

Structural Barriers to Interdisciplinarity: A Case Study of VCU Women's Studies

When one looks at the websites or other materials from most women's studies programs or departments nationally, one will find a generous use of the term "interdisciplinary" to describe the academic work and teaching that women's studies does in the academy. In fact, because women's studies has been institutionalized for about forty years in the U.S. now, considering the field to be interdisciplinary is almost a given. The tag of "interdisciplinary" indicates something radical or new, something postmodern, something without boundaries, or a scholarly practice that happens on the borders of traditional disciplines. However, it is responsible to investigate this notion, particularly how interdisciplinary programs function within traditional university structures to investigate if this is truly the case. In addition, scholars who theorize discipline-formation and regulation often point to Julie Thompson Klein's assertion that many use the term "interdisciplinary" with out any clear definition of the term. (Shumway and Messer-Davidow 213). In order for the term not to remain an empty signifier for the purposes of my argument, I will discuss it below.

In defining interdisciplinarity, Joe Moran claims that there are "competing impulses behind the term," (15). One impulse in defining interdisciplinarity is to return to a more generalized knowledge, a conservative view. The other "represents a more radical questioning of the nature of knowledge itself and our attempts to organize and communicate it. In this sense, interdisciplinarity interlocks with concerns about epistemology--the study of knowledge--and tends to be centred around problems and issues that cannot be addressed or solved within the existing disciplines, rather than the quest for an all-inclusive synthesis," (15). Moran goes on to say that, following the work of Geoffrey Bennington, "inter" can mean joining *or* separation, and thus "can suggest forging connections across the different disciplines; but it can also mean establishing a kind of undisciplined space in the interstices between disciplines or even attempting to transcend disciplinary boundaries altogether," (15). The tension between these two prevailing understandings of interdisciplinarity is what creates the ambiguity of the term. One of the main questions that drives my inquiry is whether women's studies merely works across disciplines, or if women's studies indeed functions in the liminal spaces between disciplines. Is gender/feminist theory the LCD of certain areas of critique within disciplines (the "unifying" or synthesizing force across disciplines) or is women's studies doing something completely different altogether?

Working from Barthes, Moran deepens the idea of interdisciplinarity, in that it "can form part of a more general critique of academic specialization as a whole, and of the nature of the university that cuts itself off from the outside world in small enclaves of expertise," (16). Moran is accurate that feminist theory is "about challenging the values and priorities of the existing disciplines rather than merely integrating them," and that feminism's critique of the disciplines is rooted in an ambivalence over how power is structured within universities and how (often) the experiences and work of women are marginalized and devalued, (102). Even given this well-known and discussed critique that the field of women's studies has of disciplinary knowledge and knowledge-production, it is questionable whether women's studies programs and departments actually serve this ideal purpose.

In Shumway and Messer-Davidow's essay, "Disciplinarity," they explore the history of discipline formation, and make cogent points about how discipline formation allowed practitioners to establish their authority by cordoning off their area of knowledge and making it exclusive. Further, the structures within universities developed to give disciplines more power over the gatekeeping of their respective bodies of knowledge, because departments were given the power to hire, grant tenure/promotion, and fire. The departments were (and still are) kept "in check" by national organizations, also organized around disciplines, (207-208). Within a larger institutional structure where disciplines do this border policing, creating and maintaining interdisciplinary programs is quite the challenge, and though women's studies departments have been vocal about this regulation of borders and the "disciplining" of disciplines, avoiding becoming a discipline in order to survive in the institution has become women's studies' biggest challenge.

Shumway and Messer-Davidow are accurate in describing disciplines as having a metaphorical geography, with frontiers and fields that can be explored or mapped, and yes, boundaries that are either loosely or rigorously policed and reinforced (209). Feminist and queer scholars have made much of this border metaphor in their academic work, often claiming that their "outsider" status allows them to accurately critique the institutions that marginalize them. While the breadth and depth of the work being done in feminist and queer studies on this topic attests to the fact that this is so, my issue is whether the institutional structures that usually house these scholars are set up and maintained in a way that allows this border space to be truly actualized.

Feminist theory, as Shumway and Messer-Davidow point out, due to its challenging of traditional epistemologies, would also challenge the "impermeability" of the sciences. Citing Harding, Shumway and Messer-Davidow outline how the feminist critique of the "hard" sciences is that they too are socially constructed and socially regulated, and thus can be studied from a social sciences or humanities perspective. (211). This is an important point, as feminist and queer scholars have continually questioned the hegemony of the sciences model in institutional structures and research methodologies. Further, drawing from Foucault and others, Shumway and Messer-Davidow bring to light the idea that disciplining knowledge in universities contributes to other methods of discipline outside the academy (i.e. the asylum, the prison, etc.) (212). In addition, the way that funding flows from private enterprise into universities contributes to the hegemony of the "hard" sciences model, as the "hard" sciences are seen as the "breadwinners" and thus have more "value." Departments and programs in the humanities struggle to keep up, to prove their legitimacy.

However, as I will argue below, in the words of scholar and theorist Maria Lugones, if one asks a colonial question, one will get a colonial answer. To have a field's legitimacy depend on the hegemonic model of the physical sciences keeps humanities and interdisciplinary programs in a perpetual race that they cannot win. Another notion to consider is that yes, disciplining knowledge contributes to other methods of discipline outside the university, but this disciplining flows in both directions. Universities are also disciplined by the structures outside the institution. This points to a larger question of borders between the university and the public sphere, and, as many feminist and queer theorists attest, this border is highly permeable, for better (in the case of activism and community service) or worse (in the case of cash flow and questions of legitimacy).

Disciplining Women's Studies

I conducted a case study of the Women's Studies Department at Virginia Commonwealth University as a way to probe some of the questions and issues raised above. Because the Women's Studies Department at VCU is relatively new (much newer than other women's studies departments nationally), I felt it could be instructive to study its formation within the context of theorizing interdisciplinarity, in the hope of highlighting structural challenges to interdisciplinary programs and to theorize possible solutions to these challenges.

Virginia Commonwealth University was created in 1968 by merging Richmond Professional Institute (RPI) and the Medical College of Virginia (MCV). At that time, RPI had a standing School of Arts and Sciences, which had been created in 1966 and featured departments of Biology, Chemistry, English, Foreign Languages, History and Political Science. A Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies was added in 1967. When VCU was organized and formed in 1968, departments of Physics, Physical Sciences, and Mathematics were formed. Journalism, Sociology, and Psychology shifted to the School of the Arts and Sciences in 1969, and in the early 1970's departments of History and Geography joined the School. The School's name was changed to the College of Humanities and Sciences in 1981, and a School of Mass Communications was also instituted in 1981 ("History"). Due to its relationship to MCV, the newly formed VCU had an obligation to prepare students for work in the health sciences. VCU's equally important affiliation with a nationally recognized arts program also pulled resources to focus on the arts. Over the last four decades, VCU has evolved into a Tier II research university, adding a School of Business, School of Education, and School of Engineering.

This evolution of the university into one of the largest universities in the state necessitated building a robust general education program, which has been, and still is, largely housed in the College of Humanities and Sciences. The centralization of the College as workhorse for the University's general education program has allowed the departments within the College to grow, and for some to flourish, despite, and because of, the dual focus on the arts and health sciences. The story of women's studies at VCU reflects this, as does its struggle for existence and legitimacy. As many stories about institutions go (if not all stories), this is a story about power and its distribution. It is also a story about a dedication, drive, and activism. And, finally, it is a story about discipline.

In 1986, Elise Smith was Dean of the College of the Humanities and Sciences, and the previous year had convened a task force to determine the possibility of starting a Women's Studies Program at VCU. On this task force were Lynn Bloom, Chair of English; Betsy Brinson, Adjunct in Sociology; Susan Kennedy, Professor of History; Diana Scully, Associate Professor of Sociology; and Leslie Slavin, Assistant Professor of Psychology. In her "Memorandum to all Department Chairmen" on November 3, 1986, Dr. Smith entreats department chairs in the College to entertain the idea of having a women's studies program. She says the institution of such a program is underway, and a grant proposal had been submitted to offer a seminar for faculty in the Summer of 1987. She comments on the importance of such a program in her memo: "As you may have noted, the Preliminary Report from the Academic Planning Committee mentions the possibility of VCU having a Women's Studies Program. It is my feeling that it is

indeed high time that VCU did offer a minor in Women's Studies. Most universities have been at it for years already," (Smith, "Women's Studies Task Force"). In fact, most universities *had* been at it for years. The first women's studies program was formed at San Diego State University in 1970, and from 1970 through the mid-eighties, women's studies programs were being formed nationally. Dr. Smith held considerable power in the university's largest unit, so it does without saying that her support of the fledgling women's studies program at VCU was partially responsible for its formation.

The task force's report, authored by the scholars mentioned above, outlines the need for the establishment of Women's Studies at VCU, but first struggles with the definition of women's studies, and it is here that one can see the slippage with disciplines:

From the beginning, Women's Studies programs, though diverse in form, have shared a common dual purpose--to supplement male-centered curriculum by adding new courses on women and to establish women as a legitimate topic for study and research. With maturity, Women's Studies also evolved into a curricular strategy for change through challenging come of the assumptions upon which traditional knowledge rests, (Bloom, et al, 1)

Here we see that the challenge to traditional epistemologies and discipline-formation are integral to the field of women's studies. The report goes on to say:

It is evident from our discussions with faculty colleagues that the meaning of the term 'women's studies' varies considerably. Consequently we offer the following working definition of the term for reference as it is used throughout this report...Women's Studies is *perforce interdisciplinary*, embracing the arts, humanities, education, social and physical sciences--indeed every branch on the tree of knowledge. Feminist scholarship informs (or should inform) the teaching and research in courses offered under this rubric, and is 'rooted simultaneously in the (specific) disciplinary structures of contemporary intellectual inquiry and in a social movement(Dubois, 2). Thus Women's Studies transcends the inclusion in particular courses of materials by women authors or women as subjects for study, though this might be the first step in what [Peggy] McIntosh calls the 'transformation of the curriculum," (Bloom, et al, 2, emphasis mine).

This transcendence points to the transformative model of curriculum, in that the vision would be that the critical study of gender and its construction would ideally be integrated within the disciplines as well as courses solely dedicated to this purpose. Thus, looking back to Moran's discussion above, the goal here seems to be to both synthesize and to work in the borders between disciplines.

Bloom, et al, in their "Women's Studies Task Force Report," outline a number of disciplinary and epistemological issues facing the university. First, they discuss a multitude of disciplines, from English to Psychology, and the androcentric focus of these disciplines. Then, they outline the ways of thinking that are privileged within these disciplines (2-3). They continue their argument for curriculum transformation from the inside-out, not simply the "add women and stir" approach, but re-examining androcentric epistemologies as well, and opening up traditional

ways of knowing and conducting research to new paradigms. They state that these changes will seem radical or controversial, but "contend that only from such change and reexamination of what has for centuries been an academic tradition dominated by white male professors and researchers can growth and understanding occur," (4).

Drawing from Florence Howe's "Toward Women's Studies in the Eighties," published in the 1979 *Women's Studies Newsletter*, the Task Force writers outline how interdisciplinarity in the form of a Women's Studies program at VCU would work: "...there are sound pedagogical reasons that make Women's Studies particularly appropriate to the goals of a liberal education and the mission of the College of Humanities and Sciences. Women's Studies is interdisciplinary and unifying, it teaches skills in critical analysis, it assumes a problem-solving stance, it clarifies the issue of value-judgment in education, and it promotes socially useful ends," (5). This description of Women's Studies as both interdisciplinary and unifying, due to the skills, positionality, and values it promotes makes for a bold and idealistic statement. The assumption here is that feminist research and pedagogy are the means by which interdisciplinary work gets done. Implicit in this report as well, is the ideal picture of a faculty across disciplines, working together to achieve these feminist goals in higher education. We cannot, of course, dismiss this vision, as we are here precisely because of this vision. The question remains, however, whether Women's Studies at VCU, or at its peer institutions, was able to achieve an ideal interdisciplinarity, or if the original goal and its effect remains transdisciplinary or multidisciplinary.

The original curriculum proposal in this report points to this both/and approach to establishing a women's studies program at a major state university. We see both courses that are decidedly interdisciplinary like the Introduction to Women's Studies (Women's Studies 101), which is described as an interdisciplinary course, "spanning the disciplines of thought affecting women's lives in biology, history, literature, economics, sociology, and psychology, as well as the changing legal and socio-economic relationships between men and women," (6). We also see humanities courses in English (Women in Literature, Women Writers), and History (History of Women), as well as social sciences courses in Psychology (Psychology of Women, Adult Development), and Sociology (The Family, Sociology of the Black Family, Sex Roles).

In addition to a rationale, and proposed curriculum, the task force also issued a few recommendations: that a Women's Studies program be established as soon as possible, that a program coordinator for Women's Studies be appointed (with faculty rank and joint-appointment in Women's Studies and another academic department), that all students (male and female) be encouraged to attend these courses, that a "Friends of Women's Studies" support group be formed, and that women faculty in the College of Humanities and Sciences form a network to exchange ideas, mentor one another, and discuss current scholarship in Women's Studies. It should be noted that the recommendations in the curriculum include the creation of cross-listed courses within existing disciplines. The only "new" courses that were proposed are the Introduction to Women's Studies course and a Perspectives in Women's Studies course, intended as a capstone course (Bloom, et al. 6-7).

Susan Hartmann outlines some of the issues with cross-listed courses and the challenges facing fledgling (and to some extent, established) women's studies programs in her article in the National Women's Studies Association Newsletter (Winter 1991 issue). This list of "essential resources for Women's Studies Programs" came out of a collective effort from

women's studies program directors at "Big Ten" universities, and includes a list of what women's studies programs need, in terms of resources, to be truly effective. What is interesting about this list is how the case for resources stems out of an assertion of women's studies as an interdisciplinary field. For example, in the case for dedicated faculty to women's studies, the reasoning is that women's studies dedicated faculty would serve an interdisciplinary function, teaching both for women's studies and for a traditional academic discipline. This mirrors the vision in the Task Force report, where, following the model of then-called "Afro-American Studies", faculty would work both in women's studies AND a traditional academic discipline. Also, in Hartmann's article, she asserts that faculty with joint-appointments in women's studies and another discipline need to be protected from being overburdened with service work due to the dual nature of their work. This notion has been propagated since, with faculty and administrators alike avoiding joint appointments due to their complexity.

The idea that a faculty member with a "joint" appointment in women's studies and "another" discipline would do "double" the work (and the fact that this has become common practice with jointly appointed faculty) negates the vision of women's studies as integrated into the disciplines. The unease with which administrators and faculty approach joint-appointments suggests a view that a joint-appointment is a multi-disciplinary position, rather than an interdisciplinary one. Hartmann states, "Faculty members with appointments in two academic units experience greater committee work, larger numbers of student advisees, and the need to keep current in *two* scholarly fields. Where possible, teaching loads should reflect these *greater burdens* by allowing regular release time from teaching, such as one semester every three years," (5, emphasis mine). In addition, Hartmann points to the duties that women's studies faculty and staff would perform as across disciplines and in the community (serving on hiring committees, faculty development seminars, dealing with the media, etc.). Particularly telling is Hartmann's call for larger travel budgets, as women's studies faculty would need to "attend two sets of professional meetings--those in Women's Studies and those in the faculty member's disciplinary area," (5). This notion that women's studies scholars would need to be current both in women's studies and a traditional discipline suggests that working in the borders between disciplines is not an option if the field is to survive within the institution. Again, questions of legitimacy arise, as it is clear that merely working in and publishing in the field of women's studies is not enough. Work in a traditional discipline must be done in order to legitimize the work in women's studies.

Over the summer of 1987, Diana Scully and others began to draft an outline of a possible Women's Studies Program, based on the work of the Task Force. Scully was the primary architect behind this structuring. In an archive of notes labeled "WMNS Organization '87", a hand-written outline of structural ideas pre-dates the more formal proposals, and within these notes written in Scully's impeccable pen(wo)manship, one is witness to the genesis of a department, the formation of an academic area of study, and how existing institutional structure plays into this formation.

Elske Smith then worked from Scully's proposal, creating a "reaction document," and sent it to Lynn Bloom, Diana Scully, Susan Kennedy, and Dorothy Scura on September 27, 1987. This proposal was based on the Task Force's recommendations and Scully's initial thoughts and its intended audience was the University curriculum committees and eventually SCHEV (State Council for Higher Education in Virginia). This draft of the proposal included the

establishment of an "affiliate faculty" which would be expected to teach "a Women's Studies course on average once a year. Such courses may be cross-listed with their home departments," (1). At the end of this proposal, Smith muses, "How to motivate faculty to participate?" and one of her answers is "Appeal to interests (a number of faculty ARE working on women's issues in their research &/or teaching," (3). So, here we are at a seeming impasse, in regard to how people working within institutions define and create programs with interdisciplinarity in mind. On one hand, Smith is arguing that faculty teaching for Women's Studies will have "home" departments and that if possible, there could be cross-listed courses coming out of the hybrid relationship between Women's Studies and whatever "home" discipline the faculty member took part. This notion is complicated by her assertion that people already ARE working with gender in their academic work, regardless of department/discipline. Structurally, this notion that faculty be shared across disciplines either through joint-appointments of "affiliate" status contributes to the double-bind of disciplining women's studies. Ideally, faculty from the traditional disciplines would come together to teach and work within the field of women's studies, but without dedicated faculty to women's studies, there would be no guarantee that this work would get done. So, women's studies either has to depend upon the traditional disciplines to keep it afloat or cordon itself off and form its own discipline.

In a memo to Bonnie Robinson, then director of the Council on the Status of Women, Dr. Diana Scully outlined the (slightly) evolved curriculum for the Women's Studies minor, which includes renamed/revamped courses and new courses in Sociology (Sociology of Sex and Gender, and Sociology of Women) (Scully, 1988). In Dr. Scully's proposal to the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, dated October 17, 1988, Scully cited The American Council on Education's January 1988 report entitled "The New Agenda of Women in Higher Education," where the importance of Women's Studies programs was highlighted. Furthermore, the report recommends that colleges and universities adopt Women's Studies programs. (Scully, October 1988, 2). In this proposal, Scully reasserts that "Women's Studies is perforce interdisciplinary....because its questions cannot be adequately answered within any single disciplinary framework," (Scully, October 1988, 3). Scully goes on to attempt to clarify the disciplinary or definitional conundrum later in that paragraph: "Although Women's Studies draws from all of the traditional disciplines, it is also a separate discipline within the academy. Like other disciplines, Women's Studies has a defined intellectual territory, an evolving methodology, and a separate set of paradigms that inform the study of women. Thus, courses taught under the rubric of Women's Studies are simultaneously informed by feminist scholarship and rooted in the specific disciplinary structures of contemporary intellectual inquiry," (Scully October 1988 3). Here we can see the ambivalence over discipline-formation when it comes to the field of women's studies. On one hand, Scully argues for discipline-formation as a way to legitimize women's studies within the academy. On the other hand, Scully argues for the interdisciplinary nature of women's studies as transcending these boundaries or borders.

In 1988, Diana Scully was appointed Coordinator of Women's Studies by the Dean at the time, Elske Smith. The minor in Women's Studies proposal made its way through the undergraduate curriculum committee structure and was approved in February of 1989, effective Fall 1989. (Scully 1990 2). In 1988, the task force requested funding from the Virginia Higher Education Council to create and teach "interdisciplinary Women's Studies faculty seminars" for the dual purpose of expanding the undergraduate curriculum by including a multicultural study of

women and to provide an interdisciplinary minor. In the report generated after these seminars, Scully wrote about how the Women's Studies program had grown in the year and a half since the minor in Women's Studies was approved. Of the nineteen Women's Studies courses offered during the school year 1989-1990, only two were not cross-listed in other departments (Scully 1990 11). This grant funding was used to launch the fledgling Women's Studies Program at VCU.

Within the materials from 1988-1990 is an undated piece of writing with marginalia in Scully's handwriting. The piece is entitled "Barriers to Interdisciplinary Studies" and it is a fascinating document, particularly if one reads it in the context of what was happening with Women's Studies at VCU in the late '80's and early '90's. It is remarkable that many of these debates around disciplinary work exist today, even with there being 700 Women's/Gender Studies Programs or Departments nationally, with 47 of these programs offering graduate degrees (Kimmich, et al. 58-60). Scully remarks: "Perhaps the greatest impediment to interdisciplinary work is the organization of universities into schools/colleges consisting of related departments based on disciplines. The discipline/department structure promotes strong disciplinary identification, rigid disciplinary boundaries, a sense of exclusiveness, turf protection and competition. This has a number of consequences," (1, strike-through intentional). In the margin is a note that says "I.S. [Interdisciplinary studies] requires cooperation, negotiation, and fluidity," (1). This vision of interdisciplinary studies being fluid and collaborative lies in stark contrast with the challenges to disciplinarity Scully outlines throughout the document. As long as promotion and tenure are granted at the departmental level, there will be faculty and research allegiance to that department, and thus that discipline, (1). Furthermore, journals and presses that publish in the disciplines are privileged and journals and presses publishing interdisciplinary work are marginalized, complicating promotion and tenure. The question of how interdisciplinary work is reviewed and evaluated also weighs on the researcher hoping for promotion/tenure (2-3). In addition, allocation of funds usually roll along departmental lines, and departmental funds might not be available for teaching across disciplines, collaboration with other researchers/faculty across disciplines, or for funding travel to interdisciplinary conferences, (2). Scully asserts (and we find this true even today) that "The location of interdisciplinary programs within a college or school makes moving between schools cumbersome. At some point it may be necessary to examine whether such programs would be better served if they were located under central administration," (3). At the end of this document, Scully entreats her audience (presumably university faculty and administration) to "become more accomodative (sic)," perhaps moving to a model using "learning centers" or other structures not based on the departmental model. At the very end of the document, Scully brings up the issue of "gatekeeping" and wonders how the "integrity of individual disciplines" would remain intact (4). This document speaks to a deep ambivalence about how university structures will change in order to adapt to the rise of interdisciplinary programs like women's studies. On one hand, there is a hopefulness to interdisciplinary work. It is fluid, collaborative, generative. On the other hand, the "integrity" of disciplines remains a concern, as does the future of faculty careers and research.

In the "Mission Statement of the Women's Studies Program," dated March 4, 1994, Scully outlines the importance of interdisciplinary work to the growth of Women's Studies and the overall intellectual health of the University. Scully asserts that "[Women's Studies] engages

faculty and students from a variety of disciplines in research, teaching, and public service, encourages faculty research and development, offers a minor for undergraduates, and provides professional expertise both within and outside the university community...Like other interdisciplinary programs, Women's Studies recognizes the power and promise of crossing departmental lines," (1). Of course, at this point, with the success of the program depending entirely on "affiliate" faculty members, this "promise" is also making lemonade out of lemons in that in order for Women's Studies to survive on the institutional level, it must cross these borders. However, what is missing from this model is the institutional assurance of survival in the form of dedicated permanent funding to women's studies.

In the summer of 1994, Diana Scully wrote a five-year report, which examined the first five years of the Women's Studies Program. This report shows the slow institutionalization of Women's Studies at VCU, from there being a few courses taught in different disciplines, to a minor being formed with a few more courses, to over 28 courses being offered on a regular basis. (Scully 1994 3). From this report, we can see the trajectory of institutionalization, primarily depending on the traditional disciplines to "donate" or dedicate faculty to the teaching of the courses. On one hand, it points to the importance that the traditional disciplines were placing on the study of gender within their disciplines, but crossing borders is not the same thing as working within the borderland or liminal space between disciplines.

In January of 1995, Diana Scully wrote a draft for discussion, based on the question of the "quality" of Women's Studies courses at VCU. Because, at the time, there wasn't a capstone Women's Studies course, and because there was only a minor being offered, it was nearly impossible to assess students in traditional ways. Scully suggested an alternate rubric for assessment in which faculty development, student involvement, scholarship/grants, and professional leadership were the categories upon which the quality of the program should be determined. This posits a larger question of how an interdisciplinary program is to be assessed. As is the case with all state colleges and universities, each unit must assess and report their successes based on a standardized model. This brings back to the table questions over which model should be used with such assessment. Scully is attempting here to define alternate methods of assessment which better fit interdisciplinary work, but the question of how to assess on the state level remains.

In the summer of 1995, Diana Scully published a report entitled "Women's Studies Program: Three Year Performance Plan" in which she outlined the successes and challenges of the first five years of the Women's Studies Department at VCU. The successes included high levels of student engagement and the growth of the program. This report also cites the importance of developing a Women's Studies major. Scully enumerates the challenges of depending upon affiliate faculty to teach courses in Women's Studies: "...the Women's Studies program relies primarily on affiliate faculty to teach its courses. This means that Women's Studies has little influence in hiring priorities and also lacks the type of stability which can best be achieved through permanent faculty who are obligated to Women's Studies for some proportion of their teaching," (1). The dependence of Women's Studies on affiliate faculty who are primarily bound to their "home" disciplines creates an uncomfortable instability in the program, as faculty are continually pulled back into their "home" disciplines. Scully's vision of how to combat this issue is to dedicate faculty to Women's Studies. In one sense, this is the only foreseeable solution to housing an interdisciplinary program within a unit that is discipline-

bound. In a Foucauldian sense, one can see how Women's Studies is surveilled and regulated by the structures within it must work. Because higher education seems perpetually in need of additional funding and resources, joint-appointments or full appointments seem to be the only structural way within the existing system to make the program viable.

Scully was continually comparing VCU to its peer institutions in her administrative work. As of the mid-1990's, fourteen of VCU's twenty-one peer institutions had Women's Studies majors, and seven of these institutions offered some sort of graduate program (whether it was a Women's Studies minor within other graduate programs, a graduate certificate, or a full MA or PhD program), (Scully, "VCU Peer Institutions," 1). However, at this time, most of these women's studies programs or departments still depended heavily on affiliate faculty for their success, which, though stated before as ideal to interdisciplinary work in one sense, also contributes to the structural instability of women's studies as a field within colleges and universities.

In the five years between 1995-2000, the Women's Studies Program at VCU was able to grow by adding more courses and two joint faculty appointments. However, Scully remarks in her three year report in 1999, that there isn't an administrative hiring policy that "favors departmental candidates with teaching interest in Women's Studies," (2). Also, during this time the proposal to approve a major in African American Studies at VCU was rejected by the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia, which was unfortunate, to say the least, as African-American Studies at VCU had traditionally been aligned with Women's Studies, with both being relatively new AND interdisciplinary programs in the University. This came as a particular threat to Women's Studies, because the political climate in Virginia under conservative governor George Allen (who appointed eleven people to SCHEV the year African-American Studies submitted its proposal) was hostile to such programs. In an article in the Richmond Times-Dispatch about African-American Studies' bid for departmental status and to offer a major at VCU, the proposal was seen by some SCHEV members as an attempt to "balkanize" the VCU campus by "separating such topics into separate courses," (1). Some of the other criticisms, according to the article, center on "whether the history, culture, and experiences of Black America warrant the creation of a degree program in that field," (1).

So, we have two issues at work here. The first is an issue of discipline-formation (seen as "balkanization"), and the second is the issue of questioning the legitimacy of such an area of study (which also intersects with the first issue). It is also important to remember that African-American Studies is an interdisciplinary program which was the model for the evolution of Women's Studies at VCU, so watching African-American Studies go through this process and have to return to the drawing board must have been a threat to Scully's vision for a Women's Studies Department at VCU. It is telling that African-American Studies offered courses in the field since 1971, but their proposal took until 2003 to pass SCHEV (Janis 1).

These issues of discipline-formation and legitimacy are permeated by socio-cultural implications of legitimacy. Cultural studies has long been the target of racist and sexist notions of legitimacy, and one way to control this is to hinder institutionalization of cultural studies programs and departments at the university level. Cultural studies also challenges traditional university (and therefore disciplinary) structures, and calls into question the seeming rigidity of disciplinary borders. This destabilizes traditional power structures within institutions of higher learning, and is often viewed as a threat to traditional disciplines. The public reaction as outlined

in the Richmond Times-Dispatch article also is telling, as it points to how the larger public partakes in the structuring of departments and programs within the university. Cultural studies has had a long-time affiliation with the communities within which the academic institutions reside, but support can turn the other way, particularly in a political climate that does not value diversity, or interdisciplinarity.

In 2001, the Women's Studies Program was able to launch a Women's Studies major track within the Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies Program, which had nineteen students in the first year majoring in this track (Scully 2003 1). The years between 2001 and 2009 were fraught with budget cuts, changing faculty lines, and increasing demand for courses. In 2007, Women's Studies was granted departmental status and the BA in Women's Studies was instituted (Scully 2008 1).

For a number of years, Scully remained the only full-time dedicated faculty to the department, and joint-appointments have come and gone. Presently, there is only one dedicated faculty to the department, and that faculty is me, an untenured Assistant Professor. We have three joint-appointments, the Chair, a faculty member we share with the French department, and another faculty member we share with the English department. Though Scully's vision of growing the Department and dedicating more courses to women's studies is increasingly becoming realized, the Women's Studies Department at VCU still depends largely on affiliate faculty and joint-appointments to survive. This leaves Women's Studies at VCU in a relatively unchanged ambivalent situation: in order for us to receive more funding and support, we must continue to prove our legitimacy through traditional disciplinary means (demonstrated research in our field, recruiting students as Women's Studies majors/minor, obtaining grants, and obtaining alumni funds).

Theorizing Interdisciplinarity as Structural Change

Shumway and Messer-Davidow point to a particular conundrum that feminists face in universities: the more that feminists are able to tap into "the flow of departmental power and resources, the more likely they are to be disadvantaged by disciplinary limits," (216). Though the Women's Studies Department at VCU would love to have access to this "flow of resources" to see what we could do with it, I find their concern about the "disciplining" of Women's Studies happening as a result. The very nature of *being* an academic program within a College of Humanities and Sciences lends us to mimicry of the structures that govern and police the more traditional disciplines (i.e. standardized promotion/tenure guidelines, expectations for research, and hierarchical departmental organizational structures). So, the question of how to do the kind of interdisciplinarity that Moran describes as an "undisciplined space in the interstices between disciplines or even attempting to transcend disciplinary boundaries altogether," remains, (15). David Shumway, in his article "Disciplinarity, Corporatization, and the Crisis: A Dystopian Narrative," argues that "Interdisciplinarity continues to carry with it the hope of overcoming specialization, but it is not clear that it very often—if ever—succeeds in doing so," (9). Interdisciplinary programs and departments add to the disciplines, rather than subvert them. In order to have interdisciplinary programs, the traditional disciplines must continue to exist, not only as a foil to interdisciplinary programs, but also as a means of support. Shumway argues that programs like women's studies, African-American studies and queer studies

function "mainly disciplinarily, developing more or less on the model of disciplinary social organization," (9). This comes as no shock, as we have seen above, the academy functions on the traditional model of disciplinarity, so in order to be "legitimate" these programs like women's studies must conform to a disciplinary structural model. Shumway uses his experience with cultural studies as a model for his argument, claiming that in intentionally placing cultural studies "outside" the disciplines, it actually weakened the power of cultural studies and further marginalized its status, (10).

Mako Fitts discusses similar issues in women's studies:

"While women's studies programs have been in existence since 1970, and while there are currently over 700 departments and programs around the world, the structure of the programs range from self-governing academic departments to small programs consisting of faculty across disciplines. In the case of the former, decisions around resource distribution, faculty hiring, tenure and promotion, assessment, and curricular design rest within the purview of faculty whose lines are housed within women's studies. There is a greater sense of autonomy and an institutional commitment (in the form of faculty lines, budgets, and representation on college- and university-wide decision making bodies), at least on the surface, to the growth of women's studies.

In the case of the latter, faculty lines are housed within the traditional disciplines where department chairs have license to farm out (or not) their faculty to teach women's studies courses. Women's studies programs have often relied on the generosity of well-intentioned department chairs who are also committed to the study of women and gender in society. Yet, under this system, there are no institutionally secure mechanisms in place to protect the longevity of the program.(251-252).

Fitts goes on to say that institutions exert formal and informal authority over faculty by means of a hierarchical organization of power that is deployed through and exercised by "many actors within the system" like deans, chairs, tenured vs. non-tenured faculty, etc. (252). In a women's studies program or department that depends on affiliate faculty to teach its courses runs the risk of this faculty having closer ties to the traditional disciplines from which they come, due to structural pressures mentioned above. Fitts discusses a "scholarly identity" that is either closely affiliated with feminist theory and interdisciplinary work, or is more closely affiliated with the work of the traditional discipline within which a particular faculty member work, (252). This "scholarly identity" might feel more solid in the traditional discipline, if the "tenure home" is the traditional discipline, as the faculty member will be pressured to conduct research and to publish in that discipline. Fitts describes this conundrum here: "Faculty members teaching in women's studies are saddled with the dual commitment to their disciplinary home and women's studies, which creates a push-pull effect. Faculty are pushed in the direction of teaching and service within women's studies while simultaneously pulled by tenure and promotion commitments determined solely by their home departments. Moreover, the feminist intellectual identity of scholars whose primary responsibility is to their home discipline is often compromised or stifled," (253).

Diana Scully published a "backlash study" in the *NWSA Journal* in 1996, where she surveyed 276 women's studies programs and women's centers in the U.S., looking at data around faculty lines, salaries, budgets, and departmental/program structures. From this data,

Scully surmises that "It also seems quite clear from these data that women's studies operates under a number of constraints that the traditional disciplines are not subject to. Indeed, the very organization of universities into schools or colleges consisting of departments based on disciplines puts interdisciplinary programs such as women's studies at a disadvantage. It can be argued that the discipline/departments structure promotes strong disciplinary identification, rigid disciplinary boundaries, a sense of exclusiveness, turf battles, and competition," (Scully, "Overview", 126). This sentiment echoes the piece of writing found in the files, and perhaps that piece of writing was a draft for this report. She continues to raise the question of interdisciplinary vs. multidisciplinary, making the distinction between integration and addition: "...if the majority of women's studies courses are taught through disciplinary departments, one might question how much integration of perspectives students are exposed to within the context of a single course. Might women's studies as currently taught more accurately be defined as multidisciplinary, drawing on a number of perspectives, rather than interdisciplinary, integrating a number of perspectives?" (127)

So the question remains as to how to create structural change that allows interdisciplinary fields like women's studies, queer studies, and cultural studies to thrive without further marginalizing these fields due to their rejection of traditional disciplinary models. It seems to be a question of assimilation or liberation, but most departments in any of the fields mentioned above have attempted to do both, to assimilate to, and to liberate themselves from, the traditional disciplines.

Part of Shumway's argument is that with the continued alliance of universities and corporations, programs like cultural studies need to assimilate to the disciplinary model and to ally themselves with the traditional disciplines in the humanities. This is the only way for these programs to survive, in Shumway's view. The humanities' defense of disciplinarity must be a "counterweight to the corporatization of everything else, to the threat of a society in which market value is the only measure of value," (15). As depressing as this may seem, we can see evidence of Shumway's argument in the formation of disciplines that have specific market functions: Homeland Security, Fashion Merchandising, Public Relations, etc.

I am not entirely convinced that the way to go would be to retreat further into the traditional disciplinary model. For the last twenty years at VCU, Women's Studies has tried to walk the line between assimilation and liberation, with some degree of success, however that success has been tenuous. However, I feel that programs like Women's Studies, African-American Studies, Queer Studies, and Ethnic Studies, along with Cultural Studies, could benefit from the organizational practices that helped them become programs and departments in the first place: coalition-building and deep connections to the communities within which they reside. These particular interdisciplinary programs are vulnerable (more so than Molecular Biology or Applied Health Sciences) because they do not fulfill a market function under capitalism, and cannot hope to win the race toward traditional scientific models of legitimacy. If any one program is to survive in the borderland space between traditional disciplines, it cannot do so alone.

Additionally, in order for interdisciplinarity in the university to flourish, it must have dedicated space and resources to allow for its growth. Scully's earlier vision of having Women's Studies located under "central administration" could work if indeed there were strong alliances among interdisciplinary programs, with decided-upon ways to assess research, service, and

teaching that attended to the particularity of doing interdisciplinary work. Further, the borders between the traditional disciplines would need to become more permeable. Traditional departments would need to make formal agreements with interdisciplinary programs, whether in their bylaws or by forging memoranda of understanding, that would allow for the flow of faculty and resources across these borders, and would allow for faculty to do considerable work in the borderland space between the disciplines. The new Interdisciplinary Humanities Center within the College of Humanities and Sciences hold such promise, but will be successful only if properly funded and administered with the above and below issues in mind.

Finally, in order for true interdisciplinary programs to survive and flourish in late capitalism, in addition to forming alliances with one another, these programs must also interface with the community in deep and meaningful ways. The walls between interdisciplinary programs and the communities they serve must also be more permeable, but there would need to be structural and epistemological changes for that to happen. Community members must have a greater stake in the work of these programs, and scholars must re-conceive their roles as scholars (to work outside the ivory tower myth, which never benefitted interdisciplinary scholars, particularly in ethnic, cultural, or gender/sexuality studies, in the first place). There needs to be more attention paid to the input and needs of the communities that ethnic, cultural and women's/gender studies serve, and those communities need to more solidly demonstrate their support of such programs.

The dream of interdisciplinarity as this radical, postmodern, borderland space can be realized if structural change is allowed to happen. The only way to achieve this is to build alliances so power can flow in a different direction than it traditionally has. Also equally important is the continual effort at not disciplining ourselves, or of backing ourselves into disciplinary corners. Continual resistance to traditional structures, and constant critical self-study must be part of this project, if we are to achieve this kind of dynamic interdisciplinarity.

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