachers do not see service-learning as enhancing student learning. Instead, it is seen as an extra, albeit a beneficial one, that takes away time from academics.

It is clear, therefore, that teachers need ongoing and explicit assistance in connecting the service activities to the traditional academic needs of their students. Once these connections are made, it is possible that instead of struggling to find a balance between service and standards, teachers will see a payoff in students' academic performance as a result of the service-learning activities.

2. *Schools must be assisted in identifying a variety of service sites that have a genuine need that can be met by a school's population of students.*

A primary concern for service-learning practitioners must be the identification of a variety of service sites that have genuine needs that can be met by a school's population of students. The teachers at Urban Middle School struggle to balance the needs of their students with the needs of those at the service site. While this situation may not be unique to this school, it is exacerbated because the middle school teachers believe that the teachers at the service sites have mixed feelings about the service the middle school students provide. They know that their students' placement at these schools is precarious, so they are unable or unwilling to push for changes that will better the experience for their students out of fear that the teachers at the service site will simply decline to accept the middle school students in their classrooms and the middle school teachers will be left without a service site.

Teachers also realize that it is clear to their students when they are not performing a genuine service. This places the teachers in the awkward position of promoting a program that they, as well as their students, know is not beneficial to those purportedly served, and the teachers must work to counteract the negative attitudes the students develop toward service.

Ideally, each teacher would have an opportunity to accompany his or her students to a service site where the students are able to meet a genuine need while having a positive, educative experience. The teachers, however, do not have the time to do the research and make the phone calls to arrange these opportunities, and for that reason need outside assistance, or the assistance of a part-time service coordinator.

3. *Teachers and researchers must investigate when negative outcomes might result from problematic service-learning programs.*

The teachers studied here made it clear that when students are involved in service activities where they are clearly aware that they are not performing a genuine service, they "close down," "shut down" or can "not even be bothered." This is a disturbing finding, even at a local level. One must question whether the negative view of service

these students are developing is worth any possible benefits accrued. Teachers and school officials must be willing to alter drastically or temporarily stop service-learning programs where possible negative outcomes seem to outweigh positive ones. Also, while obviously not wanting to dissuade any committed schools and teachers from engaging in service-learning with their students, researchers must consider when the absence of service-learning might actually lead to better student outcomes than the presence of inadequate programs.

4. *Conceptions of assessment and accountability must be broadened to include measures beyond standardized tests.*

Organizations that fund service-learning in schools, while necessarily pushing for accountability, must realize that the impacts of service-learning on student achievement may not be easily measured on a standardized test. Will a multiple choice test or even a survey instrument aimed at understanding a student's attitudes toward service necessarily identify the benefits accrued by a student who now is more understanding of his younger siblings because he has volunteered in a preschool? Teachers and principals, the individuals with the most direct connections to students in schools, see powerful benefits when students engage in service-learning. Their knowledge, gained through experience, must be valued.

5. *Practitioners and researchers must work together to identify the age-specific needs of students involved in service-learning, and design service-learning programs accordingly.*

Teachers at Urban Middle School often spoke about the specific needs of the students with whom they worked. The fifth and sixth grade teachers were concerned that their students were asked to take on too much responsibility, and the seventh and eighth grade teachers wondered how to combat the negative attitudes toward service their students often conveyed. While service-learning is often promoted as appropriate for just about any age of students, from early elementary to higher education, all service-learning is not appropriate for all ages. The experiences of the teachers in this study speak to the need for dialogue and research on what types of service-learning are appropriate and most meaningful for students at different ages.

6. *Teachers need worthwhile professional development and time to collaborate with their colleagues as they strive to understand and implement both the theory and practice of quality service-learning.*

On a very basic level, teachers who will be working in service-learning schools need assistance in understanding the philosophies and pedagogies that form the foundation of service-learning and in tying service to the academic curriculum. This type of professional development will most likely be most useful for new teachers and for those new to service-learning. Professional development and time for collaboration, however, is a fundamental need for all teachers. Teachers at Urban Middle School, from Chloe, a first-year teacher, to Lynn, a 30-year veteran, need time to meet with colleagues and plan

curricula that connect service to academics and devise methods of managing the dilemmas they experience at the attempt to implement quality service-learning in their schools.

7. *Support for service-learning programs in schools must be ongoing, not just limited to the adoption and implementation phases.*

While there are often funds to assist schools that are in the beginning stages of adopting and implementing service-learning, there are far fewer opportunities for schools to obtain funding once the initial implementation process is completed. For example, several resources supporting the service-learning program at Urban Middle School have been eliminated over time. These included the funding sources that allowed for a part-time service-learning coordinator; compensation for teachers to meet during the summer or after school to plan curricula; and the purchasing of materials for use in the service-learning programs. The school had plenty of support when it was beginning to adopt service-learning, but now that it has reached the point of presumed sustainability, the funding is gone and the program has suffered. The connections to the academic curriculum are rare; students are serving in places where their services are not necessarily wanted; and new teachers are expected to successfully utilize service-learning with few of the supports that were in place when the school opened its doors in 1992.

8. *The service-learning research agenda must be expanded to include studies on the experiences of teachers.*

Teachers are at the forefront of service-learning implementation. Researchers and practitioners agree that teachers play a major role in the success or failure of service-learning and that preservice and in-service teacher education should strive to address the needs of those who are currently using or will use service-learning in their classrooms. Without research, however, teacher educators have no basis from which to begin to meet these needs. This study identified three dilemmas faced by middle school teachers in one specific context, but additional research is needed to determine if these findings can be generalized to other contexts. If service-learning is to achieve the student impacts researchers are desperately trying to document, quantitative and qualitative studies on teachers' experiences must be given the same emphasis as studies on service-learning's effects on students. Effective *service-learning* cannot be achieved without quality *service-teaching*.

APPENDIX A: PILOTED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. I would like to ask you about your teaching history. How long have you been teaching? How long have you been at this school? How long have you been using service-learning?
2. How do you prepare students for a service-learning experience?
3. What do you and your students typically do at a service-learning site?
4. What do you have the students do after a service-learning experience?
5. Please describe some of your vivid experiences with service-learning.
6. Describe a difficulty you have experienced with service-learning.
7. Considering your experiences with service-learning, what would you say are some of the benefits of making it part of the curriculum?
8. What would you say are some of the drawbacks of including service-learning in the curriculum?
9. Do you think “dilemma” is an appropriate term to describe the difficulties faced by teachers of service-learning? Why or why not?
10. What do you think are the sources of dilemmas you face as a service-learning teacher? (Administrators? Parents? Students? Community members? Yourself?)

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Interviews of Service-Learning Teachers

Interview 1

1. I would like to ask you about your teaching history. How long have you been teaching? How long have you been at this school? How long have you been using service-learning?
2. How do you prepare students for a service-learning experience?
3. What do you and your students typically do at a service-learning site?
4. What do you have the students do after a service-learning experience?
5. Please describe some of your vivid experiences with service-learning.
6. Describe a difficulty you have experienced with service-learning.
7. Considering your experiences with service-learning, what would you say are some of the benefits of making it part of the curriculum?
8. What would you say are some of the drawbacks of including service-learning in the curriculum?
9. I noticed _____ as I was observing in your classroom. Can we talk about that?

Interview 2

1. You've previously been given a copy of the transcript from the last interview. Is there anything you would like to expand on or change?
2. It has been approximately a month since we last talked. Can you describe some of your positive experiences with service-learning over the last month? Difficulties?
3. What do you view as the goals of service-learning activities? Do you think these goals are realistic?
4. If I asked the same question of your teaching colleagues, what do you think they would say? The principal? Parents? Students? Service site coordinators? Service site teachers?
5. Thinking about the goals that you and others set for service-learning, do you think they are attainable?

6. If you were not at a school that mandated service-learning, do you think you would attempt to use it in your classroom? Why or why not?
7. I noticed _____ as I was observing in your classroom. Can we talk about that?

Interview 3

1. You've previously been given a copy of the transcript from the last interview. Is there anything you would like to expand on or change?
2. It has been approximately a month since we last talked. Can you describe some of your positive experiences with service-learning over the last month? Difficulties?
3. Please describe a time when you felt you were having a difficult time meeting the needs or expectations of everyone involved in a service-learning activity? What did you do?
4. Several teachers have mentioned that teachers at the service site are sometimes reluctant to accept middle school volunteers. Why do you think that is? How does that impact what you do or do not do at the service site?
5. Do you think the school, parents, and community all have similar opinions on the value of service-learning? If yes, what do you think those opinions are? If no, from where do you think the differences arise?
6. What unique difficulties do you encounter as a teacher of service-learning?
7. If you are going to continue to use service-learning next year, what would you like to keep the same? What might you like to change?
8. If I asked the same question of your teaching colleagues, what do you think they would say? The principal? Parents? Students? Service site coordinators?
9. Researchers often draw a distinction between community service and service-learning. Do you think there is a difference? If so, what is it? What do you call your program here?
10. What do you think are the purposes of schooling, and where does service-learning fit into these purposes?
11. I noticed _____ as I was observing in your classroom. Can we talk about that?

Interview 4

1. You've previously been given a copy of the transcript from the last interview. Is there anything you would like to expand on or change?

2. It has been approximately a month since we last talked. Can you describe some of your positive experiences with service-learning over the last month? Difficulties?
3. If you could design your ideal service-learning program, what could it look like?
4. Many educators use the term dilemmas to discuss difficulties faced by teachers. They use this term instead of problems because they believe the term “problems” indicates a solution can be found. Dilemmas, on the other hand, can have many possible resolutions, but no real solution. Do you think “dilemma” is an appropriate term to describe the difficulties faced by teachers of service-learning? Why or why not?
5. Do you think your experience dilemmas? What might they be?
6. What do you think are the sources of dilemmas you face as a service-learning teacher? (Administrators? Parents? Students? Community members? Yourself?)
7. What drew you into teaching? Why have you remained in teaching?
8. Do you draw on any personal experiences with service in your work with the students?
9. I noticed _____ as I was observing in your classroom. Can we talk about that?
10. This will be our last interview. Do you have any additional comments you would like to make?

Focus Group

1. As a group of teachers, what are you trying to accomplish with service-learning? What is working? What is problematic?
2. What about the structure (scheduling, physical layout, etc.) of the school supports the implementation of service-learning? What hinders its implementation?
3. What types of supports from outside the school would assist you as you implement service-learning?
4. How do you think service-learning at this school could be improved?
5. Do you see differences in how service-learning is implemented in the fifth and sixth grade compared to how it is implemented in the seventh and eighth grade?
6. Is it reasonable to conclude that service-learning exacerbates existing difficulties/dilemmas within schooling? (Examples: time, communication, teacher vs. child control, etc.)

7. Is it reasonable to conclude that service-learning creates some unique difficulties that might not exist if service-learning was not part of the curriculum? (Example: negotiating with the service-learning site.)

Interview of Additional Educators

1. I would like to ask you about your teaching/administrative history. How long have you been teaching/acting as an administrator? How long have you been at this school?
2. What role do you play in the implementation of service-learning at this school?
3. Considering your experiences with and knowledge of service-learning, what would you say are some of the benefits of making it part of the curriculum?
4. What would you say are some of the drawbacks of including service-learning in the curriculum?
5. What do you view as the goals of service-learning activities?
6. If I asked the same question of your teaching colleagues, what do you think they would say? The principal? Parents? Students? Service site coordinators?
7. Do you think the school, parents, and community all have similar opinions on the value of service-learning? If yes, what do you think those opinions are? If no, from where do you think the differences arise?
8. What unique difficulties do you think teachers of service-learning encounter?
9. Many educators use the term dilemmas to discuss difficulties faced by teachers. They use this term instead of problems because they believe the term “problems” indicates a solution can be found. Dilemmas, on the other hand, can have many possible resolutions, but no real solution. Do you think “dilemma” is an appropriate term to describe the difficulties faced by teachers of service-learning? Why or why not?
10. What do you think are the sources of dilemmas teachers of service-learning face? (Administrators? Parents? Community members? Students?)

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