Essays

WPAing as a Postpedagogical Practice

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Abstract

This essay addresses the constructive if seemingly incompatible relationship between WPA and postpedagogy. I demonstrate that while WPAs may not use the term, they grapple with the most overt postpedagogical position: namely, that whatever we might call a writing pedagogy is far too complex to be predicted or exploited (Lynch xix). Developing a relationship between the two reconfigures writing program administration as a set of ongoing and relational practices rather than a position from which to deploy strategies. What's at stake here is not what it means to be a WPA, but rather the important ways WPAing, as a set of ongoing and relational practices, becomes meaningful.

Admittedly, I've got trouble here at the start; my title is a stretch. It's not the "W" in WPA causing the trouble. Postpedagogy and WPA are both committed to writing. It's the P for Program and the A for Administration. Such words ring like devil terms for proponents of postpedagogy. For example, Victor Vitanza has long chanted, "*Programs lead to pogroms!* Therefore, Diaspora, Diaspora, Diaspora forever" (417). Vitanza casts writing as that which necessarily resists programs and, so, should never submit to administration. While attention-grabbing, "Diaspora Forever!" is an unhelpful tagline for our Council of Writing Program Administration. Postpedagogy and WPA seemingly name contradictory accounts of scholarly practice. For example, Marc Santos and Megan McIntyre write, "We hope it is apparent that postpedagogy isn't merely a discussion regarding teacher preparation, curricular development, or classroom management." They may as well write, "We hope it is apparent that postpedagogy isn't *merely* a discussion of Writing Program Administration." Or, as Sara Arroyo indicates, the acts of writing that emerge from postpedagogy cannot be planned for because it "lifts the notion of a finished curriculum from the pedagogical situation" (102). That would mean a WPA's basic concern for, say, assessment, which necessitates programmatic planning or a "finished curriculum" that could be assessed, doesn't have a meaningful place in conversations about postpedagogy. Not concretely anyway.

Still, I've laid awake for countless hours, trying to articulate for fictional colleagues the opportunities and even the useful strangeness attached to postpedagogy. To be sure, postpedagogy comes with its own set of problems, and I'll address a few of those as I go. But I'm convinced it remains deeply productive for writing teachers looking for practices that can adapt to the particularity of student writing. My quieter question—one that I lay awake trying to articulate for myself—is what postpedagogy might offer writing program administration if anything? Can approaching administration in terms of postpedagogy, including the managerial necessities the work entails (Strickland), allow for more responsive rather than calculated labor, more coordinated rather than administrative work?

Like so many writing teachers, I grapple with postpedagogy's most overt position: that whatever we might call a writing pedagogy is far too complex to be predicted or exploited (Lynch). Yes! I often feel compelled in the writing classroom to (somehow) plan for change. I try to follow bell hooks who insists that experience grounds pedagogy, which means "our strategies must constantly be changed, invented, reconceptualized" (10–11). hooks, anticipating postpedagogy, explains that an engaged pedagogy will follow from the experience or the performance of teaching. She's clear that teachers are not performers, in that our work is not spectacle. But teaching is still a performative act that "offers the space for change, invention, [and] spontaneous shifts . . . [that] consider issues of reciprocity" (11). Like hooks, advocates of postpedagogy promote the unpredictable writing acts that emerge from and with the practice of writing and teaching writing, not the other way around. Postpedagogy asks writing teachers to craft encounters for students rather than plan predictive rubrics and outcomes because writing situations are just too particular. The best writing teachers can do (should do?), Paul Lynch says, is "fashion a method of making ourselves susceptible to that particularity" (58).

Fashioning a method for change, reciprocity, and particularity in the classroom is one thing; administering for it is quite another. But I am hardly alone in asking about postpedagogy and writing program administration. WPAs may never use the term, but they often reflect a kind of postpedagogical practice in their scholarship. And what I keep learning from these WPAs is that if we can approach our WPAing in more explicitly postpedagogical terms, then, to return to my quiet question, yes, we can, at least tentatively, articulate and grow a moving and morphing set of WPA practices that are responsive and accommodating rather than predictive and strategic, and that are necessarily sustained by change.

My answer remains only a tentative yes because postpedagogy cannot offer WPAs concrete ways for differently occupying our institutionally

given positions. We cannot be a postpedagogy WPA in the same way we can be, for example, a feminist WPA. To be reductive, being a feminist WPA means incorporating principles like collaboration, intersectionality, distributed leadership, and the affirmation of affect and emotion into our given positions. It means paying careful attention to what (and which!) feminist principles open our administrative positions up to something other than traditional leadership strategies (LaFrance and Wardle 19–21). Linda Adler-Kassner has long demonstrated that developing and incorporating principles into our WPA position is critical work, and I do my best to address such work below. But postpedagogy, at least for the WPA, cannot function as a set of principles that frame our position. Instead, postpedagogy reframes our principles again and again by continually opening us up to our own practices. In other words, principles sustain our position while postpedagogy helps WPAs make explicit those more tacit practices that disclose the very position of WPA in the first place. In that way, postpedagogy helps WPAs resist what Willie James Jennings calls the tacitly designed, masculine principle in higher ed of the "self-sufficient man—one who is self-directed . . . who recognizes his own power and uses it wisely, one bound in courage, moral vision . . . and not given to extremes of desire or anger" (31). The thing is, regardless of one's gender identification, this principle of the "self-sufficient man" remains a compelling framework for WPAs, even while our practices—our actual WPAing—continually and productively unravel such a WPA-centric approach. And postpedagogy helps us foreground those practices rather than our position.

Admittedly, approaching writing program administration as a postpedagogical practice rather than a position can seemingly leave us WPAs with exactly nothing to do. That's because, as Laura Micciche writes, "while the WPA whose actions have traceable effects back to her and her alone might be an anachronism in the context of current theories of agency . . . this possessive, linear model of agency is alive and well in the world of administration" ("For Slow" 74). This anachronistic WPA is alive and well because something like an administrative practice isn't as readily available as, for example, a medical practice or a yoga practice. At least I've never explained that I *have* an administrative practice when I can seem far less odd by simply saying that I *am* a WPA. That's one reason Diana George's famous metaphor of the sole WPA as a plate twirler remains terribly powerful. We are all always "trying to sustain the illusion of perpetual motion, worried over how to end the show without losing control" (xi). The metaphor centers what feminist scholars critique as the "WPA-centric model of work, which [like Jennings' self-sufficient man] envisions the ideal WPA as one who maintains centralized power over the writing program" (Micciche,

"More than a Feeling," 441). Even more to the point, Sherri Craig collects in one sentence nearly every metaphor from the predominantly white narratives that continue to characterize our position: "WPAs are resilient accidental basement dwelling boat rocking fathers in an army of one" (19). Again and again, we first articulate what the WPA is (role/position) before focusing attention on WPAing (practices/responses). So rarely do we articulate a more relational, accommodating, and, I would say, postpedagogical approach to what makes our WPA position meaningful.

To approach WPAing as a postpedagogical practice rather than an assigned institutional position from which to deploy strategies, I trace some of postpedagogy's longstanding arguments. I am by no means the first to do so, but rarely, if at all, have WPAs tracked down and then connected up a postpedagogical approach to the situational work in which we constantly engage. So, I try to do just that. I then explain how I approach the complex notion of practice as far more than an instrumental activity. Finally, I foreground and explore a few examples of the postpedagogical practices in which WPAs already engage. What's at stake here is not what it means to be a WPA, but rather the important ways WPAing, as an intense practical involvement, or as a set of ongoing and relational practices, becomes meaningful.

The Back-and-Forth of Postpedagogy

Marc C. Santos and Mark H. Leahy describe postpedagogy as "giving up (school's) control of writing" (86). Following Vitanza, they claim "an instructor cannot presume that there is one proper writing to teach but must acknowledge that writing gathers together a diversity of practices we must accommodate" (86). So, while they might want to lose control of writing, they still offer writing instructors and, I think, WPAs something to do. We accommodate whatever shows up in the writing act. Accommodating a writing act aligns with Thomas Rickert's account of postpedagogy as that which marks an engagement with those unique writing acts or surprises that indicate a failure of control (172). For Rickert there is no "glittering pedagogical prize achieved by means of good theories devoted to just ends" (173). Instead, a unique writing act cannot be orchestrated in advance, only recognized and accommodated. Planning for what we want to get out of student writing (e.g., our "glittering pedagogical prize") controls and, so, stifles the unplanned, even accidental possibilities of student writing. A postpedagogy, Rickert says, privileges the kind of student writing that "can erupt anywhere, out of any circumstance" (172).

As an example, Rickert (along with nearly everyone else engaged in postpedagogy) revisits Quentin Pierce's paper, a student paper David Bartholomae dwells on in "The Tidy House: Basic Writing in The American Curriculum." Quentin's paper is cynical, strange. It contains lines like, "The stories in the books are meanless [sic] stories and I will not elaborate on them. This paper is meanless [sic], just like the book, But, I know the paper will not make it. STOP" (qtd. in Bartholomae 6). And it ends with the rather hopeless, "I don't care. I don't care. about man and good and evil I don't care about this shit fuck this shit . . . . Thank you very much. I lose again" (6). Bartholomae admits he "knew enough to know the paper was, in a sense, a very skillful performance in words" (6). But he ignored it, choosing to file it away in a desk drawer for 18 years! Rickert argues that the paper haunts Bartholomae and, to some degree, composition pedagogy for multiple reasons. Chief among them is that it neither transgresses nor affirms Bartholomae's pedagogy. It's a unique, if troubling, writing act (Rickert 191–92). Rickert's point in revisiting Quentin's paper is to make obvious that predetermined writing pedagogy too often helps writing teachers maintain the fundamental fantasy that we control what students learn (180). Why troubling such an entrenched fantasy matters is that it shields writing teachers from recognizing and accommodating inventive, unpredictable writing acts. We just file these surprises into drawers, meet them with a failing grade, or (worst of all for Quentin) demand a revision.

So, the question seems always to come in response to postpedagogy, what's a writing teacher, let alone a WPA, to do? Paul Lynch says that for postpedagogy, disrupting systemic writing pedagogy may just be project enough (58). It's enough, that is, to challenge any pedagogical imperative, which certainly includes administration, "on the grounds that it is nearly impossible to speak about teaching without being tempted by the will-to-system" (Lynch, xiv). But Lynch also argues that postpedagogy still cannot respond to what it emphasizes: namely, disruptions, surprises, and inexplicable student work. He rightly says that it is just "insupportable that we would simply do whatever and wait to see what might happen" (50). Or, far more piercingly, Lynch asks, "How do we practice recognizing worth that we have never before seen?" (98). How do we accommodate what we cannot recognize? Indeed, Lynch admits, "It is easier to insist on the bureaucratization [the WPA-centric model, the will-to-system, the position of WPA] than it is to recall the imaginative possibility that occasioned it" (99). What's more difficult, and what postpedagogy's challenge allows for, is the recognition that bureaucratization or centralized positions are a stabilizing result of imaginative, disruptive, and surprising practices that preceded any formalized pedagogy or administration. In much the same way

hooks articulated an "engaged pedagogy" (11), Lynch uses postpedagogy to promote experiences and context-dependent tactics, which he argues opens pedagogy up to the imaginative practices that always and already underlie more systemic or formalized writing pedagogy.

All that said, as a recently tenured WPA, working with a non-tenure-track Assistant WPA, I feel more than obligated to promote formalized programming from predetermined principles and plans. Promoting such programming is all the more attractive to me given that MA/MFA students with little to no classroom experience teach all of our first-year writing classes. What's more, I am writing after a U.S. president was impeached (a second time!) for inciting violence in response to losing an election. And I'm writing while a novel coronavirus continues to devastate lives and compound economic insecurity, while police keep killing Black and Brown Americans despite massive protests, while white nationalism finds its way into mainstream discourse, while environmental degradation shows no signs of slowing. The local hardships and insecurities that fall out of this national context are difficult to hold. Such a consolidated bundle of angst can obviously overwhelm both new graduate instructors and their first-year writers. So, yes, promoting formalized, even stable, programming feels like the right, maybe the only, approach to my position as WPA.

The thing is, postpedagogy has already succeeded, even when it comes to writing program administration. Again, we WPAs may not use the word, but notions of postpedagogy already serve as the ground for the differing ways we figure the work of teaching and administering writing. For example, in the 2019 *College Composition and Communication* symposium, Chris W. Gallagher explains that WPAs want to provide each student in their program with the chance to encounter, perform, and learn a set of shared competencies or standards. This is why, Gallagher says, "Recent efforts such as the 'WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Writing' . . . attempt to stabilize and publicize the field's theory and practice" (477). But then he admits that we struggle to defend such standardized learning outcomes in our writing programs because "the idea of a generic 'academic discourse' that students could learn in first-year composition and then apply in all their courses across the disciplines is a fiction in the first place. From this perspective, writing, like teaching, is an *irreducibly complex, situated activity to which standardization is anathema*" (477; my emphasis). Gallagher sets up this symposium so that advocates for standardization, for formalized and stable programming, participate as outliers making an antiquated case. Postpedagogy, or at least the idea that teaching writing is an "irreducibly complex, situated activity to which standardization is anathema" (477) gets

framed in this symposium as a norm. What now needs defending, it seems, is standardization.

What I hope I'm demonstrating is that postpedagogy need not be either a celebration of student transgression or a committed resistance to standardization. For me, this either/or approach obscures the ways postpedagogy foregrounds writing program administration as a practice more than a position. In fact, Steph Ceraso, Matthew Pavesich, and Jeremy Boggs use complexity theory to argue that "the strongest version of postpedagogy forwards a complex account of learning rather than a disorderly one. Even if postpedagogical theorists sometimes use language that implies chaos ("accident," for example), postpedagogy relies upon a notion of learning as a form of coordination in a complex, but not chaotic, system" (Ceraso and Pavesich). At its best, then, postpedagogy can powerfully account for the surprising experiences so many first-year writers, teachers, and WPAs have with writing, even if those surprising experiences produce and are, in turn, produced by the bureaucratizing practices WPAing requires. Taking up postpedagogy, even taking it seriously, is unquestionably more difficult for a WPA than for a writing instructor; there's just too much for which we have to plan, assess, and account. But postpedagogy does help student writers, writing teachers, and WPAs privilege the impulse to accommodate emergent writing acts that lead (again and again) to transformative practices.

Practice Makes WPA

For Casey Boyle, practice names more than working on a skill required for improving one's ability in, say, a sport or with a musical instrument (5). Practice also names more than the opposite of theoretical speculation: "That's a fine theory, but will it work in practice?" (4). These traditional approaches to practice require a predetermined goal that the practitioner is consciously working toward, even working to control. Both approaches are instrumental understandings of practice. We get a practitioner who is using a practice to accomplish an already established goal. So, we get a practitioner on one side and a practice on the other. This instrumental approach to practice separates out, for example, a point guard from a basketball game, or a cellist from a concerto. The approach certainly separates out a WPA from their writing program.

Boyle writes that "it is not that we practice a tool/object/task but that an event of practice is occurring, exercising its tendencies within [an] assemblage and developing, over time, further capacities for that assemblage" (51). More succinctly, "*Practice is the exercise of tendencies to activate greater capacities*" (5). It's a difficult formulation, to be sure. Boyle is suggesting

that as practices are repeated and as they differently accumulate, a tendency to do one thing rather than another becomes available. He uses the tendencies of water to help him get at just what he means: Any body of water tends to take "the shape of its container and spreads across surfaces and into a surface's crevices" (5). Such is water's tendency. But exercising those tendencies with heat or freezing cold can "activate new capacities" (5). The capacity of water to function as steam or ice emerges in practice, in the exercising of tendencies. And this same exercising of tendencies, or, practice, constitutes any body, "from a microbe, a human, an institution, a rainforest," (5) and I would of course add, a WPA.

Any body, then, even a WPA, is not a stable thing but rather a set of tendencies that "emerges with and through practices" (5). One of Boyle's chief tenants is that any "individual (be it a human or nonhuman) or group of individual humans is not an essential subject or object compelled to adapt to external factors, [like the kind of centralized WPA that's 'alive and well' in Micciche's description], but that individuals emerge *from* and *with* practice" (45). Practices and, so, the perceptions of possible actions that become available to the WPA (i.e., capacities) are co-constitutive. Practice makes WPA. Put another way, WPAs do not *first* encounter TAs, curricula, university mandates, computer labs, budgets (if there are any), schedules, etc. as external factors to which we need to adapt and then assign meaning. WPAs are not at all separated from these elements that already constitute a writing program; our position emerges with these elements as the program is practiced into being one way rather than another. It's why moving from a WPA position in one program to another can feel like taking on an entirely different kind of job.

Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus say, people and things show up for us as meaningful because we already have "familiar practices for dealing with them" (18). Such practices are often so familiar that they remain invisible in their use. To name a simple example, if we did not already have a familiar practice (i.e., exercise of a tendency) for working with a schedule, we would not encounter a schedule but rather a strange artifact that would require analysis and explanation (which, frankly, is exactly how I initially encountered program assessment). Familiar practices give our lives and our work meaning and intelligibility. But, Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus also argue, "the commonsense practices that make our lives intelligible [like standardization or bureaucratization] cover up the fact that everyday common sense is neither fixed nor rationally justified" (29). That which our familiar or commonsense practices disclose could emerge differently were we to practice WPAing differently. Or, as Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus say so well, "Our practices are designed for dealing with things, not for dealing with

practices for dealing with things" (30). WPAs understandably can seem far more attentive to the people and things our practices already disclose, including our own position as a WPA, but we rarely, if at all, attend to those disclosing practices themselves. Again, as Lynch learns from postpedagogy, "it is easier to insist on the bureaucratization [or that which is disclosed] than it is to recall the imaginative possibility [or practices] that occasioned it" in the first place (99). Postpedagogy, because of its emphasis on accommodating the surprise and change that emerges from the practice of writing, helps us better foreground our own disclosive practices and not just the things those practices already disclose.

For example, Adler-Kassner ends up foregrounding a disclosive practice when she poses three questions designed to help new WPAs articulate the principles they are bringing to the position. She asks, (1) "What kind of WPA do you want to be?," (2) "What kind of alliances do you want to build?," and (3) "What kinds of compromises are you willing to make, if any?" (396). Her questions are not profound; they're not designed to be. But they matter. (I remember taping all three to my computer monitor as I nervously geared up for the WPA position.) What Adler-Kassner wants is for WPAs to value their own principles before making decisions about their programs. So, she walks newer WPAs, like I was, through her first question, "What kind of WPA do you want to be?," by also asking whether we want to collaborate across campus and in the community or work independently? What I eventually noticed is that her second and third question folded back onto this first one. That is, whether I wanted to be the kind of WPA that collaborates or works independently didn't really matter because, according to Adler-Kassner's line of questioning, I also needed to decide what kinds of alliances I wanted to build and what compromises I would make. That means regardless of my answer to the first question about whether I wanted to be the kind of WPA that collaborates, Adler-Kassner's questions already assume that WPAs are going to be collaborative, or at least collaborative enough to make some alliances and compromises. Collaboration here is already writing program administration's tendency; it's a disclosive practice.

Like the tendency of water to take a container's shape, collaboration appears here as already co-constitutive with what writing program administration means. It's not a principle that WPAs decide whether to take up. It's not a principle we can deploy or not from our position. There is neither choice nor control here; collaboration is one practice (among many) that makes the position of WPA meaningful in the first place. Put in terms of postpedagogy, writing program administration follows from the practice of collaboration, not, as Adler-Kassner would have it, the other way around.

Better foregrounding the tendency or practice, and not the principle, of the co-constitutive relationship between collaboration and writing program administration makes a difference because, as Jennings says, an educator who wants to serve in a western educational institution too easily grows into a "quiet tyrant" who, "enamored with his own abilities, imagines the good he can do in the world and then evaluates and organizes people according to their usefulness in fulfilling his dream" (75). A "quiet tyrant" is self-sufficient, convinced of the principles he will deploy in his WPAing before he deploys them. In that way, he sees himself as separate from his WPA practice. He is first a position.

I'm aware that naming the possibility that WPAs can work as quiet tyrants risks the same kind of drama as Vitanza's claim that "Programs lead to pogroms" (417). My point here is that WPAs are habituated or exercised into their administrative position through practices like collaboration, and, so, Adler-Kassner cannot help but foreground such a necessary practice even while she is asking would-be WPAs if they want to engage in collaboration or not. The practice of collaboration is interruptive and surprising. It requires constant accommodation, not decision or control. Writing program administration as a postpedagogical practice, then, highlights the fact that Adler-Kassner's scholarship, at least in this instance, is so remarkably attuned to WPAing that what she effectively offers the would-be WPA are not principles to choose from but an ongoing occasion of practice. (Perhaps that's why I left her questions unanswered but still taped to my computer monitor.) Her questions offer possible ways of constantly reflecting on and accommodating a practice like collaboration already implicit within writing program administration

As I said at the top, we cannot be a postpedagogy WPA because postpedagogy offers us no stable position from which to take up a set of principles. But postpedagogy does better to enable us to articulate and grow the kind of practices that disclose our specific WPA position one way rather than another. And, much like Adler-Kassner's line of questioning for new WPAs, such articulations of practice are often baked into WPA scholarship. But my point is that our practices remain far too implicit when we approach them as only strategic, or as a 'how-to' adapt to the things our WPA position already discloses. Instead, we might better approach the practices that make our position meaningful as constant articulations of responsiveness and accommodation—as postpedagogical practices.

Postpedagogical Practices for Writing, Programing, Administering

In the same collection where Adler-Kassner asks us to reflect on what kind of WPA we want to be, Rita Malenczyk explains, "Writing program administration . . . grounds itself, perhaps more than any other discipline, on the rhetoric and politics of departmental and university life and structure, as well as on the lived experiences of its practitioners" (3–4). Here, writing program administration is necessarily responsive to and accommodating of the environments and experiences that emerge from the life of a program and its practitioners. So, while WPA scholarship may rarely, if ever, take up the language of postpedagogy, there does exist at least a hesitant relationship between the two. By approaching WPAing as an often already postpedagogical practice, I now hope to rearticulate or make more explicit a few existing examples of these practices that center writing, programming, and administrating.

Writing

In an admittedly lofty, but useful engagement with Whitehead's process philosophy, Marilyn Cooper reminds us that writing is an "adventure of ideas, in which one does not feel oneself to be the master of what one writes, but where writing forces one to think, to feel, and to create" (159). Writing surprises. Indeed, I cannot count how many times I've built sturdy plans for a writing project only to be caught off guard and taken in new directions while I was writing. And I know I share this experience with every writer. Who knows how many more directions my writing has suggested that I just couldn't accommodate because those suggestions never quite surfaced above my initial plans. To get at the difficulty of accommodating surprise for WPAs, at least when it concerns the writing that goes on in our programs, Matthew Heard wants WPAs to develop a "sensibility." Heard's sensibility is a "posture" that "describes readiness and adjustment rather than knowledge and belief" (40). Readiness and adjustment, of course, reflect what I've been calling a postpedagogical practice. And for Heard, sensibility is the kind of posture WPAs need as we "*feel* through our embattled engagements with writing as it moves through us and into our programs" (39). Put another way, if our position is grounded, as Malenczyk's says, on the rhetoric and politics of writing instruction in a particular institution, then WPAs "have a unique window into the scenes of conflict and contingency where writing becomes a lived habit" (Heard 39). Like practice, lived habits tend to disappear in their use. For example, I remember a colleague whispering to me during a faculty meeting tangentially related to

writing instruction, "I don't see the problem; good writing is clear, concise, and specific." While my colleague was naming a lived habit, anyone with even the tiniest bit of interest in postpedagogy (or writing studies generally) may sense the conflict and contingency embedded in such a confident and "obvious" observation. Heard's point is that WPAs are positioned right at the scene of these kinds of conflicts and contingencies that concern writing. We should be sensible to them.

Such a sensibility, Heard admits, is a difficult posture. He explains, "One of the hard realities that faces me as I work to cultivate this sensibility I have described is how difficult it is to act in ways that change the *ethos* of writing that undergirds the needs and values for writing in my local setting" (45). For example, Heard explains that when he first took on writing program administration, he used the graduate pedagogy course to welcome TAs into conversations about what counts as writing and whether writing can be taught. The TAs immediately resisted. They wanted "direction and training" (44), not complex questions about writing pedagogy that might unravel their job before it started. Heard misunderstood their resistance because he "focused on [his] vision of TAs emerging, phoenix-like, from the ashes of their old habits of thinking" about writing (44). I'm tempted to say he was working here as a "quiet tyrant." He writes that he was sensitive enough to these TAs' concern, but, and this is the big point, he struggled to be "*sensible* to the feelings of disappointment and anxiety that pushed back against the vision of writing [he] had idealized" (45). What Heard was unable to sense was that this disappointment and anxiety were not simply signs of resistance to his vision, but rather these feelings were produced by the lived habits of his institution—the rhetoric and politics of writing instruction. The TAs' disappointment and anxiety emerged from and with the practice of teaching writing. Here, Heard's sensibility needs to function not only as a posture, but more importantly as a practice, or as a different way to exercise the tendencies underlying his institutional approach to TA education.

Speaking directly in terms of postpedagogy, Ceraso and Pavesich ask writing teachers to "make sure that writing is not the only activity in a writing or rhetoric class; students should also be drawing, taking pictures, recording/editing audio and video, arranging and experimenting with materials, building, coding, and so on" (Ceraso and Pavesich). The important connection between postpedagogy and administration here is that if Heard's notion of sensibility helps us feel out different possibilities for practice (45), which I think it does, then just as Ceraso and Pavesich ask of writing teachers, WPAs too have to practice differently in order to recognize and accommodate surprise. No, we can't just "do whatever" and

see what happens. But we also can't simply introduce new content into the same practices and hope to recognize and accommodate difference. Heard wanted to change his TAs' understanding of how writing could function in his institution, but he didn't focus on his practices, his WPAing. He only introduced new conversations and questions into an already expected pedagogical practice, into a lived habit.

Perhaps instead Heard might have organized his approach to TA education around observations of design studios, chemistry experiments, or forestry research. Or, he might have asked his TAs to reverse engineer their notions of writing pedagogy by focusing exclusively on first-year writers' essays, asking how such texts might offer concrete pedagogical direction and training. One thing I've done is ask TAs to teach audio projects that emulate the kinds of writerly moves of journalistic, story-driven podcasts. Like Heard, I hoped the project would challenge our TAs to question what could count as writing in our program. Instead, I had to learn how to accommodate the surprising ways TAs began framing the work of assessing student writing around affect and issues related to the body. Their intense focus on assessment that emerged from this assignment was (by no means!) what I or my assistant WPA planned for. And it ended up suggesting a direction for our program that I found difficult to follow. Without having encountered Heard's (postpedagogical) notion of sensibility, I'm sure my initial intentions and plans would have kept me from recognizing and then accommodating such a powerful response from my TAs. As Cooper says, "In thinking about writing, the most important aspect of becoming is the way intentions, purposes, plans—and even writers themselves—do not exist prior to writing but rather emerge in the process of writing" (13). The same applies to administration: Our intentions, purposes, plans—and even our positions themselves—do not exist prior to WPAing but emerge in the process of our WPAing.

Programming

Approaching the 'P' in WPA as a postpedagogical practice might best reflect what Ceraso and Pavesich call "the assemblage of learning environments." They write that "postpedagogical thinkers understand teaching as the assemblage of learning environments rather than the linear transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. These learning environments are ecologies of spaces, bodies, objects, technologies, problems, and questions" (Ceraso and Pavesich). All our programing, be it TA education, placement, assessment, first-year writing curricula, and so on, already consist of "bodies, objects, technologies, problems, and questions" (Ceraso and Pavesich).

Writing program administration is a constant assemblage of learning environments.

For me, and I'd bet for most WPAs, assembling a learning environment entails the practical ways we try to account for how, say, the curriculum we write for the specific students in our college or university interacts with the classroom spaces assigned to us, the university writing requirements for which we are responsible, the level of experience our TAs bring to teaching, our understanding of how people learn, first-year writing scholarship, the specific history of the writing program we direct, and critically, all the labor, work, and action that emerges from our program. Assembling learning environments entails endless response and accommodation because the "bodies, objects, technologies, problems, and questions" from which our programs emerge are obviously everchanging (Ceraso and Pavesich). And what WPAs often bring to these programs is our own prior programming: That is, our own prior intentions, purposes, and plans (e.g., do we plan to collaborate or not?). Underlying a WPA's programming, then, exists our own relationships with writing scholarship, changing university initiatives, local institutions, first-year writers and their Tas, which is all to say our programs already show up as complex environments long before we get the chance to start programming, start assembling. Our job is to account for the ways we participate in and constantly assemble such environments. Rather than taking a supposed "step back" to test our program against an already established standard or goal, we can learn to recognize and accommodate what becomes available when we program otherwise, and what does that mean for how we program next year, next semester, next week, tomorrow? Such a recognition requires that we center our practices and what those practices disclose, while pushing to the margin the principles we already have for dealing with the things that have been disclosed.

A good example of the ways programming that centers principles rather than practices can cover over what becomes available is Cassie A. Wright's demonstration that, as a professional organization, CWPA overlooked, even ignored, *Students Rights to Their Own Language* (SRTOL). SRTOL is a progressive policy adopted by NCTE and CCCC in 1974. It answered the growing question "about the language habits of students who come from a wide variety of social, economic, and cultural backgrounds" by affirming "students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language" (Committee 1). While directly impacting writing programs, the policy remained absent from the pages of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* for 21 years (Wright 120). The reasons for that absence are no doubt a result of our organization's struggle to genuinely engage with race (Perryman-Clark and Craig). Wright also suggests the absence is a result of our field's early

focus on "professionalization and labor management" (121)—exactly what I've been calling our focus on the WPA *position*.

This programmatic focus on position made it awfully difficult to recognize and accommodate the possibilities of language use that emerged alongside our programming. In other words, like the emotional responses that Heard's TA education surfaced, I'm convinced SRTOL emerged with, not simply in resistance to, programming around what counts as writing. The powerful idea that students have a right to their own language within the university may indeed have been surprising, but there it was, already available to those working as WPAs. But CWPA, as an organization, struggled to accommodate it, maybe even recognize it as an available practice. That's why Wright says that, as an organization, "[C]WPA might more actively engage the implications of SRTOL with respect to program design and assessment, drawing especially on [Asao] Inoue's work as well as critical race theory, cultural rhetorics, and code switching/meshing theories, for example, to rethink communally responsible ways to affirm diverse language practices" (121). Wright is asking here for WPAs to engage in a postpedagogical practice. She's asking that we exercise our programming tendencies with differing "ecologies of spaces, bodies, objects, technologies, problems, and questions" (Ceraso and Pavesich) to better accommodate what might emerge. Wright's (postpedagogical) suggestion for CWPA not only affirms diverse language use, but it asks WPAs to work against relegating to the margins the surprises that emerge from our own programming.

It's worth recognizing that assembling learning environments rather than implementing systems from prior principles undercuts our (fantasy of) control of student writing and maybe even TAs' classroom teaching, allowing for the accommodation of writing acts, even an act as uncontrollable as SRTOL.

Administration

Micciche articulates a deceptively simple administrative practice for centering and accommodating surprise. She argues for a slow agency. Micciche argues that administration, or the design, implementation, and constant maintenance of a writing program, tends to require "big agency" ("For Slow" 76). Big agency names the position from which a sole WPA might "lead assessment initiatives, revise curriculum, hire, train, and oversee new teachers, advocate for the writing program at college and university levels, and coordinate writing initiatives across campus" (73–74). As WPAs well know, because these kinds of big administrative expectations are tethered to promotion and to how others learn to value WPA labor, there exists an

ever-pressing urgency to respond. Big agency privileges speed, it has to. WPAs hurry. That's our tendency.

Micciche's slow agency, then, is counter-intuitive, maybe aspirational (73). As I've experienced, moving slower, more deliberately can feel like it comes with too much professional cost. It also risks appearing like a kind of incrementalism that asks those seeking critical change to keep waiting. So Micciche makes a practical case for learning to document outcomes-in-progress as a strategy for meeting expectations and, critically, for welcoming as many others as possible into larger administrative initiatives (83–84). But her notion of slow agency names much more than a slower pace. It names the productive possibility of "agency as action deferred" (74), or even "suspended" (75). Deferred or suspended action, she writes, "is not necessarily a sign of powerlessness, inactivity, or dereliction of duty. On the contrary, it creates much-needed space for becoming still *and* getting places, allowing for regenerative returns" (74; my emphasis). Recognizing and then learning to accommodate regenerative returns means slowing down enough to occupy "spaces of deliberate uncertainty in hopes of achieving a renewed standpoint on a situation" (79). Purposefully occupying a space of uncertainty is just the kind of thing advocates of postpedagogy, even those as pushy as Vitanza, would welcome.

But, just like postpedagogy, slow agency is a big ask. WPAs just don't feel like we have time (or the institutional capital) to welcome uncertainty. That feeling of lack is Micciche's point. She argues that the speed at which we feel we need to operate from our big, consolidated agency too easily obscures the "conditions that make speediness necessary and normative in the first place" (79). In other words, acting from our WPA position with a sense of constant urgency is indeed a WPA's tendency—it's what our position has been practiced into.

Slow agency, on the other hand, can be a helpful practice in that it subverts what adrienne maree brown calls "masculine action culture" (61). brown says this pervasive culture is "penetrative" (61). Like Jennings' "self-sufficient male" (23) and like the big agency attributed to writing program administration, masculine action culture produces individuals whom others come to depend on to change a situation. The politics of a particular change that an administrator makes may be radical, leading to heroic and creative actions. But brown makes clear that what will be lacking is the work of "forming long-term partnerships with communities . . . [and] a sense of community ownership or engagement in the work" (61). So rather than rushing to administrate or implement (or penetrate) our programing, Micciche's slow agency asks WPAs to differently exercise this tendency toward speed by "residing longer than is comfortable in the complexity, stillness,

and fatigue of not knowing how to proceed" ("For Slow" 80). I can't write a sentence more reflective of a postpedagogical practice than that.

That said, I spent my first two years as WPA pretending I'd never read Micciche's sentence. Residing longer with the discomfort—and it is a discomfort—of not knowing how to proceed within the various assemblages that make up a writing program monkey-wrenches the illusion of a stable WPA position. It certainly has for me. But it gives WPAs the chance to slow down and accommodate not only what our (fast) practices already disclose as available and, so, go unquestioned within our programs (e.g., measurable learning outcomes, argumentative essay assignments, rubrics, etc.), but also those things that may emerge as available if our (fast) practices didn't cover them over (e.g., TA readiness, students' own language, a desperate need for a WAC initiative, etc.). Micciche admits, WPAs are not always in charge of pace, nor can they always practice something like deferred action. But, like in all these examples, what I find here is a practical attempt to recognize and accommodate what emerges from the act of our own WPAing. I find yet another example of writing program administration as a postpedagogical practice.

Conclusion

Andrea Riley-Mukavetz says, "It is easy to write joyfully about the practices that are easy and uncomplicated (are there practices that are easy and uncomplicated?), but what about the practices that scare us, challenge us, leave us with few answers or unarticulated meanings?" (546). It didn't take long after reading Riley-Mukavetz to understand, that with this essay, what I'd been doing was worrying about the complicated kinds of practices that the centralized, too often neoliberal WPA position allowed me to privilege, and how those practices stood in sharp contrasts to my attraction or even commitment to the relational power baked into writing pedagogy, and the practices that postpedagogy (sometimes inadvertently) celebrates. Orienting to writing program administration as a practice that emerges from a reciprocal and relational account of knowledge-making rather than focusing on a central WPA who works from an already established position is indeed a hard practice to write joyfully about. That is, developing a relationship between postpedagogy and administration opens our work up to something other than putting into practice theories developed elsewhere, apart from our own labor. Writing program administration might instead be the kind of ongoing and unfolding exercise that makes available new capacities for our classrooms—that opens conditions for possibility and occasions for practice that filter those possibilities into the probabilities we need to care for our programs.

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