



## International Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Research

Robert Bringle, Julie Hatcher and Steven Jones (Editors.) Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing. 2011. 400 pages.

ISBN 978-1-57922-399-7 (paperback).  
\$39.95.

*Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning & Civic Engagement*  
Vol. 3, No. 2, Fall 2012

---

**Reviewed by Rebecca J. Dumlao**  
**School of Communication**  
**East Carolina University**  
**Greenville, NC 27858**

---

This edited book is the first on research for international service-learning (ISL) and also the first in the IUPUI Series on Service Learning Research. The book's theme is timely and well aligned with the current impetus for colleges and universities in the United States to globalize and update curricula so students are better equipped for our increasingly interconnected world. Arguably, as the book cover asserts, ISL provides "high-impact pedagogy with the potential to improve students' academic attainment, contribute to their personal growth, and develop global civic outcomes." This book shares data, concepts, and insights about ISL research to support that contention.

The first section of the book details four conceptual frameworks for ISL. In chapter one, two of the series editors, Bringle and Hatcher, conceptualize ISL as the intersection of (a) service-learning, (b) study abroad, and (c) international education. They present a compelling argument that ISL may be *the* pedagogy best suited to prepare college graduates as active global citizens. Also, these editors draw together concepts from those three areas of study to show intersections and complementary ideas that reflect important trends in contemporary higher education. Next, author William Plater provides a macro-perspective in a detailed

Page 120

exploration of key historical, social, and educational information that influence ISL. Information in this chapter could prove quite valuable for faculty or others to consult when proposing a new ISL course or program.

Nevin Brown provides insights from years of experience with nations, cultures, and educational institutions through the organization he once led, the International Partnership for Service Learning and Leadership (IPSL). This chapter reports some details of a study that looked at the effectiveness of the IPSL program and possible changes in the students participating. Nicholas Longo and John Saltmarsh provide convincing evidence to reframe ISL as Global Service Learning (GSL). They emphasize the importance of bringing global education and global perspectives into student experiences as well as equipping students to be global citizens. This chapter offers a list of competencies for global citizenship, shows implications of global perspectives on practice and research, and presents several exemplary programs using the GSL approach.

The second section of the book focuses on pragmatics: how course designs can inform research on ISL. A chapter by Jones and Steinberg offers information about variability in ISL courses ranging from full courses taught entirely in the host country to courses taught before, during and after the service-learning experience in the host country (i.e., sandwich designs), to practicums only in the host country. This chapter also details advantages and disadvantages of the variations, and offers multiple recommendations about how to do rigorous ISL research. Hilary Kahn details challenges common to ISL collaborations and proposes filmmaking as a way to “bring to the surface” provocative cultural systems, power structures and ideologies for students, directors, locals and ISL researchers to consider.

Another chapter proposes that ISL research and practice need to be informed by thoughtful attention to the local context and the forces that shape that context. Illustrative examples come from the author’s civic engagement experiences in Greece. Notably, author Susan Sutton contends that students can be taught to do discovery-centered research to inform future ISL programming. She offers a set of learning objectives for contextual learning through ISL courses.

Next, Whitney and Clayton’s chapter reviews the significance of critical reflection, “the component of the pedagogy that generates, deepens and documents learning and that, consequently, can function to improve the quality of the service learning activities and their educational and community benefits” (p. 183). A detailed rationale explaining the importance of in-depth critical reflection along with the tables of sample questions to use with students may prove highly useful to ISL program or course designers.

The third section of the book provides a selection of well-conceived resources and perspectives for conducting rigorous research on ISL. Humphrey Tonkin’s chapter gives a detailed agenda of possible ISL research. The extensive bibliography provided will help a scholar get a head start on developing a literature review for the selected research topic. The next chapter by Janet Eyler points out ways that ISL research could benefit by reconsidering

the existing literature on service learning research. Included in this chapter is an overview of known outcomes of service learning along with concrete suggestions for filling gaps in our knowledge rather than replicating what we already know.

Richard Kiely explores how ISL research could be informed by research on international learning. This chapter offers specific ways that ISL could build upon and potentially extend research on study abroad, as well as on intercultural and transformational learning. Another very thorough bibliography will help scholars quickly move forward in their own studies on these topics. The following chapter by Bringle, Hatcher and Williams highlights important design, measurement and theory considerations for doing rigorous quantitative ISL research. This chapter may be useful to students learning to do research or those wishing to delve into quantitative service-learning research for the first time.

Adding more, Kiely and Hartman detail concepts, characteristics, methods, approaches and best practices for doing exemplary qualitative ISL research. Like the previous chapter, this one is valuable to those starting out in qualitative or mixed methods ISL research. A chapter by Wells, Warchal, Ruis, and Chapdelaine rounds out this book section by offering a set of important ethical guidelines for ISL research, suitable for use by students, faculty, and community researchers alike.

The final section of the book consists of a single chapter that provides a South African perspective on North American ISL. Not surprisingly, the author of this chapter, Mabel Erasmus, points out that constructive dialogue about the purposes, practices, and intended outcomes of ISL between U.S. service learning partners and those within the host country, are crucial to developing strong ongoing relationships. The questions and perspectives raised provide a basis for thought-provoking conversations between scholars, students, and community partners about the nature of ISL, underlying assumptions, and important areas of future scholarship that are truly international in scope.

Overall, this book, written by faculty, administrators and community leaders experienced with ISL, offers guidance for individuals building ISL courses and programs as well as for faculty, students, and practitioners interested in the future of service-learning and community engagement. But the majority of the book is geared toward those interested in how rigorous research can contribute to student learning as well as improve the practices and outcomes of ISL, providing information and resources not available elsewhere. For those serious about implementing an ISL program with a rigorous research component, it is an exemplary volume to add to their bookshelves.

*Correspondence concerning this review should be addressed to: Rebecca Dumlaor, School of Communication, 102 Joyner East, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina 27858, [dumlaor@ecu.edu](mailto:dumlaor@ecu.edu).*