Chapter 8
WEAVING IN THE LOOSE ENDS AND PLANNING A NEW TAPESTRY
FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

As I wove the tapestry of this study, I presented the stories of certain students and Latinos who participated in Crossing the Border through Service-Learning (CTB). By allowing the reader to hear a variety of participant voices, I wove into one document the many threads of an experience that for many was transformative. Through those voices mingled with my reflections and musings, I tried to immerse the reader in the experience so that understanding could emerge about the course, its purposes, and its results.

The tapestry began as an empty warp onto which I wove the threads to create a picture composed of pastel and brilliant colors, sometimes in smooth threads and other times in knotted threads I attempted to untangle so the picture could emerge. As I prepared the warp, I sought to discover the answers to one main guiding question and three sub-questions. The answers to these questions are woven into the tapestry of this document, some in clear relief, others more subtly presented as part of the background of the total picture. Here the answers are presented in a synthesized form, bringing together the stories and perceptions of the participants as they answer the research questions.

Overview

As I analyzed the data from all the sources, certain themes became apparent from both student and community participants. These themes have been present throughout the data presented in this document, presented as findings for each case study, and in this chapter, I concentrate on synthesizing the findings from the three within-case analyses in a cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998). To illustrate the themes that cut across all cases, I address each research question and draw conclusions from the data.

First I report the findings from the individual case studies by identifying the emergent themes that crossed the cases. Within each emergent theme, I present the sub-themes that offer evidence of the findings. I then discuss the dissonance that occurred within the emergent themes. Lastly, I present the relevant dimension which relates the findings to the research questions (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).
Next, I convey the findings that defined my rationale for including the unique phenomena in the preceding chapter. Finally, I present implications of the findings, and suggestions for further study.

These research questions guided the study to describe and examine the relationships that occurred when service-learning students entered the Latino community. First is the overarching question; the other three served as sub-questions that elicited the details that answered the main question:

1) What does the formation and development of the relationship between these two groups look like?
   a. What are the expectations of each person involved in the relationship and how do these change over the course of the semester?
   b. What are the salient issues that factor into a mutually beneficial relationship between students and community families?
   c. What role does the service-learning course play in the development of a relationship between students and community families?

Reciprocity as the Overarching Theme

Reciprocity emerged as the overarching theme of the relationships. During the study, sub-themes emerged, all of which served to define and describe the reciprocity of the relationships that developed in the context of the service-learning course. The findings are reported under these categories, organized in the order of the sub-questions that guided the study, with the sub-themes (evidence) listed under the main emergent themes:

Emergent Themes from the Case Studies

1) Appreciation for and understanding of diversity
   a) Exchange of linguistic and cultural knowledge
   b) Cross-cultural friendships
2) Privileged population working in solidarity with targeted population
   a) Dominant culture crossing the border to understand, empathize with, and advocate for oppressed population
b) Changes in perspective resulting in blurring of Otherness

3) CTB as a catalyst in reciprocal relationships
   a) Pairing of disparate groups resulting in cross-cutting socially constructed boundaries
   b) Intersection of community service, scholarship, and teaching/learning

4) Findings from the Unique Phenomena to Each Case

5) Effects of service-learning on academic knowledge
   a) Learning communities
   b) Learning linking the academy with the community

6) Suggestions for programmatic changes
   a) Inclusion of service-learning in interdisciplinary curricula
   b) Inclusion of service-learning as Teacher Education

7) Implications for further study
   a) Heritage learners in the Latino community through service-learning
   b) African American students placed in the Latino community

_The Overarching Question:_

*What Does the Formation and Development of the Relationships Between the Two Groups Look Like?*

_The Formation of Relationships_

The relationships between the participants in CTB resulted from an artificially contrived placement at the beginning of the semester. As the instructor of the course, I arbitrarily placed students in the Latino community, basing the choices on my knowledge of the participants’ needs, personalities, and schedules. Out of these serendipitous placements, relationships grew, some of them as casual friendships, others as deep relationships, and very few as unsuccessful pairings.
The Development of Relationships

Throughout the study, hearing the voices of the participants in the program offered a means of examining the relationships as they developed in the context of CTB. Without my even asking the questions that guided each interview, the Latino voices spoke of the friendships that were developing as the students visited their homes. In class and in reflections, the student voices echoed similar stories of friendships that were developing week after week as they spent more time in the families’ homes. From all the participants, I heard evidence that reciprocal relationships were developing.

Emergent Themes from the Case Studies

Appreciation for and Understanding of Diversity

First Sub-Question: What are the expectations of each person involved in the relationship and how do these change over the course of the semester?

Exchange of linguistic and cultural knowledge. In initial interviews and reflections, the students and Latinas included in their expectations for CTB a desire to become more fluent in the partners’ language and to gain greater understanding of her culture while at the same time sharing their own knowledge of their native language and culture.

Despite many hours spent in foreign language classrooms, Carol felt frustrated with her level of proficiency, so the opportunity to communicate with native speakers of Spanish in a natural setting appealed greatly to her. Whereas Carol stated a specific goal of becoming fluent in Spanish, Kathy only fleetingly mentioned a desire to maintain the fluency she had developed during her study-abroad experience. Liz did not refer to language proficiency in her interview, but during the semester she made references to increasing proficiency resulting from her constant efforts to communicate vital information to María concerning her healthcare.

All three Latinas expressed a wish to learn English to improve their quality of life in the United States. Isabel did not work, but she wanted to be able to communicate in English when performing daily activities such as taking the children to the doctor or going shopping. Although both Rosa and María shared Isabel’s desire to communicate in
the Anglo world as a whole, they also were motivated to learn English to help them at work, both in terms of work and of its accompanying social life.

The students saw themselves as teachers working with students, mirroring the Latinas’ perceptions about CTB. Although the Latinas spoke of helping the students with their language, and sharing their culture, most regarded the students as the teachers and themselves as the students at the beginning of the semester.

Whereas Isabel, who had previously worked with a service-learner, realized that she and the student would both function as teachers and learners, Rosa and María, being new to the program, did not understand the reciprocity involved in the teaching aspect of the program. They regarded the students as their teachers, to be respected, but friendship beyond that point would be possible only within the confines of the teacher/student relationship. By the end of the semester, both the Latinas and the students realized how much the community members had to offer the students.

The students were helping real people in real life situations creating a real reason for learning. Textbook Spanish was for simulated experiences; community Spanish with the Latinas was for vital experiences (cf. Richardson, 1999). They were involved with helping the Latinas to navigate in a culture whose ways often seemed strange and alien, causing them to worry less about how they sounded than about communicating and problem solving. Their motivation was high thus lowering their anxiety (cf. Krashen, 1982).

Similarly, the Latinas enjoyed practicing English with the students. Whereas they had previously been afraid to speak to Anglos, they gained confidence in their ability, realizing that Anglos could be sympathetic listeners. This increased level of confidence affected both Rosa and María at work. Rosa came to regard the Anglos at her work as possible friends with whom she could communicate, and María felt empowered by her ability to be understood at her work.

In CTB, seldom were the learners worrying about grammar and vocabulary lists per se; they were too busy communicating, trying to understand and to be understood. They were not worrying about errors. They realized that the Latinas were so grateful to have their help that no one was measuring and assessing their errors. Communication was the main focus of all their language interactions, resulting in meaningful, contextualized
language learning that was automatic and reciprocal (cf. Shrum & Glisan, 2000). Both the English speaker and the Spanish speaker were learning from the more experienced and capable peer who offered the help without criticism or judgment.

In CTB, the university students and the community participants guided each other as collaborative apprentices in language acquisition (cf. Rogoff, 1990). All the participants were teachers and learners. Depending on the situation, they were all experts and they were all more experienced peers. When the students were teaching English or helping their families with Medicaid forms, they were the experts, or more experienced peers/collaborators. When the families were sharing their food and customs, or helping the students with their Spanish, they were the experts, or more experienced peers/collaborators. Depending on the circumstances, the roles reversed, and the teachers and learners were indistinguishable (cf. Stanton, et al.).

The students learned to rely on their ability to be understood in an environment where no other bilingual person was available to act as an interpreter; they were the interpreters. CTB provided the participants with a transformative experience as they experienced success with communicating and interacting in a culture not their own.

Another important aspect of language learning through service-learning situated in the Latino community was the reciprocity of the relationship (cf. Wertsch, 1991). The learners were not allowed to be passive. They were active and in control of their learning. They mediated, or provided tools and signs for each other (cf. Wertsch) that helped them cross cultural boundaries. Becoming involved in a grassroots project gave language learning meaningfulness that was not possible in the sterile atmosphere of the classroom (cf. Mullaney, 1999).

Cross-cultural friendships. All the participants expressed an initial desire to experience a friendship with a person from another culture. However, their stated expectations about friendship varied considerably.

The students expected to learn about other cultural perspectives and to establish cross-cultural friendships; they saw CTB as a means of achieving these goals. They expressed a desire to have an impact on the Latinas. From the first, the students expressed interest in reciprocal relationships, both for reasons of language acquisition and cultural
knowledge and for reasons of friendship and broadened horizons. The students shared
goals, but they also expressed differences in their reasons for taking the course.

At the beginning, Kathy wished to maintain her ties with the Latino world she had
enjoyed so much during her study abroad. Carol expressed a desire to know personally
the people she was helping rather than to be randomly doing good works through
community service; a resultant friendship would also be pleasant. Liz was interested in
fulfilling her multicultural requirement for her ESL, but she also mentioned a friendship
that would encourage María to learn English. Both Isabel and Rosa hoped to find an
Anglo friend who would help the children with their homework, and who would help
them with cultural mediation and navigation. María did not mention friendship at the
beginning of the course, seeming more focused on CTB as an English class and nothing
more.

However, various themes emerged as important in establishing these cross-
cultural friendships: affection, trust, respect, and mutual concern; commonalities and
dissimilarities; “funds of knowledge,” and loneliness (Greenberg & Moll, 1990). Some of
the relationships began to develop into friendships at a deeper level than others. Each
participant in the study began referring to her/his partner as a friend. I heard reports from
all of them about shared activities and rich conversations that were reminiscent of what I
would expect to hear about any friendship. The Latinas were beginning to use the term
confianza (trust) referring to the students, and the students were writing about time spent
in the warmth of a friend/family home as affection, trust and respect grew between them.

At the same time, mutual concern for the wellbeing of the partner grew, as they
began to see each other as friends, not just as “my student” or “the teacher.” Their
concern involved the physical or emotional wellbeing of the partners, such as Kathy’s
concern for societal discrimination toward Isabel, or Isabel’s concern about Kathy’s
thinness and her problems with her brother. Carol’s concern for Rosa also involved
societal discrimination that she perceived in Rosa’s dealings with the Anglo world, but
even more significantly, she felt a deep concern for Rosa’s reticence about speaking
English. Liz was concerned about María’s problematic pregnancy, but her deepest
concern was for the discrimination she perceived as María tried to obtain adequate
medical care.
Both students and Latinas discovered they shared common interests and concerns that were greater than cultural or linguistic differences (cf. Lather, 2002). They realized that as human beings, they shared commonalities and dissimilarities that crossed cultural boundaries.

Of the three students, my surmise based on the data is that only Kathy understood from personal experience the circumstances surrounding financial hardship, a commonality she shared with Isabel, but which Carol and Liz did not share with their families. Based on the fact that Isabel, Rosa, and María are all eligible for the health care offered for women whose income is below a certain level, I assumed their socioeconomic status was different from that of Carol and Liz, both of whom spoke of parents who held professional jobs and whose lifestyles bespoke a certain level of economic comfort.

The students also learned that they shared common interests in learning about cultural practices. They also enjoyed talking about their families, their boyfriends, hairstyles, and other personal information of the kind that crosses cultures. They learned that although their cultural heritages were different, human kindness could be present in all people.

As the semester progressed, the students gained an appreciation of the “funds of knowledge,” or sharing of social knowledge the Latinas brought to the relationship (cf. Greenberg & Moll, 1990). They learned about cooking Latino food, but they also appreciated the way the Latinas made welcoming homes without much money. They learned to appreciate the warmth of the lives that were offered so generously to them. They admired the courage that enabled the Latinas to come to the United States despite the difficulty of border crossing. They were impressed by the women’s devotion to their children and their welfare, always attempting to help them in any way possible. The students admired the Latinas’ ability to build a meaningful life against the odds of economic and language barriers.

The theme of loneliness ran throughout the first interviews with some of the Latinos. No matter if they worked or stayed at home, they shared a sense of isolation and alienation. Although Isabel had participated for several semesters, she still talked about being lonely because her husband did not allow her to work or to go out. Friendship with the students changed her world, because now she does not feel so isolated. Rosa also
talked about not having friends in this country. She had come to distrust both the Latinos and the Anglos that she worked with, so she felt isolated at work and at home. María did not speak of loneliness; her main preoccupation was with her pregnancy and its accompanying problems.

By the time I conducted the second and third interviews, there were constant expressions of pleasure at having made friends who visited them frequently and with whom they could share the ordinariness of life. Several of the families described the students as being their only real friends in the United States.

Dissonance

One problem with friendships established in the context of the service-learning course is that the placement only lasts for a semester. In the world of the university, relationships are often bounded by the length of the semester, but in the real world, relationships do not normally end or change when a class meets for the last time. The students are accustomed to the timeframe of the semester, but the Latinos are not always ready for the friendship to be placed on hold because the course ended. I worry about the effects on the Latinos, but I believe the power of the relationships might outweigh the sense of loss accompanying the end of the semester. Cultural understanding has still occurred and perspectives have been changed. Additionally, many of the students do make a point of staying in touch with the Latinos.

As a result of the data collected for the study, I have determined that I need to prepare a document for both the students and the Latinos addressing this issue. I need to explain the purpose and length of the course. I plan to write the document and then have several of the Latinas read and critique it in hopes of avoiding the sadness that emerged from the interviews at the end of the semester.

Relevant Dimension

In reconsidering the research question regarding the expectations of the participants at the beginning and the end of the semester, the data demonstrate that significant change occurred over the course of the semester. The relationships began with an exchange of linguistic and cultural information, but they all developed into deeper
friendships than any of them had imagined, based on communication that crossed linguistic and cultural barriers. By the end of the semester, all the participants had developed an appreciation for and an understanding of diversity that changed their expectations about cross-cultural friendships.

*Privileged Population Working in Solidarity with Targeted Population*

Second Sub-Question: *What are the salient issues that factor into a mutually beneficial relationship between students and community families?*

At the beginning of the semester, two disparate groups of people were partnered by an outside agent. They represented different ethnic groups, languages, educational levels, and socioeconomic statuses. They represented different orders of social hierarchy (cf. Ransford, 2000). However, in the course of the semester, two themes emerged as salient factors in the development of mutually beneficial relationships between the students and the Latinas. First, the students, all members of the dominant culture, crossed the border to understand, empathize with, and advocate for the Latinas, members of an oppressed population. Second, both the students and the Latinas experienced changes in perspective that resulted in blurring of Otherness.

*Dominant culture crossing the border to understand, empathize with, and advocate for oppressed population.* At the beginning of the semester, the Carol and Liz positioned themselves as members of the privileged class who were accustomed to volunteering and donating their time to help others. They regarded CTB as an opportunity to engage in similar community service, with the added bonus that the target population was comprised of people with whom they could speak Spanish.

In many instances, such as Kathy’s experience with Janeth’s teacher, Carol’s with the Salvation Army, and Liz’s with healthcare agencies, they actually crossed the border to understanding how the world looks through a Latina lens. By coming to personally know people from another domain, they were able to transcend the barriers of Otherness that had formerly separated them (cf. Collins, 2000).
In some way, all the students acted as cultural bridges and mediators for their families in dealing with outside agencies. They were willing to make phone calls, provide transportation, interpret, and do whatever was necessary to help the Latinas find empowerment in an alien, often unfriendly society. They were able to transform their privilege to give it power for change (cf. Harro, 2000) rather than accepting the privilege of their position to reinforce the order of social hierarchy (cf. Ransford, 2000). All three students felt a desire to change the infrastructure of a society they perceived as unjust.

They were able to name the problems they found and then provide dialogue to transform the social order (cf. Harro, 2000), refusing to accept the oppression imposed by the existing social order. They were able to develop a liberatory consciousness that allowed them to be aware of problems and to work toward finding solutions in solidarity with the Latinas (cf. Love, 2000). They were able to act as conduits for their voices so they could be understood by the surrounding society (cf. Behar, 1993). In other words, they became agents of change.

*Changes in perspective resulting in blurring of Otherness.* In the course of the semester, both the students and the Latinas experienced changes in perspective toward members of their partners’ cultures. As their perspectives changed, the Otherness and stereotyping that had separated them blurred. As the students interacted with the Latinas and became friends, they ceased to Other them (cf. Fine, 1998). They grew to appreciate and recognize them for the qualities they brought to the relationship. As the Latinas grew close to the students, they realized that not all Anglos are racists. The boundaries that had separated them as strangers became borders to be crossed.

As a result of the friendships that developed, the students and the Latinas seemed to regard each other as people who shared a life together, rather than as the Other. They helped each other to acquire language and experience culture. Each person in the relationship gave and received as the occasion required. They shared joys and concerns. They worked together for the good of the children in the families. They felt true solidarity. The reciprocity that underlined the relationships did not extend into all areas of the friendships, such as in their different expectations about the duration of relationship.

In other words, the relationships gradually moved from the realm of teacher/student exchanging cultural practices and information as well as linguistic
knowledge to that of teacher/learner/friend/confidant/advocate. The roles of teacher and learner were interchangeable, with all the participants acquiring the other’s language and culture either through direct teaching or through communication. As their language skills improved, they were able to communicate at a deeper level thus sharing other aspects of their lives as the relationships developed.

Dissonance

Despite the changes in perspective demonstrated by both the students and the Latinas, at the end of the semester there were still expressions of perspectives that indicated Otherness and privileging. The Latinas still referred to the students as being able to solve all their problems, thereby placing themselves in a subdominant position, accepting the power of the students in society (cf. Ransford, 2000). The students accepted the notion that they were the “fixers,” thus accepting the hierarchical categorizing (cf. Ransford).

For the first time, the students had the opportunity to witness in a close and personal way the treatment that Latinos may suffer when dealing with Anglo culture, and they worried about what would happen if the Latina lacked an Anglo friend to advocate for them, a noble concern with dangerous implications. By reading Freire (1970) and Behar (1993), they had become aware of the importance of enabling the voices of marginalized populations to be heard, but the issue was not straightforward.

Another dissonant factor was the workday, and as I discussed in chapter five, I will need to make significant changes in the practice before the new semester begins. However, despite the dissonance and discomfort it caused, the outcome was positive, because it will result in change of practice through recognition of the problem. In the future, the Latinos will be included in such decision-making involving CTB.

In CTB, the reciprocity of the relationship between the university students and the Latino families allowed all involved to be both carers and cared-for (cf. Noddings, 1999). Since the needs of the community were considered in the design of the program, both students and community members were stakeholders who felt ownership of the project, but they also established a sense of caring for and about each other.
Relevant Dimension

Some of the themes mentioned in the previous section, such as exchange of linguistic and cultural information, are salient issues that factor into a reciprocal relationship. However, crossing the border into solidarity with the Latinas established the real foundation for relationships that were beneficial for all the participants. The Latinas recognized that the students were their advocates, providing entry into a culture that was normally closed to them (cf. Ransford, 2000). The students on the other hand learned firsthand about issues of social justice in a transformative way.

Crossing the Border Through Service-Learning as a Catalyst in Reciprocal Relationships.

Third Sub-Question: What Role Does the Service-Learning Course Play in the Development and/or Impediment of a Reciprocal Relationship Between Students and Families?

Pairing of disparate groups resulting in cross-cutting socially-constructed boundaries. The reciprocal relationships described in this document would never have happened without the catalyst of the service-learning course. The students and the families were two disparate groups of people who probably would never have met had they not decided to participate in CTB; their worlds would never have intersected. Through the auspices of the service-learning class, the two worlds did intersect, resulting in the formation of friendships and the exchange of language and culture.

Additionally, the course requirement that the students visit their families twice a week provided the impetus for the students and the Latinos to spend time together. The close, constant contact of these lengthy visits gave the participants the opportunity to develop relationships that were rich and mutually beneficial.

Similarly, the expectation was set up in the class that cultural and linguistic exchange would take place, so the students expected that to be the case. The Latinos also had the preconceived idea that the students were coming to teach them English, so all the participants were expecting reciprocity in that sense.
Intersection of community service, scholarship, and teaching/learning. In a like manner, the required weekly reflections provided the catalyst for the students to analyze their relationships continually. The readings were all related to the issues of Latinos living in the United States; by relating the academic literature to lived experiences, they were able to give meaning to the relationships that were forming. Through the reflections, it was interesting to watch many of the students develop from those who had a desire to help others into those who were in solidarity with their families, wishing to act as agents of change, fighting for social justice in a society they deemed unjust (cf. Ward, 1997).

As I read the reflections and transformation papers generated by the students, the expressions of solidarity were overwhelming. Students who had never before known the personal face of poverty found themselves confronting a bureaucratic system that made no exceptions. They stood side by side with their families as they experienced social injustice and prejudice. From these roots the relationship was fostered and nurtured (cf. Wood, 1998).

The curriculum for CTB presented an alternative version to the master narrative that most students heard during their time spent in school. By reading literature written from a Latino perspective, they were able to hear the “other side of the story” (cf. Apple, 1997; McLaren, 1998).

In their work in the community, they learned to see society and its treatment of marginalized people from the point of view of the people who were being oppressed. Their understanding that knowledge shapes power and social activity caused them to tackle situations in which they perceived discriminatory behavior by Anglos who were practicing linguicism (cf. Schniedewind & Davidson, 2000; Sleeter, 1999) due to their families’ lack of ability to communicate in English.

I am somewhat cautious about referring to Freire (1970), because the main thrust of this study deals not with the “pedagogy of the oppressed,” but rather with relationship building. I am including Freire, however, because a chapter from Pedagogy of the Oppressed was included in the readings for the course, leading to class discussion making change in society through dialogue and listening to others’ voices. The students did much toward helping the families realize that they had rights, no matter their legal status in this country. The granting of ownership to the learner was empowering, and is a basic tenet of
service-learning. Service-learning is based on a mutually beneficial relationship in which all participants gain from the experience, both in the giving and the receiving.

**Dissonance**

However, although the relationships presented in the case studies resulted in friendships, such was not always the case. Occasionally in the time since I first conceptualized the course, there were times when conflicts and incompatibility occurred, as was illustrated in the section of vignettes. When people were forced together in a relationship superimposed by an authority figure, in the form of a university professor, there were times when the relationships were rich and successful and times when they were utter failures.

**Relevant Dimension**

The students themselves commented on the fact they would probably never have met the Latinas without CTB. If they had not taken the course, there could not have been a relationship.

**Reciprocity**

While reciprocity did not define all aspects of the relationships as they developed, it did emerge as a theme that was present to a certain extent in all of the partnerships. In the end, all participants described reciprocal relationships in which there was mutual benefit and gain, as well as shared friendship.

However, the reciprocity was limited. They did inhabit different social groups comprised of different ethnicities, languages, educational levels, and socioeconomic statuses; and more likely, their social groups would not intersect unless one of the participants invited the other to a special function. The relationships were contextualized within the confines of the course for the most part. The students were more apt to attend baptisms, birthday parties, weddings, or other special events in the Latino community than the families were to enter the Anglo community.

Nonetheless, service-learning is a way for people to build relationships that are non-hierarchical, based on each person’s desire to give and to receive (cf. Jackson and
Smothers, 1998), and that was certainly the case with CTB. The students and the Latinas shared of their language, their culture, their knowledge, and most importantly, their Selves.

Findings from the Unique Phenomena

In the individual voices and the vignettes presented in chapter seven, the reader was able to hear the voices of students who presented interesting phenomena for one reason or another. In this section, I present the findings that emerged from those data, followed by the implications for programmatic changes. The implications for further study are found in the following section.

Effects of Service-Learning on Academic Knowledge Learning by Linking the Academy with the Community

Learning communities. Tara’s voice opened the scene as she spoke of the learning community she experienced on the workday. In CTB, we all form a community and work together with the common goal of blending the academic knowledge with the community service through reflection and conversation. More traditional teachers would observe my class and find chaos—students on the floor creating graphics that describe relationships, the coffeepot brewing in the corner, baskets of candy being passed, one of the assistants on the cell phone making an appointment for a Latina at the OB-GYN Clinic. They might visit a LWSG meeting and find me in the kitchen in my chinos and sweatshirt, chopping onions and wiping my eyes while Isabel stands at my side mixing the cornbread.

In other words, we all work together with few divisions. Friendships develop, not only between students and families, but also among the students. We all join in solidarity with the Latinos. The students probably read twice as much, write twice as much, and discuss twice as much as they would without the catalyst of the learning community that exists in CTB.

Learning linking the academy with the community. As Tom so powerfully stated, CTB allows students to take their learning beyond the walls of the academy so that it can become more meaningful in the real world. Learning that transcends the walls of the
classroom empowers the learner by placing the learning experiences in the community (cf. Dewey in Flinders & Thornton, 1999).

**Suggestions for Programmatic Change**

The data from the vignettes suggest certain programmatic changes that would make service-learning foundational for the curriculum. In this section, I am only discussing the data that emerged from the vignettes. In the following section is further discussion for programmatic change.

*Inclusion of service-learning in interdisciplinary curricula.* Mike’s voice as he described helping the Garcías establish their bakery presents a strong case for the power of creating opportunities for students to participate in interdisciplinary projects that unite their field of study with Spanish in the academy and service-learning in the community. Such an approach would firmly place learning in the community, allowing the community to participate in the education of the society (cf. Dewey in Flinders & Thornton, 1999).

*Inclusion of service-learning in teacher education programs.* Tiffany’s, Betsy’s, and Kari’s voices all presented an argument for the importance of service-learning in a Teacher Education program. Due to the complexity of this discussion, it is presented in the following section; I mention it here because this theme emerged from the vignettes.

**Summary**

Service-learning that is situated in the Latino community can crosscut barriers of language, culture, ethnicity, education, and social class, creating experiences for the university students and Latino families that surpass anything that could happen in the traditional classroom. The tie that binds the students and families is mutually beneficial; the roles change according to the circumstance. In the preliminary study that arose from the service-learning classes prior to the actual study, the students commented constantly that they felt they learned more from the families than they taught them, both in terms of culture and of language (Tilley-Lubbs, 2001). Similarly, the families told me repeatedly how much the students had helped them with appointments and other bureaucratic problems, to say nothing of the gains they made in English. Both were touched by what
they considered the sacrifice the other had made on their behalf.

The need for the service-learning program seems fairly straightforward and obvious; the findings of the study show how the students and community members relate to each other in meaningful ways, resulting in enriched academic knowledge when paired with classroom activities. Based on the data collected from the study in the form of formal and informal interviews, observations, weekly reflections, transformation papers, final power point presentations, and class discussions, it was apparent that many of the students in the class and the Latinos who participated in the program felt a genuine concern for and relationship with each other.

After analyzing the data, though, I have come to realize that not all of the relationships were lasting, world-changing friendships that will endure through the years. Some of the students enjoyed their families immensely, but when the semester ended, there was no regret and there were no feelings of sadness at moving to the next phase of life. Conversely, others continued to correspond after the class ended. The students and the families were a conglomerate of individual personalities that react in distinct ways to different situations.

However, for many of the students and the Latinos, the service-learning course was truly transformative. Many of them did become agents of change as they changed their perspectives completely about people who reside physically, ethnically, linguistically, educationally, or socioeconomically on the other side of the border. Not only did language acquisition and growth in cultural knowledge occur; there was also an awareness of commonalities that gave these reciprocal relationships particular depth.

If relationships lead to a sense of solidarity, friendship, and closeness; social reform could occur that would decide the fate of the world (Greene, 1997) in a dynamic and positive way. The strength of the relationship has the power to help Latinos view the world of Anglos as acceptable, safe, and pleasant; a decent place to live. On the other hand, the students who develop a meaningful relationship with the Latinos can learn to see people outside their domains of class, education, and ethnic heritage as being worthy of their caring and concern, people who when all the socially constructed identities are stripped away are just like themselves. In a world where we are increasingly aware of globalization, the sense of community among dissimilar groups can only lead to a
lessening of distrust and discrimination in society. According to Greene (in Shaw, n.d.), the goal of education is to help students to realize their deep connection to and responsibility for not only their own individual experience but also for other human beings who share this world.

The tapestry canvas is complete. The threads have all been tucked in so there are no loose threads to show. The colors are blended and harmonious; and it is ready to frame. Similarly, the study is complete; the findings have been examined. In the next section, I present the implications that emerged from this study.

Framing the Tapestry

The Implications of the Study

In this section, I present further implications of the study. I suggest ways that we in higher education could build on the results of this study by incorporating service-learning in the community into our curriculum, thereby strengthening the ties between campus and community, while at the same time providing students with real-life transformative experiences. Using the framework that emerged from the study, I make suggestions for the future of foreign language education and the education of preservice teachers preparing to be foreign language or ESL teachers.

Implications for the Study of Foreign Language

Research shows that the traditional paradigms for teaching Foreign Language by direct instruction are not as effective as methods that involve learners in service-learning experiences in the Latino community (Curtis & Baskerville, 2001; Schulz, 2002). By immersing students in a community where people face discrimination and marginalization, their awareness of social justice issues is enhanced.

The students who participated in this study exemplified the results described by the research. By their own reports as well as those of their teachers, their language proficiency did improve noticeably in the course of the semester. Granted, most of the students also take other Spanish courses at the same time, so their improvement cannot be attributed solely to the service-learning course, but they report changes in being able to think in Spanish and to speak without translating every word mentally before speaking.
Additionally, in their own words, they became aware of a population whose life differed greatly from their own, and they were able to join in solidarity with the Latinos with whom they partnered.

Studies show that students need an immersion experience abroad in order to gain proficiency in Spanish (Schulz, 2002), but there are students who are unable to go abroad due to financial or familial restrictions. For those students, the immersion experience offered by a service-learning experience situated in the Latino community is an excellent alternative. Many students who study abroad live with other Anglo students, even in a home stay, and consequently they do not have a true immersion experience. A service-learning course like CTB provides a rich immersion experience, and could be required for more than one semester as an alternative for the study abroad.

Some universities are now requiring courses in oral proficiency in order to prepare students to pass the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) based on the guidelines established by the American Council on Teaching Foreign Language (http://www.actfl.com). CTB is an ideal alternative for an oral proficiency course as well. Instead of spending two to three hours a week in a classroom talking to other non-native speakers of Spanish with a professor who may or may not be a native speaker, they spend a total of 50 hours minimum per semester in the home of a Latino family. Granted, not all the time is spent speaking Spanish, because most of the students teach ESL to their families, but by their own account, they spend more time speaking Spanish than English in their role as cultural mediators.

Lastly, as universities adopt performance-based assessment for teacher certification programs, it will become increasingly necessary that preservice teachers be proficient in Spanish. ACTFL has developed language standards for inclusion in the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Standards. These standards require that preservice teachers score at the Advanced Level on the ACTFL OPI (Schultz. 2002). In many university courses, the upper level Spanish courses are taught in a combination of Spanish and English, delivered in a lecture style of direct teaching, resulting in little to no speaking practice for students. A course such as CTB could be incorporated into a final internship to refresh the communicating skills of graduating seniors. In other words, the inclusion of a service-learning course situated in
the Latino community would provide rich opportunities for students who are majoring in Spanish and who wish to enhance their knowledge of culture and their communication skills.

**Implications for Service-Learning in Teacher Education Programs**

As was evidenced in chapter seven, data emerged that indicate the possibility of including service-learning in preservice teacher education programs. By hearing the voices of teachers who returned to the university for a graduate degree, the reader is able to realize the power of the service-learning experience for preservice teachers who will be teaching students whose backgrounds are so different from their own.

When I first began the service-learning program, I questioned the need for the students to be able to communicate in Spanish. After examining the attitudes of both the Latinos and the students, I feel that there is a place for all students in the Latino community, no matter their ability in Spanish. Since I know the Latinos so well, I am able to judge whether they are more interested in learning the language or in developing friendships, and based on that knowledge, I can place the students accordingly. Of course, the ideal is that both the language acquisition and the friendship be present, but there are situations in which both are not possible.

For example, some of the students who have had the richest experiences have been ESL preservice teachers whose language skills were limited or non-existent. For example, Seung was a Korean student who had studied Spanish for one semester. Marisol was emphatic in praising her skills as a ESL teacher:

\[ Le \\ agradezco \\ a ella, \\ a \\ Seung \\ porque \\ ella \\ siempre \\ me \\ hablaba \\ en \\ inglés, \\ nunca \\ en \\ español. \\ . \\ . \\ y \\ sí, \\ con \\ ella \\ fue \\ con \\ la \\ que \\ aprendí \\ a \\ entender \\ un \\ poquito \\ más \\ el \\ inglés \\ (Interview, \\ February \\ 4, \\ 2002). \]

[I am grateful to Seung because she always talked to me in English, never in Spanish. . . . And yes, it was with her that I learned to understand a little more English.]

In addition, now that we have a project in place in an elementary school in Blacksburg, there is the opportunity for participating in the program without the long commute. This also offers the opportunity for involvement with the Latinos without
demanding the depth of relationship implied by twice-weekly visits to the families’ homes.

Finally, as universities prepare teachers in certification programs to meet the standards established by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), they are faced with assessing dispositions in each of the ten standards. CTB provides the means of determining whether students have the dispositions that would be suitable for the teaching profession. As students write weekly reflections and a final transformation papers based on issues of social justice and education, it is possible to obtain a snapshot of the student’s dispositions and whether or not they are appropriate or not for the teaching profession.

As both the advisor and a methods teacher for the Foreign Language Education Program, I hear many preservice teachers expressing a desire to spend more time in the schools as an internship. As a result of our work at Eastside Elementary School, a principal from another school called to see if we were interested in a partnership with his school. Consequently, in the past year, we began the Roanoke Project, a tutoring/mentoring program that pairs university students with elementary school children whose native language is Spanish; since then, the program has expanded to other schools as well. There is more demand than there are students; this program would be ideal for preservice teachers who want to work in the community.

A powerful statement about the effect of CTB can be heard in the voice of Helen, a student who took the course the second semester I taught it:

Hi Sra. Lubbs. . . . how are you? I am writing to ask a favor of you. Recently, I had an ephiphinal [sic] moment where I saw this woman on TV, who lived and worked in California for a non-profit organization that dealt with educating Hispanic children who have just come from their native lands, to the US. The woman didn’t speak Spanish and the children didn’t speak English, but through this school-like program, the children were taught English and as the limitations of the language barrier were lifted, a special bond was formed. Well Señora, I am at a crossroads in my life. Having just graduated from Tech, I am now about to go BACK to school—Radford—to pursue a nursing career. In a week and a half I begin summer school there and, YESTERDAY I saw this woman, of whom I
speak, on television and something happened inside me and I thought “that’s what I want to do.” …I do not want to be a high school teacher to kids that don’t care about the Spanish language. I want to make a difference and help refugee children that get thrown in the school system and help the transition of the move from their home to the US as easy and fearless as possible. . . . I am wondering if following my nursing career will be a mistake and if I should follow this other path instead. Something within my heart tells me not to give up on it! Thank you! (Email Communication, May 1, 2003).

Helen’s story is not unusual; the data demonstrated that many students decide to become ESL teachers as a result of their work in CTB. CTB takes learning outside the walls of the academy to give it shape and meaning, contextualized in real-life and real-world experiences.

**Suggestions for Further Study**

During the time of the study, there have been students and Latinos whose backgrounds would represent more diversity, but I was limited in collecting data by availability and reliability of the participants to generate documents and to participate in the interviews. However the data suggest several studies:

itez What are the effects of placing heritage Spanish speakers in the homes of Latinos for a service-learning experience?
itez What are the effects of placing African American students in the homes of Latinos for a service-learning experience?
itez What are the effects of including Crossing the Border (CTB) in an interdisciplinary course, partnering with a discipline such as business?
itez How can participating in CTB enhance the educational experiences of preservice teachers in Teacher Education programs?
itez What role could the reflective journals generated by preservice teachers in CTB play in assessing the dispositions toward teaching as defined in the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium Standards (INTASC)?

The results of this study imply that a program such as CTB provides a valuable, possibly transformative experience for student and Latino participants. The power of
the voices of these participants suggests that both Foreign Language and Education programs could benefit from having such a course included in the curriculum.

**Conclusion**

At this time in history, changes are taking place on a daily basis. When I first conceptualized this study, the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, had not yet occurred. The political climate in the United States has changed, with xenophobia causing immigration to be more difficult, to say nothing of immigrants finding and keeping jobs or getting driver’s licenses. Important demographic and socio-political changes are still occurring in the United States and throughout the world (Kellner, n. d.). Consequently, our country is now more diverse than ever before. This creates the challenge of providing people from diverse ethnicities, classes, and backgrounds with tools to enable them to succeed and participate in an ever-changing world. Critical pedagogy, born of critical theory, considers how education can strengthen democracy, create a more egalitarian and just society, and deploy education in a process of progressive social change. At this time in history, we are also acutely aware of the need for community building among all peoples (Wildman & Davis, 2000), and relationship forms the cornerstone for community building. Supported by the literature, I propose that the intersection of service-learning in the community combined with scholarship in the academy can build relationship and community that can effect change in society.

In the feminist critical theory research tradition, I hope to use the results of the study to effect change in society. I never cease to think of Greene’s (1997) comments on illuminating a dark world. The relationships that emerge from CTB often lead to a sense of solidarity, friendship, and closeness; social reform could occur that would decide the fate of the world in a dynamic and positive way (Greene, 1997, ¶13). I truly believe the students often become agents of change to illuminate a world that is troubled by the darkness of socially constructed barriers that divide cultures.

We as educators can have the courage to challenge the alienation that permeates human history by enabling our students to enter the community as agents of change. This change can be examined by looking through the lens of relationship as observed in both
the students and the community members. The resultant change will impart the ideas of critical consciousness and social justice, creating a sense of community between two disparate groups of people.

The tapestry is complete; the threads are smooth, the colors are vibrant and alive, and the piece is ready to hang on a large wall where it can be studied further. With each change in the light, new facets of the threads appear. As the course continues, more students and Latinos will interact and new relationships will emerge, and it will soon be necessary to stitch a companion piece to complete the scene.

*Hay tantísimas fronteras*
*que dividen a la gente,*
*pero por cada frontera*
*existe también un puente*

(Gina Valdés, 1982, p.2).

There are so many borders
That divide people,
But for each border
There also exists a bridge

(Translated by Chris Carger, 1994).

**Afterword**

Since the inception of CTB, because of the relationships the female students forged with the Latinos, four women appealed to us for help in dealing with abusive husbands, and the students proposed a support group as a way of providing a forum for the Latinas to work toward a self-empowerment. Before she graduated, Kristine and I had chatted about writing a grant to fund a LWSG to provide education and address the needs of these women, and in the fall of the study, Amy and I were finally able to finalize and
submit the grant proposal.

Furthermore, as I analyzed and interpreted the data, one theme that occurred in the interviews with both Isabel and Rosa was that of their relationships with men, Isabel’s with her husband with whom she lives, and Rosa’s with her husband whom she left. Whereas Isabel accepted her fate with quiet resignation, Rosa was her usual fiery self, wanting to help all Latinas to become empowered as she herself had done.

Rosa was especially excited about having the opportunity to share her story. She is proud that she had the courage to leave a bad marriage, and she feels that if other Latinas hear her story, they will realize they could do the same. She is articulate and gregarious, intelligent and thoughtful, a wonderful role model for other Latinas.

The following is an excerpt from my musings following the first interview I conducted with her in September when I first heard her story of spousal abuse. That interview provided the inspiration for the women’s support group.

As I look back on this interview, although I explained my purpose, I am not sure that she understood completely; her interview is a testimonial for the strong woman who wants to do what is best for herself and her children. Her impassioned story, however, provided the final nudge to write the grant with Amy so that we could have the LWSG; my constant transformation and growth occurred throughout the study right alongside that of the participants.

Interestingly enough, this aspect of the data I collected from Rosa is more in line with the readings I have done about Chicana feminism, perhaps due to the nine years that she has lived in the United States. I mention this because it is this strength that shapes Rosa as she is—a feisty, strong-willed survivor, but at the same time, a woman who at the beginning of the study had very little confidence. I have chosen not to include certain details of Rosa’s life in order to respect her privacy and anonymity, but I feel I must mention her circumstances since they had shaped her. It was amazing to me to observe the changes in Rosa as the semester unfolded (Reflection, April 21, 2003).

In contrast, when I conducted the final interview with Isabel, I was able to see the opposite side of the spectrum. In this excerpt from her last interview, she replies to my asking her if she wanted to return to Mexico: “Bueno, yo no quiero regresar (riendo).”
[Well, I don’t want to return.”] In response to my question, “Por qué regresas?” [“Why are you returning?”], she said, “Porque es que mi esposo dice que yo me vaya ya.”

[“Because my husband is telling me to go.”] I asked why, and she replied:

*Porque, allá tenemos una casa a medio construcción y él quiere que yo llegue a terminarla entonces él quiere quedarse uno o dos años más aquí y ya luego ir para allá, entonces le digo que yo no quiero ir, pero yo voy a tener que irme. …* Pues no, yo lo siento mucho porque por mi Mamá, porque ella siempre nos ha ayudado mucho pero le digo a él que si él se va a quedar aquí entonces no tiene caso que yo me vaya. Lo ideal es estar aquí unos un tiempo y tratar de tramitar papeles o algo y yo poder ir más adelante a verla a ella, pero pues ella también debe entender que pues yo debo estar aquí con él (February 4, 2003).

[Because we have a half-built house there, and he wants me to go finish it. Then he plans to stay here another year or two and then he will go back too. Then I tell him I don’t want to go but I am going to have to go.] …Well, no, I am really sorry, because of my mom, because she has always helped us a lot but I tell him [her husband] that if he is going to stay here, then there is no reason for me to go. The ideal thing is for us to stay here for a while and to try and get our papers or something, and then I could go to see her, but then she also has to understand that I need to be here with him.]

I asked her where she wants to be in the future, and her answer was eloquent in expressing her desire to stay here:

*Pues es que es uhm, es difícil porque, yo no quisiera regresar allá es carencia de trabajo, entonces cuando hay esa carencia también hay carencia de comida. Entonces aquí lo que pasa es que hay mucho trabajo y se puede uno quedar sin trabajo tal vez un mes, dos meses pero ya luego tiene uno un trabajo y ya tiene uno el trabajo y ya cuenta uno con cierto dinero para subsistir y allá es; no, no, no, allá es bien difícil y los trabajos mal pagados y se matan mucho trabajando y entonces por eso no me gusta allá, aunque aquí, aquí está bien y me gusta porque hay muchos lugares muy bonitos, pero es difícil porque como él trabaja entonces él sólo quiere estar aquí en la casa y para mí es difícil porque yo estoy todo el*
tiempo en la casa y yo quisiera salir cuando él está, entonces es bien difícil
(February 4, 2003).
[Well, it’s, uhm, difficult because I don’t want to go back there because there is a lack of work, then when there is a lack of work, there is a lack of food. Then what happens here is that there is a lot of work, so maybe you can be without work a month, two months, but then you have work. You have work that provides a wage you can count on to exist and there, no, no, there it is really hard and the work doesn’t pay anything and you kill yourself working and then that’s why I don’t like it there because there are a lot of beautiful places. But it is difficult because since he works, he only wants to be at home and I would like to go out when he is at home, so it is really hard.]

If I had not spent so many hours in the Latino community talking to and spending time with women, I would not have understood her words, so alien to my perspective as a White, middle class university professor. However, since I have also been able to cross the border of understanding cultural differences, I did understand, but I still felt saddened to hear the words of this woman, my friend, whose voice sounded so plaintive and resigned.

My sadness was not alleviated when, after the interview had ended, Isabel took me into the bedroom shared by the family of four to show me all the things we had brought her on the workdays. She expressed gratitude for the warm quilts and blankets; before, they had suffered from the cold, but now they are able to wrap up and stay warm. The tape recorder was no longer running when I broached the topic of the LWSG that would soon be starting. I mentioned the topics, one of which was “Concientización de la violencia doméstica” [Awareness of Domestic Violence]. Isabel turned to face me, her huge brown eyes looking me in the eye. Calling me Doña Kris to soften the impact of her words, she told me that Latinas can learn all they want about domestic violence and women’s rights, but the fact is, they have no rights unless their husbands want to grant them. In a low, passionate voice, she told me that, sure, she could demand her right to stay here in the United States, but her husband would ignore her and treat her so badly that her life would be worse than it would in Mexico.
Isabel had opened all the windows in the apartment in an attempt to get rid of the smell of some seafood she had prepared the day before, and as the wind blew in the open, unscreened windows, I felt a sadness and a chill that had nothing to do with the frigid February air. I realized that I was meddling in someone’s life in a most unwelcome way, and that there are cultural barriers that I will never be able to cross. However, judging by the data I collected from both women, I suspect they came closer to crossing those boundaries than I have in the years I have been in and out of their lives.

From that day forward, my resolve to work in solidarity with the Latinas was even stronger. Amy, Kimberly, Kristine, and I worked together with the students and the Latinas in the spring semester following the semester of the study facilitate the group funded by the grant. We had obtained funds to hold the LWSG in Roanoke, an eight-week session with guest facilitators who shared their expertise on topics as diverse as cooking nutritiously to establishing parameters of relationships.

During that time, the students, the Latinas, and I worked side by side to cook the weekly meals and have the programs. Juana even participated as a presenter when we talked about nutritious meals, drawing on her expertise as a promotora social (social worker). Due to the sensitive nature of some of the meetings (see Appendix J), we located bilingual experts in counseling, women’s issues, early childhood development, and public health nursing who were willing to donate their time to what they deem a worthy cause. This pursuit added another dimension to the examination of relationships as we worked together on this project, perhaps providing material for a future study.

Cuando ayudas a una mujer,
ayudas a una familia;
cuando ayudas a un hombre,
ayudas al hombre.

(Young Men’s Christian Association of Colombia).
When you help a woman,
You help a family;
When you help a man,
You help a man.

(Translated by Gresilda Tilley-Lubbs, 2003)