

## Theoretical Foundations for International Service-Learning

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*International service-learning (ISL) combines academic instruction and community-based service in an international context. Objectives of linking international travel, education, and community service include increasing participants' global awareness, building intercultural understanding, and enhancing civic mindedness and skills. Research on cross-cultural adjustment, approaches to community development, models of democratic research, and a variety of pedagogical theories are discussed as foundations upon which we can better understand the intellectual and political context for ISL and the student learning it makes possible. These literatures also provide frameworks for creating ethical ISL experiences that positively impact the communities and developing countries where we work and can inform project assessment and critique, as well as future research.*

International service-learning (ISL) combines academic instruction and community-based service in an international context. With concurrent calls for colleges and universities to internationalize and produce more civically engaged students, the proliferation of ISL programs is not surprising. Related genres such as educational travel, eco-tourism, and solidarity travel have grown in popularity, as well, sometimes as an auxiliary service of educational institutions (e.g., Augsburg College's Center for Global Education), as fashionable "gap year" programs for high-school graduates (Simpson, 2004), as part of collaborative relationships between nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and post-secondary institutions (e.g., the work of companion community organizations, Global Exchange, and others), or as alternatives to traditional tourism. The goals for linking international travel, education, and community service include increasing participants' global awareness and development of humane values, building intercultural understanding and communication, and enhancing civic mindedness and leadership skills (Berry & Chisholm, 1999; Hartman & Roberts, 2000). There is evidence that these programs are proliferating not only in the U.S., but worldwide (Annette, 2003; Berry & Chisholm), though much of the research about ISL remains before us to do (Bringle & Tonkin, 2004).

For the purposes of this article, ISL refers to a variety of experiences common in U.S. higher education today: faculty/staff-led co-curricular "mission" and service trips, academic courses with international immersion that include service experiences, study-abroad programs with service components, and international programs with formal service-learning cur-

ricula (e.g., semester-long programs such as University of Santa Clara's Casa de la Solidaridad in El Salvador, Yonkers-Talz, 2003). While these examples are diverse in duration, formality of academic instruction, extent of service, and in myriad other ways, all strive to achieve similar objectives regarding student learning and community service (Berry & Chisholm, 1999, provide a list of models from around the world). The research on ISL experiences suggests that they can be successful at meeting these objectives to some extent in the short term (see, for example, Crabtree, 1997, 1998; Kiely, 2004; Monard-Weissman, 2003; Parker & Dautoff, 2007); research on the long-term impact of ISL on students and communities is still limited (e.g., Kiely, 2005a; also see Tonkin et al., 2004, for a rare book-length and longitudinal analysis).

I was introduced to service-learning (SL) in 1993 when I accompanied 25 university students and a handful of medical personnel and engineers on a three-week service-learning experience to El Salvador. Since then, I have led many similar trips to Nicaragua and Kenya; some more service oriented and others more educational in focus, some explicitly connected to university baccalaureate graduation requirements, others through nonprofits. In contrast to positive ISL outcomes reported by me and other scholars, consider these observations:

- Local children become enamored with the foreign students and the material possessions they take for granted.
- Students and other visitors leave piles of used clothing and other "gifts" after project/trip completion.

- Community members fight about project ownership as development activities exacerbate internal political and interpersonal divisions.
- Members of neighboring communities wonder why no one has come to help them.
- Projects reinforce for communities that development requires external benefactors; national governments rely on NGOs to respond to the needs in their country.
- Many students return to pursue courses of study and careers with little apparent divergence from the path of/toward privilege.

These snapshots reveal some of the dilemmas I have encountered in international community-based educational and service work, experiences and observations that many others working in this field have shared (Cruz, 1990; Kiely, 2004; Simonelli, Earle, & Story, 2004). Based on these encounters, it is not surprising that I feel intellectually and ideologically conflicted about ISL work. These experiences have challenged me to find more theoretically-grounded approaches to ISL projects, curricula, pedagogies, and partnerships.

Despite a growing body of literature on international education, civic engagement, and service-learning, few who practice ISL or write on these topics consult a broad and varied set of literatures to inform their ISL teaching or research. Because we are working across many disciplines, it can be difficult to find each other's work, particularly as so much of it appears as chapters in edited volumes which are not easily identifiable through online search engines and indexes (Williams' 2007 bibliography provides a good alternative source). Thanks to journals focusing on community service learning such as the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, scholars and practitioners are increasingly aware of the research on and best practices for academic service-learning, and most SL teachers and researchers consult and cite literature from their own fields of study, as well. However, ISL is a multifaceted endeavor and should be informed by multiple disciplinary and interdisciplinary literatures. Therefore, this article is conceptualized as an exploration of ISL in relation to an array of theoretical and empirical disciplinary traditions.

In the next section of this article, I provide some historical context for these developments, particularly related to early international education and study-abroad. Next, I discuss civic education and service-learning and how both movements are becoming internationalized. Then I discuss, in turn, cross-cultural psychology and communication research, participatory development, democratic research paradigms, and alternative pedagogical theories that can inform our ISL work. In some cases, I reference lit-

erature that is many decades old to remind us of the roots of these important conversations; I also connect to the recent academic literature on SL and the limited but growing literature on ISL. In sum, this discussion provides an interdisciplinary framework for designing meaningful ISL experiences, developing effective pedagogies, assessing the impact on participants, beginning a reflexive critique of ISL, and linking back to our disciplines and future research.

### The Historical Context for International Education

International educational experiences were initially designed with the lofty goals of promoting international understanding and world peace. International cooperation, it was argued, could be achieved through transnational participation which required "the regular interaction of citizens from many lands" (Angell, 1969, p. 23). International educational exchange grew significantly in the years following World War II (Bochner, Lin, & McLeod, 1979) with the typical experience characterized by the phrase "junior year abroad." Programs for diplomats and business people also proliferated during this time (Martin & Nakayama, 2004).

Once enjoyed only by a small percentage of relatively affluent college students and usually lasting a full year, international educational experiences are now more popular than ever. However, their average duration has been abridged to a semester or less, and programs are increasingly entrepreneurial (Green & Baer, 2001). In this context, some scholars are urging colleges and universities to re-examine their international programs around the idea of global citizenship and with concerns for social justice (O'Donovan, 2002). Barker and Smith (1996), for example, argued that there is a need for citizens who not only appreciate other cultures, but who understand the differences created by ethnicity and religion and the forces of power and history at work within nations and in international relations.

At the same time, globalization continues to alter traditional study-abroad contexts. Major world capitals have homogenized, and students congregate in fast-food restaurants, increasingly preferring programs where courses are taught in English. I was reminded during my year teaching in Madrid (1999-2000) that it is difficult to have the kind of immersion experience that once may have been possible. The dominating presence of multinational businesses, restaurants, and shops along with the dynamics of global migration and cultural hybridization all affect the character of many places (Swerdlow, 1999, Zwingle, 1999), especially as experienced by the educationally elite. Meanwhile, interest in experiences in "non-traditional locations"

(Stephenson, 1999) and developing countries has been on the rise since the early 1990s (Rubin, 1995). While this trend is exciting, the search for an idealized or “authentic” other (Shome & Hegde, 2002) and the fascination with “dangerous” places (Phipps, 1999) require interrogation.

Authors writing about the purposes and ideal structures for international educational experiences increasingly advise meaningful contact in host countries in relation to social issues. Student participation in community-based programs and experiential learning activities are recommended to enhance international understanding and global citizenship while also serving local communities (Barker & Smith, 1996). Potential synergies between study abroad and service-learning are many (Hartman & Rola, 2000; Parker & Dautoff, 2007; Pyle, 1981), particularly in terms of expected learning outcomes. However, there are critical differences, as well. In particular, the direct beneficiaries of study-abroad experiences are the students, and these benefits are conceptualized largely as pragmatic such as improved language skills and enhanced job preparation, despite earlier claims about international education and world peace. SL experiences, on the other hand, are intended to reciprocally benefit communities and their members in addition to students; SL benefits to students are articulated in more civic, rather than individualistic terms, such as enhanced civic participation, social responsibility, and commitment to community service (Kenny & Gallagher, 2002; Parker & Dautoff, 2007).

On my own campus, discussions about international service-learning are mushrooming, as we grapple with what this would entail academically or logistically, or what it would mean in contexts as varied as Australia, Brazil, China, Italy, and Spain. How might we advise our study-abroad programs in light of concurrent trends toward entrepreneurialism and community service in international education and given the competition among individual/instrumental goals and collective/idealistic ones? How can a critical understanding of study-abroad within a history of globalization deepen the academic components of our ISL programs? This brief background and history of international education as it relates to service-learning only begins to suggest how complex the issues are; the following sections begin to address these vexing questions.

### Going Global with Civic Education and Service-Learning

Historically parallel to the call for the internationalization of higher education has been the call for a renewal of education’s civic mission. Harkening

back to philosophies of education posed by John Dewey (1916), it has become common in recent decades for voices from government, educational associations, and individuals to argue that college graduates must be prepared to function as informed and engaged citizens if our democracy is to flourish (Barber, 1992; Boyer & Hechinger, 1981; Commission on National Community Service, 1993). These voices posit that community service, within a disciplined pedagogical framework, would teach citizenship and social responsibility (Kraft & Dwyer, 2000; Rutter & Newman, 1989; Sapp & Crabtree, 2002). Barber (1992) argued that education in liberty is the most fundamental component of education and that a program of community service would “inspire a renewed interest in civic education and citizenship” (p. 245).

Kenny and Gallagher (2002) connect the history of SL to a number of educational movements such as the founding of land-grant colleges, the philosophy of experiential and pragmatic education, and national traditions of volunteerism and activism. Organizations such as Campus Compact were formed to consolidate these traditions and support a civic educational mission. The objectives of SL include active, collaborative, applied, and experiential learning; development of cross-cultural, global, and diversity awareness and skills; critical reflection; increased university-community collaboration on social problems; and the formation of an informed and engaged citizenry (Berry & Chisholm, 1999; Boyer & Hechinger, 1981; Commission on National Community Service, 1993; Erlich, 2000; Gabelink, 1997; Gamson, 1997).

In addition to the rationale for SL as a crucial dimension of civic education, the literature expounds on the logistics, pedagogical dimensions, and practice of SL (Barber & Battistoni, 1993; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Howard, 2001; Jacoby, 1996; Kendall, 1990; Zlotkowski, 1998; additionally, journals such as the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* and the *Journal of Higher Education* have made significant contributions). While only 15 years ago the SL literature was small and mainly composed of a call to educate students for civic life, today this literature is vast, increasingly theoretical and empirical, and associated with virtually all academic disciplines. There is much evidence that the call for increased civic education produced positive institutional changes through the creation of major SL programs, hundreds of individual courses, and other initiatives (Ehrlich, 2000). Evidence is mounting that these efforts positively impact college students, as well (Myers-Lipton, 1996; see Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001, for an annotated bibliography).

The literature on service-learning in international settings is small by comparison, but includes descriptions of specific university programs (Crabtree, 1997; Kraft, 2002; Simonelli et al., 2004; Smith-Paríolá & Gòkè-Paríolá, 2006) and case studies of individual ISL experiences (Crabtree, 1998; Liebowitz, 2000; Milofsky & Flack, 2005; Schensul & Berg, 2004; Williams, 2000). In addition, an emergent group of quantitative and qualitative studies of ISL confirms student development of civic and research skills (Schensul & Berg), effects on diversity learning (Camacho, 2004), and positive longitudinal impact on students (Kiely, 2004, 2005a). The International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership has played a significant role in building an understanding of ISL, including providing an inventory of models (Kraft, 2002) and large-scale analysis (Tonkin et al., 2004). From this literature we are beginning to learn about facilitating student learning and relationships with communities in ISL contexts. To further this work, I offer a discussion of several theoretical and empirical traditions from a variety of disciplines that can provide foundations for our future ISL practice and research.

### Understanding and Facilitating Cross-Cultural Adjustment

If we are to fully understand the educational potential of international education and design ISL programs optimizing the benefits of this experience, we need a basic proficiency in cross-cultural psychology and communication (see Berry, 1990, for a deeper exploration of the parallels between SL, international education, and intercultural training). All international educational experiences include cross-cultural contact and immersion; a foremost consideration for past research on these experiences has been the impact on student academic learning, cultural awareness, and personal growth; the SL literature has also studied these outcomes (e.g., Dunlap, Scoggin, Green, & Davi, 2007; Fitch, 2004; Myers-Lipton, 1996).

At one time, it was believed that intercultural contact would itself produce increased cross-cultural awareness and reduced ethnocentrism (Amir, 1969; see Gudykunst, 1979, for a review of literature related to the “contact hypothesis”). However, this assumption was soon complicated by empirical research. For example, several researchers found that group status (Amir & Garti, 1977), gender (Baty & Dold, 1977), the sojourner’s country of origin (Becker, 1968), individual predispositions and attitudes (Kim, 1995), and characteristics of the host country (Jones & Popper, 1972; Kim, 1995) all impact the outcomes of intercultural experiences for individuals. Decades of research on intercultural

immersion has spotlighted variables such as language learning (Wilkinson, 1998), cross-cultural awareness (Bochner et al., 1979), the acquisition of intercultural communication skills (Gudykunst, 1979; Hammer, Gudykunst, & Wiseman, 1978), the creation of a global world view (Bachner, Zeitschel, & Shannon, 1993; Sharma & Jung, 1986), and personal transformation and growth (Adler, 1975, 1985; Coelho, 1962; Kim, 1995; Steinkalk & Taft, 1979), demonstrating mostly positive, though not simple, correlations between the immersion experience and these outcomes.

International immersion experiences involve intense psycho-emotional, ideological, and physiological disruptions. Initially conceptualized as a kind of illness to be overcome (Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960), Adler (1975) countered that the “shock” of cross-cultural transitions is essential for personal growth and transformation. Several models have been proposed to explain the process of cross-cultural adjustment, including the U-Curve model (Lysgaard, 1955), the extension of that model to include the cross-cultural re-entry or the W-curve model (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1983), both of which are stage models, and more recently, the process-oriented stress-adaptation-growth model (Kim, 1995, 2005). These models include stages or phases of psychological disruption, gradual adjustment and adaptation over time, questioning oneself and one’s own culture, and resultant attitude and behavior changes. Rockquemore and Schaffer (2000) posited a similar model to map the cognitive learning process in SL. In their model, the initial shock experienced in a service site gives way to “normalization” and eventually evolves toward “engagement” (pp. 17-18). This last phase is characterized by integration of academic and community learning along with development of a structural critique of social issues and interest in advocacy. Other models of intercultural sensitivity map students’ attitudes and change along a continuum from more ethnocentric to more ethnorelative, like that used by Pusch (2004), who found a relationship between ISL experiences and increased self-awareness, cross-cultural skills, and intercultural learning. Dunlap et al. (2007) posit a compatible model of the process of developing socioeconomic and white privilege awareness using a set of stages related to and resulting from contact in service-learning. All of these models are useful as heuristics for understanding and facilitating the cross-cultural adjustment of our students in ISL contexts and as frameworks for research on the impact of ISL.

Understanding culture shock and cross-cultural adjustment can be particularly important for relatively short ISL experiences, which are often sojourners’ first experiences in lesser-developed countries or other-

wise structurally underprivileged or underresourced contexts. In these contexts, students and faculty may experience the disruptions of culture shock in a rapid-fire succession of stages and symptoms as they encounter often dramatic confrontations with difference, with self (Adler, 1975), and with the realities of global injustice (Crabtree, 1998). The students I have accompanied to El Salvador and Nicaragua, for example, had little travel experience outside of traditional European destinations or resorts in locations such as Mexico and the Caribbean. Facilitating their learning required the ability to help them process their culture shock and its reverberations in their attitudes about the United States. Given these circumstances, attention should be paid to preparing students and faculty alike for ISL immersion (Martin, 1984; Berry, 1990), for the confrontation with poverty, gross inequity, and the alarming injustice that often characterize ISL contexts (Kiely, 2004; Quiroga, 2004), and for guiding and understanding the complex learning that is possible (Kiely, 2005a; also see Kiely, 2005b for an abridged report of the study). For example, the pre-departure program at one university where I worked with a co-curricular winter-term-in-service program mixes historical and socio-political study with leadership and team-building exercises, construction and public health preparation for specific projects, and reflections on spirituality, morality, and social justice (Crabtree, 1997).

Moreover, given the characteristics of typical ISL contexts, the re-entry to the U.S. from an ISL immersion experience, even if just a week or two in duration, may be particularly difficult for our students. Thus, serious thought must be given to the re-entry program (Martin, 1989). Quiroga (2004) found that students perceive the re-entry from an ISL experience as the most difficult part, and recommends more opportunities for reflection during and after an ISL experience. Our campuses' international studies programs, study-abroad offices, and counseling services may have training or support personnel and useful materials to share. Faculty can provide opportunities for students to sustain the impact of the experience in their academic work. Effective strategies include follow-up research and advocacy projects, identifying alternative study-abroad options or post-graduation service placements, creating campus and community speaking opportunities about the ISL experience and context, and assisting students' exploration of complex intellectual and ethical issues that are bound to emerge after an ISL experience (Kiely, 2004).

In study-abroad contexts and other intercultural immersions, effective cross-cultural communication and the development of meaningful relationships in the host country—whether with peers, host families, or in romantic relationships—have been identified as

the key to successful and satisfying international experiences (Brislin, 1981; Hammer et al., 1978; Rohrllich, 1987). Hanvey (1979) argued that to achieve a more profound cross-cultural awareness, there must be “a capacity to participate” in host countries and communities (p. 10). Research on intergroup relations adds that cross-cultural contact produces better results when each group shares relatively equal status, when there are shared tasks requiring interdependence and cooperation in a supportive climate, and when there are opportunities for interpersonal interaction (Amir, 1969; Cook, 1985; Stephan & Stephan, 1995).

While the research discussed in this section can prepare us to facilitate student learning in ISL, we also need to consider and study the impact of this cross-cultural encounter on those in host communities. Little has appeared in the academic literature about preparing communities for ISL visitors, community member perspectives on the cross-cultural encounter, or the long-term impact of that encounter on those individuals and communities. Fiske (1993) cautions:

Cross-cultural [interaction] which is initiated and directed by the more powerful of the two cultures (for power difference is always part of the cultural differences) always runs the risk of reducing the weaker to the canvas upon which the stronger represents itself and its power (p. 149).

While there have been few studies that focus on the impact of ISL on host communities or countries, the literature on participatory development offers valuable philosophical and practical frameworks to help us reflect on Fiske's warning, and to connect what we know about cross-cultural contact, adjustment, and relationships to the context of ISL.

### International Service-Learning and/as Participatory Development

Even in domestic settings, but certainly in international contexts, co-curricular and course-based SL experiences are connected to community development work. While practitioners are aware of the literature on community partnership building for service-learning (Jacoby, 2003; also see the extensive literature on campus-community partnerships for health <http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/index.html>), few SL educators engage the literature on comparative theories, ideologies, and models of development. This omission is particularly troubling in the case of ISL, as so many programs include community-based construction, healthcare, and educational interventions—all development work.

The idea of development emerged in the nineteenth century when it was understood to be a

process of human improvement manifested largely through the formation of nation-states, transition to industrial technologies, and emerging capital markets (see McMichael, 2004, for a thorough history and contemporary analysis of development philosophy and models). By the end of World War II, the dominant conception of the world order divided the globe into modern/developed nations (i.e., First World), communist/Soviet bloc nations (i.e., Second World), and a bloc of newly-independent and undeveloped nations (i.e., Third World). The approach to development that prevailed during this era, known as “modernization,” combined rapid economic growth (capital and technological improvements) with attitude and behavior change (using media and other communication strategies). It was argued that not only lack of technology, but deficits in individuals—low educational level, traditional values, lack of skills, even resistance to a so-called “modern” point of view—were responsible for poor rates of development in many parts of the world (Lerner, 1958).

During the 1960s and ‘70s, when it became apparent that developing countries were not “catching up” to the West despite capital and technological advancements, alternative explanations for what was being called “underdevelopment” were posed (Frank, 1968). In many cases, particularly in Africa and Latin America, technology, industrialization, and rising Gross National Product (GNP) failed to produce broad-based changes in living conditions for most people. While inequalities between nations seemed to be diminishing to some degree, inequities within developing countries in areas such as employment levels, literacy, housing conditions, health status, and education all seemed to be on the rise, even exacerbated by so-called “modernization” (McMichael, 2004; Rogers, 1976) and policies such as “structural adjustment” (Stiglitz, 2003). Factors contributing to this disappointing outcome included rapid urbanization, corrupt third world governments, local elites as agents of colonial regimes, the structure of the global agricultural and commodities markets, international monetary policy, and the perception that development was driven by actors and processes external to the developing nation (Stiglitz). McMichael’s analysis of the socio-political dimensions of development additionally include phenomena such as “blaming the victim,” the development of internal colonialism in postcolonial states, and the impact of concurrent trends in the globalization of finance, debt, trade, manufacturing, agriculture, and labor.

Alternative models of development emerged in the mid- late 20th century, with a focus on decentralized, rural, community-level interventions with mechanisms for the so-called beneficiaries of development to participate in project design, implementation, and

assessment (Bessette, 2004; Moemeka, 2000; Nair & White, 1987; Nelson & Wright, 1995; United Nations General Assembly, 1997). NGOs like the World Bank have since encouraged a focus, at least in their rhetoric and best intentions, on participatory development models and strategies (Bhuvan & Williams, 1992; Nelson & Wright; Streeten, 1997). Nevertheless, despite an understanding that effective participation is a key to sustainable development, large-scale international and state-sponsored development efforts continue to focus on national economic growth and address inequalities based on class, gender, race, and ethnicity largely through market development and consumerism (McMichael, 2004).

I have argued elsewhere (Crabtree, 2007; Crabtree & Sapp, 2005) that small NGOs can be essential partners in ISL, helping us connect more meaningfully to organized communities in developing countries, facilitating cross-cultural relationship building and project participation, and providing needed perspectives on development and politics in the countries where we work (also see Kiely & Nielson, 2002/2003; Porter & Monard, 2001; Simonelli et al., 2004). One organization with which I work in Nicaragua maintains a bi-national on-site staff that networks and collaborates with local community organizations to prioritize and design projects. The organization is cultivating a philosophical and operational commitment to participatory development, including necessary consciousness-raising among their relatively conservative board of directors and donors. Still, while NGOs have many merits, they rarely meet the ideals they proclaim (Streeten, 1997). In practice, participation is seen largely as a means to improve the effectiveness of externally determined projects rather than as an end in itself, as a means to challenge the root causes of underdevelopment (Lane, 1995). Similarly, in the ISL literature, the discussion focuses overwhelmingly on maximizing student learning; attention to community-level concerns is underwhelming at best (see Camacho, 2004; Porter & Monard; and Simonelli et al. for notable exceptions), particularly when compared to the significant attention given the community and partner organizations in the domestic SL literature.

The development project itself has undergone substantial scrutiny during and since the 1990s, “losing considerable credibility among members of Third World (now southern) states” (McMichael, 2004, p. 37; also see Sefa Dei, Hall, & Goldin-Rosenberg, 2002). Legacies of colonialism, failures to use indigenous knowledge, ongoing inequitable global trade arrangements, corruption of southern governments along with persistent tribalism, the devastating outcomes of structural adjustment on third world debt, and failure of NGOs alike are all named in the cri-

tique (Stiglitz & Squire, 1998). Given these criticisms, discourses of liberation and social justice have begun to replace earlier discourses of development (White, 1994). Intellectuals and activists from “southern” nations increasingly conceptualize development in relation to sustainability and democratization (e.g., the work of Wangari Maathai), biodiversity and indigenous people’s rights (e.g., the work of Vandana Shiva), and gender, race, and (im)migration (e.g., the work of Arundhati Roy).

ISL courses and co-curricular experiences are implicated in development’s history whether through our sometimes naïve hopes for projects, collaboration with NGOs about which we know too little, or tacit complicity with governments that fail to adequately address the needs of the most marginalized communities and populations (Streeten, 1997). How can we disrupt the economic relationships that have characterized development history? How can we create experiences for our students that include meaningful projects with communities? How can we participate in creating a model of cross-cultural collaboration that is more than palliative? What are the implications of involving our students and institutions in the production of sustainable change and democratic processes in other countries?

In a comparison of ISL projects in El Salvador and Nicaragua, my research has shown that the more substantive the participation of the community, the stronger the learning outcomes for students (Crabtree, 1998). Similarly, working with a network of community-based organizations in El Salvador and with the Greenbelt Movement in Kenya, I observed that communities well developed in terms of their self-sustaining organization and problem-solving capacities provide more powerful learning contexts for students while also producing more positive outcomes for community members and organizers (Crabtree & Karangathi, n.d.; Crabtree & Sapp, 2005). The hypothesis is that in well-designed cross-cultural participatory development and service-learning projects, both community members and students can be empowered as citizens, and the relationship built through collaboration can be mutually beneficial. Porter and Monard’s (2001) compelling application of the Andean concept of *Ayni* (roughly, reciprocity) similarly demonstrates that working with indigenous grass roots organizations through a shared understanding of sustainable development not only leads to locally-valuable projects and ongoing relationships among partners, but helps students develop more relational and equitable ideas about service. More research is needed to fully understand the dynamics and effects of ISL incorporating (or centering) the community perspective. The work is being undertaken, but it is slow going due to factors

such as the complex and long-term nature of the effects being studied and the complications of collaborating across great distances.

Our ability to incorporate an understanding of development’s complex history, some knowledge of comparative ideologies of development, and analysis of the contexts where we work will all be crucial if we are to engage in ethical and responsible ISL work (Porter & Monard, 2001; Simonelli et al., 2004). Faculty on our campuses can help prepare ISL participants, as well as design effective and comprehensive assessment efforts. If ISL is part of co-curricular programs in offices of campus ministry or in student affairs divisions, it is incumbent upon ISL leaders to build the bridges to faculty and academic programs. ISL scholars working with organizations such as Campus Compact should also consider developing a master curriculum, at least in broad strokes, for ISL programs. A critical/cultural analysis of ISL in relation to the development dimensions of these experiences and understood in relation to critiques of globalization (McMichael, 2004; Sefa Dei et al., 2000; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1997; Stiglitz, 2003) will help us better understand how our work may be perceived by and impact communities and/in developing countries, as well as the ways it may work to reify rather than disrupt our students’ sense of and place in the world (see similar cautions in Cone & Harris, 1996; Cruz, 1990; Illich, 1990; Neururer & Rhoads, 1998; Simonelli et al., 2004; Williams & McKenna, 2002). In our future research, we can focus more on the benefits achieved in, for, and with the communities where we work (Bingle & Tonkin, 2004; Kraft, 1996) and seek to explicate these within the larger historical relations and global structures that frame our work.

### Democratizing Inquiry: Community-Based Research

In addition to the cross-cultural experience and community development work, ISL provides a rich context for research related to our disciplinary agendas, the study of teaching and learning, and the needs and objectives of communities. Moreover, research is frequently a valuable service students can provide communities and organizations through their SL courses (Reardon, 1998). If we seek the ideals of participatory development in community-based projects, it also makes sense to pursue participatory modes of inquiry. Participatory, action, and feminist approaches to community-based research provide epistemological frameworks essential to linking academic research with civic responsibility and social justice in ISL.

According to Reason (1991), “One of the key questions about research is the political one: who

owns the knowledge and thus who can define the reality?" (p. 325). Traditional academic research positions those who are trained in highly-specialized fields as legitimate experts who study the lives, problems, and realities of others. These experts use specialized methods of observation and analysis, and are expected to maintain a posture of objectivity. The data, findings, and other outcomes of legitimate academic research are then evaluated by professional peers for their validity, reliability, and contribution to disciplinary theory and inquiry. Scholars reap the majority of the rewards for this research in the form of publications and professional advancement. While most academics hope their research also will make contributions to improved practices or policies, few can make this claim (see Boyer, 1990 and Hall, 1981 for elaborations of this argument).

This dominant research paradigm supports a monopoly on knowledge production and its application for rich nations, powerful institutions, and elite social groups. Knowledge is central to the maintenance (or change) of global power relations, and can be seen as "the single most important basis of power and control" (Tandon, 1981, p. 23). The widely-accepted approach to research tends to discredit common knowledge as too subjective, and posits experts as singly important to knowledge production and problem solving (Ansley & Gaventa, 1997; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). Whether or not the common good is served by such research is usually left to the experts to determine, as well. Feminist critiques of the traditional approach to research also reappraise the scientific method and objectivity, pose dilemmas presented by standpoint theory, and promote activist research (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Code, 1995; Harding, 1991; Naples, 2003; Reinhartz, 1992). Literatures on participatory action research (PAR) and feminist research (sometimes referred to as FAR) all echo calls for an alternative research paradigm. It is worth noting that this alternative, participatory paradigm of community-based research evolved in a timeline parallel to the academic conversations on civic education (i.e., the 1980s and 1990s; see particularly Boyer, 1990), and has been connected to the study and practice of participatory development (Reardon, 1998).

Similar to the critique of traditional academic research, one of the criticisms of SL is that the students and university often benefit more than the communities where service takes place (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Reardon, 1998). This can be particularly true in ISL, as suggested by the snapshot presented at the beginning of this article. PAR-SL projects can involve communities, students, and faculty (as teachers, researchers, or advisors) as co-investigators of social problems. Within a participatory and action-

oriented framework, such research not only builds the capacity of novice scholars, but empowers communities as collaborators in knowledge production and social action (DeBlasis, 2006; Strand, 2000). Cruz and Giles (2000) argue that action research, as both a philosophy and a research method, "provides the best data while avoiding doing any harm to the community relationships that we are trying to nurture as well as study" (p. 31).

While the degree of participation in various phases of community-based inquiry varies tremendously from project to project (see the summer 2003 special issue of the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* on community-based research for several examples), it is critical for there to be interaction between the researchers and those among whom the research is being conducted. The identification and definition of problems, development of research questions, data collection and analysis, and use of findings should be relevant to those whose lives and problems are being studied (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Whyte, 1991). Researchers in the PAR tradition are committed to collective investigation, analysis, dialogue, and action aimed at long-term and structural change in addition to short-term local solutions "grounded in community rather than campus interests" (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003, p. 5). Feminist approaches add that researchers should consider their positions of power and privilege in relation to the researched, and be accountable for the ways research not only reveals unjust social relations, but reproduces them (Maguire, 1987; Naples, 2003; Reinhartz, 1992; Schrijvers, 1995). Informed by these epistemological frameworks, participatory and action-oriented approaches to community-based research offer a model for collaboration between ISL faculty and students and the communities where we visit and work (Reardon, 1998, argues that PAR *is* service-learning).

My research in collaboration with a Kenyan colleague, who is a community development professional rather than an academic, illustrates how ISL can be a context for mutually beneficial inquiry (Crabtree & Karangathi, n.d.; see Crabtree & Sapp, 2005, for a discussion of the project itself). Observations and interviews in communities during ISL trips combined with interviews with community leaders and NGO staff contributes significantly to my disciplinary research agenda about communication, participation, and development. At the same time, this research is relevant to the NGO's work within communities, as they seek to discover which communication strategies work better in various contexts. Additionally, community members report that the visitors animate their pride in self-sustaining community development efforts and, further, that partici-



pating in the research interviews encourages them to understand their personal experiences in a broader context. The interview is more than a data-gathering technique: it is part of a process of building understanding and relationships and can be seen as providing a service itself (Devault, 1999). Interestingly, the research also documents and enhances the professional development of NGO staff, many of whom were community members who became local leaders and then organizers, and for whom academic opportunities are few. Unexpectedly, discussion of gender relations in the context of gender injustice and changing gender roles in Kenya has been a sometimes challenging but natural outgrowth of this collaboration and the ISL trips to Kenyan communities. These conversations have been enlightening for participants and leaders alike, as our views shift in dialogue and through new and shared experiences (see Porter & Monard, 2005, and Simonelli et al., 2004, for related examples). Despite the benefits of collaborative, action-oriented, community-based research, cross-cultural collaboration outside the usual academic relationships can be challenged by distance, lack of technology, and other constraints (Crabtree & Sapp; Crabtree, Sapp, Malespín, & Norori, 2008).

Reciprocity is the key to ethical and successful collaborative research, and this ethos also should guide ISL projects in terms of student learning outcomes and in relation to positive community impact (Henry & Breyfogle, 2006; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). While the literature on ISL tends to focus on the logistical dimensions of program development from the perspectives of institutional administrators, parents, and faculty and on the learning objectives for our students (Crabtree, 2007; Tonkin et al., 2004), the literature on participatory development and research provides a supplement. In other words, we need more than an ethos of reciprocity as a guide; we need to learn the theories, methods, and on-the-ground strategies that are more likely to *produce* mutuality in process and outcomes. Even when short-term immersions do not lend themselves to research projects, or when student or faculty research is not an explicit component of ISL programs, these alternative research paradigms can inform ISL with a set of values, a language of critique, principles and guidelines for appropriate collaboration and participation, and the shared goals of reciprocity, mutual empowerment, and social change. These principles also relate to our pedagogy.

### Facilitating Transformational Learning: Theories and Pedagogies

“What cannot be questioned (it can of course be ignored, suppressed, or misunderstood) is that SL is fundamentally a question of pedagogical strategy”

(Butin, 2005, p. xviii). Service-learning provides an invitation to create new, more egalitarian, connected, and mutually transformative student-teacher relationships (Birge, 2005). While initially this was identified as an unexpected outcome of SL (MacNichol, 1992), it now should be a matter of intentional strategy, as we look toward developing new relationships among teachers and learners as well as new kinds of relationships in and with marginalized and poor communities in ISL contexts.

One of the claims made often about experiential education, SL, and international immersions alike regards their ability to *transform* participants. The desired transformations facilitated by ISL may include an awakening to self, to other, and to the world; increased knowledge, confidence, and language skills; and the development of more complex and personal understandings of other cultures and cultural others, and of community, poverty, and justice (Crabtree, 2007; Kiely, 2002, 2004; Monard-Weissman, 2003; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000; Tonkin et al., 2004). Other hoped-for changes include moving students from a charity orientation toward more of a social justice orientation on issues such as global awareness, service, development, and the roles of individuals as agents of change (see Cuban & Anderson, 2007, and Morton, 1995, for an exploration of and alternatives to this continuum model). How do we facilitate such transformational learning experiences?

Perhaps the most common theorizing about SL outcomes relates to the cognitive, affective, and operational dimensions of student learning and how these manifest in and/or are enhanced by SL (e.g., Eyster & Giles, 1999; Gardner & Baron, 1999). Much of this research is grounded in Dewey’s philosophies of democratic (1916) and experiential (1938) education (see Deans, 1999 for a discussion of Dewey as “a founding father” of SL). More recently, based on Kolb’s work on experiential education (1984), this literature has attempted to model and empirically study the learning processes and outcomes of community service experiences, whether in higher education (Cone & Harris, 1996; Primavera, 1999) or other contexts (Carver, 1997; Hepburn, 1997). In general, experiential learning enhances conceptual understanding, increases student ability to apply abstract concepts, and involves greater opportunities for general learning (e.g., communication, cooperation and teamwork, leadership skills) than traditional lectures, readings, and examinations.

Feminist critiques of experiential learning provide a useful counterpoint, claiming that Kolb’s (1984) theory treats experience as an individualistic encounter rather than as a social construction (Michelson, 1996), and that without analysis of subject positions in rela-

tion to the “experience,” SL and other experiential educational encounters can reinforce prejudices (Williams & McKenna, 2002). Related concerns are that experiential learning focuses largely on individual student transformation rather than on social transformation, and that those focused on civic education maintain a naïve faith in western models of civility and democratic process (Williams & McKenna, 2002). Similar critiques have been made of Dewey’s pragmatic approach to experiential education, which is seen as reformist rather than as truly revolutionary or transformative for students, for education as an enterprise, or for society (Deans, 1999).

The work of Brazilian educator Paolo Freire (1994, 1998, & 2001) is cited as a more radical approach to experiential education that relies on social analysis, pays attention to cultural diversity and class conflict, and is grounded in a utopian and revolutionary vision. His goals were related primarily to literacy education; he sought political transformation of individuals and society. For Freire, education is political, and critical reflection and collective social action should be an explicit part of the educational process. Freire focused on analysis of oppression in society as well as consciousness-raising about power relations in the classroom. Based in a Marxist philosophical critique, his work emphasized the ways that educational institutions and knowledge production serve particular socio-political interests. Freire’s pedagogy of liberation is one of the theoretical anchors for SL (Deans, 1999) and has been cited in much of the other literature explored in this article, particularly that related to participatory development, democratic research paradigms, and alternative pedagogies.

Mezirow’s (2000) transformational learning theory provides another useful framework for understanding how ISL can produce powerful learning experiences (Kiely, 2002, 2005a). In this conceptual model, learning requires examination of one’s assumptions in relation to new knowledge, leading to reconstruction of meanings through reflection and dialogue that then serves as the basis for action. Similar to participatory and other democratic epistemologies discussed earlier, Mezirow’s “perspective transformation” involves a shift in how we understand the nature and use of knowledge. One longitudinal study of students who had an ISL experience in Nicaragua over a 10-year period demonstrates that the transformational outcomes of SL occur through contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalizing, processing, and connecting (Kiely, 2005a). In Kiely’s (2004) application of Mezirow, he shows how an ISL experience has an impact on students’ perspective transformation. He found evidence of students’ “emerging global consciousness” related to six different types of perspective transformation: political, moral, intellec-

tual, cultural, personal, and spiritual (p. 11). These manifested in three distinct levels of perspective transformation: envisioning alternatives to current lifestyles and relationships to the poor and marginalized, changes in multiple dimensions of worldview (i.e., political, moral, etc.), and attempts to change behaviors or take action consistent with these perspective transformations. The third level most challenges students after ISL experiences; they have difficulty acting on their changed perspectives once they are reintegrated into their culture and routines. The connection to the importance of re-entry training as discussed earlier is clear; we need to find ways to develop post-ISL agency and to conduct research on the outcomes of such efforts.

Feminist pedagogy similarly provides an approach that connects self-reflection, critical analysis, and social action for teachers and students alike (Maher & Thompson Tetrault, 2001). Feminists believe that we need to critically engage in dialogue and reflection not only about what we teach, but about how we teach, and who we are in relation to what and who we teach (Crabtree & Sapp, 2003; Munson Deats & Tallent Lenker, 1994). Related to Freire’s critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1997; McLaren, 2000; Weiler, 1991), feminist pedagogy is a set of assumptions about knowledge and knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), as well as approaches to content across the disciplines, teaching objectives and strategies, classroom practices, and instructional relationships (see Cohee, Daumer, Kemp, Krebs, Lafky, & Runzo, 1998; Luke, 1996; Macdonald & Sánchez-Casal, 2002; Ropers-Huilman, 1998). The principles and characteristics of feminist pedagogy include valuing the epistemological validity of personal experience; exploring the links between the personal and the political; developing caring, non-hierarchical relationships between students and teachers; creating community in the classroom based on reflexive analysis of power and privilege; and seeking the application of knowledge through advocacy and social action (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, in press). Feminist pedagogy is extremely compatible with SL; feminist scholars writing about service-learning have provided useful examples (see Balliet & Heffernan, 2000) and pointed critiques (Fos, 1998; Michelson, 1996; Neururer & Rhoads, 1998; Williams & McKenna, 2002). Critical race consciousness and anti-oppression work increasingly are integral to theorizing and practicing feminist teaching (hooks, 2003; Macdonald & Sánchez-Casal) and in SL (Dunlap et al., 2007). All SL educators, but particularly those working with multicultural and women’s communities, should consult this literature; our research on ISL also can incorporate feminist perspectives.

The pedagogical and learning theories discussed here all include a substantive focus on critical reflec-

tion. For example, Dewey believes education is “a form of growth through *active experience* and *reflective thought*” (emphasis in Deans, 1999, p. 16). Freire’s key concept of praxis in experiential education is a recursive cycle of action-reflection-action (Freire, 1994). For Mezirow (1994), critical reflection is the “trigger” for transformational learning; it is through reflection that we reassess presuppositions, come to understand our beliefs and habits of mind, reveal distortions in our perspectives, and come to appropriate action. In feminist pedagogy, critical reflection on the self, classroom dynamics, and society comprises both content and method for teaching and learning. Critical reflection “examin[es] power relationships and hegemonic assumptions” in relation to both educational contexts and practices and in society-at-large (Brookfield, 2000, p. 125). Maher (2003) studied the impact of a set of reflection activities to develop a model for reflection in SL. His small-scale study showed that formal reflection activities help students “go deeper” in their understanding of the service experience as well as their own beliefs, including identifying and exploring changes in their beliefs as a result of the experience.

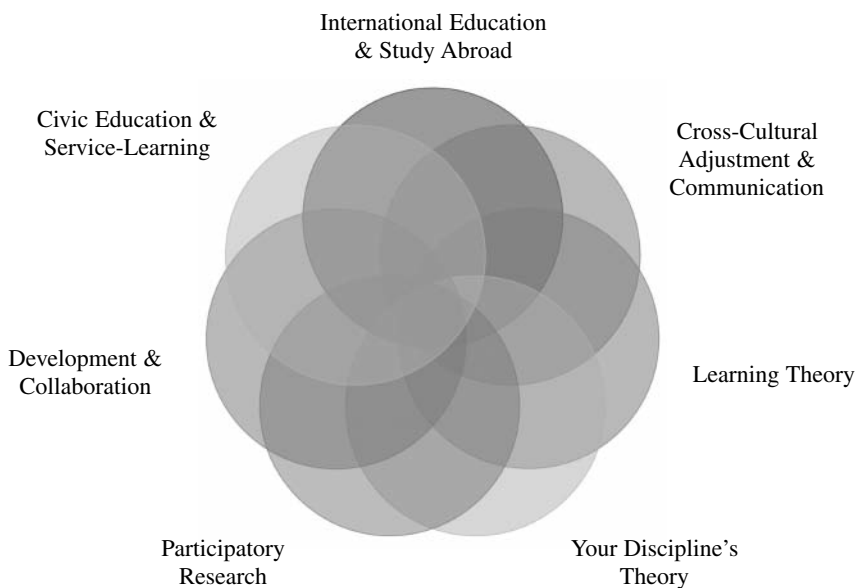
While faculty may be relatively comfortable facilitating students’ academic learning and skill development activities, it is equally important for us to develop reflection and facilitation skills (Brookfield, 1995; Crabtree, 1999; Eyer, 2002). Many faculty members bristle at the use of “reflection” in academic learning, yet effective SL pedagogy requires it. The nature of the

cross-cultural encounter, awakening of global awareness, powerful cognitive dissonance that often results, and immense personal growth that becomes possible are each phenomena with enormous disruptive as well as transformative power (Adler, 1975, 1985; Kim, 1995). It would be unethical for us to be unprepared to manage these changes in/for ourselves in addition to helping our students process them. In fact, all of these pedagogical approaches require the teacher to be engaged in a reflexive and recursive praxis; in these pedagogies, we are not only facilitators and teachers, we become co-learners and subjects of analysis. Reflection in SL pedagogy “offers the opportunity for faculty to find deeper meaning in who they are, why they teach, and how to bring their personal and professional insight to bear on society” (Birge, 2005, p. 203). In Brookfield’s (2000) words, “we teach to change the world” (p. 1). Thus, critical reflection is not merely a powerful teaching and learning tool, it is a way of life for committed teachers (Brookfield, 1995).

### Future Directions for Research

ISL merges civic education, cross-cultural immersion and relationship building, community development work, shared inquiry for problem-solving and change, and powerful learning experiences grounded in critical reflection. The academic conversation about ISL is still relatively new, but it is clear that it has long roots in other conversations, and that many literatures can inform our ISL work. Figure 1 illus-

Figure 1  
*International Service-Learning at the Intersection of Theoretical and Empirical Traditions*



trates the overlap of these conversations, with ISL in the center and at the intersections. Certainly, I have omitted seminal authors and other important literatures; every reader will have “must-reads” to add to the reference list. The diagram provides a conceptual space to add that work in the circle labeled “Your Discipline’s Theories.” Naturally, I have focused on the theoretical and empirical traditions that have most significantly influenced my own work for the past 15 years. I did not come to this work informed by a broad configuration of appropriate theoretical and empirical training; rather, my ISL experiences and the dilemmas they created motivated me to search for answers in the literature of my own and many other fields. So, while incomplete by any measure, this article is a manifestation of that journey.

Future research and program assessment efforts must be intensified at project and program levels and have a comprehensive focus if we are to fully understand ISL. Impact on students and impact in communities are both longitudinal phenomena and need to be studied as such (Kiely, 2004, 2005a). Participants on both sides of the global divide need to be invited to share their perspectives over time. While we are beginning to learn much about the *short-term* effects of ISL experiences, particularly on students, and some of the long-term learning outcomes, we know little about the long-term impact of (I)SL in communities where we work. Intentionally engaging with multi-disciplinary theoretical and empirical traditions will not only strengthen our ISL experiences, but improve our research, as well (also see the detailed research agenda delineated by Bringle & Tonkin, 2004).

Study abroad is gradually being subjected to stringent assessment protocols covering aspects such as pre-departure and re-entry orientation, on- and off-campus student learning environments, instructional and faculty quality, curriculum, measurable student learning outcomes, housing/host families, health and safety, and many others (Gillespie, Braskamp, & Braskamp, 1999). No similar protocol exists for assessing ISL experiences, though we can imagine drawing from those available for study-abroad programs and combining them with recommended assessment strategies for SL courses and programs (Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001; Gelmon, 2000). Assessment also should attend to the participatory dimensions of ISL, including the quality of information sharing, degree of consensus about participation, opportunities for consultation and decision-making throughout planning and implementation, and the presence and quality of feedback and advocacy beyond the community (Eyben & Ladbury, 1995). These dimensions could further be enhanced

through the use of a social justice framework for understanding the outcomes of ISL on students, as well as the impact on communities from the perspectives of participants, community leaders, beneficiaries, and others (Cuban & Anderson, 2007).

There are many models of ISL ranging from short-term immersions in communities or cultures to multiyear and sequential developmental approaches. The latter, where many and varied civic learning and community service experiences form a scaffold for developing students’ civic engagement over time, show much promise for the future (Boyle-Baise et al., 2006; Meisel, 2007). There are also a growing number of commercial and nonprofit venues for international and service work, and we know little about their structures, goals, “curricula,” or outcomes on participants and communities. All of these are sites for applying current and new research frameworks. A comprehensive approach to the evaluation and assessment of ISL experiences and their community impact is an ambitious and overwhelming undertaking. But unless we take up the pieces of this project as we can, we may not only fail to effectively teach our students how to engage in just global relations, we may fall terribly short of our own deepest hopes for doing so.

## Conclusion

It would be disingenuous not to admit that I remain conflicted about ISL. So I close with three questions that are part of my own reflexive praxis: (1) How can we undertake appropriate interventions in other(s’) communities that balance the enhancement of student learning with sustainable improvements and meaningful social change? (2) How can we create cross-cultural experiences that empower all participants while neither reinforcing nor exacerbating the social distance among them? (3) How can we engage in responsible critique, yet not become paralyzed or cynical, so that we can continue to act and teach in a world that is characterized by so much self-interest, increasing disparity, and injustice? There are no easy answers to these questions and I suspect no satisfactory resolution to the dilemmas they present, but these questions are nagging and necessary guides for proceeding.

Increasingly, I have come to believe that relationships are the centerpiece of this work, whether ISL is conceptualized as teaching, development work, or a movement for social justice. At the end of the day, ISL projects are not about providing material support to our partners in developing countries and communities—after all, how much can we really do in the face of such extreme poverty and structural inequality? ISL is about producing global awareness among all participants, providing opportunities to develop

mutual understanding, and creating shared aspirations for social justice and the skills to produce it. We need to become more attuned to the relational aspects of ISL and other community-based learning experiences (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Foos, 1998; Neururer & Rhoads, 1998). The following example is illustrative.

In the summer of 2004, after a two-hour truck ride, a half-hour canoe trip, and another hour of hiking, I found myself in the mountains of Minas Rosita, Nicaragua, in a small community called Santa Rosa, as part of an ISL project-planning and assessment team. After an update about local needs from community members and discussion of the mechanisms for shared participation with the community leaders, a woman thanked me for our visit, her arm in mine, tears in her eyes. We had not yet built the community center together, not yet provided public health support. To her, the project was almost beside the point. She told me that no governmental official—no national, regional, or local Nicaraguan functionary—had ever visited her community. It seemed our presence had affirmed her community's very existence, precipitated community-level organizing, and confirmed her right to hope for a better life.

Through experiences such as this one, I have learned much about the intangible outcomes of ISL including the power of witnessing (Morton, 1995), the catharsis of sharing stories, the ability of our presence to draw needed government and NGO attention, the catalytic sway of one project beyond our visit and unrelated to our intentions (Crabtree, 1998), the personalization of the "other" (Neururer & Rhoads, 1998), and the deep significance of accompaniment for community members, students, and faculty alike (Simonelli et al., 2004; Yonkers-Talz, 2003). In my ISL work and my reading alike, I am reminded over and over that in many ways the material aspects of our service are merely symbols of a new relationship among differently-situated actors in global relations. Nadinne Cruz's definition of service affirms this view: "Service is a process of integrating intention with action in the context of a movement toward a just relationship" (qtd. in Morton, 1995, p. 31).

Despite ambivalence, I continue to practice and study international service- and community-based learning through work on my campus, and with local agencies and international NGOs. I have to believe that we can engage in work that is ethical by being actively and critically conscious of our motivations, choices, and the complex impact of our work, and by practicing the kind of sound inquiry and informed debate that are the hallmarks of our profession. All of us working in ISL are searching for ways to act justly in an unjust world, to inspire and prepare our students to do the same, and to honor the people and communities where we work and teach. Maintaining a com-

mitment to education for solidarity (Kolvenbach, 2000) within a truly reflexive practice may be a way forward. Joining a conversation among kindred theorists, researchers, and practitioners beyond our disciplinary and national boundaries will surely raise our consciousnesses and enrich ISL practice.

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