

*I*n this essay, an inquiry into WPA self-representation and identity formation, I examine the ways in which we have, over time, represented ourselves—how we have formed and are forming our professional and organizational identity via WPA scholarship and its implicit and overt models of the WPA position—and the locations we have occupied—the figurative and literal professional memberships we have sought, found, and, to some extent, neglected. The ways in which the position has been imagined, the identities assigned and deflected, the communities invoked and excluded—these have a scholarly and organizational history, the study of which shows the different ideological agendas that have surfaced over time and the identities which today contend for dominance. I hope that examination of attempts to situate the position may lead to increased bridge-building, of the sort increasingly seen between WPA and MLA and ADE, certainly, but also of a more disciplinary and collegial sort: scholarly bridges between WPA theory and the larger rhetoric-composition enterprise, and institutional bridges that support WPA interests across a range of campus types. In the following pages, I hope briefly to trace the history of WPA identity-formation and to show that the WPA is

*Identity and
Location:
A Study of
WPA Models,
Memberships,
and Agendas*

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(in) a position that is always in process: despite dominant WPA narratives, organizational hegemonies, and the push for professionalization, WPA identity is continually remade. Such self-conscious attention to how the WPA operates in institutional and professional relations can, perhaps, give us increased awareness of what our future agendas ought to be.

I. Foundational Representations

In 1999, *Writing Program Administration* marks its twentieth year of publication. Over this twenty-year period, the literature on WPA-related issues forms a pattern of increasing self-consciousness, reflected in a growing critical meta-discourse on the WPA position itself. Less than ten years into the journal's existence, the initial conception of the WPA as a unitary figure-position is joined by a proliferation of studies that treat the position as a dispersed range of activities and roles, situated within and delimited by disciplinary and social forces. This is the post-unitary WPA, a complication of the position from single and static to multi-positioned and multiply located. In this period we also see efforts to locate the position in a way that reflects a particular agenda, forming the foundation of a dominant WPA model.

The evolving representations of the position are embedded in phases of WPA scholarship, a typology of which has been provided by former WPA editor Ken Bruffee in his 1985 article "The WPA as (Journal) Writer: What the Record Reveals." Bruffee reviews the contents of the WPA journal for the preceding five years and organizes them into three categories: a straightforward "how-to" category, characterized by articles on particular administrative topics and practices; "contextual how-to" articles, which deal with "the way elements in a program are organized, articulated, and sustained" (6); and articles relating to professional identity, that of both the WPA position and the national organization. Using Bruffee's taxonomy, we can identify not only three types of articles, but three ways of being for the WPA, representations which move along a continuum of identity-formation.

Scholarship in the first category establishes a kind of WPA self-consciousness, though its treatment of identity is restricted to a form of nominalism. In the early years of the journal, one of the central, intentional

purposes of such works was to delimit the field and define the position, which was then of fairly recent vintage, given the founding dates of the organization (1976) and journal (1979). Bruffee writes elsewhere that WPA scholarship at the end of the 1970s and into the early 1980s took on the tasks of "identify[ing] ourselves professionally...identify[ing] our needs and the nature of the particular skills we needed to acquire in order to do our jobs adequately...[and] identify[ing] each other" ("Editorial" 11). It is the task-based nature of the process that defines the early period; as with current-traditional rhetoric, WPA scholarship was, in its earliest phases, innocent of contexts that would later become apparent givens—of things such as disciplinary and institutional status. The current-traditional WPA was/is a describer of programs and procedures, and his/her identity was/is tied to these tasks in an integral way that does not invite interrogation. In this embodiment, WPA and program are often one, as I remember being the case in my first professional position, at UCLA, where Richard Lanham, in the first few years, was UCLA Writing Programs—it was "his" in a proprietary way. Location and identity were, at that point, fairly uncomplicated matters.

Such uncritical identity formations are quickly outgrown—people moved on or were deposed—and the growing exchange of self-descriptions allowed for more dialogic consideration of shared topics, with the result that what Bruffee calls "contextual how-to" articles, his second category, came into being. In these, we see movement away from earlier isolated tasks and claims of universality ("[W]e have developed a system of [textbook] evaluation that for five years has proved effective and enlightening. This system can be adapted to fit any size department and any departmental policy"; Gopen 17) and toward discussion of the means of confronting what was an increasingly evident set of complex relationships ("[The authors] underscore the dynamic nature of writing programs at the same time that they note their complexity [and recognize] that no one method is sufficient for evaluating any writing program...[T]hey endorse a paradigm of choices which recognizes the appropriateness of different methods of evaluation for different situations"; Gere 41). While the journal's practice has come largely to exclude the first category of discussion, this second continues (see Glau,

Robertson, Chase), and with it implicit reference to the WPA as traditional unitary administrator. In such articles the WPA is a figure who operates within a system of specific institutional processes—placement and assessment, program design, and TA training, for example. The focus is on particular administrative tasks and the individuating factors that must go into a WPA's contextual approach to them; the rhetorical construct is an individual WPA/writing program addressing other individual WPAs and writing programs with categorically similar needs and concerns, reinscribing over the notion of context a totalized position and field. Robertson's "Teach, Not Test: A Look at a New Writing Placement Procedure," published in the journal in 1994, best illustrates a recent example of this category. She describes how she and her colleagues addressed her university's request that they re-examine their placement exam procedures, ties her critique of then-current practice to a particular school of thought on the writing process which her program had since adopted, and explains how the placement procedure was altered to elicit the kind of student writing emphasized in the program's curriculum. In her conclusion she states

I am not suggesting that other programs adopt our specific procedures wholesale...What I am suggesting is that individual writing programs consider developing their own placement procedures that accurately reflect their own writing classes. In other words, Stony Brook's experiment provides a general paradigm for future placement processes...Whatever procedures individual programs develop can reflect their own pedagogy and philosophy. (62)

Like process theory itself, "contextual how-to" articles invoke a context based in the individual. Broader social issues, competing values, power relations, and the concept of multiple positions lie beyond the context invoked.

This foundational model of the WPA as a single position/voice located in a particular program which lays claim to a universal representativeness creates the means of a dominant discourse. Those who speak come to speak for others; the identity they present comes to be the identity assigned to

others. And, in the early period of WPA scholarship, those who spoke from this unitary position spoke from a research-university location—a location of academic status and authority which they invoked to validate their voices and models. The earliest texts presented descriptive studies of writing programs—descriptions which were offered as, in varying degrees, definitive models of writing programs. Historically, then, there has been an attempt to naturalize the research university as the "home" of writing programs and the WPA position, imposing the research university location as the single world view, totalizing WPA experience and making the dominant context seem the natural one.

If we look at the samples used in descriptive works on writing programs by Witte and Faigley, in 1983, Connolly and Vilardi, in 1986, and especially Hartzog, also 1986 (Figure 1), we see a very powerful identification being made for the position and field, one that allies it with a particular location and set of values. The Witte and Faigley, Connolly and Vilardi, and Hartzog samples include only four-year schools and universities. Hartzog's includes only Carnegie Research I-level institutions. In the Preface to her book, she states, "[This study] is not, nor does it pretend to be, a comprehensive study of writing programs in the country today. I have selected AAU [Association of American Universities] programs not because they are truly representative of all programs, including those at two- and four-year colleges" (x). Hartzog explains that she selected the programs studied for three reasons: 1) they are located in "major research universities"; 2) their programs have "visibility" and "influence"; and 3) using them aligns the "status and identity" of composition "not only with teaching but also with research." It is not surprising that the three programs in the sample selected for in-depth case studies are those at Harvard, Penn, and Chapel Hill. Given the status of Hartzog's text as one of the earliest—that is, foundational—studies of writing program administration, it seems clear that, despite the circumlocutory disclaimer, we have a text that lays claim to the power of defining WPA identity, and chooses to locate identity in high-status research universities. The power to dominate—to be visible and influential, rather than to be literally representative—is the central value in the project.

The Witte and Faigley study shares this elitist impulse to an extent,

Figure 1

Witte/Faigley Sample (1983)		
Miami University*	University of Northern Iowa	
University of California-San Diego*	University of Texas	
Connolly/Vilardi Sample (1986)		
Bard College	Grinnell College	U. Mass-Amherst
Beaver College	Illinois State University	University of Michigan*
Brooklyn College/CUNY	Jackson State University	U. of Montevallo
Brown University*	La Salle University	U. of New Hampshire
Carnegie-Mellon University*	Miami University*	U. of Pittsburgh*
Cornell University	Michigan Technological Univ.	U. of Utah
Eastern Oregon State University	St. Edward's University	U. of Washington*
George Mason University	SUNY-Stony Brook	Western Kentucky U.
Georgetown University	U. of Maryland-College Park*	Whittier College
Hartzog Sample (1986)		
Brown University	Purdue University	U. Missouri-Columbia*
California Institute of Technology	Stanford University	U. of Nebraska-Lincoln
Carnegie-Mellon University	Tulane University	UNC-Chapel Hill
Case Western Reserve University	U. of California-Berkeley	University of Oregon
Catholic University	U. of California-Los Angeles	U. of Pennsylvania
Clark University	U. of California-San Diego*	U. of Pittsburgh*
Duke University	University of Chicago	University of Rochester
Harvard University	U. of Colorado-Boulder	USC*
Indiana University	U. of Illinois-Urbana	University of Virginia*
Iowa State University	University of Iowa*	U. Wisconsin-Madison
MIT	University of Kansas	Vanderbilt University
McGill University	U. of Maryland-College Park	Washington University
Michigan State University*	University of Michigan*	Yale University
Princeton University	University of Minnesota	
Neel Sample (1978)		
Arizona State University	I. Sargeant Reynolds Comm. College	U. Missouri-Columbia*
Brown University*	Michigan State University*	USC *
Cal. State Coll.-Dominguez Hills	Ohio State University	U. of Texas-Austin
Central College	Queens College/CUNY	University of Virginia*
City College/CUNY	University of Iowa*	U. of Washington*
Dallas Cnty. Comm. Coll. District	University of Michigan*	University of Wyoming*

* = represented in 2-3 samples

since the sample they use also includes only Class I research universities, though their choice was restricted to schools that had conducted a certain model of program evaluation; they write, however, "We might have chosen other studies [and so sites of study] as well, but these four serve to raise the most important issues evaluators face" (8). The result is an indirect claim that the research university is the site of the most important issues in what the text, via its title, claims as its milieu—college writing programs, with "college" used as a synonym for "university." This same milieu is invoked by Connolly and Vilardi. Their claim to representative validity is close to

absolute; the Introduction states, "These twenty-eight descriptions of recently revised programs reflect changes that are occurring throughout the country. Cumulatively, the essays provide what an ethnographer might call a 'thick description' of the culture of our composition classrooms" (1).

The sample used in Neel's 1978 *Freshman Composition*, which appeared in the MLA series *Options for the Teaching of English*, a series devoted to pedagogy, does not reflect the same move to establish a certain identity evident in the later samples (Figure 1). Neel writes, "The eighteen [composition programs] represented in this book were chosen not because they are the 'best' but because they offer an overview of the ways different institutions deal with the teaching of writing" (vii). He includes two community college programs and two four-year college programs; his work shows a bias toward the research university, certainly, but more openness to inclusion of difference than any of the later studies. His work is not foundational to later research in the same way as Hartzog's, Connolly and Vilardi's, and Witte and Faigley's have been—that is, it is not part of a dominant discourse about writing programs and program administration.¹

This foundational location of the position within the research university actually reflects a minority situation, as review of WPA membership data shows. Using a recent membership list, I compiled a kind of profile of the membership (Figure 2), including membership numbers, gender distribution, and how many institutions currently represented in the organization are state, how many private schools; what the distribution is according to institutional type (doctoral, comprehensive/Baccalaureate, two-year/community college); and what the distribution is according to difficulty of admission (in other words, degree of eliteness).² Of the approximately 3700 institutions of higher education in the country, about 12% have WPA representation, though this figure rises to almost 20% if we look only at four-year colleges and universities. Only about 3% of two-year/community colleges have WPA affiliation. Overall, the current WPA organization is a mid-range enterprise. Twelve of the institutions included in the Hartzog sample are not currently members of the WPA. Unfortunately, membership data from past years have not been kept, but I think it is fair to surmise that these schools were unlikely ever to have been affiliated. I say

Figure 2

WPA Membership Data*

Membership Total: 789	
491 female (62%) 298 male (38%)	
Number of Institutions Represented: 429	U.S. Total: @ 3700; = 12%
[Not able to identify: <49]	
Doctoral Institutions: 147 (34%)	U.S. Total:
Comprehensive/Baccalaureate: 229 (53%)	Doctoral/Four-Year: @2000; = 19%
State Supported: 222 (60%)	
Independent/Private: 152 (40%)	
Two-Year/Community College: 43 (10%)	Two-Year/Community: @1700; = 3%
Other: 3 Non-US: 7	
Admissions Rating (where available; does not include 2-year/community colleges or non-US):	
Most Difficult: 15 Very Difficult: 50 Moderately Difficult: 261 Minimally Difficult: 25	
Noncompetitive: 22	

* The membership list frequently provides home as opposed to institutional address information, and so in the case of forty nine members I was unable, despite non-privacy-invasive investigative efforts, to identify the member's home institution. This does not mean, however, that the "Number of Institutions Represented" total should be +49, since many institutions have multiple WPA members. I estimate that the actual total number is 450.

that not as a judgment about these schools or their writing programs, but as evidence of the point the membership data make: even within the WPA organization, the foundational representation of the WPA position refigures reality to favor a particular agenda.

The membership numbers in relation to national numbers for two-year/community colleges further suggest a *de facto* institutional bias. The unitary WPA model seems to disenfranchise those who do not participate in the research-for-tenure process, a bias unintentionally perpetuated in the organization-sponsored "Intellectual Work" document (Schwegler et al.), which represents WPA work as scholarly, specialized, and defined by a particular location. It assumes research university interests as central to the organization. It does not overtly present itself as speaking for only one sector of the organization, but its discourse ties it to a particular audience, the sites of tenure competition and the traditional hierarchy.³

II. Power and Representation

This model of the unitary WPA located in the research university persists in the earliest works in Bruffee's third category, which consists of

articles that relate to professional identity and which represent, directly or indirectly, the WPA and the WPA's work in a way that enables and encourages critical perceptions of it from a broader context than practice and description. The third category represents the WPA position as institutionally embedded and socially active and acted upon. Such articles, Bruffee says, provide the "ability to criticize ourselves" (7), "[help] us tell ourselves who we are" (9), and entail self-reflexive writing. From the mid-1980s, we see a growing complication of the unitary WPA model. As the model shifts, the agenda moves from a preoccupation with status-based professionalization of the field to multiple reformulations of WPA identity.

The earliest examples of self-critically aware articles might be termed traditional-conservative, since they maintain the unitary model even as they call for situational change. Maxine Hairston's calls for secession, in her 1985 CCCC Chair's address and subsequent CCC article as well as in a 1988 WPA article on the topic, treat the WPA as a scholar and institutional figure whose primary agenda is to professionalize the field and the positions of its instructors. Richard Bullock's 1987 WPA article, "When Administration Becomes Scholarship: The Future of Writing Program Administration," calls for recognition of the scholarship of the WPA and WPA work, drawing a distinction between the English Department perception of WPAs as "caretakers of a slice of bureaucracy" and his view of WPAs as "experts and scholars testing and refining their knowledge in the practical arena of application" (14). His article anticipates the "Intellectual Work" document: published over ten years ago, it treats WPA work not as administrative tasks to be seen in local relation to universal paradigms, but as an intellectual challenge to disciplinary tradition, activities implicating a much larger group than writing instructors and a much broader social setting than writing programs. Still, the WPA in the work of Bullock and Hairston is an isolated figure battling for recognition of his or her work, program, and discipline, politically savvy by necessity, competing in productivity with literature faculty but committed to teaching in a way that maintains a distinction between composition and literature. Hairston does not treat the WPA position as an object of critical study per se; we see in her articles no sense of the position as itself a social construct, though she does speak of

the WPA as a potential agent of change. Bullock's article does examine the WPA position self-consciously, positioning it for critical evaluation, though in the limited relation of the politics of rank in literature departments and the academy as a whole. The agenda in this model is to acquire exchange value for the position within the system of academic status economics.

Perhaps because arguments in this category tend to be polemical, like Hairston's, and so based in a binary value system, and because they are frequently cited as "seminal" pieces, they have helped create what later scholars have critiqued as a (masculine) gendered WPA position. More emphatically than Bullock, authors Gary Olson and Joseph Moxley in their CCC article, "Directing Freshman Composition: The Limits of Authority," define the WPA in relation to institutional power and authority—to the issue of rank within a hierarchical system. They see as problematic the conditions of appointment that constrain the WPA's authority, a primary limitation they cite being the lack of tenure for most WPAs of the era. In this sense, their argument is an argument about status and authority, an issue of academic social class, of one's rank in the hierarchy and the power that attends it (or fails to); and about authority, the degree to which one can wield influence in decisions on departmental and institutional practices and policies. In their model, position is inextricably linked to power defined through a hierarchical matrix of rank and authority—what I'll only somewhat facetiously call the "power tools" approach to WPA identity. The power tools school constructs the WPA as an entity that must muscle its way into the established class system of academia. In this, it supports and perpetuates traditional notions of academic class divisions: the categories of tenured and nontenured, of assistant, associate, full; but also division defined by access or lack of it, an agentic policy-making role or a passive subject position—in short, all the ways in which privilege and authority pertaining to rank are typically played out. But in this expansion of the WPA context the article clearly stands apart from "contextual how-to" pieces, taking as it does a social context for its argument and seeing the position as a part of a class dynamic. The attention has shifted away from tasks and paradigms; the position itself is understood as a nexus of power relations, and the challenge is to empower the individual so located.

This masculine-conservative identity that posits a unitary WPA seeking entry into the traditional academic system continues as one way of being for the WPA. It is central to Ed White's "Use It or Lose It: Power and the WPA," which employs warfare metaphors to urge WPAs, by any means necessary, one might say, to seize power, and hence authority and privilege, via commando-like responses to challenges or threats to the WPA's position or program, and Lynn Bloom's satirical "I Want a Writing Director" (a take-off of Judy Syfert's "I Want a Wife"), a piece that depicts the WPA as an exploited director-wife, thus equating powerlessness and the feminine, and thus supporting the masculine power tools model. The current professionalization movement in composition/rhetoric is at least in part a product of this model, if we consider its relation to the professional organizations' policy statements, from the CCCC Statement of Principles and Standards to the WPA's Portland Resolution, documents which, in whole or in part, were intended to be used precisely as power tools in negotiating a more definitively entrenched place in the hierarchy for the individual WPA. In this sense, the documents are conservative in nature: they conserve a representation of the (unitary) position defined in relation to the traditional English Department, and maintain the opposition so constructed. In Christine Hult's 1995 article, "Politics Redux: The Organization and Administration of Writing Programs," we again see a representation of a WPA as an authoritarian figure who is the emblem of professional knowledge, for whom writing instructors labor and whose knowledge they reflect, and whose success is measured first by his or her ability to control the writing program and deliver a product to the English Department and university, and second by his or her ascension into "higher" administrative positions—chair, dean, and so on, an idealization of the position as part of the traditional academic hierarchy. In this hierarchy, the representation of the WPA tends to be monolithic; such works treat the position relationally, but the set of relations remains constrained by its location in the academic status system, the research university.

III. The Post-Unitary WPA

A means for considering the position from a larger critical perspective

had earlier been provided by Susan Miller's trenchant 1991 book, *Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition*. Miller lays out in strong, powerfully argued form the layers of co-optation that inhere in the field and its organization, including WPA identity-formation. She incisively discusses the split between self-identity and program identity—a split that reflects the traditional-conservative agenda—and argues that this agreement to be an isolated outsider seeking admission to the system serves the dominant hegemony's interest, continuing the dissociation of high and low classes through the intermediary WPA position. Rejecting the traditional WPA model as the monolithic co-dependent of literary studies, her critique offers a post-unitary WPA model.

Also in 1991, a second example of critical self-consciousness appeared in Joseph Janangelo's WPA article, "Somewhere Between Disparity and Despair: WPAs, Image Problems, and the MLA Job Information List." The first line of the article cites the irony of the WPA position, a mode of being defined by self-consciousness. Janangelo challenges his readers to confront the disparity between our self-image as a professionalized group and our private willingness to cooperate with the distorted perceptions of us perpetuated by the MLA *Job Information List*. While greatly different from Miller's direct critique, Janangelo's article identifies the self-created and self-perpetuating nature of the traditional WPA position and indirectly identifies the professional organization as itself implicated in sustaining a problematic representation of the position. In the years following these two works, and in reaction against articles of a traditional-conservative bent, an increasing number of articles have appeared which might be characterized as reformist, in that they attempt to alter WPA ways of being that promote division and hierarchy by reformulating WPA identity.

Many such works have come out of a feminist theoretical orientation, beginning with Marcia Dickson's piece "Directing Without Power" and Rebecca Moore Howard's "Power Revisited; or, How We Became a Department," both in 1993, through Hildy Miller's 1996 article "Postmasculinist Directions in Writing Program Administration," which again suggests a feminist/collaborative redefinition of power and

leadership—of WPA identity—along the lines of cooperation and flexibility. These authors seek new organizational patterns, new means of socially embedding discussion and decision-making about writing programs. In 1994, in "Decentering the WPA," I argued for an alternative definition of the WPA as a collective entity or representative position within a system of collaborative administration; in 1995, Barbara Cambridge and Ben McClelland's article "From Icon to Partner," appeared, seeking, as the title suggests, to redefine the WPA position, in their words, "changing the basic architecture of leadership and the responsibilities of the WPA" (155)—both efforts at reconceiving and relocating the position.

The above-cited texts take a reformulation of the position and its location as their focus. In the earlier works, such as Dickson's, critique of the position is implicit, for the most part. The level of self-consciousness is obviously strong, since the position is subjected to a critical evaluation, but the purpose is to reform and relocate it, to examine the set of relations in which it might operate—a conception of a multiple, relational WPA. Dickson identifies a WPA model that features no absolute claim or prescriptions for the office or its goals, dismantling Olson and Moxley's assumption that control is the key indicator of WPA power. Resisting their rigid, prescriptive, conflict-focused model, she calls for a more fluid notion of WPAs and of writing programs; she argues for local conditions as the guideline to program structure, with the issue of control decentered, replaced by collaborative enactments of WPA work. Dickson argues that "the only way to direct a program is to let the individual program shape itself according to the beliefs of the people who make it up and existing power structures of the institution in which it is located" (147), to "let the program grow through the concerted efforts of the members of the community." Articles that rework the problems identified by the power-tools school treat issues of power and authority as conflicts to be undone by decentering the position of the WPA, allowing an escape from the managerial slot and avoidance of the function that Susan Miller critiques as the WPA's institutional position—the mediation of the high and the low. Reformist approaches forefront the work of the field, not the WPA, and so avoid divisive hierarchical categories, without reducing this work to a set of

administrative tasks or narrowing it to the activities of the research scholar. Working within the institution's set structures leads to power-sharing, a process clearly described by Howard as well. WPA-work replaces the unitary figure and a binarized location in a literature-composition or other status system.

Although the traditional-conservative model remains current, WPA-work conceived as multiple and multiply situated is increasingly apparent as a competing alternative formation. In Bloom, Daiker, and White's 1996 book *Composition in the Twenty-First Century: Crisis and Change*, many of the essays critique the ways of being which the traditional WPA representation encodes and call for a different sense of the position. John Trimbur, in "Writing Instruction and the Politics of Professionalization," resists that aspect of the WPA representation that partakes of the traditional, citing the oppressive role the WPA is then cast into: "WPAs, precisely because of their professional knowledges, are invariably implicated in acts of surveillance that constitute both staff and students as 'docile bodies'... The WPA's professional identity...is inseparable from the micropolitics of discipline—differentiating, measuring, hierarchizing its subjects" (142-143). In "The Long Revolution in Composition," Ann Gere argues that "our thinking about WPAs remains remarkably static," and she urges us to "reconceptualize WPAs in terms of multiple subject positions," for "WPAs obstruct the long revolution when they identify with the existing order by accepting a position in the hierarchy" (127). Her desire to see the position as multiple, as itself a site of research, adding a "reflective quality" to administration, is an idea whose heritage we can trace back to Bruffee.

A recent example of this reflective quality which calls attention to shifting identities and self-conscious position(ing) can be seen in an article by Wendy Bishop and Gay Lynn Crossley, ultimately published in *WPA* in 1996 as "How to Tell a Story of Stopping: The Complexities of Narrating a WPA's Experience." The road to publication was a rough one for this article. In its original form, it was a long, personally detailed narrative of a WPA's experience. The first round of *WPA* editorial board reviewers were split in their opinions on its appropriateness. The editor sent it to all the board members for discussion at its pending meeting at CCCC, and again opinion

was split, with those having negative reactions seeing it as a "victim's narrative" and others reading it as a narrative that revealed the political forces that affect us professionally and personally, giving the lie to any division of the personal and professional and highlighting issues of gender, rank, and power. Readers of the much-edited published version can infer these editorial responses from comments the authors make in the article's self-consciously abrupt ending. The article challenges the WPA and the WPA organization in ways that are unfamiliar. It transgresses boundaries and conventions; it speaks hysterically, in Helene Cixous' sense of the term. It is self-conscious to a degree not before seen in our professional literature. Like Bullock's earlier article on the scholarly work of the WPA, the Bishop and Crossley piece made people uncomfortable. Bullock's article evoked a hostile response from at least one *WPA* reviewer, and he, too, chose to include the reaction in his revised ending to the piece, in his case by quoting the reviewer: "WPAs are paid very good money for [their] 'expertise.' To exact it as 'scholarship' is about as logical as paying scholars administrators' salaries because they publish articles and books" (17). By including this instance of resistance to his then-new representation of the WPA, he tagged his conception of the position as a radical departure from the then-prevailing notion of the WPA as office staff. Bishop and Crossley's piece does the same for a more recent example of resistance to a turn of WPA identity.

In addition to feminist versions of the post-unitary WPA model, which treat identity and location in ways beyond the unitary-binary, the "collaborationist" stance of the power tools model in relation to academic and social class elicited critical response from more leftist, more theoretically radical voices in the profession. These consist of post-Marxist, poststructural notions of destabilization and revolution in the elitist system of either the discipline or higher education overall. This stance has been termed the "New Abolitionism," though the "death wish" school is a perhaps compatible metaphor. In this strand, identity gives way to location as the focus of concern; the position itself is ultimately to be dissolved, since it is the site of class division and exclusion. The dis-location of the WPA is intended to disrupt the established order, destroying one foundation of academic inequality.

One argument that reflects this school is Clyde Moneyhun's article, "All Dressed Up and OTM: One ABD's View of the Profession," a scathing challenge to the credentialing function represented by the increasing numbers of composition/rhetoric PhD programs. He attacks the "managerial class of the composition industry" (406) whose "primary institutional function is to husband the resources of comp programs and to give vocational training to future rhet/comp managers" (407). Raging against the class divisions exacerbated by the professionalization of the field, he calls for the creation of "a whole new job description"; he writes, "I hope that I can work toward my own obsolescence and find a new way to be useful to the community that created me"; he seeks its "radical transformation" (411). Through critical self-consciousness, Moneyhun's WPA deconstructs itself. This WPA death wish also emerges in Sharon Crowley's provocative discussions of the universal requirement. She calls on us to separate ourselves from the term "composition," in effect, to relocate ourselves and our work. Crowley speaks at the level of the field, infrequently touching on the WPA position, but when she does so she uses the term "composition directors" (231), clearly allying the traditional conception of the position with oppressive structures. Crowley's critique is consistent with Moneyhun's analysis of the academic superstructure of exclusiveness and self-serving hierarchical practices. Each seeks to transform the power relations of the academy, each invokes a death wish for business as usual, an abandonment of the position currently occupied, and each locates this deconstructive effort in the dissolution of the traditional-conservative WPA model. Together they offer real innovations in the historical process of WPA identity-formation, expanding the possibilities for post-unitary models. Their articles have helped make what is a literally integral issue for the WPA—consideration of an end to traditional writing programs—a topic that exists in terms transcending the WPA community, for they did not appear in *WPA* but in *Rhetoric Review* (Moneyhun) and *JAC* (Crowley).

Moving from a monolithic position to a multipositioned agency, divided, multiple, positional as opposed to a position, deconstructed, we might say, our self-representation has been a process of unraveling the assumptions implicit in and attendant to the unitary-figure model. This is not

a positivist history, however; the trend toward the theoretical unthinking of the WPA position cannot be seen through a mythic frame of "progress." Already the scholarly discussion includes accounts of post-unitary, dislocated WPAs who note the problems and ambiguities that accompany the shift in models (see Gradin; Harrington et al.). What promise exists lies in the expanded self-questioning made possible by the evolution/devolution of WPA identity. Just as examination of identity master-narratives in WPA scholarship helps to suggest the insufficiency of the unitary model, a study of WPA community and membership opens up self-critical questions about contending locations.

IV. The Problem of Agency

The conversations that over time have led to a complex understanding of the WPA position have been almost entirely local conversations, taking place in the WPA journal, at WPA conferences, in WPA-related edited collections. In other words, they have been located in a rarefied context and so have been limited primarily to the rhetorical parlor of WPA authors, and thus larger notions of community and membership, both symbolic and literal, have not often had key roles to play in establishing WPA identity and location. But changing conceptions of the position open up a broadened sense of community and the possibility of new ways of engaging with the larger field. Through such effects, the multiple WPA model may lead to creative alliances, shared interests, and topics of common concern, all of which may help break down what seems a current condition of WPA insularity and restricted agency.

In any field, the existence of a field-dedicated journal can lead to an evolving identification with an exclusive specialization—to, in short, professional exclusivity. By its very nature, our professional outlet, the WPA journal, helps define our field in a way that has established certain kinds of exclusive knowledge and practices. Such exclusivity can lead to self-containing professional insularity, in that the existence of the journal prevents the dissemination and recognition of writing program theory in the larger professional-journal venues. "Measuring" this kind of professional insularity is a challenge, since what "counts" as WPA-work is difficult to

delimit and open to debate. If we use the journal's own "Author's Guide," which includes the caution that its list of appropriate topics is "meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive," WPA-work includes "the organization, administration, practices, and aims of college and university writing programs," specifically, the "education and support of writing teachers, the intellectual and administrative work of WPAs, the situation of writing programs...the programmatic implications of current theories, technologies, and research; relationships between WPAs and other administrators, between writing and other academic programs, and among high school, two-year, and four-year college writing programs; placement; assessment; and the professional status of WPAs."

Even with this expansive definition of WPA-work, it is difficult to find much evidence of cross-talk in the major rhetoric-composition journals. In the past ten years, *College Composition and Communication* has published only eight articles that have a WPA-related focus: two articles on the WPA's professional situation; two on writing centers; two on WAC-related topics; and two on assessment. While clearly reflecting major strands of WPA work, the articles do not in most cases invoke the writing program as their context. The two articles on the professional status of the WPA—Olson and Moxley's "Limits of Authority," in 1989, and Lynn Bloom's two-page satire, "I Want a Writing Director," in 1992—are the only pieces that specifically address the topic of program administration/administrators. Wyche-Smith and Rose's 1990 "One Hundred Ways to Make the Wyoming Resolution a Reality," which appeared in the Staffroom Interchange section, addresses the potential role of WPAs and Writing Center administrators in enacting the Resolution's goals, thus acknowledging the existence and potential agency of the position/location.

Citations are typically used in faculty evaluations to measure a mixture of quality and influence; using this admittedly questionable measurement device, we again see evidence of limited WPA participation in communities beyond the WPA. Among the CCC pieces, the two writing center articles, one of the WAC pieces, and the two assessment pieces cite one WPA article each. The Olson and Moxley article, the piece I consider to be most clearly WPA-related, cites four WPA articles. Seven of these nine

citations refer to WPA articles ten or more years old. Another WPA citation appears in an article on collaboration (also referring to a more-than-ten-year-old piece), and *Writing Program Administration* is included in a 1988 annotated list of journals in rhetoric-composition. The rate of WPA-related topics in *College English* over the last decade is much the same. Of ten articles on (arguably) WPA-work topics, none deal with WPA professional status, one with writing centers, four with WAC, and one with assessment. Of these, the writing-center article cites no WPA articles; two of the four WAC pieces cite WPA articles, for a total of three cites, two of them post-1990; and the one assessment article cites the author's co-written 1986 WPA article. An article on plagiarism not specifically related to WPA-work cites a 1992 WPA piece on the topic. In *College English*, WPA articles were cited five times in ten years.

As a reader of the WPA journal, an author whose work has appeared in it, and a member of the editorial board, I know that the reason for the low rate of citation is not the quality of the work published in the journal. Insularity, a limited location, seems to me the more likely explanation. Discussion about WAC, writing centers, and assessment takes place, if still infrequently, in the two most widely disseminated professional journals, but such topics as the freshman curriculum, writing requirements, multiculturalism, professional politics, standards, and so on take place with almost no mention of the writing program, the very structure that, in most English Departments, in most schools, is the institutional location of struggle over and implementation of policies related to these topics, and the site at which policies related to these topics most critically affect students. The self-conscious WPA position, in unitary or post-unitary form, is rarely recognized as a perspective relevant to others in the rhetoric-composition community.

This calls into question the existence of anything like WPA agency: how can we do what the Intellectual Work document calls for, which is to "advance and enact disciplinary knowledge within the field of rhetoric and composition"? Enacting is clear; we do that in our program design, papers, and articles; but advancing—that suggests some reciprocity, and what the means is of this reciprocal relationship to the larger field seems elusive. We have a kind of "shadow" relationship to the field, in that as enactors of it we

incorporate its knowledge, but how is our knowledge—is our knowledge—redirected into the research activities of composition/rhetoric scholars? (Where) do we see discussion of such topics as program design in relation to critical pedagogy, for example? TA training and post-process theory? Writing programs and race? And if the mainstream rhetoric-composition journals rarely publish WPA-related articles, if they redirect submissions to the WPA journal and if we ourselves write directly for the journal, then the result is that we have little means of influencing the larger field, little power to create the interstices that would allow our knowledge to influence that of the rest of the rhetoric-composition community. As WPAs in the WPA publishing in the WPA journal, we are frequently—sometimes, it seems, exclusively—left talking to ourselves.

Anne Ruggles Gere has called the WPA position “overdetermined.” To such external control we have added a degree of self-created marginalization within our professional organization and rhetorical communities: in forming ourselves into an organization, in sponsoring a journal, we withdraw from other locations and identities. My goal, however, in calling (WPA) attention to our own insularity is not then to suggest specific courses of action to expand location and agency (though making inroads into other journals’ conversations is one obvious ambition we might adopt). Instead, considering the path we have followed to arrive at the post-unitary WPA, we seem in a position to adopt the kind of negative capability Joseph Janangelo calls for:

It is in validating the ambiguity and tentativeness of...self-definition that I see a potential strength in writing programs’ difference from the academy. I see a potential strength in being “in limbo” and in flux...That state of limbo—of being in flux and undefined—frees us from certain restrictions such as narrowly defined hiring criteria and scholarly specialization... [I]t is beneficial for writing programs to enact the process of self-definition as difference in its primary sense—to delay it in time—rather than to rush toward a premature and potentially limiting definition of self. (14-15)

As individuals and as a professional organization, a post-unitary WPA

identity and location let us recognize “multiplicit[ies] of positions and allegiances” (143), as feminist theorist Caren Kaplan terms it, and, as bell hooks puts it, let us find the “value of marginal space[s].” This is a post-unitary agenda that can be carried out through our own multiple locations, and which can allow for conversations across our different locations, and which might enable us to speak our WPA-knowledge to others in venues beyond the WPA, and to learn more about WPA-ness in contexts beyond the research university. The hybridization of our location offers the means to break out of insularity and into a non-hierarchical, dynamic professional space, one that can accommodate the diverse identifications evident in our membership base and our multiple locations, as scholars and teachers engaged in, and by, WPA-work.

Notes

1. In the Fall 1997 issue of *WPA*, for instance, Hartzog’s book is cited twice, Connolly and Vilardi’s and Witte and Faigley’s once each, suggesting that their work continues to be seen as authoritative.
2. I used *Peterson’s Guide to Four-Year Colleges* (Princeton: Peterson’s Guides, 1998) as the source of institutional and admission data and U.S. totals. The information available through the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reflects data and totals only through 1994; *Peterson’s Guide* provided the most recent available data.
3. This phenomenon has not gone unnoticed or unchallenged: Janangelo and Hansen’s 1995 *Resituating Writing* includes an article entitled “Two-Year Colleges: Explaining and Claiming Our Majority,” in which the authors, Elizabeth Nist and Helon Raines, state, “We [two-year college composition specialists] believe our work *should* be central to research and scholarship in composition studies and in writing program administration... Being unnamed WPAs should not be viewed by us or by our university colleagues as being uninformed and inexperienced in WPA work” (59). They list eight steps the organization could take to increase inclusiveness and interinstitutional collaboration; their points, officially unaddressed, to my knowledge, show the continuing struggle over WPA identity and location, in scholarship, membership, and community.

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