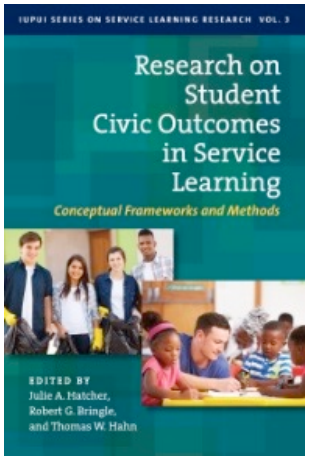


Research on Student Civic Outcomes in Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Methods

Hatcher, Julie A.; Bringle, Robert G.; and Hahan, Thomas W., eds. Stylus Publishing, Llc., 2017

Book Review

Tags: civic engagement | engaged learning | service learning

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Research on Student Civic Outcomes in Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Methods is the third volume in a series dedicated to research on service learning. This volume, with its timely focus on civic outcomes, is divided into three sections. It begins with an introduction to how student learning outcomes are embedded in service learning, then moves on to various theoretical frameworks by which one can situate research. It concludes with some nuts and bolts aspects of conducting research on student civic outcomes in service learning, defined as "a course or competency-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in mutually identified service activities that benefit the community, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility" (10).

All three chapters in Part One are useful to the novice in this research area. "Introduction to Research on Service Learning and Student Civic Outcomes" provides a taxonomy of service learning courses, with essential attributes and levels of development for instructors to improve the quality of civic learning opportunities within service learning courses along with clear factors for individual as well as institutional research and assessment. "Student Civic Outcomes in Higher Education" offers a helpful literature review of civic outcomes, while "Student Civic Learning through Service Learning" concludes Part One with two pertinent questions: (1) What do we know about cultivating civic learning through service learning courses? (2) What do we still need to learn about how the variables of course design influence civic learning? One key point repeated in each chapter is that civic outcomes in service learning should focus on learning *with* others and not doing *for* others.

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Part Two explores research on civic outcomes in service learning through multiple disciplines and theoretical perspectives including social psychology, political theory, educational theory, philanthropic studies, human development, community psychology, critical theories, and activity theory. The chapter "Critical Theories and Student Civic Outcomes" most directly questions the "individualistic" and "server-centered" approach to service learning (184), noting, for example, that serving at a soup kitchen often counts as service learning but protesting does not (187). A critique of the AAC&U Civic Engagement VALUE rubric is particularly thought-provoking on issues of access and power (187-190).

Part Three turns more directly to the how-to of conducting research with chapters on quantitative, qualitative, and longitudinal research along with chapters on institutional characteristics and using local and national datasets. One of the most interesting chapters in this section, "Documenting and Gathering Authentic Evidence of Student Civic Outcomes," asks "What counts as good evidence of learning and for whom?" (303). The chapter identifies two challenges familiar to those who work with assessment: making outcomes explicit and collecting authentic evidence (304-305). Unfortunately, much existing research depends on indirect evidence, and the chapter recommends use of the AAC&U VALUE rubric along with ePortfolios to enable formative and summative assessment.

Each chapter of the volume concludes with an extensive reference section. The volume is worthwhile for teachers and researchers who want to improve students' service learning as a site for civic engagement.

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