

# AAUSC 2017 Volume—Issues in Language Program Direction

## Engaging the World: Social Pedagogies and Language Learning

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## Chapter 3

# Lessons from the CruCES Project: Community Service Learning and Intercultural Sensitivity in the Foreign Language Classroom

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### Introduction

In a 2007 report on the state of foreign language (FL) programs in higher education, the Modern Language Association (MLA) issued a call for change in the governance structure, curricula, and agenda of language programs in order to meet the current and future educational and professional needs and challenges of students in the 21st century. Specifically, the report advocated for a diversification and integration of the curriculum beyond disciplinary boundaries through an emphasis on shared objectives: the development of translingual and transcultural competence.

Although the impact of the MLA's call for transformation has yet to be fully assessed, it nonetheless resonates with the increasing diversification of language program course offerings and degree programs as well as with the emergence of scholarship in the areas of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) and Community Service Learning (CSL), which are particularly well suited to advance the aims of the MLA report. To contribute to a growing body of scholarship (see, e.g., McBride, 2010; Rodriguez-Sabater, 2015) and further illuminate the role and value of CSL in fostering translingual and transcultural competence, this study focuses on intercultural sensitivity development (ISD) within the context of a CSL project.

In fall 2015, students enrolled in SPAN 4703, an upper-division course on Spanish for the professions and the community, participated in a grant-funded collaborative community service-learning project involving two local nonprofit organizations, Caritas Village and El Centro Cultural Latino de Memphis, and community members from the diverse West Binghampton neighborhood of Memphis, Tennessee. The Creating Communities, Engaged Scholarship (CruCES) project sought to build community and capacity in West Binghampton through the combination of entrepreneurship and the arts. Throughout the semester, students worked together with designated community leaders to develop and market sustainable, arts-based microeconomy projects that would later be taught to

others within the community. In the process, students also engaged in a study on intercultural sensitivity.

Using mixed methods to assess the impact of the CruCES project, the purpose of this study was to address the following research questions: (1) Does CSL promote ISD among students? If so, how and to what extent? (2) What factors may or may not contribute to the development of intercultural sensitivity in this particular case as well as in a service-learning context in general? (3) How might service-learning experiences be improved so as to provide an environment conducive to the development of intercultural sensitivity? (4) Lastly, what insights does this particular study pose for our understanding of intercultural sensitivity (what it is and how it is developed) and for the assessment of intercultural sensitivity?

The connection between intercultural sensitivity and translingual and transcultural competence is implicit though made complicated by the proliferation of distinct yet related terminology across a spectrum of disciplines addressing intercultural competence. Translingual and transcultural competence connote the ability to move between multiple languages, communication modalities, cultures, and cultural contexts with a degree of ease and fluidity (MLA, 2007). This adaptability, in turn, is part and parcel of what language, behavioral, cognitive, and other scholars refer to as intercultural competence or one's ability to effectively and appropriately interact with others in an intercultural context (Deardorff & Edwards, 2013). Intercultural competence is therefore characterized in terms of skills, behaviors, and attitudes, including linguistic competence. To date, language scholars addressing intercultural competence focus predominantly on the acquisition and development of language skills and cultural knowledge necessary for enacting effective and appropriate intercultural communication and enhancing global citizenship (e.g., Byram, 1997, 2009; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Timpe, 2013). Yet much remains in the way of exploring how language study can enhance or help foster the underlying attitudes conducive to the acquisition and further development of intercultural competence. This study concerns itself therefore not with the linguistic aspects of intercultural competence but with the related concept of intercultural sensitivity or the underlying attitudes conditioning the acquisition, demonstration, and development of intercultural and, by extension, translingual and transcultural competence.

## Literature Review

The benefits of CSL for language learning are well documented in the existing literature on LSP and CSL. In addition to fulfilling the communities goal area of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) world-readiness standards (Abbott & Lear, 2010), CSL has the potential to motivate student learning, strengthen linguistic skills, develop professional language skills,

and foster translingual and transcultural competence (Barreneche, 2011; Ebacher, 2013; Hellebrandt, Arries, & Varona, 2003; Hellebrandt & Jorge, 2013; Pérez-Llantada & Watson, 2011). In the process, it empowers students and local communities in bridging the needs and aspirations of students, language programs, and institutions of higher learning with those of local, or even global, communities and community partners (Carracelas-Juncal, 2013; Lear & Abbott, 2009; Lear & Sanchez, 2013; Magaña, 2015; Petrov, 2013). Though not without its challenges, the increasing interest in and integration of CSL into the language curricula, as evident in the growing scholarship on CSL (Hellebrandt & Jorge, 2013), speaks to its relevance to LSP and by extension to the greater goals and aims of modern language programs in promoting community engagement.

As noted earlier, the terms “translingual” and “transcultural competence” connote the skills, behaviors, and attitudes exemplified in the concepts of intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity. The interdisciplinary and diverse literature on intercultural competence employs often overlapping definitions of intercultural competence, intercultural sensitivity, and other related terms that have recently been critically examined (Deardorff, 2006). According to Deardorff (2006), a consensus definition of the term “intercultural competence” emphasizes effective and appropriate interaction within intercultural contexts. This definition is reinforced by that of Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), who similarly assert that intercultural competence connotes “the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people, who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world” (p. 7). As with translingual and transcultural competence, intercultural competence is therefore often discussed in the academic literature in terms of its demonstrative skills, behaviors, and attitudes (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

In comparison, the term “intercultural sensitivity” is often used interchangeably with intercultural competence. Its use in discussions of developmental and process-oriented models of intercultural competence, however, suggests a more nuanced definition of intercultural sensitivity that directs attention to cognitive orientations rather than behavioral skills and traits. Specifically, Bennett (1993) and Deardorff (2009) define “intercultural sensitivity” in terms of one’s attitudes or mindset regarding difference (e.g., cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic). Intercultural sensitivity thus refers specifically to attitudes or mindsets indicative of one’s ability to develop and demonstrate intercultural competence. Following Bennett and Deardorff, this study uses the term “intercultural sensitivity” to refer to one’s underlying attitudes regarding difference (i.e., cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic) conditioning the ability to acquire and demonstrate intercultural competence.

As a lifelong process (Deardorff & Edwards, 2013), ISD occurs over time and through contact with others of different backgrounds (e.g., cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic). Bennett (1993) suggests that the development of intercultural

sensitivity occurs in predictable stages, which he outlines in his Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). Consisting of six stages (denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration), Bennett's DMIS posits that continued exposure to difference positively impacts the development of intercultural sensitivity. In short, intercultural contact allows for the adaptation of cognitive orientations. Bennett's model ultimately suggests that these stages progress from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative mindset, meaning that one will not only become more tolerant of difference with continued intercultural contact but will eventually identify with, or more specifically integrate oneself within, the mindset of the "other."

Similarly, Deardorff's (2009, Deardorff & Edwards, 2013) Process Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (PMIS) emphasizes process over specific behaviors in the acquisition of intercultural competence. Envisioned as a circular process, Deardorff's model posits that the acquisition, demonstration, and continued development of intercultural competence and sensitivity begin and end with one's underlying attitudes and mindset. Envisioned as a circular feedback loop, her model moves from internal to external outcomes and back, beginning with attitudes and moving through newly acquired knowledge and comprehension and critical thinking skills to desired external outcomes (i.e., behaviors) and back to attitudes. Both Bennett's and Deardorff's models illuminate the need for attending to not only the acquisition of communicative skills, cultural knowledge, and critical thinking skills in the development of intercultural competence but also cognitive orientations. For language educators and program directors, this means providing opportunities for engaging in intercultural contact beyond the classroom.

Despite the significance of CSL for ISD, to date, only two studies (McBride, 2010; Rodriguez-Sabater, 2015) specifically examine the relationship between CSL and ISD and focus on CSL and intercultural sensitivity among students in FL classrooms. They both suggest a positive correlation between CSL and ISD. McBride (2010) examined student intercultural competence over the course of a tutoring or teaching assignment with second language learners. She found that the students most engaged in the Second Language Acquisition process of their respective tutorees provided greater depth of reflection in their journals and therefore demonstrated a higher degree of intercultural competence after a semester-long program. McBride argued that successful student engagement with CSL requires a frame of reference (a concept borrowed from a previous study of new teacher cognition—Levin, Hammer, & Coffrey, 2009) focused on the needs of the community in question rather than on the needs of the self. McBride also contended that though student training in reflective writing might produce more instances of intercultural competence, such explicit instruction misses the larger point of refocusing student attention on the CSL experience and needs of the community.

Similarly, Rodriguez-Sabater (2015) examined student end-of-course reflection papers in an L2 Spanish course for evidence of intercultural competence.

Using Bennett's (2008) intercultural competencies framework (i.e., mindset, skillset, and heartset) to assess journal entries, she found that students demonstrated the highest number of intercultural competence skills in the area of mindset, which refers to statements reflecting student attitudes and beliefs. Similarly to McBride, Sabater suggested that lack of experience or training with reflective writing among the students might account for the low demonstration of intercultural competence in the other two competency areas.

Service learning has also been found to be beneficial for heritage learners (see Carracelas-Juncal, 2013; Magaña, 2015; Petrov, 2013; Thompson, 2012). Taken collectively, these studies support the notion that CSL has an impact on student attitudes and beliefs regarding CSL, community service, and difference (e.g., cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic). For example, Thompson (2012) found that the CSL experience fostered reflection on cultural and socioeconomic differences among heritage learners, despite the fact that they share a common language with the community they serve, a finding echoed in studies by Petrov (2013), Magaña (2015), and Carracelas-Juncal (2013). As a result, the service-learning experience proved to be personally transformative for the heritage learners, who benefited from their newfound awareness in terms of increased self-esteem and motivation to continue learning Spanish to serve the community (see Carracelas-Juncal, 2013). Though focused on the identity process of heritage learners and not on the question of intercultural sensitivity *per se*, these findings are nonetheless significant in that they foreground the transformative potential of the CSL experience as expressed in student reflections. Indeed, reflection on difference as a result of intercultural contact necessitates a reflexive and critical encounter with the self, which then potentially leads to modification of one's fundamental attitudes regarding others (Deardorff & Edwards, 2013).

## Method

Inscribing itself in this line of inquiry, this study critically approaches the design of the CruCES project and specifically addresses the challenges in the assessment of intercultural competence and sensitivity encountered in McBride's (2010) and Rodriguez-Sabater's (2015) studies by refining the assessment tools. Specifically, this study uses quantitative and qualitative methods in the assessment of ISD and examines how student reflection journals can be enhanced by incorporating digital photographs and critical reflection questions in addition to written reflections. Both Bennett's DMIS and Deardorff's PMIS are used to analyze and assess the development of student intercultural sensitivity. Lastly, this study design draws on Deardorff and Edwards's (2013) contention, building on Gordon Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis that intercultural contact alone is insufficient to engender intercultural sensitivity. Rather, a successful CSL project must be inclusive,

equitable, cooperative/collaborative, and mutually supportive for all stakeholders involved. The CruCES project was designed so that all stakeholders, including students, would have a voice in and agree upon the design and goals of the project.

### **Course/Project Design**

SPAN 4703 is an upper-division Spanish course focused on Spanish for the professions and the community. Offered as an elective, this course integrates service learning as a core pedagogical method. Class time is evenly divided between traditional classroom learning and CSL. During the CruCES project, for example, class convened on campus on Tuesdays and off campus at Caritas Village on Thursdays. On campus, classroom time was devoted to the presentation and discussion of theories, concepts, and issues related to Spanish for the professions and CSL, such as intercultural competence models, LSP pedagogy, CSL project design, and community partnerships. Off campus meetings, in contrast, were devoted to the project and related activities within the community itself. This meant engaging with locals, participating in workshops, and collaborating with community project leaders toward the development of the arts-based projects while at Caritas Village. In addition, students were required to complete an additional 14 hours of community service beyond the hours spent toward the project during designated class/CSL times. These hours could include additional hours devoted to the project or to some other related service opportunities. Many students, for example, chose to engage in translating and interpreting activities for local organizations such as Caritas Village, a major partner in the CruCES project.

The CruCES project partnered SPAN 4703 with Caritas Village and El Centro Cultural Latino de Memphis (housed in Caritas Village). Both organizations are located in the heart of West Binghampton, a culturally and linguistically diverse and historically troubled neighborhood that has recently experienced a surge in new immigrants. The greater Binghampton area encompasses approximately two square miles located between Midtown and East Memphis. According to 2010 census data, the population of Binghampton numbers over 12,000 individuals, the majority of whom self-identify as African Americans. Approximately 14% of the population are immigrants, the majority of whom hail from Latin American, African, and Asian countries, including Mexico, El Salvador, Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia, China, Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia, and India. According to information compiled by the Community Leveraging Investments for Transformation (LIFT) organization, many of these immigrants are refugees who come to Binghampton specifically as a result of the area's social services and affordable housing. Indeed, while the area has historically suffered from unemployment, urban blight, low educational achievement, and poverty-related crime, Binghampton residents today benefit from the presence and work of numerous organizations offering a variety of social services to the community and working to better living conditions in



the area, including Caritas Village and El Centro in addition to the Binghampton Development Corporation, Planned Parenthood, and the Christ Community Health Center, to name a few.

Founded by Onie Johns, who also served as director until January 2017, Caritas Village is a community center that provides a broad range of services for the people of West Binghampton and Memphis in general. A single, two-story brick building on the corner of Harvard Avenue and North Merton Street, Caritas Village consists of a restaurant, a spacious dining and meeting area (which also serves as an art gallery), a large, multipurpose room on the second floor, and an outside community garden. Caritas Village provides free meals for those in need, free health screening, educational and cultural resources, and artisan and art-work. Most significantly, it provides a space for people and organizations to gather, share, and serve the community. Thus, in addition to local community members, Caritas hosts a broad spectrum of the surrounding population, including college professors and students, business people, politicians, and community organizations such as El Centro Cultural de Memphis.

Founded by Richard Lou, also chair of the art department at the University of Memphis, El Centro similarly provides needed social and educational services as well as cultural resources to and for the Memphis Latino population, such as English language classes; workshops and informational programs related to professional, social, and legal matters of local concern; and cultural and educational workshops for families and children (e.g., art and theater classes, karate lessons, and information sessions on higher education preparation and funding for children of first-generation immigrants). They also engage the greater Memphis population through cultural festivals and events such as the annual Tamale festival, which features a tamale cooking competition, live music and dance by local Latino artists, information tables on local Latino and Latino-serving organizations, local food vendors, and activities for children. Both Caritas Village and El Centro were crucial in providing the physical space and means for CSL and engagement during the CruCES project.

Collaborative by design, the CruCES project partnered students in groups with community leaders toward the completion, marketing, and sale of sustainable arts-based projects. Community leaders were solicited and chosen with the help of Caritas Village and El Centro Cultural Latino de Memphis. The primary criteria for inclusion in the project were residence within the neighborhood of Binghampton and knowledge of a unique cultural tradition or skill in the area of the arts that could be developed during the project. In all, four community leaders participated in the project, each possessing a diverse range of artistic knowledge and skills, mainly in the areas of artisan work. Through dialogue, community leaders and the student groups chose a project that could eventually be shared with others in the community as a viable and sustainable entrepreneurial activity. Students and community leaders devoted the remainder of the semester to further

developing and marketing the project and product. Student engagement with community leaders and others within the neighborhood of West Binghampton occurred primarily at Caritas Village during the designated time for the Thursday afternoon meeting of SPAN 4703. Student engagement with the community, however, extended beyond class time as per project needs and course requirements.

In addition to the group projects, students and community leaders, along with other interested individuals of the West Binghampton neighborhood, jointly participated in workshops, lectures, and discussions related to the project and to CSL. Guest speakers from the university and local organizations, for example, presented and gave workshops on teamwork and leadership, photography, micro-economics, marketing, entrepreneurship, and Latin American music and culture. Team leaders likewise presented their respective artistic skills and cultural traditions. Students facilitated a World Café-style discussion addressing the concerns and needs of the West Binghampton neighborhood and the issues of community and community service. Lastly, many students volunteered additional hours interpreting for the free health clinic operated out of Caritas Village. In sum, students devoted a total of 28 hours during which they engaged with the community, in the form of collaborative service learning, volunteer work, or jointly participating in workshops. Though significant, the number of hours was not as crucial to the outcome of the project as was the design and attitude of the students.

## **Participants**

In total, 15 undergraduate students (4 males, 11 females), enrolled in SPAN 4703, participated in this study. As an upper-division Spanish course with a prerequisite requirement for enrollment, the students, not all Spanish majors, exhibited a range of command in their Spanish speaking and writing abilities from intermediate to advanced. Indeed, a little over half of the participating students were heritage learners (total eight) who likewise demonstrated a range of speaking and writing abilities from the intermediate to advanced level. In the initial survey, of the 15 participants, 3 students reported having had some experience with service learning from a previous class, while total 9 reported having had experience in the community volunteering in some capacity, either through school, church, or some other organization.

## **Study Design**

The CruCES project involved a mixed-methods study design to assess student ISD over the course of the project. The quantitative portion of the study involved the use of pre- and post-project surveys. The pre-project survey questions related to student experience with CSL and community engagement and perceptions of intercultural sensitivity and of how they thought the CSL project might impact their intercultural sensitivity. The post-project survey questions similarly

addressed student perceptions of how their experience with CSL during the course of the semester impacted their thoughts on community, community service and engagement, and intercultural sensitivity. The post-project survey questions thus differed from those of the pre-project survey in that the post-project survey specifically sought to gauge student perceptions of their ISD as a result of participation in the CruCES project. As such, the surveys do not necessarily conform to a standard pre-posttest design.

The qualitative portion of the study consisted of a three-part digital reflection journal involving digital pictures, a written reflection, and critical reflection questions. Though reflection journals are frequently used in CSL assessments (Deardorff, 2009), they nonetheless pose a challenge in that students often fail to engage the assignment with sufficient depth of reflection. McBride (2010) and Rodriguez-Sabater (2015) recognize that this may be due to a lack of experience with reflective writing. They also note that when provided with training and models in reflective writing, students tend to overcompensate in seeking to conform to the expectations of the teacher, thus further exacerbating the problem of assessment. So as to not influence student reflections and journal results, no formal instruction on reflective writing or models were given to the students. Students were asked only to reflect on their experience with the CruCES project and individual group efforts, whether observations, insights, frustrations, or other comments. Given that the focus of the study was on cognitive orientations, or attitudes, students were given the option to write their journal entries in the language in which they felt most comfortable reflecting.

The problem of student reflective writing abilities was mediated, in part, through the use of digital photographs and critical questions. Though digital media is increasingly integrated in language instruction and in service-learning projects to help facilitate the learning process and make more evident the project process and outcomes (e.g., Paesani, Allen, & Dupuy, 2016), the value of digital photography in specifically assessing student ISD is yet to be considered. Following anthropological assertions that visual representations convey subjective experiences and perceptions of reality rather than an objective truth (Pink, 2013; Ruby, 1982), digital photographs provide a unique means of observing shifting student experiences and perspectives. Specifically, digital photographs have the potential to reveal one's evolving relationship to place and others. In the context of this study, therefore, digital photographs served to reinforce student journal entries and provide greater depth of clarity and perspective on student perceptions of Caritas, the community, and the CruCES project. Students were thus instructed to take digital photographs of any aspect of the project that they deemed personally meaningful or relevant. This included, but was not limited to, pictures of Caritas; of the project process, materials, and products; of the project groups and community leaders; of other community members not directly engaged in the group projects; and of the workshops and guest speakers.

Lastly, students were asked to complete each entry with a series of self-generated critical questions stemming from their experience with the project and that could be used as points of discussion and/or reflection. These questions were likewise used to gauge the shifting subjective experiences and perspectives of the students over the course of the project. Taken together, the journal entries, digital photographs, and the self-generated critical questions provided a richer perspective of the students' experience with the CruCES project and their developing attitudes regarding difference and CSL that could be used to more accurately assess ISD. As per the syllabus and project design, students completed one journal entry every two weeks, submitting a total of 8 journal entries per student. In total, this study surveyed 120 journal entries.

At the conclusion of the semester, survey results and journal entries were coded, analyzed, and assessed for intercultural sensitivity using Bennett's (1986, 1993, 2004) DMIS stages. The respective parts of the journal entries were examined individually as well as in relation to one another across the codes identified. Each journal entry was then assigned a number, from one to six, corresponding to each one of Bennett's six stages of intercultural sensitivity. In all instances, journal entries were examined for statements reflecting attitudes and mindsets indicative of Bennett's respective stages of ISD. Given that progress along the stages is nonlinear and that individuals may demonstrate both ethnocentric and ethnorelative positions on different topics within the same journal entry, half numbers were used to indicate journals wavering between two respective stages of Bennett's model. An example of a contradictory set of statements would include the following: "My group has become fast friends; I've never had such a good experience working in groups. It makes me believe that collaboration between strangers is possible" (stage four of Bennett's scale); "Rosa, one of the cooks, has been in the United States for eight years. I know this is a Spanish class, but I don't understand how you can live someplace for so long and not speak the language" (stage three of Bennett's scale). In an instance such as this, a rating of 3.5 would be assigned to the journal entry. In the final analysis, student ISD was triangulated using survey data, journal results, and teacher observation.

It is important to note that although Bennett's model provides a useful framework for quantifying and plotting student ISD over the course of the semester, it is the overall transformation of student attitudes and perceptions regarding difference that is most significant for this study. Deardorff's PMIS (2006, 2009) in particular is useful in underscoring the transformative potential of intercultural contact as one's attitudes regarding difference serve as the basis for the acquisition, demonstration, and continued development of intercultural sensitivity. This serves as a reminder that no matter where and how far individuals enter and progress along Bennett's scale, they will inevitably emerge from such positive intercultural experiences with transformed attitudes and mindsets.

## Results

For the purposes of this volume, the following sections present the final and overall findings of the CruCES project study and discuss the finding's implications and relevance for the integration of CSL in FL programs and curricula.

### Surveys

The pre-project survey (see Appendix for survey questions) showed that, despite varying levels of experience with CSL and community service, students perceived themselves as possessing a high degree of intercultural sensitivity from the outset of the project. At the same time, the majority of participants indicated that they anticipated benefiting from participating in a CSL project in terms of their ISD and competence. This perception is corroborated in the post-project survey, which likewise showed that students maintained a high perception of their respective intercultural sensitivity while maintaining the belief that they benefited from participating in the CSL project. Only two participants consistently disagreed with survey statements correlating CSL with ISD in both pre- and post-project surveys. Overall, however, pre- and post-project surveys showed no significant differences in student self-reports of intercultural sensitivity before and after the CruCES project. Survey results also showed that the majority of the students nonetheless perceived a positive relationship between CSL and their intercultural sensitivity. Table 3.1 shows the results for the post-project survey.

Table 3.1 Post-Project Survey Results

<b>Survey Questions Correlating CSL and Intercultural Sensitivity (on a scale of 1–5)</b>	<b>Column A (mean)</b>	<b>Column B (standard deviation)</b>
Made me more willing to engage in dialogue with others	4.29	1.27
Helped me better understand people of different ages, abilities, cultures, or economic backgrounds	4.29	1.44
Encouraged me to consider perspectives other than my own	4.07	1.27
Helped me to gain more knowledge about the community with which I worked and the issues that community faces	4.14	1.23
Helped me to develop my intercultural communication skills	4.07	1.33

## Journals

Journals revealed a gradual shift over the course of the CruCES project in students' attitudes regarding difference and CSL. This was evident across the reflective writing comments, digital photographs, and self-generated critical questions.

In general, the narrative arc for the majority of the journals progressed from skepticism and caution at the beginning of the project to curiosity and understanding in the middle to acceptance and belonging by the end. For example, in the first journal, one student noted her initial reluctance in undertaking the service-learning project due to the amount of work, time, and dedication it would require. She also noted that while not overly enthusiastic about the project, she recognized the significance of helping others less fortunate than herself. These sentiments were reinforced by her critical questions: "How much will the project leaders expect of us? What if I do not have the time to devote to this project? Will I be safe there [at Caritas Village]?" Similarly, the student's photographs for the first journal likewise reflected her attitudes regarding service learning and difference in that they consisted of a series of long-range, wide-angle shots of objects at Caritas Village, such as paintings, decorations, and furniture, chosen seemingly at random.

The student's attitude had changed by the fourth journal. Invested in the project, she had begun to develop relationships with her fellow group members, the community project leader, and community members frequenting Caritas Village. The student's written reflections during this time reveal an appreciation for the project as a vehicle for breaking down barriers between people of different backgrounds and for developing relationships, as shown in the following three comments:

. . . The most interesting thing about this activity [group project] is that the group has become very close; we have gotten to know one another much more than what we normally would have in a class. We are constantly in communication so that the project turns out to be a success.

. . . Our project leader ingeniously sees the opportunity and potential to change it [recycled materials] into something different. What I liked most about her is that she said you do not always need money to make money, you can use your creativity to produce money. This way of thinking only emerges when one has experienced need [poverty] and has learned to value even the simplest of things.

. . . The children at Caritas are very interested in what we are doing. The other day these two little girls and their mothers watched us work. We made room at the table for them and soon they were helping us!

These attitudes were likewise reflected in the student's questions and photographs. By the fourth journal, her self-generated questions focused on the needs

and outcomes of the individual group efforts and on whether or not the group would be able to help the project leader in fulfilling the broader goals of the CruCES project. Similarly, the photographs for the fourth journal present a series of close-range pictures of the group project product and materials, fellow group members at work on the project product, and the team leader showing the group how to make the product.

By the final journal, this particular student demonstrated a complete transformation in her attitude regarding service learning and difference that she herself acknowledged in the written reflection portion of the journal entry. In the final journal, she writes:

I have become more open to the idea that this class is different from other classes and that service learning goes beyond volunteer work. I now understand why we are spending 50% of our class time at Caritas rather than at the University. There is a reason for it beyond the fact that our teacher likes it here [Caritas]. If we only talked about community and community service in our classrooms without experiencing being in the community and working alongside the community, it would not have had the same impact. This experience has transformed me in ways that I am sure I cannot yet explain.

As in the previous journals, these sentiments are likewise reflected in the critical questions and digital photographs. Thinking beyond the CruCES project, the questions in the final journal addressed the role of community engagement in the student's life beyond the university and a concern for the future well-being of the community project leaders:

How can I continue the work we started in CruCES? Will the project leaders continue? Will we remain in contact? How can I use what I learned in CruCES about community building in my own career and community?

The digital photographs for the final journal, in turn, consist of a series of close-range pictures of people, including fellow project members, project leaders, community members, and the student herself. These photographs differed from previous photographs in that they were deliberately posed and framed as group pictures, as opposed to action pictures, and included selfie-style photographs taken with the student herself.

Though not all participant journals exhibited as strong a transformation or as linear a progression as that of the aforementioned example, the general narrative arc held true for all but one of the students. In the case of the outlying student, her journal entries throughout the semester consistently revealed a high degree of intercultural sensitivity in terms of attitudes regarding difference and CSL while at the same time a reluctance to fully commit to and engage with the project. Written reflections and critical questions, for example, revealed an

understanding of and sensitivity toward the value of CSL and of the impact of cultural and socioeconomic differences on the formation of distinct worldviews. Yet the digital photographs for all of the student's journal entries are of an impersonal nature: long-range, wide-angle, and seemingly indiscriminate pictures of objects or of people participating in daily routines at Caritas.

As suggested in the narrative arc of the journals, final analysis using Bennett's DMIS stages corroborates the notion that participation in CSL fosters ISD. The initial journal entries show that student intercultural sensitivity at the outset of the project varied between stage two and four, with the majority of journals rated between two and three (toward the ethnocentric side of Bennett's spectrum). This stands in contrast to student self-reported perceptions of high intercultural sensitivity in the pre-project survey. Over the course of the semester, journal entries show gradual progress along Bennett's DMIS stages though not necessarily unidirectional. The majority of students progressed by one or one and a half stages, many moving from the ethnocentric to ethnorelative side of Bennett's spectrum, while two participants experienced uneven progress. Additionally, two participants' DMIS ratings seemed to show no overall progress, though they revealed a high level of intercultural sensitivity from the initial journal entry through the last. Overall, however, analysis of the student journals confirms that the majority of students did, in fact, experience an increase in their ISD over the course of the CruCES project. Table 3.2 shows student journal entries rated along the categories of Bennett's stages of ISD. In addition to the mean for each student, journal entry, and for all journal entries, the table also shows the gain, or overall progression along Bennett's stages, between journal one and journal eight for each student and for the class as a whole.

## Discussion

The results of the survey and journals support the argument that CSL fosters ISD. Perhaps more importantly, however, they further illuminate the relationship between the two and underscore the notion that participation in CSL has the potential to transform one's attitudes and ideas concerning difference. All participating students, regardless of their initial start and end point along Bennett's DMIS stages, demonstrated through their reflection journals a shift in attitudes concerning difference and CSL. This implies that CSL is a pedagogical method well suited to foster and develop student intercultural sensitivity by virtue of its ability to structure positive and meaningful intercultural contact alone.

### Surveys

The survey results pointed to potential challenges in self-reporting of intercultural sensitivity. As noted earlier, students reported having a high degree of



Table 3.2 Journal DMIS Ratings

Student	Journal 1	Journal 2	Journal 3	Journal 4	Journal 5	Journal 6	Journal 7	Journal 8	Mean	Gain
A	3.5	3.5	4	4	4	3	3.5	3.5	3.63	0.00
B	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.75	1.00
C	3.5	3.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	5	5	4.38	1.50
D	4	4.5	5	5	5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.00	1.50
E	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.50	0.00
F	3.5	3.5	4	4	4	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.06	1.00
G	4	4.5	4.5	4.5	5	5	5	5	4.69	1.00
H	2.5	2.5	3	3	3	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.06	1.00
I	3	3	3.5	3.5	3.5	4	4	4	3.56	1.00
J	2	2	2.5	3	3	2.5	2.5	3	2.56	1.00
K	3	3	3	3	3.5	3.5	3.5	4	3.31	1.00
L	3.5	3.5	4	4	4	4	4.5	4.5	4.00	1.00
M	3	3	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	4	4	3.50	1.00
N	2.5	2.5	3	3	3.5	3.5	4	4	3.25	1.50
O	3.5	3.5	4	4	4.5	4.5	5	5	4.25	1.50
Mean	3.33	3.40	3.87	3.90	4.03	4.07	4.27	4.33	3.90	1.00

intercultural sensitivity in both the pre- and post-project surveys, indicating no overall gains in student ISD. This result is somewhat misleading, however, when viewed in relation to the reflection journals and student survey results regarding perceptions of the benefits of CSL for the development of intercultural sensitivity and competence. Though the survey instrument itself could have been problematic (i.e., question type and wording), it is more likely that students are unaware of or unwilling to admit their own limitations and biases concerning intercultural sensitivity. Similarly, negative perceptions of CSL's benefits for intercultural sensitivity recorded in the surveys may inaccurately reflect the motivations behind participant responses. For example, the journal entries of several students revealed that, though they recognized the value of CSL for intercultural sensitivity, their previous exposure to difference as a result of CSL, community service, or cultural background and upbringing made them uncertain as to how or whether the CruCES project would impact their own ISD. Student perceptions of their own intercultural sensitivity in relation to past experiences therefore had an impact on how they responded to questions concerning CSL and intercultural sensitivity.

## Journals

The reflection journals illuminate challenges in the assessment of intercultural sensitivity as well as nuances in the nature of ISD. As noted in previous studies of CSL and intercultural sensitivity/competence, the use of reflection journals as a form of assessment presupposes that students possess the ability to effectively and appropriately engage in reflective writing. Many students, however, lack explicit training and/or experience in reflective and reflexive writing, and though explicit instruction may lead to better journaling, it does not necessarily lead to more accurate assessment of student intercultural sensitivity as a result of student desires to please and to excel in classroom assignments simply for the sake of doing so. Indeed, the design of the reflection journal was such that student perceptions of their CSL experience would be documented from at least one if not three angles (i.e., student observation, reflection, and questions). The design of the journals was therefore helpful in assessing student intercultural sensitivity and in understanding student progress along the DMIS stages.

As noted earlier, student ISD tended toward three types: gradual linear progression, nonlinear progression, and seemingly static evolution, the latter two being of particular interest. Though ethnocentric comments increased for participants who experienced a regression along the DMIS stages, those perceptions were not necessarily recorded in the digital photographs. Reasons for the abrupt change in the tone of student reflections may potentially be attributed to personal circumstances unrelated to the project, such as stressors in family, work, school, and other areas. Indeed, frustrations over balancing the demands of the project with those of work, school, and family were noted in many of the self-generated

questions in the initial journal entries. As such, the evident regression may be no more than a reflection of fluctuations in attitude and personality informed by external circumstances. That these circumstances inform student engagement with and perceptions of the CSL project is unavoidable, however, and may need to be factored into teacher, community partner, and program expectations and assessment of CSL project goals relating to student outcomes. The regression may also be indicative of the complexity of human nature as related to the demonstration of intercultural sensitivity. This is to say that, unlike the homogeneity of perspectives implied in Bennett's respective developmental stages, an individual may simultaneously hold contradictory attitudes and viewpoints. Considering this possibility, assessment of intercultural sensitivity could potentially benefit from research in psychology and cognitive science.

In comparison, the sole participant revealing no progress along the DMIS categories revealed a high degree of intercultural sensitivity across the journal entries but failed to appropriately engage in the project and thus maintained a distance between herself and the community constituted by the CruCES project participants and the patrons of Caritas Village. This distance was effectively captured in the impersonal nature of the accompanying digital photographs. In this particular instance, the distance was explicitly acknowledged by the participant and justified in terms of external circumstances (i.e., work, school, and family). Despite the regression and seeming lack of progress, however, these outliers as well as all of the other journal entries revealed a substantial change in student attitudes concerning CSL, community service, and difference between the first and final journal entry. This suggests that participation in CSL has the potential to positively impact intercultural sensitivity in students regardless of where they start, how far they progress, and how, specifically, they move along Bennett's DMIS stages.

### **Digital Photographs**

Perhaps most revealing of student transformation in attitudes were the digital photographs, which captured the students' personal transformation from outsider to insider within the community and project over the course of the semester. The final analysis confirms this to be the case for all but one of the project participants.

Photographs from the first journal represented the students' initial encounter with Caritas Village and therefore included pictures primarily of objects, such as artwork, that conveyed the uniqueness of the place. Those few initial photographs of people at Caritas Village employed a wide-angle frame and were taken indiscriminately and at a distance. These may be interpreted as being reflective of student feelings of unfamiliarity, reticence, and curiosity at the same time, themes likewise conveyed in the written portion of the journal entries. As the project progressed, however, many of the photographs became more intimate, so much so

that by the last journal, many of the photographs were framed as “selfies” containing the individual student along with group leaders, project members, and Caritas Village patrons. This transition may be interpreted as the students’ integration within group, project, and Caritas Village.

The sole exception to this narrative of integration came from one student whose photographs reflected a general distance self-imposed by the student in question throughout the journal entries. As previously noted, the evident distance was explicitly addressed by the student, who chose to abstain from full integration within the project/group because of personal reasons entirely unrelated to the project itself. Of interest, however, is the fact that this particular participant’s reticence to fully engage was likewise documented in the choice of subject and framing of the digital photographs. This suggests that digital photography or other means of visual documentation may be an apt tool to document and assess student ISD in the context of CSL.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

The CruCES project study confirmed that CSL positively informed ISD among participating students. Analysis of the data showed that the extent to which the CSL experience had an impact on student intercultural sensitivity depended on a number of factors, including the relative degree of student intercultural sensitivity at the outset of the project (i.e., their initial mindset); their overall investment and engagement with the project; and student backgrounds and external circumstances (e.g., previous experience with CSL, exposure to cultural and socioeconomic differences, work, family life, school). The data also showed that students’ trajectories along Bennett’s DMIS stages range from seemingly no progress to steady progress and various occurrences of uneven progress in-between. As made evident in the journal entries and especially in the digital photographs over the course of the project, however, all students demonstrated a shift or transformation in attitudes regarding CSL, community service, and difference. This suggests that regardless of the initial mindset of the students and their differing trajectories along Bennett’s DMIS stages, student intercultural sensitivity will inevitably benefit from participation in a CSL project.

As Deardorff and Edwards (2013) noted, the relative efficacy of CSL in engendering student intercultural sensitivity is dependent upon the degree to which collaboration and equity is built into the design of the project itself, a result confirmed by this study, highlighting the collaborative nature of the CruCES project. From the outset of the project, Caritas Village and El Centro Cultural Latino de Memphis were invested in the overall design of CruCES and in the grant writing process as partners with an equal voice and stake in the outcomes of the project. Within the broad parameters outlined by the stakeholders, students and

community members (i.e., leaders and other participants) were equally allowed to collaboratively develop the arts-based projects pursued within each respective group. In so doing, each group collectively negotiated their own specific goals, objectives, and operational procedures. A certain amount of autonomy was therefore conferred to the respective groups, which led to greater motivation and investment on the part of students and community leaders. The CruCES project design allowed students specifically to play an active role in collaboratively shaping the project. At the same time, it provided a space for constant and constructive interaction, collaboration, and dialogue. Furthermore, students, community partners, and community members continually dialogued about CSL, community service, the specific needs of the West Binghamton community, and culture through various workshops and discursive spaces of shared experiences throughout the project.

These study findings affirm the value of CSL in furthering FL program goals to develop intercultural competence as well as suggest the need for more critical engagement with—and training in—CSL design and implementation. Given the value of intercultural competence for today's and tomorrow's global economy, FL program supervisors would greatly benefit from investing in and encouraging the integration of CSL within existing curricula. Beyond the development of intercultural communicative competence, CSL is perhaps most valuable because of its ability to engender transformative results in student attitudes concerning difference and community service. Acquiring these skills could potentially greatly help the development of intercultural competence (including communicative competence). It could also help prepare students for subsequent intercultural encounters well beyond the classroom. Indeed, ISD is understood to be a lifelong process, as each encounter builds on, informs, and transforms an individual's foundational attitudes and beliefs. CSL is therefore well suited to prepare students for critically processing and reflecting on their own ISD, thereby maximizing the potential benefits of intercultural encounters. Regardless of the specific steps taken, support for the implementation of CSL can only benefit and further FL program goals and objectives related to fostering and developing translingual and transcultural competence.

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## Appendix

### Pre-project survey questions

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#### DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Gender: M F

Race:

Ethnicity:

Age:

#### BACKGROUND AND PAST EXPERIENCE WITH SERVICE LEARNING

Did you or your family speak another language other than English at home? Y N

Do you have previous experience with community service learning in the past? Y N

Do you have previous experience with community service? Y N

If you answered yes to the previous questions, was your community service experience related to your faith or linked to a religious organization? Y N

#### INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY

On a scale of 1–5, rate your degree of intercultural sensitivity (i.e., your awareness and sensitivity to cultural and other differences such as racial, ethnic, and socio-economic):

1	2	3	4	5
very low	below average	average	high	very high

INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING

On a scale of 1–5, with 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree, please rate the following statements:

Participation in community service learning will make me more willing to engage in dialogue with others.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Participation in community service learning will help me better understand people of different ages, abilities, cultures, or economic backgrounds.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Participation in community service learning will encourage me to consider perspectives other than my own.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Participation in community service learning will help me to gain more knowledge about the community with which I will work and the issues that community faces.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Participation in community service learning will help me to develop my intercultural communication skills.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Post-project survey questions**

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DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS (OPTIONAL)

Gender: M    F

Race:

Ethnicity:

Age:

BACKGROUND AND PAST EXPERIENCE WITH SERVICE LEARNING

Did you or your family speak another language other than English at home?    Y    N

Do you have previous experience with community service learning in the past?    Y    N

Do you have previous experience with community service?    Y    N

If you answered yes to the previous questions, was your community service experience related to your faith or linked to a religious organization?    Y    N



INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY

On a scale of 1–5, rate your degree of intercultural sensitivity (i.e., your awareness and sensitivity to cultural and other differences such as racial, ethnic, and socio-economic):

1	2	3	4	5
very low	below average	average	high	very high

INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING

On a scale of 1–5, with 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree, please rate the following statements:

Participation in community service learning made me more willing to engage in dialogue with others.

1	2	3	4	5
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Participation in community service learning helped me better understand people of different ages, abilities, cultures, or economic backgrounds.

1	2	3	4	5
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Participation in community service learning encouraged me to consider perspectives other than my own.

1	2	3	4	5
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Participation in community service learning helped me to gain more knowledge about the community with which I will work and the issues that community faces.

1	2	3	4	5
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Participation in community service learning helped me to develop my intercultural communication skills.

1	2	3	4	5
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