CHAPTER 7.

LEARNING TOGETHER THROUGH CAMPUS-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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Guilford Child Development's Learning Together Family Literacy Program provides opportunities for families in Guilford County, North Carolina, to improve family literacy as parents and children learn together under one roof. Most students in the program are women refugees or recent immigrants, and they enroll in ESOL classes while their children participate in early education and homework help programming. In addition to classes twice a week, families are given a book each month to encourage reading in the home, as well as ideas for activities related to literacy and resources in the community. Since 2012, High Point University's English Department, Service Learning Program, and Women's and Gender Studies Program have partnered with Learning Together in developing curricular and co-curricular initiatives that empower students and community members to use literacy studies as a tool for critical reflection and personal agency. This chapter explores the challenges and successes of university and community partnerships that involve multiple stakeholders. Specifically, we argue that the "learning together" approach is a feminist intervention that can serve as a model for campus-community engagement, where diverse pedagogical needs are considered in conjunction with the goals and operation of community partners.

ACTIVISM AND ACADEMIA

As Orr (2011) has noted, "WGS has demurred in defining, delimiting, or in any way offering a sustained interrogation of a term [activism] that is arguably foun-

dational to the discipline's understanding of itself" (p. 90). Quite often there is the assumption of the "academic versus activist" divide, which argues being one precludes being the other, and that current women's and gender studies programs are conservative in their activist leanings (Brown, 2008; Zimmerman, 2002). Or, as it pertains to our composition and rhetoric students, the assumption is that to be an activist, one must be hugging trees, protesting in the streets, and in the case of feminist activists, burning bras. Addressing these conflicting perceptions of activism and their relations to women's and gender studies is a productive entry point in a variety of contexts, but particularly courses where there is a service learning component. Further, in dispelling notions of radical activism as the only method of eliciting change, students not only begin to see ways in which "everyday activism" (Finley & Stringer, 2010) can be integrated into their own lives, but also begin the important work of considering why negative stereotypes exist around certain forms of activism and how these stereotypes relate to some of the larger forms of gendered, racial, and socioeconomic oppressions that will be considered in class. Therefore, for the purposes of our courses and this article's discussion, we use Finley and Stringer's definition of activism, which highlights the stories, activities, and artistic endeavors of "'everyday' people who think, say, and do things that help advance the rights of women and decrease gender inequalities," and note, as Finley and Stringer acknowledge, that this "is not all there is to feminist activism," but is a good place to start with in the classroom (p. viii).

Along with an expanded understanding of everyday activism, the other way in which the learning together model positions itself as an activist strategy for campus-community partnership is through the methodology of standpoint theory. Like activism, the effectiveness and positioning of standpoint theory has been debated (Harding, 2004); however, as a "feminist critical theory about relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power" that empowers oppressed groups and values their experiences, it has been a useful method in approaching our campus-community partnership in a way that allows both parties to be heard and have their needs met (Harding, 2004, p. 1). While larger debates as to whether "women as culturally diverse collectivities" can produce knowledge that answers questions about social relations are outside the scope of this chapter, the learning together model we propose takes up Harding's (2004) assertion that "standpoint projects must 'study up'; they must be part of critical theory, revealing the ideological strategies used to design and justify the sex-gender system and its intersections with other systems of oppression, in the case of feminist projects" (pp. 4-6). In this way, we argue that the learning together model employs the methodologies of standpoint theory to expose the activist potential of literacy as a tool by which students and the women of Learning Together can examine a host of oth-

er economic, political, and material oppressions that refugee and immigrant women face in contemporary U.S. society.

With respect to composition and rhetorical studies, our approach echoes Royster and Kirsch's (2012) argument that,

> The idea in developing a feminist-informed operational framework is not simply to make a clearer, more coherent place for feminist work in rhetorical studies but also to bring a better balancing for how qualities of excellence are negotiated and constituted in the field generally, given the values added by feminist methodologies. We begin the process, therefore, with a basic principle: We accept the notion that there is indeed value to be recognized and appreciated in the lives, words, participation, leadership, and legacies of women. (p. 18)

The "learning together" model we propose is rooted in literacy and uses rhetoric and composition studies in its practice, but has wider applications outside of these fields. The feminist and cooperative ethos of "learning together" is one that encourages multiple perspectives and voices, with active participation from all parties—student, faculty, and community partners. Further, as our discussion will detail, the stories and experiences of women often become the driving force of classroom activities and projects. With these theoretical and methodological concerns in mind, then, this chapter models the learning together approach and is organized around the experiences of the Director of Women's and Gender Studies (Jenn) and Assistant Director of Service Learning (Cara) at High Point University, and it draws on interviews with Molly Betton, former Program Coordinator at Guilford Child Development, and Lexi Koperna, a student in WGS 2274 who also completed an independent study project with Learning Together. After discussing these individual experiences, we conclude with a section devoted to how we have employed the learning together model at other service sites and how others might use this model to enhance partnerships between institutions and community agencies.

LEARNING TOGETHER: A WGS DIRECTOR'S EXPERIENCES WITH FEMINIST ACTIVISM AND SERVICE LEARNING (JENN)

As debated in a number of disciplinary discussions (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002; Dugger, 2008; Orr, 2011; Berger, 2013), a tension surrounds the rhetoric of "service," "civic engagement," "volunteerism," and "activism" as they relate to

women's and gender studies and service learning. When housed under the language of "service" or "volunteerism," there is the risk that these programs ultimately highlight the differences between campus and community, furthering a divide of "us versus them" and reinforcing preexisting stereotypes on the part of both students and community members. "Activism," on the other hand, "argues for relationships based on connection" (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002, p. 237). Activism, which is most closely aligned with women's and gender studies, is the term least often used in contemporary academic discourse on the subject, raising the suspicion of many women's and gender studies faculty with respect to service learning and civic engagement initiatives. Further, given the rich and foundational history of activism and community engagement implicit with women's and gender studies, for many WGS affiliates there is unease around the commodification of "institutionally sanctioned versions" of work that has been considered "unique to the discipline" (Orr, 2011, p. 21). That is, as service learning programs and civic engagement initiatives become mainstream in the academy, the rich history of women's and gender studies and its work in this area is frequently overlooked and WGS faculty are often left out of these conversations. The learning together model we discuss, then, applies as much to institutional discussions between departments and programs as it does to campus-community relations.

Upon my hire, I was awarded a grant through HPU's Service Learning Program to develop a service learning (SL) course in women's and gender studies. The grant stipulates that awardees attend three professional development workshops, which introduce them to the theories of service learning, as well as provide networking opportunities with a number of partner agencies and organizations in the city of High Point. This training aligns well with the first recommendation of the NWSA's 2011 White Paper "Women's Studies as Civic Engagement: Research and Recommendations," which stresses the importance of faculty support, noting, "Faculty require skill and training to prepare students for engagement beyond the classroom. The time and skill required to develop effective university-community partnerships as well as the on-going assessment of the efficacy in local communities must be recognized as the real work of the institution" (Orr, 2011, p. 24). Since its inception, HPU's SL Program has worked hard at creating sustained relationships with the city of High Point, recognizing that effective SL programs meet the needs of both the university and the community. HPU's SL Program also stresses the importance of training and continued faculty support in order to facilitate educational experiences that benefit all involved parties. While HPU's SL Program does not explicitly label itself "feminist" or have official ties to the Women's and Gender Studies Program, it does embody many of the tenets laid out in the NWSA White Paper.

It was through one of the workshops that I was first introduced to Learning Together. New to both the city and the university, it was important to me that I develop my own understanding of the High Point community and its needs before developing a service learning course or bringing my students into partnerships with various organizations. I spent a year volunteering with a number of local agencies, including Learning Together, before teaching my first SL course. I had previous experience as a literacy volunteer, and, as an English professor, I advocate the significance of literacy, personal narrative, and literature in empowering individuals, understanding the particular importance of this to those for whom English is not their first language. These prior experiences led to my initial work with Learning Together in the fall of 2012. I began working weekly with the program, offering a women's conversation hour focused on increasing the students' agency through literacy and language skills. In addition to the conversation circle, it became clear that my training and job as an English faculty member could be helpful in the classroom. I began to develop weekly grammar lessons, as well as lessons in practical writing skills, that could be useful for the women on job applications, corresponding with their children's teachers, and navigating other daily tasks that required a grasp of the written form of the English language. While these practical skills are certainly beneficial in helping to empower these women to lead more independent and full lives here in High Point, Learning Together also provides a strong sense of community that is particularly important to the women and not necessarily seen in typical ESOL classes.

In an interview[1] for this collection, we asked Molly Betton, former Program Coordinator at Guilford Child Development, about why the program attracts almost exclusively women. She explained that:

> Although Learning Together does not exclude men/fathers from participation, our program attracts over 99% female participation, and so we frequently frame our approach as working with "women" and "mothers." Most of the women in our program come from cultural backgrounds that value the woman as the matron of the household and the primary caregiver in the family. Because they carry more responsibility for raising the children, the women in our program have a higher

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1   Keeping with the learning together model, we asked Molly Betton, former Learning Together Program Coordinator for Guilford Child Development, to contribute her thoughts about the HPU-Learning Together partnership. After discussing our aims and hopes for this chapter, we gave Molly the option of being interviewed in-person or via email. Molly chose to respond to our questions via email and gave her written permission to include her responses in this chapter and collection.

> interest in seeking the kinds of parenting and child supports
> that we offer (versus just the ESOL or the GED).

Molly also discussed the "social role" that the program fills for its female participants, saying, "Many immigrant women end up living in a state of isolation. For some women in the program, Learning Together is their only social outlet, their only time without young children, when they can focus on themselves. Many of the men in their lives already have opportunities to socialize with other adults, usually though work." In Learning Together's ESOL class, family hardships, life changes, as well as happy occasions, are discussed and celebrated, strengthening the bond between participants. As a new member to the city of High Point myself, I also found this sense of community beneficial, developing friendships with the women through these experiences.

After my first semester volunteering, it became clear that the women had a particular interest in wellness, as many of them found the American diet much different from that with which they were accustomed. Also, many of them were intrigued by our culture's preoccupation with exercise and wanted to learn more about how to keep themselves and their families healthy and fit. Therefore, in the spring, as a group we decided to structure our grammar and vocabulary around fitness and nutrition and incorporated exercise such as Zumba, yoga, and strength training with household objects into our conversation sessions. This plan came directly from the Learning Together students and is one way in which the community need dictated the curriculum, as opposed to the other way around. It was during this semester that one of Cara's students completed her service learning hours in the adult classroom with me. An exercise science major, she was tasked with developing lessons on fitness and nutrition and was asked to design accompanying worksheets that would be appropriate for English language learners.

While ultimately this was a positive experience, it did require a great deal of negotiation in terms of my role as both an advocate for the women of Learning Together and as a professor. As the organizer of these weekly sessions, I was serving as a community volunteer at Learning Together, not as a university professor, and I became the SL student's primary community partner. I helped her develop materials and advised her on the type of information the women wanted and what was appropriate for their language level. Although the student and I enjoyed a positive working relationship, there was also some tension, as we had to navigate our roles in the Learning Together classroom. While both she and I recognized each other as student and professor, in the space of Learning Together we did not function in these capacities. Drawing on models of community and feminist activism, I saw her as an equal partner in designing an effective

and empowering experience for the students at Learning Together. I was not her professor in the service learning course, and did not see it as my role to interact with her in this way. The student, however, did not enter the relationship with the same expectations, and in hindsight, I realize it was my fault that I did not more clearly articulate my goal for the program or her role in it. Also, in assuming that she was prepared for the work (she had chosen this assignment for her service hours and final project), I failed to consult with her on which tasks, exactly, she was willing and able to perform. As a sophomore, she did not have as extensive a background in her major as I had assumed, nor was she particularly comfortable leading exercise demonstrations or explaining wellness terms to a group of adult women who were non-native English language speakers. While the HPU student and the Learning Together students got along well with each other and genuinely enjoyed each other's company, they saw me primarily as the instructor, even though I was not functioning in my role as professor. This often happens at the service site, where, whenever there is a question regarding one of the HPU students, it is directed toward me, even when I am not the instructor of the service learning course.

In this case, not only did the student have difficulty at times differentiating my role as community member versus professor, but I did as well. While I wanted to see her as my equal in the classroom, I could not ignore the fact that outside of this context I was aware of what was expected of her in Cara's course. I grew frustrated when I felt she was not completing tasks that were in the purview of her assignment, and I was conflicted as how to proceed in these situations. If I did not pick up the slack, then the students in the Learning Together classroom would suffer, but at the same time, I knew that I should not be doing the work that was part of her service learning requirements. In speaking with Cara about this situation, I became aware that the student in question felt that I was placing too great of a responsibility on her in comparison to what was expected in the course and what was being expected of her classmates, and that she did not feel prepared for the work nor confident in her skills in completing all the tasks I had assigned. These conversations helped Cara and me become more personally aware of the fact that transparency and open dialogue are crucial in creating effective partnerships for all parties involved, which includes students. Working with Cara's student in my capacity as a community member afforded me insight into the responsibilities of the student and community partner that I may not otherwise have had as a service learning professor. In this capacity I was better able to negotiate the needs of both the community partner and the service learning course. This experience was also invaluable to me as I began to prepare my own service learning courses, as I had a more complete picture of the needs and expectations of the various participants.

Although I taught a SL course ("Feminist Theory and Praxis") in the academic year following this experience, it was another full academic year before I partnered with Learning Together for a service learning section of the course "Women, Gender, and Culture." As explained in my course description for students, a primary goal of the course was to examine the lives of women across cultures through the lens of service learning, with particular attention paid to the role of globalization in the lives of women in the United States and abroad. In partnering with three community programs that empower and address the needs of women in our city of High Point—the YWCA of High Point, West End Ministries/Leslie's House (which provides transitional housing for women ages 18 and older without dependents), and Learning Together—students were to consider the effects of globalization here in High Point, while thinking more broadly about the material reality of women's lives globally. Although not explicitly stated on the syllabus, a guiding theme of the course was interrogating the activist potential of service learning as it relates to women's and gender studies. The readings assigned on the first day of class were John Eby's "Why Service Learning Is Bad" and *Ms.*'s Fall 2011 section of articles on women's and gender studies programs, which includes the pieces "So You Want to Change the World?", "Women's Studies Brings Global Change," and "Taking Women's Studies Into the Streets." These articles and the surrounding debate of the activist potential of both service learning and women's and gender studies set the tone of the course and were frequently referenced by students in class and in their writing throughout the semester. Assigning these texts at the outset was a strategic move on my part for a number of reasons. First, I wanted to stress to students the responsibility associated with service learning, and I made sure that they were aware of my previous experiences with our partner agencies and my personal commitment to these organizations. In doing this, I attempted to establish myself as not only their teacher in the classroom, but as an activist in our community. In addition to working with virtually all of the students on their service at least once during the semester, I routinely referenced our partner agencies and community members when appropriate during class lectures. This was important not only to establish my credibility, but to ensure that my students were making connections between the work we were doing in the community with the work we did in the classroom.

My second reason for assigning the first set of readings was not only to acknowledge women's and gender studies' history with activism and service learning, but also to help students see women's and gender studies as a dynamic academic discipline that operates with its own pedagogy and demands students take equal responsibility in all aspects of the learning process. Thus, in a way, I was extending the learning together model to engage students in their own learning

process through feminist, team-based, and service learning pedagogies. While I was continually impressed by the work that students were doing in the classroom and in the community, at times they expressed their frustrations at what they considered were "failures": low quiz scores, initial difficulty interacting with community members, and navigating complicated assignments as the semester progressed. Despite overwhelmingly remarking that the course was more "challenging" than they were expecting or prepared for, their own assessment of their quality of *learning* at the end of the semester was a 4.79/5. Further, as the semester progressed and the students adjusted to the expectations of the course, the quality of their work and their grades improved. Once students realized that the expectations of their work placed on them by both me and their community partner were not going to be lowered, their assumption of responsibility increased, the level of confidence grew, and standards of performance improved.

While it would be an exaggeration and overestimation to say that all of the students' lives were dramatically transformed through activism and SL, the learning together model and their service learning work brought a greater awareness to their own personal responsibility as it relates to both their learning and their place within local and global communities. Further, as a result of the course, one student in the class, Lexi, elected to undertake an independent study project building upon her work with Learning Together, and another student applied for and was chosen to be an AmeriCorps VISTA in the city of High Point upon her graduation.

LEARNING TOGETHER: A COMPOSITIONIST'S EXPERIENCES PROMOTING ACTIVIST-ORIENTED SERVICE LEARNING (CARA)

I came to High Point in 2010 as an Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Composition with the desire to develop sustainable community partnerships that would support and enhance students' and community members' multiple literacies.[2] Prior to being appointed Assistant Director of HPU's Service Learning Program, I began the process of developing a service learning (SL) course by applying for and being awarded a course development grant. Through my research on service learning within composition studies and my prior experiences teaching SL as a graduate student, I was keenly aware of scholarly critiques suggesting that problematic SL models can privilege ideologies of service or volunteerism over critical reflection (Butin, 2010; Eby, 1998; Herzberg, 1994; Howard, 2001;

2   Cope and Kalantzis (2000) describe multiliteracy as the notion that literacy is not fixed and that there is no single way to teach literacy because language is acquired and interpreted in multiple ways and through multiple contexts.

Flower, 2008); value university knowledge over community knowledge (Flower, 2008; Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009; Tryon et al., 2008); lack authentic collaboration between students and partners (Flower, 2008; Schutz & Gere, 1998); perpetuate stereotypes of others (Eby, 1998; Himley, 2004; Schutz & Gere, 1998); and support "drop-in" service experiences rather than sustainable partnerships (Cushman, 2002; Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009; Tryon et al., 2008). Therefore, I approached the task of choosing a partner for my course with the aim of developing a long-term, reciprocal relationship with a local literacy organization.

I heard about the Learning Together program and reached out to staff members to determine if it might be a good partner for my class. I first met with Molly at a local coffee shop near campus for an informal conversation about Learning Together's goals and needs and the content and learning objectives of the course I was developing. I hoped that meeting in a casual off-campus environment would offer a space where we could talk honestly about whether the potential partnership could be mutually beneficial. While the idea that "those being served control the service" has been a widely accepted principle of good practice within SL for decades (Sigmon, 1979), partnerships that prioritize community (versus academic) needs and make community partners active participants in designing service projects have proved difficult for many programs and practitioners to enact. When the groundwork is not laid for reciprocal partnerships prior to students' initial service, the placements often put additional stress on community partners or lead to low levels of student learning and engagement. Howard (2001) suggests that faculty should be highly selective and intentional about students' service learning placements in order to ensure that partnerships will allow students to understand the relevance of their service in relation to course content and meet defined learning objectives. Therefore, the first step in developing service learning partnerships is often for faculty and community members to make time for conversations to understand each other's goals and needs. Community partners may feel reluctant to turn away potential university partnerships even if they are not well-equipped to train or accommodate students, so faculty members often assume the responsibility of having to decline organizations that do not seem like the right match for their courses.

Molly describes Learning Together as a family literacy program for low-income immigrant, refugee, and minority parents and their preschool-age children that engages participants through a four-part approach: 1. To empower mothers to set and reach personal, educational, and vocational goals. 2. To connect families to other resources and to their greater community. 3. To support parents as their child's first educator and advocate. And 4. To give the children skills they will need to be successful in school. Although not explicitly a feminist organiza-

tion, like the Family Scholar House program discussed by Kathryn Perry (Chapter 10, this collection), given its approach, Learning Together can be interpreted as a feminist intervention. Given Learning Together's diverse participant demographic and literacy-oriented goals, Molly and I felt there was enough cohesion between organizational needs and course objectives to move forward with the partnership. I volunteered at the organization on several occasions, and I shared drafts of my syllabus and relevant assignments with Molly to solicit feedback. When the class began, she and the homework help program coordinator came to campus to speak to students about Learning Together's mission and participants, and they also held an on-site orientation and training for students.

The first service learning course that I collaborated with went through several versions with significant modifications to course content and student service requirements. These revisions were based on observations made at the site and conversations between Learning Together staff and myself. During the first version of the course, HPU students were placed in either the child-care room for babies and preschoolers or the homework help room for K-8 students. Following that semester, however, we placed all SL students with the homework help program—the college students seemed be babysitting the younger children rather than learning with or from them. I also changed my grading criteria for students' final projects to include community partner response/feedback as a component of the grading rubric, because we noticed that students were seeking input for the design of their projects primarily from me rather than from the community partners for whom their projects were intended.

Despite the effort Molly and I put into our initial planning of the SL component, the first version of the course encountered many problems typical of SL partnerships, and the course evaluation data suggested that the experience did not particularly enhance student learning.[3] However, because we were committed to maintaining an open dialogue and making changes as needed, subsequent courses partnered with the program have run more smoothly, and student evaluation data have shown significant gains in student learning and overall satisfaction with the SL component. Through our experiences partnering with Learning Together and other local organizations, Jenn and I have found that even when intense energy is given toward working collaboratively within university-com-

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3   Other institutional factors may have also contributed to the evaluation data in addition to the "kinks" with the SL component and logistics. In 2012, HPU's SL program had just implemented a new course designation system that was unfamiliar to many students and academic advisors. Therefore, many students in the course had unintentionally enrolled in SL, and in the written portion of the evaluations, some respondents expressed frustration about being required to fulfill SL hours in addition to traditional class time and coursework. Since that semester, the course designation system has become more familiar to the campus community, which has led to higher percentages of students who enroll in SL by choice.

munity partnerships, it takes time to enact genuine collaboration, and efforts toward this goal must be sustained on both ends.

As the learning together model implies, each course or project in which we have participated has led to a diverse range of issues that must be negotiated through a learning process involving campus and community stakeholders. It was in the second version of the course that Jenn became the community partner for a young woman in my class who had chosen to complete her service by implementing wellness activities with the women and developing materials related to fitness and nutrition. As Jenn described, despite her intention to partner with the student as a community volunteer, her professional position at the university created unanticipated tensions. Because the final project rubric included a community partner feedback component (my tweak to the grading criteria in response to issues from the previous semester), the student was concerned that she was being evaluated more critically by Jenn than other students in the course who were partnering with Learning Together staff and volunteers unaffiliated with the university. Jenn had also spoken with me about her anxiety that the student might not be capable of completing a quality project that would benefit the women in the program, and she expressed concern that she might be taking on too many of the student's responsibilities in order to fulfill her own duties as a community volunteer. These conversations raised interesting ethical questions for me as an SL instructor, and I recognized the validity of the student's and Jenn's anxieties that their roles within the partnership were functioning differently than other partnerships in the class. Through a series of conversations, the wellness project and culminating "Learning Together Olympics" were ultimately successful and well-received by all stakeholders. However, the situation raised questions about whether faculty members can ever genuinely detach themselves from their associations with institutions when doing activist work in the community. While I still think that faculty members can absolutely partner with students in non-faculty community volunteer roles, I now avoid giving faculty any evaluative role when working with students in this capacity.

Despite the speed bumps encountered by having to renegotiate students' roles, assignments, grading criteria, and faculty and community partner expectations (bumps which I think are typical of and perhaps even necessary to enacting the learning together model), even early stages of our partnership with Learning Together were effective in achieving some feminist activist goals. When asked what she considers the best experience with respect to the partnership, Molly says that it has been the expanded services that the organization has been able to provide to participants: "With the help and support of HPU, we are able to offer tutoring to 25 school-aged children whose parents and younger siblings attend the program; to provide one-on-one or small group computer classes; and

to provide more individualized English-language-instruction to our adult learners." While these expanded services have helped Learning Together work toward feminist goals of improving women's lives through enhanced access to literacy and community support, I think where the first courses I taught fell short was that the college students didn't perceive their work as the type of everyday feminist activism that Finley and Stringer describe. The process of partnering with Learning Together for multiple courses and projects has allowed me opportunities to develop and implement an activist-oriented SL model that more explicitly addresses feminist aims and demonstrates to students and community members our deep commitment to the Learning Together program.

To discuss this progression toward a feminist activist approach, for the remainder of this section I focus on an upper-division course I taught for writing majors, "Community Writing." In the class, students collaborated with some of Learning Together's immigrant and refugee women to develop a community publication—a printed book collection of literacy narratives,[4] *Women's Stories of Literacy*, which was distributed within the community and now serves as a course text for other SL courses that partner with the organization. To develop a foundation in literacy studies, students read seminal works such as Mike Rose's *Lives on the Boundary*, Richard Rodriguez's *The Hunger of Memory*, Deborah Brandt's *Literacy in American Lives*, and Ellen Cushman's *The Struggle and the Tools*, as well as excerpts from well-known literacy narratives by Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, Helen Keller, and David Sedaris, among others. The students enrolled in the course, who happened to all be women,[5] were each paired with a Learning Together participant. Over the semester, the students conducted multiple oral history interviews with their partners, and they adapted these interviews into literacy narratives written from the first-person perspective. Similar to the method that Concannon et al. discuss in their chapter in this collection, the students composed multiple drafts of the narratives, which were presented to their partners for feedback and revisions. In addition to these stories, each student composed her own literacy narrative as well as a critical analysis of her community partner's narrative. Each chapter in the book, with the exception of one that I discuss in more detail, includes the community partner's literacy narrative, the HPU student's literacy narrative, and the student's critical analyses of her partner's narrative.

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4   A literacy narrative is a genre in which the author offers a narrative, typically from the first-person perspective, about the processes of reading, writing, or teaching or learning to read or write. These narratives take many forms, including print, oral, visual, digital, etc.

5   The fact that the class was composed of all female students is not surprising. Studies have found women are more likely to volunteer in college than men, and SL classes at HPU tend to be majority women (A.W. Astin & Sax, 1998; Cruce & Moore, 2007; Marks & Jones, 2004).

The project received IRB approval—all participants consented to participate and the women made decisions about whether to use their names or to include pictures with their stories, and they worked through multiple drafts with the students to prepare for publication. Most of the community partners chose to use pseudonyms, while all of the HPU students opted to use their real names. While the composing process in itself encouraged deep listening between students and partners, an ethical dilemma arose that amplified the experience. Several Muslim women decided to withdraw their stories from the collection, although they had initially asked to participate in the project and signed consent forms. Their narratives discussed gender and political violence, and they became afraid of retaliation. The students faced the difficult task of moving forward with the project in a way that would be responsive to these women's fears while also honoring their commitment to other women involved with the project who wanted their stories published.

Initially, the community members' fears about publishing their stories in the collection did not sit well with students in the class, who expressed concern that the women's reluctance stemmed from gender oppression within Muslim communities that would be perpetuated by the removal of their stories. Through conversations in class and with the Learning Together women, however, the students developed the understanding that the women were asserting authorial agency by deciding, and voicing their views about, the conditions on which their stories, names, and pictures could be shared. All of the Learning Together women, for instance, chose to share their stories orally in a final culminating event at the community center where the program meets. One participant, Mays, an Iraqi Muslim woman who opted to use her name and picture in the book, visited Jenn's class "Women Writing Worldwide" as a guest speaker and shared her story with other HPU students. Ultimately all but one woman, who asked to be referred to as Toma, decided to have their stories included in the collection. Toma requested that she be provided with three printed copies of the story that she could share with her young children when they got older, and she allowed her partner, Sally's, critical analysis essay to be included in the collection. The process that the women and the students went through to share and document their literacy narratives and to produce a final collection agreeable to all stakeholders in the project was a true example of the learning together model in action. The students in the class perceived their work on the book as a type of feminist activism, even when, as in the case of Toma, that activism chafed against their own views of Western feminism.

Community publishing projects such as this one are part of a growing subfield within rhetoric and composition. There have been a number of books and edited collections that address the value of community publishing projects

(Parks, 2010; Goldblatt, 2007; Mathieu, 2005; Mathieu, Parks and Rousculp, 2014), and scholars propose the integration of community publishing into writing programs as a method of expanding the focus on what Mathieu, Parks, and Rouscamp (2014) have termed the "community writer." Bickford and Reynolds (2002) argue that although the field of composition has a long history of research on service learning, many scholars "share a discomfort with *activism*, a term far more likely to be used in women's studies" (p. 230). They suggest that even well-known scholarship that refers specifically to activism, such as Cushman's (1999) and Schutz and Gere's (1998) frequently cited work, tends to conflate the term activism with the notion of service (p. 230). Parks (2014) points to the decline in activist work within composition, and he suggests that the discipline's emphasis on rhetorical agency and critique have compromised its political agenda. Which is why, according to Parks, "we tend to conclude with *discussion* instead of moving on to *collective action*" (p. 511). He points to community publishing as "a modern manifestation of early disciplinary attempts to foster activist connections between the literacies of our students and literacies in the neighborhoods that surround our campuses" (p. 485), an idea that has been highly influential to my own pedagogical progression from using more traditional SL models to the activist-oriented learning together model we propose.

Since the book project, I have continued using the learning together model in my administrative work with the SL Program, particularly in how I offer training and faculty development across the disciplines. Community publishing has become a key component of how I implement the learning together model as an activist-oriented approach, and it is an approach that faculty have used in other SL classes related to narrative medicine, poetry, business ethics, and health and nutrition. As students and community members collaborate to create published texts, the negotiation and production processes help to encourage students and community members to be active participants within the partnership.

CONCLUSION

In 2012, the White House released *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*, a report by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement commissioned by the Department of Education. The report, referred to as a call for action, comes in response to a "civic recession" (p. 7), a term used to describe a massive deficit in civic knowledge and public engagement in the democratic process. While acknowledging the immense value of the civic work already being done at colleges and universities, the report suggests that these endeavors have laid a partial foundation for civic learning but

have not been enough to foster a culture of engagement within higher education. The authors assert that in order to create a pervasive culture of engagement within higher education, civic learning must become a central part of *every* college student's education.

While our courses were not necessarily framed in terms of civic engagement, this notion of service learning as "civic involvement and public engagement" naturally "clicked" for many of our students. One student, Lexi, who undertook an independent study project with Learning Together following Jenn's class, said that her "best experience" with service learning was "the moment it made me question the construct of 'citizenship.'" Interviewed for this piece, she elaborated,

> It [service learning] made me re-evaluate everything I thought I knew and felt comfortable with regarding my identity. One of the biggest challenges that I faced during my Learning Together experience was trying to explain aspects of my own culture. It was not a challenge I originally predicted prior to my initial experience with service learning in general because I realized I did not always have a concrete answer.

The question of "citizenship" came up during one of the lessons in the adult classroom at Learning Together, but its association with identity more broadly speaks to the feminist intervention potential of personal narrative as a strategy in the composition classroom. The experiences of Lexi and her classmates, as well as those documented in *Women's Stories of Literacy: A Writing Project Featuring Refugee and Immigrant Woman and High Point University Students*, demonstrate Royster and Kirsch's (2012) suggestion that:

> One strategy might be to use our classrooms as innovative experimental sites in recognizing that while we are tacking out into the world, the imperative may be simultaneously to tack in as we consider the presence of the world at home. We look toward the world, but simultaneously we have the opportunity to look at the world in us—within our nation, in our communities, in our classrooms. (p. 127)

What may at first glance appear to be a very simple concept—citizenship— is revealed to be far more nuanced for both our students and the students in the Learning Together classroom as they reflect on their own identities, stories, and the individual journeys that brought them to this shared space. Attempting to define the term "citizenship" became much more than a simple exercise in vocabulary building. Reflecting on what it means to be a "citizen" and the social constructs related to our identities created a situation where students could

think more deeply about "civic awareness" and the need to advocate for change in their own communities.

When students become aware of their roles as advocates for social change, it then becomes possible to move past general conceptions of service in relation to civic engagement and citizenship, toward a more defined sense of activism. This collection's aim of aligning feminist and rhetoric and composition specialists to initiate or build activism through campus-community partnerships is something that we have found incredibly valuable in our work with Learning Together and other community organizations. The institutional partnerships between the English department and the service learning and women's and gender studies programs have allowed us to build more deeply sustained community partnerships. Parks (2014) argues that composition, as a field, has turned away from political activism and "settled for a soft vision of progressive change, a vision that at best produces a hesitant and halting trek across a neoliberal landscape eager to validate our students and our own 'protestations' as a sign of rich democratic debate" (p. 506). While we do not dispute Parks's claim that rhetorical agency has become a prevalent stand-in for genuine advocacy and action, the chapters in this collection offer examples of how the activist ethos deeply ingrained within women's studies and feminist composition theory can help reinvigorate the political aims of community partnerships and community literacy projects within writing studies. Moreover, the learning together approach we describe serves as a potential model that we hope will help others work toward social justice goals through sustained campus-community partnerships.

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