

Investigating the Ontology of WAC/ WID Relationships: A Gender- Based Analysis of Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration among Faculty

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Introduction

Cross-disciplinary relationships among faculty are the cornerstone of writing across the curriculum (WAC) / writing in the disciplines (WID) (Bazerman et al., 2005; Russell, 2002; Condon & Rutz, 2012). Yet relationship building across disciplines often remains difficult to do (Soliday, 2011; McConlogue, Mitchell, & Peake, 2012; Lillis & Rai, 2011; Paretti et al., 2009; Paretti & Powell, 2009). According to Marie Paretti (2011), to enhance relationship-building efforts in WAC/WID contexts, we need a better understanding of “the ontology” or “way of being” of collaborations among writing specialists and disciplinary content experts. While flexible theories are essential for “describing and enacting this work,”¹ Paretti (2011) reminds us that “larger macro structures—departmental, institutional, and cultural—impinge powerfully on” cross-disciplinary collaborations in ways that can “engage or destroy” any theoretical framework.

To shed light on the ontology of WAC/WID interactions, this article explores the effects of a particular macrostructure—gender—on interactions between a writing specialist and a political science professor.² Gender is an especially important dimension around which to study cross-curricular literacy (CCL)³ work because gender dynamics, which impact all interpersonal exchanges, are further complicated in cross-disciplinary efforts wherein participants’ professional identities are rooted in disciplinary gender regimes.⁴ Complex gender dynamics affect the strategies disciplinary faculty can use to teach writing as well as enable and constrain cross-disciplinary relationships among faculty. Yet, gender has been systematically examined as a macrostructure shaping cross-disciplinary relational dynamics. As a result, writing specialists don’t always take gender forces into account when deciding what and how to communicate with disciplinary faculty about (teaching) writing.

The gap is surprising given that composition and rhetoric has a rich history of gender-based research on (teaching and learning) writing (Flynn, 1988; Caywood & Overing, 1987; Phelps & Emig, 1995). In particular, technical communication

research examines the role of gender in producing and consuming texts and teaching writing with technology (Hawisher & Sullivan, 1998, 1999; Hawisher & Selfe, 2003; Pagnucci & Mauriello, 1999; Rickly, 1999; Haas, Tulley, & Blair, 2002; LeCourt & Barnes, 1999). Although gender is not necessarily a focus of WAC/WID scholarship, scholars do acknowledge the implications of disciplinary discourse and professional identity for how we understand and teach writing (Dannels, 2000; Poe et al., 2010). In that vein, WAC/WID researchers have engaged issues of racial identity (Young & Condon, 2013), cultural and linguistic identity (Cox & Zawacki, 2011), and professional and disciplinary identities (Poe et al., 2010). While such rich identity-based research may seem to lead logically to the investigation of gender issues in WAC/WID contexts, by and large such has not been the case. Despite important critiques of the WAC enterprise based on feminist principles (LeCourt, 1996; Malinowitz, 1997) there is work to be done when it comes to bringing gender-critical lenses to bear on practice-based research in WAC/WID. Toward that end, this article presents a case study of cross-disciplinary interaction between Bill, a writing specialist, and Lena, a political science professor in order to investigate the following questions⁵:

- How do gender dynamics come to bear on WAC/WID relationships among writing specialists and faculty in other disciplines?
- How do disciplinary cultures inform faculty gender roles and identities in ways that enable or constrain cross-disciplinary conversations about teaching writing?
- How might awareness of how gender ideologies shape and are shaped through cross-disciplinary conversations improve faculty interactions in WAC/WID contexts?

Theoretical Framework: Gender and Disciplinary Culture

Navigating disciplinary differences is at the heart of WAC/WID work. Writing specialists recognize that academic disciplines produce particular “images of reality,” providing a “cultural system” and a sense of professional identity for academics who associate with them (Klein, 1990, p. 104; Klein, qtd. in Strober, 2011, p. 13). We accept that disciplinary cultures profoundly impact the nature and potential of cross-disciplinary communication and collaboration (Klein, 1996; Lamont, 2009). We do our best to contend with “the power of disciplinary habits of mind and disciplinary cultures in impeding conversation across disciplines” (Strober, 2011, p. 49). Our professional literature offers strategies for scaffolding workshops and conversations about (teaching) writing that take disciplinary differences into account (for example, Jablonski, 2006; Anson, 2002; Soliday, 2011). However, we are often less attentive to how gender factors into disciplinary discourses and cultures to impact cross-disciplinary work.

Applying a gender-critical lens to theories of disciplinary difference foregrounds the importance of gender in WAC/WID contexts. Becher and Trowler (2001) argue that “gender plays a vital part” in “conditioning the shape” of “internal divisions of power, status, and labour” within disciplines (p. 54). That is, gender infuses the make-up of disciplinary discourse communities and relationships among community members. Moreover, gender does not “impinge on tribal cultures in an unalloyed way” (p. 55); disciplinary cultures also shape how gender operates. Tacit assumptions at the heart of disciplines “often involve taken-for-granted ideas about gender identities” (p. 55).⁶ That is, individual disciplines tend to be perceived as masculine or feminine. The categorical lines depend on internal and external factors including local contexts, disciplines such as engineering, physics, chemistry, and math are often considered masculine, while English, biology, and psychology are often considered feminine (Abouchedid & Nasser, 2000; Archer & Freedman, 1989). These perceptions shape how faculty members experience their disciplinary cultures and how they understand their own professional identities in relation to their colleagues from other disciplinary areas. A growing body of literature reinforces the notion that disciplinary work is not only a matter of taking on a professional identity, but a gender identity as well.⁷ This reality has important implications for WAC/WID practitioners and others seeking to foster cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Research Methodology

The case study I report on here is part of a larger research project in which I examined cross-disciplinary conversations about teaching writing to determine how faculty can engage more productively in such exchanges. For that project, I adapted Karen Tracy’s (1997, 2005) Action Implicative Discourse Analysis (AIDA) as a theory and method for studying institutional talk in interaction, focusing on how talk among writing specialists and faculty in other disciplines constructs relationships among people, disciplines, and institutions (Black, 1998, p. 20). I collected data from five participant groups, each including at least one writing specialist and at least one disciplinary content expert, from four different post-secondary institutions. Each group submitted audio and video recordings of at least two face-to-face conversations about teaching writing over the course of a semester. In addition, I conducted at least two interviews with each participant, drawing on initial analysis of recordings to develop semi-structured interview questions. In this article, I focus on interview data collected from Bill and Lena, the only group consisting of a male writing specialist and a female faculty member.⁸

Data Analysis

Analysis of over 180 pages of transcripts from interviews with Bill and Lena took place iteratively over time. In the spirit of AIDA, I treat interview data as “metadiscourse about [Bill and Lena’s] interactive occasion[s].” I do not take participants’ comments “as straightforward descriptions of the ‘way things [were],” but rather interpret comments “in light of implicit evaluations conveyed” (Tracy, 1997, p. 16).⁹ Adapting methods from constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), I initially used line-by-line coding to analyze several transcripts. Using a recursive process of memoing and reading widely, I articulated patterns, processes, and points of interest. With Bill and Lena, questions about how disciplinary discourses shape and are shaped by gender and gender dynamics in cross-disciplinary conversations informed my interview questions and recursive data analysis from the beginning. I use a gender-informed theory of disciplinary difference to investigate how disciplinary culture(s) shaped their gender identities and how those identities enabled and constrained their cross-disciplinary collaboration.

The concept of dual identity is particularly useful in analyzing how Bill and Lena negotiate their gendered disciplinary identities in conversation. Rooted in social psychology, the concept of dual identity refers to a state in which a person associates (to varying degrees) with both majority communities and minority communities in a given context. I chose a dual identity frame, as opposed to multiple (see for example Jones & McEwen, 2000) or intersectional identity (Crenshaw, 1989) theories that examine identity across several dimensions (often including race, class, and sexuality) because it allows me to focus on a particular intersectional dynamic—gender and discipline. Moreover, while intersectional theories tend to frame various axes of identity as “reinforcing vectors” (Nash, 2008) and multiple identity models explain individual identity development, dual identity suggests conflict and division among identity dimensions within a particular context.¹⁰ As Fleischmann and Verkuyten (2015) suggest, dual identity can be an asset as well as a potential liability; I examine both possibilities in Bill and Lena’s case as a way to explore how the phenomenon can enable and constrain cross-disciplinary interactions in CCL contexts.

Context

Bill and Lena taught at Northeast State College, a small public, master’s granting institution in the United States serving approximately nine thousand undergraduates, including many first generation and non-traditional students.¹¹ At the time of the study, Northeast State’s unofficial WAC program featured an interdisciplinary writing board that sponsored faculty development around the teaching of writing. In addition, a summer seminar for teaching writing (SSTW) was offered each year through

the faculty center for teaching and learning (FCTL). Although Bill and Lena had been acquaintances for years, they worked closely together for the first time during the 2012 summer seminar, which Bill co-facilitated. Traditionally, facilitators had little contact with participants after the seminar. However, Bill, a newly appointed FCTL “teaching fellow” planned to use a course release to follow-up more consistently with several seminar participants, including Lena. During their meetings, Bill and Lena discussed challenges Lena faced incorporating concepts from the workshop into her courses. As my analysis will show, Bill and Lena’s gender identities and dynamic both enriched and constrained their cross-disciplinary conversations about (teaching) writing.

Participants

Bill described himself as a straight, white man. At the time of the study, he was thirty-nine years old, had been at Northeast State College for four years, and was preparing his tenure and promotion materials. Bill holds a master’s of teaching degree in English education and a doctorate in composition and rhetoric. His research investigates how people learn to write and the bridge between academic and workplace writing. He teaches a range of undergraduate writing and rhetoric courses including one on gender and masculinity. Bill had significant practical experience working with faculty on (teaching) writing, though he admitted the field of writing across the curriculum was a fledgling scholarly interest for which he had no professional training. “[H]onestly, I’m shooting from the hip,” he told me, “I’m making it up as a I go.” Nevertheless, in the “small pond” of Northeast State, Bill was one of few with relevant background and expertise to support WAC/WID efforts; he embraced the role because he was committed to improving teaching and learning.

Lena described herself as a straight, white female. At the time of the study she was in her late 40s, had been at Northeast State College for 6 years, and been tenured there for about a year. Lena earned an undergraduate degree in political science and journalism and a PhD in political science. Lena’s scholarship focused on the human dimension of politics, including the media’s role in political debates and the material impact on human lives within particular demographics. Lena taught courses in American government, global perspectives on politics and popular culture, and contemporary political controversy. Inspired by the SSTW, Lena sought to incorporate more writing in all of her courses and looked forward to Bill’s advice and support in the process. Lena and Bill believed they shared goals and expectations as they embarked on their collaboration; they both judged their efforts a success. My analysis usefully complicates their perceptions by showing how resonances and asymmetries between their gendered professional identities both enabled and constrained their work.

Findings

Findings from this case study reveal that disciplinary “gender regimes” significantly shaped how Bill and Lena were socialized into their disciplinary cultures and local disciplinary communities. The professional identities they developed as a result of disciplinary socialization impacted their perceptions of one another in both beneficial and potentially problematic ways. In what follows, I examine similarities and differences in how Bill and Lena experienced the “dual identity” problem in their disciplinary contexts and show how those experiences came to bear on their cross-disciplinary work (Becher & Trowler, 2001).

“It Really Is about Power”: Political Science and Lena’s Dual Identity

Lena’s experience of the dual identity problem was rooted in a conflict between her “feminine” values as a teacher and researcher and the “masculine” values undergirding political science as a conservative discipline focused on power. Lena explained it this way:

I think Political Science is a conservative discipline in its nature and by that I don’t mean politically conservative. . . . But, to me there’s not real interest in people [chuckle] and there’s not real interest in the things that I find interesting anymore and so it’s all about institutions and if I had to do it again I’d probably go into sociology or English, you know? Writing, I don’t know. I guess that goes to the kinds of people[. . .] but you have a lot of people who are really into power. I mean, a lot of people go into political science, students even, it’s . . . it really is about power. It’s still a very male discipline, I find . . . both with students and with faculty.

As with many disciplines, men are overrepresented in political science and “the discipline’s categories and methods were developed by privileged men to consider those issues of concern to them” (Celis et. al., 2013, p. 7; Tolleson-Rinehart & Carroll, 2006). The rise of the rational choice model “amplified other divisions” (e.g., between qualitative and quantitative researchers and between problem- versus method-driven research) that separated political science professionals along gendered lines (Lamont, 2009, p. 95). These divisions contributed to Lena’s dual identity as she felt a disconnect between the human-centered research questions and methods that inspired her and the disciplinary value placed on “institutions,” “hypothesis testing,” and “generalizability.”

Lena confronted the gender regime of political science in the classroom as well when students dismissed her “feminized” teaching strategies (such as journaling) as inappropriate for the disciplinary context. Lena explained:

Yeah, and that [male dominance in the discipline] affects writing. I think it can affect the writing that you have students do. I once tried to have students keep a journal in my American Government class and oh, the guys just couldn't stand it, you know? One sentence or they wouldn't do it. So you really have to think about the kinds of students you get . . . in your discipline. They're not creative types. Or they . . . don't see themselves that way and it's really hard to do that [teaching writing the way you want to], especially when you feel there's not a lot of room for creativity.

Lena's attempt to use writing to tap into students' "creativity" met resistance from male students who perhaps perceived journal writing as a "symbolically soft" form of expression that didn't fit with their "hard" views of political science (Miller, 1991, p. 50). The fact that Lena was a *woman* assigning a "feminine" form of writing in a masculine disciplinary context quite possibly compounded their reaction.¹²

Lena's relationships with her male colleagues in the department also contributed to her dual identity problem. She explained how senior male colleagues regularly diminished her disciplinary expertise during conversations about politics or current events:

I have a colleague who really likes to, I feel, [chuckle] lord his knowledge of everything under the sun over . . . over not just me, but others, and especially over women, I feel. And so, that makes me not even want to open my mouth about anything that has to do with politics. And I think that also, I've known a lot of men like that in the political science discipline. [. . .] They just seem to thrive on being super knowledgeable about all these things that—current events or whatever. And that makes you really not want to talk to them. If you feel like they're judging you because you don't know what happened in Italy last week, that kind of stuff [chuckle].

Lena felt her disciplinary expertise was on trial in conversations with male political science colleagues who were fixated on power, status, and knowing. She seems to associate the problematic power dynamic with her disciplinary colleagues in terms of both gender and the (gendered) discipline. "A lot of men . . . in the political science discipline," she says "lord knowledge . . . over women." On the contrary, she told me she felt confident in her disciplinary knowledge when talking with Bill, perhaps because they were from "two different disciplines." The fact that Lena was reluctant to talk about politics with male colleagues and attributed her comfort with Bill, at least in part, to their disciplinary differences, suggests that her interactions with male peers was another factor contributing to Lena's dual identity experience in political science.

As Becher and Trowler (2001) point out, local environments significantly shape the interplay of gender and disciplinary culture. In this case, Lena's experience of local

disciplinary culture was not only destructive to her professional sense of self, but it also thwarted her ability to change the culture of teaching writing in the department.¹³ She explained:

We've had a class, I guess for at least ten years, that one of the folks at our department, who I think really does care about the students, and he wants them to be prepared, he created, because he was concerned about their writing abilities. I feel like maybe it's time to change how we look at it, and I don't feel comfortable suggesting that . . . I've taught this class twice . . . and I've just taught it like he taught it. I'm trying to figure out if I can get up the nerve to say, well, maybe I don't think we need to have them do this, but we should have them do that instead. I'm struggling with that myself, because not feeling comfortable adjusting for other things we may want to do.

Lena's struggle to find the courage to change a course long taught by a male colleague exemplifies another effect of the dual identity problem on WAC/WID efforts. Ultimately, her discipline's "gender regime" impacted Lena's confidence and sense of self-efficacy, constraining her efforts to develop writing pedagogy and curriculum.

"Such a Schoolboy Exercise": Bill's Dual-Identity Experience

Just as Lena's professional identity and approach to CCL work was shaped by her experience as a woman in a masculine discipline, Bill was influenced by his position as a man in a "feminized" discipline. Feminization—the "process by which the field of composition has become associated with feminine attributes and populated by the female gender"—carries both pejorative and potentially radical connotations (Holbrook, 1991, p. 201). On the one hand, composition is characterized as "women's work" in the worst sense of the term (Schell, 1992)—it suffers "lower prestige [and] is taken less seriously"; it "is characterized by a disproportionate number of women workers"; "it is service oriented"; "it pays less than 'men's work'"; and "it is devalued" (Enos, 1997, p. 558). On the other hand, composition is feminized in a positive sense as the woman-dominated field has historically sought "gender-balance" in research and teaching (Miller, 1991, p. 39) and often embraces teaching strategies aligned with feminist philosophies of identity and voice that are cooperative, relational, interdependent, caring, and joyful (Lauer, 1995, p. 280).¹⁴ That is, even as composition remains "the gendered 'woman' of English departments" the "frequently noted characteristics of composition equally define it as an already-designated place for counterhegemonic intellectual politics" (Swearingen, 2006, pp. 543-44; Miller, 1991, p. 52). Nevertheless, despite potentially positive dimensions, most professionals "are caught in the web of gendered experience that has led to the devaluation of the field. . . . Both

male and female teachers of writing have had trouble getting tenure, with salary compression, and respect” (Enos, 1996, p. 2).

Bill weathered the consequences of marginal disciplinary status. He described a particular experience of belittlement he faced when delivering his annual report to the university curriculum committee as director of the writing board:

It’s such a schoolboy exercise. I have to hand my report to the chair and then I have to say a few words about what’s in the report. There’s like twenty or thirty people in the room, including vice presidents and deans. And then I’m done. I have to show up for ten minutes and do a little song and dance for everyone.

Bill’s reference to the “schoolboy exercise” that required “a little song and dance” indicates his experience of marginalization and disrespect. In addition to going through the motions of reporting to a committee that didn’t seem to care about his professional work, Bill had to shoulder demeaning exchanges with faculty colleagues. He described one moment in particular:

So, this social work professor just launches in, you know. . . . Wow! [. . .] [J]ust like the classic spiel about subjects and verbs and [students] can’t put together a sentence, and I know this guy and he used to be on our writing board. [. . .] He either didn’t come to meetings or he never said a single word. He was just dialing it in. So, now, after having had that experience with him, he launches in a very public way and is demanding a response of me in front of all these people. Many of whom know me and know, like, “Oh, God, poor [Bill]. He’s in this position,” you know? And so, he just goes on and on and on, and at the end, I’m thinking, “This is [. . .] not the venue for this right now. This is a meeting of the university curriculum committee. Why are you doing this?” And so I just said, “I hear you. I hear what you are saying. Your comments are not atypical. . . . I don’t think anybody else really wants to hear about all this right now in this setting. I’ll be happy to talk with you. Why don’t we meet?” No. He wanted an answer and I owed him at least that. [. . .] Shit like that happens.

As Bill’s anecdote illustrates, he was treated poorly, perhaps even humiliated, because of his colleagues’ assumptions about the work of teaching writing. Part of his professional identity resonated with disciplinary marginalization.

At the same time, Bill has created opportunities to reclaim power and authority in the face of marginalization. Bill found a way to make the uncomfortable, potentially demeaning interaction described above a platform for teaching his colleagues,

sharing his expertise, and arguing for his cause. Here's how Bill describes his typical response to the common criticism publicly voiced by the social work professor:

We have a social mission at our school. We serve first-generation college population. Everybody knows this. [. . .] This is not a mystery and so, I will say: "We're at the intersection of this decade's-long debate about access and standards. And, these are the decisions we ought to make about providing access to students of different backgrounds, but then also maintaining some level of rigor and the standards and whatnot. [. . .] And you know what? I hear what you're saying. I experienced it myself. I don't have the answer for you. I'm going through the same problems that you're going through."

In Bill's response, he commiserates with his critic without losing face; he admits he doesn't have all the answers and reclaims some ground by turning the question back on the denigrator. In contrast to Lena's experience of being silenced by her colleagues, Bill performed proactive discursive strategies that demonstrate confidence and rhetorical control in response to professional subordination.

As this example suggests, and research echoes, despite suffering some effects of their association with a feminized discipline, men do not experience the negative consequences of dual identity as women do (Enos, 1996). In 2001, Becher and Trowler proposed men in feminized disciplines maintained relative "immunity from the 'dual identity' problem" because they still tended to hold leadership roles (p. 56). According to more recent data from the National Census of Writing, more women than men report directing writing programs (including first-year writing, WAC, and writing centers). Nevertheless, Becher and Trowler's (2001) argument remains relevant; while men holding leadership positions in feminine disciplines are not immune from dual identity issues, they likely experience the problem very differently than do women in traditionally masculine disciplines. Bill's choice to employ confident discursive strategies in the meeting did not "challenge widely available ideas about gender roles" in the same way Lena would have had she refused to remain silent in conversations with her disciplinary colleagues (Becher & Trowler, 2001, p. 56). Still, Bill's experience as a male in a feminized discipline shaped his professional identity. As someone confronted with gender daily he considered himself cognizant of and sensitive to gender issues. In an email response to an early draft of this article, Bill explained:

As a male in the field of composition, it's impossible not to think about gender—I've been outnumbered by women in almost all of my professional endeavors in the field (from grad school to my current position). [. . .] I like to think that I'm further along when it comes to gender awareness than most men.

While Bill suffered drawbacks of working in a feminized field with marginal status, he valued the gender awareness his discipline cultivated. Moreover, as a man in a leadership role, he was able to navigate complicated interdisciplinary relational dynamics and negotiate power. As I'll show, Bill and Lena's professional identities, shaped by the gender regimes of their disciplines, intersected in both beneficial and problematic ways.

Gendered Professional Identities: Resonances and Asymmetries

Lena identified with Bill as a kindred spirit, a teacher who cared about students in a way other colleagues across the university didn't always seem to despite the fact that Northeast State College is a teaching-focused institution. "Everybody seems to just want to do their own thing," Lena told me. "There's been some attempt to talk more about the students' needs and where they're at but it hasn't been as important here as at other institutions that I've taught at. It's a little discouraging in a way because if everybody is doing their own thing for themselves . . ." In contrast, Lena found Bill's student-centeredness, rooted in his disciplinary training, relatively rare and "refreshing":

[H]e comes across as someone who is good, and who cares, and who really wants the students to learn. [. . .] I've always thought about how you try to construct assignments, and how you talk to students, and how you get them to think. He really takes this approach that I find refreshing, that he really seems student-centered. I guess that's also part of why I think that he's a good teacher.

Lena also valued Bill's interactional style. "Bill listens," Lena told me:

[He] asked me questions and helped me, at least that's how I feel. I worked with another person a little bit—a great person, but I felt I was being more talked to. I think in [Bill's] case he's really good at getting you to think about what it is you're doing, not doing and how you might do it differently.

Bill's interactional strategies, even though he took on the "expert" role of writing specialist in the context of their WAC/WID collaboration, were very different from what Lena experienced working with male colleagues in her department. In short, Lena found in Bill a professional identity that resonated with the part of her own dual identity that felt disparaged in her disciplinary/department context.

Bill, too, sensed resonances between his professional identity and values and Lena's. He chose to work with her because she seemed "receptive" to the ideas he offered in the summer seminar, a sensibility he associated with her gender and her approach to teaching:

I find the women generally are more receptive, I think, than men. Most of the people who have participated [in the summer seminar] . . . I think that may be four men, twenty women. I think part of the receptivity issue has to do with their sense of their role as a teacher, whether these things we're advocating, like having students get into groups and share their work, whether—that would just be one example—whether those seem doable to them, whether they're open to those things, or whether they just seem . . . I guess I shouldn't suggest [. . .] that women are all open to those kinds of practices. I have found, at least so far, that women have tended to be more [open], among the people I have worked with.

A reflective practitioner, Bill struggled with his sense that gender had something to do with the connection he felt with Lena. His comments illustrate his desire to resist generalizing or stereotyping. At the same time, he maintains his felt sense that Lena's gender and teaching identity contributed to her receptivity and their camaraderie.

While resonances between Bill and Lena's (gendered) professional identities strengthened their relationship, interview data from this case study also suggest that hidden asymmetries in their gender dynamic might have unexpectedly hindered their work. While Lena consistently praised Bill and appreciated their time together, she was hesitant to raise or return to certain issues when she thought she knew Bill's stance. For example, Lena spoke at length during an interview about how she struggled to balance content coverage with a writing-based approach to teaching in her discipline:

[I]n my department there's kind of an expectation that we're gonna cover X, Y, and Z in an intro to American government class, it's even kind of in the course description. [. . .] So if your colleagues kind of expect this and you're doing something quite different, that makes me feel a little bit . . . uncomfortable; even though I have tenure I don't really have to worry about those things in some ways.

Lena's concern about coverage surely influenced how she interpreted and tried to implement strategies Bill suggested for teaching writing. However, Lena told me she was reluctant to spend time discussing her concerns with Bill:

[I]n thinking about my conversations with [Bill] I never felt . . . I didn't know how to broach that topic like, "Really, what do you do, [Bill], when you feel like you have to get this across?" [. . .] Like, "[Bill], I really need you to tell me what do I sacrifice? You know, how do I . . ." [. . .] "Do I just assume that they're gonna read all this stuff on their own and get it if I'm cutting out X-number of days of . . . material?"

Despite her concerns, Lena chose not to discuss the challenge of covering content and teaching writing because philosophically she agreed with Bill that teaching students to think and engage content was more important than coverage. She felt compelled to enact the mentality.

[Bill] firmly believes and I think I do too, is that, it's not just about the content, it's about how students learn to think and how students learn to find content, to use content and I do, I do agree with this, and I took that mentality into the classroom. [...] I did that in part because I felt that's almost what I had to do given my earlier conversations with Bill about how it's not so much the content.

Lena's disciplinary culture created tension between a writing teacher mentality and the reality of teaching political science in her department, but she couldn't explore those tensions with Bill: "Knowing that he felt that way maybe I didn't really push it more." As a result, Bill and Lena weren't able to problem solve the challenges of teaching writing in political science honestly and strategically. It is difficult to know if Lena would have felt more comfortable raising the issue if she'd been working with a (white) woman.¹⁵ However, complicated gender dynamic probably at least contributed to the disconnect. That is, the intersection of Bill and Lena's (gendered) professional identities, the same identities that resonated with one another and bolstered their relationship, potentially fueled a power imbalance that led to missed opportunities in conversations about teaching writing.

Bill would likely have been surprised to learn about Lena's reluctance to share her concerns. From his perspective, any disproportion in their power dynamic favored Lena as tenured faculty member:

[O]ur relationship was somewhat asymmetrical in the sense that a) she was senior to me, [and] b) she had been at Northeast State College longer than me. While it may not have come up or shown, I always did feel that asymmetricality on some level.

Bill's comments show how relational forces, such as institutional position, can intersect with gender to shape perceptions of relational dynamics in WAC/WID contexts. The fact that Bill acknowledged Lena's position as a senior colleague shaped his performance of expertise. It might have led him to treat Lena respectfully in ways her senior disciplinary colleagues, who were invested in performing their power and superiority, did not. At the same time, Bill's perception of Lena as more powerful (based on tenure and time at the institution) might have obscured how the intersection of their gendered disciplines and their unique gender dynamic actually silenced Lena in certain instances.

Discussion

Findings from this case study suggest that disciplinary gender regimes shape the classrooms and departments in which content experts attempt to develop and enact writing curricula and pedagogy. Moreover, it shows how faculty members constantly resist, remix, and/or accept professional gender identities inflected by their disciplinary cultures. To help faculty reflect on their objectives for student writing and explore appropriate curricular and pedagogical options, writing specialists must deliberately strive to recognize and account for gender in WAC/WID contexts. I focused on gender-different/discipline-different relationships, but complex gender dynamics impact gender-same/discipline-different interactions as well, as my larger study indicated. Many different identity positions shape CCL relationships and I've offered one example here. My case study suggests, however, that the more writing specialists anticipate the role of gender (and identity more broadly) in cross-disciplinary conversations with faculty and in teaching writing in disciplinary contexts, the better we can work with colleagues to develop writing curricula and pedagogies that address the intersecting dynamics at play in a given situation and meet the needs of teachers and students.

For example, if Bill had realized what gender-inflected challenges Lena faced in assigning journal writing, he might have helped her frame the journal assignment for students likely to resist “creative” writing assigned by a female professor. In a similar vein, recognizing how gender dynamics affected Lena’s ability, as a woman, to change and develop writing curricula in her department might have allowed Bill to respond more directly to the material realities constraining her efforts. Bill did not initially acknowledge how the qualities he admired in Lena—receptivity to learning, dedication to teaching, and care for students—were marginalized in her department’s disciplinary gender regime. Had he been more attuned to those dynamics, Bill might have been able to explicitly address them, perhaps by validating Lena’s concern about content coverage while maintaining a shared commitment to teaching writing. Together, they could have creatively considered tenable ways to enact the philosophy in Lena’s context. Bill might have helped get Lena’s colleagues involved in the project or urged her to develop pedagogies and curricula for her own classes first rather than in the department-designated writing-intensive course. In short, attunement to Lena’s (gendered) reality would have helped Bill more effectively support Lena’s efforts in her classrooms and department.

Bill admitted that his failure to acknowledge the impact of disciplinary gender regimes on Lena’s lived reality might have led to “naïve” teaching advice:

My goal was to try to offer Lena a new way of thinking about teaching, a more hopeful way and an empowering way. But what I’ve learned is that you

can't compartmentalize. If she was feeling beaten down by her department and colleagues and even by the "ways of knowing and doing" in her discipline, then me suggesting that she try peer-group workshops wasn't really all that helpful. It was, in fact, sort of naïve.

As Bill makes clear, while writing specialists would do well to recognize faculty colleagues holistically as multifaceted teacher-learner-scholars, the pull to compartmentalize is strong given the realities of CCL work. Bill explained:

It wasn't until I read your article that I learned or was reminded that there was more of a backstory to Lena's situation than just her unhappiness with teaching. . . . [. . .] Or, maybe I did have a sense of the larger backstory of her professional discontent, and I just tried to bracket it off as something that was outside of my control and so not worth trying to address. What I could address was pedagogy, so that's what I tried to do. [. . .] I don't think I understood or tried to understand the depths of her overall professional unhappiness. Or, perhaps I sensed it but "didn't want to go there" because as an untenured faculty member just trying to lead a seminar on writing, it seemed like a bigger problem than I could handle. [. . .] Also, I am friends with her direct supervisor/department chair, so how much I may have wanted to know about whatever pain he was causing her (and my sense is that he may be a part of the problems she was experiencing) is also an open question. Politics, politics!

As an untenured faculty member, Bill understandably sensed the depth of the problem and feared it was more than he could handle. He felt constrained by institutional forces such as tenure and campus politics. For his own professional survival he wanted to help Lena without digging too deep.

Ultimately, however, writing specialists *can* respond to complicated gender dynamics despite challenges. For example, Bill might have drawn on the institutional knowledge writing consultants acquire to put Lena in touch with writing-friendly faculty in other departments so she could build a community of teachers and scholars who welcomed all aspects of her professional identity. By putting Lena in touch with other women from "masculine" disciplines or departments invested in writing curriculum and pedagogy, Bill could have acknowledged and addressed her predicament without becoming embroiled in departmental politics or risking tenure. No matter the response, the first step in accepting gender as a critical axis of consideration for WAC is for writing specialists to recognize the gendered "backstory" shaping our own and our colleagues' professional realities. Doing so positions us to make informed decisions about how best to accomplish the rich and varied ends of CCL work.

Conclusion

Disciplinary gender regimes continue to limit the ability of female faculty to maneuver as writers, researchers, and teachers. Leslie, Cimpian, Meyer, and Freeland (2015) found that “field-specific ability beliefs”—beliefs about what is required for success in disciplinary activities—“can account for the distribution of gender gaps across the entire academic spectrum” (p. 262). Women “may be less represented in ‘brilliance-required’ fields” and those who make it “may find the academic fields that emphasize such [fixed, innate] talent to be inhospitable” (p. 262). These gendered conditions significantly impact how writing specialists build, maintain, and assess CCL relationships. Consideration of how gender forces operate in disciplinary contexts and in cross-disciplinary conversations should inform our communicative choices, our approach to community and ally-building, and the standards we use to measure the outcomes of our efforts. While writing specialists expect and regularly navigate disciplinary differences in WAC/WID contexts, we tend to be less attuned to gender dynamics, even when we focus on gender as part of our teaching and scholarship (Mullin et al., 2008). When we are not attuned to gender, we are less likely to make conscious decisions about how best to communicate with colleagues in conversations about (teaching) writing and less likely to suggest curricular or pedagogical options that are tenable for faculty within the constraints of disciplinary gender regimes and departmental contexts. As WAC/WID initiatives rapidly evolve in response to shifting educational climates, failing to make gender a “critical category” of consideration restricts writing specialists’ understanding of the work we do and limits our ability to initiate and sustain cross-disciplinary relationships (Lutes, 2009, p. 247).

Case studies like this one mark an important step toward recognizing gender as a powerful force impacting CCL interactions. Findings suggest the need to make gender-based research more visible in the field. Future research might offer comparative case studies that consider asymmetrical power relations in CCL conversations between two women or two men. Researchers might trace discursive patterns across cases, noting similarities and differences in use and effect. Future research must also seek to build a more capacious view of gender that respects and explores the effects of non-binary gender diversity in WAC/WID contexts. As the National Census of Writing illustrates, writing specialists identify outside the man/woman binary and/or as LGBTQ. Pieces like Eric Anthony Grollman’s (2016) in *Inside Higher Ed* attest to the unique challenges faced by queer faculty as well as how gender intersects with identity dimensions such as race and sexuality to negatively shape experiences of faculty from underrepresented groups. We need to study how the lived realities of faculty members can and should shape the nature and purpose of CCL work. More gender-critical WAC research is needed to highlight the “fault lines of gender that run unexamined beneath” day-to-day faculty interactions and to construct a more nuanced

understanding of the ontology of these interactions (Lutes, 2002, p. 246). Only by cultivating a reflective awareness of how gender inflects WAC/WID discourse and practice, can writing specialists learn to recognize manifestations in our daily work and act purposefully to sponsor more meaningful cross-disciplinary interactions.

Notes

1. I've recently suggested pedagogy as a potential framework for faculty engaged in cross-disciplinary work around teaching writing (Tarabochia, 2013).

2. I employ a binary gender framework (man/woman, masculine/feminine) here because disciplines tend to demonstrate and enact this binary. However, I recognize the diversity of gender and hope this project is a first step toward highlighting non-binary gender diversity in the context of WAC/WID work.

3. Taking my cue from Jeffrey Jablonski (2006), who draws on David Russell, I use cross-curricular literacy work as an umbrella term that encompasses a range of initiatives geared toward literacy learning across the curriculum (including writing across the curriculum, writing in the disciplines, communication across the curriculum, etc.).

4. See Becher and Trowler (2001) for more about the role of gender regimes in disciplinary cultures (pp. 54–55).

5. Bill and Lena are pseudonyms.

6. Becher and Trowler draw on Kim Thomas's (1990) examination of the relationship between how students and instructors construct English and physics and social constructions of gender.

7. Becher and Trowler (2001) cite several telling accounts rendered in British educational journals. More recently, research sheds light on women's experiences negotiating professional and gender identities in American educational institutions particularly in the context of "masculine" disciplines such as science and engineering (see, for example, Jorgenson, 2002; Rhoton, 2011).

8. While my larger study included male/male and female/female participant groups as well, I chose to focus on one case study in order to capture the detail necessary for a nuanced gender-based analysis. Bill and Lena are cisgender individuals.

9. For example, when Lena tells me she appreciates Bill's interaction style, that she feels he really listens to her, I don't necessarily conclude that Bill is a good listener. I value Lena's description of her experience *and* consider her perception of Bill in relation to her experience (as she describes it) interacting with senior male colleagues in her department.

10. I associate the dual identity phenomenon with Pronin et al.'s (2004) notion of identity bifurcation wherein a victim of stereotype threat is able to selectively disidentify

with dimensions of the threatening domain and/or with aspects of her in-group that are criticized in the domain (p. 153).

11. The name of the institution has been changed to protect participants' privacy.

12. Papoulis (1990) situates the view—that narrative, personal types of writing are elementary and less intellectually challenging than expository, abstract forms of writing—within broader female-male binaries.

13. According to Laura Brady, “Personal experience is one interpretation of an event, shaped by a subject’s positioning and type of agency; it should invite discussion and analysis of the conditions that construct both the event and the narrative” (qtd. in Lutes, 2009, p. 242). In that spirit, I treat Lena’s description of her experience as one possible reality and a piece of data relevant for understanding the professional identity she carried in her interactions with Bill.

14. Lauer (1995) points out how the nature and value of “feminine” teaching strategies are complicated by feminist scholars who question the extent to which they support feminist values. For example, see Schell’s (1998) argument that feminist teaching strategies contribute to the marginalization and exploitation of contingent writing teachers, who are most often women.

15. An exchange from my larger study between two middle-aged white women stands out in this regard. A speech pathology professor purposely raised the issue of passive voice, explaining that while she knew writing specialists favored active voice, she saw rhetorical and epistemological reasons to use passive voice in disciplinary genres. The point led to a rich discussion about disciplinary writing conventions. Again, I cannot claim that their gender-same dynamic allowed for the exchange, but the difference between this discussion among women and the lack of discussion between Lena and Bill seems telling.

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