ABSTRACT

CHEN, CHEN. Enacting a Networked Disciplinarity of Rhetoric and Composition Across Disciplinary Social Spaces (Under the direction of Dr. Chris M. Anson).

This dissertation studies the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition as enacted in embodied experiences across disciplinary social spaces such as the CCCC convention and WPA-L email list. Contributing to scholarship on writing disciplinarity, the researcher performs the work of a discipliniographer, drawing attention to the often taken-for-granted participation in such social spaces, making visible the physical and emotional labor expended to perform disciplinary work, building connections, solving problems, creating and disseminating knowledge. Using qualitative field research methods including activity recording and semi-structured interviews, the study explores how different members of the field participate in such disciplinary social spaces. The analysis approaches the data with three analytical frameworks including theories social ties, activity theory, and actor-network theory, providing thick descriptions of how a CCCC convention and the WPA-L list come to be and how participants have engaged in these spaces as members of the field.

Perceiving social spaces such as the CCCC and WPA-L as places of exchanging ideas, knowledge, building and maintaining interpersonal relations, participants in the study have engaged with these spaces differently because of their identifications and how the multitude of their identities have situated them in different power dynamics. Participants use these social spaces to connect with their strong ties, weak ties, and activate latent ties across the disciplinary-professional-personal spectrum, often along the lines of professional collaborations or personal friendships. Their identifications influence how these ties are built and maintained. Further, the infrastructures and design and cultures of the spaces have shaped their experiences as well. Participating in cross-institutional professional/disciplinary spaces is a kind of expansive
learning activity that also requires people to negotiate their relations with components in other realms such as their local institutions and personal lives. As their experiences shift and change over time, their engagements with the disciplinary spaces change, resulting in changing disciplinary cultures as manifested in these social spaces. Thus, the cross-institutional spaces are themselves networked assemblages embodying ideologies that can facilitate and hinder productive connections as well as marginalize certain populations.

With a processual approach to writing disciplinarity, this dissertation responds to Derek Mueller’s call of treating disciplinarity with a “network sense,” complementing efforts of scholarship on defining disciplinarity and disciplinary identity by unpacking the processes of formation of such disciplinarity as enacted in social spaces. What this dissertation captures is the shape of the discipline as enacted at this particular historical conjecture—the cultural manifestations of the field that will continue to change. As a result, it asks members of the discipline to reflect on “what company we keep and how we keep our company” in the field, a question once asked by the CCCC chair Akua Duku Anokye in her chair’s address in 2007. Interrogating the implications of power dynamics on the labor and identity performance of members in the field across disciplinary social spaces, the study calls the discipline membership to continue to ask the questions Anokye posed in our day-to-day practices in order to better enact our disciplinary networks to be inclusive and egalitarian.

Thus, this dissertation has implications on studying disciplinarity not only in rhetoric and composition but in other disciplines and fields as well. Members across academic fields should investigate the social interactions in their disciplinary realms, their values in contributing to knowledge production and dissemination, recognizing and legitimizing the labor in these spaces.
In turn, they should interrogate how the structural composition of spaces and technologies as well as academic hierarchies support or inhibit such professional work.
Enacting a Networked Disciplinarity of Rhetoric and Composition Across Disciplinary Social Spaces

by
Chen Chen

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media

Raleigh, North Carolina
2018

APPROVED BY:

Dr. Chris M. Anson
Committee Chair

Dr. David M. Rieder

Dr. Jason Swarts

Dr. Stephen B. Crofts Wiley
DEDICATION

To my grandfathers, Jinyin Chen (陈金印) and Chengfang Han (韩成芳).
BIOGRAPHY

Chen Chen is a teacher and scholar of rhetoric and composition. Her scholarship focuses on how professional communication practices in academia create knowledge and enact disciplinarity. Her research interests include the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition, writing across the curriculum, professional writing, digital rhetorics, and social media. As a scholar of writing, she is interested in how people write and communicate across technological and cultural contexts. As a teacher of writing, she is committed to preparing her students with the rhetorical knowledge to communicate in different academic and professional contexts. Her collaborative work with Chris Anson and Ian Anson (UMBC) is forthcoming in the collection *Considering What We Know: Threshold Concepts for Writing Studies* edited by Elizabeth Wardle and Linda Adler-Kassner. Her writing has also appeared in *Composition Studies* and *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. She regularly presents at national and international conferences such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication, the Computers and Writing Conference, the International Writing Across the Curriculum Conference, the Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference, and the Watson Conference. Before beginning her doctoral studies, Chen received her Master of Science in Professional Writing at Towson University and was consequently an instructor of first-year writing at Community College of Baltimore County-Catonsville and of writing for business and industry at Towson University. Chen holds a bachelor’s degree in French from the Communication University of China in Beijing during which she spent a year studying abroad at Université Lumière Lyon 2. In fall of 2018 she will be joining the faculty at Winthrop University in Rock hill, South Carolina as an Assistant Professor of English where she will be teaching a
variety of writing courses including first-year writing and professional writing and manages the internship program for English majors.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the discipline of rhetoric and composition, we believe that writing is a social act—one never writes alone. This dissertation, similarly, was not written by myself alone. It would not exist if it weren’t for my research participants: my fellow colleagues, friends, rhetoricians and compositionists. The stories I tell here are their stories, our stories: stories of our everyday life as academics in this field. I am grateful that they generously shared with me their experiences. This dissertation is foremost for them.

My committee, led by Dr. Chris M. Anson, joined by Drs. David M. Rieder, Jason Swarts, and Stephen B. Crofts Wiley, has contributed enormously to this endeavor. They listened to me, from the first time that I had an idea back in the fall of 2015, to the final defense. They listened to my ideas, confusions, fears. They encouraged me, supported me, pushed me. Chris, who is the world’s best advisor, always gave prompt responses to my emails and constructive feedback on my writing, even when he was halfway across the world and it was the middle of the night. I would not be where I am if it weren’t for the support of my committee. I am a better writer and scholar because of them.

One of the biggest challenges to finishing this dissertation was posed by the job market. I had to pause my writing processes several times to work on job materials, prepare for interviews, etc. Along the way many people gave me support, helping me prepare at various stages of the market, listening to me vent and freak out, calming me down, etc. In particular, Dr. Stacey Pigg, not only wrote a reference letter for me, but also shared with me her materials and did my very first mock interview with me. She answered so many of my text messages asking random questions. She is the kind of mentor everyone would want to have. Former CRDM graduates, Drs. Gwendolynne Reid, Stephen Carradini, Kevin Brock, JJ Sylvia, and Elizabeth Johnson-
Young, all shared with me their materials, experiences, words of wisdom, insights. I’m eternally grateful for them. Friends from other institutions—Dr. Xiaobo Wang, Dr. Ruth Osorio, and the Facebook group for 2017 rhet/comp job marketers—have also provided me with resources, comfort, and courage. My weekly writing accountability group meetings with my friend and colleague David Coad have helped me keep a productive and steady working pace on the dissertation amidst all the other tasks I had to do.

I also want to thank my friends in the CRDM program across cohorts. I have made some of my best friends in this country in this program. I want to first thank my cohort: Meridith Reed, Sarah Evans, Jessica Elam, Chandra Maldonado, Melissa Adams, Peter Kudenov, and Joel Schneier. I’m also grateful for the company and support of many others I’ve met in CRDM, Samara Mouvery, Chelsea Hampton, Katreena Alder, Kendra Andrews, Desiree Dighton, Krystin Gollihue, Abigail Browning, Jeonghyun Lee, Mai Xiong, Hannah Mayfield, and Laura Roberts. They have given me enormous amount of support and courage. Particularly, I feel so fortunate to have gone through these four years with my best friend, colleague, confidante—Meridith Reed—who has always been there for me. Thank you for believing in me.

Finally, I want to thank my two families in China and in the U.S. My Chinese family—especially my mother Lingmei Han (韩玲妹), and my father Youde Chen (陈佑德)—have always encouraged me to pursue my dreams even if it meant that I had to travel across the world to do so. My American family, Jennie Porter and Gary Rosecrans have in many ways introduced me to American culture since I first met them during my high school exchange year and have made me feel like home in this country once so foreign to me. I’m also enormously indebted to my husband Wake Harper, who has gone through with me the preliminary exams, job search,
and dissertation writing, taking over household tasks and providing much emotional support.

This dissertation is for him.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................................................... xii
LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................................................ xiii

CHAPTER 1 Writing Disciplinarity .................................................................................................................. 1
  Introduction ................................................................................................................................................... 1
  Kairotic Moments for Studying Disciplinarity ......................................................................................... 5
  Enacting Disciplinarity ............................................................................................................................ 8
  Dissertation Overview .............................................................................................................................. 10

Theorizing Disciplinarity ............................................................................................................................... 13

Writing the Disciplinarity of Rhetoric and Composition .............................................................................. 20
  Epistemic Approach .................................................................................................................................. 23
  Organizational Approach .......................................................................................................................... 25
  Social and Rhetorical Approach ............................................................................................................. 32
  Networked Approach .............................................................................................................................. 34

Taking a Network Sense of Rhetoric and Composition .............................................................................. 37

Disciplinarity as Enacted by Networked Activities and Relations ............................................................ 43

CHAPTER 2 Studying the Enactment of Disciplinarity .................................................................................... 45

Methodological Framework ......................................................................................................................... 45

Data Collection ............................................................................................................................................ 50

Researcher Role .......................................................................................................................................... 63

Data Analysis .............................................................................................................................................. 65

CHAPTER 3 Disciplinarity as Networked Affective Relations ......................................................................... 71

Networking .................................................................................................................................................. 71
Social Activities ..........................................................................................................................75
Participation at the CCCC ................................................................................................75
Networking/Socializing at the CCCC ..........................................................................................80
Social Ties ....................................................................................................................................82
Strong Ties ..................................................................................................................................86
Latent Ties .....................................................................................................................................88
Weak Ties .......................................................................................................................................96
Identity Performance and Social Ties .........................................................................................100
Participating into the Discipline ..............................................................................................103
Participating to Give Back to the Field ......................................................................................107
Shifting Identities and Changing Social Participation ...........................................................108
Social Ties and Emotional Energy Flow ...................................................................................111
Fueling Creativity and Increasing Sense of Belonging ..............................................................113
Draining Group-Shared Energy .................................................................................................114
Conclusion: Disciplinarity as Networked Affective Relations ................................................116
Social Ties, Social Identities .........................................................................................................117
Affective Disciplinary Energy ......................................................................................................118
CHAPTER 4 Laminated Professional/Disciplinary Activity .........................................................120
Professional/Disciplinary Activity ..............................................................................................120
Activity Theory and Expansive Learning Theory ....................................................................123
Picturing a Professional/Disciplinary Activity ...........................................................................127
Goals and Motivations of Professional/Disciplinary Activity ................................................135
Why do I want to go to CCCC? .................................................................................................137
**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 2.1: Participants’ professional statuses ........................................................................58

Table 2.2: Front of Activity Recording Card at CCCC 2017 ..................................................60

Table 2.3: Data Collection Distribution ..................................................................................62

Table 2.4: Data Categories .....................................................................................................67

Table 3.1: Professional Activities at the CCCC .....................................................................76

Table 3.2: Personal Activities at the CCCC ...........................................................................78

Table 3.3: Personal Professional Activities ............................................................................79

Table 3.4: Socializing/Networking Activities at the CCCC ....................................................80

Table 3.5: Types of connections and strength of ties ...............................................................84

Table 4.1: Reasons my participants go to CCCC conventions for ........................................137

Table 4.3: Motivations for using WPA-L ................................................................................146

Table 4.4: External Factors impacting going to CCCC ............................................................155

Table 5.1: Subject Areas of Most Popular Monthly Discussions ..........................................199
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: Engeström’s complex model of an activity system (illustrated by Matt Bury, Wikimedia Commons) .......................................................... 125

Figure 5.1: A visual model of how a CCCC convention is put together ........................................ 191

Figure 5.2: Discussions with over 100 responses. X-axis: years. Y-axis: months. (FYC: blue; Disciplinary concerns: yellow; Assessment: red; Fun: brown; Pedagogical practices: green; List logistics: purple). ........................................... 214

Figure 6.1: Model of disciplinary participation in social spaces reflecting the relations between such participation and the social construction of disciplinary culture........ 223
CHAPTER 1 Writing Disciplinarity

What this story teaches me is that if you don't learn to work together, if you don't learn to honor many voices, if you don't learn to get beyond discrimination, mistrust, dishonor, you can't manage a planting party, let alone a company, an institution, a place, a unit that will implement collective goals.

—Akua Duku Anokye, 265

Introduction

The story Anokye references to in the epigraph is an Ananse story about a farmer and his corn planting party where the farmer has invited the corn, the termite, the chicken, the snake, the fire, the water, and the sun, despite every one’s warning to him for not inviting the next. Eventually the planting party never takes place because each member gobbled up each other. When the sun rises, there is nothing left. Anokye, in her chair’s address at the annual convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 2007, told stories like this to evoke the discussion of “the company we keep” at the professional organization and its annual conventions. She reminded her audience that the company this organization and its conventions keep are “the teachers who come at peril to their financial well-being, the part-timers, the graduate students, the tenure track and tenured faculty, the rebels with a cause, the mentors, the newcomers, in addition to the leaders, the megastarts, and the chairs” (266). I open my dissertation with Anokye’s chair’s address because I resonate with her idea here that the discipline needs to reflect on the company they are keeping and on the ways that they are keeping that company. At the same time, her address pointed to a disciplinary culture inherently fraught with power dynamics, particularly visible in the social spaces that members of the field frequent. While her call to inclusivity emphasizes only various professional groups, power
relations along other lines such as gender, sexuality, and bodies are also present in disciplinary social spaces and intermingled with different professional identities to influence the ways people experience such social spaces. In turn, their social experiences can lead to concrete material consequences on their professional career and personal well-being. As a discipline, rhetoric and composition is known for its friendly culture, which has the power to fuel knowledge production and dissemination, but power is a double-edged sword. The assumption of a friendly field can sometimes blindfold people, making invisible the inequities in social spaces. In this dissertation, I aim to make those dynamics visible again by describing people’s embodied experiences at disciplinary social spaces—something often absent in formal scholarship and perhaps taken-for-granted as part of the academic life—arguing that while disciplinary social spaces and structures have the power to bring people together to foster collaboration, creativity, etc., power differentials and inequities and the labor expended in order to participate in the field can have consequences on the kinds of disciplinary culture we create. This is at core of the question of disciplinarity. I want to highlight how certain company has been kept by the professional communities with which members of the field engage as a quest to investigate the enactment of disciplinarity.

My inspiration for this dissertation is my own experience of entering into this “company.” In a graduate class on “teaching college composition,” I was introduced to WPA-L, a listserv in the field that’s intended to help writing teachers and writing program administrators by offering a space for people to ask questions, offer answers, share stories, etc. Before that class, I did not know that teaching college composition was a field of study. Being an international student who did not go to college in this country, I was not even aware of the existence of the first-year writing course. I also had never used a listserv before. But I soon fell
in love with this field as I learned more and more about it in this course. Interestingly enough, I
did not subscribe to WPA-L at the time, partly because I wasn’t sure about my own professional
trajectory after that course and partly because I did not want my inbox to be flooded with emails
as warned by the professor. But I eventually subscribed during my doctoral studies and am now
receiving all the emails everyday.

The following semester, in another class on writing assessment, we were encouraged to
turn our final papers into proposals to the Conference on College Composition and
Communication, the 4Cs. A professor who had reviewed proposals for the convention in the past
was invited to help us with our proposals. She told me that she loved Cs and that it was the
academic Christmas for her. By that time, I had decided that I would get a teaching job after my
Master’s degree and prepare to apply for a PhD program to study “rhetoric and composition.” I
was fascinated by the concept of academic conferences, something that was new to me. I was
eager to discover this space where, as that professor said, people were super friendly to each
other, something that apparently was not the case in other academic disciplines. One can imagine
how excited I was when I later found out that my proposal got accepted and I was to go to this
fabulous, almost magical “C’s.”

These two first encounters I had with WPA-L and CCCC served as my “entrance” to the
discipline of rhetoric and composition, or so it seems, at least. I wasn’t quite sure what I was
doing, but I wanted to stay in this country and furthering my study was an easy way to achieve
that goal. And I was fortunate enough to “discover” something that really interested me. These
encounters marked for me the beginning of a journey that has been shaping who I am
professionally, affecting both my professional and personal life. Today I can fully identify
myself as a member of the discipline of rhetoric and composition, but more than ever I feel that
there is so much about the discipline that I don’t know. Not in the least do I even know what it means to be a member of this discipline and what company it is trying to keep.

As I have briefly described my early experiences engaging with WPA-L and the CCCC as a way to enter to the discipline, Anokye also did a brief ethnographic study of the attendees at the CCCC convention in 2006 in Chicago. She asked attendees these questions: “When was your first CCCC Conference? What do you remember about it? What kept you coming back? What would you like to see CCCC do in the future? What do you say or would you say to encourage others to become members?” In her chair’s address, she presented the issues that her interviewees’ responses referenced to: “the promotion of empathy; a sense of social responsibility and social justice; the capacity for teamwork and leadership; deep and enduring learning” (267). While Anokye emphasized the positive experiences her interviewees highlighted, she realized that some people did feel they were neglected or ignored by well-known scholars and that “many believe [the organization is] falling short in our social and civic responsibility, that [the organization] show[ed] a real lack of activism and awareness” (270).

Today, these responses still ring true, not only in terms of how the discipline should get other entities outside the discipline to listen to what it has to say about writing practices and teaching writing, but also in terms of how members are talking to each other within the discipline, sometimes excluding or neglecting what each other has to say. In particular, invoking Anokye’s address again I want to call to attention to the ways members of the discipline as well as professional organizations contribute to construct the disciplinary culture. As I will later elaborate in my literature review, scholarship on disciplinarity has focused primarily on the structural and systemic elements of disciplines, including their means of communication, outlets for the dissemination of knowledge, and disciplinary practices without taking into account the
ways in which members of the discipline interpret and respond to its work—the psycho-social elements of disciplinarity. I’m thus also interested in exploring and making visible how members of the field perceive the disciplinary work they do, especially in disciplinary social spaces such as an academic conference and how they have perceived the roles and functions of such social spaces. This investigation can then lead to further reform in the ways that disciplines form and sustain themselves, and provide principled, welcoming spaces for new and existing members to carry out their work.

The exigence for my dissertation project started with personal motivation and interest and has now shifted to a disciplinary impetus for reflecting on disciplinary culture and taking actions to improve such culture, thanks to the current events that have unfolded, perhaps serendipitously around the two social spaces I’m studying: the CCCC convention and WPA-L.

*Kairotic Moments for Studying Disciplinarity*

The discipline of rhetoric and composition, as a relatively young field, has seen many efforts to write its disciplinary history and development, explore questions about what the discipline is and what kinds of work its members do, and to establish its legitimacy in academia and in society. These efforts manifest the need to constantly reflect on disciplinary identity and development, for both the inward purposes of enculturating new members into the field and reflecting on disciplinary work and the outward purposes of responding to shifting social, cultural, and political climates that impact the discipline and its members and the students they serve (the company we keep). Most recently, an edited collection on *Composition, Rhetoric, and Disciplinarity* puts forward the exigences of a “disciplinary turn” to which contributing authors respond with different focuses (Malenczyk, Miller-Cochran, Wardle, and Yancey). As the discipline has matured overtime, new publications on disciplinarity such as this show that the
issue of disciplinarity is a continuing topic for scholars of rhetoric and composition. My
colleague Matt Halm, in his presentation at the CCCC convention in Kansas City, MO in 2018,
pointed out that the field should always keep asking the question of what rhetoric and
composition is and that it is okay that we never reach a definitive answer. I agree with Halm in
that this quest to explore disciplinarity should not end, and I will add here that the quest should
be processual, accounting for the various moving parts and changing times in which the
discipline is situated and which the discipline encompasses. My literature review later in this
chapter will elaborate more on the scholarly exigences for writing the disciplinarity of rhetoric
and composition. Here in the introduction, I want to highlight the kairotic moments that serve as
impetus for writing disciplinarity with a focus on social interactions in the field and disciplinary
culture.

Many controversies have sprouted in disciplinary social spaces through informal
communications within the last year. In the summer of 2017, the NAACP issued a travel
advisory for the state of Missouri for people of color, especially African Americans. The
membership of the CCCC immediately responded because the CCCC convention 2018 was to be
held in Kansas City, MO. In response to membership’s request to move the convention, the
organization released a brief statement indicating that for financial reasons, the organization
couldn’t afford to move the convention. Perceived by many to be insensitive, this statement
didn’t satisfy but instead angered much of the membership, especially members of color. Many
caucuses joined force and wrote a formal statement to the organization, asking it to move the
location or at least ways to improve the convention format that would accommodate those who
could not attend. Suddenly, tensions within the discipline broke out in the open. The convention
still took place as planned, but significant transparency was offered by the program chair Asao
Inoue on how major changes were made and implemented at the convention to engage with local activist work, to ensure that attendees could present virtually, etc. This event prompted the field to reflect on and revise the ways it keeps its own company.

Almost immediately after the 2018 convention ended, a discussion on WPA-L broke out starting with a critique of the 2019 CCCC’s Call for Proposals (CFP) because the 2019 convention program chair Vershawn Ashanti Young used African American Vernacular English (AAVE) extensively in writing the CFP. A space not immune to heated discussions, with occasional unprofessional and inappropriate posts with ad hominem attacks, WPA-L has once again exploded and bled over to Facebook and Twitter. Complex arguments have been made about the values of code-meshing and the teaching of Standard American English (SAE). Backchanneling on Facebook and Twitter critiqued the racist, classist nature of some of the posts on the list, particularly when a graduate student’s calling out of that nature was immediately shut down. While the discussions on the list have mostly remained civil, shutting down a graduate student and dismissing the work on code-meshing have made those observing the discussions frustrated and even angry. I read through most of the emails on the list, spreading over five different threads, accumulating 152 emails as of 1:23 pm EST on March 25, 2018. I also read a significant number of tweets on my Twitter feed and a Facebook thread, and participated in some Twitter and Facebook discussions. I was drained, confused, frustrated from doing this work. I acknowledged on Twitter the labor that people had put into participating and following these discussions. This event continued to shape the process of writing my dissertation and how I may end it, and how I might discuss the implications and future directions of this research. Like the controversies over the 2018 CCCC convention, the discussions over the 2019 CFP and the ways the discussions have been carried out, serve as another exigence for my work here. No longer am
I the naive new member of the field entering into the discipline four years ago being fascinated by the CCCC convention. My heart is heavy and my thoughts are complicated over what I think the disciplinary culture is.

Even in the midst of such negativity, I still love this field and I love the work I do, and most of the people I’ve encountered have been nice, reflecting how many members would describe the culture of the discipline. But the social spaces where members dwell don’t always feel nice and welcoming to a lot of people; dwelling in these spaces requires a lot of physical and emotional labor, negotiating the different identities they embody and the disciplinary culture in these social spaces. While these social spaces do not fully represent the discipline’s culture, they can play major roles in shaping that culture, the work members of the discipline do, the knowledge created. However, this labor is not always captured in formal scholarship. This is another reason that I was drawn to study the embodied communicative experiences that take place in disciplinary social spaces both online and offline.

*Enacting Disciplinarity*

Responding to the continuing exigences of writing disciplinarity and the kairotic moments, this dissertation contributes to the efforts on writing the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition by focusing on the informal disciplinary communications at social spaces. In particular, I take a networked view of disciplinarity because it allows me to capture the shifting, social nature of disciplinarity with a processual approach. The literature review later in this chapter will explain in more detail the networked view, but here in the introduction I will point out Derek Mueller’s definition of a “network sense” when writing disciplinarity:

“When inquiring into disciplinary emergence and maturation, network sense names a facility for recognizing and tracing relationships, for engaging in focused reading and
exploratory reading, and for noticing connections among programs and people, publications and conferences, activities and their material castings, difficult questions and myriad stakeholders.” (Mueller, *Network Sense* 14).

Mueller’s network sense is productive for this dissertation because it focuses on the relationships and connections within the discipline and recognizes that different components, both human and nonhuman, can impact the formation and development of a discipline as well as disciplinary culture. For an individual member of the discipline, participating in social spaces can involve a lot of negotiations across different places; such participation also often changes over time as their identities change over time. From a different perspective, any given social space is a heterogeneous network itself that may take different shapes from time to time. Scholarship on disciplinarity has always been questioning the ways a discipline may be defined. In rhetoric and composition, such definitional work has particularly been helpful in terms of arguing for the legitimacy of the field. However, definitional scholarship risks treating the discipline as a static object, eclipsing its shifting nature and the processes of defining disciplinarity. Mueller has pointed out the value of complicating definitional efforts concerning disciplinarity “pursuant to essences [e.g., seeking to define writing studies as x] or differentiation because disciplinary formation is continuing, yet-emerging” (“Emplaced Disciplinary Networks” 23). Joining Mueller’s work, my dissertation contributes to a network view of the discipline by emphasizing the processes and the relational aspects of disciplinarity. These processes are often more visible in disciplinary social spaces. Therefore, this dissertation research pays attention to all the negotiations and changes and sets out to explore the roles social spaces can play in shaping disciplinary culture.
Thus, the central research question for this dissertation is: How is the networked disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition enacted through informal disciplinary communication? In particular, I’m interested in how people communicate in disciplinary social sites such as academic conferences and online social network sites because these are the types of sites where cross-institutional social interactions often happen. In turn, I will argue how describing a networked disciplinarity can further enrich scholarship on disciplinarity by drawing attention to the power dynamics and laboring work in disciplinary social spaces as constitutive of disciplinary culture. Specifically, studying people’s experiences at the CCCC conventions and on the WPA-L email list, I explore the following three questions:

1. What are the embodied communicative experiences that take place at these disciplinary sites and beyond and what factors impact these experiences?
2. What kinds of connections/associations can be built in these experiences, either among activities or actants, which contribute to the shape of disciplinary networks?
3. What roles can these sites play in the creation of these experiences, thus enacting the discipline?

Dissertation Overview

In the rest of this chapter, I will review scholarship on writing disciplinarity, specifically on the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition before establishing how my dissertation will contribute to this rich body of scholarship by adopting a network sense.

Chapter two describes my methodological approach, a qualitative field research with participant observation and interviews, inspired by multi-sited ethnography developed by George Marcus and Christine Hine, a research design which “moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural
meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space” (Marcus 96). I will lay out how I recruited my participants and the two primary methods I used to collect my data: an activity recording and qualitative interviews. I will also explain in more detail why I chose to study the CCCC conventions and the WPA-L. At the end of chapter two, I will also briefly introduce the plan for analysis in the three data chapters.

In chapter three, my analysis focuses on the interpersonal relationships established and maintained across the CCCC and WPA-L using theories of social ties. Since a discipline can only create knowledge when members work together, theorizing the social relations helps describe the ways interpersonal connections are built, especially in cross-institutional contexts and the ways that such connecting efforts and social relations are productive or not to individual professional and disciplinary development. Here I work with the concept of “network” defined as interpersonal connections. My participants’ experiences show that they often use social spaces like academic conventions to connect with personal and professional strong ties, but an online space like the WPA-L functions less as a space where active networking happens. However, both spaces provide infrastructure that can help activate latent ties within the discipline, connecting people to new networks, bringing opportunities and resources. Regardless of where ties are built, both online and offline spaces can help maintain tie strength, but people’s multi-layered identities (personal, professional, disciplinary) can significantly impact how people participate in these social spaces thus how ties are made. In turn, their participation also influences how their professional identities are developed.

In chapter four, I shift the unit of analysis from interpersonal networks to what I define as disciplinary/professional activity captured across my research sites. When members of the discipline participate in social spaces such as the CCCC and WPA-L, they are participating in a
kind of learning activity complementary to the literate activity in the academy that Paul Prior studied in his work. Prior’s ethnographic study shows that graduate students across the disciplines must negotiate many different situations, interacting with other classmates, lab mates, advisors and professors, and also their personal identities and situations in order to develop literate knowledge in their disciplines. Prior argues that such literate activity, as a process for students to be enculturated into their disciplines, is laminated and reflects that enacting disciplinarity is a process (Writing/Disciplinarity). In this dissertation, my focus moves beyond the institutional boundaries to the professional/disciplinary activity integral to their professional trajectories. In this chapter, I treat the CCCC and WPA-L as mediating spaces which expose people to new social environments, new mediating artifacts, new tensions and contradictions that drive the development of both individual members and the discipline as a whole. In analyzing this activity, I illustrate the different motivations and artifacts that impact such activity, arguing that it is similarly laminated and heterogeneous. In turn, people’s embodied experiences across the CCCC and WPA-L are also chronotopic, shifting over time and across space.

Chapter five shifts gears once again, by treating the CCCC and WPA-L not as unifying artifacts but networked assemblages themselves, made up from both human and nonhuman actants. My analysis in this chapter is guided by actor-network theory which draws attention to how different actants are associated together to create the effects of what people come to experience as these two spaces, further revealing power dynamics in enacting the discipline. Drawing from the work of actor-network theorists such as John Law and Bruno Latour, I unpack how a CCCC convention comes to be, using the CCCC 2017 Portland convention as an example, highlighting in particular the nonhuman actants such as the CFP, convention space, convention program, which played vital roles in shaping the convention as attendees came to know it and
their experiences. Similarly, I unpack WPA-L as a platform, discussing its infrastructure and its culture as perceived by my participants and constructed by its discourse archived openly online, drawing from contextualized data I collected for a big-data research project on the archive. In this chapter, I also return to the kairotic exigences mentioned above to argue that these social sites are actor-networks also because they may be unstable and can only come to shape when the necessary actants can be spliced together over and over again. Tensions within and beyond the actants can change the dynamics of the network and reinvent it in different ways.

In chapter six, I will conclude the dissertation by summarizing my arguments across the three data chapters before discussing the implications of the dissertation and future research directions.

Theorizing Disciplinarity

What is a discipline? What is a discipline made of? How can we theorize a discipline? These are the big questions that drive the inquiry in this dissertation. Scholarship on this subject ranges from a variety of disciplines themselves, and as usual, academics borrow from one another to help explain their own disciplinary development. In this section, I will review scholarship from the history of science, the history of sociology, and the history of philosophy, as well as sociolinguistics, to discuss what approaches have been taken to theorize disciplines.

From a scholarly perspective, a discipline cannot exist without a body of knowledge. Understanding disciplinarity must therefore begin from an epistemic perspective— that is, what counts as knowledge and how that knowledge is constructed. In writing the history of science, Thomas Kuhn has famously popularized the notions of “paradigm” and “paradigm shift” in scientific revolutions, which were subsequently adopted by other disciplines to talk about the advancement of knowledge and the progress of knowledge making. For Kuhn, the advancement
of sciences is not linear but marked by establishing and breaking paradigms, defined as “some accepted examples of actual scientific practice—examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together” which “provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research” (Kuhn 11). A scientific community is founded on paradigms and it advances with the breaking of existing paradigms and establishing new ones. At any given time, the accepted examples of actual scientific practices based on the established paradigms constitute the knowledge of the community.

But epistemologies are not developed by individuals alone. Kuhn associated “paradigms” closely with scientific communities, which indicates that epistemologies are born in some kind of a social or organizational structure. Even someone like Newton and Einstein would need to work from preexisting concepts and theories which they could break from to revolutionize science according to Kuhn’s theory. Their revolutionary discoveries would then need to be acknowledged by other scientists in order for them to be considered legitimate knowledge in the disciplines. Such acknowledgements could be achieved through widespread publications and lectures. Publications and lectures exist in their own structures—different types of organizational or institutional structures—where members of disciplines can produce, disseminate, and receive knowledge. Even independent scholars who are not affiliated with any institutions would still engage with scholarship and participate in some professional organizations where they can interact with others. Modern digital technologies such as online social network sites also provide opportunities for people to connect with one another. Present here are two perspectives on defining and theorizing a discipline besides the epistemic perspective: an organizational and institutional perspective, and a social and rhetorical perspective.
Theorizing a discipline with an organizational and institutional perspective means that a discipline may be defined through the infrastructure upon which it stands. Institutional structures legitimize a discipline at the local level. Organizational structures legitimize a discipline at the professional and national or international level. Legitimizing disciplines in these established structures can have material consequences to those who create, disseminate, and receive knowledge in the disciplines. Established disciplines with institutional and organizational structures can receive financial and material support to assist research and teaching. Established professional organizations also function to facilitate the exchanges of knowledge and practices in the discipline across institutional and sometimes geographical boundaries. The advancement of disciplines often happens within these structures because of the support members of the disciplines receive by being part of the structures. But these existing structures also set boundaries, some of which need to be challenged for the benefit of knowledge making and disciplinary advancement. Julie Thompson Klein defines discipline “boundary work” as “the composite set of claims, activities, and institutional structures that define and protect knowledge practices” (1). She argues that often these boundaries need to be crossed in order for the production and organization of new boundaries (2). Certainly, Klein’s discussion of disciplinary boundaries includes epistemic crossings as well as institutional crossings. She points out that some disciplines are more “permeable” from an epistemological standpoint: “the applied and the synoptic” are often “inherently interdisciplinary” (citing Heckhausen 39). Sometimes the crossing among disciplines is driven by the practical problems professionals face in practice. On the other hand, the synoptic disciplines tend to “have a looser aggregation of interests, implying greater openness to ideas from other disciplines” (Klein 40). Examples of such disciplines are “literary studies, history, philosophy, anthropology, and geography” (40). Charles Bazerman’s
discussion of the interdisciplinary nature of writing studies is a case in point; he argues that knowledge borrowed from other disciplines helps him pursue his own research in writing studies.

Just as knowledge travels from discipline to discipline, the locations where knowledge is created and knowledge-making practices are protected also shift and evolve. As Klein points out, the permeation of disciplines can have real implications on the “individual identity and disciplinary classification” (52). Members in rhetoric and composition know much about the discussion on the naming of their field: composition studies; writing studies; rhet/comp; comp/rhet; rhetoric and composition (see Coleman; Coleman and Goodman for a collected body of scholarship on the nomenclature of the discipline). Many members of the discipline of rhetoric and composition may prefer to identify themselves as primarily a compositionist or a rhetorician, participating in disciplinary spaces that either focus more on writing pedagogy and program administration or rhetorical theories. The nature of rhetoric and composition often means that many members of the discipline share multiple disciplinary and professional identities. Since identities are constructed with social and power dynamics, individual identity performance across disciplinary spaces will bring these features to light.

Traces of these exchanges resulting from different communication practices become the social capital of a discipline. A social and rhetorical approach to theorize a discipline would focus more specifically on what kinds of connections or associations manifest in these traces which make up the “shape” of the discipline. In this approach, a discipline is seen as made of members, tools, and material artifacts that work within and across the parameters of organizations and/or institutions to create, disseminate, and receive knowledge. Knowledge embodied in concepts, ideas, arguments, research projects, can be treated as the product of social interactions. Complementing the epistemic and organizational approaches to writing a discipline,
a social and rhetorical approach looks at a discipline not as a static product but as an entity in motion. Studying the different relations among different elements of a discipline also potentially reveals power dynamics in disciplinary cultures and spaces. Böner et al.’s mapping twenty years of scholarly knowledge diffusion in 500 most-cited U.S. research institutions demonstrates citation patterns in relation to institutions and geographical locations. Their study, using published scholarship in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences as data, identifies institutions as producers, sources, or consumers of knowledge as demonstrated in citation patterns (416). This study highlights the social dynamics of scientific disciplines reflected in citation practices where for example as the number of scholarship increases, “authors are more likely to cite papers generated by authors at close-by institutions” (425). Nathan Johnson applies factor mapping methods to highlight various impact factors influencing the production of written scholarship in the humanities, including institution, citation patterns and quotation grafting, location, and metadata factors such as venues, subjects, and dates. On a macro-level, such studies, along with other bibliometric studies, contribute to people’s perception of impact factors in disciplinary knowledge diffusion. While there are limitations to quantifying knowledge production patterns, other qualitative studies focusing on the qualities of associations and connections among different disciplinary elements provide complementary views.

Taking a social view of disciplines or intellectual communities is prevalent, unsurprisingly, in sociology studies. Randall Collins, in his sociology of philosophies, has argued that “[t]he crucial focus of an intellectual group is the consciousness of the group’s continuity itself as an activity of discourse, rather than the particular contents of its discussions” (28). While Collins’s focus is on formal face-to-face interactions among intellectuals in a group such as lectures, written communication such as scholarship can also be considered as an activity of
discourse from which we can glimpse the disciplinary culture. Scholars in writing across the curriculum and sociolinguistics have studied academic writing from a social perspective. Ken Hyland treats academic discourse as a social act, arguing that “...the interactions of academic writing indicate the writer’s acknowledgement of the community’s epistemological and interpersonal conventions and connect texts with disciplinary cultures” (14). Hyland also points out the power of academic discourses not only within disciplinary communication but also in relation to the public because “[t]he languages of the academy have, in fact, reshaped our entire worldview, becoming the dominant mode for interpreting reality and our own existence” (160). Within the academy, scholars often need to learn the “language” of their disciplines in order to be “part of the community.” “The social interactions in the writings of academics not only negotiate community knowledge and credibility, but help to produce and sustain status, relationships, exercise exclusivity and reproduce interests, which lead to an unequal distribution of influence and resources” (Hyland 168).

Also relevant here is the concept of communities of practice, developed by theorists Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave to describe situated learning. This concept assumes the social production of meaning and that “practice” is the source of coherence of a community (Wenger). This concept is important for theorizing disciplinarity because one can treat disciplinary participation the way Wenger uses “to describe the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises” (55). Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder argue that organizations should actively cultivate communities of practice by “valuing the learning they do, making time and other resources available for their work, encouraging participation, and removing barriers” (13). Without these actions, communities of practice “will tend to organize along friendship lines or within local
geographical or organizational contexts rather than cover the whole organization” (13). In the context of an academic discipline, one may argue that institutional and organizational entities should take similar measures to cultivate the communities of practice situated in the discipline. What kinds of scholarship get published? How do communities of practice develop? Who gets to connect with whom? What barriers prevent or break these connections? These are important questions to ask about a disciplinary culture because they open ways to reflect on the power of academic discourses and disciplinary participation as they impact the worldviews as well as the development and ideologies of the disciplines and the academy.

For members within a discipline, it is important to learn how to become part of the disciplinary community of practice, but this learning process is fraught with competition and power play. From the perspective of the disciplinary community, it is thus crucial to reflect on how a diverse body of members, ideas, tools, institutions, can be engaged in a variety of disciplinary work. Charles Bazerman argues for the value of rhetorical analysis of discipline by revealing the history and evolution of disciplinary discourses because it can make “more visible these suppressed issues of the dynamics and evolving knowledge production of the disciplines (Constructing Experience 75). Bazerman takes a social and rhetorical view of disciplinarity focusing on the social processes of disciplinary construction primarily in terms of disciplinary writing. This emphasis on process is also taken by others who have written about the disciplinary knowledge construction of scientific disciplines (Myers; Latour and Woolgar). Paul Prior’s sociohistoric account of literate activity in the academy across different disciplines reveals that the so-called disciplinary enculturation is actually not a single-direction initiating movement of newcomers into the field but a more open and heterogeneous process. Drawing on Foucault’s notion of “orders of discourse,” Hyland argues that “[d]isciplinary orders of discourse, then, are
ideologically shaped by those who exercise authority, the powerbrokers and gatekeepers of the field, and serve the interests of the powerful within the discipline” (157).

Such social and rhetorical approaches to writing a discipline with an emphasis on process complements the epistemic and organizational approaches by reflecting more critically on the culture(s) and ideologies of a discipline. What are the implications of such cultures and ideologies on members of the discipline, especially those who are just “entering” the discipline? As academics, when we perform our research and teaching practices, what kinds of knowledge, institutions, activities, people, and tools, and labor are we privileging? What and who is absent in our disciplinary work? How can a discipline remain open and equitable to its members, knowledges, and practices? In the discipline of rhetoric and composition, these questions have been explored with different perspectives, but never with an explicit focus on disciplinary participation in social spaces that I study in this dissertation. Just as Hyland focuses on how “community ideologies” “are acted out through personal cognition in textual practices” (158), I want to draw attention to embodied experiences of members in the context of a community ideology in a given disciplinary social space. In the next section, I will review the scholarship on writing the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition from these three approaches (epistemic, organizational, and social and rhetorical), before justifying my own interest in writing the discipline as enacted across its social spaces.

Writing the Disciplinarity of Rhetoric and Composition

As I have shown in the previous section, disciplinarity is often theorized or studied with three different approaches: epistemological, organizational, and social and rhetorical. From an epistemological perspective, disciplinarity emphasizes the knowledge production process: how do we make knowledge in our discipline? Organizationally, we may theorize disciplinarity in
terms of its location in our institutions, sometimes in relation to other disciplines and the public, as well as its own organizational structure reflected in various professional organizations. Finally, disciplinarity can be theorized socially as we examine how various elements of a discipline come together and interact to make up the shape of a discipline. As much as these three approaches focus on different aspects of disciplinarity, all of them are necessary in order to gain a full picture of a discipline. They are also not distinctive approaches that don’t overlap. A historical study of the professionalization of a field focusing on its publication records by mapping out citation practices portraying the scholarly networks in writing may be considered primarily an organizational approach because it focuses on the professionalization process through scholarly publication. However, the mapping of citation practices also reflects a social view of the discipline. The social interactions in a discipline, whether through written scholarship or face-to-face activities, are significantly limited and structured by the organizational characteristics of institutions and professional associations. Knowledge production processes are in turn influenced by disciplinary hierarchies and institutional constraints.

Although there is a collective sense that the discipline of rhetoric and composition has stabilized through its professionalization and recognition as an autonomous area of research, especially when the Visibility Project legitimated rhetoric and composition in the National Research Council and when a compositionist Ann Gere was elected to be the president of Modern Language Association, investigation into its disciplinarity continues, informed by a variety of research methodologies, from network studies to microhistorical methods (Mueller et al.; McComiskey). As I mentioned in the introduction, the question of disciplinarity still permeates the scholarship and the day-to-day work of disciplinary members. When an
administrator has to argue for the place of a writing program within their institution, when a professor introduces a graduate student to composition theories, or when a member of the discipline tries to decide if they belong at the annual convention of Conference of College Composition and Communication, the question of disciplinarity comes to the forefront. Therefore, at the center of this dissertation, I believe that we ought to continue the work on writing the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition. Here I do not go into detail on the debate about whether we should treat rhetoric and composition as a discipline, nor do I plan to tease out the different nomenclatures that are used to refer to the discipline even though a review of how we have “written the discipline” will shed some light on these two issues. Rather, I want to focus on how the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition has been theorized in the three ways discussed above before contributing to this body of scholarship with a new way to theorize its disciplinarity from the social and rhetorical perspective.

Rhetoric and composition, as a relatively young discipline (depending on how one sees it, the birth of the discipline may be traced back to the first freshman composition course at Harvard at the end of the 19th century, the founding of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1949, the publication of the Braddock report in 1963, or the Dartmouth Seminar in 1966, etc.), has seen various ways of investigating its disciplinarity. As Janice Lauer famously defines the dappled discipline and its multiple features,

At its deepest level, a discipline has a special set of phenomena to study, a characteristic mode or modes of inquiry, its own history of development, its theoretical ancestors and assumptions, its evolving body of knowledge, and its own epistemic courts by which knowledge gains that status. Its surface characteristic ritual features include a particular departmental home, a characteristic ritual of academic preparation, and its own scholarly
organizations and journals. Finally, permeating these features is a discipline's tone, the result of its evolution and the ways its scholars interact with one another and outsiders (20).

Lauer’s definition of discipline mirrors the three perspectives on writing disciplinarity that I have summarized above. An epistemic perspective on disciplinarity would encompass its subjects of study, modes of inquiry, “theoretical ancestors and assumptions, its evolving body of knowledge, and its own epistemic courts by which knowledge gains that status” (Lauer 20). Organizational accounts of disciplinarity would focus more on its institutional location and professionalization of its members, and its scholarly and professional organizations and journals. To investigate the tone of a discipline is to look at disciplinarity socially, examining how members of the discipline relate to one another and to outsiders. Below I will elaborate more how the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition has been written from these three perspectives: epistemic, organizational, and social/rhetorical.

Epistemic Approach

Tracing disciplinary development from an epistemic perspective reveals how knowledge is made both through writing research and on the teaching of writing. In the early efforts to write disciplinary history in the 1980s (North; Berlin), a main exigence for work on disciplinarity was to establish its legitimacy and to define its identity. This exigence also lead to various views on the genesis of the discipline, contingent on the tensions between research and pedagogy. Stephen North, in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, has argued that the publication of the famous Braddock Report by Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Shor in 1963 serves an important benchmark for the field because it focuses on the knowledge creation process, particularly through research, in composition, synthesizing different research
approaches to studying writing and the teaching of writing. It was at this moment, according to North, that composition became Composition (15). But North does not discount the values of teaching practices of writing courses. Instead, he critiques the lack of acknowledging methodological pluralism and Practitioner inquiry. North’s cataloguing of various types of “knowledge makers” in the field reflects his view that a field can only be legitimized as a discipline when one focuses on how knowledge is made. On the other hand, some may treat the parallel effort to trace the origins of the field by James Berlin as another way of writing disciplinarity with an emphasis on writing instruction and its epistemological influences from rhetorical theories. While Berlin seems to attribute the genesis of the discipline to the implementation of first-year writing courses, his focus on writing instruction parallels North’s book along the epistemic line as he reviews how the objective, the subjective, and the transactional theories influenced the ways good writing was defined.

Continuing to focus on teaching, Fulkerson’s philosophical history of the discipline from 1979 to 2005 gets at the axiology of our discipline that guides our pedagogy, arguing that what we value influences how we teach writing. Separating philosophies of composition from other theories, including an epistemological one, Fulkerson’s approach of writing our discipline nonetheless points to the relationship between teaching and research when, in 1990, he notes that “[a]xiological commitments set up goals for pedagogy, but do not prescribe how best to reach them, and one's decision about how to reach the goal will be guided but not determined by views of writing as a process, just as both procedural and pedagogical theories will be based on whatever research or experience one's epistemology allows to constitute knowledge” (418). In other words, one’s instructional values are determined by one’s epistemological views.
Others who believe that the legitimacy of the discipline hinges on research may also attribute the genesis of the discipline to the “process turn” marked by the publication of the significant piece by Flower and Hayes introducing a cognitive model of the writing process (Nystrand, et al.). Gary Olson’s collection on the intellectual work of rhetoric and composition takes disciplinary inquiries a step further from research on the teaching of writing, showcasing a diverse body of scholarship on different aspects of knowledge production, arguing that disciplinary knowledge isn’t only produced to support the teaching of writing. These efforts of writing the epistemological history of the discipline continued to the twentieth-first century when scholars began to revisit ideas about how we make knowledge in the discipline (see Massey & Gebhardt).

Organizational Approach

While these efforts to theorize disciplinarity are epistemic in nature, research and pedagogy are not only influenced by the epistemic evolution of the field. As Jacob Babb asserts in his contemporary history of the discipline, “Epistemological pressure is exerted within the discipline by scholars whose work establishes or challenges the boundaries of research deemed legible to other members of the community. External groups, such as university administrations, accreditation organizations, and legislative bodies, exert institutional pressure that shapes disciplines as well” (Abstract). However one wants to characterize the birth of the discipline, the teaching of writing, especially the first-year composition courses, plays an important part in the discipline, which raises issues of institutional structures. When one talks about the teaching of writing, one inevitably needs to talk about where that teaching takes place in the organizational structure of academia. If one wants to attribute the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition to the teaching of writing, one’s writing of the disciplinarity must include discussions of the
locations of such teaching. The development of rhetoric and composition, in this sense, is a process of what Klein calls boundary crossing and establishing within institutional structures, relating to other disciplines and entities.

One tension in the discipline’s historical development lies in the relationships between rhetorical studies and composition studies, materialized in the boundaries between English departments and Communication departments. Steven Mailloux’s rhetorical history of the relationships between English and Communication studies and a series of responses sparked by his book reflect the complex institutional developments that lead to the split of rhetorical studies into two different departments. Scholars who value the foundational role of rhetorical studies in the university argue for cross-disciplinary efforts to revive the marginalized role of rhetorical studies (Glenn, Lyday, and Sharer). With the eclipse of rhetorical studies and oratorical education, first-year composition became the center of attention, almost as a replacement of rhetorical education, which then led to the establishment of English studies. Harvard implemented the first freshman composition course as a remedy to students’ poor performance on the entrance exam. Many colleges then gradually followed this example. However, writing instruction, at this time, pushed only for the correctness of “pure English” where usage was the most important. Crowley, in her Composition in the University, critiques such historical practice using Foucauldian terms, stating that the goal of such a course is “to subject students to discipline, to force them to recognize the power of the institution to insist on conformity with its standards” (74). It is no surprise, then, that one line of debate on the disciplinary identity of rhetoric composition focuses on how one may articulate the relationships between “rhetoric” and “composition” (see Coleman; Coleman and Goodman). On the other hand, composition also became increasingly shadowed by literary studies in English departments. Thomas Miller, in his
contribution to Glenn et al.’s collection, observes that from the beginning, the teaching of English was shaped as a response to literacy crisis, whereas literature studies produced what was considered research and professionalism; especially even at the end of the 19th century, instructors of the composition courses were mostly people who “could not claim a research basis for their work” and “whose work was to clean up students’ language” (25). Articulating the relationships between “rhetoric” and “composition” manifested in institutional structures such as curricular development is one way of writing the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition.

Therefore, much of work on the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition hinges on the first-year writing course and the administration of writing programs. With the presence and development a variety of writing programs and the prominent role of first-year writing courses in the discipline, scholarship on writing program administration is often tied to the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition. In fact, the Council of Writing Program Administrators sponsored a landmark special event in 2001 called “Conference on Composition in the 21st Century: Crisis and Change,” which promoted reflection on the disciplinarity of composition by centering on a variety of important disciplinary issues, primarily the teaching and assessing of writing and how other factors such as research and political and social issues would shape the discipline in the future (Bloom et al.). The administrative histories of WPA work in L’Eplattenier and Mastrangelo’s collection trace the formations and developments of writing programs in institutional contexts as influenced by local politics, as well as a set of historical narratives that focus on the professionalization of WPAs as disciplinary formation (Heckathorn; Rose; Gunner).

Whether one attributes the genesis of the discipline to the first-year writing program or not, one must acknowledge the important role of the first-year writing courses in our discipline and the contribution made to the discipline by research about WPA work. Certainly, the
discipline has gone far from focusing only on the teaching of freshman composition, but much of
the WPA scholarship does not yet touch on the administration of other writing programs, such as
professional writing or technical writing programs. When writing about the disciplinarity of
rhetoric and composition, one must also look at the issues of administration such as justifying the
writing program to the rest of the university, designing the curriculum, mentoring graduate
student instructors, and implementing equitable practices for the contingent labor, or establishing
independent writing programs and departments.

At the local institutional level, investigation into the disciplinarity of rhetoric and
composition also considers the graduate programs in the field, which purposefully train the
future teachers and researchers in the field. Reflective work on graduate programs focuses
specifically on the professionalization of these emergent scholars. Just as one asks the question
whether students are taught to write well in the first-year writing courses, one also wonders if
graduate students are prepared for the professions they are entering into (Anderson and Romano;
Miller, “Why Don’t Our Graduate Programs Do a Better Job;” Peirce and Enos; Long et al.).
Arguments are made about how doctoral education may not be adequate in preparing students for
the “culture shock” that they may experience on the job, either because their doctoral training is
more composition oriented than their future literature-dominant department or vice versa; or they
are not sufficiently trained in administering a writing program that they are expected to do in
their job (Anderson and Romano; Miller, “Why Don’t Our Graduate Programs Do a Better
Job;”). Stories are also told about graduate school experiences without effective guidance on
teaching (Pemberton). What’s taught in graduate programs certainly reflects the epistemic
development of the discipline; but seen from an organizational and institutional perspective,
accounts about graduate training are also accounts of the discipline’s structure. The design of
doctoral programs, as Babb analyzes in his dissertation, impacts deeply the trajectory of
disciplinary formation and development, influencing the culture(s) of the discipline. Institutional
contexts, often clearly demarcating disciplinary boundaries, and working with other myriad
factors such as university administration, different levels of finances, and university or state
politics, foreground the power dynamics that academics are exposed and subject to.
Consequently, for graduate students and junior faculty, learning to be a member of the discipline
and the academy requires the labor to navigate these power differentials. The question often
becomes a reflective one for those in power to think about how to use their privilege to create a
more inclusive discipline.

Other attempts to write the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition organizationally
step out of local institutions to look at the professional establishment of the discipline at the
national and international level, often through scholarly publication venues and professional
organizations. For example, Maureen Daly Goggin traces the professional history of the field
through its major disciplinary scholarly publications. Harvard’s entrance exams angered English
educators of K-12 who opposed the Uniform College Entrance Requirements Committee
(Goggin 27). In 1911, NCTE was established, in part to respond to the dismantling of the MLA
Pedagogical Section but also to form alliance among English instructors of K-12. While NCTE
addressed issues of English pedagogy at all levels, college composition scholars were given
limited space. After WWII, the vast development of science and technology boosted college
enrollment. Since first-year composition was a required course for all incoming students, rhetoric
and composition scholars needed more scholarly space to discuss pedagogical practices, thus
creating a professional organization devoted solely to college rhetoric and composition: CCCC
founded in 1949 and its journal *College Composition and Communication* journal (*CCC*) in
1950. Nancy Bird, an education scholar, examines the CCCC as an exemplar of professional organization for an academic discipline. Bird’s dissertation in 1977 traces the historical development of the first twenty-five years of the organization and its role as “an agent for the continuing education of college composition teachers and for the professionalization of the field of college composition teaching” (4). For Goggin, the establishment of these professional spaces legitimates the discipline. Consequently, she names the editors and reviewers of prominent journals in the discipline “discipliniographers.” For example, Charles Roberts, first editor of CCC, declared composition as a discipline with annual meetings and an official publication. The primary functions of CCC under Roberts’s editorship were to offer practical service for a specialized group, namely college writing teachers, and a forum for encouraging research in composition. Once again, we see both research and pedagogical practices coming together to constitute the disciplinarity.

Tracing the development of CCC and other main journals such as Research in the Teaching of English (RTE), Rhetoric Society Quarterly (RSQ), College English (CE), and later, Rhetoric Review, Pre/Text, and Written Communication, Goggin illustrates how the development and shifts of the journals both on its publishing guidelines and its personnel organizations such as changes of editors and reviewers, impact the direction of disciplinary development. Donna Burns Phillips, Ruth Greenberg, and Sharon Gibson also argue, in their study of the CCC journal, that the evolution of the journal in its physical format, its conversants (editors and authors), and the subject matter mirrors the development of rhetoric and composition as a “specific area of study” by the mid-seventies and “a potential discipline still experimenting with methodology and refining its theoretical, pedagogical, political, and social vision” (445). In Goggin’s words, the discipline is a “garden” that continually needs maintenance and reflection.
on what’s being planted, who gets to plant, and how it gets maintained, and journal editors and contributors are the “gardeners of the discipline.” Expanding her original definition of the discipliniographers, Goggin argues for the importance of a broad set of influences on the production of scholarship, including “[p]articipants in graduate programs, conferences, newsletters, book publishing, various institutional tenure and promotion procedures with guidelines that value and thus encourage some kinds of work over others, invisible college networks of friends and colleagues” (186-187). Goggin’s work highlights how these organizational and structural components shape the discipline.

Other scholarly efforts have researched disciplinarity around the founding of the professional organization Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Being recognized as an official organization first within a larger, already established professional organization (NCTE) granted members of CCCC much ethos needed to extend its wings. Over the years, CCCC has become much more independent, but its official affiliation with NCTE still defines many of its features as a professional organization. Recognizing the importance of major national conferences such as the CCCC in shaping the discipline, other scholars have studied CCCC’s roles by focusing on the famous chair’s addresses delivered by the organization’s chair every year on Thursday at the beginning of the convention (Mueller, “View of the Center”; Lee; Barton). Taking distant and close readings of these chairs’ addresses, these projects reveal how these addresses set the “tone” of the discipline and how the changing focuses in these addresses reflect evolving disciplinary focuses over the years. However, founding a professional organization within the higher education doesn’t necessarily mean that it would be officially recognized by other parties beyond our immediate neighbors. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Louise Wetherbee Phelps and John M. Ackerman’s work on “The Visibility Project”
finally achieved the goal of gaining an official space for rhetoric and composition in the academic structure in American higher institutions. First, they successfully argued for the recognition of rhetoric and composition as an “emerging field” in the National Research Council’s taxonomy of research disciplines. Second, they were able to obtain a code series assigned to rhetoric and composition/writing studies in the federal Classification of Instructional Programs. The Visibility Project represents an effort to establish disciplinarity from an organizational and institutional perspective in the larger context of American higher education.

**Social and Rhetorical Approach**

As mentioned, discussions of professional organizations and scholarly publications can reflect the social and rhetorical aspects of disciplinarity. Jacob Babb defines the discipline as “the product of a complex interaction between scholars and teachers who attempt to create coherent, if varied, intellectual spaces for their work and social and political influences, both local and national” (Abstract). But I suggest that we can extend “scholars and teachers” further to include all elements in disciplinary communities, human and nonhuman, and that a social and rhetorical approach to writing disciplinarity focuses on unpacking the creation of that product Babb speaks of, to illustrate how the relationships among ideas, members, tools, texts, organizations cohere and vary. For example, the stories on how different members of the discipline get enculturated and professionalized into the discipline through different activities in different spaces (see Anderson and Romano; Fontaine and Hunter) illustrate disciplinary structures but also paint the social cultures of the discipline. How are different parties or members in a discipline related? How are elements in a discipline socialized/encultured/engaged in disciplinary work? When we look at the disciplinary organizations, from local first-year writing programs to doctoral programs to national
professional organizations, we inevitably see the connections and relations built in those structures. When we look at the scholarly conversations and citation patterns reflected in our published books and journal articles, we also see the flow and connections of ideas, concepts, and arguments. Often when we talk about a discipline, we talk about its disciplinary community where members reside. But Prior’s work has challenged the static view of disciplinarity with a more process-oriented approach. Prior warns us of the danger of treating disciplines as structured discourse communities and urges us to study disciplinary participation through situated studies of mediated literate activity where “heterogeneous elements of the networks, including the participants, are (re)produced” (28).

Disciplinary enculturation is not one-directional. As “newcomers” learn the ways of a discipline, they negotiate, fumble but also innovate and push the “seniors” to reflect on and revise their practices. As writing scholars, we all support the notion that writing is a social act. If our knowledge-making process is done through the production of scholarship, we also ought to treat our all scholarly work as a social construct. By the same token, circulation of scholarship and participation in disciplinary professional organizations reflect the social construct of a discipline. This view allows us to critically examine how the discipline comes to be through a set of social relations and actions which inevitably bring to the forefront issues of diversity, accessibility, and inclusivity. It also acknowledges the development of individual members in the discipline as impacted by a multitude of factors. In their edited collection bringing together the “unheard” voices of the discipline, Fontaine and Hunter point out that, “in the process of ‘professionalization,’ of working toward disciplinary autonomy, composition has begun to promote an illusion about itself” (p. 9). This “illusion” presented by the limited number of established scholars in their collection reflects the tensions between research and teaching, as
well as issues along the lines of gender, race, and labor. When contingent faculty or graduate students feel that they do not “measure up” to the “standards” set up by dominant voices such as CCCC chairs, their stories are being excluded from the discipline, and their work not counted as disciplinary knowledge making or disciplinary construction (Fontaine & Hunter; “Burkean Parlor”). As Phillips et al. wonder on the edge of an emerging discipline of rhetoric and composition in the early 90s, “How would our disciplinary legitimacy affect our relationship with students in the margin? With our colleagues? Would the disciplinary status come at the expense of practitioners?” (461).

To write the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition with a social and rhetorical approach means to examine the social nature of disciplinary work, unpacking, with a process-oriented approach, the relations/associations among various members, ideas, tools, elements in broader disciplinary contexts such as scholarly journals and professional organizations and disciplinary social spaces.

**Networked Approach**

Recent work on the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition has begun to adopt a networked approach which can capture the shifting social nature of the discipline. Jason Swarts’s entry in *Keywords in Writing Studies* (2015) explains a metaphorical use of the term “network” in writing studies “to describe and theorize growth, disciplinary diversification, and creativity” (121). Scholars taking a networked approach to write disciplinarity have been attempting to visualize that diversification and creativity by processing large amounts of metadata about the discipline (Johnson, “Invisible Colleges in Rhetoric and Composition”; Johnson, “Modeling Rhetorical Disciplinarity;” Mueller, “Grasping;” Mueller, “View from the Center;” Mueller, *Network Sense*; Tirrell). Mueller’s distant readings of the disciplinarity (*Network Sense*), while
contributing to the conversation on the roles of a structural element in the discipline, scholarly publications, focuses rather on how ideas hang together in these publications and how people travel across professional/disciplinary spaces with a network sense, hence embodying a more social approach. His bibliometric study of CCC citations illustrates the shape and density of the discipline, capturing, in real time, its evolution (“Grasping”). The “long tail” in his graphs of citation frequencies in the journal over twenty-five years shows an increasing number of names that are only cited once, which certainly visualizes “how broad-based the conversations (in a given journal) have grown—and just how much the centered, coherent, and familiar locus of conversation, based on citation practices, has slid” (Mueller, “Grasping,” 211). Randall Collins refers to the solidification of intellectual networks as symbols which are relationships among participants in the discipline that make them feel they are part of the group (23). Scholarly citations are one type of such symbols, and citation practices show the networked relations among scholars through scholarship production. Bibliometric studies such as Mueller’s can provide the “true” picture of how prominent figures in the field are being “socialized” in the field in scholarship and how the trends of scholarship and citation practices may reflect disciplinary development. For example, he found that “the prominence of the top-most cited authors is gradually and relatively steadily declining” within the CCC archive from 1987 to 2013, a positive trend that may reflect the field’s flagship journal being more open to more scholars (Network Sense, 217). His interactive graphs on citation patterns and keywords appearances in the CCC journal archive allow readers to play with the data and invite new inquiries to the list with attention to race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, disability (Network Sense, 216-217).

But bibliometric studies constitute only one kind of social disciplinarity work. Many other factors can be traced and analyzed to paint the social and rhetorical networks or
communities of a discipline. Jeremy Tirrell’s mapping of the online rhetoric and composition journals adds a new dimension to traditional bibliometric studies. His geographical maps illustrate the movement of authors, editors, and sponsoring institutions of these online journals as well as the concepts appearing in article/review titles and special issue themes to their corresponding physical locations. Tirrell’s work brings together two layers of social networks: the networks of people and institutions, and the network of ideas, and corresponds them to geographical locations. To trace other disciplinary relations, the Writing Studies Tree (WST) crowdsources the genealogy of the discipline of rhetoric and composition by allowing anyone to input data on their professional trajectory so as to create a social network map that visualizes geographically the interpersonal and interscholastic relationships among members of the discipline. This genealogy extends the traditional genealogy model of “student-advisor relationship” to include more professional relationships such as collaboration in various capacities and mutual mentorship across different institutions (Miller, Licastro, and Belli). Such a social model of disciplinarity “captures the behind-the-scenes relationships that form between colleagues in teaching seminars, in graduate courses, in advising meetings, and through the editorial process” (Miller, Licastro, and Belli), areas that previous work on disciplinarity has not focused on, at least on such a scale and with such magnitude for the discipline of rhetoric and composition.

More recently, in *Cross-Border Networks in Writing Studies*, Derek Mueller, Andrea Williams, Louise Wetherbee Phelps, and Jennifer Clary-Lemon bring together multiple methods to trace the disciplinary networks of Canadian writing studies both from distant and close perspectives. Their study adopts an innovative networked methodological approach to capture the multifaceted disciplinary work and the continuous movement of members in Canadian
writing studies. By tracing the professional trajectories of disciplinary members, and their interpersonal relationships in broader professional contexts such as academic conferences, the study investigates the history, development, and identity of Canadian writing studies and its interdependent relationships with its American counterpart. Complementary in-depth interviews, textual analyses, and institutional case studies also add detailed pictures of the nature of disciplinary work done by Canadian writing scholars and institutions, revealing the problems of their marginalization and invisibility in the academy.

**Taking a Network Sense of Rhetoric and Composition**

Different approaches to investigate disciplinarity presented above inspire me to explore new ways to research disciplinarity. While epistemic and organizational developments of a discipline are crucial in characterizing disciplinarity, what drives these developments is ultimately the social relations of those who comprise a discipline, whether members of a discipline, institutions which house the discipline, professional organizations, or scholarship circulated in and across the discipline. Examples of recent disciplinarity work on rhetoric and composition with a network approach I reviewed above are grounded in a processual view of the discipline. This approach, emphasizing the processes of enacting disciplinarity, complements the static view of disciplinarity. Both are important. In certain local or individual contexts, it may be productive to treat discipline as a unified entity in a particular moment, focusing on individual development and professionalization in the field. On the other hand, unpacking the processes of how a discipline comes to be at any given moment allows us to foreground the dynamics of disciplinary culture and the tools that help shape that culture for better or worse. In this view, the discipline becomes less a static product solidified in paradigms or materialized in disciplinary journals or institutions and organizations; it becomes an entity made up of multiple forces and
elements as they come together at any given time. These forces and elements do not stay static; they shift and change. Sometimes they settle into new paradigms, new concepts and ideas, or new institutions and organizations, but sometimes they fade away or become marginalized from the mainstream narratives of the discipline. With a processual view of disciplinarity, I return to the narratives, stories, and the social relations that compose the discipline and reveal how they compose the discipline. From there, I hope to bring to light the power differentials inherent in our disciplinary work thus push us to reflect on our disciplinary work and culture.

To do that, I argue that we should for a moment perhaps forgo the notion that there needs to be a unified “discipline,” something that is out there to guide people on what to do and how to do that. Instead, we should attempt at a more embodied understanding of how a discipline comes to be. This is not to make invalid the efforts to legitimize the discipline, but to value the myriad activities performed as disciplinary work. A discipline only exists or comes to be when we perform certain actions, be it teaching, writing, or producing scholarship. Therefore, while we are doing disciplinary work, we are also working to “enact” the discipline.

I borrow the term “enact” from Science, Technology, and Society scholar Annemarie Mol, who, in her work on the ontology of medical practices, argues for breaking the divide between nature and culture, object and subject, by analyzing “the knowledge incorporated in practices” (48). She writes that “[i]nstead of talking about subjects knowing objects we may then, as a next step, come to talk about enacting reality in practice” (50). Mol’s ethnographic study of atherosclerosis reveals that what constitutes the disease can be different in different places, from the clinic to the surgical room or the pathology lab, and these different versions of the disease may overlap or contradict one another. These versions of the disease, or realities, are enacted by both human and nonhuman actors involved in each place. For example, a patient may not
complain of any pain in the clinic, but an examination may reveal that he should be suffering from the disease. Thus, the disease is not a simple static diagnosis and there is not one unified reality of the disease, but a multitude of realities enacted by different actants across different times and spaces. Therefore, focusing on enactment means focusing on processes rather than product. To focus on how a discipline is enacted means to unpack how a discipline comes to be as heterogeneous networks rather than to simply define what a discipline is as a static, stable entity.

Theoretically, I look at a discipline as something to be enacted by processes including a variety of disciplinary work, from teaching, researching, and attending a conference to mentoring a graduate student, etc. It includes any form of writing that’s involved in the knowledge production process encompassing something as informal as tweets at a conference to the very formal published scholarship. It includes oral exchanges that take place between colleagues at a program meeting or a quick meet-up at a conference site. Focusing on the enactment of disciplinarity in these processes means to adopt an embodied understanding of disciplinary work, emphasizing not on what’s being produced in these processes but how the processes carry out and contribute to disciplinary culture(s). This focus allows me to attune to the heterogeneous nature of disciplinarity inherent within disciplinary structures but also across its relationships with other public entities. This is why a networked view of disciplinarity can be productive.

Derek Mueller defines the network sense of the discipline as “an epistemological capacity for discerning those patterns entangled with a broad set of forces (an actor-network) beyond the text, involving matters of semantic associations, historical orientations, locations, and relationships” (“Clouds” 52). I concur with him that “questions of disciplinarity are, above all else, questions of the sociology of associations” (“Clouds” 117). Even though he does not use the
word “enact” but “summon,” he does imply that the discipline is not a stable product “out there” when he writes that “the field is summoned anew each time a question is asked of it, each time a student signs up for a course, each time a narrative is retold or a database is queried” (“Clouds” 174). In this sense, the discipline becomes not as “an object known” but as a “knowing subject” in Mol’s words: a subject that comes to be through specific actions. Mueller’s network sense hinges on “the latticework of ties among those who self-identified with the field, their institutional situations, geographical locations, methodological preferences, and areas of specialization” (“Clouds” 255). Distant reading and visualization methods used in Mueller’s work and the Writing Studies Tree project portray such latticework from a distant perspective and account for the shifting nature of disciplinary work. However, what is left out of the big picture are the micro-relations and day-to-day activities of those who self-identify with the discipline and a variety actors involved in the processes of their disciplinary work. Consequently, the nuances and affective qualities of disciplinary work are not captured. This brings me to the empirical implication of enacting the discipline.

To study how the discipline is enacted means exploring the day-to-day activities of disciplinary work or, what contribute to the fabrics of disciplinary networks. This is by no means the first call to focus on our daily actions in relation to the question of disciplinariness. Indeed, Susan Miller has argued that “[a] corrective good story about composition, like new feminist versions of women, depends on including characters and their ordinary daily actions in the symbolic domain that traditionally marginalizes them, denying their significance in symbolic as well as factual ‘reality’” (3). Sheryl Fontaine and Susan Hunter’s collection gives voice to those who have been marginalized in the hierarchies of the composition discipline, “celebrat[ing] the true potential of our discipline’s multivocal, heteroglossic, nonhierarchical nature” (9). In
McComiskey’s collection, scholars have conducted microhistorical research on various disciplinary events highlighting the exceptional normal narratives of our disciplinary history about members of the discipline, epistemic contentions, professional events, etc. As mentioned before, these narratives represent a social and rhetorical approach to writing the disciplinarity, albeit on a microscopic scale. Joining this body of scholarship and contributing to the social and rhetorical approach of writing disciplinarity with a processual view, I believe the kinds of stories important to tell are about how rhetoric and composition is enacted through embodied practices, which should include what people who identify as members of the discipline do in different places and spaces: classrooms, scholarly inquiry, offices, different cross-institutional social spaces such as academic conferences and listservs. The question becomes, how do we enact the reality of composition as a discipline/field? How do the realities and bodies in these different sites coordinate into a singularity of “rhetoric and composition”?

In order to investigate how a discipline is enacted from a network perspective, I position my project in the middle of the methodological spectrum between Mueller and WST’s distant perspectives and the close perspectives represented in Fontaine and Hunter’s and McComiskey’s collections, where I will account for both the broad shapes of disciplinary networks and the specific detailed actions that contribute to these networks. A productive example is Jeff Rice’s networked view of English studies, in which he suggests that College English should be “the study of the mixing and remixing of connections: those connections that move from popular culture to the university, from geography to politics, from literature to film, from theory to theory, from celebrity to noncelebrity, from city to classroom, from the Web into our daily lives, from writing to writing” (132). Theorizing disciplinarity as networked relations and activities
allows researchers like me to trace the processes of how a discipline gets enacted as one follows the connections throughout networks.

Network theorists have used networks as a productive concept to talk about the social activities under the impact of new media technologies. Rainie and Wellman define networks as the new social operating system centered on “networked individuals” who can build communities around themselves through connections afforded by the social network, the internet, and the mobile technology revolution. Internet communication technologies (ICTs) and mobile technologies impact the processes of socialization, leading to social cohesion (Ling). Others theorize networks as agents of power in terms of both control and resistance (Galloway and Thacker; Castells). While social scientists such as Granovetter and Haythornthwaite emphasize on the connections among people, using the concepts of strong, weak, and latent ties to describe the strength of interpersonal connections (Granovetter; Haythornthwaite, 2002, 2005), actor-network theorist Bruno Latour treats networks as an assemblage of both human and nonhuman actants (Latour, 2008). Disciplinary networks share similar qualities as theorized in these treatments of networks. Internet communication technologies have changed the ways members of a discipline conduct their work and communicate with each other. Individual members of a discipline can build their own networked connections through interactions with others in the field for the benefit of their own professional development while also contributing to the advancement of the discipline. Different networks in and across the discipline also embody power dynamics. Disciplinary networks can be comprised of networks of interpersonal relations, such as those visualized by the Writing Studies Tree. But disciplinary networks also include other entities, such as the tools we use to communicate and the tools we use to create scholarship. Affordances of these tools, such as scholarship databases and social network
platforms, shape the performances of disciplinary work. Disciplinary networks can also be made of networked activity systems, where mediating artifacts and the divisions of labor can support the reaching of the object and push forward the development of an individual or an entity. This is where Spinuzzi’s definition of network proves productive to study the enactment of disciplinarity. He defines networks as “relatively stable assemblages of humans and nonhumans that collectively form standing sets of transformations” (12). Putting actor-network theory and activity theory in dialogue, Spinuzzi studies the intricate knowledge work of Telecorp in the context of the telecommunications industry in Texas. Spinuzzi treats the networks of Telecorp as assemblages of all the human and nonhuman actants and activities, using the concept of “net work: the ways in which the assemblage is enacted, maintained, extended, and transformed; the ways in which knowledge work is strategically and tactically performed in a heavily networked organization” (16). This concept of “net work” emphasizes on the formation of networks where one must pay attention to not only the connections among agents but also connections among activities performed by actants.

**Disciplinarity as Enacted by Networked Activities and Relations**

In this dissertation, I contribute to the efforts of studying disciplinarity from a networked perspective by focusing on networked disciplinary activities and relations. Specifically, I focus on a kind of disciplinary “net work” that’s often not documented or symbolized in formal scholarly publications or teaching materials, yet contributes to intricate disciplinary networks, embodying disciplinary power dynamics and labor practices: the informal social interactions that people have at online and offline social spaces in order to connect or “network” with others, to build relationships in and across institutions, to gather resources, to find collaborations, to mentor, to build solidarity. Such interactions are often essential for those who become productive
scholars and members of the discipline, not only to their personal and professional development but also to the development of the discipline. These interactions usually happen in spaces such as the hallways of a department building, a bar across the street from campus, an academic conference, or online social network platforms. These interactions contribute to the disciplinary cultures and reflect the shapes of the discipline. A member of the discipline, entangled in the disciplinary networks, is one such Rainie and Wellman’s networked individual. A discipline is as broad as the extent of the networked relations and activities embodied by their members and disciplinary work. These interactions, in a multitude of forms, through a multitude of media technologies, across a multitude of spaces and places, are an extension to what Collins calls the “interaction rituals,” including not only face-to-face interactions but also virtual interactions in online spaces where members of the discipline come together with shared objects or actions, moods or emotions, and moral obligations to one another which will then be filled with emotional energy and symbolized as disciplinary cultures through repetition. Collins asserts, albeit anthropocentrically, “[a]ll social life is an ecology of human bodies, coming together and moving apart across the landscape” (23). The social disciplinary life is also such an ecology where not only human bodies but also nonhuman bodies come together and move apart across the disciplinary landscape or the transdisciplinary landscape. This is how disciplinary networks are built. I’m thus interested in what kinds of activities take place when these bodies come together and what kinds of relations and associations are built, particularly in certain informal social spaces. Further, I want to explore the roles of these social spaces in enacting disciplinarity. In the next chapter, I will present the methodology of the dissertation.
CHAPTER 2 Studying the Enactment of Disciplinarity

Methodological Framework

My research design is informed by scholarship on qualitative communication research methods, specifically a qualitative field research with participant observation and interviews, in which I intentionally select points of entry into particular disciplinary networks built around particular types of disciplinary sites. These points of entry allow me to trace the types of actions and events as part of the communicative practices that scholars perform to engage in disciplinary networks beyond the immediate confines of their institutions yet at the same time intertwined deeply with the literate activity they perform in graduate seminars, research labs, such as those Prior examines as the literate activity in the academy. As Christine Hine argues, these different forms of communication can contextualize each other. But at the same time, many of these events and activities are very concrete and local, involving particular times, places, and people. This characteristic of activities is similar to Bahktin’s theory of language as chronotopic (referenced in Prior “Writing Disciplinarity,” 247)—situated in time/space-sensitive actions and events. In reverse, actions and events are also chronotopic, situated in particular times and spaces and impacted by the relationships between people. Consider the following scenario:

A writing program director (WPA) working at a four-year university may need some advice on how to negotiate the workload of the contingent writing instructors in her program with the university administration. She visits the website of CCCC where she finds the “CCCC Statement on Working Conditions for Non-Tenure-Track Writing Faculty.” She consults the document online and uses some language from the document to write her report or compose her email to her dean. She may also consult her colleagues at other institutions who are also members of the organization, whom she has met either through graduate school, at a conference,
or online social network sites. She may send an email, a text message, a Facebook Messenger message to ask for advice. Once she receives some advice, she composes her report/email to her dean, which results in a fruitful and successful negotiation so that the contingent faculty in her program can now work on a three-year contract instead of a one-year contract. In this example, her professional activity spans across different organizations (her writing program, her college, the national professional organization of CCCC) and results in a transformation of her local organization that stabilizes the personnel in her writing program. She belongs to several assemblages that include both human and nonhuman agents. Here I use the word “assemblage” as defined by Marcus and Saka as a concept that captures both the social structure in which someone functions but also the heterogeneous and emergent nature of the structure. If she posts her questions on a listserv or at a conference presentation, she may encounter advice from other people in the assemblages that occupy those spaces. As Marcus and Saka point out, since assemblages are inherently situated in time and space, they may seem “structural, an object with the materiality and stability of the classic metaphor of structure” (102). However, “the intent in its aesthetic uses is precisely to undermine such ideas of structure” (102). So in order to achieve her different goals and purposes, our WPA constantly engages in different assemblages, those of which only come to be through the participation of human and nonhuman agents.

This scenario is a very common activity that resonates with many writing program administrators (WPAs). It represents a kind of knowledge work that WPAs often perform. It also demonstrates the possibilities of different kinds of connections and actions involved in the work. Her activity across time and space for the object of negotiating the workload of contingent faculty in her department is a networked one. She is only able to achieve such object through her social interactions with the human and nonhuman agents in the assemblages of disciplinary
networks. These interactions will likely result in some positive feelings on her part about the discipline. She is likely to feel supported by her broader disciplinary networks maybe even more so than her local institutional community. Besides her structurally designated professional position as a WPA, these psychological/personal dimensions also contribute to her identity as a member of the discipline. This is how the disciplinarity is enacted and how disciplinary culture is built, through an intersection of these dimensions.

To develop a heuristic for theorizing disciplinarity through networked activities, my study captures the chronotopic experiences of members of rhetoric and composition in particular informal communicative environments, in order to trace the various types of networked relations and activities and their contributions to the enactment of the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition. At the same time, I also investigate the perceptions of these disciplinary members of their experiences and the roles of particular types of disciplinary sites in the processes of such enactment. To conduct this investigation, I developed the following methodology.

To truly obtain descriptive accounts of people’s experiences, my methodology is heavily influenced by qualitative and ethnographic methods. Traditional ethnography in the field of anthropological and sociological studies is useful in capturing people’s experiences and the cultures they inhabit. But traditional ethnography tends to focus on intensive engagement of the researcher in a single research site. For sociologists, ethnography “enables investigators to gather valid and reliable qualitative data through the development of close and continuing contact with those being studied” (Gold 388-389). Often, this was achieved by researchers who would need to go into “the field,” away from “home” to learn about exotic places (Gupta and Ferguson). However, new trends in ethnographic research in the late 20th century have problematized these traditional notions. One notable trend is the emergence of “multi-sited ethnography” which
“moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space” (Marcus 96). This methodology calls for “a strategy or design of research that acknowledges macrotheoretical concepts and narratives of the world system but does not rely on them for the contextual architecture framing a set of subjects” (96). By tracing the formation of a culture in and across multiple sites, this ethnography “constructs aspects of the system itself through the associations and connections it suggests among sites” (96).

Building on Marcus’s work, Christine Hine has developed a connective ethnographic method that travels among online and offline spaces. This method is particularly helpful for tracing networked assemblages which include various types of sites and media, as well as the connections and associations constructed through communicative actions at various disciplinary sites as they enact the discipline, and to focus on the processes of the enactment. Connective ethnography pushes researchers to look at “the constructions of boundaries and the ways in which different forms of communication are used to contextualize each other” (Hine, “Connective Ethnography” 619). Building on Latour and Woolgar’s laboratory ethnography, Hine extends research on the communicative structures for the practice of science beyond the laboratory due to the development of new media and digital communication technologies. For a full immersion in the discipline of e-science, Hine spent three years conducting fieldwork at offline sites such as institutions and museums as well as online sites such as websites and online forums. In another more theoretical work on multi-sited ethnography in STS research, Hine advocates for the innovative multi-sited ethnographic works exemplified by Mol’s work on atherosclerosis. But Hine also acknowledges the lack of depth of engagement of this type of ethnography in comparison with traditional ethnography. Yet, Hine’s multi-sited ethnography
brings methodological innovations to capture the connections and associations among various research sites. This is an inventive approach, like Mol’s work, focusing more on ontology than epistemology.

In the context of this dissertation, exploring how disciplinary assemblages come together within and across sites and how they contribute to disciplinary culture(s) complements the epistemic view of disciplinarity with an ontological one. For example, Hine justifies her investigation of the mailing list “both as an instance of the embedding of ICTs in the discipline and as a site where the discipline itself was progressively enacted and redefined” (Hine, “Multi-sited” 666). As she puts it, “[t]racking the development of ICTs has taken me through diverse aspects of the discipline, and also entailed recognition that the discipline is itself both a continually enacted process and an important structuring feature” (666). In the process of this research, not only do I discover the enactment of disciplinarity, I also enact the disciplinarity myself as a researcher, “placed within a field of varying connections, tensions and identifications, and moral positions,” such that are often shifting and unstable (Hine, “Multi-Sited” 657).

In Hine’s connective ethnography of e-Science, she discusses her site selection as somewhat unconventional from traditional ethnography because she not only identified major sites to begin with but also followed new connections that lead her to other sites of investigation. This attention to connection and process is important and also informs my own research design. Adapting the multi-sited, connective ethnographic design, I also recognize the fact that rhetoric and composition is enacted in a multitude of disciplinary social spaces. However, the limitations of my research goals require that I modify this methodology since my focus on particular types of communicative practices does not allow me a long-term, in-depth engagement with my
research sites. For example, conferences are only held once a year. Ideally, I would follow all scholars’ activities across all informal disciplinary sites from online to offline to observe how their embodied networked experiences. But such an approach is only feasible as a case study or two around one individual member, not to capture multiple experiences of different members. Therefore, I intentionally chose to anchor my research objects around particular disciplinary sites that are representative in rhetoric and composition, as well as to sample research participants to represent a variety of disciplinary members of different professional statuses as well as demographics. These choices were much informed by my unique role as a researcher and also a member of the discipline myself.

**Data Collection**

First, I purposefully selected two research sites that represented a range of informal disciplinary communications in the discipline of rhetoric and composition: the annual convention of College Conference on Composition and Communication (CCCC), and the popular listserv for writing program administrators, WPA-L, unofficially associated with the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA). These choices were foremost informed by my personal professional experiences of recognizing that these two social spaces include large disciplinary memberships. However, my own role as a graduate student and still a junior member of the field means that my professional experiences are limited and that I’m perhaps more familiar with large disciplinary spaces because of my limited time in the field. But like Hine, I considered that while these two sites might be representative in some ways they were also limiting in other ways therefore I allowed myself to explore where members of the discipline travel with their informal communications beyond these two sites. This approach helped to compensate the lack of my in-depth engagement with the broad disciplinary networks as well as allowed me to be more attuned
to my participants’ embodied experiences and the connections among various types of sites. For example, during interviews, I learned about other informal communication sites or assemblages that my participants are part of, including other conferences, either smaller and focusing on particular disciplinary areas or larger and interdisciplinary and/or global; local writing groups with fellow colleagues; social media groups on Facebook and Twitter organized around shared professional interests or identities. Even though I could not follow scholars to these other sites, I was able to gain a glimpse of their actions at these other sites through personal accounts and capture the similarities and differences among those other sites and my primary sites in terms of different representations of disciplinary cultures and participant experiences.

Several other reasons informed my choice of these two sites. First, WPA-L and the annual CCCC convention are examples of two types of sites: a digital communication platform and an academic conference. Often, these two types of sites are where scholars interact with one another either online or face to face, for professional and social purposes. As Collins suggest, these communications, especially the face to face ones, are “interaction rituals” that help scholars build cultural capital and exchange emotional energies (22-24). Those of us who engage in professional discussions on listservs or social media and/or go to academic conferences all understand that they play important roles in the work we do. However, it is also important to note here that these disciplinary sites are often not exclusively online or offline as communication travels through them. For example, a conference presentation can be tweeted and archived, discussed on Facebook or a listserv. A discussion on a listserv can be carried over to Facebook or lead to face-to-face meetings at a conference. Secondly, these two sites encompass the largest memberships of the discipline. Every year, approximately over 3000 people attend the convention, and over 4000 people are subscribed to WPA-L. While these two sites in no way
fully represent the entire membership of the discipline, and there are plenty of people in the field who don’t go to the CCCC or who don’t subscribe to WPA-L, they nonetheless reflect the social nature of the discipline by virtue of their sizes. In fact, it would be more interesting to find out who doesn’t engage with such large disciplinary sites and for what reason.

WPA-L is a popular listserv in the field, with a subscription of over 4000 people. Started by David Schwalm and currently managed and moderated by Barry Maid at Arizona State University-East, the list is not owned or sponsored by the professional organization Council of Writing Program Administrators. Nonetheless, description of the list is included on the official website of CWPA at http://wpacouncil.org/wpa-l: “WPA-L is an international email discussion list intended primarily for individuals who are involved in writing program administration at universities, colleges, or community colleges. Faculty or students interested in program administration are welcome to join” (Council of Writing Program Administrators). Despite its stated orientation toward administrators of writing programs, it also includes hundreds of teachers of writing, some book editors, and writing researchers, from graduate students to lecturers, and from tenured professors to independent scholars. Because WPA-L is not officially sponsored or sanctioned by the council of writing program administrators, it functions very much like an informal, open social network platform. With its current configuration, anyone can subscribe to the list and post to the list. Messages and users are only deleted when they send very hostile, irrelevant, or spam-like messages to the list. As one of the most active listservs in the discipline, WPA-L can serve multiple functions for its members: a discussion space, a bulletin board, a resource pool. It is very likely that a member of the discipline has heard of the listserv even if they are not subscribed to it; however, many may not be familiar with its open archive, or how to interact with the list effectively. Often, members send requests publicly to the list to
unsubscribe them when it is something that they can do themselves on the list’s interface. While WPA-L has the appearance of an undiscriminating space, like any social space, tensions sometimes arise and discussions can get heated.

CCCC, the Conference on College Composition and Communication is a national professional organization that split from its parent organization the National Council of Teachers of English in 1948. Ever since CCCC has hosted its annual meeting, first known as “the Conference on College Freshman Courses in Composition and Communication” in 1949 (Bird 35), and now with the same name as the organization: “Conference on College Composition and Communication.” While mostly autonomous, the organization is still affiliated with NCTE, which serves as its fiscal agent. The convention is held in the spring, usually in March or April, and attracts around 3500 attendees. While we may look at WPA-L as an unofficial site, the CCCC is an official professional organization with bylaws, committees, and position statements, whose details are all hosted on their website: http://www.ncte.org/cccc/about. Besides sponsoring the national convention, the organization also manages various kinds of sites for disciplinary communication, such as College Composition and Communication, the flagship journal in the discipline which in many ways defines its central scholarship. The organization also hosts Connected Community, a digital social network platform, and has recently added summer regional conferences. While its mission statement[5] defines the purposes and tasks of the organization, its Strategic Governance Vision Statement reflects its role as an advocate for the discipline and members of the organization. Under this guidance, the national convention, aims to present a space to facilitate conversations centering on these visions with a personal flair of the program chair. For example, the theme for CCCC 2018 is “Languaging, Laboring, and Transforming,” which reflects the program chair Asao B. Inoue’s scholarly interests in
investigating racism in writing assessments. The Strategic Governance Vision Statement of the organization is the following:

By 2022, CCCC will be a clear, trusted public voice for the teaching and learning of writing, composition, rhetoric, and literacy in all higher education contexts. We will advocate for a broad definition of writing (including composition, digital production, and diverse language practices) that emphasizes its value as a human activity that empowers individuals and communities to shape their worlds. We will be the leading voice in public discussions about what it means to be an effective writer and to deliver quality writing instruction. We will provide conditions under which teachers and scholars can discuss, build, and practice sustainable, relevant, and ethical models of teaching and learning. We will encourage and support a wide and vibrant range of scholarship at the leading edge of knowledge about writing, composition, rhetoric, and literacy. To support this work, CCCC will enhance participation by members who represent a diversity of races, cultures, languages, identities, institutions, and institutional roles.

As an official organization for the discipline, CCCC represents an anchor for some members of the discipline, a professional/disciplinary home. CCCC the convention thus becomes a physical representation of that home. Therefore, some of the communicative practices taking place in such a site are more formal than what takes place on WPA-L, such as the highly competitive conference presentations. But the nature of a conference site also enables informal exchanges that happen outside of the formal concurrent sessions, such as meetings for Special Interest Groups and other informal social activities. It is a site where attendees can meet face to face in the hallway of the convention center, at reunion and publishers’ parties, at restaurants and cafés, to talk about their professional lives and personal lives.
While different in both functions and communicative practices, CCCC and WPA-L may be perceived to share a similar role in bringing people together, virtually or physically. They can connect people, help them “network” in its most mundane and simple sense, which consequently can contribute to their individual professional and academic career as well as the development of the discipline of rhetoric and composition as a whole. For this reason, my research goal in this study centers on how these two particular sites connect people, and how the “networking” happens at these two sites through the various events and activities that people undertake, and how these connections contribute to a networked view of our discipline. Further, as laid out in the introduction, my first research question investigates what embodied communicative practices take place at these two sites. In order to address this question, I remained open minded to the various kinds of actions and events that could happen at these two sites. In turn, I explored how members of the discipline perceive the roles of these two sites in the processes of these events and activities and identify what kinds of connections and associations are constructed at these two sites and beyond. These questions required me to learn from members of the discipline their experiences and perceptions before attempting to theorize them into ways disciplinary networks are constructed.

Second, I recruited a sample of research participants who represented diverse demographics, professional backgrounds, and levels of engagement with the two primary research sites. To do this, I designed a survey (see Appendix A) which was shared on WPA-L, Facebook, and Twitter. This survey and my selection method performed criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling (Lindlof & Taylor). As the main criterion to participate in my study, participants must self-identify to be members of the rhetoric and composition discipline. Maximum variation sampling ensures the collection of “a wide range of variables of the
phenomenon under study” (Lindlof & Taylor 146). Using the survey allowed me to reach broader disciplinary membership and recruit participants based on criteria relevant to my research questions. The survey includes demographic data and levels of engagement with the two sites which allowed me to sample a variety of participants with different professional statuses (from graduate students to retired faculty) who engage with the two sites with different frequencies. I then organized interested participants based on their responses in a spreadsheet, highlighting in particular their professional status and how often they have engaged with the CCCC or WPA-L, before emailing a number of them to see if they would be interested in participating in my project. For every type of professional status reflected in my survey results (NTT faculty, TT faculty, graduate students, administrators), I selected people who engaged with the two sites at different frequencies. As a result, I was able to recruit NTT faculty who would attend the CCCC every year or only when presenting; TT faculty who would attend the CCCC every year, only when presenting, or with changed frequencies over the course of their career; administrators who would attend every year or only when presenting; and graduate students who attended every year, only when presenting, or for the first time. Similarly, across different professional statuses, I was able to select participants who identified as lukers, nonsubscribers or seldom/sometimes posters on the list. While this survey created a sample for the rest of my data collection, it also shed some light on the correlation between participants’ professional statuses and their engagement levels with WPA-L and CCCC. For example, the responses partially confirmed my hypothesis and personal experience that graduate students rarely post on WPA-L often. However, given that this is not a comprehensive sample of disciplinary members, no definitive generalizations can be drawn on those correlations. Potential participants were given the choice to participate only in the CCCC’s part of the project or only the WPA-L part or both,
because I had intended to recruit participants who might not engage with either site. While most people gave consent to be in both parts of the project, three consented only to the CCCC’s part (but they explained to me in the interviews later why they didn’t use WPA-L). This perhaps corroborates the fact that the CCCC convention is perceived as more official a venue of disciplinary communication, given its affiliation with our biggest professional organization, whereas WPA-L seems to be less comprehensive in terms of its disciplinary reach (WPA work). But as I discovered later in the study, there are more reasons for people’s lack of engagement with WPA-L.

From those who responded to my follow-up emails, I recruited 21 participants whose embodied experiences at CCCC and WPA-L I explored in depth (more people responded to the initial survey but did not respond to my soliciting emails later or did not participate fully, such as recorded activity at CCCC but wasn’t interviewed and therefore were dropped from the study). These participants represented a broad range of demographics and professional backgrounds as shown in Table 2.1 below: ten were graduate students (including nine PhD students and one Master’s student), three were tenure-track assistant professors (including one who also had an administrative role), five were tenured professors (including three who also have administrative roles), two were administrators with no teaching requirements, and two were non-tenure-track, full-time lecturers (including one who was also a PhD student). Six are men, and sixteen are women, all ranging in ages from 25 to 53. They also came from a variety of institutions; however, all were from four-year institutions. Later I will discuss how their multi-layered identities and their networked connections are mutually shaped by each other and how their identities impacted their disciplinary activities in these spaces.
Table 2.1: Participants’ professional statuses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate Students</th>
<th>NTT faculty</th>
<th>Junior TT faculty</th>
<th>Senior TT faculty</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because I wanted to capture my participants’ experiences during the CCCC convention in time, I needed a method to “follow” them around. To achieve this, I created a paper-based recording card for each participant with a template that allowed them to note all their movements throughout one day at the conference (see Appendix C). This method was informed by the experience-sampling method and diary method, used in field research in social sciences. Experience-sampling method allows researchers “to make variations in daily experience, often outside the domain of ready observation, available for analysis, replication, and falsifiability, thereby opening a broad range of phenomena to systematic observation” (Kubey, Larson, and Csíkszentmihályi 100). Similarly as a method to study everyday experiences, diary method was a precedent form of experience-sampling method with which researchers are able to obtain reliable “within-person” information and how individuals change over time as well as how experiences compare across individuals (Bolger, Davis, and Raaieli). While the diary method can help characterizing within-person processes and individual differences, experience-sampling is a version of diary method where participants are prompted to record “particular events in response to certain stimuli “in situ” (Hormuth). Aiming to capture participants’ experiences at a CCCC convention live, I adapted the experience-sampling method where instead of prompting participants to record over long time intervals, I selected a limited recording time for them: one day at the convention in 2017, and identified the types of experiences I was interested in
exploring: all their professional and personal activities during the day. Then I used the traditional diary method that asked them to record their experiences throughout the day using a recording card (see Table 2.2). Throughout the day, participants noted where they were, what they were doing, and what they were feeling, from the moment they got up until the moment they went to bed. To ease the process and save them time, I included a list of common activities that people generally partake at the CCCC, using one keyword to indicate each event, including “encounter, social, attending, leading, play, exhibit, explore, break” (as seen in Table 2.2 below). To help them record their feelings easily, I also provided emoji stickers for them to use though not everyone used them. At the same time, I encouraged participants to use their own methods and add to the list to include other activities that my codes didn’t cover. As a result, my own limitation was that I didn’t capture how a participant’s experience changed over the course of one convention, which was less important in the context of this project.

However, both experience-sampling and diary methods, often used in quantitative settings, have the limitations of constraining participants’ freedom in the process of data collection due to strict recording protocols. Using them in a qualitative setting, the researcher needs to adopt a certain level of flexibility to accommodate the participants, recognizing that there might be “ontological and epistemological conflicts” between the researcher’s protocols and the participants’ life experiences (Koro-Ljungberg et al.). In order to capture my participants’ embodied experiences recognizing the limitations of this recording method, I wanted to accommodate my participants’ experiences during the data collection process by not over-burdening them with the recording task and allowing them to include experiences that I didn’t pre-identify for them as well as modifying the time intervals laid out in the recording card based on their movements. Further, while these methods usually don’t build on retrospective
reflections, I actually asked my participants questions about their recordings during qualitative interviews, allowing them to elaborate more on their experiences, identifying what was most significant in their individual experiences. In order to maintain a consistent point of reference and to capture a range of different activities at the conference, I asked participants to record their activities on Thursday, the first day of the conference, when people tend to be the busiest. Several of my participants remarked that I was going to get rich data because they had a very full schedule that day. I met up with most of my participants on Wednesday (pre-conference day) to deliver the recording cards to them; however, for logistical reasons, I wasn’t able to get to all of them. Some of my participants ended up recording their Friday activities while others weren’t able to record at all, but they were still approached for follow-up interviews. Two participants did not attend CCCC this year, and therefore didn’t produce recordings either.

Table 2.2: Front of Activity Recording Card at CCCC 2017 (see Appendix C for the full recording card).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Codes</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Meeting with people (old/new) to socialize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encounter</td>
<td>Running into people/meeting people while on the way to something else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending</td>
<td>Attending a session/business meeting (please note session number or meeting name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading</td>
<td>Presenting/chairing a session or conducting a business meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.2: (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Exploring various tables set up on the site of different organizations (please note which table and what you are doing, for example, recording a literacy narrative for DALN or getting a sparkle pony from C’s the Day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit</td>
<td>Visiting the exhibit hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore</td>
<td>Exploring the city of Portland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>When you are not doing “conference stuff” or “socializing” (please specify what you are doing, for example, checking emails, grading papers, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After collecting the recording cards at the end of the conference, I followed up with people to conduct interviews. Twenty-one participants were interviewed, including seventeen who recorded their activities at CCCC 2017 and two who attended CCCC 2017 but didn’t record, as well as two who didn’t attend. Three participants declined to be interviewed about their usages of WPA-L but were able to talk to me briefly about why they didn’t want to talk about WPA-L, which I will discuss in my analysis chapters. In the interviews, I asked questions about their general experiences with the CCCC (whether they attended in Portland in 2017 or not) and WPA-L as well as their perceptions of these two sites and what other sites they use for informal scholarly or professional communication. For those participants who recorded their activities in Portland, I also asked some questions to clarify their recordings. Table 2.3 shows the final distribution of my data collection.
Table 2.3: Data Collection Distribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consented to CCCC part of the study</th>
<th>Consented to WPA-L part of the study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity Recorded at CCCC 2017</td>
<td>Interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>21 (including 2 who didn’t record and 2 who didn’t attend)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews were conducted over Skype with a social constructionist grounded theory approach (see Appendix B for interview protocols). Kathy Charmaz advocates this form of social constructionism as examining “(1) the relativity of the researcher’s perspectives, positions, practices, and research situation, (2) the researcher’s reflexivity; and (3) depictions of social constructions in the studied world” (“Grounded Theory Method” 398). I developed a set of questions that would help the participants to describe their experiences of engaging with CCCC and/or WPA-L, but these questions evolved and changed in the process of interviewing all my participants. For example, one question I asked is whether they have had any negative experiences with CCCC, but this proved to be a hard question for several participants because they didn’t feel they had any negative or unpleasant experiences personally. In this case I asked them if they have observed any negative or unpleasant experiences. At the same time, some participants had difficulties answering my open-ended questions, so I would use previous participants’ examples to help them think of their own answers. For example, when I asked a participant to describe their relationships with WPA-L to get at their perceptions of the list, they offered an interesting metaphor. Consequently, I also prompted other participants to think of their own metaphors. In the interview process, I focused particularly on how and where connections were built for individual participants. To that end, I encouraged my participants to
tell me stories. These stories provided me with insights on individual networks and how they support individual personal and professional development in the discipline as well as how disciplinary activity systems were networked in achieving particular professional/disciplinary goals. Collectively, they portrayed the processes of disciplinary enactment.

Guided by the chronotopic research design, my interview questions also attuned to time. For individual participants, their engagements with CCCC and WPA-L often change over time. While I asked participants why they attend CCCC, how often they attend CCCC, and what they usually do at the conference, assuming they would answer at the time of the interview, many of them ended up elaborating on the changes over the time of their career. This in turn prompted me to ask them to consider how their other experiences have changed over time.

To supplement and contextualize my primary data set, I also interviewed the conference program chair of CCCC 2017, Carolyn Calhoon Dillahunt, and WPA-L’s moderator and manager, Barry Maid. Their accounts of these two sites provided yet another point of entry into the disciplinary networks. It is thus important to learn their roles along with the roles of these sites. Barry provided me with the history of WPA-L, and his account about the list gave it life and history. In the interview with Carolyn, she gave me a detailed account of the conference organization process for CCCC 2017, providing a more structural perspective of the conference, contrasted with my other participants’ perspectives mostly as attendees and not organizers.

**Researcher Role**

I was particularly aware of my unique position as someone who identifies as a member of the discipline of rhetoric and composition, as my research participants do, but I am also a researcher who is studying the discipline who constantly looked inward as well as outward in this research process. I am part of the disciplinary networks I am studying and my movement as
a member of the discipline and as a researcher in this project contributes to the enactment of the discipline. In turn, my identity as a doctoral candidate, still young in the discipline, and my personal professional experiences helped shape the ways I selected my research sites and the kinds of activities and experiences that I expected to capture in my research. I was already familiar with the CCCC convention and the WPA-L listserv as crucial disciplinary social spaces with large memberships. But I remained open-minded in the research process from the beginning by not assuming that every potential participant would have engaged with these two spaces and asking them what other sites they used and their purposes for using various sites. At the same time, all my interview questions were open-ended, intending to gain participants’ perspectives.

My personal experiences and observations of and reflections upon attending CCCC since 2014 have inevitably informed my research design. The event codes I developed were based on these experiences and observations. On WPA-L, I also carry those two roles. I am a subscriber to the list, not only for my own personal and professional reasons but also for the purpose of this research project. Posting my participant recruitment message to the list contributed to its vast open online archive which I often referred to in the interview process. If my two roles are on more equal footing in those two contexts, during the interview processes, my role as a researcher became more prominent. However, my conversations with participants were often a blend of personal and professional interactions for me. For example, one participant was also working on her dissertation and she found it interesting that while she was been doing interviews for her dissertation, she was also supporting others’ research by being interviewed. Another junior faculty member and I laughed with each other over his activity recording of feeling “tired and hungry” throughout the whole day that he recorded for me because we both know that feeling so well. These were my moments of my data collection process, but they were also my data points.
because they were moments of affective connections that were being enacted within the parameter of my research project and also within the disciplinary networks my project helped to enact.

**Data Analysis**

My research question for this dissertation aimed to study how a discipline is enacted through networked, embodied experiences in informal disciplinary communications. Specifically, in the case of rhetoric and composition, I wanted to explore what factors impact the networked experiences of members of the discipline in their informal communications, what kinds of connections are built in these experiences that contribute to the shape of disciplinary networks, and what roles the informal disciplinary sites perform in creating these experiences and building the culture(s) of the discipline. To that end, I collected data that helped me explore those questions with a focus on two particular disciplinary sites: CCCC and WPA-L. In this section, I will talk about how I analyzed these data.

The self-reporting cards and some of the interview questions provided me with a glimpse of the embodied experiences people have had at CCCC and on WPA-L. Working with both the recording and the interview data, I started the analysis process with a process coding method as an initial coding approach. Process coding asks researchers to use “active terms to define what is happening in the data” (Charmaz, “Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Data Analysis” 13). Process coding allowed me to discover participants’ experiences with an attunement to the shifting nature of such experiences. They also allowed me to compare experiences across individuals or within individuals across different times (15). This coding method is thus in line with my processual and chronotopic research design. Using Dedoose to code my data, I first labeled all the actions and then categorizing them based on the sites where
actions happened (CCCC, WPA-L, other sites). These actions included ways they engaged with the space, such as particular activities they performed as well as goals for performing these actions. For example, reading through their experiences, I identified specific actions participants performed across these sites, such as “going to standing group/SIG meetings” or “going to newcomers’ breakfast” at the CCCC and “monitoring job market stuff” on WPA-L. The result was a long list of actions which I then categorized into broader categories based on emerging patterns during second round of coding. I also coded why my participants engaged with either site. Finally, I identified emotions and affective qualities of certain actions as captured in the activity recording and in interview responses. Saldaña describes emotional coding as a first-cycle coding method that can help explore “the emotional reactions and interactions of individual people to their particular circumstances” (110). I paid attention to general feelings towards broad experiences in certain social spaces as well as emotions linked to particular events. Then, I coded people’s perceptions of the CCCC and WPA-L in terms of their roles and functions as disciplinary social spaces: for example, “gatekeeping role” of CCCC or “a bulletin board” of WPA-L.

These codes and categories were created using constant comparison as a way to help me clearly organize my participants’ experiences and accurately identify emerging patterns and themes. Constant comparison requires researchers to comb through the data line by line and identify incidents with as many categories as the analysis allows and then constantly compare with the rest of the data throughout the analysis process to refine the categories in order to theorize findings (Glaser). For example, during second round of coding, I discovered the pattern that some of the actions at CCCC fall into identity-related categories: professional, disciplinary, personal, so I was able to categorize some initial action codes into these patterns, leading to later
analytical conclusions in chapter three. Similarly, the reasons for which participants used or did not use either space also appeared to fall into different activity realms: professional, disciplinary, and personal; a pattern that will become significant in chapter four. Guided by Randall Collins’ concept of emotional energy flow, I also categorized the emotional codes as either positive or negative depending on whether they contribute to the intellectual creativity of the networks or take energy away from the networks. Table 2.4 shows the broad categories of my codes, for full coding scheme see Appendix D. Initial codes will be included in individual data chapters below as pertaining to particular analytical frameworks.

Table 2.4: Data Categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Categories</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cs Activities</td>
<td>Activities related to the CCCC convention, including on site actions and goals and motivations to participate in the conventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Cs</td>
<td>Participants’ perceptions of the convention’s roles and purposes in the discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPA-L Activities</td>
<td>The ways participants engage or don’t engage with the list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of WPA-L</td>
<td>Participants’ perceptions of the list’s roles and purposes in the discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Sites</td>
<td>Other conferences, social network sites, groups where informal communication practices happen for my participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional energy flow</td>
<td>Different feelings and emotions captured in the data regarding different activities and experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In chapter 3, I will talk about how individuals build various types of interpersonal connections across sites. My participants’ experiences showed a range of engagements at different sites associated with their multi-layered identities and motivations as well as the
affective dimensions of these experiences. Social scientist Caroline Haythornthwaite has theorized that media technologies impact the types of tie connecting communicators, be it strong, weak, or latent. She argues that “the use and impacts of media are dependent on the type of tie connecting communicators. The tie determines the ways, means, and expression of communications, and it determines the motivation, needs, and desires for communication” (“Strong, Weak, and Latent Ties” 385). For example, participants choose to use a certain disciplinary site based on what they can get out of it on personal, professional, and disciplinary levels. With different personal, professional, and disciplinary motivations, their actions at a given site will lead to different kinds of social ties within the interpersonal networks of the discipline. In turn, these social ties also impact the constructions of their personal, professional, and disciplinary identities. What my data also show is that these multiple types of actions and identities aren’t always clearly and readily distinguished from one another; instead, they range on a spectrum and often overlap and shift over time across individual career trajectories. These individual ties together build disciplinary interpersonal networks. Consequently, I update Collins’s argument by expanding the definition of interaction rituals in disciplinary networks and emphasize how these informal communications contribute to the disciplinary culture of rhetoric and composition. Further, I discuss the various feelings and emotions that exhibited or resulted from these experiences and social interactions and argue how they may contribute to or take away from what Collins calls the “emotional energy” of disciplinary networks which fuels the creativity of intellectual activities. This chapter thus shows how the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition is enacted through interpersonal connections built, strengthened, weakened, across informal disciplinary sites through mutual influences with individual identifications. In turn, I
illustrate how structural/organizational features of these sites also impact these connections and people’s affective experiences.

Nevertheless, these interpersonal actions are also situated in collective activity systems that are aimed to achieve specific goals in disciplinary work. In chapter four I treat disciplinary activity across these social spaces as heterogeneous and laminated. Guided by Paul Prior’s chronotopic method, I analyze the individual development through their professional/disciplinary activity as they move across different activity systems, navigating and negotiating different tensions and motivations. I will tell the narrative of one participant Rose about how she learned to work with the different problems and challenges in order to participate in such activity before describing more broadly a variety of factors that impact people’s participation as reflected in my data. In this analysis, I discuss the different factors that impact the disciplinary/professional activity as reflected in my data, highlighting the contradictions caused by a variety of personal/institutional factors as participants navigate these disciplinary sites. In turn I discuss how these factors change over time and construct the chronotopic experiences of a disciplinary/professional activity, arguing that this is how individuals learn to participate in the discipline and this is how a discipline learns as well.

While in chapters three and four, CCCC and WPA-L are seen as mediating artifacts which enable the transformation processes of individuals and a discipline collectively, they are in fact complex assemblages themselves that need to be unpacked. In chapter five, I take a different approach to my data by providing a descriptive account of how the CCCC and WPA-L come to be, as shown from both the perspectives of my participants who come to these sites from time to time as well as the “organizational” perspectives represented by individuals such as the CCCC program chair and the moderator of WPA-L and contextual information about CCCC as an
organization and a conference and the history of WPA-L. With this approach, I highlight the temporality of these assemblages as socially networked spaces themselves whose stability may be questioned in the future. According to the Latourian actor-network theory, a network is temporarily stabilized through the sedimentation of associations: the stronger the associations, the stronger the network. In *Reassembling the Social*, Latour redefines sociology as “the tracing of associations” (5) where “you have to ‘follow the actors themselves,’ that is, try to catch up with their often wild innovations in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands, which methods they have elaborated to make it fit together, and which accounts could best define the new associations that they have been forced to establish” (12). From this perspective, disciplinary communication sites such as the CCCC convention and WPA-L can be understood as temporary manifestations of a collective of actors/actants, despite its seemingly stable structure. In this chapter, then, I will trace the actants and controversies that come together at these sites, revealing how these sites have stabilized and become a version of what James Carey calls as “an ordered, meaningful cultural world” that is integral to the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition (15). At the same time, I question such stability, as did some of my participants, and bring forward questions of in what ways these two sites represent or not the discipline and how they may evolve in the future.
CHAPTER 3 Disciplinarity as Networked Affective Relations

Networking

For this dissertation project, I interviewed twenty-one people who identified as members of the rhetoric and composition discipline. When I asked them what they thought the role of the CCCC annual convention was, many of them mentioned that it is an important space for networking, bringing a diverse group of ideas and people together to share and exchange ideas for the purpose of moving forward the research and pedagogies of the field. Here networking has two aspects: one is the networking of ideas in which people share research projects and pedagogical practices; the other is the interpersonal networking with other members of the field. The two types of networking can occur simultaneously in interactions at disciplinary social spaces. Ideas are exchanged/shared when interpersonal relationships are built: friends and colleagues from different institutions get together to talk about their work during formal sessions or online discussions but also over coffee at the conference. Interpersonal relationships are built when ideas are exchanged/shared: discussions about research or teaching may lead to future collaboration or mentorship relations. On the other hand, interpersonal connections can be built and maintained across platforms where people can “meet” in online spaces and then get to know each other better in person, or even remain actively connected online. Building these social ties can lead to the expansion of the field both in terms of knowledge production and membership. At the same time, whether and how ties can be built and maintained is influenced by the inherent power structures in the discipline as well as the different power dynamics fraught in the social spaces that we frequent. Effective networking, facilitated by various spaces and tools, can build ties and strengthen them, allowing for collaboration among scholars across institutions.
However, challenges posed by the particular design of disciplinary social spaces or the culture of the membership can serve to police or prevent ties from forming.

“Networking” is, of course, a loaded concept when it comes to building interpersonal relationships. Two of my research participants elaborated on what networking meant at academic conferences. Ross (all names are pseudonyms except for the CCCC 2017 program chair and WPA-L manager), a junior tenure-track faculty, encouraged the graduate students in his composition theory class to network at the CCCC, but some of the students were resistant to the idea of networking at a conference just for professional gain. One of his students was particularly concerned about “being perceived as basically a suck-out to people higher in the field.” But Ross explained that networking at a conference such as the CCCC is more organic and less “gross.” In his words, “it is kind of a mingling of the personal and the professional. . . and simply creating opportunities for relationships to form.” This mingling of the personal and the professional reflects the spectrum of interpersonal relationships established through communications at disciplinary sites such as academic conferences. Rachel elaborated more on how this type of networking opportunity may be differentiated from other types of networking such as in business and corporate contexts. She calls it “actual purposeful networking of meeting people in your field and meeting potential mentors and making friends and connections.” Rachel lives in the D.C. metropolitan area and has seen what “network” means in D.C. She described it as “kind of slimy and self-serving,” usually beginning with “hi I’m a staffer for X, I am very important, I have a work-issued cell phone, here’s my business card.” To her, it is a very career-focused and upward-climbing type of networking. On the other hand, the networking she has experienced in academia is not just career-focused and self-serving but also mutually beneficial, often leading to meaningful mentoring connections. For example, she talked about how a research participant in
her dissertation project generously offered to send her some job market materials which were very useful for her. This is also a kind of organic networking that Ross mentioned. While almost all of my participants talked about conferences such as the CCCC serving as a place for networking, not many of them talked about using the WPA-L listserv or other informal communication sites the same way. There is not much “socializing” in a digital platform like the listserv; connections are established in a more goal-oriented fashion, whether to put together panels for conferences or to respond to edited collection CFPs. Some of these connections only end up being reinforced or strengthened through later face-to-face interactions. Even when they talked about social activities at conferences or on social network sites, they didn’t always refer to them as “networking” because many of them use social activities to reconnect with old friends and acquaintances. Therefore, the “networking” of interpersonal relationships can be understood in this context as building and maintaining interpersonal connections, or social ties.

As reviewed in chapter one, disciplinarity has been written by looking at the connections among scholarly conversations in the forms of bibliometric studies or distant reading of citation patterns (Johnson; Mueller). The web of ideas is one way to picture the shape of the discipline where it can be made clear what kinds of conversations or ideas have been privileged and how different ideas are connected. On the other hand, interpersonal connections also constitute the shape of the discipline. Tracing how connections are made in embodied experiences is another way to capture the enactment of disciplinarity as it comes to shape through interpersonal communications. Interpersonal connections in a professional capacity can lead to collaborations that push forward the discipline, revealing behind-the-scenes work on how collaborators get together. In a personal capacity, strong and positive connections can make people feel that they belong in a community, enhancing the friendly culture of the discipline. Therefore, unpacking
these social ties and their formation allows for a look at disciplinarity that contributes to the network sense of the discipline while at the same time prompting members of the field to reflect on the disciplinary culture, questioning perhaps the perceived friendliness and revealing power dynamics constitutive of such culture. An important aspect of social network theory is how media use impacts the social ties. As Rainie and Wellman’s work shows, internet communication technologies (ICTs) have significantly changed the ways individuals are connected to each other. But I want to treat media in its broadest sense, where any mediating infrastructures that can bring people together can be understood as a conglomerate of media technologies. Concepts of social ties and media use can thus help me investigate and theorize how “networking” actually happens in disciplinary social spaces, addressing questions such as: what kinds of connections are made? How are they made? What factors impact this networking? When would it not happen? What are the consequences of successful or failed networking?

At these disciplinary sites, social ties are influenced by various factors: the infrastructure of the sites, people’s activities and their use of media technologies, people’s perceptions of the sites’ functions in terms of making connections, their professional and disciplinary identifications, and their personalities. And these factors don’t remain stagnant over time and space as the sites change over time and people’s career trajectories—and thus their identifications—change. In turn, these social ties contribute to the density of the disciplinary networks quantitatively when more and more people are connected, which may potentially lead to future collaborative research projects or inspirations for and support of individual research projects. While these informal social spaces aren’t formal places of publication, they certainly foster scholarship and sometimes even serve as spaces of composing when collaborators from different institutions meet in the physical space of a conference to work on their projects.
Qualitatively, people’s feelings towards each other and their experiences at these sites reflect the disciplinary culture. The nature of this culture can have affective impacts on participants in the culture.

In this chapter, I analyze the networked relationships manifested across informal disciplinary sites, from the CCCC to WPA-L, categorizing the kinds of relationships, the strengths of relationships, and the affective dimensions of these relationships. I theorize how these relationships impact and are impacted by people’s identifications of themselves, and how these relationships contribute to the disciplinary network and its “emotional energy flow” (Collins). In the next section, I begin by categorizing the social activities my participants talked about at the CCCC convention and on WPA-L on a professional to personal dimension.

Social Activities

*Participation at the CCCC*

My analysis of seventeen recordings of participants who attended the 2017 CCCC convention and twenty-one interviews with participants who discussed their experiences at CCCC conventions in general yielded three main purpose-based categories of activities. These categories reflect the dimension of their participation at the conference spanning from personal to professional. Professional activities include all formal conference functions as shown in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1: Professional Activities at the CCCC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Activities</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending (either presenting or as audience member) pre-conference activities</td>
<td>events usually taking place during the day on Wednesday, the day before the conference officially starts: Workshops, Qualitative Research Network Forum, Research Network Forum, IWCA Collaborative, the CWPA Reception (organized by International Writing Center Association, not affiliated with the CCCC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending concurrent sessions</td>
<td>formal research presentations in the forms of panels, roundtables, poster presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending the opening session</td>
<td>usually taking place Thursday morning where the chair of the CCCC organization delivers a “Chair’s Address”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending the Newcomers’ Breakfast session</td>
<td>A free breakfast session serving primarily newcomers to the conference but open to all, usually on Thursday morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending the award ceremony reception</td>
<td>Reception for award winners, usually on Friday evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending Standing Groups/SIGs</td>
<td>Meetings of Standing Groups/Standing Interest Groups in the organization, concurrently taking place in Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings after 5pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to the Exhibit Hall</td>
<td>Where representatives from publishers/professional organizations set up booths/tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to the WPA-GO mentoring breakfast</td>
<td>The Graduate Organization of the Council of Writing Program Administrators pairs up mentors and mentees and organizes a formal mentoring breakfast session for them to meet and interact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to the WPA-GO mentoring event</td>
<td>A separate mentoring event hosted by WPA-GO for mentors and mentees to interact with each other. Graduate students interested in WPA work also meet and network.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1: (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting with WPA-GO mentor/mentee</th>
<th>Sometimes, WPA-GO mentors/mentees set up a separate meeting to meet, especially when they can’t make it to the WPA-GO events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending to formal commitments</td>
<td>People who have official roles in various organizations, including but not limited to the CCCC, the NCTE, CWPA, WPA-GO, often have scheduled meetings during the conference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Exploring various tables set up by different groups affiliated with the organization/conference | Separated from the Exhibit Hall, this is a space where people can learn more about research teams or other groups (DALN, Writing Studies Tree, etc.)
Cs the Day (a conference scavenger hunt game) is one of the tables and stands out as a conference participatory game mentioned by my participants |

For those who have attended the conference, these activities would be familiar. In fact, for all my participants, different activities have become their “conference routine,” things that they do at every CCCC they go to. I consider these activities professional because they are formally structured by different organizations, be it the CCCC organization, sub-disciplinary organizations, or publishing companies, etc. However, it is important to recognize that the term “professional” here is fluid because a lot of personal interactions may also happen during these professional events. For example, several participants talked about going to panels where their friends/colleagues are presenting to support them. In that way, going to a panel is not just about learning new things from other people in the field but also to enhance interpersonal relationships. “Meeting with WPA-GO mentor/mentee” is also a category where a professionally motivated activity may lead to personal relationships.
On the other hand, some activities that people do at the conference fall more on the personal end of the spectrum. These are usually activities related to personal needs that are not directly related to the conference yet necessary for them to have a productive and enjoyable conference experience. Table 3.2 shows the personal activities my participants experienced.

Table 3.2: Personal Activities at the CCCC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Activity</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decompressing</td>
<td>In many of the recordings, my participants noted being “tired,” “hungry,” and “stressed” throughout the day. Attending to the professional obligations and responsibilities is hard work, and people often need to take breaks to decompress from the hectic life. This category includes trying to find a time and place to sit down and get away from the conference. For some, doing a little bit of sightseeing can also help decompress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating alone</td>
<td>There are a lot of social dining activities, but I separate eating alone out as a personal activity because it doesn’t indicate an interpersonal interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with family/personal matters</td>
<td>This category refers to occasions when conference participants need to attend to family or personal matters (a call from a daughter, for example, or an alert from a credit card company about a possibly fraudulent charge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercising</td>
<td>When participants spend time at the conference to exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sightseeing</td>
<td>While some people conference hard, others take the opportunity to explore the city as well. For some, the location matters when they decide if they want to go to the conference in a given year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These activities, while usually done alone or with family members, are considered more personal because they don’t necessarily involve interactions with people they know in a professional capacity. However, some of these activities can have a social capacity to them. For example, this year Ross spent some time on Thursday afternoon after his presentation to walk around Portland with a conference friend and got Voodoo Doughnuts. Lucy spent Friday morning exploring Portland with one of her good friends. In these examples, the interactions take place with people whom they know in a professional capacity but also are considered their personal friends.

Besides personal responsibilities, my participants also talked about activities they did that are professionally oriented but perhaps not directly related to the conference or organized formally by professional organizations or institutions. I categorized these activities as personal professional actions. As academics, work travels with us. Table 3.3 shows the personal professional responsibilities that my participants mentioned.

Table 3.3: Personal Professional Activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Professional Activities</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Playing host</td>
<td>When bringing guests from other disciplines or new attendees, they offer ways to support their conference experiences, playing host.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>Most of my participants used “down time” at the conference to grade papers, respond to emails, meet up with collaborators to work on research projects, meet with one’s committee members, etc., in general engaging in off-site work-related responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working on presentations</td>
<td>This is more related to the conference, but I consider it personal because people have to work on their own to find time and space to finalize their presentations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Networking/Socializing at the CCCC

The categories in these three tables show that attending an academic conference is indeed a social experience, even for the most introverted. Except when a participant is going to the gym or decompressing on their own, almost all the things they do in waking hours impact or are impacted by their interpersonal relationships. Therefore, I created a fourth category of conference activities including all activities my participants talked about that have explicit socializing or networking purposes. In the activity recording card for participants who were in Portland in 2017, I had two explicit socializing/networking categories: “Social” and “Encounter.” I used “Social” to capture intentional and planned meetings with people to socialize, whether with people they already knew or new people they were meeting for the first time. I used “Encounter” to indicate unplanned meetings where my participants ran into people while they were on their way to something else. Later, in interviews with my participants, I learned that these social/networking activities were more nuanced than these two predetermined categories could capture. Not only did people plan their social events in different ways, they also treated these events differently on the spectrum of professional to personal. The formality of a given activity is determined by the personal/social motivation of the activity; the conference site infrastructure; the identities of the people involved; and the existing relationships between people involved. In turn, the different levels of formalities impact the outcomes of the activities, namely the relationships that are built/developed.

Working with both the recording and interview data, I categorized all the socializing and networking activities based on the spaces/places/capacities where they took place (see Table 3.4). More formally organized social events or occasions such as publishers’ parties or university reunions provide spaces and moments for people to connect with one another. In some ways,
they can limit who can be connected with whom. For example, university reunions are primarily for people related to one particular program, either as current students or faculty or alumni. Thus, people tend to be only connected with those who are already within their professional network because of the institutional connection they have. Formal sessions or WPA-GO mentoring events are occasions where people are more likely to meet others with shared research or professional interests. Other categories are less formally structured but more personal and can happen more serendipitously. Because these social/networking activities occur in different spaces or capacities, the nature of the relationships that people build or maintain can be different. To reflect the kinds of connections that my participants talked about, I categorized the socializing/networking activities based on the types of connections involved in Table 3.5.

Table 3.4: Socializing/Networking Activities at the CCCC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socializing/Networking Activities</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Going to publishers’ parties</td>
<td>Publishers usually hold parties at the conference, sometimes broadly for the conference attendees; sometimes divided by region; sometimes specifically to celebrate the publication of a new book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to university reunion parties</td>
<td>Many university graduate programs hold parties for their current students, faculty and alumni.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting new people at formal sessions</td>
<td>This refers to when people meet for the first time as fellow panelists or when audience members approach the panelists and introduce themselves and their work. This also includes occasions such as SIG meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to WPA-GO mentoring events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting people/hanging out at restaurants/cafes, around the city</td>
<td>This category includes all the social events that are not organized by an institution/organization but by individuals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Getting interrupted by social meetings

“Encounter”- often happens in the hallway at the convention site when people running into each other on the way to something else or while doing other things. Or when planned activities get interrupted/cancelled because of unplanned social meetings

Social Ties

Social scientists Mark Granovetter and Caroline Haythornthwaite study social networks in terms of the interpersonal relations that contribute to their density. A network is densest when everyone in the network is more likely to be socially involved with one another, forming strong ties. In contrast, lower-density networks are made of weak ties, acquaintances with whom we are less likely to be socially involved. While Granovetter emphasizes the strength of weak ties serving as bridges between more close-knit networks, Haythornthwaite introduces the concept of latent ties: ties that are technically possible but not yet activated socially and such that must be established by authorities (“Strong, Weak, and Latent Ties” 389). Haythornthwaite also theorizes the ways that communication technologies can impact the establishing and maintaining of different ties. On the one hand, she argues that “[t]he tie determines the ways, means, and expression of communications, and it determines the motivation, needs, and desires for communication” (385). On the other hand, “[p]atterns of media use, like patterns of resource exchange, can show how members of a network are connected, and how media support and create network structures” (387). Many of the activities at conferences such as the CCCC and on listservs such as WPA-L are inherently social, in the sense that more than one person is involved in the activity. But the nature of these social interactions tends to fall on a spectrum from disciplinary/professional to personal due to the shifting nature of the social ties on the same
spectrum, while the interactions, determined by the motivations and needs and culture, influence the nature of social ties in return.

Table 3.5 below lays out the types of connections and their strengths and the changes of the strengths through activities at the CCCC conventions, WPA-L and beyond. Identifying moments of connection and networking stories in the categories of activities, I categorized different connections into different types of ties as impacted by different social activities. However, it is important to recognize that my categorization here is in some ways arbitrary and only for analytical purposes because it doesn’t quite reflect the ebb and flow of the ties or the different nature of ties as professional, disciplinary, or personal. For example, people can have professionally strong ties with colleagues from institutions other than their own while they are working on a project together. But they may not become personal strong ties, which means that their interactions can decrease significantly after the completion of the project. On the other hand, people working in the same institution may not necessarily interact as much depending on their professional roles, whereas going to a disciplinary convention can bring them together as disciplinary strong ties. The strengths of the connections not only are impacted by the kinds of social activities that helped establish and/or maintain the ties but also by time and space. In other words, there is a temporal and spatial quality attached to the social connections. Strengths of social ties are usually determined by “frequency of contact, duration of the association, intimacy of the tie, provision of reciprocal services, and kinship” (Haythornthwaite 386). However, Haythornthwaite also points out that the different kinds of resources people exchange can differ because of the different types of ties. For example, some people may not share emotional support with professional connections unless that connection becomes stronger and personal. The strength of ties also increases and decreases based on the duration of the association. For
example, a tie grows stronger when people are involved in the same project but may become weaker after the project is concluded.

Table 3.5: Types of connections and strength of ties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of connections</th>
<th>Strength of connection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous grad school friends, colleagues</td>
<td>Strong ties, weak ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current colleagues from home institutions</td>
<td>Strong ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People they only knew online</td>
<td>Weak ties, strong ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues/friends from other institutions where they didn’t go to school or worked</td>
<td>Latent ties activated, weak ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New colleagues they met at CCCC in 2017</td>
<td>Latent ties activated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mickey Mouse”-luminaries in the field</td>
<td>Latent ties activated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because most of my participants didn’t see WPA-L as primarily a networking space and because participation on an email list can seem less diverse than that at a conference, I will talk about participation on WPA-L based on the types of conversations that take place on the list. In my big data analysis of the WPA-L archive, I analyzed the most popular monthly topics across the archive from 1993 to 2017 based on the functions of the topics. None of these functions carry an explicit purpose of networking. However, my participants’ experiences do show that sometimes new connections can be made on the list and reinforced if these connections also travel off the list. A common way to do that is through posting and responding to CFPs for edited collections or to attempts of building panel presentations at conferences. But occasionally, participating in a discussion can lead to connecting with another individual. Later I will share stories that exemplify the best-case scenario of such networking experiences. Two of my participants have also talked about interacting with people they already know. Sometimes they’ll respond off list to their friend, or they’ll promote their friend/colleague’s work on the list. Even
though WPA-L may not serve primarily a networking function, it is crucial to understand that many social interactions, even at a conference site, can take place in online spaces and that online social interactions can lead to strong social ties. My data reflect that social ties often do move from site to site, from online to offline. In the next three sections, I will analyze in more detail the different social ties enacted at the CCCC and on WPA-L based on tie strengths, while also discussing how these social ties shift across sites between online and offline spaces, across and beyond these two primary sites.

If we see building and maintaining interpersonal relations as crucial in enacting disciplinary networks, then we must also interrogate what challenges are presented that may prevent the formation of ties or break established ties and in what capacity some of these challenges are caused by power dynamics within disciplinary culture. For example, junior scholars, especially graduate students like the one in Ross’s class, can feel less that they belong in a big convention space like the CCCC. When discrimination or harassment occurs in such social spaces, as some of my participants have observed, potential ties may not form or be broken. Further, different people may have different expectations or perceptions about how one should behave in certain social spaces and pass on such views to their students who may or may not agree with these views. In a given social space such as the WPA-L, it may seem that everyone’s behavior is open to scrutiny, but graduate students or NTT faculty may still feel that they are marginalized. Later in this chapter and in Chapter Four, I will further elaborate on how the multitude of identities of my participants are impacting and being influenced by their participation in these social spaces, subjecting them to inequities based on gender, sexuality, class, professional status, and different bodies.
Strong Ties

Looking at Table 3.5, one can see that strong ties often develop through long-term academic and/or professional interactions that are either location-based or project-based. In other words, people tend to develop closer relationships if they have gone to school together or if they have worked on collaborative projects together. Of course, these strong ties may weaken after the end of a school program or professional position or the completion of the project. But sometimes, the ties remain strong if the people involved have become close personal friends or if they continue to share similar professional/scholarly interests that bring them together to engage in more collaborative projects.

Friends and colleagues with whom people are currently going to school or working with are generally considered to be strong ties because they tend to already interact with one another frequently. Graduate students such as Samantha and Lucy all hung out with their current grad school friends in Portland, either at their program party (Lucy) or on their own (Samantha). However, for some people, the CCCC actually provides an opportunity for people to interact with colleagues from their home institutions. Kate, whose primary professional position at her university is to direct an interdisciplinary learning center, has actually been using the conference to meet up with her writing colleagues in the English department. She acknowledged a separation between her professional obligations and her disciplinary affiliation which complicates her identity as an academic. Therefore, she actually uses the CCCC to socialize with disciplinary colleagues from her home institution without “non-comp colleagues” around “to have some uncensored conversations and catch up on work-related things.” A change in Kate’s professional appointment has led to the shift of the strength of her professional ties. Her writing colleagues have thus become weak ties.
Close personal friends are often past collaborators or graduate school colleagues who have remained strong ties even if they usually live in different locations now. Many of my participants talked about intentionally trying to find time to meet up with their close friends at the convention site. Felix, an associate professor, had dinner with his grad school friends Thursday night in Portland; it is something that they usually do at the CCCC. Tom, an associate professor and writing program administrator, has a group of six or seven grad school friends whom he tries to get together with every year at the CCCC. Lilly, an assistant professor, also enjoys hanging out with her grad school friends at the conference. She said that sometimes her friends would text her prior to the conference to see if she was going to coordinate their meetups. Samantha, even though a junior doctoral student, has been enculturated in the field since her undergraduate studies. This year, she met up with a friend from her Master’s program who shared the same advisor with her when Samantha was pursuing her Master’s and she was pursuing her PhD. Ross, an assistant professor and junior administrator, met up with a peer mentee from his PhD program this year. Ross had been giving him advice for the job market, and she had just gotten a job offer, so they celebrated her success.

Besides meeting with people one has gone to school with or worked with in the same institutions, my participants also use the conference space to socialize with strong ties contingent on disciplinary work. Here I see the ebbs and flows of ties that Haythornthwaite talks about as contingent on work-related projects. Academics often collaborate with people across different institutions on research projects or administrative tasks for regional/national professional organizations. They tend to form stronger ties throughout the duration of the projects or tasks. Because of the physical distance, they have to use digital technologies or conventions to communicate and collaborate with one another. Kate talked about meeting up with former
collaborators who have now become personal friends to catch up on things as well as meeting up
with current and future collaborators to work on projects. For example, in Portland, Kate met up
with people who were going to lead a workshop with her in the summer at another conference.
They had a formal meeting at the conference but also had dinner together. Through those
interactions, Kate now considers them not only disciplinary colleagues but also disciplinary
friends.

Academic conferences serve as important disciplinary sites for members of close
relationships to get together to reinforce their strong ties. But by bringing many members in the
field to the same physical location, a conference also provides opportunities for people to meet
new people, thus establishing weak ties and strengthening them into strong ties. In a similar way,
WPA-L, by virtue of being an online space, can potentially bring more people together, whether
substantial interpersonal relationships develop or not.

Latent Ties

Because latent ties are defined as dependent “on structures established organizationally
by management of an organization, system administrators, or community organizers,” these
structures can have significant impacts on “who can talk to whom, and via which means”
(Haythornthwaite 389). Every member, by becoming affiliated with a discipline—specifically, a
disciplinary organization—becomes a latent tie with others. Therefore, by registering and then
attending the CCCC or by subscribing to WPA-L, my participants have exposed themselves to
many latent ties in the discipline. Of course, simply affiliating oneself with an organization or
discipline does not mean that connections are established. Thus, academic conferences such as
the CCCC and online platform such as WPA-L allow these latent ties to be activated because
people can reach out either in person or through email to other people and build connections.
Table 3.5 shows three types of latent ties that tend to get activated at the CCCC, as derived from my data set: colleagues/friends from other institutions where they didn’t go to school or worked; new colleagues they met at CCCC 2017; and “Mickey Mouse”-luminaries in the field. These are not distinctive categories, of course, as new colleagues can be from other institutions where they didn’t go to school or worked. But these categories provided me with a way to aggregate the activity recording data and the interview data. At the conference, various kinds of activities and ways of space design provided the infrastructure to activate latent ties. Except when a conference-goer is at their hotel room or in a quiet room and away from digital technologies such as Twitter or the convention app, they are very likely to be physically exposed to other latent ties in the field. My participants talked about meeting new people at various types of conference activities.

One common way to meet new people is at professional activities listed in Table 3.1, organizationally structured events that bring people together. The convention itself offers formal events to facilitate such networking. Doctoral student Anne became friends with her fellow panelists in Portland, who are all interested in work on community writing. Another doctoral student, Samantha, also met new people at sessions in Portland: some were presenters on a panel she chaired; one was a fellow presenter on her own panel. Sometimes, people from the audience would approach panelists after a presentation and connect with them. I had once done that at a workshop at CCCC 2014 where I introduced myself to one of the facilitators because I noticed he was from the same school where I was going to start my PhD program. He turned out to be a student from the program at the time; he became the first person I had ever met from my PhD program. These formal sessions tend to activate latent ties based on shared disciplinary or
professional interests which can possibly lead to stronger disciplinary or professional connections and often the production of scholarship.

Tom, an associate professor, met a professor in Portland from a different institution because they were presenting on the same panel. They later talked about starting an edited collection together in which he would be the editor and she would be one of the contributors. If they would carry out this project, then they would potentially become temporary strong ties and generate new scholarship. At the IWCA Collaborative, Master’s student Lucy met a graduate student and a few undergraduate students from the University of Hawaii at Manoa where there is an archive that Lucy really wants to visit for one of her current research projects. These new colleagues expressed interests in her work, and Lucy wanted to potentially maintain that connection for the future. Rose, a doctoral candidate, has been going to the Second Language Writing Standing Group meetings since the time it was still a SIG. Through that group, she had met other scholars with whom she later presented on a panel at the CCCC and then published a co-authored article in *Composition Studies*, a prominent journal in the field.

Other formally structured events by other organizational entities also use the CCCC convention space to bring people together. Here I want to highlight particularly one formal event at this conference, organized not by the CCCC but by the graduate organization of Writing Program Administration (WPA-GO): the WPA-GO mentoring event. Among the professional and disciplinary relationships that I’m examining, mentoring relations are especially important for participants, and the WPA-GO mentoring event formally and intentionally helps activate latent ties contingent on mentorship. In the Writing Studies Tree project, mentoring connections among users are explicitly presented, yet only in the form of formal mentoring relations between professors and students, graduate advisors and advisees. However, looking at conference
activities and other informal interactions among members of the discipline, one can see that mentoring relationships can be cross-institutional and either peer-based or hierarchical. Several of my participants talked about meeting with new mentors or mentees through the WPA-GO events. Usually, the WPA-GO mentoring committee organizes a breakfast and an afternoon/evening social event to provide structured time for mentors and mentees to meet. But mentors and mentees are also encouraged to set up their own meeting times, especially when they are not available at the structured times. Anyone can be a mentor—graduate students or faculty—especially if they have attended the conference several times and/or have been in the field for a while. Felix, in particular, wanted to highlight the benefits of this program by telling me that he has been involved in the program as a mentor for several years and remained in contact with his mentees over the years. Rose, a graduate student and also a full-time contingent faculty, and Samantha, a doctoral student, used to sign up as mentee, but in 2017 both of them served as mentors to other graduate students who were less familiar with the conference. While formally structured mentoring events are perceived to be very helpful—especially in enculturating and supporting incoming members, as infrastructure to help activate latent ties, they have limitations. This year in Portland, for example, the WPA-GO mentoring event on Thursday afternoon was sparsely attended because the location of the coffee shop was a bit far from the convention center. Tom tried to meet up with a mentee at the event, but it didn’t work out because they didn’t realize how far it was, so they ended up only talking on the phone.

Another mentoring event structured by the conference is the newcomers breakfast which is open to all attendees. While attendees are not paired up prior to the conference as they are in the WPA-GO mentoring program, this event offers a chance for members with different backgrounds to connect with one another. Felix talked about going to the newcomers breakfast
as a move to “pay forward.” Because he was made to feel so welcomed when he started attending the conference, he wanted to pay this feeling forward to incoming scholars so that they would feel welcomed as well. Alice, a senior scholar in the field, also enjoys going to the newcomers breakfast so that she can meet younger scholars and learn about their work.

Finally, besides formal sessions listed on the program, there are also other structured social events that help activate the latent ties, such as publishers’ parties, or program reunions. These are more informal occasions where people get to connect with latent ties, and reconnect with weak ties and strong ties. These events are prominent spaces where personal and professional relationships are intermingled. Program reunions, sometimes organized by individual institutions or graduate programs, sometimes jointly planned by multiple institutions, serve especially as a space where people are exposed to all kinds of social ties with a shared institution/program. The reunion party becomes a hub for current graduate students, faculty, and alumni to connect and reconnect. The publishers’ parties, including several notable ones such as the Bedford St. Martin’s party, the Norton party, and the Fountainhead party, are great opportunities for different social ties to connect as well. However, these parties do have their ulterior motive to make money by publicizing their books. Its primary purpose is thus not to facilitate professional networking even if it ends up providing the structure for serendipitous connecting convention attendees. This brings me to the last kind of latent ties activated at the conference: “the Mickey Mouses.”

My participant, doctoral student Michael, is the one who came up with the term “Mickey Mouse:” “if you think about Disney World where people go meet Mickey Mouse or whatever, so every year at CCCC I pick a Mickey Mouse, which is my celebrity scholar that I wanna meet at the conference.” Academics routinely read scholarship produced by people they don’t really
know in person. Academic conferences offer an opportunity to meet such people, attaching a face to a name. Structured social events intentionally bring a large number of people together into one location, potentially increasing the chance of people meeting their “Mickey Mouse.” Michael met two this year in Portland at the Norton party. Many graduate students can perhaps relate to this experience, but it is not exclusive to younger scholars. Even a senior scholar like Jane told me she still feels really excited to listen to Peter Elbow and Nancy Sommers present, although she feels less likely the need to approach them to make the connection.

Together, all these organizational events offer the infrastructure for what Haythornthwaite calls “the social implementation” that activates latent ties (393). But face-to-face interactions are not the only way to activate latent ties. An encounter online can lead to the establishment of some weak ties, reinforced and strengthened in person, which can then lead to strong ties. In a professional and academic context, it can lead to the production of scholarship and policy changes. Rachel, a doctoral candidate, first met her friend and collaborator James on grad café, an online forum for graduate students in all disciplines, when they were both applying for phd programs. They later met in person at the CCCC and have collaborated on research projects and published together ever since. Jane told me the fascinating story of how she met one of her best academic friends, Jessica, who she rooms with at multiple academic conferences every year. Their first interaction was years ago on the listserv for the Conference on Basic Writing, involving a conversation on the definition of “basic writing.” Several people volunteered to be part of a working group to produce a document that would define “basic writing” and they decided to have a meeting at the CCCC in Phoenix. Jessica and Jane ended up being the only people from that group of volunteers who could afford to go to the conference that year (because many people who teach basic writing on the listserv were from community
colleges and lacked sufficient travel funding). They met at a coffee shop near the hotel and really enjoyed each other’s company. Jane actually doesn’t remember if that document was ever written, but she and Jessica ended up doing some collaborative scholarship around basic writing for several years after that. The year after Phoenix, Jessica asked Jane to be her conference roommate, and from there, their relationship has developed into a “robust, full friendship” involving interactions at many different sites both in professional and personal capacities.

However, some online interactions such as responding to a question, a CFP, or even engaging in a discussion doesn’t necessarily lead to a substantial connection, unless these interactions are later supported by other means of communication, often face-to-face interactions. Six of my participants have built new connections which started on WPA-L and later developed more fully in person. Two people’s experiences stand out particularly, demonstrating how such connections activated and then further developed can benefit not only the individuals involved in the interactions but also the discipline as a whole.

Tom told me the story of one of his earliest formal interactions on WPA-L which eventually led to his very first publication. During one of his earliest formal interactions on WPA-L, he was involved in a conversation that included another graduate student studying at Purdue for his PhD. Tom was a Master’s student, trying to decide where to go for his PhD, deciding between the program at Purdue and the program at Arizona State. After learning that this other graduate student had gone to X University for his Master’s, Tom emailed him for feedback on these two programs:

And he was really helpful and really generous with his time. Then we met at a conference after that, after I decided to go to X University, we met at a conference, and at that conference, he invited me to be on a panel that he was putting together, I think that’s how
it happened. In any case, he ended up co-editing, guest-editing an issue of *Y Journal*, and invited me to submit a revised version of my conference paper to that. And it ended up over the course of time, being one of my very first publications. And so that all started at WPA-L and matured over the course of a few years into my very first publication.

Tom’s story, as he said later in the interview, was “everything you want it to be.” It shows that cross-platform social interactions, often serendipitous, can fruitfully contribute to the personal professional development of a scholar in the field. The unique structure of a listserv, where one can send messages to “all” (which has its own disadvantages), opens up opportunities to foster social ties.

Jane told a particularly poignant story about how initial online connections have led to individual professional fulfillment and disciplinary achievement. And it started on WPA-L:

This is one of the best experiences of my professional life I have to say. A really awesome project that did grow out of that list very directly is the CWPA Outcome Statement. I was heavily involved in the drafting of the first version and the third version of that. I was among the people who participated in that work from the very start, and that actually has its origin on the WPA-L, because somebody wrote, is there anything statement [sic] about what people should be able to learn, and people were like oh you couldn’t possibly have one of those cuz places are so different, and then it was like, but wait a minute if there were one what would it look like, and a bunch of people were like, yeah what would it look like, and started a little conversation. And they were like this conversation is so fascinating let’s get together at Cs next month and continue it in person. So for the next probably three years we had either conference panels or workshops on what became the CWPA outcome statements. We ended up calling
ourselves the outcomes collective, we ended up with a little executive [committee], I was on the executive committee in the end that did the final editing. I co-edited a volume about the outcome statement. That was my second and it was certainly a longer running experience in a cross-institutional work group producing a product, and that was really meaningful work. I have made some pretty great professional ties out of that. And probably two quite good personal friends out of that group as well.

The CWPA Outcomes Statement has been revised several times over the years and serves as a foundational text in the field of writing program administration, crucial to the development of writing pedagogy and curriculum design of first-year writing courses. Jane’s story demonstrates the process of how disciplinary work gets done in a networked environment and how connections built through such a process can have long lasting impact on the discipline.

These two stories show that activated social ties must be continuously maintained in order to develop into strong ties, and such maintenance often takes place across online and offline spaces at multiple sites. Often, different communication platforms provide complementary support to maintaining weak and strong ties. For example, Alice described WPA-L as a space to extend conversations in between conferences. Anne talked about adding new people she met at the convention on Facebook so that she could further cultivate that connection.

Weak Ties

Activated professional and disciplinary ties will only remain activated if they “expend effort normally reserved for strong ties, such as frequent communication, self-disclosure, and negotiation of communication norms” (Haythornthwaite 394). While we may meet a lot of people at a conference, not many of the people we meet will remain active social ties in our
social networks. The connections can immediately become dormant again if they don’t continue to interact. On the spectrum of interpersonal relationships reflected in my data, people’s relationships tend to get closer when they fall further towards the personal end. Often, professional relationships become personal relationships; this is why I have categorized people who went to graduate school together as having strong ties because they tend to have a more personal connection in addition to a professional one. However, some strong ties weaken after they graduate or after they stop working together because their relationships don’t develop into a personal level and/or their professional interests diverge, leading them to different social circles in the discipline. Nevertheless, some people continue to collaborate or work together professionally in different capacities, which would also contribute to the strength of their social ties. Different disciplinary sites can provide opportunities for people to reconnect with their strong ties after they have weakened, as well as maintain their weak ties. For example, people who meet on WPA-L by responding to a CFP for an edited collection can later develop to have strong ties with the editors who sent out the call if they become contributing authors.

Weak ties are defined by Granovetter as acquaintances, connections that can help bridge high-density networks. In other words, weak ties can open up social circles and bring people more connections, resources, or information. Through informal academic communications, just like other social interactions, people meet people who introduce them to more people, more ideas, more perspectives, and more resources. This chapter documents various ways in which weak ties are strengthened through different social activities at different disciplinary sites. These weak ties have not only brought significant benefits to individual members of the discipline but also contributed to the density of the disciplinary networks of rhetoric and composition.
As shown in Table 3.5, I observed different kinds of weak ties: previous grad school friends/colleagues; people they have known only online; and colleagues/friends from other institutions where they didn’t go to school or worked. Since weak ties are acquaintances; people tend not to have personal relationships with them. The nature of the connections is thus usually professional or disciplinary. In these categories, two types of weak ties are most interesting in my data set: people my participants knew only online, and colleagues/friends from other institutions where they didn’t go to school or worked because these connections would often lead to potential professional and disciplinary collaboration, thus contributing to the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition. On WPA-L, new connections people make are usually not from their local institutions, and they are built usually with specific purposes and motivations that would make them easier to maintain as weak ties or even to develop into strong ties. In other words, subscribers to WPA-L may not meet a lot of people as they would at a conference, but the relationships they do end up developing through WPA-L and beyond often can lead to more substantial disciplinary work, benefiting the individuals involved and the discipline as a whole.

Several participants talked about connecting with people at conferences that they had only previously known online. When I asked my participants what other informal communication platforms they used, many mentioned using various social networking sites for professional or disciplinary purposes, mainly Twitter and Facebook as well as some listservs. Nine participants talked about meeting people they had previously known online in person at the CCCC and how the face-to-face meetings established or strengthened their relationships. Sometimes these online ties were collaborators on research projects or administrative tasks who they had not met in person until they were in the same conference space. Felix talked about meeting people he had collaborated with before at the conference, and Mary met people she had
been working with on the WPA-GO mentoring committee over Skype. Lucy had been taking a
graduate course on WPA studies that involved Skype interviews with a writing program
administrator from a different institution. This year at CCCC in Portland, she finally got to meet
with this professor, which she believed solidified their professional connection. Not only does
this professor’s scholarship informs Lucy’s thesis, but she was also coming to Lucy’s campus to
help manage their writing center at the absence of a director. Meeting her in person allowed
Lucy to share with her more her work and research interests to which this professor responded
positively and openly by offering to help with Lucy’s work. Anne ran into her mentor for a
*Kairos* piece she is working on in Portland with whom she had been skyping, which has
strengthened their relationships as well. Such meetings existed in earlier years of social media.
Before the existence of Facebook and Twitter, Alice met many of her best academic friends in
online spaces such as MOO. She talked about chatting with a friend, who has since become her
“academic twin,” every Tuesday evening at 8pm Eastern Time in the old “Tuesday café” on
MOO for an hour to talk about issues; they then met in person at conferences and became best
friends.

Sometimes people have well established online presences at different social network sites
and strong professional identities with a number of followers and/or frequent interactions online
for professional or academic purposes. Even if they may not consider themselves to have a well
established online presence, they may still have been active enough on various platforms that
they can be recognized offline. Amber Buck describes this successful professional persona on
social media as “personally professional” (162). Really active and popular users of social media
tend to be recognized by other social media users, and their social media presence can become a
conversation starter. Julie is an avid tweeter, especially at academic conferences. While her
profile image and her Twitter handle don’t necessarily reveal her real identity, she is well known in the circle of rhetoric and composition scholars who tweet. Now that people’s twitter handles are printed on their name tags at the CCCC convention, people have recognized Julie when looking at her name tag because of her tweeting and then will strike up a conversation with her.

In online spaces, people can also reinforce their weak ties or strong ties. Mary talked about having responded off WPA-L in a personal email or on Facebook to her former professors. Kate sometimes will chime in on discussions started by people she has worked with on scholarship or other projects, building on what they have said, or if they haven’t mentioned something they did, she will occasionally promote their work on their behalf. Tom and Alice both talked about using WPA-L as a source of professional contact where connections may foster and where they can see someone offline and recognize them and their work from their posts on WPA-L.

**Identity Performance and Social Ties**

What has become apparent in this analysis so far is that people’s participation in social spaces is impacted by people’s identifications. How they identify themselves as a professional or an academic often determines which disciplinary social spaces they may participate in. In addition, personal needs and identities also play important roles in their activities. Their identities influence their relations with other people, situating them in power structures inherent in these social spaces and in the discipline more broadly. In turn, such participation and relations can also help shape their professional/disciplinary identities as well as constituting disciplinary culture.

In the previous section, I recounted many stories in which interpersonal networking was successfully executed and consequently contributed to professional and disciplinary progress,
which, to a certain extent, has flattened the professional hierarchies by bringing people together across their academic ranks. Ideally, the longer a person is in the field and making contributions to its work, the more relations that person may have, either professionally or personally. As the number and strength of social ties increase, the disciplinary network’s density increases. On the individual level, a well-connected and seasoned member of the discipline may have more what Latour and Woolgar call “credit” and “credibility” if these connections have resulted in productive professional and scholarly experiences, such as serving on more committees and publishing more articles and books. Latour and Woolgar treat scientific development as the “continual redeployment of accumulated resources” when scientists accumulate credentials by publishing scholarship and others “invest” in their credibility by referencing and building on their scholarship. A discipline thus can be seen as enacted when social ties continue to develop and contribute to professional and scholarly development. Conversely, building social ties requires working with the culture and infrastructure that can challenge networking efforts. In order to participate in a convention, as my participants mentioned, they often would have to have an official role in order to receive travel funding, which means that the convention proposal review structure serves as a gatekeeping mechanism, preventing certain potential latent ties from activating and privileging other ties. Later in chapter four I will perform analyses on participation in these social spaces as a unit of professional/disciplinary activity. Then in chapter five, I will further unpack the infrastructure and design of these social spaces to trace more the construction of disciplinary culture as people come to experience it in such spaces.

Through my earlier analysis of social ties across WPA-L and the CCCC, one can see that disciplinarity can be understood as enacted through these interpersonal connections. Consequently, for a discipline to move forward, members must continue to foster these
connections across institutions. When recruited for this study, all my participants identified themselves as members of the discipline of rhetoric and composition. However, such a professional/disciplinary identification gets complicated across disciplinary sites such as conferences and online social networks because personal motivations and interactions also seep into those spaces and because this identification changes over time throughout people’s professional/disciplinary trajectories. But as individual members advance in their professional career and in the discipline more broadly, the motivations for and the ways in which they build and maintain connections can change. In other words, their professional/disciplinary identifications also impact how social ties are built and maintained, and thus how disciplinary networks evolve.

Here I use “identification” instead of “identity” because I want to highlight that identities change and should be understood as how someone “identity” themselves at a given time and/or space. “Identification” reflects the performative act that people have to take in different situations as they relate to others. Identity can be treated as a social performance in a Goffmanian sense, where individuals, when taking on certain social roles, are met with expectations of “a performance” that “is ‘socialized,’ molded, and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of the society in which [the performance] is presented” (35). In the context of this dissertation, social identity plays a major role in how people interact in disciplinary spaces, but other personal and character traits also impact their actions. Ibarra and Petriglieri, in their work on “identity play,” discuss the concept of “self” as “consist[ing] of multiple identities that vary along dimensions including their centrality or importance to the individual, whether they reflect actual or potential achievement, and their temporal orientation (i.e., their past, present, or future)” (11). This summary is productive because it takes into account the processual and non-
static identity performance reflected in my data as “[i]dentity can only be understood as a process of ‘being’ or ‘becoming’” (Jenkins 17), always shifting across time and space as people move up the academic ladder. Their social interactions and self-representations also change across disciplinary sites because of their professional advancement both in rank and in disciplinary interests because “[i]dentities exist and are acquired, claimed and allocated within power relations” (Jenkins 45).

Participating into the Discipline

Increasing the density of disciplinary networks involves recruiting and enculturating younger members (not necessarily in age but in disciplinary/professional experience) into the field not only through what Prior calls “laminated literate activity in the academy”—the learning to write through interactions in graduate seminars, research labs with other colleagues and professors, etc. (Prior)—but also through informal communication practices in social spaces as well as to continue to foster new connections among existing members. For graduate students or junior scholars, participating in a disciplinary site such as the annual convention of the CCCC and the WPA-L with such large numbers of attendees and subscribers can be a way “into” the discipline. While this chapter focuses more on interpersonal networking, I use “participation” here to mean more than just networking but more broadly the professional/disciplinary activity that takes place in these social spaces. In chapter four, I will elaborate more on what I mean by the professional/disciplinary activity.

Scholarship on graduate student enculturation and professionalization in the field of rhetoric and composition abounds. Some scholars focus on efforts such as training graduate students not only to teach but to engage in administrative tasks (Anderson; Pierce and Enos; Long, Holberg, and Taylor; Miller). Others analyze specific writing practices or other literacy
activities expected of graduate students as they are enculturated into the field and the academy (Prior, “Writing/Disciplinarity”; Leon and Pigg; Casanave and Li). In examining people’s motivations for going to conferences such as the CCCC and for subscribing to or participating on the WPA-L, I learned from my participants that participation in these sites contributes to their scholarly identification as members in the field and that their scholarly and professional identities then in turn influence where and how they participate socially in the discipline. Michael’s sentiment: “As a young composition scholar, it seems important to go to the flagship conference” is also reflected by other graduate students such as Anne (“Being on the job market two years from now . . . I think it is important to go to those national conferences”), Lucy (“Especially thinking about myself as someone who’s being professionalized into the field, I have a fear of missing it, like I’m not gonna meet that important person”), and Mary (“I do plan to keep attending Cs. I’m hoping to become a WPA when I finish my PhD, or if nothing else I’ll stay in the field of composition studies. Since Cs is the flagship conference for us, I plan to stay active and continue attending these conferences in the future”). In a similar vein, several participants talked about subscribing to WPA-L in order to “keep a pulse” on the field and give them a sense of “who this community is.” Because many posts on WPA-L are oriented toward asking for resources or solutions to problems as well as announcements of CFPs or jobs, some graduate students treat it as a space for professionalization. Mary talked about the value of learning about people’s research ideas on the list—much faster than going to conferences or reading journal articles. Lucy finds it interesting to learn about different issues faced by writing program administrators (WPAs) as a preparation for her future career as a WPA. These motivations and purposes are manifestations of the institutionalized identity of “a member in the discipline of rhetoric and composition;” they also reflect the “established patterns of practice,
recognized as such by actors, which have force as ‘the way things are done’” in the discipline (Jenkins 45). In a way, their participation in these spaces constitutes a form of “identity work” which “fundamentally seeks the preservation of existing identities or compliance with externally imposed image requirements” (Ibarra and Periglieri 14). As graduate students, they see these moments as professionalizing their identities as rhetoric and composition scholars.

Presenting at a flagship conference also contributes to one’s professional credit (the addition of a line on the CV), yet also marks scholarly progress and builds cultural capital in the field. In Randall Collins’ work, an intellectual’s cultural capital includes not only the basic and existing knowledge of the field but also means of new discoveries (31-32). In this process, scholars can perform both “identity work” as they use this professional credit to advance professionally, and “identity play” as they invent and reinvent their disciplinary identity (Ibarra and Periglieri 14). Rachel and Lucy, both graduate students, mentioned the weight a conference like the CCCC carries, which can be very beneficial for their professional portfolio. This is especially important considering how one has to balance different options to gain “professional credit.” Rachel said, “I think CCCC is probably—there are a lot of conferences I enjoy going [to]—but they don’t carry the same kind of prestige and weight. And as a graduate student with limited travel funding and limited time, especially as a grad student and a parent, I can’t just travel a lot. I have prioritize the conferences that make more sense.”

Two other graduate students, Jack and Samantha, talked about using conferences as spaces to figure out their disciplinary identity by exploring different areas in the discipline. Jack first went to the CCCC because he wasn’t sure what his role was in the discipline. He was doing some work in technical communication, in rhetoric and composition, in cultural rhetorics, and in digital humanities, and went to different panels at the conference to get an idea of what it looked
like to do research in a particular area. This motivation influenced his conference experience and pushed him to go to a session in every single time slot to explore as many different areas as possible. The second time he went, he had a better idea of what he wanted to do as a scholar himself:

I was a little more aware that I wanted to be in tech comm or cultural rhetorics, although I kinda knew that if I was in tech comm, I would be the weird one that was studying people that didn’t really do business in the traditional way. And if I was doing cultural rhetorics, I would be the one who were [sic] studying the cultural rhetorics of people who do business outside the normal way. So I was sort of on the fringe of either group, but you know I don’t mind being on the fringe. So I kinda went to panels on both of those and I kinda intuited where my people were, trying to connect with some people there.”

By embodying a better scholarly identification, Jack’s networking strategies became more targeted; he would try to meet with people who were doing similar research or studying subject areas that he was interested in. And conferences offer great opportunities for this selective networking practice. Eventually, Jack, who was finishing up his doctoral program at the time of the interview, told me that the CCCC was no longer his top conference to go to because his disciplinary interests had solidified more in technical and professional communication, in particular, business communication and entrepreneurship. Similarly, Samantha, even though early in her PhD career, already has a more focused area of research so that a large conference such as the CCCC is not as conducive to discoveries of new ideas or to build her cultural capital. Therefore, she actually prefers to go to smaller, more focused conferences tailored to her particular interests. For similar reasons, some people don’t subscribe to WPA-L because they feel that the issues and discussions posted on the list are usually not directly related to their own
professional and scholarly interests. For example, Michael doesn’t subscribe to the list because his current primary interests are not in WPA work, although he indicated that he might subscribe later if he decided to get into WPA work more. It is also important to note that the perception of the list focusing mainly on WPA work may not be an accurate one based on the archive of its actual discussions. But as people’s interests change, the list is also changing. If more people think the list covers broader issues about the field (such as the discussion on the CCCC 2019 CFP), they are more likely to post discussions related those issues on the list, thus changing gradually the list’s focus. This is a point that will come back in chapter four and five.

But for others, a big conference can still be helpful to their disciplinary identification if they identify themselves primarily as “a compositionist.” Anne talked about finally figuring out her dissertation research topic to be on Appalachian studies, which meant that she could go to the Appalachian Studies SIG at the CCCC in Portland and connect with people there. At the same time, she could also attend the community engagement SIG. The conference provided her with the opportunity to network with two groups of people who normally wouldn’t be in the same space at the same time.

Participating to Give Back to the Field

For senior scholars in the field, high in professional rank both institutionally and in the discipline, their motivations to participate in social interactions often stem from their commitment to mentorship and service to the discipline. Alice, a well known computers and writing scholar, told me with much enthusiasm that the RNF (Research Network Forum) at the CCCC and the GRN (Graduate Research Network at Computers and Writing Conference), both occasions to share work-in-progress, are “not to be missed” because they offer her opportunities to meet new scholars and learning about their work. When I asked if she made any new friends
this year in Portland, she responded, “I always make new friends! Again, [at] RNF, because these are grad students that I didn’t know before. And the newcomers breakfast, going to those two events. I always make sure I have my cards and all that I can share with them, and let them know, if you’ve got questions, if you are lonely, whatever, you know, we are best buds from now on, friend me on Facebook.”

Nonetheless, mentoring doesn’t only happen hierarchically in the discipline. As I already mentioned before, graduate students like Rose and Samantha have also served as mentors. Samantha talked to me more generally about enjoying connecting people with similar research interests and passing on resources. After our interview, knowing that I was interested in the backchanneling of WPA-L discourse on Facebook, Samantha sent me a screenshot of a Facebook post she saw on her newsfeed that is an example of such backchanneling. Lucy told me that she once shared a post she saw on WPA-L to her advisor who doesn’t subscribe to the list since she thought the post was relevant to her advisor’s research interests. In the next chapter, I will also discuss more how activity across these social spaces embodies a kind of horizontal learning irrespective of the disciplinary and professional hierarchies.

_Shrifting Identities and Changing Social Participation_

In spaces such as the CCCC and the WPA-L, professional identification, disciplinary identification, and personal identification often function simultaneously as people plan their social engagements. Kate talked about balancing her professional and disciplinary commitments and how they influence her social participation at different professional and disciplinary social spaces. Because her current primary job responsibility is to manage an interdisciplinary learning center, she has one foot outside the discipline at her home institution. Because of her professional responsibilities, she also often attends academic conferences that are not affiliated
with rhetoric and composition, such as the main annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges and Universities, a conference she attends regularly now less for her own professional reasons than for promoting her center’s work; the conference of the multidisciplinary International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to which she has professional commitment as a board member; and the International Consortium for Educational Development annual conference which has a strong faculty development component. At the same time, in a disciplinary space such as the CCCC, Kate also has held official roles on the Executive Committee for the organization, which means that she needs to spend some of her conference time to attend official meetings, working on improving policies and practices. For her, going to the CCCC is a way to connect with her disciplinary colleagues and friends. On the one hand, Kate’s professional identity pulls her away from her disciplinary work. On the other hand, her disciplinary identity at the conference enables her to build more personal relationships. For example, in Portland, she went to dinner with colleagues who were going to run the workshop at the CWPA conference with her in the summer. Over that dinner, she got to know more about them thus became disciplinary friends with them. Often, this type of situation is more likely to happen with senior members in the field who may have taken leadership positions in their home institutions that may pull them away from their disciplinary identity. However, it can also happen when one’s research involves collaboration with people from other disciplinary spaces. Jane, who has been working on research projects with librarians at her school, brought a librarian colleague with her to Portland this year where they presented together. For Jane, this librarian is a professional colleague and not a disciplinary one.

Of course, personal habits also impact the ways people engage with these platforms. Some of my participants identified as introverted people, who are less likely to actively make
new connections at a conference space or who would have to force themselves to do so. The heated discussions and “drama” on WPA-L which have occasionally evolved into flame wars have also deterred people from subscribing to the list because they personally didn’t want their inbox to be flooded by such posts. People also tend to have different preferences for how they subscribe to the list and organize their emails.

Finally, people’s collective identifications may complicate their participation in cross-institutional contexts because they are representing their institutions as well: two of my participants also mentioned that they were concerned about how they might represent their institutions if they were to ask for resources or questions to help resolve problems at their home institutions: “While I could go to WPA-L, know I could post this question there and get some really great stuff, but in doing that, I don’t want to use the wrong terms, I don’t wanna make it seem like [my institution] isn’t already thinking about inclusive pedagogy, I’m representing, not representing myself, but my professional position, so I decided I just sent my request to people who I knew.”

Because people’s professional and disciplinary roles and responsibilities shift over time, their participation patterns in these social spaces change. Identity performance in these social spaces is a process. Recently scholars have studied how graduate students construct their professional identity in digital spaces. Amber Buck’s work on graduate students’ professional identities on Twitter shows that graduate students have “a multiplicity of different ideas of what it means to be a writing teacher and researcher” (175). Their online identities are constructed over time, through an “accumulation of specific moments of interaction with different communities” (Buck 176). This is true in offline spaces as well, where they must consider which disciplinary sites to participate in, how to participate in them, who to connect with, etc. However,
there are explicit and implicit “rules” that reflect the common values of the disciplinary community. The process of following those rules reflects an identity performance defined by Erving Goffman as “idealization,” in which the performers “offer their observers an impression that is idealized” (35). Therefore, “[i]ndividual identification emerges within the ongoing relationship between self-image and public image” (Jenkins 93). When certain people such as NTT faculty, graduate students, female, or LGBT people feel marginalized in these social spaces, they may feel less motivated to participate in social spaces, breaking the possibilities of establishing potential social ties among various groups of people. Later in chapter five I will unpack more how shifting discursive culture on WPA-L impact people’s participation on the list or the lack thereof.

Social Ties and Emotional Energy Flow

The processes of building interpersonal connections I’ve analyzed so far in this chapter constitute a kind of “interaction ritual” (IR) that, building on Goffman’s work, Randall Collins defines as a “sociological theory of very wide scope, which tells us the conditions under which symbols are generated and are felt to be morally and cognitively binding” (20). One of the ingredients of any interaction ritual is that the group of people “share a common mood or emotion” (22). Collins elaborates on how this shared mood or emotion can carry a social effect in which “individuals who participate in IRs [interaction rituals] are filled with emotional energy, in proportion to the intensity of the interaction” (23). For Collins, this “group-generated emotional energy” “charges up individuals like an electric battery, giving them a corresponding degree of enthusiasm toward ritually created symbolic goals when they are out of the presence of the group” (23). The emotional energy thus can fuel the creativity of intellectuals. In the context of this dissertation, the concept of emotional energy is important because the disciplinary social
interactions I’ve analyzed in this chapter carry affective dimensions that impact the disciplinary culture and individual members’ participation in the discipline. Collins argues that emotional energy can only be charged during face-to-face interactions, but my project revises that idea by showing that social interactions across sites can also charge emotional energy.

In relation to identity performance, also relevant here is Wenger’s theory of modes of belonging. Wenger argues that the formation of a worker’s identity can be understood in terms of belonging in the communities of practice. There are three modes of this belonging (173-174):

1. Engagement: active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning
2. Imagination: creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experience
3. Alignment: coordinating our energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises.

These three modes, reflect a more concrete process of identifying oneself to be part of communities of practice than Collins’ concept of group-generated emotional energy; however they don’t capture the changing nature of the sense of belonging. Since the professional and disciplinary identities of members of a discipline change over time impacting their social participation the shared group energy also shifts, impacting their sense of belonging.

In the previous section, I emphasized how social and networking activities across the CCCC and the WPA-L can help enculturate junior scholars into the discipline. Part of that enculturation process involves a sense of belonging. Having strong personal and professional social ties in the discipline can make someone feel that they belong. Positive interactions with social ties will tighten the connections and strengthen the culture of the networks. For example, many of my participants talked about the collegiality of the rhetoric and composition community,
which is often reflected in how welcoming the flagship conference space is to diverse members. At the same time, many of my participants also expressed how tired and overwhelmed they usually are at such a big conference like the CCCC, as well as their frustrations with the occasional inappropriate social behaviors. This section considers the affective dimensions of the social interactions captured in my data by examining the ways these interactions both positively contribute to the emotional energy of the disciplinary network, fueling individual and disciplinary development, as well as the ways they constrain such development, possibly temporarily depleting that emotional energy.

*Fueling Creativity and Increasing Sense of Belonging*

Julie told me this story:

When I went to NCTE, I randomly sat next to a lovely woman who I forget where she was from. But we were chatting about how NCTE as sort of a space where we talk about literacy, wasn’t clearly definitely connected to what we were doing in composition. And I remember she said this really clearly, “but *it feeds me, it feeds me.*” And I was like oh okay, it kind of does. [italics added]

The italicized quote from the woman Julie met accurately describes how academic conferences can provide the emotional energy that fuels individual creativity and the advancement of the intellectual field. While my participants showed mixed feelings about participating on WPA-L, seventeen of them enjoyed going to the CCCC for social reasons: to meet up with old friends, to connect with new friends and colleagues. Throughout their recordings in Portland, they described a lot of positive feelings towards their conference activities. Smiley faces were frequently used in participant activity recordings during social events when they met up with friends, mentees/mentors as well as for formal sessions such as
concurrent sessions and SIG meetings. In the follow-up interviews, they explained that while they were tired, exhausted, or anxious about presenting their work, they always enjoyed so much more meeting with other people and learning about their work and research. Good conversations or presentations made them feel curious and excited, pushing them to think about new ideas and new issues in the field. On WPA-L, my participants also talked about positive experiences where they had learned about resources and/or opportunities that have contributed to their career. Tom explicitly described WPA-L as a teaching space when he first subscribed where “if you chimed and had a thing to say, people would engage you, it didn’t really matter, it could be a lecturer at a community college who was chiming in to respond, it could have been Ed White, or Chris Anson, or some luminary in the field, so it was a place where you could go and have a real interactive discussion.”

When talking about the opening session on Thursday morning where the Chair’s address is given, Lucy said “I like seeing the field in a room and feel like I’m part of, especially as a graduate student you can feel so lost, it feels kinda centering to be oh right we are here.” The flagship conference provides not only a connecting point for people to build specific social ties, but it can also be a physical representation for the field, not necessarily in the sense that everybody in the field goes to the conference but in the sense that it offers an opportunity to, in Wenger’s language, “create an image” of the field being represented for attendees to foster the sense of belonging as Lucy expresses here.

Draining Group-Shared Energy

To increase the sense of belonging in a community of practice, the last mode is for participants to align their energies and activities with the existing structures, but this would require rhetorical work as these interactions would be subject to the power relations within the
community. If their actions and presence are not valued by others, then their sense of belonging would decrease, taking away the shared group energy. While many of my participants expressed positive experiences of participating in disciplinary social spaces and the increased sense of belonging it has fostered, I also learned about the presence of sexual harassments in these spaces that have often gone unacknowledged, as well as how the effort to making the convention and its space more accessible to people can be sometimes seen as an afterthought during the planning and organizing processes. None of my participants disclosed being victims of harassment, but several of them, such as Tom and Kate, did tell me that they had heard about these incidents and went unresolved. Not surprisingly, none of my participants gave me specific examples of such harassments. But this silence is perhaps part of the problem. Last year the #MeToo movement broke out in the Hollywood industry where prominent figures in the industry, one of them Harvey Weinstein, were accused of sexually harassing and/or assaulting others. As it often happens on the WPA-L, subscribers to the list engaged in a discussion in several threads related to the problems of sexual harassments in the field, starting with a subject line “We have a Weinstein Problem.” Many personal stories were shared in these threads and discussions were carried out on how the field could do better and should do better. The fact that none of the stories were surprising to participants in the discussions also speaks volumes of the seriousness of the problem, as pointed out by some in the discussions. Interestingly, this discussion also took a turn (as list discussions often do) to discussing whether the list was itself a safe space and whether these types of conversations should happen and how they should happen on this list.

As discussed before, power dynamics also manifest in terms of professional inconsideration/inappropriateness. For example, at academic conventions, presenters sometimes go over their limited presenting time, leaving not enough time for other presenters. Many have
also experienced the unpleasant audience members who take over the Q&A by persistently asking questions or by making comments about their own work instead of engaging with presented work. Both Rose and Ross have also mentioned that often on WPA-L exclusionary language is used related to the tensions between tenure-track and contingent faculty. Very rarely, interactions could get out of hand and become incredibly unprofessional, especially on WPA-L; it is in fact one of the reasons that some of my participants don’t subscribe to the list and sometimes backchanneling can happen on other social network sites such as Facebook or Twitter. Like water cooler conversations, these dramas may provide anecdotal gossips for people in the field, but they usually don’t directly contribute to the emotional energy of the field that fuels intellectual creativity. However, some of these instances may also serve as reflective moments for people to recognize the power differentials still present in what may be perceived as “welcoming and friendly” spaces, and that some people occupying privileged positions can still dominate disciplinary social spaces. As Tom said, “But I find myself occasionally shaking my head thinking, we are word people, we are rhetoric people, how are we so . . . I’m baffled at how these things work.” Later in chapter five, I will unpack more how these social spaces come to be as networked assemblages themselves, commenting more on the cultures of the CCCC convention and the WPA-L. Here, it is enough to note that interactions in these social spaces can sometimes be dangerous for members of the field.

**Conclusion: Disciplinarity as Networked Affective Relations**

In this chapter, treating disciplinarity as networked relations, I have analyzed the development of social ties across primarily the CCCC conference and the WPA-L as reflected in my data and the various factors impacting the strengths the social ties such as individual and collective identities in the disciplinary culture. While most social ties may contribute to
individual or disciplinary progress, they can also put those less privileged in unpleasant or
dangerous places. Further, I discussed the relationships between these social ties and people’s
identity performance and how the affective dimensions of such social interactions contribute to
the emotional energy in the interaction ritual chains in the discipline. Theories of social ties and
media use have helped me identify and theorize how interpersonal networks are shaped through
interactions in disciplinary social spaces.

*Social Ties, Social Identities*

Disciplinary social spaces, whether online or offline, offer spaces for members of the
discipline to develop and maintain social ties. The nature of the social ties depends on how they
are built and maintained as well as people’s identifications. At academic conventions, such as the
CCCC, professional, disciplinary, and personal activities are intertwined. New social relations
can be built through professional interactions while existing ones are reinforced. Many of these
relations, starting with a professional and disciplinary nature can later move on to a more
personal nature. Strong professional/disciplinary ties may weaken unless interactions persist; as
interactions persist, such ties may also become personal thus stronger. The development and
changes of ties happen across spaces online and offline and are in constant motion over time.

People’s multi-layered identities impact and are also influenced by the ways they
participate in disciplinary sites. Junior scholars tend to feel that they need to make a greater
effort at networking to get to know more people and more work while senior scholars tend to
have less the need to make new friends but may feel more obligated to give back to the field
through mentoring junior scholars. But peer mentoring and co-mentoring can also be facilitated
in these social spaces despite disciplinary/professional hierarchies. However, people are often
very aware of the hierarchies in these social spaces, especially those in less powerful positions,
such as graduate students, contingent faculty, or female participants. This awareness means that they are more careful at how they participate or don’t participate in these social spaces. In turn, the participation can shape their professional/disciplinary identities as these social spaces can offer different opportunities and resources for people to develop their career focus.

Building social ties and constructing social identities enact the discipline as a heterogeneous social network, because social relations can lead to achievement of disciplinary work and shape disciplinary culture. In turn, analyzing how social ties are built and reflect on their implications on individual and disciplinary development begins to hint at the power dynamics endemic to disciplinary culture as well.

_Affective Disciplinary Energy_

Participating in social spaces fuels a shared disciplinary mood but also requires emotional energy from individuals. Positive social interactions are forms of “mutual engagement” that “will give rise to communities of practice over time” (Wenger 174). When the communities of practice are understood as shifting networks in this dissertation, these interactions can strengthen the social network by making people feel that they belong and that they are welcomed. Negative social interactions, if of a professionally inappropriate nature, can momentarily deplete that shared energy; if of a more serious unethical or even criminal nature, does much more than just damaging the disciplinary networks. Disciplinary social spaces are supposed to offer opportunities for members of the discipline to continuously come together and have productive interactions because the social interactions can charge members with positive energy. But they must be constantly scrutinized for inequities caused by power differentials.

This chapter thus invites members of the discipline, and of academia in general, to think about the impacts of social interactions in disciplinary and professional social spaces, especially
on those in less powerful positions. For a discipline, how members relate to one another is equally important as how scholarship and ideas relate to one another. In the next chapter, I will move beyond the interpersonal relationships and shift the unit of analysis to the professional/disciplinary activity that encompasses people’s participation in these social spaces, and how these disciplinary spaces function as mediating artifacts that push forward individual development, not just in terms of building social networks, but in terms of all their functions to help achieve the goals and purposes of individuals participating in these spaces. What will return next chapter is how identities come into play in terms of motivations and desires to participate in such activity, but I will also elaborate more on what other factors impact these motivations and desires.
CHAPTER 4 Laminated Professional/Disciplinary Activity

Professional/Disciplinary Activity

In chapter three, I described how participants formed interpersonal connections across the CCCC annual conventions and WPA-L and analyzed what factors influence the strengths of such social ties across spaces and over time. In turn, I highlighted how individual identifications could impact and be influenced by these social ties as well as how these social interactions can contribute to or take away from the emotional energy of the discipline. In this chapter, I take a different approach by focusing the unit of analysis not on interpersonal connections but on the disciplinary/professional activity that people carry out across the informal disciplinary sites, the motivations and goals driving this activity, and how these disciplinary social spaces function as the mediating means that help them achieve the goals. This is a kind of learning activity, one that is more complex than learning in school or in communities of practice where the apprentice moves from the periphery to the center by acquiring knowledge that has been predetermined for them by the master. Mediating spaces expose people to new social environments, new mediating artifacts, new tensions and contradictions that drive the development of both individual members and the discipline as a whole.

The job of academics and professionals of a discipline consists of various types of tasks taking place across different spaces. Within our local institution, we teach students, conduct research, carry out administrative work, and provide service to the institution. Beyond our local institution, we are connected to other members of the discipline in other locations. We go to regional, national, and international conferences to present our research, to learn about other people’s research, and to build relationships with others in the field. We email and text our friends at other institutions to ask about their work, and to stay in touch. We use social media to
discuss disciplinary and/or professional issues. We send queries, requests, and announcements to listservs and social media platforms. We ask for help to solve our own professional problems. We collect resources to help with our own research and institution. In these processes, we learn to negotiate our actions, our identities, and our relationships as we move in and out of different spaces and communities; we learn to be members of the discipline just like the students in Paul Prior’s work learn to perform literate tasks in graduate school as emerging members of their disciplines. In Prior’s analysis of graduate students’ textual production and reception processes, he takes into consideration the “talking and listening, reading and writing, thinking and feeling, observing and acting” that are involved and blended together (Writing/Disciplinarity 137). Prior says, “[i]t is also clear that the historical trajectories of the artifacts, practices, and persons that interact in these scenes of writing implicate activity that is not only multimodal, but also temporally and spatially dispersed and distributed across multiple persons, artifacts, and sites” (137). Similarly, the disciplinary/professional activities outside the academy are also heterogeneous, made of various individuals’ actions that converge and get mediated at disciplinary sites. As disciplinary professionals, members of a discipline go to academic conferences also to learn, but this learning is often social, expansive, and horizontal, where learning serves as “a process that transforms and creates culture” and “a process that leads to the formation of theoretical knowledge and concepts” (Engeström and Sannino 2), and where the disciplinary hierarchy may be transcended. From this perspective, such social spaces serve as mediating artifacts that transform people’s learning activities.

Embodied experiences captured in my dissertation not only encompass moments of the individual development of my research participants but also the development of the discipline. Individual actions converge at disciplinary social spaces such as conferences or online social
network sites. These spaces and the technologies used for communication in and across these spaces serve as mediating artifacts that link these individual actions to a set of networked activities. The development of professional/disciplinary activity is driven by individual goals and collective objects of communities individuals are situated in, mediated by myriad of artifacts such as the CCCC conventions and the WPA-L listserv, which in turn situate people in new, heterogeneous networks. To describe and analyze the disciplinary/professional activity captured in my data, I find productive Yrjö Engeström’s expansive learning theory which provides a framework to study the learning activity using activity theory. People’s participation in such activity, influenced by many factors from both the professional/disciplinary realm and the personal realm, requires constant negotiations over challenges caused by these factors. This chapter extends Prior’s work on the literate activity in academy to the professional/disciplinary activity in other disciplinary social spaces that is similarly laminated and heterogeneous. In turn, we see how people’s embodied experiences across these social spaces are chronotopic. Activity theory and expansive learning theory focus on the development and goal/object-oriented learning activity, allowing me to make sense of different factors impacting people’s participation in social spaces. Since my coding process reflected that such participation was often driven by various individual and collective motivations and desires, it is productive to analyze my participants’ experiences in the context of activity footings, drawing attention to interactions and connections across different activity realms people are situated in. In this sense, disciplinarity is enacted through networked activity systems in which participants must reconcile various factors such as time, money, family duties, institutional natures, professional statuses, etc. From this perspective, activity theory allows for a detailed description of professional/disciplinary activity across social
spaces, thus contributing to further theorizing disciplinariness with attention to affordances of these social spaces and power dynamics.

**Activity Theory and Expansive Learning Theory**

Working from the different tensions in the history of activity theory, Engeström develops a complex activity system model as a better heuristic to analyze human activities as well as a framework for methodological intervention in developmental research. One of the founders of activity theory, A. N. Leont’ev delineates object-oriented activities from goal-oriented actions. For Leont’ev, activity “orients the subject in the objective world” (50). He further notes that “[i]n all of its distinctness, the activity of the human individual represents a system included in the system of relationships of society” (51). In order to dissect the internal structure of an activity, Leont’ev first emphasizes an activity’s main characteristic: its objectivity. He defines the object of activity as twofold: “first, in its independent existence as subordinating to itself and transforming the activity of the subject; second, as an image of the object, as a product of its property of psychological reflection that is realized as an activity of the subject and cannot exist otherwise” (52). David Russell provides an in-depth explanation of the term “object” understood in the context of Engeström’s model (511):

The object/motive refers to the raw material or problem space on which the subject(s) brings to bear various tools in ongoing interaction with another person(s). The object is shaped and changed over time to produce some outcome. This is the object of study of some discipline (e.g., cells in cytology, literary works in literary criticism). The object or focus of activity implies an overall direction of that activity, a (provisionally) shared purpose or motive (e.g., analyzing cells, analyzing literary works). Of course, the direction or motive of an activity system and its object are contested, as individuals bring
many motives to a collective interaction, and the division of labor in the system itself
guarantees diversity. Dissensus, resistance, conflicts, and deep contradictions are
constantly produced in activity systems.

Critiquing Leont’ev for not fully elaborating on the structure of activity, Engeström
builds off Vygotsky’s triangular model of a mediated action and develops a complex activity
system model to understanding collective work. Illustrated in figure 4.1, this model captures the
social complexity of an object-oriented activity. To explain this complex model, Engeström uses
an emerging activity system of “international activity-theoretical collaboration” as an example
(“Activity theory and transformation”). In this system, the subject is no longer just him as an
individual scholar of activity theory, but rather a group of scholars who created the organization
of the international congresses on activity theory (ISCRAT). These scholars, functioning in the
worldwide community of scholars of activity theory, aim to create the outcome of “new
intellectual tools and patterns of collaboration” centered on the central issues of activity theory,
with the help of mediating artifacts such as the international meetings and publications on
activity theory. But they also have to abide by the rules of the community they are situated in and
under the division of labor of the community. In Engeström’s example, the rules are “largely
tacit conventions of international scientific collaboration and the purposely very flexible statutes
of the organizer of international congresses on activity theory, ISCRAT” (“Activity theory and
transformation,” 31). The division of labor in the community means multiple
compartmentalizations based on disciplines, languages, and schools, etc. Engeström develops
this complex activity system to move the unit of analysis away “from individual actions to their
broader activity context and back again” (“Activity theory and transformation,” 32). In this
model, what drives the activity system towards its outcome are the contradictions among
different components and the overcoming of those contradictions. While this model emphasizes on the unit of analysis as the activity system, it is still a helpful tool to examine the development of individuals and their individual objects and outcomes of their actions because these actions and developments are deeply situated in and contextualized by the activity systems they function within.

Figure 4.1: Engeström’s complex model of an activity system (illustrated by Matt Bury, Wikimedia Commons).

With this model (shown in figure 4.1), subjects identify contradictions in their learning activity and use tools and interactions with others to overcome and resolve those contradictions in order to produce new outcomes and new objects. Shifting from Wenger’s community of practice model, in which the apprentice moves from the periphery to the center by learning
knowledge that has been predetermined for them by the master, Engeström’s expansive learning theory treats learning as a process of knowledge discovery and creation. He defines expansive learning as “a method of grasping the essence of an object by tracing and reproducing theoretically the logic of its development, of its historical formation through the emergence and resolution of its inner contradictions” (*Learning by Expanding* xx). He further notes that “[t]he expansive cycle begins with individual subjects questioning the accepted practices, and it gradually expands into a collective movement or institution” (*Learning by Expanding* xx). While the development of academics can be perceived as vertical when one treats development as moving among academic ranks: from a Master’s student to a PhD student to an Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Full Professor, and Professor Emeritus, this is only one way to perceive the development of an academic. Much of the professional development of an academic also happens horizontally, or the vertical development of an academic is often supported by much horizontal development where professional ranks become invisible in disciplinary social environments: graduate students collaborate with tenured faculty to give conference presentations, produce scholarship, and perform administrative tasks. Academics are always learning by building on previous knowledge when they conduct scholarly research and contribute new knowledge to update existing bodies of scholarship and knowledge of the disciplines. Collectively, this is how the discipline learns. Both vertical and horizontal developments intersect in professional/disciplinary activity. In the context of this dissertation, various disciplinary sites such as the CCCC and WPA-L function as mediating spaces that open up opportunities for both individual and collective development. They are also spaces where different conflicts and contradictions can manifest and converge.
In the next sections, I will analyze my participants’ professional/disciplinary activity as mediated by the CCCC conventions and WPA-L. In particular, I will discuss the learning goals and objects by which participants are motivated in their activity and how the CCCC and WPA-L serve as mediating spaces to help them work towards transforming these goals and objects which contributes to their professional development as members of the discipline. At the same time, I situate the analysis of the activity in the participants’ different identifications, the processual chronotopic changes of such identifications, and connections with other literate and personal activities that come into play. This analysis is informed by the principle laid out by Paul Prior in his sociohistoric account of literate activity in the academy, in which he argues that “activity is socially and historically organized and learning to participate in such activity involves appropriating packages of motives, goals, social relations, and contexts as well as mediational means” (Writing/Disciplinarity 23). In the analysis, I unpack these motives and goals in relation to the mediational means of the CCCC and WPA-L, to argue that similar to the literate activity in the academy, professional/disciplinary activity is also perspectival and laminated, where different activities—literate, professional/disciplinary, and personal—often function at the same time where some are more foregrounded than others. Shifting identifications of participants over time also affect their changing perspectives in their professional development and participation in such professional/disciplinary activity. A member of the discipline often functions in multiple activity systems which means they have to negotiate their actions, social relations, adjusting their goals and motives.

**Picturing a Professional/Disciplinary Activity**

Academics function in multiple activity systems given their roles in different professional and disciplinary capacities either as researchers, teachers, students, or administrators, often a
combination of any of these at any given time. Their work and participation in these various spaces is also driven and motivated not only at the personal level in their individual actions but also at the collective level in the activity systems they function in. Many of the actions and activities performed by an academic are driven by a learning goal/object. At different stages in one’s career, an academic is always learning, to be a better teacher/researcher/scholar/administrator; and a discipline continues to learn, creating new knowledge. In this section, I will describe the experiences of Rose, whose multi-layered identifications both as a PhD candidate and an NTT faculty have presented challenges for her as she pursues different disciplinary/professional goals. Over the years, she has learned and continues to learn through the mediation of informal disciplinary spaces such as the CCCC and WPA-L as she advances in her professional trajectory. At the same time, her individual development has contributed to the development of the discipline as well.

At her working institution, Rose was hired as a multilingual, second-language writing specialist, a NTT faculty. But in a department where all the faculty members except for one have gotten their Master’s or PhD degrees at the same institution and where there hasn’t been a tenure-line hire of any composition faculty for twenty years, Rose can’t help but feel like an outsider. As a scholar, Rose is isolated in her local community. In an activity system situated in her working constitution where the collective of the department may be motivated by the object of better teaching and supporting the students, Rose’s individual actions of teaching, contributing to the system and its object, may be in contradictions with others who have not been trained in the studies of rhetoric and composition and/or who do not have expertise in teaching second-language writing. Her scholarly pursuits may not be explicitly supported by the institution due to her position as an NTT faculty. Going to the CCCC becomes, for Rose, an occasion to connect
with other fellow compositionists and more specifically second-language writing scholars. In her words, CCCC has been a place where she can go and she can remember, “oh yes, I’m not a weirdo. I do know what’s going on in the field, and there are people who are like me.” It is comforting for her. CCCC functions as a mediating space for her expansive learning actions, connecting and situating her in yet another activity system where the subject is a group of second-language writing scholars. In this system, her personal motivations and goals as an aspiring second-language writing scholar as a PhD candidate in TESOL are aligned with the collective object of advancing the field of second language writing research and pedagogy. Her participation in this community presents less challenge and more support for her professional development that travels back to her working institution. Similarly, WPA-L also functions as a mediating space that exposes her to disciplinary and professional conversations and events in the discipline, indirectly supporting her growth as a scholar. Because of the multiple identities Rose embodies, her professional/disciplinary activity is laminated in that all the activity systems she is part of converge in mediating disciplinary spaces where she learns to navigate challenges caused by tensions between her and the communities she functions in. The conventions of CCCC and WPA-L function as such mediating disciplinary spaces that, while perhaps exposing her to these contradictions, also help her overcome such contradictions.

Disciplinary social spaces open opportunities for her professional advancement by connecting her with groups of people with similar scholarly and pedagogical interests and giving her resources and information that may support her career trajectory. Not only does Rose go to the CCCC, she also goes to other conferences. She talks about them also in terms whether she identifies with the community present at each conference and whether it supports her career goals. For example, she had attended the annual conference of the Council of Writing Program
Administration (CWPA) in the past two years because she is drawn to the work of writing program administration (WPA). Similarly, she actively checks WPA-L, treating it “like a Facebook news feed” because she identifies as “an administrative junkie,” interested in learning issues and concerns related to WPA work and scholarship. Specifically, she monitors the job postings on WPA-L to see what jobs are available and the meanings of these posts. Even when she is not actively participating on WPA-L and only passively reading these job posts, she is exposed to disciplinary tensions that can have direct impact on her professional trajectory. For example, she noticed that there were a lot of positions looking for multilingual writing specialists; she paid special attention to these postings because it is her area. But she realized that a lot of these positions were NTT positions, which made her think that they sent a certain message about funding and the profession. As a doctoral candidate and an NTT faculty, she was still speculating whether she was going to go on the job market the coming season to get a tenure-line job, monitoring the job posts could help with her future career plans.

In Penrose’s work on the professional identity of contingent faculty, she develops an instructive model to help emerging composition professionals articulate their professional identities by drawing on three factors that have historically defined professions: “a specialized and dynamic knowledge base of body of expertise”; “a distinctive array of rights and privileges accorded to members”; “an internal social structure based on shared goals and values” (108). Rose’s experiences corroborate Penrose’s argument that the three factors interrelate; Rose’s professionalization reflects the laminated activity systems of her community membership, her growing expertise as a second-language writing specialist, and her navigation of institutional structures that may or may not provide her with sufficient support for professionalization. But Rose sees participating in conferences as important ways to professionalize herself as a scholar.
In fact, she has emphasized on how much the CCCC convention has given her because it connected her with scholars of second-language writing with whom she has published scholarship.

In the community of her work institution, an R1 university, she is experiencing less support for her research as an NTT faculty. She tells me that it is partly because the delineations between research and teaching faculty are a little more rigid. As a result, if she can figure out a way to support her conference attending and to ensure that there is no disruption to her teaching, she can go to conferences. But the institution is unlikely to provide explicit support either financially or professionally for her to be more involved in a service role in a conference or a professional organization. On the other hand, her graduate school institution, all the way across the country from where she lives, provides competitive travel grants that she has consistently applied for and been awarded when she is presenting at CCCC. Outside of her work institution community, she experiences other tensions caused by disciplinary and professional hierarchies, which often determine the disparities of rights and privileges among members of the discipline, one of the factors that Penrose argues as defining a profession. For example, as much as she is interested in the focus of the CWPA conference and that she acknowledges the positivity and high energy of the conference, she has felt less certain about her position at that conference because of her identity as an NTT person, even if people were nice and welcoming to her.

Similarly, on WPA-L, Rose is primarily a lurker and is very careful at posting on the list (even just announcements), partly because she feels vulnerable with her identifications as both a graduate student and especially as a NTT faculty because she is so aware of what she calls the “divisive” and “problematic” nature of the tenure vs. non-tenure hierarchy or dichotomy partly “because of the labor model of first-year writing.” For Rose, participating in disciplinary social
spaces is contingent on the power relations to which she is subject, across different activity footings. Her marginalized professional role in her working institution positions her in a less privileged in cross-institutional spaces. Treating her participation in social spaces as a professional/disciplinary activity highlights the connections between her and other entities in the different footings (her working institution and graduate program), mediating social spaces, as well as between her own two identities (her professional obligations as NTT and her disciplinary aspirations as a second-language scholar).

In addition to achieving her personal goals as a scholar, she also values very much her professional contribution to the discipline as a whole, as manifested in her taking leadership positions in the broader disciplinary community outside her affiliated institutions. Ever since her first year of going to CCCC in 2012, Rose has been attending the second language special interest group which is now a standing group (see http://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/sigs). Now she is the incoming chair of this standing group. During this past CCCC in Portland, Rose took on additional leadership roles at the conference: she facilitated a roundtable, co-chaired a workshop, and also served as a mentor in the WPA-GO mentorship program. In the activity system of second-language writing studies, Rose’s involvement at the CCCC with the Second-Language Standing Group, meeting other scholars, presenting her research in a panel with other second-language writing scholars, contribute to her transformation as a scholar of second language writing studies. Together, Rose has been part of the scholarly efforts to advance the field as a whole. One year at the CCCC, she presented with several senior scholars on second-language writing whom she had met in the standing group. Later, they co-authored an article for a major journal in the field, *Composition Studies*. Through this cycle of learning actions, Rose has experienced the process of internalization in which she has been exposed to new knowledge and
connections in the field, transforming her as a scholar. At the same time, she has gone through the process of externalization by creating new knowledge and feeding it back to the field.

Rose’s professional development provides her with the confidence that contributes to her work in the activity system of her working institution as well. In reviewing educational research, Penrose contrasts a collaborative professional, an educator who draws from their peers’ varied experiences and expertise, with an isolated autonomous individual, one who doesn’t have a collaborative community. She argues that “professional identities are not simply a matter of assigned status or recognition but self-images that influence behavior—determining, for example, where we seek our professional knowledge and to whom we consider ourselves accountable” (112). As Rose has advanced over the years in her professional trajectory in terms of “assigned status” and as a second-language writing scholar and a compositionist in general, she has worked toward resolving contradictions across different activity systems she functions in to also improve her professional “self-image” as she gains more confidence in her identifications.

The first time she went to the CCCC convention, she felt that “the conference was an enormous place where really smart people got together and talked about really smart things” that she was sure she would never fully understand. Over the years, she has learned to participate in the conference and it has become “a safe haven to go as a composition person [to] talk with other composition people.” In other words, she has immersed herself more in the disciplinary culture of composition studies and she feels more comfortable being around people in the field at the conference because she has accumulated more cultural capital in this disciplinary culture. Within her working institution, she has taken the initiative to spread the composition community so to speak, by organizing workshops for her fellow instructors on writing conference proposals for
CCCC 2017 and she is also planning to invite composition researcher and scholar Asao Inoue to the institution to give a workshop on anti-racist assessment.

Rose’s struggles are ongoing and she must continue to navigate across different activity systems throughout her career. Talking with a fellow presenter in Portland this past year on the state of multilingual writing specialists/coordinators either as NTT or TT faculty and the institutional challenges they are often faced with, she lamented that “the work is always hard no matter where you are.” At the time of the study, Rose was at the crossroad of her career where she was about to finish her graduate studies. Her future was still undetermined, and she’ll likely be faced with other struggles as she gains more confidence in her role as a scholar and more experience navigating different communities. I’ll end Rose’s stories with a quote from her that perhaps reflects her struggles in her career trajectory:

At the business meeting [of the second language writing group] people are coming up to me and they are calling me Dr. XXX, I’m like well not Dr. XXX yet. I’m like, sorry I’m not. I’m just a grad student, and I’m not even a professor! So I feel like I’m a fraud. But I know if we are talking about supporting second language writers in the classroom I have done research in that area, and I’ve been a teacher for a decade, and I’ve been working for the last five years full time with second language writers. So I do have the credential, but I feel like really, sort of, I guess, uncomfortable and incompetent because of those positions, of being a grad student and a NTT, and I don’t know if that’s gonna change when I do become Dr. XXX. Or if I get a tenure, if I decide to go on the market and get a tenured job.
Goals and Motivations of Professional/Disciplinary Activity

I chose to describe elaborately Rose’s experiences because of the complexities of her identities as both a graduate student and an NTT faculty. While not conclusively, two of the activity systems she functions in represent two common types of communities that members of the discipline are usually part of: a local institution and a cross-institutional group with a specific scholarly focus. While mediating artifacts encompassing a variety of teaching and administrative tools can transform the object of teaching and supporting students, mediating spaces such as academic conferences and online social spaces support the development of research and knowledge production in the scholarly areas as well as the development of individuals involved in the group in ways that would have not been possible without these mediating spaces. Rose’s experiences demonstrate the communicative relations between the subject and the communities they come to contact with through mediating spaces, which is “an integral aspect of activity systems” (Engeström, “Activity theory and transformation” 32). Her story also offers a descriptive account of the professional/disciplinary activity members of the discipline engage outside their institutions where they may participate in multiple activity systems as the same time and are faced with the challenges of negotiating various factors working toward the goals or objects of the activity. Further, her experiences begin to show that such professional/disciplinary activity is often laminated. In a given situation such as the CCCC convention, she might foreground more her disciplinary activity as a second-language writing scholar, but it doesn’t mean she is not embodying her professional role as a NTT faculty. In fact, she actually helped colleagues from her working institution to navigate the CCCC convention since it was their first time presenting at the convention.
To further theorize the professional/disciplinary activity mediated by disciplinary sites the CCCC conventions and WPA-L, I examine how people’s motivations and desires intersect with the mediation of these two spaces and what factors impact the mediation processes. In this analysis, I demonstrate how the professional/disciplinary activity in informal spaces is heterogeneous, always situated in different sociohistoric contexts, laminated with activities in other realms such as the academy and in more personal spaces. Prior conceptualizes literate activity in the academy as perspectival and laminated because he believes that “multiple activities co-exist, are immanent, in any situation” (*Writing/Disciplinarity* 24). He defines “lamination” as such, “Whereas one or more of these activity footings (e.g., school learning) may be relatively foregrounded at any one time, the backgrounded activities (e.g., of home, neighborhood, work) do not disappear” (*Writing/Disciplinarity* 24). When my research participants talk about their experiences participating in communities at the CCCC conventions and the WPA-L, their professional/disciplinary activity is laminated because the mediating roles that the CCCC and WPA-L play are impacted by their professional and disciplinary goals, and the spectrum of professional/disciplinary/personal identifications. These disciplinary spaces often open opportunities for my participants to professionalize, thus contributing to their individual development. But this contribution is contingent on the negotiations these participants have to go through given the nature of the mediating spaces and the sociohistoric contexts of the activity, as well as other activity footings.

Treating the professional/disciplinary activity as the unit of analysis, I start with the subject’s goals because they drive the development of the activity. In explaining the relationships between human psyche and the social worlds in which it functions, Leont’ev says, “in society a man finds not simply external conditions to which he must accommodate his activity, but that
these same social conditions carry in themselves motives and goals of his activity, his means and methods; in a word, society produces the activity of the individuals forming it” (51). Participants tend to have different goals and motivations for engaging in professional/disciplinary activity because of their different identities, external factors that impact their engagements with these disciplinary spaces, their relations with other people in the community in which the activity is situated. Analysis of their different goals and motivations shows how the activity is laminated and perspectival, offering a dialogic model to understand and theorize the cultures and the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition.

*Why do I want to go to CCCC?*

In my qualitative interviews, I asked participants why they go to the CCCC in general or in a given year, what external factors impact their decision, and why they subscribe or not to WPA-L, in order to learn how the CCCC and WPA-L function as mediating artifacts in their professional/disciplinary activity. Table 4.1 shows categories of reasons mentioned by my participants that determine why they go to the CCCC conventions. Some of these reasons reflect the kinds of mediation the conventions provide to the disciplinary/professional activity of my participants, showing that participation in the convention can have transformative effects on their professional trajectories.

Table 4.1: Reasons my participants go to CCCC conventions for.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default (professional, disciplinary)</td>
<td>I’m going no matter what.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional obligations (professional, disciplinary)</td>
<td>I have a role in the professional organizations of CCCC or NCTE that obligates me to go to the convention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1: (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professionalization efforts (professional, disciplinary)</th>
<th>Going to the convention because I’m part of the field, relating to my disciplinary status, identity, professional aspirations, going to learn things that would contribute to them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional credit (professional)</td>
<td>Presenting at the convention contributes to my “professional credit” (direct quote from Ross) because it is the discipline’s flagship conference, and participating at this conference carries more weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on work (disciplinary)</td>
<td>Presenting my research to get some feedback. I would be more likely to go if my proposal gets accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social reasons (personal)</td>
<td>Going to connect with my friends/colleagues, to network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future career plan (disciplinary)</td>
<td>I just applied for PhD programs and haven’t decided where to go yet, using the convention as an opportunity to talk to people affiliated with the programs to help me learn more about them. This may also include people interviewing for jobs at Cs (not reflected in my data)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (personal)</td>
<td>Where the convention is held matters to me when deciding whether I should go because I like to travel and do something fun besides participating in the conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break (personal)</td>
<td>Direct quote from Julie. Daily WPA life involves a lot of putting out fires, so going to the convention can be a nice break from the daily grind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing reasons over the years (professional, disciplinary)</td>
<td>The reasons for which I’ve been going to the conventions have changed over the years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An important mediational role the CCCC conventions perform is to professionalize members into the discipline. Professionalization process is an identity transformation and development process. Nine of my participants attend the CCCC conventions every year by
default, including graduate students, junior TT faculty, senior tenured faculty, and administrators. To them, going to the biggest flagship convention of the discipline is something one must do as compositionists, no matter where the convention is, what the theme is, who’s chairing it, or even whether they present or not. A major reason for going to the convention at any given year is to professionalize in the field. This professionalization includes both the more intellectual, formal efforts and the more informal, social efforts. As I discussed in chapter three, emerging scholars such as graduate students tend to see going to the CCCC as a way to enculturate themselves into the field because they could learn about a big variety of research and practices and also potentially many different people. For more seasoned scholars, it offers an opportunity to give back to the field by mentoring others. However, regardless where they are in their career, this convention can certainly offer a broad disciplinary perspective for participants, as Tom says:

> It gives me an opportunity, not that other conferences wouldn’t, but it gives me an opportunity to participate in these sorts of large conversations outside of my department, outside of my own institution, which for me is really important, to get some perspective in both directions, to see the things that I’m fortunate enough to have at my disposal at my work but also see maybe some opportunities that I may not otherwise see.

The intellectual stimulation and exposure can be very valuable especially for people who may feel isolated in their home institution such as Rose, the lone compositionist, or others like Rachel, the only one in her graduate program who does research in disability studies because the convention, as the largest in our field, is a really great opportunity for her to talk to people in rhetoric and composition who also works in disability. Intellectually, this means being exposed to new, cutting-edge research, either in specific sub-fields, or in rhetoric and composition in
general. Because of its big size, it can also be a space for people to be exposed to different research interests all at the same time. Anne, a doctoral student, praises the unique opportunity at the CCCC where she can go to both a SIG on Appalachian studies and one on community engagement. As she said, “In what other time would I be able to go to [both SIGs] that are groups of people who wouldn’t normally be at the same place?”

Intellectual engagement with the CCCC can transform people’s professional careers both broadly—such as “pushing my thinking in a general professional sense” as Jane said—and also specifically producing tangible outcomes that can push forward people’s career as a scholar in the discipline. Lucy told me how her attending a session exposed her to cutting edge research before it was published and also how that experience lead to one of her own publications as well:

For my particular area of study, I went to a session last year, actually had to miss other important things cuz I knew this would be really really important to one of my research, so I went to it and I ended up writing a Kairos Cs review. A little over a year later, pretty much almost word for word that Cs presentation was an article. But I got to know everything about it a whole year in advance, so that was invaluable.

Jane talked about attending the CCCC early in her career to get feedback on her work and using it as a way to track her scholarly pace:

It was also a good marker for making sure I was keeping a good productive pace esp. as an assistant professor, you wanna get tenure, it was part of my regular rhythm, okay let’s keep things moving along, let’s get feedback on them, let’s get them out of the door, it meant to have something to say by a certain date, so it helped me pace my productivity in sending things out.
Specifically, presenting at the flagship conference carries significant weight to one’s professional credit. Colloquially, we may talk about performing professional/disciplinary activity as getting “a CV line.” That CV line is what Ross calls the “professional credit.” Not only can presenting at the conference help people develop their scholarship as Jane said, but the very act of presenting itself adds a professional credit, albeit less valued than a peer-reviewed publication. Nonetheless, this is something that perhaps tends to matter more to junior scholars such as graduate students Anne, Rachel, and Mary, who all talked about the CCCC conventions as being more prestigious and that it shows more “seriousness or value” of their work if it gets presented at this convention. Presenting at the conference is one of the most formal and professional ways to engage with the intellectual community present at the convention and a more direct way to advance one’s scholarly career. Five people indicated that they would propose every year by default. In fact, the process of attending the conference and then sending a proposal soon after has become somewhat a routine for people like Lucy and Ross. As Ross said, “After you’ve been doing this for a few years, that’s just built into your academic year. April is the time when you are working on proposals, it just feels natural. It is a terribly stressful time to be doing it, every single year. But it becomes part of a behavioral pattern.” I conducted most of my research interviews in April, the season where people are working on their proposals. Tom told me that he actually decided not to propose for 2018, “[but I] ended up being on a roundtable and a panel proposal less than a week after I made that decision, so I’m weak, can’t help it.” For Lilly, aligning to the conference theme is important and not something she can do every year given her research in progress. But Michael felt that CCCC’s call is usually broad enough that you could fit a lot of different things to the theme. However, even when you have proposable projects, whether the presentation would, in Anne’s words, “actually speak the type of scholar you wanna be and the
type of work you wanna do” is important to consider for one’s disciplinary identity and professional career.

Finally, as I discussed more elaborately in chapter three, many people attend the convention for social reasons, to network with others in the discipline. The convention thus functions as a conglomerate of mediating artifacts that facilitate face-to-face interpersonal interactions. In activity systems, mediating artifacts facilitate the transformation of objects and can also serve as networking nodes connecting different communities. For example, many of my participants used their cellphones to talk or text with their friends, setting up meetings to get together. Several of my participants also talked about tweeting at the convention to engage with conference presentations, carry on discussions, and interact with people they sometimes only know online. This past year in 2017, the conference app also included an “Activity Feed” that allowed users to post short messages and pictures, tagging their “location” as a session on the conference program, and also “like” a post by clicking on a smiley face button or to comment on the post. The platform looked almost like a combination of Facebook newsfeed and Twitter feed. While the Activity Feed was unexpectedly active—a cursory look shows a variety of posts including comments on a panel or pictures with friends—none of my participants who went to Portland used this feature in the app. Those who used the app only used it to plan their conference schedules. In 2018, the conference app has been revised to include a similar feature that allows users to post “What’s happening?” both in text and visual forms. Similar to Facebook posts, users can “like” or “comment” on a post. This time, perhaps to accommodate and attract Twitter users, the platform allows users to link the app to their Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn accounts so that posts can be directly shared across platforms. It’ll certainly be interesting to see how conference attendees engage with this function in 2018. Communication technologies
function not only as mediating tools for social interactions, they are also the medium of important discussions that may push people’s intellectual engagement, fuel their intellectual creativity, in a similar way as reading scholarship does.

Besides digital technologies, the physical space of the convention center also shapes and frames people’s conference experiences based on its unique designs and layout. One disadvantage that some of my participants mentioned of the conference is its size, making it challenging to navigate the site, when “you have to elbow people coming in and out of a room” (Lucy). Dan also mentioned the accessibility of the conference space being an issue of contention in the process of conference planning. In recent years, the CCCC has been integrating concerns of accessibility and disability as part of the conference planning process. The conference disability committee performs an audit of the conference location the summer before and subsequently they develop a disability guide for the conference attendees. However, Dan, a disability studies scholar, thinks that in some ways the accommodations put in place often seem more like an afterthought. His thought is supported by Rachel, another disability scholar. While for many people, the physical space of the conference, albeit challenging at times, doesn’t necessarily affect the quality of one’s activity significantly, yet for many others, the design of the space plays a crucial role in how one can carry out the activity or even whether one would choose to engage with a certain mediating space. For example, Dan talked about the implementation of gender-neutral bathrooms at the conference space where making a women’s bathroom gender neutral isn’t the best solution, and only single-stalled bathrooms could make transgender attendees more comfortable.

One of the motivations of attending the CCCC or engaging in professional/disciplinary activity through academic conferences in general is related to where such conferences take place.
Several of my participants mentioned that where the CCCC convention is held could impact whether they would want to go, even if it is not a deciding factor. Michael, a doctoral student still trying to figure out which conferences would best serve his professional goals, told me that he wouldn’t necessarily go to CCCC every year partly because he was considering going to smaller, more focused conferences but also partly because locations mattered to him a lot. For example, he had decided not to go to the convention in 2018 because the location of Kansas City, MO was not particularly attractive to him personally. But Jane was excited to go to Kansas City because her best friend lives there. While Anne thought it was cool that she got to go to Las Vegas because of Cs, she wasn’t sure if she’d go back there later. Lilly, on the other hand, was personally very excited about going to Cs in Vegas. Geographical preferences can certainly play a role in terms of whether someone wants to go to a conference in a given year. Perhaps it is also partly why we tend to go to a handful of regional conferences too because of proximity. But what makes location more of a factor in influencing people’s activity is its connection to external factors such as finances. My data show that geographical preferences are usually personally motivated. However, the recent scandal of the CCCC 2018 where many people in the field decided not to attend either due to fear of their personal safety or political disagreement with the discriminatory legislation in Missouri reflect that locations could matter significantly in the broader social and political contexts beyond immediate disciplinary contexts.

Why do I use WPA-L?

In contrast to the CCCC conventions, WPA-L carries no formal affiliations. Professional/disciplinary activity mediated through WPA-L is less complexly laminated than that mediated through the CCCC. While some personal preferences of using the listserv or general email usage do play a role, motivations for using the platform are often more professionally or
disciplinarily oriented, as seen in Table 4.3. While in no way fully representative of the
disciplinary community of rhetoric and composition, WPA-L is used by many people to monitor
the kinds of conversations that take place on the list in order to get an idea of the kinds of
issues/questions the field cares about, especially since an email list is much faster in responding
to current issues or events than published scholarship or conference presentations. Some of my
participants find it important to tune in to those conversations as an essential part of the
professionalization process, as Mary says here:

Part of it is just to stay up to date with what people are concerned about in the field. The
email listserv is a whole lot faster than the journal or even the conference does. So just
hearing about different people’s research ideas I think is really valuable. Especially since
I’m coming up on the year when I’m gonna be on the job market, I want to be as
conversant in recent issues as possible.

WPA-L serves as the vehicle and archive that supports mediates the transmission of information,
resources and opportunities. Its large number of subscription and popularity in the field makes it
a great mediating artifact that can help people perform certain disciplinary work, such as
collecting information/resources and solving problems. Lilly, a junior faculty and a WPA, finds
WPA-L a rich well of resources that can help her with both her administrative and pedagogical
tasks: “When I come in and there is an email or a chain that I wanna save I have a folder in my
outlook and I’ll copy those into that folder so like and revisit it. Or what I’ll do is I have folders
on my zip drive and if it is like, a bibliography or something I’ll copy it and then save it onto my,
like in a document or something.” For graduate students being professionalized into the field, the
exchange of resources and problems/solutions provides them with a sense of the profession and
their future career that otherwise may not be available to them at this stage of their career. Lucy explains:

I think something that’s really cool about it, outside of that is I just use it for seeing how people answer questions about WPA problems, ones that I imagine I might be facing in 6-7 years. So when someone’s like oh this is something that’s happening at my institution I’m really not sure what to do, what have you done at other places, and I would pause and oh I’d like to know more about that, even though at this moment I’m not having the problem. I find it really interesting to read through what people are doing.

For reasons I have mentioned earlier but will discuss more later, most of my participants engage with the list in a more passive way, only reading the posts without actively posting to the list except to respond to individuals off the list. But when they do read passively, they often do so with multiple motivations listed in Table 4.3. Rose’s description reflects the multitude of her motivations:

I think it is one of those things where I think you sort of have to be part of but not active in it. You have to be aware of it, it is one of the things that we, I actually think that anyone who teaches comp should at least be thinking or occasionally tune in to those conversations, even if just reading the titles of CFPs, and seeing what kinds of jobs are posted, those give you a sense of what’s happening in the broader field, in a quick easy way.

Table 4.3: Motivations for using WPA-L.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information about professionalization events (professional)</td>
<td>To learn about mostly logistics information about these events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field uptake (disciplinary)</td>
<td>To read the conversations on WPA-L to gain an idea of what current issues people in the field care about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in discipline-related discussions (disciplinary)</td>
<td>To respond to posts on or off the list to join conversations about issues related to writing program administration or the discipline of rhetoric and composition in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities and resources (professional, disciplinary)</td>
<td>To be exposed to the CFPs posted on the list or resources for research/teaching/administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism (professional, disciplinary)</td>
<td>To be exposed to the kinds of problems/issues people are faced with as professionals in the field when they post questions or responses to the list (especially helpful for graduate students entering the profession to have an idea of the profession)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity observation (personal, professional)</td>
<td>To see prominent scholars post on the list and getting a sense of their writing style on WPA-L is like meeting them without awkwardly approaching them at conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition (professional)</td>
<td>To post on WPA-L either to recruit research participants or to participate in discussions can be a way to “get one’s name out there” so that people may recognize your name as associated with your research/discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job market (professional)</td>
<td>To look at the kinds of job posts out there either before or during job market season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama (personal)</td>
<td>To watch heated discussions that go awry, or checking the list only when there is drama going on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage change over the years (professional, disciplinary)</td>
<td>To engage with WPA-L differently as one’s career trajectory shifts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, some of my participants do post on the list, even if just announcements such as CFPs for edited collections or conferences soliciting responses; these posts tend to be
more neutral while WPA-L allows them to reach a wide audience quickly. Occasionally, some of my participants do more actively participate in perhaps less neutral discussions or problem-solving endeavors on WPA-L. Just prior to our interview, Lilly posted a query to the list, something she rarely does, to ask about textbook accessibility. Her action was actually prompted by her department chair who suggested, “why don’t you just post this question on that WPA listserv that you are part of?” While feeling that it would not necessarily yield productive solutions because she already anticipated the kinds of responses she would receive, Lilly sent a query to the list anyway, to which she received some feedback that she then compiled and sent to her department chair. Even though her posting to the list was motivated less by her desire to solve the problem than to appease the department chair, the list worked as a tool for her to collect information that supported her professional communication with her department chair. Tom has always been somewhat active on WPA-L, even and especially more so when he first subscribed to the list as a graduate student. When he responds to other people’s queries he also does so on the list because he believes that “the idea that it is a place for writing teachers to teach writing to other writing teachers, so part of the function of it is for it to be out, right, that’s part of the function, accessible and consumable, for the community, not just for one person. I figure, if somebody is asking a question on the list, to answer on the list is generally the most appropriate way.” Tom also knew, from the beginning when he started to post on the list, he treated his participation on the list as a method of name recognition which was important to him as a graduate student, knowing that people on the list would be potential future employers or colleagues.

Finally, some of my participants referred to WPA-L as a place where they could see field “celebrities” talk. Such a perception of the list is indicative of the power dynamics of which my
participants are very aware on the list. It reflects that the list is not a neutral place and people, particularly those marginalized such as junior scholars, are very sensitive to the ways they may engage with such a space. Later I will elaborate on this more in chapter five.

“I use other tools/spaces”

In chapter two, I explained that my choice of research sites was informed by my own professional experiences, with a limited perception that the CCCC and WPA-L would be representative of certain disciplinary social spaces. Throughout the research process, I learned from my participants that the CCCC was indeed the largest convention in the field of rhetoric and composition. WPA-L, on the other hand, was also perceived to be very active, but one of my participants mentioned that the Writing Center listserv (WCenter-L, associated with the International Writing Center Association) was also very active to the extent that she sometimes would confuse the two lists. Because people’s different goals for engaging with professional/disciplinary communities are usually professionally, intellectually, and socially oriented, they can choose different mediating artifacts or spaces depending on their evaluations and perceptions of functions of mediating artifacts as well as the communities they may be engaged with through such mediating artifacts. Therefore, it is not surprising that a few of my participants talked about reasons for not going to the CCCC conventions because they feel less of an intellectual connection with the conference or that their professional position requires them to be more selective about conference going. Similarly, they may also choose not to subscribe to WPA-L because of a perception that the list’s emphasis on writing program administration doesn’t align with their professional interests. Other mediating tools my participants mentioned fall into a range of categories: other conferences (regional, topical); social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr); and email and mobile texting in general. These tools connect my participants
with distinctive communities: other disciplinary/professional communities; local writing groups; and cross-institutional writing/research groups. Often, people are selective of mediating artifacts because of the vertical development of their professional trajectory. For example, graduate students like Jack and Samantha talked about going to topical conferences such as Computers and Writing, Association for Business Communication, or Association of Teachers of Technical Writing because they wanted to see more focused research. While I did not focus my analysis on these sites, the variety of types of spaces and places reflects the breadth of my participants’ professional/disciplinary activity and further confirms the lamination of such activity. Sometimes the choice of attending a conference is based on one’s professional obligations; for example, Kate now routinely attends the AACU conventions (American Association of Colleges and Universities) because of her professional role as the director of a learning center. She still identifies as a compositionist, but her professional role often requires that she backgrounds her disciplinary role. Nevertheless, her engagement in disciplinary communities of rhetoric and composition (particularly in the areas of writing program administration and writing across the curriculum informs her work on professional development of faculty in higher education with an emphasis on teaching and learning.

Such participation at the CCCC conventions and on WPA-L reflects cycles of expansive learning where, by participating in social spaces individuals learn new knowledge and ideas, gain resources and evidence to help them solve problems. In performing these functions, the social spaces support the kind of horizontal learning that Engeström defined. They bring a community together while everyone in the community is also situated in their own local contexts, so the social spaces enact the “polycontextuality” at the level of the professional/disciplinary activity, where “experts are engaged not only in multiple simultaneous tasks and task-specific
participation frameworks within one and the same activity [but also] increasingly involved in multiple communities of practice” (Engeström et al. 320). But to achieve this polycontextuality productively involves negotiations with many different things across different activity footings, as the motivations I discussed before reflect. Professional and personal identities, preferences, and situations impact their participation in such professional/disciplinary activity. This analysis reflects that if we consider disciplinarity as constituted by the collective professional development of its membership, we must recognize that the enactment of disciplinarity involves laminated and perspectival professional/disciplinary activity. What is perceived as horizontal learning is still influenced by power dynamics of established structures in different contexts.

**Negotiations and Contradictions in Professional/Disciplinary Activity**

Development of activities and transformation of subjects are driven by contradictions within the activity system. To describe how people participate in the professional/disciplinary activity across disciplinary social spaces, it is thus important to recognize and locate the contradictions that must be overcome. Laminated activity also indicates that during the process of participation, people must engage with the various contexts they are situated in and that influencing factors across activity footings are often connected themselves. Engeström and Sannino effectively summarize different levels of contradictions, differentiating them as local, individual conflicts and collective, activity-level contradictions. They describe four levels of contradictions which manifest in different phases of the expansive learning process (Engeström and Sannino 7):

1. as emerging primary contradictions within each and any of the nodes of the activity system
2. as openly manifest secondary contradictions between two or more nodes (e.g., between a new object and an old tool)
3. as tertiary contradictions between a newly established mode of activity and remnants of the previous mode of activity
4. as external quaternary contradictions between the newly reorganized activity and its neighboring activity systems

The descriptions I’ve done so far indicate that a member of the discipline often needs to overcome contradictions within and across the different components of any given activity systems they are part of. Engeström defines contradictions not as problems or conflicts but “historically accumulating structural tensions within or between activity systems” (“Expansive Learning at Work,” 137). Spinuzzi operationalizes the role of contradictions as “engines of change: they provide the impetus for the sorts of reorganizing, reconceiving, and reworking that characterizes a living activity system or network” (73). Academic members of a discipline work within institutional and professional structures, and disciplinary cultures that have historically accumulated structural tensions. Given the professional hierarchies within and across these structures, power dynamics are present and can manifest in different forms in any disciplinary social environment. They present particular challenges for any members engaging in activities in these environments, who must negotiate with their actions through these tensions while also attending to their personal activities. The negotiations undertaken by members of the discipline represent the “reorganizing, reconceiving, and reworking” within the disciplinary/professional activity and across the disciplinary/professional activity with other academic activity and personal activity. To study the kinds of contradictions that drive the professional development of an academic means to consider how such development is laminated in different contexts.
Can I go to CCCC?

When people engage in professional/disciplinary activity, their other activities may get “backgrounded” but they still directly impact their participation. Attending an academic conference opens people up to various opportunities beyond their local institutions—that is, to a bigger professional and scholarly community. But factors from their home institutions or their personal activity may present serious challenges to them that they have to work through. Table 4.4 shows categories of such factors. These factors reflect tensions between activities, the tertiary and quaternary contradictions that Engeström and Sannino outlined: those between “a newly established mode of activity and remnants of the previous mode of activity” (tertiary) and those “between the newly reorganized activity and its neighboring activity systems” (quaternary) (7).

When the goals for participating in professional/disciplinary activity are to advance one’s professional career, but the object of institutional administration is more manifold, a scholar can be faced with different perceptions of how or whether their career should be supported by their home institutions.

Institutional travel funding is often strictly tied to the status/position of the individual, whether they are a graduate student, NTT faculty, TT faculty, or administrator, as well as the type of institution. Graduate students Michael, Dan, Jack, Mary, and Anne all talked about travel funding impacting their conference travels. When I asked Dan what external factors impacted their decision of going to Cs, they first talked about whether they could get funding from their department or university, which was not always a given, and there were a lot of restrictions on how the money could be spent, such as a ban on staying in an Airbnb, and there was no per diem for food. Anne’s institution offered more secure funding for doctoral students who have passed preliminary exams. Mary’s institution was fairly generous, but she still ran out of money by the
time CCCC 2017 came around and she had to pay out of pocket. Rose could apply for travel funding and had gotten substantial amount at her graduate institution, but she had to compete for a very small amount at her working institution. In comparison, TT faculty are usually better supported for conference travel, but not always. Lilly indicated that her annual travel funding only covered one conference, so she usually saved it for the CWPA conference because her primary role is a WPA and the conference is easier to get into. As the assistant director of a writing center, a staff position, Julie had a small amount of professional development funding that she could use for conference travel. Kate, Alice, and Felix, all senior TT faculty and administrators, talked about having professional support from their institutions that it was a shared understanding that they had to go to the CCCC conventions every year. But, Rose, being a NTT faculty, has to consider whether her working institution would share that understanding and help her cover her classes or other responsibilities. To secure institutional travel funding, my participants talked about having to justify attending the conference. For graduate students and faculty, usually if they are presenting at the conference, it is easy to justify. But for administrators such as Kate and Julie, they often have to consider if they are taking an active role in the conference or if their participation can directly benefit their job duties. For Kate specifically, whether to go to the CCCC is a laminated issue as she must consider her disciplinary commitment to the CCCC organization as an officer on the Executive Committee and also her professional responsibilities as a director of a center for learning and teaching at her home institution.

Other activities situated in institutional or personal contexts play a role in their professional/disciplinary activity as well. Eight people mentioned timing as a factor to consider. If they plan to go by default, they tend to plan out their semester schedules and syllabi to take
that week into account. Even so, being usually in March, the convention tends to near or during spring break, which makes it more or less pleasant for people with different preferences. Julie had to take professional development days for conference travel, approved by her supervisor, so that she didn’t have to take vacation days. Several of my participants are parents and talked about having to arrange childcare. Tom used to take everyone with him to the conference when they only had one child, but now they have three so he needs to consider how his partner and the kids will manage. Ross’s partner just began to return to the workforce after having children, so he could imagine more logistical challenges in future conference trip planning. Rachel, a doctoral candidate and a mother, had her first child early in her graduate career and was pregnant with her second at the time she participated in my study. Jane’s daughter is older but still clingy to her; in her activity recording, she took multiple breaks throughout the day to talk to her daughter on the phone. In chapter three, I wrote about how personal identification in terms of people’s personalities influenced the ways they built interpersonal networks and the types of relationships they built and maintained. Here we see at a more granular level how different roles my participants embody in their personal lives intersect with their participation and negotiations in their professional/disciplinary activity.

Table 4.4: External Factors impacting going to CCCC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Arranging family duties: make sure children or pets are taken care of when they are out of town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary duties</td>
<td>Having a role in the convention either as a presenter or officially involved with the organization;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4: (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Money</th>
<th>Monetary support for conference travel from home institution or when institutional travel funding is not enough to cover the whole cost of conference travel and lodging, planning to attend a conference often involves personal financial planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Having professional support from home institution by justifying that their attendance is related to their current job duties/positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Planning involving considering the timing of the conference, given that CCCC happens in the middle of the semester.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*How do I use WPA-L?*

Because WPA-L is not an official platform and is free to use, subscribing and posting to the list does not require professional or financial support from one’s home institutions as attending conferences does. Instead, participating on WPA-L involves an investment of time. Nonetheless, users of the list are still subject to the hierarchical structures of academia and the power dynamics of the field on the list. Similarly to an academic conference, WPA-L is a space where people converge for different motivations and purposes, as I explained before. But enjoying the benefits of WPA-L involves negotiations with the community in which it is situated; users often experience tensions arising from either the subject matter under discussion or the academic hierarchies reflected in members’ positions (as in Rose’s case), or both.

As a mediating space, WPA-L exposes subscribers to other types of mediating artifacts that can transform their professional and academic development, leading to what my participant Tom calls “generative interactions.” One type of generative interactions is to network with other people in the field. In chapter three, I pointed out that WPA-L was not commonly perceived by
my participants as a space specifically for building or maintaining interpersonal relationships, but it could be a space where interpersonal connections could lead to outcomes such as conference presentations and scholarship. Unlike the variety of ways that help activate latent ties in a conference space, making interpersonal connections on the list is often a much more serendipitous process. Lucy had a chance to put together a conference panel with someone through a listserv (either WPA-L or the writing center listserv) that ended up not happening:

But someone on the listserv who was posting about my research area, writerly self efficacy, and they were looking for sources so I wrote back to them, we went back and forth a little bit. He was working on a project with a Master’s course, I ended up sharing some sources, and I mentioned oh btw the IWCA conference proposal is coming up so if you are interested I’d love to collaborate on a panel together, so they were like oh yeah that sounds fun. So I was hopeful about that, maybe I got to know someone through here. But then I just got an email from him five days ago, he’s like, oh well just so let you know I ended up not studying self-efficacy so I’m sorry but I won’t be doing a presentation with you.

Mediation through the WPA-L can be transformative because it opens up opportunities that people would have otherwise been unaware of. For example, even graduate students like Michael who didn’t subscribe to WPA-L at the time we talked mentioned that he might do so in the future to check out jobs while on the job market. Solutions to problems, answers to questions, and resources to inquiries often work as mediating artifacts that help users with their specific goals in their local communities of practice. As Alice said, “it is connected me, it is provided me with information about programs at other institutions over the years that were very important to me, still are important to my department, as well as to the profession.” Nevertheless, many of my
participants, and probably a majority of those subscribing to the list, don’t actively post often to
the list primarily due to the culture of the list and their perceived relationships with the list
community. As a result, the mediating space can actually expose users to contradictions that
either deter them from engaging with the community or make it less pleasant to do so.
In chapter three I mentioned that some of my participants hesitate to post on WPA-L because
they are self-conscious about their professional identities as graduate students or contingent
faculty (which place them at the “bottom” of academic hierarchy). Sometimes people overcome
these contradictions by navigating the implicit “etiquette” of the list, such as carefully crafting
messages to the list to be as neutral as possible. But because online social spaces, especially an
informal one like WPA-L, tend not to have explicit “rules” for participation stated on their
website, people interpret “etiquette” differently. Graduate student Tom talked about learning
how to be less strictly formal and more “appropriately informal and formal” in terms of the genre
of list posts and its audience expectations, and how other list members treated the list as a
teaching space. On the other hand, Lucy’s experience shows that different perceptions of the list
can cause awkward moments between users of the same institution:

So I had sent something out. She [Lucy’s mentor] was very chastising, oh that wasn’t
information that I would put there, and it had to do with a research project that we were
doing together. It ended up being a really awkward situation that I ultimately was talking
with my other mentor, the way we kinda thought through was like it seems like she has a
different idea of what the listserv was for. But yeah it was awkward and professionally
confusing what that happened, regarding something that I had put on the listserv.
Lucy’s experience here highlights a manifestation of power dynamics to which she was subject
and because of which she was “disciplined.” Here it is productive to invoke the dual-connotation
of “discipline” both as a categorical description of an academic field but also a verb, embodying means of control in a Foucauldian sense. This second connotation, defined by Foucault as “methods,” “made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility” (137). Lucy was disciplined by her mentor for her participation on WPA-L. Even in such an informal social space, Lucy was still subject to professional hierarchies and the power dynamics. The discipline of rhetoric and composition is enacted in social spaces through people’s participation, but not without the subjectivation of underprivileged members into Foucauldian “docile” bodies (138) that must follow what the senior scholars do. And such hierarchies travel across spaces, such as in Lucy’s case, from within her institution to a broader disciplinary space.

Activity theory allowed me to attune to the socially-constructed cultures of these social spaces and the different activity systems that people function in, highlighting their negotiations over contradictions among factors within and across communities with different values (e.g. when local institution doesn’t value the work of a national disciplinary conference in Rose’s case). Motivations and goals for participating in disciplinary/professional activity as well as historical structures of professional hierarchies can change over time as people move forward in their professional trajectories, engaging with various social environments in the discipline. Thus, this requires the constant “reorganizing, reconceiving, reworking” on the part of members of the discipline reorganize their activity, reconceiving their goals, reworking their participation and the communities they are involved with over the course of their professional trajectories. This is how the discipline is enacted. To conclude this chapter, I highlight in the next section the changing nature of disciplinary/professional activity as reflected in my data to theorize the lamination of the activity and people’s chronotopic experiences.
Conclusion: Laminated Professional/Disciplinary Activity and Chronotopes

In this chapter, I have analyzed my participants’ professional/disciplinary activity across my two research sites: the CCCC conventions and the WPA-L listserv. I emphasized the motivations and contradictions driving the development and various factors impacting the activity, situating the professional/disciplinary activity in different contexts. Similar to building interpersonal social networks, participating professional/disciplinary activity is also impacted by and influencing participants’ identities and the power dynamics within academia. Various perceptions of disciplinary and professional cultures my participants are being exposed to influence the lamination of their activity, and the laminated activity in turn contributes to the culture. Activity theory has been helpful in this analysis because of its focus on a dialogic approach between subjects and tools. Prior calls the literate activity “the laminated process by which students come to represent tasks and produce texts as well as the way those texts are received and used by professors, peers, and others” (32). The professional/disciplinary activity I’ve analyzed in this chapter is also a laminated process by which my participants learn in professional and disciplinary communities as well as the way this learning activity and the cultures of such communities are perceived by them and others.

Therefore, working as mediating spaces, academic conferences and social network sites also encompass chronotopes of our disciplinary cultures. The concept chronotope came from Bakhtin, who uses it to mean “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (84). Prior takes up chronotopes both methodologically as I did in this project to account for the processual and dialogic approach to analyses of activities and analytically to theorize the laminations of literate activity. Prior treats scenes of writing research and theory as chronotopes that account for the full narratives of how
people write in the academy as well as the “dialogic multiplicities” of such literate activity (*Writing/Disciplinariness* 248). In Prior’s work, chronotopes can be representational and embodied. For example, he writes, “the representational chronotope of writing in the classroom centers on a textual version of Initiation-Reply-Evaluation (IRE) discourse in which the teacher initiates the writing task (assignment), the student replies (text), and the teacher then respond to or evaluates the text (evaluation)” (249). In turn the chronotopes are embodied in the student and the teacher. In fact, Prior’s work challenges the representational chronotope of the classroom where the teacher holds the authority. Instead, a student’s literate activity involves much of the writing, reading, and talk in non-academic settings, and they often have to navigate their work in academy based on perceived expectations and personal preferences of professors.

In my analysis, participants have constructed chronotopes of their experiences, embodying the culture reflected in disciplinary social spaces. A participant’s professional/disciplinary activity is not ideally perceived to take place across professional ranks and support horizontal learning. Instead, it is deeply subjected to power dynamics across activity footings. Members of the field perceive the chronotope of an academic social environment—especially an informal one—as a space where they can gather to learn from each other and build disciplinary networks. But an individual member, functioning in multiple activity systems with different motivations, constructs chronotopes of their own that capture much more nuances of their experiences which evolve over time. The mediating tools that engage people in different communities as well as these communities can shift over time, as Jane describes here:

I went to [name of institution] in 1993, I remember Cs in 1994 XXX who was the most senior composition person in my dept at the time, XXX invited me to go to the WPA breakfast with her and it is so funny now in hindsight, but at the time it felt like she was
taking me to this club of people, I remember feeling not sure whether it was okay that I signed up for the listserv. This actually gets to a problem they had at the time in terms of how to position themselves to new people. I remember feeling not sure, cuz my job in 1993 was, the title was placement test coordinator. [Name of institution] hired me, we didn’t have a director of first-year writing for various reasons I won’t bore you with. What they wanted me to do was run the placement testing program. So I felt like to be in the CWPA you needed to be a director of writing. XXX had a title of director of campus writing, she was doing WID/WAC work, so I’m like she is the person from our school that could be in the CWPA, so I wasn’t really sure if I was, is it okay... They have done a much better job of, of course the listserv [WPA-L] has nothing to do with the organization except to be frequently confused with it. Anyone who wants to join the organization can, and WPA-GO has been such a great thing in terms of making it super clear that graduate students are not only welcome in the organization but have a really vibrant leadership role, both in helping to drive the organization and helping to welcome and mentor other graduate students who are coming in. They’ve done a lot to fix that. In hindsight, oh could I go to the breakfast seems a little silly.

Jane’s narrative here shows that as she advanced in her career her perception of the mediating tool (the CWPA breakfast) and how she related to the community in that space shifted while the mediating tools connecting people to such community have also shifted as well.

Analyzing people’s professional/disciplinary activity across different spaces in this chapter, I have treated the CCCC conventions and WPA-L more or less as what Latour calls “black-boxed: turned into a single thing—an object, a procedure, a concept, a technique—that resists decomposition and that therefore functions as a reliable building block for other work
(cited in Spinuzzi 91). While I have, in chapter three and four, talked about what takes place at these two sites, I have primarily focused on the perspectives from participants in these two sites and their perceptions of them, neglecting how these two sites come to be the ways they are, involving not only participants taking advantages of their functions but also the organizing parties behind them and the nonhuman, material and technological actants that have more or less stabilized over the years in these contexts. In the next chapter, I will un-blackbox the CCCC and WPA-L, unpacking how these two sites are complex heterogeneous networked assemblages themselves where both human and nonhuman actants play important roles to the formation of networks. In the process of un-blackboxing, I will make visible the power dynamics among these actants and discuss the ephemerality of such networks.
CHAPTER 5 Un-Blackboxing CCCC and WPA-L

Networked Professional/Disciplinary Activity

In chapter four, I treated the CCCC conventions and WPA-L as mediating artifacts that support people’s professional/disciplinary activity. While I accounted for the changing nature of these mediating spaces due to the changes in how people have engaged with them in terms of chronotopes, I did not reveal the specific processes of how these two mediating artifacts have come to be the ways they are. In other words, I have black-boxed the CCCC and WPA-L. As members of the discipline of rhetoric and composition, when we say we are going to go to conferences or check WPA-L for whatever purposes, we usually treat them as unified entities. However, they have achieved this level of perceived unity because they have been formed through a long chain of both human and nonhuman “actants.” Already in the last two chapters, we began to glimpse the “technological affordances” of these two social spaces as mediating artifacts that supported people’s professional/disciplinary activity and interpersonal networking. Already one might have thought about how the infrastructures of these spaces played into the power dynamics that shaped people’s participation. Through my own observations and experiences at the CCCC and WPA-L, as well as accounts from both my participants’ engagement with these two sites and the organizers of the two sites, I’m able to unpack these two spaces and how various actants (including both human actors and nonhuman objects) come to be translated into the actor-network known as the CCCC convention and the WPA-L. Actor-network theory is productive to unpack the blackbox because of its focus on associations and attention to power. In chapter three and four, I described how professional/disciplinary activity could contribute to individual and disciplinary development as enacting disciplinarity. In this chapter, however, I want to make visible the ways power differentials among different actants
that contribute to shaping the social spaces such as the CCCC convention and WPA-L as people come to know and experience them. In that process, I will explore more fully how technological affordances of these spaces privilege certain bodies, resulting in problematic disciplinary cultures in these social spaces.

*Actor-Network Theory and Disciplinary Assemblages*

Actor-network theory, as used in sociology, aligns well with my attempt to construct disciplinarity from a social-rhetorical perspective because it posits knowledge as a social product. Latour and Woolgar’s laboratory ethnographic work is a good example of such belief as they unpack the creation of a scientific article by tracing all the work that takes place in a lab leading to its publication, and how later research builds on the article—the cycles of such work contributing to scientific development. Latour and Woolgar’s work illustrates John Law’s definition of knowledge that “may be seen as a product or an effect of a *network of heterogeneous materials*” (381). Knowledge must be understood as “a material matter” and also “a matter of organizing and ordering those materials” such as the test tubes, machines, notepads, scientists, organisms found in Latour and Woolgar’s lab (Law 381). This is the first central idea of actor-network theory. In this view, a society wouldn’t exist if it weren’t for these patterned networks. Actor-network theorists aim to explore the relationships among these heterogeneous materials and how they come to form networks “to generate effects like organizations, inequality and power” (Law 381).

Another crucial point in actor-network theory is the symmetry of agency. According to actor-network theory, neither humans or machines “determine the character of social change or disability;” instead, they are equal in their agency to do so (Law 383). As Law explains, even a person is “an effect generated by a network of heterogeneous, interacting, materials” (Law 383).
Following this logic, I would not be the dissertation-writing PhD candidate I am without my laptop, my books, my colleagues and advisors, my office space, and my graduate teaching assistantship granted to me by my program and university, etc. This dissertation, a textual document, only comes to shape because of a set of heterogeneous materials, including me the writer, Google doc, Google drive, my laptop, my advisor, my accountability group partners, my university etc. This is of course not new to writing scholars who believe that writing is a social act. But the point is that all the materials swarming together have equal capacity to produce effects that come to be known as the actant. However, we often don’t attend to all the complexities of a given network because they coalesce into an assemblage functioning as one seemingly unified actor. John Law calls that a process of “punctualization” (385) and Spinuzzi uses Latour’s term “black-box” (Spinuzzi 49). Complex materials get “black-boxed” into one “actant” which may perform transformations. In his study of the telecommunication company Telecorp, Spinuzzi writes about the company itself as a black-box that actually consists of “a patchwork of services provided by different teams and companies” (50). In my project, CCCC the convention is a black-box, understood as a space or place that facilitates the processes of knowledge dissemination, organization building, and social networking among writing scholars and teachers. WPA-L is also a black-box, known as an email listserv where writing teachers, scholars, and program administrators can post questions about the teaching of writing, ask for resources, and disseminate job postings and CFPs. But both are not what they are perceived to be or cannot function as they do without the complex networks that punctualize/black-box them. And this punctualization/black-boxing may only be temporary.

Therefore, what actor-network theory allows is the “reversible black-boxing” process so that we can unpack the processes of translation that lead to the relative and perhaps temporary
stability of an assemblage. Latour performs this unpacking for us in his description of a door of La Halle aux Cuirs at La Villete in Paris (“Where are the missing masses?”). From the necessity of having a door so that people can travel through a wall more easily to devising the best door that allows it to close upon people’s coming through more effectively and efficiently (keeping the cold air out but not so fast as to give people bloody noses), Latour illustrates how in the process of designing this door functioning in its most efficient way, competency is delegated to humans first (passengers closing the door after themselves or a porter closing the door after people), then to nonhumans (hinges or “grooms” that would close the door automatically). In either scenario, the functioning door is contingent on the effective disciplining of these human or nonhuman agents; a porter can decide to be slacking at his job or a groom can stop working. Unpacking a technical object such as the groom as a social construct, Latour highlights how competencies are distributed from engineers designing and delegating “selective attitudes” to the nonhuman agent (158). If the groom closes the door too fast, then it “prescribes” a certain kind of moral to the door that may be perceived to be rude to the humans coming through it (157). In turn, users of the door must walk through the door fast enough to not be hit by it quickly closing upon them. In this description, Latour emphasizes that it is less important to distinguish between humans and nonhumans than to pay attention to the effect of “the complete chain along which competencies and actions are distributed” (165). The effect is what he defines to be an actor network (Reassembling the Social). The process in which the actants come together in this chain to produce certain effects is called translation.

Translations are the “ordering efforts” “which generate ordering effects such as devices, agents, institutions, or organizations” (Law 386). Law defines “translation” as “the social ordering as precarious process” (385). In those efforts, individual actors may have conflicting
preferences on ordering which can manifest as resistances and controversies. The core concern of actor network theory, for Law, is:

how actors and organizations mobilise, juxtapose and hold together the bits and pieces out of which they are composed; how they are sometimes able to prevent those bits and pieces from following their own inclinations and making off; and how they manage, as a result, to conceal for a time the process of translation itself and so turn a network from a heterogeneous set of bits and pieces each with its own inclinations, into something that passes as a punctualized actor (386).

In the context of this dissertation, the CCCC conventions and WPA-L can be treated as punctualized actors that involve human and nonhuman actants, chained together, that have stabilized so much that people treat them as mere tools and no longer question their existence or the form they take. But in reality, these tools themselves do take slightly different shapes or forms from moment to moment depending on how “engineers” of them (CCCC organization leadership and convention program chair; the designers of the convention centers and the technologies such as projectors in a presentation room or the conference app; or the designers of the Arizona State University’s listserv interface and the moderator of the WPA-L) make changes that would shift the distributions of competencies which may then in turn impact how “users” engage with these tools. This is not to mention other actants from outside the immediate disciplinary context that may be “chained” onto this network. In the sections below, I attempt a description of the CCCC convention and WPA-L, like the one Latour did of the door, to illuminate how these two sites come to be and what controversies and power dynamics are at play that have stabilized them into their present manifestations and how they may shift or change in the future. Finally, I discuss the implications this analysis on the way we look at such
disciplinary social spaces in terms of their contributions to the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition.

**How Portland CCCC 2017 Came to Be**

Latour reminds us that in tracing an actor network, we must select a “departure point” because there is no “social” in the first place; “[i]t is only a movement that can be seized indirectly when there is a slight change in one older association mutating into a slightly newer or different one” (*Reassembling the Social* 36). The slight change in an older association that is of concern here took place in 1949 when a group of college writing teachers needed their own professional venue to exchange teaching and research related to college composition because the umbrella organization National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) was not giving them sufficient attention and space to do so. Various historical accounts of the discipline of rhetoric and composition have tackled the historical significance of the formation of the Conference on College Composition and Communication as a professional organization (McLeod; Goggin; Bird). As much as I have been drawing differences between CCCC the organization and CCCC the convention, the organization started as a convention. During a scheduled session on “College Undergraduate Training” at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 1948 annual convention, George Wykoff’s talk on the value of freshman English course prompted a discussion that went on so long that John Gerber, chair of the session, proposed the group continue the discussion at a two-day meeting the following spring devoted entirely to college composition (Bird 33-34). Hence, Gerber became the spokesperson of the group to the NCTE, and the group was granted permission to hold this conference under the sponsorship of the NCTE.
However, I’m not here to trace the history of the CCCC organization or conventions. In fact, actor-network theory guides me away from historical tracing in its conventional sense because it focuses on associations and their movements without predetermined assumption of stability. In a way, time is irrelevant. An actor-network chain is only strong as far as the associations are strong. Mentioning the genesis of the CCCC organization was a way for me to trace the beginning of the actant-network chain that eventually stabilized as an “actant” because a large group of organizers, participants, objects, spaces “swarming toward it” over and over again every year in the form of a convention (Reassembling the Social 46). This actant can also be defined as an “assemblage.” In their work on assembling social spaces, Wiley et al. draw on assemblage theory to “define an individual’s social space as the sum of the social relations, geographical mobilities and emplacements, and communication networks that link that individual into a specific constellation of assemblages” (342). In their conceptual model of social space, assemblages “are the bundles of arrangements and logics that shape a subject’s emplacement, mobility, and connectivity—that is, their social space—with the aim of producing a specific effect” (345). From this perspective, the CCCC convention, as the flagship conference of rhetoric and composition, can be considered as a disciplinary social space, an assemblage that is the sum of the social relations, mobility and connectivity of members of the discipline with the aim to facilitate intellectual and social connections in the field and in turn to also shape the discipline. As an assemblage networked with other assemblages but also a network within itself, the convention exists in cycles. The departure point of my analysis is thus the beginning of a given year’s convention because it is the moment when changes can happen, deviating from previous conventions and because it is really the beginning of a new assemblage bearing the same name of the previous ones with a different year in the title.
Portland, OR was selected to be the convention site for CCCC 2017 after a complex process. Current convention siting policy indicates that the convention site is usually selected about five years in advance by considering a plethora of factors, such as how the site would accommodate the size of the membership, align with the organization’s mission, offer hotels with reasonable prices, etc. (“FAQs About the CCCC Annual Convention”). Members of the organization are polled about possible sites before the NCTE staff members perform local investigations of these possibilities considering “location of recent conventions, geographic parity, opportunities for attractive costs, and other factors.” These members then present a report to the Executive Committee of the organization including “information about hotel costs, Internet access, travel options, meeting space, and tourism.” Members of the Executive Committee would then vote to select a location (“CCCC Convention Siting and Hostile Legislation”). While I will not go into detail about how Portland was selected here, it is important to note the language of this policy. The policy represents a kind of punctualization of the actor network of convention site selection, a black-box that will have significant effects on later convention assemblages.

*Convention CFP as a Networked Effect*

The year was 2015. Carolyn Calhoon-Dillahunt (her real name, used with permission) put her name in the hat to run for the office of assistant chair for the CCCC organization, a four-year term with different responsibilities every year, and won the election. The main responsibility of her first year was to organize the CCCC convention in 2017. Even before starting her term, she had to start thinking about the theme of the conference, and learn about how the proposal system worked and if there were any changes she’d like to make. As conference program chair, she was in charge of the vision of the convention, but she must negotiate with the Executive Committee
early on to figure out a budget to accomplish her vision. Fast-forward to January 2016. The Executive Committee held a meeting where Carolyn presented them with a draft of the convention’s call for proposals (CFP) to get feedback and to revise. In April 2016, CCCC 2016 took place in Houston, Texas. The CFP for CCCC 2017 was officially released. In Houston, Carolyn was busy promoting her CFP in different spaces at the convention: the Newcomers’ Breakfast, the Caucus meetings, etc., disseminating print copies of the CFP as well as recruiting possible reviewers. The CFP is a 3-page document, printed front and back with the description of the call, information on the proposal review process, program format, proposal guidelines, awards, area clusters (ways to organize the review of proposals and to create the program), and a paper copy of the proposal form for those few people who would not submit online.

The CFP is a crucial document, a gatekeeping mechanism of the convention, an actant in this assemblage with the goal of recruiting participants, or in ANT terms, enrolling actants into a spatial and temporal orientation toward a future event. As an assemblage itself, it has become sedimented in its form today from the much earlier years when speakers were selected based on written evaluations, convention chairs’ personal connections, previous conference attendees, and even who could get travel money from their institutions (Bird 58-59). But even with its more or less stabilized current format, the CFP captures the changes made each year by the program chair. The theme of CCCC 2017 was “Cultivating Capacity, Creating Change,” with an emphasis on action for the future of the discipline and the profession. New sessions were introduced: a series of “Cultivate” sessions and “Think Tank” sessions. Particular review criteria for 2017 proposals were laid out as well. The CFP is the face of the next convention and serves its function of what actor-network theorists define as an “intermediary.” In his work theorizing techno-economic networks, Michel Callon defines intermediaries to be “anything passing
between actors which defines the relationship between them” (134). The CFP makes connections between the organization of CCCC and its convention attendees, along with the proposal submission system. It is the first step that begins to link attendees among themselves both as individuals and collectives based on different professions, institutions, research or teaching interests. For example, the area clusters define the topics covered by the convention into which people’s proposals must fall. At the same time, as an object composed in an official genre bearing the organization’s logo, the CFP embodied the disciplinary power and the mechanism of “disciplining,” in part determining the shape of the convention and attendees’ experiences. My participants’ perceptions of the CFP also reflect its purpose as an intermediary that aims to bring a broad range of participants together while also presenting a theme that gives some degree of coherence to the kinds of work to be proposed to the convention. Some of my participants like Michael and Ross think that the CCCC’s convention themes are always broad enough that one can frame any projects to fit a given theme. On the other hand, Lilly feels that a given theme can restrict whether she would be able to send a proposal. Mary also talked about the convention having a gatekeeping role, with its low acceptance rate of proposals, almost intentionally setting trends for the field by valuing certain kinds of scholarship. The CFP helps serve that gatekeeping role, consequently influencing what kinds of ties would end up activated.

In the network that leads to the effect of the CFP, Carolyn may seem to be the one carrying the most agency, but such agency was only relational to the other actants in the network and her role largely prescribed to her by the network. What resulted as “her” CFP was also a social product. Just like any other writing process, hers of writing the CFP was also a social process where she received feedback and support from her colleagues to help her finalize the writing, such as the January officers’ retreat when she first presented a preliminary draft of the
CFP to the Executive Committee officers. But some of these supports are unsolicited. She said to me, “What was maybe interesting my year is, I had a lot of people who, not a lot, I had a handful of people who emailed me prior to the call about how they thought my conference should be, including the speakers I should have and the themes I should have, and I thought that was interesting. They all happen to be men, which I thought was interesting.” In cases like these, uninvited actants can disrupt the network of associations by trying to splice themselves into the network with their power card.

*Power Distribution behind the Gatekeeping Role of the Convention*

For the 2017 convention, proposals were due by 11:59 pm PT, on May 9, 2016, exactly a month after the 2016 convention ended. This submission schedule is another part of the intermediary that partly dictates people’s behavior if they want to participate in the convention. As Ross said, this cycle is built into his academic year; submitting a proposal has become a behavior pattern every year. For graduate students like Lucy, it pushes her process of enculturation into the discipline as something that she “should do.” Because of the quick turnaround (usually a month or a month and a half after the previous convention), every year the convention has integrated a session to help people begin working on next year’s proposals. It is typical for people to use a current convention’s experience as inspirations for the following year’s proposals. But why this quick turnaround? In this assemblage that comes to be the convention, the submission system is itself a network but also linked to many other actants. My participate Jane mentioned that there used to be an even shorter time period between the previous convention and the due date for the proposals for the next convention. Time, as I will later discuss, is also an important actant in the assemblage of a convention, because changing one
deadline would impact all subsequent deadlines thus shaping the eventual temporal spatial orientation of the future event.

During the submission process, the main interactive actants became the aspired convention presenters, their proposals, and the submission system. As the main orchestrator for the whole convention, Carolyn actually took a back seat, mainly answering questions about the CFP and the submission system. Even though the online submission system is contracted through the University of Oregon, not under Carolyn’s control, she still got emails about problems with the system. Not knowing where questions should be directed in this process shows the nature of the convention as a black-box. The online submission itself is yet another black-box with algorithms that mandate what the submissions should look like. The length limitation of 7000 characters (including spaces) of the proposals becomes a literal gatekeeper; one cannot submit the proposal if it exceeds the length. While putting together proposals, some members resort to other means to build panels, including WPA-L. Before the due date for the 2017 proposals, fewer than 1000 proposals were submitted, but on Monday, May 9, 2016, around 1000-2000 proposals were in, so many that the system crashed and needed repair. This is not to say that the technology of the submission system determines people’s behavior of submitting proposals. In fact, it is the relational negotiation between the proposers and the system under the guidelines laid out in the CFP that leads to the effect of a collection of convention proposals in Carolyn’s hands.

Carolyn’s work “picked up” at this moment. The clusters on the CFP were not only categories guiding proposers on their submission but also ways for Carolyn to match proposals with reviewers. Through the system, she sent out the proposals to reviewers for stage one review. By the end of May, reviewers were supposed to send in their scores rating the proposals. With some push from Carolyn, those who missed the deadline could take a week or two longer. But by
early June, Carolyn began to gather second-stage reviewers. For second stage review, twelve reviewers (including Carolyn) gathered in Urbana, where the headquarters of NCTE are located, to review about 1100 proposals. Carolyn carefully selected second-stage reviewers to be as representative as possible of different caucuses. Reviewers read all the proposals, rated them, and put them together into a program, matching individual proposals into panels and coming up with good titles for them. Putting together panels is very challenging because sometimes a very good proposal may not fit with any other proposals for a good panel. So it requires a lot of what Carolyn calls “finagling.” This finagling is a mechanism for the eventual network building at the convention. In a way, the reviewers function as agents of power that determine who may be placed on the same panel with whom. Except for full panel proposals, panels are largely formed at this stage by reviewers. Given the brevity of individual proposals, the eventual assembled panel may look slightly different from the focus of the individual presentations, giving attendees the impression of mis-matched panels that can lead to unpleasant experiences for both presenters and audience members. Samantha mentioned having experiences both as a panelist and an attendee with weird panel compositions. In her first year at Cs, she attended a panel where two of the three presenters were focusing on social justice but the third seemed arbitrarily stuck on:

One person was talking about critical autoethnography and another person was talking about doing community engagement and civic engagement stuff with their local juvenile detention center, connecting them with their professional writing program. And then the third person was talking about assessment using grammar tests. And it was like, who put you together? And it got kind of contentious cuz people were asking him like why are you on this panel, the work you are doing is socially unjust, grammar is a tool of the privileged to beat down the oppressed. And he was just like, um I don’t know, right? So it
just got very combative. And it was very uncomfortable being in the audience watching that. And it wasn’t his fault that he was placed on this panel.

Samantha’s experience resulted from a network involving the processes of planning the conference schedule, and the presenters and their scholarship. Unpacking how the CCCC 2017 program was put together shows the distributed agency in an actor work across multiple bodies and how power resides in the relational dimensions among these actants and bodies. Eventually, the program, just like the CFP, would become an object that would help enroll people into different assemblages at the convention site.

Scheduling the formal sessions is no small feat. Not only did Carolyn have to consider the schedules of individual attendees to not double book them (as an attendee can be a chair on one panel but presenter on another). She also had to try to avoid having panels on the same topic scheduled at the same time, as well as spreading out each cluster over the convention program so that there were panels on a given cluster throughout the entire convention. She used the color coding method from the previous program chair first to schedule sessions based on the proposals alone. Then she looked at people’s names to fix any conflicts. She also considered not to put panels with all graduate students at the same time. Then she made sure that every panel had a designated presentation room before acceptances were sent.

Members who have been in the discipline long enough have a certain level of familiarity with the acceptance rate of the CCCC. But every year, given the physical space of the convention, acceptance rates can vary. The Oregon Convention center is so large that Carolyn was able to accept more proposals than was the case at previous conventions. In chapter three, I wrote about how participants use different experiences at the convention to network with one another. Those networking experiences are deeply impacted by the physical space and
convention program, the latter also influenced by the physical space itself. A more spread-out space can potentially increase people’s mobility and serendipitous meetings, but it could also limit people’s mobility when it takes too long to walk from one room to another or when congestions are created in small spaces, such as what happened in Portland near the registration area. This is partly why Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition (CDICC) creates an accessibility guide for the convention every year, which I will discuss more later.

Workshop sessions are even more precariously scheduled. They are first accepted on the basis of quality but then are heavily dependent on scheduling efforts and potential attendance. Because workshops are usually held on Wednesday, the day before the convention officially starts, and attendees have to pay extra fees to attend them, their attendance is dependent on a lot of factors. Do attendees have enough financial support or means to come to the convention one day early to attend workshops? Are they willing to pay the extra registration fee for any workshop? Some workshops are half a day long while others are full-day workshops. Presenters have requested the preferred time (morning or afternoon) and length (half-day or full-day). Even after the workshops are put on schedule, it doesn’t mean they will necessarily happen because of registration rate. In the end, at least one workshop decided to cancel prior to the convention in 2017 because only one or two people had registered for it and the presenters decided to cancel. Unlike concurrent sessions or poster sessions, workshops are accepted and scheduled more interactively with negotiations involving presenters. Carolyn also decided to add workshops on Saturday when the convention would be wrapping up, something not normally done. And some of them turned out to be well attended. But this is something that can change at the discretion of the program chair. She hoped that as the program chair of the 2018 convention, Asao Inoue would do the same. At the time of writing this chapter, I was less than two weeks away from the
CCCC 2018 convention, and there were Saturday workshops listed on the program. However, there was some confusion, reflected in posts to WPA-L, about whether these workshops would cost additional registration fees. When convention practices change, it sometimes takes time for people to “learn” how to participate and take advantage of the convention.

Early in the fall of 2016, acceptances and rejections were sent out. These emails often determine whether a potential attendee ends up going to the conference, since sometimes for personal or financial reasons participants may only decide to go if they are accepted (if they don’t have an official role at the convention, they may not receive travel funding). Even though the review process described before shows that the power of accepting and rejecting proposals (or gatekeeping) lies in the hands of the program chair and various groups of reviewers as well as the theme of the convention, structure of the convention space, time frame, and the composition of the pool of proposals themselves, the program chair often serves as the “face” of such a black-box, the actor that directly communicates with potential attendees. For 2017, Carolyn was the one who received reactions to the acceptances and rejections. Nevertheless, as the program chair, she had the power to override reviewers’ decisions and accept proposals at their discretion if all other elements allow. With this power, it is not atypical for “big names” in the field to complain to the program chair if their poorly-written proposals are rejected. Fortunately, Carolyn did not get much of the “big name bullying” this year; partly she thought it was because she is less well known in the discipline than some of the previous program chairs and therefore fewer people reached out to her. Even though Carolyn didn’t personally experience what I dare to call this form of “bullying,” this is still another example that power dynamics are constitutive of our disciplinary culture and professional lives. Like the men who gave her unsolicited advice on
shaping the convention, people in privileged positions wanted to exercise their power to gain more privilege.

*The Afterthought “Actant”*

The assemblage of the convention network includes also the local planning committee and other organizational entities that ensure the smooth operations of the convention on site. In the summer of 2016, Carolyn conducted a site visit where she saw the physical space of the Oregon convention center, picturing the layout of different activities at the convention. At the same time, the CDICC conducted the accessibility audit. This audit resulted in the CCCC 2017 Accessibility Guide, which was released to the convention attendees on February 25, 2017, weeks before the convention. This 46-page document included detailed information about how to get around the convention and the city of Portland with both textual descriptions and images gathered and produced by groups of people from the CDICC as well as the convention planning team, especially the local planning committee. This document significantly supported and even transformed the experiences of attendees, whether they needed specific accommodations or not. However, at the same time, it also seemed to come as an afterthought to truly ensure the accessibility of the convention. It was thus productive to analyze the ways that this document was enrolled into the convention network, bringing to light how such enrollment was not done in the most effective way, thus still resulting in the privileging of certain bodies at the convention even though the document was intended to address some of those privileges. My participants Dan and Rachel, both disability scholars themselves, expressed their chagrin about the convention accessibility. My conversations with them revealed four main persistent problems related to accessibility at the CCCC conventions.
First, there seemed to be a lack of institutional consistency in the work of ensuring convention accessibility. As Dan said, “it feels like Cs just can’t, the leadership just can’t remember, can’t do what they need to do to transfer knowledge from year to year. So you have to remake the wheel every conference. So that’s frustrating.” Accommodations for increased access cannot be always provided and are often contingent on the convention venues. For example, both Dan and Rachel mentioned the consistent lack of ramps for wheelchair access, especially at the front of the presentation rooms. The second issue had to do with accounting for intersectionality. Rachel praised the CCCC for being inclusive and making her feel welcomed as a mother by offering spaces for her to nurse her baby. On the other hand, the gender-neutral bathrooms at the convention site were often not offered in the best way. Dan expressed their frustration as a trans person:

I’m always keenly aware of the gender neutral bathroom intent. I appreciate it, but as a trans person, I do really appreciate it. But they are often tacked on rather than thought about as part of the space. They’ll put a sign on a women’s bathroom door that says that’s a gender neutral bathroom, and like, I’m not going to what’s something that’s obviously a women’s bathroom, like I don’t look like a woman; I don’t think that’s fair. I think they should emphasize finding bathrooms that are single stall and make those gender neutral rather than putting a sign up on a bathroom.

This problem relates to the third problem regarding how convention attendees are educated or not on issues related to accessibility, elevating the issue to the level of the culture surrounding convention spaces. Rachel told me her observations at Portland:

At Portland there was no single stall bathroom, so they just put the sign over what was traditionally a women and men’s bathroom. And the women’s line was really long, so
since it was designated gender neutral, I went to the men’s line, and I did that twice and both times I had heard interesting reactions. One man was like, you know, you are in the wrong bathroom, he was clearly confused. And the second time I was in there there were women who were remarking about the urinals and like, well that’s too bad we are taking them away from the men who can no longer use these urinals and have to wait a longer line. I’m like well some women can use the urinals too, and they were joking about trans, and I was like no, some women have penises, so it was just an interesting moment I realized that you need more than just signs to do the work of making Cs a more trans-inclusive and friendly conference.

Addressing these problems requires a networked effort from many actants. At the time when the accessibility guide was released, the networked effect was already created, and it might be too late for some interventions. This is the fourth problem: an accessibility audit is not required at the time when conventions sites are selected, which means that by the time a city is selected and the convention center or hotel is chosen in that city, the convention planning team has to work with the characteristics of the physical space, which seriously limits the kinds of accommodations that can be put in place. In conclusion, these four problems reflect how the CDICC is an afterthought actant that gets spliced into the convention network often too late to ensure the best accessibility for convention attendees.

_Unpacking the Physical and Emotional Labor of the Planning Experiences_

In chapter three I mentioned how social interactions at the convention site could contribute or take away the emotional energy of the discipline. But the emotional labor is indispensable even when attendees begin to plan their convention experiences, not to mention the emotional labor put in by networks of the planning team. In this section, I unpack both the
physical and the emotional labor that human actants are engaged in as the convention took shape in 2017 and what roles the nonhuman actants in this assemblage of the 2017 convention played in such labor.

Enacting the convention network cannot be done without the Local Arrangements Committee, which is in charge of a lot of the logistics at the convention site, such as recruiting volunteers for registration, exhibit hall, and accessibility. It was additionally challenging for Carolyn this year because there was only one local university in Portland from which one person volunteered to chair this committee, while others were at a greater distance. Therefore Carolyn had to find another person from a different university to co-chair the committee. Both co-chairs ended up being people who had not attended the convention or had been a long time ago and were thus less familiar with the convention. The local arrangements ended up taking a little longer but were accomplished just in time.

The last three months leading to the convention involved a lot of detailed work by the planning team. For conference attendees, this was the time when people were making travel arrangements. Planning the trip always involves working with many entities, from the moment someone secures finances to take care of family responsibilities to adjusting work/teaching schedules to booking the travel and lodging arrangements. As documented in the last two chapters, conference travel planning often involves working with friends and colleagues who are strong ties, but sometimes people also use online social network sites such as Facebook and WPA-L to find hotel roommates or people to share taxis. From my participants’ experiences, planning seems mostly like a problem-solving process in which they try to find ways to save money, take care of their children/pets, and take care of their students by finding people to cover their classes. Then no one had anticipated the big snow storm in Northeast, which scrambled
many people’s travel plans. Surely the complexities of conference travel planning are no stranger to any academic, but I chose to gain perspectives from my participants in this research to illustrate how such complexities can be unpacked, and what kinds of physical and emotional labor participants are engaged with in this process. What I’ve done is to “decode an intermediary” like Michel Callon does when he describes how intermediaries are often hybrid, linking texts, objects, and humans together (138). Here I highlight a few narratives that show participants’ negotiations during this planning process and the different actants that shape their conference trips:

Lucy: “Yeah, we planned together. But she [a colleague] suggested the shorter amount of time. That plus I have another friend from Rutgers in NJ, those are the times that we ever see her are at Cs, so we always share rooms together. Working with my friend and she wanted to not stay as long, plus the other person wasn’t gonna stay that long either and we booked all of our hotels together. They definitely shaped how I long I was there.”

Jane: “Of course there was the large snow storm that was a big pain in the neck. . . I was supposed to fly, I don’t exactly remember how it worked out on the days of the week, but I was supposed to fly through DC and I switched my flight to one that was supposed to fly to Chicago, and then when I got to the airport for the Chicago flight my outbound to Chicago was delayed and they were trying to put me on another flight that wasn’t gonna get to Cs until Thursday night 830pm or something, I was leaving at the crack of dawn Saturday morning so no that was not okay.”

Alice: “I go in the night before RNF and I come back after everything is done. Because I have night blindness I have to wait an extra day to come home so I’m not coming home, what is, Sunday night won’t work, so I come home on Monday, or whatever day it was. I
had to catch a red eye, so that was horrible. But it got me home in daylight, cuz it is an hour drive from the airport.”

In the scholarship of rhetoric and composition, this type of scholarly work and emotional labor is often overlooked and invisible; they are black-boxed into an intermediary like the product sold by Club Me, Cap Sogeti or CISI that Callon mentions, which facilitates Mr. Smith to spend his holiday (139). It is something everyone goes through, nothing special.

At this point, convention attendees had begun to plan their conference experiences as well, even before the final program was out. Here I want to highlight two particular actants with which attendees must negotiate in order to plan their convention experiences. The first one is time. The convention program largely determines how time is carved out for attendees. Even my data collection method was impacted by the schedule because the activity recording card was designed primarily based on time intervals in the convention program. But individual planning makes the convention one’s own, and how attendees negotiate with time as they planned their experiences by prioritizing certain things lead to different clusters of networks within the assemblage of the convention. One common practice among my participants was putting down on their calendars the formal obligations they had, such as presenting and business meetings. Social activities were usually less intentionally planned but happened more serendipitously. And no matter how carefully they planned their schedule, their planned actions could always be disrupted by encounters in the hallway.

Planning technologies are tools attendees use to support their negotiations with time. They serve as intermediaries that help enact these experiences. Planning technologies included an assortment of things for my participants: the convention program book, the PDF version of the convention program, the convention mobile app, and their digital or paper calendars. These
technologies served not only as tools for participants to browse the different events and sessions they could attend but also inscription devices for them to track their experiences. Their technological affordances shaped the users’ experiences. Some people preferred using digital technologies such as the convention app or the desktop version because they didn’t like carrying around the program book. However, others preferred perusing the program, color-coding things and turning pages. Digital versions of the program, either in the app or as a PDF, allowed for a certain level of flexibility that some of my participants enjoyed; however, there were always issues of accessibility and usability with digital platforms. In fact, the lack of consistency with the convention app was one of the issues that the CDICC raised in terms of convention accessibility. Rachel also complained that there wasn’t a desktop version of the app as there used to be that she could more easily use to browse and take notes. This year, the app also included a newsfeed section that surprisingly many attendees used to post things like people do on Twitter. The app also included spaces where users could take notes. Jane found that function useless because she would likely delete the app later. This indicates the ephemerality of the app and its lack of connection to other platforms that can either increase its functionality or the preservation of its content. Some participants, like Alice and myself, used multiple tools to plan the convention experience. Alice printed out calendar pages and used the app and her phone calendar to ensure she knew where she needed to be at different times. Ross complained that the convention app didn’t allow him to add other calendar items, while Alice found the app useful because it included more information about convention sessions that she didn’t input into her personal calendar. But several of my participants also talked about using the program book to help them select sessions they wanted to attend. The physical program book was even more isolated than other digital tools, so attendees needed alternate ways to manage their other
calendar items. All different forms of technologies shared a common main goal that was to deliver the convention program and help attendees plan their convention experiences. Yet they were also representations of the dominant convention logics that packed everything into every waking hour. Perhaps the new feature of 2017’s convention app—in which people could “follow” one another and “like” or “comment” on their newsfeed—attempted to incorporate some more personal social functions, but none of my participants found it useful as a socializing or networking mechanism. Therefore, these technologies really highlighted the busy convention schedule. Attendees had to actively schedule breaks or personal down time because they were not explicitly suggested in the program. These technologies are not neutral tools but embodiments of the convention formality, “disciplining” how attendees might experience the convention. In this respect, it is interesting to consider what the program book would look like if it included blank pages or coloring pages so that attendees could play with it, and what that would do in shaping attendees’ conferencing labor.

When the convention finally happened, all bets were off. For Carolyn, not much could be done anymore. Little things might need to be fixed, but the careful planning prior had mostly ensured that no big problems happened. Like planning the convention, attending the convention also involves much labor, physical and emotional. I chose to have most of my participants record Thursday because I knew that day was going to be very active for most people. And as Lucy explained, my prediction was right:

I think this year was slightly unpleasant as I mentioned about like I overbooked myself with committing to too many things, and they are also additional things people were asking me to lead and I was like no I can’t, I’m stretched too thin as it is. Thursday being an extremely long day, there was a moment I was not happy right now, being physically
exhausted and mentally strained so I’d say if I’m talking about my overall Cs negative experiences, it might just be like a bad day because so much was happening. If I think back to it, oh gosh that was exhausting.

This is also the moment when it became apparent how the convention space functioned to shape attendees’ experiences. This is the moment when Carolyn realized that the registration area was not situated in the best place because she didn’t expect so many on-site registrations to result in a huge traffic block in the middle of the main hallway. At the Action Hub, tables were set up where representatives of different organizations or projects such as the Writing Studies Tree and C’s the Day sat throughout the convention, or where sessions were scheduled for attendees to meet various CCCC award winners, labor liaisons of the CCCC, representatives of the CCCC’s inaugural summer conference series, and others. This year, a table was set up for attendees to write letters to their state representatives regarding issues about higher education, and the convention collected and mailed them. However, the Action Hub ended up situated in a far corner of the convention center next to the exhibit hall, so that it was not clearly visible to attendees. Carolyn had to tell people that these tables were set up for specific purposes, not just rest areas for attendees. Similarly, attendees learned to navigate the space and, as they do every year, experience the overwhelming size of the convention. My data show that the size didn’t bother everyone, but it certainly took significant physical and emotional labor for them to learn to navigate. Mary talked about disliking having to elbow her way in and out of rooms. As Julie said, “it is learning how to navigate both, literally when it comes to conference spaces, but also metaphorically just sort of figuring out what’s out there.” The description in this section made visible the chaos leading up to the convention, bringing to light the different factors that tend to
exacerbate the physical and emotional labor at the convention. Consequently, one may begin to think about better ways to enact the assemblages of the convention.

_Reinventing the Actor-Network of the CCCC Convention_

In chapter four, I took a chronotopic approach to analyze my participants’ professional/disciplinary activity, emphasizing the role time plays in the changing nature of such activity. As an individual member of the discipline moves in their professional trajectory, the ways they participate in such activity change. This is a developmental view of the activity. In this chapter, I treat the assembling of the CCCC network not with a developmental perspective but recognizing that the convention is “re-invented” every year. My description in this chapter so far shows how different actants were translated into the chains of the actor network of the CCCC convention 2017 in Portland. But this network disassembled after the convention ended only to come back together in a somewhat different shape the following year. To conclude my description of the 2017 actor network and to look forward to the 2018 actor network, I focus this section on the concepts of “translation” and “punctualization” as ways to deal with history in actor network theory. Callon defines “translation” as follows:

“A translates B.” To say this is to say that A defines B. It does not matter whether B is human or non-human, a collectivity or an individual. Neither does it say anything about B’s status as an actor. B might be endowed with interests, projects, desires, strategies, reflexes, or afterthoughts. The decision is A’s—though this does not mean that A has total freedom. For how A acts depends on past translations. These may influence what follows to the point of determining them (143).

Callon further explains that the process of translation is also a process of definition: how A translates B defines how B acts and that such definitions are “inscribed in intermediaries” (143).
As program chair Carolyn translated the convention by determining its theme, that translation resulted in the convention CFP. Of course, her work was influenced by past translations that had determined the form of the CFP and some of its content, such as the clusters. The CFP then moved on to translate potential convention presenters and attendees, which resulted in the various proposals collected through the system. Carolyn also translated members of the discipline to be reviewers of the proposals who then translated proposals into panels to be scheduled. Proposals then went through one more step before becoming inscribed into the program: each was organized and scheduled and located in the physical space of the convention center. Convention attendees were then translated into the network chains through the intermediaries of acceptance emails, the registration portal, and the convention program was published on different platforms. The presentations and meetings that took place at the convention were inscriptions of this last translation process, resulting in what attendees may refer to as “conference experiences” that shaped who they were as professionals and scholars in the discipline, their work, and also what came to be known as the CCCC 2017 convention (see Figure 5.1).
On Saturday afternoon, March 18, 2017, the convention came to an end. Exhausted, Carolyn felt she could finally breathe. Attendees were all going home, if they weren’t home already, hopefully intellectually stimulated and probably physically and emotionally exhausted. But whether they attended the Portland convention or not, everyone knew that they were only a little over a month away from the next submission cycle for CCCC 2018. For the first time, the CCCC had also planned four regional one-day conventions in the summer in 2017. Already, what we understood as the CCCC convention was taking different shapes. As my participants perceived, they left the convention with new ideas, new projects, new connections, and feelings of belonging, assurance, validation. But they also pointed out the different characteristics of the convention content. Felix thought that increasing the number of concurrent sessions somewhat watered down the quality of the presentations. Tom felt that the CCCC conventions are not as intellectually stimulating as the Rhetoric Society of America conferences, whereas Lilly thought
that the CCCC presentations are more theoretical and not as pragmatic as those at the Council of
Writing Program Administrators conferences, where she can bring her specific institutional
problems and find practical solutions. These perceptions, of course, depend on individual
professional and scholarly interests, which all the more demonstrates how the experience or the
“effect” of the convention result from the associations among various actants. Callon uses the
concept of “convergence” to measure “the extent to which the process of translation and its
circulation of intermediaries leads to agreement” (144).

The CCCC convention network has seen successful processes of translation and
convergence as the convention gets put together every year and its sponsoring organizations (the
CCCC and the NCTE) have successfully managed, regulated, and supported them from an
organizational and institutional perspective. However, that so-called success is contingent on a
lot of factors that influence all the potential actants who may be able to be recruited to the
network. As Carolyn reminded me, while the convention draws about 3000-3500 people, the
organization’s membership is double that number. She pointed out, as Ross did, that the
convention is not the same as the organization and should not be seen as representative of the
discipline’s membership. Already, Carolyn had spoken of future directions for the convention
and the organization now that her duty as the program chair was done and she was about to move
on to her responsibilities as the organization’s chair:

But I think . . . this one weekend is not gonna be very sustainable. It will still happen, but
it is gonna be hard to maintain an organization in this day and age if we don’t have things
that attract people beyond . . .. I think that we need to be an organization beyond the
conference, we need to be able to do work beyond this one meeting a year, or I don’t
think we are sustainable as an organization. The conference may still happen but the Cs
[convention] won’t be the Cs [organization.] So I think it is a really important thing, but I think its role’s gonna have to change instead of just one party a year. We need to be thinking about what we are doing together as a discipline and this is a great opportunity to meet together, but this isn’t the only time that we can get together. And it is certainly not the only time to do work.

Her thinking reflects the boundaries of the CCCC convention networks and the intention to push the boundaries from the organizational and disciplinary perspective. The convention, once stabilized as a mediator for disciplinary work, becomes yet another actant spliced into more associations. However, the question is, how stable are the CCCC convention network chains? Are they irreversible?

When talking about the durability of techno-economic networks, Callon argues that “the more numerous and heterogeneous the interrelationships the greater the degree of network coordination and the greater the probability of successful resistance to alternative translations” (150). Given the complex process of convention planning that I have described in this chapter and the heterogeneous actants involved in the process, the CCCC convention networks may seem to be very stable and likely irreversible, especially since they are officially affiliated with a longstanding official professional organization that has a large membership with policies and regulations. At this point, the networks can be seem to be “punctualised” (Callon 152). However, the heterogeneity of the convention networks changes every year when the convention gets reinvented by a new program chair in a new location, opening up the network to new iterative challenges that may threaten its durability and stability.

In August, 2017, convention acceptances and rejections for CCCC 2018 in Kansas City, MO were not arriving. On June 7, 2017, the National Association for the Advancement of
Colored People (NAACP) had released a Missouri Travel Advisory in the wake of the passing of Senator Gary Romine’s “Jim Crow Bill,” SB 43 and consequently the recent events of color-based crimes in the state with a long history of such crimes. Under the leadership of various caucuses, the membership began to react. A joint-caucus statement addressed to the NCTE Headquarters was published on August 15, 2017, drafted by the NCTE/CCCC Black, Latinx, American Indian, and Asian/Asian American Caucuses, with co-signatures from many members and sub-organizations of the discipline, called the CCCC organization to move the convention in 2018 to a safer and more inclusive location for all the membership as well as asking for increased transparency in the process of convention siting. When the decision was made to hold the convention in Kansas City, MO, the causes presented more detailed recommendations for action to the EC on ensuring the CCCC’s commitment to social justice. The concerns laid out by the caucuses lead to significant changes at the CCCC 2018, including the founding of a new “Task Force on Social Justice and Activism at Cs” (SJAC).

On the eve of the convention in 2018 when I was drafting this chapter, three days before I left for Kansas City, MO, I was reminded the challenges of maintaining the stability of the CCCC convention networks. I didn’t receive my acceptance to the convention until November of 2017 and had seriously thought that the convention might not take place. I could only imagine the physical and emotional labor undertaken by various leaderships involved in the organization and convention planning, not to mention the members of color who had felt alienated from the organization and/or the convention this year. I looked forward to seeing what the convention would eventually look like, its physical space, its virtual presence. It was still early to say whether the convention would be “successful” or even how that “success” might be measured. As an actor-network, it may be considered “successful” when it does happen and when attendees
do participate. But the “success” of the networked assemblage of CCCC 2018 would also be determined by the qualities of translations. Nevertheless, the changes to this year’s convention as reflected much the heterogeneity of the convention and the power dynamics among various actants involved in the networks, actants not only from within the discipline but also other entities such as state legislatures.

**How WPA-L Comes to Be**

Unlike the CCCC, WPA-L is not officially affiliated with a professional organization and can be in some ways more unstable than an academic convention since it is largely dependent on the technological infrastructures of the listserv platform. In this section, I unpack what we have come to know as the WPA-L community. While WPA-L does not have a physical location where people can gather, its virtual space is no less real and actually offers a more comprehensively visible view of the community that it embodies because the email list functions not only as a vehicle of the communicative exchanges among members of the community, but it also records and archives these exchanges; in other words, it is an inscription device as well as an intermediary.

WPA-L was created in 1990 by David Schwalm, then at Arizona State University, as a bitnet discussion list with the address WPA-L@ASUACAD. This was before the age of common email use, long before the existence of any social media platforms we now know. It was created to offer a space where people could talk about issues concerning writing program administrators, allowing “for the rapid interchange of information and ideas about such topics as composition curriculum, composition theory, textbooks, use of part-time faculty, TA training, budgets, program assessment, faculty evaluation, placement or exit testing, administrative organization, computer application, and writing centers” (Schwalm). This initial explanation of the purposes of
WPA-L was not going to limit what threads would be posted, as even the original flyer that
David created indicated that the thread topics would be determined by people who would post to
the list. Indeed, the list has over the years seen posts and discussions on more than the topics
David had suggested. At 2:33 p.m. PT on March 17, 2017, the time when I interviewed Barry
Maid, the current list manager, the list had 4537 subscribers. Barry was hired by ASU in 1993
and took over the list in the 2000s because he had prior experiences managing email lists. But
Barry described to me his role as the official list moderator to be really “more like the janitor.”
While he has the power to regulate the list community by unsubscribing people or deleting posts,
he doesn’t want to “play list mom.” And it is the same philosophy that he inherited from David,
who also believes the list to be self-cleansing. This is how Barry described to me his philosophy
of being the list “janitor”:

The word now is “curation,” and some things don’t need to be curated. If you are dealing
with adult professionals, they ought to behave like adult professionals. I know better, I
know people well enough to know that’s not always the case. But it is kind of going into,
there is a certain level of maturity you expect from people, but that doesn’t always
happen rarely. I don’t want to play list mom. I think it is counter-productive. I’m not sure
I have the ethos to do that.

Technological Affordances of WPA-L

Today the WPA-L has archived all exchanges on the list since 1993 and the archive
continues to grow every minute. The technological affordances of an email list and the particular
infrastructures of WPA-L (the platform design of the listservs server at Arizona State University
and the features and functions allowed by list manager) shape the ways users may engage with
the list. To post to the list, one must subscribe to it on the archive interface, which is also linked
on the official website for the Council of Writing Program Administrators. Only subscribed members can post the list and receive emails from the list. However, anyone can go to the archive to look at posts on the list and names of people who have posted (but their email addresses are only visible to subscribers). Because any subscriber can send a post to the list on the archive’s interface, or by emailing directly to the list’s address “wpa-l@asu.edu” or by responding to someone else’s post on the list, it is not an easy job to trace the conversation threads anyway. In particular, when a subscriber posts to the list, they have the option of writing a subject line, as we do with all emails we send. It is helpful to use subject lines because they are then alphabetically organized in the archive every month. If someone wishes to participate in a conversation, they can simply respond to a message and all the responses are curated together. However, it is also possible for users to change the subject line even when they are still participating in the same conversation. This then creates challenges for users if they are trying to find all pieces of the same conversation. The interface of the archive also doesn’t offer options to directly download any messages. Given this situation, it is understandable that it may be easier to actually receive all the emails in one’s inbox and see firsthand how conversations evolve and save anything that’s valuable. Further, all of us have probably experienced the dreaded “reply all” when what was not meant for all was sent to all. Some of my participants mentioned that there were certainly incidents when people didn’t need to reply all on the list, but the infrastructure of the list doesn’t make it easy on people. If a message is sent through the list’s archive interface, then the email appearing in the sender box is not the sender’s actual email address but a coded address affiliated with the list. Therefore, to reply to that sender off list would require asking publicly on the list for their own address. Such infrastructure and design features make “enrolling” people into the networked assemblage sometimes a bumpy process.
When subscribing to the list, users can choose to receive all the emails as they get sent to the list or they can choose to receive digests which send only two emails daily, each including an index of all the messages sent so far that day on the top and all the messages below. I learned from my participants that subscription preferences are really based on personal preferences of email use. Some people prefer the digest version so that they don’t get a lot of emails in their inbox. But for others, the digests are too convoluted to trace out threads of conversations, so they choose to receive all the emails. Some people have emails automatically filtered into a separate folder, while others choose to browse and delete and save as they go through their inbox. Some emails are saved in a separate email folder while some resources are saved on their local computers.

*WPA-L as a Community of Practice with Power Dynamics*

Subscription is required to post to the list only because the list was hit with some bad spam and Barry had to kick some people off. Such minimal moderation means that subscribers can post anything to the list, making it a self-regulating space, just as David and Barry want it to be. The culture of the list is thus only determined by how and what people post on it. In chapter four I talked about why my participants do or do not subscribe to WPA-L. In this chapter, I want to focus more on the culture of the list as perceived by my participants and reflected in the textual archive. Several participants have talked about using the list as a way to “keep a pulse” on the field, but they also know that the list is not fully representative of the discipline as a whole. In many ways, the list is still seen as one centered around issues of particular concern to writing program administrators, a reason that may deter people from subscribing simply because they are not interested in WPA work. In my contribution to the edited collection *Composition as Big Data,* I analyzed all the subject lines in the WPA-L archive from 1993 to 2017 and also
conducted a close reading of the subjects of the most popular topics (those that received the highest number of responses every month) during the same time period.

Based on the subject lines, these most popular topics cover a wide range of issues in the field (see Table 5.1 below). Compared to the topics that David Schwalm suggested in his flyer, my coding includes five more categories (highlighted in yellow): professionalization; disciplinary concerns; list logistics; general higher ed issues; and fun. Discussions about professionalization, disciplinary concerns, and general higher ed issues reflect that the list is a platform where broader disciplinary conversations take place beyond just concerns about writing program administration. The categories “list logistics” and “fun” show that users also treat the list as a collegial and friendly community. Barry has mentioned that “one of the values of writing studies is ‘play nice’ and that’s not true in every discipline.” The fact that some topics purely about fun things received the most responses supports his point.

Table 5.1: Subject Areas of Most Popular Monthly Discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
<th>Topic Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FYC</td>
<td>FYC placement</td>
<td>Posts related to issues specific to FYC, including placement, dual enrollment, FYC requirement, curriculum design, outcome statements. Note that some posts cover issues that can also be in other course contexts, such as writing assignment design, so they are not included here.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FYC requirement</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FYC curriculum design</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dual enrollment</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical issues</td>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>Posts related to how teachers or students behave and related to each other in the classroom. Example, Do instructors drink too much coffee while teaching? What do students call you?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate course design</td>
<td>Posts about designing different kinds of undergrad courses (excluding FYC since it has its separate category), what should we teach in these courses, who should teach them?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing assignments design</td>
<td>Posts about how to design different kinds of writing assignments, why we should assign them, in the context of all writing courses</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching with technologies</td>
<td>Posts related to technologies used in writing classes for various purposes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching practices</td>
<td>In all course contexts, how we teach something, how to help/support students on learning something, what big movements in the field guide our teaching.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course policy</td>
<td>Different kinds of course policies in writing courses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional formats</td>
<td>Posts about teaching online, f2f, distance ed.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>Writing Genres</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student writing</td>
<td>Posts about particular features of student writing, student ownership of their work.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalization</td>
<td>Professionalization events</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional ethics</td>
<td>Posts about sexual harassment, abusive power/authorities in the field</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhet/comp graduate programs</td>
<td>The design of graduate programs in the field, curricular work, exam processes, training and professionalization of grad students.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing</td>
<td>Posts about publishing practices, editorial practices, publishing trends.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Writing assessment</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: (continued).
Table 5.1: (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program assessment</td>
<td>Posts about assessment of different writing courses and programs, including but not limited to FYC</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Program design</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Designing programs, majors, minors, anything but FYC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class size</td>
<td>How big should classes be at different levels.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPA managerial issues</td>
<td>Rules and guidelines on program management in general, related to things like how to cancel class, should different types of teachers be treated differently in terms of course design, how to manage instructors in the program and their behaviors, how to respond to last minute emergencies, etc.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional relations</td>
<td>Posts about how WPA or writing programs are related to other entities in the institution</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTAs</td>
<td>Posts about the training and labor conditions of GTAs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom space design</td>
<td>Discussion on the ideal writing classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary concerns</td>
<td>Theories and knowledge in writing studies, the relations between theories and practice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.1: (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Posts about</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>grammar issues and grammar instructions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language use</td>
<td>language phenomenon, linguistic diversity, different uses of language</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism</td>
<td>definitions of and strategies to deal with plagiarism, tools to detect plagiarism and critiques of them</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinarity</td>
<td>disciplinary identities, responses to other entities/public events as a discipline, defining disciplinary work, history; the culture and ideologies of the discipline</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Processes</td>
<td>How people write in general, posts about</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific member of the field</td>
<td>posts about particular members of the field, usually as celebration of their professional achievements, or life, or career.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary writing</td>
<td>posts about secondary writing, how to teach writing in high school</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.1: (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labor issues</td>
<td>Posts related to labor issues in writing studies in general, such as contingent labor, pay and benefits, who get to teach what course.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List logistics</td>
<td>Posts about how to use/navigate WPA-L</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Higher ed issues</td>
<td>Posts about governmental, legislative measures that directly impact higher education institutions, public discourse about higher ed, purposes of higher ed, policies, tenure &amp; promotion, student success, etc.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Posts that are completely unrelated to professional/disciplinary work</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several of my participants perceived WPA-L as a community of practice where members of the field can discuss composition-related issues, but participation on the list is subject to the power dynamics of the field, reflected in the discursive practices on the list. When asked to describe their relationships with WPA-L or the community on the list, Jack gave me a metaphor of being upstairs on a balcony looking down at a group of people trying to decide if he should go down there to join them. It accurately reflected Jack’s perception of the list as a contentious space that he wasn’t sure if he wanted to be a part of, thus his bystander role. After talking to Jack, I started asking all my participants for metaphors about WPA-L. Julie’s is perhaps most interesting and captures the nature of WPA-L content in terms of its function to help users:
It is like a town hall or a city council meeting. Did you ever watch Parks and Rec, those meetings, with everyone in there talking nonsense and every once in a while you touch on something that’s really helpful (laughs). So that sort of space, that town hall, that’s what it feels like a lot of times. You still have a lot of crazy stuff, you have some folks who have been there forever tell you exactly the way things have to be, and then they are wrong, that’s not the way things have to be. But that’s sort of the space, that kind of discussion is what happens a lot of the time. Cuz you have to filter through a lot of the stuff, get the things that you need, it is ridiculous.

Parks and Recreation is an American political satire sitcom on NBC. The town hall or city council meetings Julie mentioned here are often scenes where citizens of the fictional city Pawnee present unreasonable and ridiculous requests to the leading character, Leslie Knope, an enthusiastic bureaucrat who genuinely loves her work, or incompetent government workers reject legitimate proposals to improve the city. Sometimes the meetings can become a shouting match, as have on rare occasions discussions on WPA-L when they become heated and even inappropriate like “garbage fire.” A famous recent example is the discussion in fall of 2015 after Anne Gere was elected as president of the Modern Language Association. Initially a congratulatory post turned into unusually nasty spitfire exchanges that even included profanity and ad hominem attacks. In his dissertation, Zach Beare studies this thread extensively, focusing particularly on “how the identities of members of the discipline are often interrogated and leveraged as means of evaluating the political actions and objectives of the discipline” and “how the style of disciplinary communication enacted on the listserv is sometimes at odds with the values the discipline claims to subscribe to (and works to instill in its students)” (85).
When civil conversations can become flame wars, they again become means of control and disciplining, deterring people’s engagement with the list. While some graduate students may not feel that their professional identities make them vulnerable contributors on the list, some faculty members may actually want to protect their graduate students from possible contentions on the list for the very reason of the possibilities of incidents such as flame wars. Ross told me about how one seasoned professor in the field warned her graduate students to not post on the list but only observe for that very reason. I’m not sure the advice on non-participation is a productive one, but the incident I mentioned in chapter one on the discussion of CCCC 2019 CFP on WPA-L perhaps already indicated that vulnerable populations such as graduate students could simply create a new social space for more active interactions without the “control” of chastising senior members of the field. Thus, it would be interesting to reflect on how forms of “control” could set implicit rules for participation and amplifying certain cultural aspects of a social space, making it more exclusive and less welcoming and thus limiting the range of voices and perspectives that can participate in the construction of the discipline. Nonetheless, my participants and the list manager Barry have also pointed out that many people on the list actively monitor the discourses by calling out inappropriate behaviors, which is a really good example on how professional privilege can be used to check each other’s actions and the implications of those actions on disciplinary culture.

When I first started designing this dissertation study in 2016, I brought a set of interview questions about WPA-L to a regional conference for some feedback. One conference attendee suggested that I ask about cases of mansplaining or use of exclusionary language. When I did ask that question in my interviews, none of my participants have actually been involved in any situations like that but many of them had observed such situations, including the incident I
mentioned in the last paragraph. Dan mentioned that there was a person who often came on the list whenever there is a discussion about racism to say that racism wasn’t real, which was always frustrating. While the list is open to any subscriber, those who do end up actively participating more may occupy more privileged positions, particularly in terms of professional status or institutional background. As one participant said:

I think the way when exclusionary language happens, I think the way it tends to unfold that’s kind of tensions that happen between full time tenure track and non-tenure track or part time non tenure track. I think that’s where, and that's sort of a class line, and that’s where language can reveal certain biases, more often than not. Beyond that, I don’t know. Certainly I think there is some interesting gender roles play out on the list. And there are, it is not a place where a lot of mansplaining happens, but it does sometimes. It is pretty obvious when it is that.

Another remarked:

One of my perceptions about the listserv is that, at least the WPA-L, is that there aren't as many representatives from two-year colleges, very frequently when I talk to people about their research methods and one of their primary methods of collecting is through the listserv, they'll have 232 from 4-year universities and 2 people from 2-year college. Jane also pointed out that professional rank isn’t necessarily the root of the privileged discourse on the list but rather a kind of narcissism, and that the culture of the list resulted is certainly a problematic one:

But it is also become clear to me that some of the people who post quite frequently on WPA-L, there is an element of blowhard, people who just like to hear themselves talk, some of whom are very good, some of whom are much younger in the profession. But I
feel like now oh there goes so and so again. And sometimes when so and so gets going it is very pleasing to me, and sometimes and so and so gets going, it is not. I can see that that’s a style of publication that’s not the only way to be successful. I guess I’ve also come to see that it is not the only place where work gets done. Sometimes it seems like there are some people who just spend all day long at WPA-L and don’t do anything else. In fact, that isn’t model of how to spend your day. That has become more clear to me. I’ve also come to see it as a place that has its own sense of [inaudible] what not, so it is a certain kind of discourse but it is not representative of the whole field.”

The power dynamics reflected on the list are often reasons that many users, including many of my participants, are lurkers on the list. Six of my participants talked specifically about being hesitant to post on WPA-L due to various concerns, and all of them are junior scholars in the field. One of the concerns is that their message, which may reflect their image as a relatively newer member of the field or a professional academic, can be seen by thousands of people. Because the communicative practices in disciplinary spaces reflect and construct professional and disciplinary identities and because discursive practices and social performances are inherently political, people are more concerned with how they act, especially those with less power. Anne put it nicely in our interview: “it goes to everybody. It goes to Andrea Lunsford, you know. Haha. Who knows if the Queen herself reads these emails but you know.” Indeed, for a graduate student, WPA-L can provide a certain name recognition that may be constructive to one’s career while at the same time stress-inducing for others. Even senior scholars may give the advice of “subscribe but not post” to graduate students; such advice indicate an awareness of power differentials on such a space. Rose, on the other hand, was much aware that her identities
as a graduate student and contingent faculty member made her particularly nervous to post on WPA-L:

So as a grad student, as a contingent faculty person, I don’t feel very secure in any of my, probably feel most confident in my position as a graduate student. Which is I guess a little scary haha. And I mean as a grad student you can also like, oh I’m a just grad student sorry. I don’t know, I feel like the whole tenure, non-tenured hierarchy or dichotomy, whatever you wanna call it, is really really problematic, and I think it is divisive, and I think it is divisive in the field of composition in a way that is different than maybe in other fields because of the labor model for first-year writing. I’m just so aware of that.

Certainly, some participants think that once they move on to a more secure job position, they may become more active on the list and feel less nervous to post. As Lucy said, “But I think as I get into in a more secure job placement, also have more power to affect change, like if I’m a composition instructor or a WPA, with a little bit more power, I feel like asking some of those questions won’t possibly be so scary for me to do at a public setting.” Unfortunately, even if one may feel more empowered at a more advanced professional position, it doesn’t necessarily mean that their working conditions would be much better or that they’d be more professionally supported, as Rose discovered by talking to tenure-track faculty with similar responsibilities as her NTT position. Similarly, in disciplinary social spaces, a higher-rank member may feel more confident, but it doesn’t mean they wouldn’t be subject to harassment or discrimination. At the same time, populations such as NTT faculty and graduate students may also be less positioned or empowered to speak up against inequities because of the very power dynamics endemic to academia.
While professional statuses position people on uneven levels in social spaces, personal identifications such as gender, race, or sexuality can also serve as basis for inequities. On the one hand, Tom talked about posting to WPA-L frequently as a graduate student in order to gain name recognition in the field. Once early in his career, he was even recognized by Cheryl Glenn (a noted scholar) at the CCCC conference because she remembered seeing his posts on the list. For him, learning the “conventions” of the WPA-L discourse meant not how to be formal in his writing but how to be appropriately informal. Nonetheless, Tom is also a cis-gendered white male, a much privileged identity that could easily shield him from inappropriate treatments. When I asked Ross whether he had any negative experiences on WPA-L, he admitted that his privileged identity meant that he had never been subject to any such discriminatory treatment. However, my participant Dan, self-identifying as a transgendered person, expressed their frustrations when they were misgendered once on Twitter; when they couldn’t find a single-stall bathroom at the convention center at CCCC 2017; and when people made ableist and racist comments on WPA-L.

**Timeliness and the Ephemerality of Platforms**

“Backchanneling” is the term used to describe how a discussion started on one platform may move to another and take a different form. Not everyone is aware of this happening if they are not part of all the different platforms or are connected to others privy to the discussions. Sometimes the backchanneling serves as another way to continue a controversial discussion on WPA-L, simply moving it to a different platform such as Facebook that may allow for more informal reactions. One of my participants brought up the post about Anne Gere’s election as the MLA president in the fall of 2016, which started as a congratulatory post to Gere and ended up becoming a heated series of personal attacks between users (studied more fully in Beare), and
then traveled to Facebook where it became even nastier. Other times, however, the backchanneling can serve as a way to keep WPA-L discussions in check, as reflected in the following comments. One said,

I will say, if somebody says something ridiculous on WPA-L, people on the disability studies comp rhet will start talking about it on that listserv. And then some people will respond like, we need to respond on WPA-L. So they'll like elaborate, write a response, that sometimes happens but pretty rare.

Another said,

I have sometimes when I have WPA-L off, there’ll be some conversations on FB that are clearly a heat reading of a particular WPA-L thread. There is one person who likes to post great length on WPA-L who drives my other friends crazy, actually in a way that has pushed them to be a little unprofessional on FB. I think it is one thing to argue with someone on WPA-L or to roll your eyes or to delete or whatever, and it is another thing to be like on FB saying, "Jane Smith is being ridiculously childish on WPA-L." I think that's kind of not cool. So I have on FB sometimes seen like, "you know, I don't know why you are having this general reaction to this thread but I think that thing you just said about that particular person is a little over the line here." So I wouldn't say it is an official back channel so much as a, you can always count on someone on FB be like, well, that's really not cool.

The cross-platform discussions reflect the ways different digital technologies can influence our discursive practices and eventually lead to different or similar group norms based on people’s perceptions of the purposes and functions of these platforms. They may also make people think about the timeliness and ephemerality of discussions and even platforms.
WPA-L may be a community of practice in the sense that it is a social space where people with shared interests and goals learn together through sharing practices (Lave and Wenger). While this concept emphasizes situated learning practices, it assumes the stability of the community once it is constructed. Actor-network theory does not assume stability of the network, and in the context of socio-technical networks, it also takes into consideration the ephemeral nature of technologies. In my conversations with Barry and my participants, we all stumbled over the sustainability of the list. “What’s going to happen to the list in the future?” I asked people. “I don’t know,” they responded. “Do you think there is value in keeping the archive?” I asked. “Yes, absolutely,” they responded. There were a lot of different speculations, some suggesting that maybe a new platform will replace it while others thought that its host being a university database contributes to its stability so it probably won’t change much at all. Even if the technical infrastructure remains and allows the list to exist, it may be difficult to say if people will continue to use the list the same ways it is been used before because of other social network platforms. One of my participants has already observed some changes on the list over time:

Partly, FB and Twitter has taken up a lot of that stuff. I also think a lot of people who used to participate actively on WPA-L are not active there anymore, whether they read it or participate in it at all. They are not very active. So just as a space where you can go and have interesting conversations, I think it is less and less useful for that. It seems to me that it is become more like a, sort of a bulletin board maybe, you know people post announcements, CFPs, stuff like that. But it is not a place where there is a lot of interactive discussion going on anymore.
From my data, it is not clear whether the assumption that younger people are less engaged with older technologies like the listserv and more with social media platforms is accurate. However, WPA-L’s nebulous cultural representation of disciplinary power dynamics certainly impacts participation. If people are less and less likely to engage in discussions on the list because they feel marginalized in the list’s discourse, is it possible that eventually the list will become more and more like a bulletin board? As a result of the controversial discussions on the list regarding the CCCC 2019 CFP, some graduate students already felt further alienation and “disciplining” on the list and took to Twitter to express their frustrations. With the support of a junior TT faculty, a group of graduate students ended up starting an email list named “nextGEN” just for graduate students in the field.

Timeliness and ephemerality can also affect not the list community itself but the content of the list posts. Perhaps the list will continue to cycle through disciplinary concerns at both local and global levels. An important characteristic of the list that many of my participants observed is that often the same questions or problems are brought up on the list over and over again. My textual analysis of the archive corroborates this observation. Figure 5.2 below shows the distribution of the top topics with over 100 responses from 1993 to 2017. As it is seen in the figure, topics related to assessment have repetitively been the top discussions from 1998 to 2012. While some of my participants like Kate believe that people should consult the list archive before posting a question, Julie also made a good point of how the list generally accommodates new subscribers or new WPAs. Even if the same types of questions get asked repeatedly, list members will still offer answers and suggestions. As she pointed out, local concerns are often unique and require new ways to solve new problems. Sometimes the only way to find possible solutions is to talk to others at similar institutions or with similar local conditions:
A lot of those questions will be like, those actually I think are the posts that are most helpful for people like I need to make a case for something, I need to make a case to training programs for adjuncts or something like that. Can people share their experiences? I need to bring this to the dean. I think that's a really great way to do things because some of that you don't have in the literature, some of that is only anecdotal, especially when you are looking at parallel institutions, so because somebody, folks predominantly coming from Midwestern large research universities, like someone from a community college in southern Nevada does not need that, they need other people doing community colleges in other cities that are similar makeup. So that's where you can actually make the connections that you might need for your very specific institution, cuz you are looking for specific contexts.

Figure 5.2: Discussions with over 100 responses. X-axis: years. Y-axis: months. (FYC: blue; Disciplinary concerns: yellow; Assessment: red; Fun: brown; Pedagogical practices: green; List logistics: purple).
Conclusion: Networked Assemblages of the CCCC and WPA-L

In this chapter actor-network theory allowed me to describe that what we come to know as the CCCC and WPA-L are actually networked assemblages made up of many actants, both human and nonhuman, highlighting the associations among these actants and the power dynamics that must be negotiated in order for the networks to remain stable. At the same time, this description reminds us the fragility of our disciplinary networks and further pushes us to interrogate the power dynamics across these assemblages as well as to think about the accessibility and sustainability of the infrastructures and design of such disciplinary social spaces. In this process, I make visible the physical and emotional labor expended in enacting these assemblages. In past disciplinarity work, these social spaces have often been treated as unified and neutral tools for professionalization or neglected for their crucial role in shaping the
discipline. This chapter provided a detailed description of how the disciplinary culture can be the result of networked actants.

Making Visible the Nonhuman Actants in Our Disciplinary Culture

Derek Mueller’s studies of the CCCC’s chairs’ addresses and the CCC’s journal archive remind us of the roles that vital disciplinary texts play in enacting disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition. But in the actor networks of the discipline, these texts function as networked effects themselves as well as actants in other networks. In this chapter, I went one step further to trace how intermediary disciplinary sites such as the CCCC conventions and the WPA-L are actually networked assemblages themselves within which the nonhuman artifacts play vital roles in transforming the human experiences.

For an academic conference, time and space significantly shape the convention and how people experience it. The convention is a result of networked effects among actants including the program chair, local planning committee, NCTE staff members, the Executive Committee of the CCCC organization, the CFP, the proposal submission system, reviewers of proposals, the convention programs, the CDICC, and many others involved in the process. Throughout the process, these actants are translated into the network chains, resulting in inscriptions such as the CFP, the convention program, and the accessibility guide which then help determine how other actants such as presenters and attendees are spliced onto the network chains. During the convention, the physical space shapes people’s movements throughout the convention and even how their presentations may be delivered (my panelists and I wondered yet again as we prepared this year’s presentations how big our room would be and how many people might come to our panel as we contemplated how we should structure our allotted time). For an online community, the features and infrastructures of the platform shape people’s participation which then shapes
the cultures of the community. All these nonhuman actants have often been taken for granted in our discussion of disciplinarity. Scholarship in the field has often studied composing technologies in writing pedagogy and research, but this chapter made visible other types of technologies that contribute to the heterogeneity of disciplinary networks and knowledge-making processes.

Re-inventing Networks

Not only are these networks heterogeneous, they are also constantly being reinvented. By tracing the process of convention planning and the history of WPA-L, I have shown the ephemerality of both social environments. What we come to know as a disciplinary community doesn’t always take the same shape every time we encounter them. Different actants can join or leave the networks as time goes on, for better or worse, impacting the effects of the networks.

What components will be at the next CCCC? Will there be a CCCC convention next year in a physical space? These are legitimate questions for members of the field and leadership of the professional organizations to contemplate. Will WPA-L continue to exist and welcome diverse membership and discussions? As members of the discipline, how can we re-invent these networks to be more inclusive, welcoming, accessible, and sustainable?

Power Dynamics and the Labor of Navigating Them

Analyzing these two sites as actor networks also allowed me to pay attention to the power dynamics among actants within the networks and recognize the indispensable labor spent navigating these dynamics. In chapter three, I wrote about the emotional energy throughout interpersonal interactions at these two sites and how positive feelings can fuel the creativity of the discipline while negative feelings can take away such energy. In this chapter, I complicated
the power dynamics by also including nonhuman actants as agents of power which must be navigated and sometimes overcome.

While professional/disciplinary social spaces often strive to be equitable and inclusive, these spaces are also fraught with inequities in gender, race, sexual orientation, class, and professional status, privileging certain bodies marginalizing others. If these spaces are considered places where new members of the field are enculturated into the discipline, the labor spent at navigating such power dynamics must be recognized, not just in terms of how members should interact with one another, but also how communicative artifacts can function to mitigate or exacerbate such power dynamics.
CHAPTER 6 Conclusion

In this dissertation, I set out to study the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition as enacted by the embodied experiences of members across disciplinary social sites, focusing primarily on the annual convention of the CCCC and the email list, WPA-L. I have described how these experiences could contribute to professional and disciplinary development as well as how such social spaces function as actor networks that bring together different assemblages. This description reveals that participating in these social networks, fraught with power dynamics, requires identity work—physical and emotional labor that’s often invisible in other formal disciplinary/professional arenas like publications. I opened this dissertation with Anokye’s CCCC chair’s address on the company we keep; here I return to that question in the conclusion. To write the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition means thinking about the company that we’ve been keeping and how we’ve been keeping or not keeping it. In disciplinary social spaces, what kinds of bodies/voices are being privileged? Whose company has been marginalized and in what ways? In what ways can we take advantage of the power dynamics to foster scholarly and professional collaborations? How could we critically investigate our disciplinary culture?

If we treat scholarship on disciplinarity as efforts to explore how knowledge is made and disseminated in the field, unpacking the social interactions in cross-institutional spaces reveals what’s “behind the stage” of knowledge production and dissemination. The processes in which people are engaged to build interpersonal connections and the processes of developing the infrastructure and designs that impact social interactions captures the shape of the discipline across time and place. The discipline of rhetoric and composition is enacted this way precisely because these processes have consequences on knowledge production and dissemination. Investigating these processes with attention to power dynamics and labor can then further help us
reflect on what kinds of power relations we want, and where we can work to advance more egalitarian or participatory logics across disciplinary and professional spaces.

**Enacting a Networked Disciplinarity**

Disciplinary social spaces, such as the CCCC conventions and WPA-L, whether intentionally designed by their organizers or creators, can serve as opportunities for members of the discipline to network. On the one hand, participation in these social spaces may include what Nardi et al. call “netWORKing,” which creates “intensional networks” that allow individuals to develop and utilize their long-term personal relationships to perform professional tasks (Nardi, Whittaker and Schwartz). On the other hand, it constitutes a kind of knotworking that Engeström describes as a new configuration of teams. These teams engage in short-term tasks in which different activity systems and actors come together where their distinctive roles and expertises can be shared with others (*From Teams to Knots*). This networking effort is usually driven by individual motivations and desires, such as entering or advancing in the discipline; building and maintaining social ties; or crowdsourcing solutions to their own problems. But power dynamics caused by professional hierarchies and along the lines of gender, sexuality, bodies, reflected in the infrastructures and culture of these social spaces present serious challenges to effective and productive networking.

Chapter three elaborated on how social ties develop across disciplinary sites and how they contribute to both individual and disciplinary developments. Theories of social ties helped me classify the kinds of interpersonal relationships built in disciplinary social spaces, identifying how media use impact the social ties. The social ties ebb and flow over time and space throughout people’s participation in these social spaces. In academia where cross-institutional interactions are common, people tend to form professional, disciplinary, and personal
connections through these interactions, both online and offline. A dense personal social network with many strong social ties and weak ties for an individual can mean that the person is exposed to more opportunities and resources for professional and scholarly development. They can use the social ties to build collaborative scholarly projects, resolve professional problems, and engage in professional duties beyond the local institutional level. However, the building and maintenance of social ties can also be largely dependent on the professional/institutional structures and technological infrastructures embodying power differentials that may marginalize certain populations.

The disciplinary social spaces studied in this dissertation function as mediating artifacts that facilitate the construction of such interpersonal social networks as well as disciplinary knotworking. Members of the discipline participate in different institutional/professional/disciplinary spaces, driven by various individual and collective motivations and desires, where they must negotiate with other entities, both human and nonhuman, in order to accomplish the goals of their participation. Chapter four laid out the different motivations and desires driving such activity, analyzing how these mediating artifacts support these motivations and desires as well as challenge them with power dynamics constitutive of different communities. Activity theory allowed me to treat professional/disciplinary activity as a whole, focusing on how such activity intersects with activities in other institutional or personal realms.

Nonetheless, these social spaces can only perform such functions if they achieve their own stability, because they are themselves made up of networked assemblages. Chapter five unpacked how these spaces come to be the way they are and how they can get re-invented and shaped in response to problems both internally within the discipline and externally from other
outside entities, highlighting particularly how the associations among both human and nonhuman actants could result in networked effects that contribute to the enactment of disciplinary culture. When disruptions happen, moments for reflections and actions are created. The social nature of these spaces, while not representative of disciplinary membership, does still manifest the problems that exist in the disciplinary culture. A discipline is enacted when these social spaces come together and when people participate in them.

Studying disciplinarity with a network orientation required me to pay attention to processes of engagement across disciplinary social spaces and their contribution to the work of knowledge making. As my participants’ experiences reflected, participation in the CCCC and WPA-L can help advance individual professional career and the discipline. At the same time, describing such experiences shed light on the power differentials endemic to academia, making visible the physical and emotional labor expended working within these spaces. In turn, it prompts us to reflect on and interrogate the technological affordances of these social spaces and our disciplinary culture enacted as a result. While other scholarship on disciplinarity focuses on definitional efforts, as if a discipline is a unified entity, this dissertation disrupts that assumption by dissecting formations of disciplinary culture by drawing attention to the day-to-day practices of people in the field.

The Company We Keep

Figure 6.1 presents a visual model of participation in these social spaces and how this participation is contributing to the construction of disciplinary culture. The arrows in the graph indicate continuous movement. Participating in professional/disciplinary activity is supposed to support the development of academics’ professional and disciplinary identities. Disciplinary social spaces are places where such identities can be formed and where the identifications can
have consequences for the participation and the cultures of the social spaces in return. How a
discipline’s culture is represented and reflected in disciplinary social spaces contributes to
shifting disciplinary identity. Different actants come together every year to “reinvent” the CCCC
convention in different shapes. The labor and tensions involved in putting together a convention
as well as attendees’ ultimate participation in the space determine the culture of that convention
and how people perceive their experiences. WPA-L, as an online space whose “formality” is
constructed by users, also embodies changing cultures as its discourses evolve.

Figure 6.1: Model of disciplinary participation in social spaces reflecting the relations between
such participation and the social construction of disciplinary culture.

While these social spaces do not fully represent the discipline’s membership or culture—
just like published scholarship doesn’t fully capture all the disciplinary work—they nonetheless
encapsulate in motion the disciplinary culture. The CCCC convention and WPA-L are certainly
some of the biggest spaces in terms of the number of members who participate, but many people
still don’t participate in these social spaces for various reasons. Indeed, my dissertation presents
many perspectives on how rhetoric and composition is such a friendly field and that these social spaces are always so welcoming and inclusive. However, when we talk about the discipline as a friendly field, we risk neglecting power dynamics that are constitutive of these spaces, interactions, relations, and statements that enact the discipline. We need to interrogate how we are keeping our company—as Anokye does—when an audience member shows ignorance of presenter’s work at a panel presentation at the convention; when people make insensitive comments regarding the working conditions of contingent faculty; when mansplaining happens; when spaces are inaccessible to certain bodies; or when senior members of the field sexually harass junior members or “discipline” graduate students on their participation in social spaces. The culture of the discipline is always changing in these social spaces, and it is up to the heterogeneous networks of actors—both human and nonhuman—to invent and enact the disciplinary culture.

As members of rhetoric and composition, if we value the cultural importance of disciplinary social spaces because they are supposed to facilitate meaningful scholarly and professional exchanges, then we need to ask questions about the labor put into these social spaces, both in constructing them and in participating in them. We also need to investigate in what ways these social spaces perpetuate or embody the dominant ideologies and what kinds of disciplinary culture we want to foster in them. We need to routinely reflect on the ways we are keeping our company in various professional and disciplinary arenas.

**How to Better Enact Disciplinary Networks**

While I may not be in the position to make specific suggestions about how a convention should be organized or how we should design a new social networking space, I ask us in rhetoric and composition and in academia in general to begin thinking about how to better enact
disciplinary networks attuning to issues of power, labor, and identity. Scholarship in rhetoric and composition has already explored extensively issues of emotional and affective labor in the academic workplace, mainly in the context of writing program administration (in particular first-year writing programs) and concerning issues such as how the WPA work is related to and perceived by other institutional entities (Gillam; Wright; Peters; Holt, Anderson, and Rouzie).

Among this body of scholarship, Donna Strickland’s work on the managerial unconscious, which digs into the roots of the disciplinary and professional structures and hierarchies that underlie disciplinary culture and that have direct impact on professionalization of members and knowledge production. Her core argument is to “understand the field as fundamentally managerial” (119). Strickland’s argument is productive to my argument in this dissertation because it grounds the discipline in its material structures not just in its scholarly and teaching endeavors but in its other workplace activities and critically engages with the issues of disciplinary structures and control that this dissertation explored as well.

This leads to more questions as I contemplate how to validate and value such labor: How do we account for the labor of disciplinary/professional socialization in sites like professional conventions? How do we take critical and ethical approaches to the design of disciplinary social spaces? How can we make the processes of such design more transparent? How do we maintain institutional memory and better reinvent our disciplinary networks? How can we behave better as participants in such networks?

This dissertation took a processual approach to studying how disciplinarity in rhetoric and composition is enacted. Therefore it needs to continue to focus on processes when making suggestions on how to better enact the discipline. Actor-network theorist John Law identifies four strategies of translation focusing on different aspects of how networked assemblage can
overcome resistance: the durability of materials; their mobility; systems of representation; and the scope of ordering (387-389). I argue that these aspects can work as theoretical frameworks to help us think critically about enacting disciplinary culture.

**Critically Representing Disciplinary Culture**

As this dissertation has shown, disciplinary culture is of course a kind of relational effect resulting from materials and conditions as well as social interactions among people situated in those materials and conditions. All of these create “systems of representations” (Law 388) and the cultural impressions upon those who participate. As mentioned earlier, when these social spaces become the places where newcomers enter the field or become disciplinary “homes” for those who feel intellectually isolated in their home institutions, the cultural impacts of experiences in these spaces are significant. This suggests that as members of the discipline, we need to continue to reflect on what we want our disciplinary culture to be and how we can foster such culture. When we create “systems of representation” such as organizational documents, conventions, or an online group, we may benefit from learning more about feminist and queer approaches to ensure the accessibility, inclusivity, and diversity that have influenced the managerial work of writing program/center administration and writing pedagogy. In his keynote address at the 2013 CWPA conference, Harry Denny asked the audience to “question what’s invisible, what's not heard or seen, especially in relation to what's always legible and already perceived” in our everyday practices (191). I argue that those practices should also extend to disciplinary social spaces.

**Questioning the Durability of Disciplinary and Professional Structures**

Certain material structures or objects may seem durable because the associations among components making up the structures have more or less stabilized. For example, academic
conferences have often developed stable structures and usually take the same shape from year to year. But such durability must be examined also as relational. A conference can only come together because the planning committee put it together with the help of many actors, as shown in chapter five. Even a seemingly stable WPA-L is functioning relatively well because a moderator is behind the stage, weeding out spam, and because many people are using it productively and cordially. Nevertheless, we must continue to be open to changes in these seemingly durable structures and continue to “reinvent” them, not only when exigences present themselves to push for such reinvention, but when reinvention become routine routine work, as demonstrated in 2019 program chair Vershawn Ashanti Young’s challenge of the CFP genre, which he wrote in African American Vernacular English. Members of the discipline should take advantage of the social nature of these spaces and seize critical moments to affect change.

*Challenging the Spatial Orientation and Attuning to the Mobility of Actors*

Paying attention to mobility in enacting disciplinary culture means asking questions about the spatial orientations of both online and offline spaces and how different actants travel between online and offline spaces. For example, when we organize academic conferences, whether it is the CCCC or other conferences, how do we select physical locations? How do we take into consideration the accessibility of social spaces, both online and offline? In what ways are we accounting for and supporting the mobility of diverse members in the discipline as they travel across these spaces? If as a field we have already been conducting inquiries about classroom spaces, why haven’t we examined the social spaces we frequent?

Scholars in technical and professional communication have tackled the issue of space in the area of networked workplace learning, which can have implications for professional communication in academia as well. Pigg, Lauren, and Keller address the issue of supporting
early career learners as a communication design problem and offer a framework for communication designers that reflects characteristics similar to the experiences I studied in this dissertation. Perhaps organizers of professional and disciplinary spaces and events can also benefit from the perspectives of communication designers with attention to the four challenges Pigg, Lauren, and Keller have proposed:

1. Networked learning is a communicative and coordinative act.
2. The communication involved in networked learning draws on old and new technologies.
3. Dynamics of communication and interaction are shifting.
4. Communication designers should pay attention to employee experiences.

_Devising Operational Strategies_

Disciplinary social spaces, as exemplified in this dissertation by the CCCC convention and WPA-L, require both transparent, effective managerial efforts and prosocial social interactions to function productively. But that requirement puts much pressure and workload on the members of the discipline who are involved, and may obscure how a leadership’s good intentions of creating social environments to facilitate work can actually result in homogeneous structures that are unproductive to the development of individuals and the discipline. In making suggestions for attuning to the necessary managerial functions of WPA work, Strickland argues for an “operative approach to management” that “calls us to notice and investigate our emotional stances toward our work, our beliefs about what constitutes a successful program, our beliefs even about the very values we see in the teaching of writing and about what we think makes a good teacher of writing” (121). This suggestion may be helpful in broader disciplinary landscapes when we consider the kinds of work we put in to build professional organizations, construct professional social spaces, and occupy those spaces. I argue that we need to pay
attention to such labor, questioning our practices both in terms of how things are done and also
the ethical and political consequences of doing so. For academic conferences, we may ask: How
do we facilitate organic, productive, and sustaining networking? How do we attune to the
expense of emotional energy of both organizers and attendees of conventions? Already the
CCCC organization has taken formal efforts to ensure transparency, which is reflected in the
business meeting that takes place every year on Saturday after the convention. In 2017, Think
Tank session E.03, “Cultivating a More Equitable Professional Organization,” allowed for
another open forum to discuss with convention attendees issues people raised about the CCCC
organization and consider suggestions for improvements. Yet when the Executive Committee
first responded in the summer of 2017 to the call by some members to move the 2018 convention
location, the response was very brief and without explanation of the decision-making process. As
a discipline, we need to continue to do better.

Future Research: Studying Networked Disciplinarity

This dissertation set out to explore the informal communication practices of members of
rhetoric and composition. Guided by connected and multi-sited ethnography informed by the
middle range theory, which argues for the negotiation of methodological adequacy in particular
situations (Hine “Multi-Sited” 653), I have been selective with my research sites. Given the
limited space of a dissertation, I have left out many other disciplinary sites members of the field
frequent in rhetoric and composition. I also did not engage in deep description of informal
communicative practices in a conventional ethnographic sense. Thus, future research could
perhaps involve venturing into different spaces such as smaller conferences that have a narrower
intellectual focus as well as conducting case studies that would allow researchers to follow
individual members of the discipline for an extensive period of time to capture how they engage
in communication practices across different sites. It would also be helpful to engage with particular demographics: for example, surveying how graduate students are enculturated into the field through engaging in different communication practices. Finally, it may be useful to trace the development of a particular project or problem in the field to unpack further the managerial details of a professional/disciplinary activity.

In addition to further studying the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition, we can also study how people in other disciplines engage with informal communication practices to enact disciplinarity. How are conferences organized in other disciplines, especially those with a longer history than rhetoric and composition? How do members of other disciplines engage in social interactions, online or offline? In what ways are these social interactions contributing to their disciplinarity and what roles do these social spaces play in that contribution? Consequently, such investigation can lead to further explorations of how students are professionalized and what effects this has on pedagogical practices. Do faculty across the disciplines teach students to engage in informal communication practices in their fields? How are students, either undergraduates or graduates, professionalized into the disciplines/professions? These research questions can potentially contribute to the field of professional communication and writing across the curriculum.

**Discipline vs. Field**

In the introduction, I mentioned that I would not go into the question of the differences between “field” and “discipline;” indeed I have been using the two words interchangeably throughout the dissertation when referring to rhetoric and composition particularly. But as I close the dissertation, I want to return to this question. In a project by the organization Campus in Camps at Princeton University, a community of scholars created definitions for academic terms...
that intend to provoke the question “whether the current configuration of the university serves the high ideals for the humanistic tradition” (A Community of Inquiry XIV). In this text, “discipline” is defined as “a category of human knowledge constituted through the sedimentation of objects, methods, bibliographies, traditions, conversations, and debates--usually in an institutional space” (15). Acknowledging the interchangeability between the terms “discipline” and “field,” the authors also make an excellent point about how “fields” “suspend the arguable separation between professions and disciplines” (29). These two definitions are particularly relevant to rhetoric and composition as it has been wrestling with the tensions between the profession of teaching writing and the research of writing and rhetorical studies. The term “field” is important because of its broad and fluid implications, while “discipline,” equally crucial, allows for more legitimization of writing research within institutional spaces. That legitimization of writing research can then support the teaching of writing in terms of course and curriculum development and the labor conditions of teachers.

In a recently published collection Composition, Rhetoric, and Disciplinarity, the editors argue for the importance and beneficial implications of treating rhetoric and composition as a discipline even though a “discipline” risks carrying “a sense of being fixed and hegemonic” while a “field” “is understood to be both less hierarchical and more fluid” (Malenczyk, Miller-Cochran, Wardle, and Yancey). Claiming disciplinarity, the editors argue, can have material consequences for the work we do as we shape the discipline and try to be more intentional in the actions we take to shape it. Blending teaching and research together instead of positioning them on opposite planes, the editors argue that “with such a claim [of disciplinarity], we can speak more authoritatively on writing matters and widen our research efforts to include writing beyond the classroom as we continue our commitment to students” (7). Recognizing disciplinarity
encompasses both teaching and research is an important move, one that should have impact on other disciplines, especially those that place less value on pedagogical practices and pedagogy-related research.

This dissertation has paid explicit attention to the professional and disciplinary activity that members of academia have been participating in, arguing for its values in contributing the disciplinarity of rhetoric and composition. In doing this work and using “discipline” and “field” interchangeably, I implicitly argue that disciplinary work should be open and heterogeneous, accounting for the processes, movements, and changes that continually shape the field. As Reid and Miller argue, disciplines are actually mistakenly seen as closed categories but really “continually emergent intellectual categories of networked interests, goals, and practices” (89). In chapter one, I organized the scholarship on disciplinarity into three types of approaches: epistemic, organizational, and social and rhetorical. In fact, the challenge of organizing this body of scholarship into these three categories for me reflects the productive conceptualization of disciplinarity as “sociohistorical phenomena, as well as intellectual enterprises” (Reid and Miller 89). Embodied experiences in disciplinary social spaces studied in this dissertation reflect both the tension between the need to professionalize as perceived by members of the field and the heterogeneous nature of the disciplinarity. As Reid and Miller discuss the implications of conceptualizing disciplines as networks on reified institutional structures, I wonder about the implications of reified professional structures on disciplinary networks.

Invoking Wenger-Trayner’s work on the concept of knowledgeability, Linda Adler-Kassner calls for reconceiving disciplinarity through the idea of knowledgeability, which “involves drawing on expertise within one community of practice and its regime of competence, then attempting to listen to and understand, as thoroughly as possible, the elements of
competence that exists within one or more other communities within shared landscape” (311). In the contexts of networked disciplinary social spaces, how can individuals and sub-disciplines or organizations enact the knowledgeability, and what I might call “professional ability,” by both asserting our own labor, identities, values, and work as well as being open to others’ labor, identities, values, and work? I pose this question both for rhetoric and composition and further for other disciplinary communities of practice.
WORKS CITED

A Community of Inquiry. Keywords; For Further Consideration and Particularly Relevant to Academic Life, especially as it concerns Disciplines, Inter-disciplinary Endeavor, and Modes of Resistance to the Same. IHUM Books, Princeton University Press, 2018.


“FAQs About the CCCC Annual Convention.” Conference on College Composition and Communication, 17 Apr, 2018, http://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/conv/faq


Heckathorn, Amy. “Moving Toward a Group Identity: WPA Professionalization from the 1940s to the 1970s.” *Historical Studies of Writing Program Administration: Individuals,*


Schwalm, David. “Quick Question.” Received by Chen Chen, 2 December. 2015.


APPENDICES
Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Survey

Survey Questions:
Question 1. What’s your full name?
Question 2. What’s your gender?
Question 3. How old are you?
Question 4. Affiliated institution
Question 5. Preferred email address to be used for future contact for this study:
Question 6. What’s your professional status?
  - Graduate Student
  - Non-tenure track faculty
  - Tenure-track junior faculty
  - Tenure-track senior faculty
  - Retired
  - Other (please specify):
Question 7. How would you describe your participation level on WPA-L?
  - I post frequently
  - I post sometimes
  - I seldom post
  - I’m a lurker
  - I no longer subscribe to WPA-L but I still post to it or check the archive
  - I no longer subscribe to WPA-L and don’t post or check it
  - I’ve never subscribed to WPA-L
  - Other (please specify):
Question 8. How would you describe your participation pattern at CCCC?
  - I attend every year since I’ve been in the field
  - I attend only when I present
  - I attend intermittently, regardless of whether I present or not
  - My attendance frequency has changed over the years
  - I will be a first-time attendee at CCCC 2017
Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for CCCC Participants

1. Have you been to CCCC? How often have you attended? Or do you plan to attend in the future? Why?
2. What do you perceive the role of CCCC is?
3. Why do you attend CCCC or not? In general, or any given year?
4. What other external factors affect your attending the conference?
5. What other academic conferences do you attend? How are they different or similar to CCCC?
6. What are the advantages of CCCC for you, personally and professionally? Disadvantages?
7. What’s most important about an academic conference? What do you think its purposes and goals should be?
8. What’s your favorite thing to do at C’s? Least favorite?
9. Have you had unpleasant experiences at CCCC?
10. What other informal scholarly communication platforms/venues do you use? Which ones do you use most often?
11. Based on your reporting of the activities (if applied), how would you assess your experience this year?
12. How did you plan your conference trip?
13. How did you plan your conference experience? (schedule, etc.)
14. Have you made new friends and/or connected with old friends this year? Do you interact or plan to interact with them at other platforms?
15. Have you done something new this year?

**Semi-Structured Interview Questions for WPA-L participants**

1. Do you use WPA-L? Why or why not?

2. How do you use the listserv? Why? (follow-up questions on specific details of the use)

3. How long have you used it? Have you participated on the listserv differently over the years? Why?

4. If you have sent messages to the listserv, how do you craft your messages knowing how people may respond? If you have not sent messages, why?

5. How would you describe your relationship with WPA-L and the people in that community?

6. Have you made new friends on the list and/or reconnected with old friends? Do you interact with them at other places besides WPA-L?

7. Have you had unpleasant experiences on the listserv where exclusionary language was used, or if you saw anything offensive?

8. Do you know if there is a back channel to WPA-L? If so, what does it look like and do you engage in those conversations?

9. Will you continue to use the listserv in the same way or not in the future? Why?

10. How do you see this list contribute to your career?

11. How do you think this list will evolve in the future?

12. What other informal scholarly communication platforms/venues do you use? Which ones do you use most often?

**Semi-Structured Interview Questions for WPA-L manager**
1. When did you take over the task to manage the WPA-L?

2. What do you have to do to manage the listserv?

3. What are the challenges of the job?

4. How has your job as manager of the listserv changed over the years?

5. How do you see this job in relation to your other academic and professional duties?

6. What do you see as the future of the listserv?

**Semi-Structured Interview Questions for CCCC 2017 Program Chair**

1. When and how did you get selected to be the program chair for CCCC 2017?

2. Can you describe to me the process of organizing this conference?

3. What did you find most enjoyable and most challenging of the whole process?

4. How do you feel now that the conference is almost here?

5. How did you balance your work of planning the conference with your other academic and professional duties?

6. How do you perceive the role of CCCC in our discipline?

7. How do you feel now that the conference is over?

8. When do you see your responsibilities as conference program chair end?

9. How do you think the conference carried out?
   a. What were some most emotional moments you have had since the conference started?
   b. What have you gained from this experience?

10. How do you perceive the role of CCCC in our discipline?
Appendix C: Activity Recording Card

Front Page

Please fill in time increments in the table from the moment you wake up till the moment you go to bed on that day, divided either based on your activities or movements of the day. Following is a list of typical activities that people tend to engage in, coded in one word for easy recording, but please also include other activities that you’ve done with your own words. You should be recording your activities as you are conducting them or shortly after. You may go back and add some details at the end of the day. You may use provided emoji stickers to help you record your feelings and activities. Please do not write your name on the card. Return the card to Chen when you are finished. She can be reached at 443-207-2268.

Activity codes:

Social: meeting with people (old/new) to socialize

Encounter: running into people/meeting people while on the way to something else

Attending: attending a session/business meeting (please note session number or meeting name)

Leading: presenting/chair a session or conducting a business meeting

Play: exploring various tables set up on the site of different organizations (please note which table and what you are doing, for example, recording a literacy narrative for DALN or getting a sparkle pony for C’s the Day)

Exhibit: visiting the exhibit hall

Explore: exploring the city of Portland

Break: when you are not doing “conference stuff” or “socializing” (please specify what you are doing, for example, checking emails, grading papers, etc.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Where are you?</th>
<th>What are you doing?</th>
<th>What are you feeling?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 7:30am</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30-8:15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30-10:00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-11:45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15-1:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45-3:00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:15-4:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:45-6:00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 6pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix D: Coding Schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Categories</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>Sub-codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cs Activities</td>
<td>Conference activities (including all specific activities my participants mentioned)</td>
<td>Professional actions, personal/professional actions, personal actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why do I go to Cs</td>
<td>Professional reasons, disciplinary reasons, personal reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discovering Cs (without being directly asked, some participants told me how they first learned about the conference)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can I go to Cs</td>
<td>Money, time, family, professional duties, disciplinary duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning conference experiences (including various activities to plan what to do at the conference either at 2017 or in general)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning the conference trip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Cs</td>
<td>Advancing the field</td>
<td>To serve people, to share knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bringing people together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critiquing the conference</td>
<td>Convention design, social interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gatekeeping role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Representing the field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPA-L Activities</td>
<td>Why do I use WPA-L</td>
<td>Professional, disciplinary, personal reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do I use WPA-L</td>
<td>“generative interactions,” lurking, organizing WPA-L emails, passing on posts to others, posting to the list, responding off list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not subscribing to the list</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of WPA-L</td>
<td>A bulletin board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A community of practice</td>
<td>A teaching space, self-regulating, self-sustained wiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional space for composition conversations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing resources/opportunities/support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changing nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Sites (other conferences,)</td>
<td>Other academic conferences</td>
<td>ATTW, CWPA, IWCA, IWAC, CWCON, Conference on Community Writing, Cs Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social network sites, groups, etc.)</td>
<td>Conferences, ISHR, MLA, RSA, SSLW, Watson, WRAB, WSRL, FemRhet, ICIL, ISotl, TESOL, AACU, other small regional conferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online social networking sites</td>
<td>Facebook, Twitter, MOO, other listservs (such as WCenter-L), resource portals, NCTE connected community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local groups</td>
<td>Writing groups with colleagues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional energy flow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Excited for networking, belonging in the field, energized by learning, gratified for the connections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Hesitant to post on WPA-L, frustrated by loud voices on WPA-L, stressed and exhausted, hungry at conventions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>