REVIEW ESSAY

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Community-Based Global Learning: The Theory and Practice of Ethical Engagement at Home and Abroad

Eric Hartman, Richard Kiely, Christopher Boettcher, and Jessica Friedrichs
Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishers, 2018

In a review in this journal of Marianne Larsen's *New Directions and Strategies for Community Engaged Scholarship: International Perspectives*, I wrote:

I find this book a huge, welcome and needed contribution to the literature of ISL ... [that] whetted my appetite for research and inquiry into ISL practices that can bring life to the postcolonial visions put forward and better inform the work of practitioners who wish to bring them about. (Stanton, 2016, p. 54)

In *Community-Based Global Learning: The Theory and Practice of Ethical Engagement at Home and Abroad*, Eric Hartman and colleagues have delivered a delicious main course that anyone interested in community engaged learning, especially internationally, should gratefully devour. As one who has called for research-based literature that can specifically inform and improve practice, I was thrilled to read it.

As the authors note in their introduction,

Our efforts reside at the intersection of theory and practice. We are conscious that the two are intertwined and profoundly dependent on one another. We represent the work of several different disciplines here, and we work to do so in a theoretically grounded and academically rigorous manner. Yet we do so ... while recognizing that we are embedded within a community of CBGL [community-based global learning] practice. ... [O]ur praxis takes place at the intersection of critical inquiry and consequential action. (pp. 6–7)

Indeed, this book provides a highly detailed, tools-filled handbook for designing and administering community-engaged, global citizenship-focused academic and co-curricular programs. Moreover, it is deeply contextualized in wide-ranging theory-based literature in community development, global citizenship, civic education, experiential and adult learning, international education, and other fields. As such, I found it essential reading

that illuminated issues and challenges that have arisen in my own international work and concrete ways to respond to them. It should be of interest and great value to the increasingly diverse scholars and practitioners within our expanding field.

Chapter 1 defines community-based global learning (CBGL) and explains the authors' decision to adopt this term in ways that differentiate it from both "service-learning" domestically (SL) and internationally (ISL). Removing "service" enables them to emphasize a more horizontal, justice-focused, reciprocal relationship with community partners, which they strongly advocate. Choosing "global" over "international" enables them to "express universalistic aspirations, such as acceptance of human dignity or respect and concern for others regardless of citizenship" (p. 18) and local engagement with global issues.

The following four chapters provide a rich tour through literature related to concepts of global citizenship; critical reflection; power, positionality, cultural humility, and intercultural communication; and community-driven partnerships. This review is interlaced with related practice principles, user-friendly toolboxes, and curricular examples enlivened by stories from the authors' work. They also form a strong foundation for the three more practical chapters that follow, focused on examples of institutional and economic contexts in which CBGL has been successful, as well as strategies for sustaining institutional commitments, undertaking program design, planning and operation, and "staying safe, healthy and happy" while engaged. The concluding chapter discusses the need for supportive curricular and co-curricular post-CBGL experiences to help ensure students' ongoing reflection and assist them in sustaining new commitments as they re-enter a world of family and friends who may lack similar experiences. As a coda to what's come before, the authors close with encouragement to readers to consider how CBGL can thrive rather than simply survive in higher education, how CBGL can "preform" rather than "reform" institutions focused on "collaborative action to co-create more just and sustainable communities" (p. 217).

As strong as this book is, I encountered places where I wished for deeper discussion. For example, in my review of Larsen (Stanton, 2016), I called for, "research...that presents portraits of practice (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) that enable readers to 'see' just how ... ISL practitioners can successfully respond to the ... challenges identified" (p. 54). Hartman et al. do this often and well. However, I wish that their inclusion of Applications 1 and 2 in chapter 2 had continued throughout the book. For example, Application 1, a story of how an instructor enabled a student to "understand and direct [her] global civic [self] ... and locate her cosmopolitan desires in a [faith] tradition and community that is familiar" (p. 45) enabled me to "see" how I could handle such a stressful, "teachable moment."

Chapter 3, which contains theoretical work related to critical reflection, misses specific strategies for how one might facilitate this. That is, what specific prompts can enable students to mine the complexity of what they are experiencing in the field and help ensure that they actually "see" what they think they are seeing?

An additional gap relates to students' residential experience in CBGL. There is brief attention given to homestays as one model for residential life and the cross-cultural benefits that can result. But there is no discussion of how one would decide if homestays are the best strategy for a given program, no criteria offered by which practitioners can determine where and with whom students will live. In establishing my ISL program in

South Africa, I assumed that homestays would be best given our goals for intercultural immersion. However, it quickly dawned on me that available, safe public transportation to communities where I wanted students to live was not available or affordable (if the students had to rely on taxis). More important, students in our pilot offerings strongly argued for living together in one residence. This, they pointed out, would enable them nightly to de-brief and reflect together on their intense, stressful days and provide mutually beneficial emotional and intellectual support. Decisions on where and with whom students live can deepen or detract from CBGL. On what basis do we make them?

A great strength of this book is its focus on working with a social justice commitment with all partners in CBGL. Chapter 5 on community-driven partnerships highlights Fair Trade Learning (FTL) standards and principles that “support redistributive equity beyond what the marketplace will bear” (p. 128). As strongly as this progressive commitment is expressed, I found myself missing specific discussion of what students actually do in CBGL that may compare or not with activities contained in SL and ISL programs. For example, in chapter 2, Hartman et al. discuss community-driven, “fourth generation community development identified by Korten (1990) and others ... that parallels the understanding and skills we are encouraging in global citizens” (p. 52). Would this orientation to community development then determine what organizations and activities programs and students engage with? How would this be negotiated with community partners?

I wish none of my critique to detract from the great esteem I hold for this publication. It is a needed, welcome handbook that has blazed new paths for seeking our goals and, as importantly, for reflecting anew on them. Hartman et al. gift us with both a deeply theoretical, research-based exploration of interdisciplinary knowledge areas that should undergird our work and examples of their application. It is, by itself, a comprehensive, annotated CBGL bibliography. The authors also deftly weave this exploration through step-by-step explanations of how to transform our work, “to seek global citizenship and social justice, individually, institutionally, and systematically with colleagues and collaborators in our home communities and around the world” (p. 218).

References

- Korten, D. C. (1990). *Getting to the 21st century: Voluntary action and the global agenda*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S., & Davis, J. H. (1997). *The art and science of portraiture*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
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