Reflecting, Expanding, and Challenging: A Bibliographic Exploration of Race, Gender, Ability, Language Diversity, and Sexual Orientation and Writing Program Administration

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In "Reflections on Contributing to a Discipline Through Research and Writing," A. Parasuraman states that specialized scholarly journals that have a narrower scope in terms of content and/or methodology influence a field or discipline through multiple means:

- by offering managerial recommendations and how-to guidelines that have more immediate practical applications;
- by triggering further scholarly discourse and research, which is vital for fueling the discipline's knowledge-generation engines and preserving the robustness of its research and discovery output;
- by presenting new paradigms and providing food for thought to thoughtful practitioners who are at the forefront of advancing the discipline's applications frontiers (315)

With this reflective issue of our specialized scholarly journal, it seems appropriate to utilize Parasuraman's framework as a means of exploring the role the journal has played in the field. It is exactly through Parasuraman's multiple means that *WPA: Writing Program Administration* has, over the past fifty years, addressed race, gender, ability, language diversity, and sexual orientation, individually and programmatically. Ultimately, the journal's publications on race, gender, ability, language, and sexual orientation have reflected, expanded, and collaborated to expand broader conversations in the larger discipline of composition and rhetoric. However, even while fulfilling and ultimately expanding these roles, the journal has not gone far enough.

Utilizing three of Parasuraman's multiple means as an organizational framework, I will explore how and when—and in which context(s)—discussions of race, gender, ability, language and sexual orientation, published in the journal, first reflected the field's perspectives and attitudes, but then began to challenge those attitudes. Finally, by expanding Parasuraman's multiple means of influence, I illustrate how the journal collaborated with members of the WPA community and WPA's governing body to expand on gaps and/or omissions, providing opportunities for evolutionary and revolutionary research and practices.

This bibliographic essay is by no means comprehensive or complete. Instead, I have focused on specific pieces that have been cited as instrumental in various conversations both within and outside of writing program administration. The interconnectedness of identity politics and identity performance, individually and programmatically, does not allow us to separate out any one aspect of race, gender, ability, language diversity, and sexuality as disconnected from one another or from the multiplicity of possible encounters WPAs understand, negotiate, or research as part of the work submitted for publication to the journal.

Beginning around the late 1980s and early to mid-1990s, the journal began to expand its focus to include articles that addressed specific aspects of ability, gender and language diversity. In providing a venue for such work, the journal offered Parasuraman's "managerial recommendations and how-to guidelines" for administrators reflecting the changing demographics of university and thus writing programs.

Susan McLeod and Kathy Jane's Garretson's 1989 article, "The Disabled Student and the Writing Program: A Guide for Administrators" acknowledged while much "thought and effort has recently gone into making college campuses physically accessible for disabled students . . . not as much attention, however, has been given to adjusting classroom practices to make learning itself more accessible to disabled students" (45). Their article provided further research sources and practical guides for WPAs "to give this matter their attention, not only because it is fair and just, but also because it is the law" (45).

Sally Barr-Ebest's 1995 article, "Gender Differences in Writing Program Administration," based on a 1992 research study, compared the similarities and differences between male and female WPAs and found issues of gender inequity. The article reported that male WPAs published more, were paid more, and were more likely to be tenured. Much like McLeod Garretson's article on students with disabilities, Barr-Ebest's article not only reflected problematic issues around gender, ability, and WPA work, but also

opened up gender and ability as specific areas of WPA research and possible publication.

Another key area of publication in this time period was language diversity. While publications on language diversity existed well before the late 80s and early 90s, they generally focused on assessment and placement. Alice Ray's 1988 "ESL Concerns for Writing Program Administrators: Problems and Policies" presented a more research and theory–based approach to understanding language diversity. Key to this piece were the ways in which it not only provided immediate practical application–based materials, but also called for more research on and better-informed writing program administration:

> The necessary components in a writing program that serves second language writers must be: a program and courses that provide and use social context for writing and language development, teachers who know about both writing and language, and assessment that takes into account principles of language acquisition and literacy development. We need to ensure that second language writers, whether international students or new immigrants, have the full benefit of theory and research in both language acquisition and composition. (25)

The next decade saw an increase in publications extending the call for more theoretically grounded language diversity in WPA work and to expanding the conversations on race, gender, and sexual orientation. Three dedicated symposium editions were instrumental in offering Parasuraman's "new paradigms" and "food for thought to thoughtful practitioners" by issuing calls for and publishing articles that have been instrumental in shaping WPA research, scholarship and practice. The ways in which the CWPA's executive board and the CWPA worked in conjunction with the journal's editors to not only publish contentious challenges within the discipline, but also to thoughtfully consider how to address these issues through timely publication was indeed a paradigm shift.

Heading the call for WPAs with stronger theoretical and research roots in language diversity, the journal published a 2006 special issue, entitled "Second Language Writers and Writing Program Administrators." By representing a range of disciplinary perspectives, the editors of this special issue primarily focused on facilitating "the process of integrating second language issues into the field of writing program administration by providing an overview of some of the key issues and by exploring possible approaches to such integration" (Matsuda, Fruit, Lee, and Lamm 12). This publication effectively took the focus away from simply viewing the students' language as an issue to be managed, but instead called for attention to the nuanced

needs of differing populations of ESL students, and the need to design curricula to better meet this demographic shift and the range of student-based needs therein (Preto-Bay and Hansen; Shuck; Friedrich). Instead of seeing the students as problematic, this issue of *WPA* challenged programmatic monolingualism and the ideological implications of programmatic practices that function without consideration for or to linguistic diversity (Shuck). Additionally, this issue provided reviews of key books, with a range of research, and practices that were instrumental in meeting the "calls" to action described in the articles that preceded them (Kapper; Ortmeier-Hooper; Tardy; Thonus).

The publication of the 2009 "Symposium on Diversity and the Intellectual Work of WPAs" furthered the paradigm shift providing "food for thought to thoughtful practitioners" by "purposefully engag[ing] diversity as an area of intellectual administrative work within our categories of work or beyond" (Horning, Dew, and Blalock, "A Symposium" 163). In this edition, Alexander calls for WPAs to consider a paradigm shift in thought and practice by utilizing curricula and expanding scholarship to more closely examine and address the "discursive and rhetorical strategies through which people are positioned within larger systems of categorization" (167); while, Matsuda suggests that this shift in paradigm and practice must go beyond past discussions that address "the presence and needs of diverse groups of multilingual writers in writing programs" noting that such work "does not necessarily carry over to their scholarship"(170).[1]

Equally instrumental in engaging diversity as key to the intellectual work of the WPA was the publication of the subsequent 2010 "WPAs Respond to 'A Symposium on Diversity and the Intellectual Work of WPAs'" (Horning, Dew, and Blalock). This work, resulting from a solicited call, reiterated Alexander's view of queering composition[2] as "ask[ing] composition to change—and to change a lot by becoming a kind of writing studies that would acknowledge positions that are most decidedly not safe, that are challenging" (Rhodes 126); reintroduced issues of gender by returning to "questions about how women and women's issues impact, influence, and affect WPAs and the work they do" (Nicolas 139); furthered the paradigm shift, expanding discussions on issues of diversity by pushing for a "re-thinking of diversity [that]must occur at all levels of our educational endeavors: instructional, scholarly, and administrative"(McBeth 133); and by exploring the intersections of race and assessment. While much had been published on a range of issues related to assessment, Inoue's "writing assessment technology" continued to challenge and expanded discussions of assessment—challenging the ways in which assessment has historically been "manipulated by institutionally-sanctioned agents, con-

structed for particular purposes that have relations to abstract ideas and concepts, and whose effects or outcomes shape, and are shaped by, racial, class-based, gender, and other socio-political arrangements" (135).

Even with the diversity symposium, the response and a 2011 article, "Troubling the Boundaries: (De)Constructing WPA Identities at the Intersections of Race and Gender"—which presented a "framework for understanding an identity politic in WPA scholarship that is constructed along an axis of multiple intersecting identities" (Craig and Perryman-Clark 54)—little was published on race and racism for many years to follow. This gap in publication was in spite of expanding research, presentations, and listserv discussions on the multiple intersections of race, gender, and ability and WPA work.

In response to many conversations with the CWPA's EB, CWPA special interest subcommittees and following up on the numerous sessions at multiple CWPA Conferences, several 2016 publications began to directly address this gap. The ways in which both the discipline and the journal collaborated to address this gap, is what lead to my addition to Parasuraman's list of ways in which a journal influences a discipline: by "providing a venue for challenging perspectives, attitudes and beliefs ultimately facilitating the discipline's moving forward—in more inclusive productive ways."

The 2016 "Symposium: Challenging Whiteness and/in Writing Program Administration and Writing" established my addition to Parasuraman's list by providing "a variety of topics, addressing race-based issues pertaining to WPA work such as supporting faculty and graduate students in writing studies, choosing textbooks, de-normalizing whiteness, and in general, becoming more thoughtful and attentive to issues of race as administrators" (7). The subsequent publication of Inoue's 2016 CWPA Conference's Plenary Address "Racism in Writing Programs and the CWPA" and García de Müeller and Ruiz's 2017 "Race, Silence, and Writing Program Administration: A Qualitative Study of US College Writing Programs" addressed the ways race functions within and writing programs, expanding upon Craig and Perryman-Clark's 2011 article on writing program administration for WPA scholars of color. Additionally, Bethany Davila's 2017 "Standard English and Colorblindness in Composition Studies: Rhetorical Constructions of Racial and Linguistic Neutrality" challenged perspectives and attitudes by exploring the intersectionality of race, language diversity and program administration, focusing on the ideologies of whiteness inherent in the expectations of standard English, which is often the foundation of many writing programs.

A fifty-year reflection on the journal's publications on race, gender, ability, language, and sexual orientation both fulfills and expands the tra-

ditionally described roles of a journal's influence on a discipline. However, even with the above-mentioned collaborations and subsequent publications, there are still gaps in inclusivity—little has been published that directly explores the intersections of ability and writing program administration or the racialized assumptions pervasive in WPA work and perspectives of WPAs of color. Perhaps at this time of reflection, it is also a time for a call to action. As we look forward we can also consider how, as a discipline and a journal we can expand our focus and attention to embrace the full trajectory of scholarship (broadly defined) that honors the expanding multiplicities of identity affiliations that we have in our field.

Notes

1. It is important to note that Matsuda subsequently addressed the need for WPAs to have clear policies and practices for their writing programs in his 2012 *WPA* piece "Let's Face It: Language Issues and the Writing Program Administrator."

2. Additional works key to the discussion of the queering of composition include Harry Denny's 2013 "A Queer Eye for the WPA" and Karen Kopelson's 2013 "Queering the Writing Program."

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