

THRESHOLD CONSCRIPTS

RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION
TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS



Perspectives
on Writing

Edited by
William J. Macauley, Jr.
Leslie R. Anglesey, Brady Edwards
Kathryn M. Lambrecht
and Phillip K. Lovas

**THRESHOLD CONSCRIPTS:
RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION
TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS**

PERSPECTIVES ON WRITING

Series Editors: Rich Rice, Heather MacNeill Falconer, and J. Michael Rifenburg
Consulting Editor: Susan H. McLeod | Associate Editor: Olivia Johnson

The Perspectives on Writing series addresses writing studies in a broad sense. Consistent with the wide ranging approaches characteristic of teaching and scholarship in writing across the curriculum, the series presents works that take divergent perspectives on working as a writer, teaching writing, administering writing programs, and studying writing in its various forms.

The WAC Clearinghouse, Colorado State University Open Press, and University Press of Colorado are collaborating so that these books will be widely available through free digital distribution and low-cost print editions. The publishers and the Series editors are committed to the principle that knowledge should freely circulate. We see the opportunities that new technologies have for further democratizing knowledge. And we see that to share the power of writing is to share the means for all to articulate their needs, interest, and learning into the great experiment of literacy.

Recent Books in the Series

- Jennifer Grouling, *Adapting VALUEs: Tracing the Life of a Rubric through Institutional Ethnography* (2022)
- Chris M. Anson and Pamela Flash (Eds.), *Writing-Enriched Curricula: Models of Faculty-Driven and Departmental Transformation* (2021)
- Asao B. Inoue, *Above the Well: An Antiracist Argument From a Boy of Color* (2021)
- Alexandria L. Lockett, Iris D. Ruiz, James Chase Sanchez, and Christopher Carter (Eds.), *Race, Rhetoric, and Research Methods* (2021)
- Kristopher M. Lotier, *Postprocess Postmortem* (2021)
- Ryan J. Dippre and Talinn Phillips (Eds.), *Approaches to Lifespan Writing Research: Generating an Actionable Coherence* (2020)
- Lesley Erin Bartlett, Sandra L. Tarabochia, Andrea R. Olinger, and Margaret J. Marshall (Eds.), *Diverse Approaches to Teaching, Learning, and Writing Across the Curriculum: IWAC at 25* (2020)
- Hannah J. Rule, *Situating Writing Processes* (2019)
- Asao B. Inoue, *Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom* (2019)
- Mark Sutton and Sally Chandler (Eds.), *The Writing Studio Sampler: Stories About Change* (2018)
- Kristine L. Blair and Lee Nickoson (Eds.), *Composing Feminist Interventions: Activism, Engagement, Praxis* (2018)

THRESHOLD CONSCRIPTS: RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

Edited by William J. Macauley, Jr., Leslie R. Anglesey, Brady
Edwards, Kathryn M. Lambrecht, and Phillip K. Lovas

The WAC Clearinghouse
wac.colostate.edu
Fort Collins, Colorado

University Press of Colorado
upcolorado.com
Denver, Colorado

The WAC Clearinghouse, Fort Collins, Colorado 80523

University Press of Colorado, Denver, Colorado 80202

© 2023 by William J. Macauley, Jr., Leslie R. Anglesey, Brady Edwards, Kathryn M. Lambrecht, and Phillip K. Lovas. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International.

ISBN 978-1-64215-162-6 (PDF) | 978-1-64215-163-3 (ePub) | 978-1-64642-381-1 (pbk.)

DOI 10.37514/PER-B.2023.1626

Produced in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Macauley, William J., editor. | Anglesey, Leslie R., editor. | Edwards, Brady (Professor of English), editor. | Lambrecht, Kathryn M., 1988- editor. | Lovas, Phillip, editor.

Title: Threshold conscripts : rhetoric and composition teaching assistantships / edited by William J. Macauley, Jr., Leslie R. Anglesey, Brady Edwards, Kathryn M. Lambrecht and Phillip K. Lovas.

Description: Fort Collins, Colorado : The WAC Clearinghouse ; Denver, Colorado : University Press of Colorado, [2023] | Series: Perspectives on writing | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023000330 (print) | LCCN 2023000331 (ebook) | ISBN 9781646423811 (Paperback) | ISBN 9781642151626 (Adobe pdf) | ISBN 9781642151633 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Graduate teaching assistants--Training of--United States. | College teaching--United States. | Rhetoric--Study and teaching--Education (Higher) | Composition (Language arts)--Study and teaching (Higher)

Classification: LCC LB2335.4 .T47 2023 (print) | LCC LB2335.4 (ebook) | DDC 808/.0420711--dc23/eng/20230125

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023000330>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023000331>

Copyeditor: Annie Halseth

Designer: Mike Palmquist

Cover Photo: Shutterstock Image 5703061 by Bruce Rolff.

Series Editors: Rich Rice, Heather MacNeill Falconer, and J. Michael Rifenburg

Consulting Editor: Susan H. McLeod

Associate Editor: Olivia Johnson

The WAC Clearinghouse supports teachers of writing across the disciplines. Hosted by Colorado State University, it brings together scholarly journals and book series as well as resources for teachers who use writing in their courses. This book is available in digital formats for free download at wac.colostate.edu.

Founded in 1965, the University Press of Colorado is a nonprofit cooperative publishing enterprise supported, in part, by Adams State University, Colorado State University, Fort Lewis College, Metropolitan State University of Denver, University of Alaska Fairbanks, University of Colorado, University of Denver, University of Northern Colorado, University of Wyoming, Utah State University, and Western Colorado University. For more information, visit upcolorado.com.

Land Acknowledgment. The Colorado State University Land Acknowledgment can be found at <https://landacknowledgment.colostate.edu>.

CONTENTS

Contributor Map	vii
Foreword	ix
Laura R. Micciche	
Introduction. “Begin as You Intend to Finish”: Considering the Multiple Liminalities and Thresholds of RCTAships.	3
William J. Macauley, Jr.	
SECTION 1. APPROACHING THE RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP	35
Phillip K. Lovas and Brady Edwards	
Chapter 1. Putting Learning First: Challenges and Possibilities for New Writing Teacher Research.	39
Rachel Gramer	
Narrative 1. First Day of Class	65
I-Hsien Lee	
Chapter 2. “The Gift of Authenticity”: Writing Center Pedagogy and Integrated Identity Work in TA Education.	67
Jaquelyn Davis Lugg	
Narrative 2. Locating Sound While Learning How to Teach.	87
Janelle Chu Capwell	
Chapter 3. Adapting, Not Resisting: A Preliminary Understanding of TAs’ Relationships with Writing Pedagogy Education.	89
Kali A. Mobley Finn	
Narrative 3. More Than My Teaching.	113
Eliza Gellis	
Chapter 4. Coming to Teaching: Moving Beyond a Blank-Slate Model of Developing Pedagogical Expertise	115
Kathleen Blake Yancey, Rob Cole, Amanda May, and Katelyn Stark	
Narrative 4. Back to the Start: The Transition from Adjunct Professor to Ph.D. Student	135
Matt Schering	
Chapter 5. Becoming and Belonging: The Three Domains of New Teachers of Writing	137
Emily Jo Schwaller	

Visualization. Approaching the RCTAship Visualization 159

SECTION 2. INHABITING THE RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP 161

 Brady Edwards and Phillip K. Lovas

 Narrative 5. Student, Teacher, Teaching Assistant: Janus and Institutional Identity 165

 Jonathan M. Marine

 Chapter 6. “Survival is insufficient”: Reimagining TA Orientation as Meaningful Threshold Boundaries 167

 Leslie R. Anglesey

 Narrative 6. Teaching Rhetoric Without a License 185

 Megan Friess

 Chapter 7. Shifting Roles and Negotiating Identities: TA Learning in Landscapes of Practice 187

 Madelyn Pawlowski and Brad Jacobson

 Narrative 7. IGTA 207

 Thir Budhathkoi

 Chapter 8. Doorways to Disciplinarity: Using Threshold Concepts to Bridge Disciplinary Divides and Develop Theory-Practice Praxis 209

 Zack K. De Piero and Jennifer K. Johnson

 Narrative 8. Always Beginning: Inhabiting the TAs hip after a Career 237

 Elizabeth Topping

 Chapter 9. International Teaching Assistants’ Needs and Undergraduate Native English-Speaking Students’ Expectations: Meaning Negotiation as a Rhetorical Strategy. 239

 Soha Youssef

 Narrative 9. “Who is That Girl I see?” Navigating the Identities of Student and Administrator as a Graduate WPA 267

 Analeigh E. Horton

 Chapter 10. I Feel It in My Body: WC Teaching and Administration as Embodied Praxis 269

 Rachel Robinson-Zetzer and Trixie G. Smith

Visualization. Inhabiting the RCTAship. 281

SECTION 3. TRANSCENDING THE RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP 283

 Phillip K. Lovas and Brady Edwards

Narrative 10. Collegiality as Transcendence Beyond the TAs ^h ip	287
Matthew Sansbury	
Chapter 11. The Pursuit of (Un)Happiness in Composition and Rhetoric TAs' Experiences	289
Courtney Adams Wooten	
Narrative 11. Worth	311
Sarah Lonelodge	
Chapter 12. Anti-Colonialist Listening as Writing Pedagogy	313
Melba Vélez Ortiz	
Narrative 12. Multiple Atypical Identities	337
Gitte Frandsen	
Chapter 13. From Deficit to Asset: Rethinking Graduate Student Narratives.	339
Nicole Warwick	
Narrative 13. Mom, Cancer Patient, Doctoral Candidate, TA	365
Megen Farrow Boyett	
Chapter 14. Integrating the Marginalized and the Mainstream: Women of Color Graduate Instructors' Experience with Identity, Difference, and Belonging.	367
Meghalee Das, Michelle Flahive, Jiaxin Zhang, and Michael J. Faris	
Narrative 14. Displacement in the Classroom	385
Charlotte Kupsch	
Visualization. Transcending the RCTAs ^h ip.	387
Afterword. The Elephant in the Room	389
Dylan B. Dryer	
 SECTION 4. GRADUATE TAs ^h IP PROGRAM PROFILES	 397
Kathryn Lambrecht	
Program Profile 1. Choose Your Own Adventuresship: Diversity, Context, and Casuistry in Graduate Student Professionalization.	399
Laura Hardin Marshall	
Program Profile 2. Disciplinary TAs Exploring the Reciprocal Effects of Providing Writing Feedback in Physics.	405
Hans Malmström and Magnus Gustafsson	
Program Profile 3. TAs as Administrative and Teacher Researchers: Professional Development at The University of Arizona	411
Emily Jo Schwaller	

Program Profile 4. A Focus on Education and Professional Development . . 413
Lacey Wootton

Program Profile 5. Equity Through Leadership: The Graduate Student
Administrator at the University of Alabama 417
Khadeidra Billingsley, James Eubanks, and Luke Niiler

Program Profile 6. University of Delaware Program Description, or,
Redefining RhetComp Professional Development 423
William Repetto

Program Profile 7. Holistic Mentoring to Advocate for Social Justice 427
Sue Hum, Kandice Diaz, Victoria Ramirez Gentry,
Karyn L. Hixson, and Abby Leigh Mangel

Program Profile 8. Chapman University: Bridging the Gap with Action
Research. 433
Ian Barnard, Matthew Goldman, Sarah K. Robblee,
Natalie Salagean, Daniel Strasberger, and Candice Yacono

Program Profile 9. Negotiating Plural Identities Through Transfer and
Inclusion: Program Revision at Bowling Green State University 439
Adel Vielstimmig

Program Profile 10. Teaching Teaching as a Process: San José State
University’s TA Program and the Development of Pedagogical Thinking . . 447
Ume Ali, Ariel Andrew, Rachel Crawford, Steven Domingo,
Julia Dunn, Jessie Fussell, Olivia Lee, Alayna Mills,
Jillian Murphy, Alexis Rocha, Lisa Rose, Elizabeth Rosser,
Ryan Skinnell, Amber Sylva, and Claire Tromblee

Editors and Authors 455

CONTRIBUTOR MAP

Contributor Locations

This map highlights the location of contributors from around the country and abroad



Figure 1. Contributor Map created by Kathryn Lambrecht and Phillip Lovas using Data Wrapper (<https://www.datawrapper.de>) and Adobe Photoshop (<https://www.adobe.com/products/photoshop.html>).

FOREWORD

Laura R. Micciche

University of Cincinnati

1992, new teacher orientation, late-August, southern Ohio. I am sweating and wondering how the admissions committee could have made such a grave error by allowing me to impersonate a writing teacher for the next ten weeks. I am an introvert. My face goes crimson at the thought of speaking in class. When called upon, I work to catch my breath between monosyllabic strivings toward words.

I had graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1991, followed by turns at waitressing, freelance writing for a trucking company, and bumming around with friends. I was not prepared or qualified to teach anyone anything.

Just as I began to imagine a quiet exit from the stuffy classroom where orientation was held, the chair of the department entered the room to welcome us and say a few words. He wasn't sweating or wearing shorts and beat-up sneakers. He wore khakis, loafers, a non-descript blue button-down shirt, a sport jacket. A tall white man with grey hair straight out of central casting—*Professor*. He greeted us, invited us to stop by his office and chat, and then said something I've never forgotten. He told us that for the past forty years he has never missed a bout of vomiting before each first class of the quarter. He had accepted this as how he copes with the terror of getting up in front of others.

The room was still. We sat with the discordant image of the serial vomiter and the Professor.

~ ~ ~

Reading the present volume evoked this memory for me. This collection of chapters places us in the awkward, exciting, and uncertain position of new teachers. Running throughout this collection is the desire to study TAs in situ, not from an administrative remove. The latter is a more typical positionality across WPA scholarship, which makes sense because admins are trying to figure out how to do their jobs better, more equitably, more thoughtfully. This book reminds us that there's more to the story than doing the job better. In these pages, we see students as new teachers; we hear student voices; and we encounter case studies of new teachers reflecting on their liminal status as teachers, students, scholars, people with lives and emotions. Teacher-development, rather than teacher-training, is the story here. Liminality is an in-between state heightened for TAs and—why stop there—an apt description of all human experience all the time. When

nurtured and coaxed, that in-betweenness can be a source of invention and knowledge-making—a main takeaway of this collection. I'm not going out on a limb by speculating that teacher prep programs rarely, if ever, frame liminality as an organizing point. In an early draft of this collection, Brady Edwards, speaking of new GTAs, suggested that we design orientation around what will be most beneficial for *their* growth. As a former WPA who ran new TA orientations for several years, I admit that "*their* growth" was less on my mind than *our* program and its responsibility to *our* department, college, and university. What's in a pronoun? This book got me thinking about that question and sometimes made me uncomfortable. I remembered that version of myself afraid to speak in class. I remembered, too, teaching a comp class and reading a student's final reflection, written from the perspective of an angry young man who ends up killing and dismembering his first-year writing teacher. It was supposed to be funny—a parody of an angry young man. I told no one. I was not-quite teacher and not-quite student; neither affiliation helped me navigate what felt like a threat.

These essays create discomfort in other ways by exposing awkward contradictions within rhet/compr and the ethos often linked to the field. Despite the field's longstanding association with student-centered practices, contributors convincingly argue that this ethic hasn't significantly shaped approaches to teacher prep. WPAs overstuff orientation, frequently complaining that the schedule is too hectic, the amount of material impossible to cover, the days a blur, the students resistant. Teacher prep norms, these essays suggest, are a reflection of what WPAs experienced themselves when they were new GTAs. It's likely that experience looms as a dominant narrative foreclosing other ways of getting it done.

Maybe the route to subverting this narrative has been under our noses all along. By taking our own advice, we might apply what we know about comp pedagogy vertically: model attentive listening practices; resist lecture; embrace interactive, collaborative pedagogies; slow down and create time for reflection. Much like the field's late arrival to vertical writing instruction, there's a yawning gap between pedagogical best practices for undergrads and their application to graduate student learners. What to call this? Wishful thinking? Bad pedagogy? Liminality doesn't end when grad school begins. Graduate students have learning styles, writing difficulties, doubt, student-teacher-scholar tensions, and varied experiences and identities that inform their performances as students and teachers. This book argues that such knowledge is *usable* and *valuable* in teacher prep.

I could have benefited from this point several years ago when, as a WPA, I noticed that more and more students were entering the doctoral program in my department with years of teaching experience at both high school and college levels. That observation did not shape new teacher programs to any

significant degree (except to waive some applicants from the teaching college writing seminar). My thinking, not uncommon from what I can tell, has been that experience is no substitute for understanding how to teach in *our* program. Here we are with possessive pronouns again. That insistence on *our* might have been at the expense of *their* by unwittingly constructing new teachers as “blank slates” (Yancey et al, this volume) rather than as persons embodying “prior processes, dispositions, beliefs, values, experiences, and affect as well” (Yancey et al, this volume).

These authors might say that my attachment to *our* is not idiosyncratic but emblematic of a guiding WPA orientation. Teacher prep programs, they insist, frequently imagine a homogenous population, producing what Kali Mobley Finn calls “a one-size fits all approach to pre-service orientation” (this volume). I believe this prefab bent is not only a consequence of habit or bad thinking but also an effect of labor conditions and surely other factors as well—compensation, timing, program and institutional culture. Still, as these authors suggest, admins can, where possible, divide the labor with other teachers or seasoned GTAs to create more manageable work cultures. They can also shift some tasks to new teachers themselves, inviting them to leverage their experience to explore what they know and what they need to know. Strategies that could position experience as useful aren’t mind-blowing. They might include pre-orientation discussion board postings, collaborative presentations on practices relevant to comp teaching, and annotating existing syllabi as a lead-in to a discussion about the curriculum. Above all, what we should be after is a dialectic between program needs and grad student needs, program outcomes and student *incomes*, or what students bring to the teaching positions that staff *our/their* programs.

Liminality is identity work. As Jaquelyn Lugg puts it, teacher training is “where new TAs begin the complicated work of building integrated identities.” Without integration, Madelyn Pawlowski and Brad Jacobson warn (this volume), disconnection can “lead to resistance or, even worse, abandonment of a practice, affiliation, or trajectory.” Around the edges of this discussion is that teacher training programs are sites of difference. Disconnection from group identity building may be a consequence not only of program integration but also of class, race, gender, sexuality, and physical and mental health conditions. As such, integration and disconnection are mediated by social locations and cultural identifications and so are not experienced evenly. As this collection has evolved, these challenges have been acknowledged increasingly across the volume, bringing to the fore group tensions that arise within teacher training programs.

Just as GTAs embody liminality, so too do writing programs themselves. Writing programs need to be nimble, not static, in the face of changing student

populations, new knowledge, and—let's face it—tired routines. *Threshold Conscripts* offers inspiration for fulfilling this need.

~ ~ ~

2008, new teacher orientation, late-August, southern Ohio. I am sweating and wondering how the hiring committee could have made such a grave error by allowing me to impersonate a writing program administrator for the next four years. What will become of this program?

**THRESHOLD CONSCRIPTS:
RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION
TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS**

INTRODUCTION.

“BEGIN AS YOU INTEND TO FINISH”: CONSIDERING THE MULTIPLE LIMINALITIES AND THRESHOLDS OF TASHIPS

William J. Macauley, Jr.

University of Nevada, Reno

Just before Debi and I were married, I asked my father for marital advice. He and my mom had been together for 40 years by then, and they seemed to have worked things out together pretty well—though not always quickly, cleanly, nor quietly. Talking, especially answering questions, was a bit of a sport for my dad. When he answered questions at all, he would say very little, say things that could be taken seriously or not (It was my job to figure that out—I got it wrong a lot.), or say things he, just then, thought were clearly established facts. “Begin as you intend to finish,” he answered. I still wonder what that meant. Debi and I recently celebrated 28 years together.

When Leslie, Brady, Kat, Phil, and I began discussing the issues that have become this book, we really had no sense of where it would lead or where we would finish. Way back then, we were focused on the complexities of rhetoric and composition TAs within the confines of writing program reputations, and on how seriously writing programs might be taken, in no small part because we all shared the experiences of being TAs and all found ourselves on the receiving end of doubt more than once. We found a lot of studies that discussed and quoted TAs, but not many where the TAs were really speaking for and about themselves through their own scholarly voices as teachers, researchers, scholars, writers, or graduate students. We did confirm that others shared our developing view that TAs are so much richer than a simplistic but true trope of teacher-student. For all five of us there, then, the TAship felt more like a careening pinball than a gently swinging pendulum or steadily growing garden. We were all aware of our responsibilities and roles during our TAsing, and we all suspected that there were other considerations and permutations of which we were not nearly aware enough. We have come some distance since then, but we still have a way to go, I think.

We had a lot of common ground between us through our individual experiences, even though our TAs were separated by time, distance, configuration, and emphasis. For example, no matter where we are in our careers we never stop having a kind of awed reverence for our dissertation directors. Imposter syndrome is another shared experience we all continue to see pop-up from time to time. But, more than anything else, it is that liminality of TAs having a foot in two worlds and stability in neither. It wasn't just being "between" that we shared; it was the sense of moving back and forth continually within and between two primary roles/identities of inhabiting and reinhabiting a threshold between teacher and student. That is one thing we think is so important to capture and explore here, in a direct way. These experiential senses of our own rhetoric and composition TAs have been further informed but not disputed by this project.

We also saw that there were a number of significant and sometimes competing changes that happened to us as TAs. One example would be the shift from purely consuming or being a bricoleur of scholarship to a producer of it. Another is the threshold TAs must cross from working responsively as a student to working independently and confidently as a professional. We agreed that these changes were essential to our moving forward and that they informed everything that happened afterward. We now recognize these in-common, profound changes as "threshold concepts," as transitions that had to happen in order to move forward and to which we can never return (Land et al.).

In that spring 2015 graduate course where these conversations began, we had been exploring seemingly prevalent and poor opinions of writing programs on so many fronts. Working to understand such perspectives and their impacts, we were focused on identifying both sources of these views and experiences or lore that might encourage them. We noticed that there was very little literature that promoted sharing with those outside of writing programs the significant learning that instructors ideally accumulate during their TAs; that there is a body of knowledge in rhetoric and composition that is enacted by teaching writing; that it takes time and effort to transfer adequately that knowledge to high-quality writing courses and student writing. Some of this, we understood, was a question of circumstances. We also noticed that a lot of the literature on TA orientations and TA development programs seemed to indicate that a brief pre-semester teaching orientation for TAs was common practice, but that budgets and curricula, enrollments and any number of other factors often overran what WPAs thought was even minimally appropriate TA preparation. To be honest, it seemed as though a lot of WPAs have been in survival mode of one kind or another, as are the incredibly and increasingly numerous contingent faculty they employ. Couple that with what seemed in the literature to be overstuffed,

clipped TA preparation, along with powerful lore about what writing instruction should look like—and too few opportunities to explore or embrace that adequately—and we started to see a focus arising. In short, it seemed to us that a sense of pragmatism or functionalism related to rhetoric and composition TAs (RCTAs) pervaded the contexts described in these literatures—an emphasis on the function of TAs in programmatic settings and/or a separate/different understanding of these folks within graduate studies discussions—and an unintentional flattening of the work that RCTAs do in writing programs.

But explication was not the only complexity we needed to deal with. We were all struck by the prominence of research that actively represents the complexities of RCTAs and TA preparation without TA voices as researchers and primary speakers—as opposed to expository anecdotalists or selectively quoted, discussed, and described research subjects. This seemed particularly curious in relation to our discussions of poor impressions of writing programs outside of rhetoric and composition, and sometimes inside writing programs' home departments, as well. We wondered, then, if there might be some association or correlation there. Deeper inquiry into the lived complexities of the RCTA might provide opportunities to respond to some of those critiques, supporting our continuing belief that the RCTA is unique in its relationship to multiple disciplines (because it touches so many other departments/programs, which probably cannot be said about TAs in other disciplines) and to the future of our field(s) (TAs are our neophytes, the next generation of teacher-scholars in writing studies, as opposed to other fields whose grads go into industry and commercial ventures). We never thought that empirical or ethnographic research on RCTAs would quickly change the working conditions of the TAs and WPAs we read about, or the minds of faculty in other departments, but we did speculate that our work here could begin to free-up rhetoric and composition research/scholarship from a seemingly static state of functional survivalism or simple habit, and potentially free TAs to speak with authority and expertise on their own behalf. We continue to find value in this line of inquiry and *Threshold Conscripts* takes up these concerns as its themes, focusing on RCTAs as a focal point and exemplar of what we have discovered are much larger issues.

DEFINITIONS

Now, about the collection's title . . . TAs don't often get to choose a lot of what they do as TAs. So, in a lot of ways, they are conscripted into service valued by their employers in exchange for entrée into graduate school and their chosen professions. I would not suggest that so many RCTAs—more on this phrase in a minute—would choose not to teach first-year composition (FYC), at least

not those who are studying rhetoric and composition, but I do think it would be a reasonable assumption that many TAs pressed into service teaching FYC would most certainly rather be teaching or doing something else, something more related to their individual interests like teaching creative writing, teaching literature, exploring the stacks of some forgotten archive, or conducting empirical or ethnographic research. All of these TAs are at thresholds in the sense that they are crossing the threshold into their graduate programs and, potentially, their professional lives. They are conscripts in the sense that they are making a significant time commitment in exchange for the opportunities they believe they will have during and after grad school. Pragmatically, TAships are often the only way graduate students can afford grad school—and, in some cases, the primary ways that graduate programs attract and retain their grad students.

But threshold conscripts means more than that, too. RCTAships are rife with thresholds including, but not limited to, those included in the now very well-known collection *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies* edited by Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle. There are five broad threshold concepts described in the collection, but they require 44 separate pieces in their articulations—and only one of those 44 actually focuses on TAships. TAs cross the threshold of teaching for their graduate universities and for programs unique to those institutions. They can be crossing the threshold of teaching in a less contingent way than they have in the past. They can be crossing the threshold into teaching for the first time, maybe newly at the post-secondary level. They may have been undergraduate writing tutors before they came to grad school. They may have been community literacy advocates. They may be accustomed to working in certain ways because of the populations or contexts of their teaching, tutoring, or advocacy before the TAship. They may have had to take deep dives into relationships with their friends, families, finances, or their own identities to become a TA. They are accumulating essential information about that particular institution in that specific program. And—because graduate school can be so different from what precedes or follows it, let alone contrasts between institutions and programs—because TAships make those experiences so different from those of non-TAs in the same programs (I am not even sure that happens as much anymore.); these TA experiences, concepts, transitions are both absolutely necessary to move forward and, potentially, definitive of so much that follows. So, “threshold conscripts” recognizes the immense changes that accompany TAships, that those changes are essential to what follows, and that those changes later be reconsidered, even if the TAship can construe graduate education in particular ways. If for no other reason than so many TAs teaching writing courses are pressed into that service without any other real option—other than to potentially not attend graduate school. So, threshold conscripts is a more than

apt title for our collection because it both acknowledges the significant changes that occur and argues that many if not most TAs are not in a position to pick and choose what changes they encounter.

Additionally, what do we mean by the phrase “rhetoric and composition TAs”? We mean any TA who is teaching or tutoring writing as part of their TAs, especially but not exclusively those studying rhetoric and composition. Part of the challenge here is that the desire for a singular label is far outweighed by the variations among these positions. A primary argument for and within this collection is that such a singularity is not available and shouldn’t be artificially constructed given these real diversities. We are talking about TAs who are studying literature, creative writing, communications, STEM-focused writing, technical writing, multilingual writing, and sometimes even studying the teaching of FYC. We are talking about TAs who take on administrative roles in first-year writing programs, who work as writing fellows in other disciplines, who work in writing centers, and who teach FYC. One might argue that graduate students teaching FYC as adjuncts should be included here, too.

Initially, at least, we thought the phrase “rhetoric and composition TA” (RCTA) was an inclusive phrase that would allow us to discuss efficiently not only those who study rhetoric and composition as graduate students but those who end up teaching FYC courses and working in writing centers as part of a TAs, regardless of the academic home of that TAs. What we have found in building this collection is that, even within the narrowest definition of a TA teaching writing, there is incredible variation in both titles and responsibilities. While this can be read as testament to change and growth, it can also be understood as revealing little or no consistency. And this may be some part of a cause or an effect of RCTAs being locally defined.

TAs largely began when the people occupying such positions were much more homogenous in gender, race, socioeconomic status, career goals, and even focus of study. TAs teaching FYC are now much more diverse, not only in these terms of identity and purpose but also teaching experience, financial concerns, familial responsibilities, and material conditions, let alone professional presence. You will see that a number of our contributors articulate just how diverse! In fact, we have expanded this collection significantly just to take up more of these issues. So, to discuss these graduate assistantships that include teaching writing, we needed a touchstone, not a one-size-fits-all label. Thus, we have stuck with “RCTA” not because it is the most accurate or inclusive descriptor but, rather, because it is recognizable enough to serve as a point of intersection for the multiple, nuanced, and diverse discussions of these roles and positions. To preserve the genuine, lived diversities found in the field and in this collection, as well as within RCTAs themselves, we did not insist that our contributors use any

one term. A primary argument for this collection is that TAs should be able to speak for themselves from their own, real, lived experiences, which includes position titles that make sense to them.

We use here a number of other terms that we understand are fluid, not because we are lackadaisical but because we are trying to represent an extremely variegated landscape of TA roles and responsibilities. Like my earlier discussion of “RCTA” and its limitations, you will see throughout this collection that the terminology varies greatly from one context to another, one chapter to another, one set of experiences to another. We see this as a representational strength rather than a definitional weakness. We remain confident that readers will be able to handle that diversity.

TAS UNDER PRESSURE

RCTAs are under significant pressure to perform in graduate school: to teach in programs, curricula, and institutions that are usually new to them; to begin and complete career-defining research; to professionalize within their studies and home institutions; and to ideologically locate and professionally define themselves as members of their field(s) both during and beyond their TAships—all on what is too often ridiculously low funding. These pressures are amplified even further for RCTAs whose identities and/or material conditions do not align readily with institutional habits and expectations. Even if the TA teaching in FYC is not pursuing a career in rhetoric and composition, these pressures remain—and some would argue are amplified by extra disciplinary dissonances. TAs swim in open seas of demands and expectations, which have the potential to define them for good or ill. From the new TA’s perspective, and perhaps even the perspectives of returning TAs, all of that working and trying-on and seeking of guidance and selecting of options and exploring of possibilities and performing against anxiety and imposter syndrome may seem scattered and tattered and unrelenting and at loose ends much of the time.

For those of us who have been through the process ourselves, and who have guided students through the process, that liminality is familiar because, from our perspectives, where it begins and ends remains relatively stable across individual cases. That kind of certainty would be invaluable to our TAs and graduate students, to be sure, but our certainty is not available in their experiences. TAs are encountering, inhabiting, and crossing new, unfamiliar, and significant thresholds before and between roles without experience or context to tell them how to do it or how it will work out. Some of why we, their predecessors and mentors, remember so well these processes is because of the intensities we experienced going through them. From the point of view of we who have guided many through

the process, a terribly reductive argument might be offered, that TAs are largely starting as students and ending as professionals, and their justifiable anxiousness is just some kind of natural feature of the process. These are similar experiences for most of us, too, after all. However, this oversimplification denies the impact of TAs' lived experiences even while it reflects the knowledge and experience of mentors who guide them, not to mention washing out the recursive and ongoing challenges TAs face. Both perspectives must be a part of any understanding of a RCTAship because neither alone represents it fully or accurately.

In some ways, this resonates with the descriptions in some of our survivalist and functionalist WPA scholarship. Focusing on pragmatic problem-solving can mean "putting out fires" and looking for any opportunity to take a breath. Catherine Latterell suggests that WPAs "often navigate a realm of compromise where we are asked to accept less-than-ideal circumstances and already blurred authority" (37). She goes on to advocate for:

. . . an ethics of action whereby people's identity and authority are based in their sense of connection to and responsibility for others. A key step in replacing hierarchical practices with this approach lies in rethinking roles and responsibilities graduate students undertake . . . in ways that are sensitive to shifting dynamics of power. (38)

This is a tall order for WPAs who are so often fighting for survival daily, as well as for our field and our programs. How reasonable is it then to ask this of neophytes who are not yet fully connected to their roles, and who don't know what to prioritize as they try to take on new and significant responsibilities for themselves and others? How likely is it that these opportunities have been or will be extended to TAs before those TAs are seen and heard in their own right?

And that is one of the major philosophical and practical points of this collection: it is simply not enough for TAs to be represented and selectively quoted by others. Those others, whom Elizabeth Rankin describes as always "colonizers," cannot be the colonized they seek to represent, which means that there is some chance that the representations will be about what is brought to the research rather than what is found in it (42). While these types of studies have done a great deal of work to explicate and understand TAs, TAs themselves who are smart enough and hardworking enough to become TAs are more than up to the challenge of speaking for themselves if given genuine opportunities to do so.

To reduce the experiences of TAs to distant and rote roles ignores the richness of TA experiences and individualities; it underserves our TAs and undervalues the importance of the RCTAship as well. And that is easy to do when those around the TA are working so hard to survive. Thus, this collection values

and examines TA experiences and knowledge as essential to understanding the RCTAship from close-up. But it also argues that the collection and interaction of these perspectives with WPAs and others enlivens these inquiries.

We, the editors here, see an abundance of scholarship available from the perspectives of directors, advisors, and mentors. We also now understand that there are still other questions and considerations that we can start to work through within this collection, but we can do so only by bringing TA voices and experiences more prominently into the discussion as the informed experts on these experiences and on these conditions. And we do so in ways that are not the norm, which would be representations of TAs and their perspectives through the eyes, experiences, and priorities of others who are not TAs or through narrative, anecdote, or exposition. This collection will do this important work from TAs speaking for themselves, and in the interests of WPAs who build, run, and assess rhetoric and composition programs that include TAs. We began this project with an interest in understanding the experiences and insights of RCTAs and intend to provoke a conversation about how that understanding can begin a larger envisioning of the TAship and its role in rhetoric and composition. Certainly, there are any number of other questions and concerns that this collection might have taken up, but we will focus on RCTAs for an audience of TAs and WPAs, and thereby begin discussions of what these TAships might foster, provoke, or ground for the TAs who inhabit them and the programs established to prepare TAs for their professional lives.

SQUEEZING IN THE STORY

Hermione Hoby, a novelist, recently shared insights about delimiting relationships in her writing in order to make them seem whole for readers. She quotes Henry James: “Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so.” In short, writers must create boundaries that would not exist in the world outside of their texts. Hoby explains, “What I love about novels is the way in which a web of refracted perceptions constitute meaning” (quoted in Carroll). In a lot of ways, researchers writing about RCTAships have to create synthetic boundaries to make the subject matter manageable, and they can do so through the prism of programmatic perspectives.

Like novelists and literary theorists, TAship scholars are trying to represent unbounded relationships and experiences in a bounded way. By doing so, however, they are deploying and revealing the constraints they have had to impose on their inquiries. And the repetition of those constraints across time, articles,

and specializations have generated a collective way of understanding, or at least representing, RCTAships. I would not go so far as to call this “groupthink,” but I do think it is fair to suggest that we may be seeing here, relative to TAs in writing, an example of historical normalization (“Groupthink”). This is a good example of what Amy Lombardi recently called our field’s tendency to “hyper-macro-ize” difficult topics and, by doing so, reduce or exclude the human experiences and conditions involved in tough topics like diversity, equity, and inclusion (Lombardi).

This is why it is so important to note the significant absence of TAs as contributing researchers and scholars in this body of research. They can and will speak to these issues from a totally different perspective, even while they deploy high-quality research, arguments, and evidence—the difference is they have a decidedly different perspective from the now familiar programmatic perspectives offered in most research in this area. TAs have not been sufficiently advanced beyond research subjects or, if they have moved into direct contributor roles, it is so often limited to anecdotal, expository storytelling as opposed to professional research and scholarly writing.

The resulting picture, then, is necessarily skewed. It is once removed. If we were to think of this in terms of Thomas Deans’ taxonomy of writing related to communities, this approach can only be “writing about” TAs; there really is no opportunity for the more engaged and engaging “writing with” or “writing for” this community (Deans). This is not a flaw in the researchers who are doing the essential work of explicating TA experiences and working conditions. Neither is it a flaw in the research and scholarship itself. It really is an issue of the culture in which this work is being done, the norms and practices that delimit the roles of graduate students, TAs, and neophyte teachers in our fields’ scholarship and research.

The building of this collection may be an apt example of the lore that delimits TA roles even in the work of understanding their experiences. More than one colleague warned me that building this collection would be difficult because the work involves a number of graduate students. I asked what graduate student projects provoked these warnings but specifics weren’t really shared. This warning, which I obviously did not heed, is problematic because it seems to indicate that TAs are not qualified to contribute significantly to our collective bodies of knowledge, which has not been my experience before or during this project. And how are they to learn to contribute significantly if we don’t include them in that work? This perspective is also problematic in that it represents a lore, trope, or convention. It is perpetuated not directly through trying and failing but through avoiding the possibility of problems preemptively—in other words, it is assumed that there will be problems, so better to not try it at all. Again, this has not been my experience.

This project has been challenging, to be sure, but no more so than other similar projects with folks not in graduate school. We, the other editors and I, agreed at the outset that a big part of this work was their learning how to build a project like this one. But the selection of editors and contributors was not wholly altruistic on my part (and I can say I have truly come to love and respect these folks even more fully than I could have imagined). It was also essential to the success of the project that the editors, as well as the contributors, have firsthand and recent experience TAing. To ensure that we included those most current and relevant voices and experiences, we needed editors who have RC-TAships in very recent memory. And, in building this collection, that has been the lens: to ensure that the lived experience of TAs is adequately represented and make sure we treat TAs as colleagues whose insights and analyses are valued appropriately.

As I discuss selected research and scholarship related to TAs in writing, my goal is to ask where the TAs are in those discussions and what impact their absence may have had on the deliverables. What is most important to understand here is not the flaws or limitations in the body of research to date but, rather, to question how the perspective is shaped and delimited by the glaring absence of those most directly involved and most immediately informed about RCTAships in the 21st century: the TAs themselves. What does it mean that they are largely included only as research subjects, to be represented and interpreted by others who are not in their roles, who are not having their same experiences? What does it mean that when TAs do participate in scholarship in this area, beyond the role of research subject, their roles are so often limited to expository writing that simply does not carry the cultural capital that other genres do, the genres so highly valued by faculty, directors, deans, and provosts, by the people who make hiring, firing, promotion, and tenure decisions, among others?

The richness and complexities of RCTAships are selectively represented in the literature, and TAships' importance as entrée into the profession is somewhat acknowledged in important ways. Rhetoric and composition literature could continue to discuss from familiar perspectives and positions the RCTAship and its relationship to priorities in the field and professionalization goals, as it has for 40 years and maybe as many as 90 (Brown and Conner). *Threshold Conscripts* hopes to contribute to a new approach to complement the extensive and important scholarship to date and seeks here to invite TAs as scholars towards those ends. Thus, part of the opaqueness of these TAships is a reflexive opaqueness—the kinds of questions and answers that TAs can express, explore, and answer are essential to a complete picture of those TAships, and they have not yet been fully available because the TAs have not been able to speak to them within the traditions of scholarly publications on this topic.

Threshold Conscripts cannot take on the whole of this responsibility, but it can bring much needed attention to the TAs as they exist now and, by doing so, open the door to new considerations from other perspectives, with other questions, and begin to address other purposes. A brief review of existing literature will help to illustrate both the promise here and the peril of continuing to ignore these challenges. The purpose in this review is to consider what is missing and what the inclusion of TAs as their own spokespersons might enable.

We are not the first to attempt such a project, although our purposes and foci are unique, I think. Sheryl I. Fontaine and Susan Hunter's 1993 collection, *Writing Ourselves Into the Story: Unheard Voices from Composition Studies* is a good example of collections that work to include diverse voices and perspectives on our field(s). The collection includes several pieces on graduate education, too, but the gist of the collection is to represent those already working in the field of composition, not those who are working to make their ways into it. Within *Writing Ourselves Into the Story*, Chris Anson's "Rites of Passage: Reflections on Disciplinary Enculturation in Composition" discusses in some detail the seeming mismatch between the variegated field of composition and what seemed to him graduate student expectations of disciplinary coherence and stability. Would TAs, recent and/or current then, have told the same stories, in the same ways? Is it a kind of privilege that scholars like Anson can enjoy, publishing work like this? Michael Pemberton's "Tales Too Terrible to Tell: Unstated Truths and Underpreparation in Graduate Composition Programs" discusses at length the lack of appropriate graduate program preparation for the administrative roles so many new composition graduates were and are expected to take on, often their first jobs. I wonder what the discussion would have been like had recent and/or current TAs been invited to discuss and describe their perspectives. I am not complaining that these pieces are lacking anything. The fact that both remain recognizable and important is testimony to their importance. I am simply asking what graduate student and/or TA perspectives would have changed or included, with the idea in mind, too, that Pemberton and Anson were familiar voices back then, too, as they are now.

Scholarship from the point of view of TAs does exist. In 2000, Tina Good and Leanne B. Warshauer published *In Our Own Voice: Graduate Students Teach Writing*. The collection brings together 30 short essays, mostly authored by current graduate students, on their work as TAs. The majority of those essays focus on the practice of teaching, on pedagogy, responding to student writing, grading, and the like. I wonder, if the TAs had been able to control the content of the collection, had been making the decisions about what their voices should be representing, whether they would have focused so much on practice and pedagogy. It is very possible that they would have because pedagogy and classroom practice are so much less risky topics than personal challenges in graduate school. When

we were building this collection, I was emailed more than once by friends and colleagues, asking me to remember that graduate students might not feel safe publicly discussing these kinds of issues. They might be reluctant to respond because the risks might just feel too significant.

But, even then, more than 20 years ago when *In Our Own Voice* was published, the collection included discussion of working conditions and the experiences of TAs trying to negotiate their places in a context unfamiliar to them. Particularly, Brian K. Bly's "Uneasy Transitions: The Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Composition Program" discusses the realities of the hard turn TAs must often make as they enter their graduate programs as both students and teachers. Patrick J. Bettencourt's "Voicing Experience" discusses who speaks for our profession and that the voices of TAs are too readily washed out by them. You will see some of these same questions and concerns raised here, in *Threshold Conscripts*. One interpretation of this commonality is lending credibility to these concerns. Another observation might be that we are still dealing with these same issues 20 years on. Good and Warshauer's *In Our Own Voice: Graduate Students Teach Writing* is an early and compelling example of the insightful value of TAs' voices in discussing and describing their experiences. In some ways, *Threshold Conscripts* seeks to complement that work by inviting the focus to shift to TA experiences and TA efforts themselves, topics that RCTAs now consider worthy of attention.

While Good and Warshauer's collection focuses on the pedagogy and practice of teaching writing, Jessica Restaino's 2012 work *First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground* advances this more current type of inquiry by turning readers' attentions to the TAs themselves, as the experiencers of TAships, teaching writing and finding their ways in their programs and professionalization. The insights Restaino's four participants provide not only deepen understanding of the rhetoric and composition TAs but provide opportunities to further develop theory and pedagogy beyond the TAship. These kinds of inquiries and studies add insights and opportunities that are simply not possible from other perspectives. Work like Restaino's has already had an impact: "This study will profoundly impact the way I think about my work with graduate teaching assistants . . ." (Rose 227). But remember that all we hear from and about these TAs is through one researcher/author, not directly from the TAs. This does not call into question the veracity of what appears but, just the same, considers the purposes and lenses that the author brings to bare in her representations of her research subjects. Would the RCTAs have chosen the same topics? Would they have prioritized the same perspectives?

Within this current context and this collection—as you may have already discerned—the characterizations of the scholarship on TAs in writing seek to overtly generate a "slant" (Dickinson) that will eventually help to tie together

more varied perspectives to the RCTAship. In some ways, one slant must be a reflection or response to others. Fontaine and Hunter's slant was to focus on diversity among contingent teachers and where their attentions are focused. Good and Warshauer's slant was more focused on classroom practice and pedagogy. But what if TAs could choose their own slants? More generally, as noted earlier, many discussions of TAs really focus on programs, on writing programs, and grad programs in which TAs participate, usually focusing on those programs' peculiar programmatic interests while not surfacing TAs working so hard to negotiate among those too often competing interests. Some discussions are more historical in nature, taking broad views of our fields and professions. There is no question that TAs are there, involved, essential, but the TAs themselves are seldom a focus nor "the first voices we hear" (Royster). Seldom are those voices first heard from outside of dominant group identities. However, no matter which lens is evoked, the TAs are there working, studying, teaching, and trying to survive, and they are represented if only indirectly.

MICRO, MEZZO, MACRO

I will use what I am calling micro, mezzo, and macro-level perspectives to help characterize current scholarship most engaged with RCTAships. Broadly, the micro level of research related to RCTAships focuses on the TAs themselves. Those at the mezzo level tend to focus on broader concerns such as programs, institutions, and/or field-level concerns. For our purposes here, these mezzo-level discussions will include and impact RCTAs to varying degrees, but they look beyond the individual, the case study, or the small cohort to broader concerns in terms of scope. Macro-level scholarship related to RCTAs at issues and challenges with the same scope as mezzo-level scholarship or larger, but it also adds in the perspective of looking at issues and questions over extended periods of time and contexts.

There is an irony here that is worth noticing. If you think about how RCTAs might be introduced to rhetoric and composition, it is often through more sweeping kinds of overviews of the field, its history, and trends over time. This makes good sense because one needs such a context in order to appreciate and understand current conditions, theoretical shifts, historical sequences, and the like. The irony is that this level of scholarship, at what I call the macro-level among the three categories I describe here, includes the least overt discussion of the essential roles and responsibilities of TAs in writing as a field. So, in some ways, the very introduction to the field that TAs get may actually exclude them. The mezzo-level scholarship will describe programs and contexts within which RCTAs are involved and acknowledge many of the conditions inherent in them but, still, RCTAs will not hear voices like their own, will not see a lot of RCTAs

like themselves speaking in scholarly ways through the field-defining work they read. It is not until they are reading and studying at the micro-level that they will begin to see themselves in any kind of active, overtly participatory way, if they see that scholarship at all. Many will not delve into these studies and articles.

So, the irony is that when RCTAs are least connected to their new fields, they will probably see themselves least in that field's literature. When they are most in need of touchpoints that help them to see themselves as part of writing studies, the literature they study will show them least as participants and contributors. As Anson pointed out, graduate students can often expect a unified and cohesive discipline; such an expectation relative to scholarship that does not really represent TAs overtly or significantly could indicate to new RCTAs that their presence is not essential. Another irony is that, in this particular construction, the RCTAs could potentially not find evidence of their roles' importance until long after they have found other motivations for continuing their studies and working at the too often conflicting responsibilities of TAs teaching writing.

As suggested above, the direct consideration of TA experiences within their TAships and/or as a result of their TAships could be considered a "micro-level" discussion. I would characterize this work in this way because it so often looks at one or a small number of TAs and focuses on those experiences specifically. Explicating TA experiences in this way is not an effort to minimize their importance but, rather, is a way to understand the rhetoric and composition TAship "on the ground" and to differentiate that perspective from others in terms of scope and experience. The studies and research found in this collection will typically represent this level of research in some part. This perspective is essential to any larger understanding because there has been relatively little work done here, and very little of the extant work is voiced by those directly impacted, meaning the TAs themselves. Scholarship in this general category might include qualitative approaches to TAs or small groups of TAs in a particular program or cohort, case study research focused on single TAs or small groups of TAs, or even longitudinal studies of rhetoric and composition TAs as they move through their graduate programs and potentially into their careers afterward. Certainly, research such as the work of Heidi Estrem, E. Shelley Reid, Jessica Restaino, and others have already demonstrated the power and importance of such inquiry.

The literature on TAs teaching writing that deploys such micro lenses is consistently sensitive and sympathetic to the challenges facing TAs who are learning to teach writing. There is abundant acknowledgment of the numerous and competing forces shaping the experiences and development of TA writing teachers (Restaino; Reid et al.). "The first semester is more of a day-to-day keeping afloat than it is a carefully constructed, planned course" is a familiar sentiment among these pieces (Restaino 1). These pieces acknowledge a number of essential

conditions that seem all too consistent for TAs who teach writing. Restaino points out two of these essential challenges, what she calls the “shaky foundation on which writing programs and scholarship rest” (2) and the dearth of TA voices on their experiences. She goes on to write:

While significant work exists on the preparation of new writing teachers—on topics ranging from mentoring programs to practicum courses—I want to argue that much of this work does not theorize the early experience of graduate students as writing teachers and its potential shaping of graduate students’ understanding of composition as a discipline, nor the relationships between how writing instruction has been theorized and how it is practiced in the classroom. (Restaino 2)

In some ways, Restaino argues that this research about an essential role and position in our profession gets short shrift, on the front end, by excluding the experiences of those who could most knowingly inform us. On the back end, the scholarship may not think through enough the outcomes of such introductions to our field. If TAs teaching writing are paying attention, they may see that their voices are not abundant, despite their empirical exigence, and that the field is shaky from the start. This is compounded by our knowing that “one graduate pedagogy seminar is not and cannot be a one-shot teaching inoculation” (Estrem and Reid 474). Estrem and Reid go on to say that “When we communicate to new instructors early on that they can fully learn to teach in a short period of time, we short-circuit their opportunities for growth” (Estrem and Reid 475). We may also, inadvertently, be suggesting to them that they are somehow substandard when they aren’t learning everything they need to know about teaching writing in a few days or weeks. The TAs in Estrem and Reid’s study—as well as Estrem and Reid themselves—acknowledge that learning to teach writing takes time, that it is recursive, and that it is difficult. Combined with TA voices being excluded, the impressions of the field they acquire, and that they are learning too slowly . . . no wonder TAs teaching writing experience such challenges, conflicts, and dissonance in their work. Meanwhile, how well can we who are not TAs understand the real lived experiences of those TAs in writing if we have to rely on memory of our own experiences and/or lore that is privileged by the publications in our field? What would those TA voices say that confirms what is already being said? How would they contest it? How much more informed could we all be if TAs were a direct and respected part of the conversation?

The solutions/responses to those challenging conditions and competing interests for the RCTA often seem to expect that the TAs themselves should work their own ways out of these circumstances. In Reid’s 2017 “On Learning To

Teach: A Letter to a New TA,” the solutions are all about what the TA can do, which can be empowering but also may indicate something about what can change and what cannot. While the spirit of the letter is to support TAs and provide them with guidance on how they can make it all work, the six strategies are all on the TA. In short, doing well is on the TA and—while there is ample acknowledgment across this scholarship that the circumstances and conditions within which TAs work and learn are significantly more challenging than they have to be—the responsibility comes to rest on the shoulders of TAs because they are “expert learners” (Reid, “On Learning” 140). How might RCTAs respond to this idea? We don’t know because their voices are not available in our scholarship, at least not fully and not yet.

Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir readily acknowledge that their “data strongly suggest that as a field, we all need to move beyond seeing the inoculation method as officially sufficient and need to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to realize returns on the intensive investment of our pedagogy education efforts” (62). However, in that same year and in another article, Reid advocates making more demanding assignments in our writing pedagogy courses to encourage exploration and critical reflection (“Preparing”). So, we should make it more difficult for TAs in order to confirm the goals of WPAs or graduate faculty? What would TAs teaching writing suggest as ways to encourage exploration and critical reflection? We don’t really know.

One reading of this body of relatively current literature is a clear awareness of the shortcomings regarding what is done to and what results for RCTAs, especially in terms of what happens to the TAs themselves as aspirants and neophytes to writing studies. However, so much of the change proposed seems to be on the parts of the TAs. Those TAs are engaged by programs based on unsteady foundations, which are too abbreviated in their trainings to allow TAs to really dig deeply into theory or practice, and not even our primary professional organizations are doing as much as they might to support these TAs or their teachers (Reid, “Teaching”). And yet it seems as though the remedies have to come from the TAs themselves. It would be so interesting and useful to understand these questions and possible solutions from the perspectives of the RCTAs themselves, to hear them speak to these issues, to see their reasoning and evidence.

So, at this micro-level, it seems as though we can see TAs, but only through the lenses of more established scholars. We can understand and articulate the unfortunate conditions within which RCTAs find themselves academic conscripts, making their ways through multiple thresholds of significant change and challenge, but we can’t really hear them speak to those conditions. We acknowledge their plight, but we seem reluctant to trust their voices as we might others living experiences we wish to understand.

Much of the scholarship that involves RCTAs has also been focused on what I would describe as a “mezzo-level.” This scholarship is produced by faculty and scholars tending to work in leadership roles with RCTAs, and it is often focused on programs for or involving TAs. This level also includes discursive practices and habits in segments of the field. In other words, mezzo-level scholarship is differentiated from micro-level scholarship because its scope is broader and it focuses much less on individuals or small groups of individuals. This scholarship’s focus can include TAs, but the emphasis tends to be on programs or curricula that include TAs. Program participants, like TAs, can be informed research participants, informants, or research subjects whose insights are essential to understanding what the programs do and accomplish, but these participants are not usually the focus of the research. Several contributions to this collection would fit into this strata of research, as well, even while they privilege the voices of RCTAs.

An example of this type of scholarship might be Mary Soliday’s *Everyday Genres: Writing Assignments across the Disciplines*. This research focuses on doctoral students working as “writing fellows” alongside disciplinary faculty to support writing across the curriculum. Certainly, this work could be strategic in the development of the graduate students involved in and part of larger efforts in professional development and research for those students. Clearly, the fellows were essential to the program, but they were not the focus of the study. This is not a flaw but rather a point of discussion relative to TAs’ roles and participation.

Another example is Sidney I. Dobrin’s *Don’t Call It That: The Composition Practicum*. The composition practicum is so often a course that accompanies RCTAships and works to inform the practicalities of TAs teaching in FYC. Dobrin explains that the

... “practicum” more often than not serves as an introduction to composition theory, to research methodologies, to pedagogical theory, to histories of composition studies as a discipline, and to larger disciplinary questions about writing, not just to teach writing per se. (1-2)

It is telling that the title of Dobrin’s introduction is “Finding Space for the Composition Practicum.” One might argue that the disaggregation of rhetoric and composition graduate programs from FYC programs has led to competition between them, rather than collaboration. One might also argue that these competitive practices are represented in some part by the segmentation of the relevant literature. One might even go so far as to argue that a constant, such as the knowledge development and professionalization of RCTAs, could support now segregated programs in beginning to cooperate on larger agendas and purposes. One of the longstanding logistical challenges has been that, so often, RCTAs

are starting to teach well before they have had time to absorb much of what a practicum offers. There are programs that are structured to avoid this particular problem, but they are the exception rather than the rule, I suspect.

One of the more interesting questions at this level is the discussion of TA resistance. In 2019, Eric D. Brown and Savanna G. Conner published “Forty Years of Resistance in TA Education” in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* on the occasion of WPA’s 40th anniversary. The authors were careful to say that “most of the resistors were TAs outside of composition and rhetoric,” but they continued in the piece to treat TAs as a singularity (65). The authors did a very good job of surveying and summarizing *WPA*’s publications on this topic, but there were some curious dissonances within the three-and-a-half-page article, not including citations. This article provides a number of opportunities to consider just how differently these issues might have been discussed if the authors had sought to represent the perspectives of TAs rather than the journal.

Discussing Reid et al.’s 2012 article, the authors reported that “TAs ‘place more value on their own experiences or those of their peers than on the [theories] they are learning’” (66). Consider the numbers of new roles and responsibilities TAs are taking on in these positions. They have to be excellent teachers, excellent students, excellent readers and writers and thinkers and speakers and listeners. . . and their orientation lasted a week. They should have everything they need, or at least they as neophytes are led to believe so. Thus, could their relying on experience and one another be a function of what they might be encouraged to assume by their training and what they are expected to carry by their programs rather than a qualitative choice about sources?

Brown and Conner also quote a 1986 article by Diogenes et al. in which the writers say that “TAs were ‘the academic equivalent of truck stop waitresses’” (67), suggesting this as a way to discuss perceived resistance to professionalization. Not unlike a truck stop waitress, could it be that TAs just have their hands full and too many tables to attend to? Could it be that their work is undervalued and their skills unrecognized? Could it be that TAs are underappreciated and overworked? I bet that, if TAs were asked instead, that story might have come out very differently. The point here is not that these authors are wrong nor that the articles they cite are malicious or incorrect. Rather, what I am hoping to reveal is that there is a disciplinary perspective represented here, one with which the TAs themselves would not likely agree. What these researchers and writers see as resistance may, from the perspectives of actual TAs, simply be choices made in the interest of survival. What is construed here as resistance to composition theory may simply be out of step with the demands of being dumped into a FYC classroom after only a week or two of preparation—again, survival that calls for practical responses rather than theoretical ones. Could it be that what is called resistance to professionalization

is actually simply trying to survive what is happening now? I am sure that many RCTAs would agree with that analysis. Meaghan Brewer, in her 2020 book *Conceptions of Literacy: Graduate Instructors and the Teaching of First-Year Composition* suggests that the problem may be much simpler than resistance. Instead of resistance, she suggests, it may simply be that RCTAs are being asked to be something that they have never seen nor been before, among all of the other things they are being asked to be, do, understand, practice, and produce for the very first times. The simplest explanation can often times be the most likely.

Remember, too, that these same neophytes will more than likely be reading scholarship that does not include them in overt ways, that does not sound like them or represent their work in recognizable ways. Early on in their TAships, everything is aspirational rather than empirical. They are expected to perform all of their roles with complete success, without fail or flaw. Who among them will likely ask for help? Where will they find the time to theorize deeply between classes they are teaching? How will they make room for recognizable professionalization? At the mezzo-level of RCTA scholarship, we may not see the most accurate and complete picture of TAs in situ, but we might be able to see the ways in which TAs are both relied upon and underrepresented.

‘Macro-level’ scholarship is the broadest in scope and range; it can be understood as meta-scholarship in many ways, which can include histories of the field or segments of the field, surveys of literature, and/or analyses of broad trends and movements. These are overviews. “Macro-level” scholarship could also include “state-of the profession” kinds of discussions, and/or sourcebooks or rhetorics for particular specialties. Again, these would be broad, meta-discussions in time, scale, scope, etc. As essential a role as the RCTAship has played in the development of so many leaders in the field, as well as TAs’ substantial contributions to programs that rhetoric and composition professionals so often take charge of (ESL programs, writing centers, WAC/WID, FYC, etc.), one might expect that TAs would figure prominently at this level of scholarship—at all three levels, for that matter. However, it is also fair to say that these texts are often so broad in scope that focusing on one type of participant, even if that one is extremely important, can be challenging at best.

A primary type of “macro-level” text is the history. Histories often argue for particular origins because those origins can then be understood as guideposts along the way to particular outcomes. Historical origin stories can frame understandings of the field in ways that explain and complicate, such as John C. Brereton’s *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925: A Documentary History*. Others track movements and influences within the field toward arguments about why the field is what it is, such as James A. Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*

and *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges* and Robert J. Connors' *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*. Still others look to complicate and challenge ideas about where the field comes from, such as in Sharon Crowley's *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays*, or propose new conceptions of the field's history toward disrupting tacit theoretical assumptions and/or dealing with new challenges that former frames inadequately addressed, such as *A Counter-History of Composition* by Byron Hawk. Others can focus on one area alone, such as rhetoric (Gold; Kitzhaber), on particular time frames (Berlin; Harris; Tobin and Newkirk), or on particular sub-specializations (Palmeri; Strickland). These histories tend not to include discussions of RCTAships, despite these TAships' prevalence and impact.

'Macro' texts focused on writing programs, where TAships live, can be historical, too, such as Barbara L'Eplattenier and Lisa Mastrangelo's *Historical Studies of Writing Program Administration: Individuals, Communities, and the Formation of a Discipline*. Neal Lerner has done similar historical work regarding writing centers in *The Idea of a Writing Laboratory*—I mention this because many RCTAs do work in writing centers, as well as in FYC and/or WAC/WID programs. Few if any of these historical texts amplify the experiences of RCTAs.

Other "macro" texts on writing programs can do a bit more with RCTAships. Kelly Ritter and Melissa Ianetta's collection *Landmark Essays on Writing Program Administration* includes two pieces that discuss teacher education specifically—and certainly other contributions discuss it, as well: Micciche's "More Than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work" and Rachael Green-Howard's "Building a WPA Library: A Bibliographic Exploration of the Field." However, these essays deal with teacher education in broad terms, are not focused on the TAs themselves, and do not differentiate—and may not even include—TAs among the teachers they consider. Of course, and again to be fair, covering a field in a single volume or article means that a lot has to be left out, so the expectation of focus on RCTAships here should be tempered at least. However, where we might also expect to find some discussion of the RCTAships is in sourcebooks for WPAs.

A good example of these texts is Irene Ward and William J. Carpenter's *The Allyn & Bacon Sourcebook for Writing Program Administrators*, where an entire section of the collection is devoted to TA training and staff development. In contrast, Stuart C. Brown and Theresa Enos' *The Writing Program Administrator's Resource: A Guide to Reflective Institutional Practice* contains two essays including direct discussions of TAs in rhetoric and composition to varying degrees: Louise Wetherbee Phelps' "Turtles All the Way Down: Educating Academic Leaders" and Meg Morgan's "The GTA Experience: Grounding, Practicing, Evaluating, and Reflecting." Of course, other inclusions in Brown and Enos are certainly related to graduate student education and WPA graduate courses, but these two essays are most

deliberate in considering TA experience. By and large, RCTAships are not prevalent in these “macro-level” texts and, when they are present, they tend to be discussed in brief and/or at some distance from those who actually occupy those TAships.

Ecologies of Writing Programs: Program Profiles in Context, edited by Mary Jo Reiff et al., is one of a group of recent books to apply new lenses to writing programs. Seeing writing programs as ecologies affords a sensitivity to the interactions between constituencies within those ecologies. Included in *Ecologies* is Dively’s “Standardizing English 101 at Southern Illinois University Carbondale: Reflections on the Promise of Improved GTA Preparation and More Effective Writing Instruction,” which demonstrates both a strong sensitivity to the work and concerns of TAs participating in the FYC program at SIUC and a determined effort to include those same TAs in the discussion of program revision. In Rita Malenczyk’s *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators* second edition, TAs appear throughout the entire text and in many of the essays collected there. In Amy Goodburn et al.’s *Rewriting Success in Rhetoric and Composition Careers*, TAs again appear throughout the text and within many of the essays included in the collection. Thus, it seems as though, in at least this latter segment of the “macro-level,” the presence and discussion of the RCTA seems to be increasing just as it is at the “micro-level” in studies of TAs.

I remind you that, as I stated earlier, these overviews are most prevalent at the start of graduate studies, in terms of assigned texts. Most programs and graduate faculty want students to have a strong sense of the field and the context for current work before they dive too deeply into specifics. And the voices of TAs are largely absent there, at the macro-level. The presence of TAs in writing programs and history is much more limited at this macro level than at the *mezzo* and more present at the micro-level than at the *mezzo*. And these texts tend to be read from macro to *mezzo* to micro, which it would seem is exactly the opposite of what new RCTAs need in terms of connecting with the field and in terms of seeing themselves as a part of that field.

TA voices and experiences seem to remain largely absent at all three levels. RCTA through-lines or throughputs across all three levels remain elusive. The effort to include the unique contributions of TAs more fully, explore representation of RCTAships more deeply, their liminalities and thresholds, challenges and rewards, must continue if we hope to better understand and more successfully develop those TAships for a changing world and employment market. I don’t think it an overstatement to say that rhetoric and composition relies on bringing into our field neophytes who see the work as valuable and valued; the absence of direct TA voices and perspectives may foul those purposes.

Clearly, there is room for further research on RCTAships at all three levels. There is certainly reason and opportunity to pursue research that works to build

from RCTAships to impact writing programs and the field, as well. Even more broadly, a generative emphasis on the RCTA as a substantial programmatic contributor has the potential to create a conceptual through-line that aggregates significant areas of rhetoric and composition as a field, both in practice and in the preparation of its future leaders. These are worthy outcomes of such a beginning as has been gathered here.

In light of these conditions, we have asked our contributors to first help in articulating and explicating liminalities and thresholds within RCTAships in relation to writing programs. Two purposes drive this request. First, the research and scholarship of this kind is still too limited, and we clearly need to know more about the lived experiences of these TAs. The work done by scholars cited in this introduction is insightful and revealing, but there simply isn't enough of it yet. We need to know more about what RCTAships *are* for those who participate in them and those who interact with them, beyond the constructed, anecdotal, or recalled. Second, the work of more overtly connecting RCTAships to writing programs and other, larger purposes in rhetoric and composition graduate education and professional preparation must build from what *is* rather than assumption, nostalgia, or fiction about what *was* or *might have been*. Starting from an informed perspective about what RCTAships are as experienced and researched, rather than what they might be, what we remember them as being, or what we would like them to be, provides opportunities to not only make informed adjustments as priorities are identified but also build on possibilities that extant conditions make possible. In other words, knowing what there *is* allows for changing what doesn't work in TAships and writing programs and building from what does.

Each chapter in this collection will also explore what its research into RCTAships may imply or suggest in relation to writing programs, larger rhetoric and composition curricula, and/or TAs' professional development. So, the result is more insight into RCTAships as experienced, a necessary "micro" step made toward mezzo (program) and macro (field/history) reconsiderations of a long-valued and seldom-appreciated professional milestone. Looking at RCTAships from the perspectives of those who experience them sets a strong foundation for what that TAship could be/come in writing programs, rhetoric and composition graduate education, and graduate student professional development. That is what *Threshold Conscripts* begins, as well as where it intends to finish.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is designed primarily for graduate students studying writing programs and for writing program administrators and others whose programmatic work impacts RCTAs, first and foremost to provide insights into TA experiences,

challenge assumptions, and increase understanding of those TAs as they matriculate through writing programs, their own studies, and the evolving roles and negotiations of identity, location, and stance. As TA roles and opportunities continue to evolve and grow—especially in relation to writing programs—insights into their lived experiences will become increasingly important. WPAs starting programs, revising programs, researching programs can all use this collection to gather insights into the experiences of RCTAs to both embrace opportunities and avoid pitfalls.

Readers can also use these chapters to generate new ideas for programs and TAs, as well as discard features of extant programs unlikely to accomplish intended outcomes. A primary hope for this collection is that readers will be able to use these pieces focused on RCTAs as foundational discussions toward more integrated and collectively organized writing programs that can work to strengthen those programs and provide comprehensive preparation and professional development for neophytes in our field(s). This wish applies to the individual, working to make the most of her own opportunities, as well as those who have opportunities to bring programs, curricula, and professional development into contact with more fully developed RCTAs. This collection only begins this important work with RCTAs.

There is another reader toward whom this collection reaches, and that is the TA studying in a rhetoric and composition graduate program and/or teaching/working in a writing program. We, the editors and contributors, hope that these readers can make direct and productive use of this collection in understanding and productively engaging with every opportunity in a RCTA and the programs where those TAs are active. This book can be used by TAs to understand more deeply what the TA can be, to see how TAs fit into the work and cultures of writing programs, to prepare for the ambiguities inherent within these roles and programs, to think critically about how the TA can be understood as a component of deliberate and comprehensive professional development within and between writing programs, to avoid some of the pitfalls of imposter syndrome and/or self-doubt, and to otherwise appreciate the opportunities a RCTA affords beyond simply covering tuition and providing a little stipend. Even if a TA is not going into rhetoric and composition, this collection can be useful in revealing the opportunities that TAs in writing programs can offer, as well as understanding more about teaching writing and FYC, which very well may be part of most professional teaching careers in English Studies and other allied fields.

So, reader, use this book to participate in deepening understanding of RCTAs in itself. Use it to explore that TA in relation to writing programs. Use it to consider RCTAs as foundational to integrated and vertical graduate

curricula, writing-related programs and centers, and professionalization in rhetoric and composition. Consider, reader, the experiences and challenges that RCTAships have and what those experiences might provoke, enable, cut-off, construe, predict, produce for the graduate students who participate in them, the writing programs that complicate them, and the graduate programs that provide them toward producing the next generations of rhetoric and composition professionals. Talk about “gettin’ in on the ground floor!” Begin here and see where you finish.

HOW THIS COLLECTION IS ORGANIZED

This collection is organized in a roughly chronological order based on what RCTAs might experience: approaching the RCTAship, inhabiting the RCTAship, and transcending the RCTAship. This organization makes sense because it allows a representation of TA experiences while it creates an impression of a vertically structured RCTAship. The first section of chapters focuses on approaching RCTAships and looks at what TAs bring to the table, on where they start. The second section focuses on beginning RCTAships, on the FYC TA orientation, on the ways that TAs are prepared for their work as teachers and participants in writing programs. The third and final section focuses on understanding the RCTAs at work, on what these TAs do and how they do it. The chapters in this section work to dig more deeply into the experiences of the TAship in order to understand the complexities and complications that it includes. We have been describing these sections as approaching, inhabiting, and transcending the RCTAship, respectively. Organized in this way, the chapters contribute to an exploratory and accumulative experience that mimics and reflects RCTAships. In each section, Brady Edwards and Phil Lovas will introduce you to the theme and contents of the section. You will find four to five chapters interspersed with brief narratives from current and recent TAs. Each section concludes with a word cloud for that section that creates a visual representation of the primary themes and concepts within that section.

The Foreword and three sections of chapters, narratives, and word clouds is followed by a section we are calling “Program Profiles.” We included these profiles because we wanted to show that there are ways of dealing with TA experiences effectively from a programmatic perspective. These profiles show a range of creative and successful approaches to meeting the needs of TAs teaching writing. We invited contributors to describe programs that are working well to support TAs teaching writing through various means and combinations of efforts. As you will see, we have ten profiles that describe programmatic, social, and work culture responses that work.

The collection is organized in this way: Laura Micciche’s foreword opens the work with connections she makes to the present collection. Following my introduction, the work is divided into three sections : approaching, inhabiting, and transcending the RCTAship. Each of these three sections includes four to six chapters and narratives. I describe these sections in more detail below. Dylan Dryer provides a provocative afterword for the collection, which is followed by our “Program Profiles,” and the author and editor bios.

APPROACHING RCTASHIPS

This first section is largely about new graduate students making their ways into RCTAships and recognizing the diversity of TAs. Rachel Gramer opens the section with an essential overview of TA research and then a detailed discussion of new possibilities for that research and what would change with shifts in our thinking about that research. Chapter Two is Jaquelyn Lugg’s “‘The Gift of Authenticity’: Writing Center Pedagogy and Integrated Identity Work in TA Education.” Lugg examines the identity work TAs must do individually both before and early on in their TAships as part of acclimating to the demands and opportunities encountered there. The third chapter in this first section is Kali A. Mobley Finn’s “Adapting, Not Resisting: A Preliminary Understanding of TAs’ Relationships with Writing Pedagogy Education,” which acknowledges the work that individuals do to prepare for their TAships, as well as the awareness that programs must build from this work and recognize their TAs’ varied backgrounds and existing relationships with writing pedagogy. “Coming to Teaching: Moving Beyond a Blank-Slate Model of Developing Pedagogical Expertise” by Kathleen Blake Yancey, Rob Cole, Amanda May, and Katelyn Stark adds significantly to this section and complements Lugg’s piece by presenting a careful programmatic consideration of the wide array of backgrounds with which TAs come into such programs. This piece also connects to Finn’s chapter that focuses on what TAs bring to the table when they join a program. The section closes with Emily Jo Schwaller’s chapter that studies the first two years of new RCTAs’ teaching and graduate studies. This chapter gives a good overview of what happens with and to RCTAs as they make their ways into their studies and then onto inhabiting their roles and responsibilities.

The chapters in each section, including *Approaching the RCTAship*, are complemented by a selection of brief narratives from current and recent RCTAs that provide insights and discussions from “where the rubber meets the road.” In other words, we complement the chapters with brief narratives because it is so important that we see people and positions in immediate as well as more elaborated ways. Narratives appear in this section, each one taking up a different

perspective and question but all grounded in the direct experiences of RCTAs: “First Day of Class” by I-Hsien Lee; “Locating Sound While Learning How to Teach” by Janelle Chu Capwell; “More Than My Teaching” by Eliza Gellis; and “Back to the Start: The Transition from Adjunct Professor to Ph.D. Student” by Matt Shering. We feel that these TA voices best portray the feelings, contributions, and struggles that RCTAs have as they *Approach* the field of rhetoric and composition as more than just students, and begin their evolution to teachers, researchers, mentors, etc. within the field.

INHABITING RCTASHIPS

In the second section of the collection, the focus shifts to how RCTAs work within their TAships. The collection’s sixth chapter starts off this section with Leslie Anglesey’s “‘Survival is Insufficient’: Reimagining TA Orientation as Meaningful Threshold Boundaries.” Focused on TA preparation as an essential early step in TA preparation, Anglesey argues that listening is an essential means of shifting away from conveying information to coproduction of meaning at multiple levels. But the orientation and TA courses are only one part of these beginning experiences. Madelyn Pawlowski and Brad Jacobson’s “Shifting Roles and Negotiating Identities: TA Learning in Landscapes of Practice” responds to the challenges of practical demands made on TAs by suggesting communities of practice as useful means of handling the cacophony of demands. Chapter Eight, Zack K. De Piero and Jennifer K. Johnson’s “Doorways to Disciplinarity: Using Threshold Concepts to Bridge Disciplinary Divides and Develop Theory-Practice Praxis,” provides a rich discussion of threshold concepts as metaphorical supports for dealing with the increasing complexities inherent in adding multiple disciplines to TA development. Soha Youssef’s Chapter Nine, “International Teaching Assistants (ITAs)’ Needs and Undergraduate Native English-Speaking Students (NESS)’ Expectations: Meaning Negotiation as a Rhetorical Strategy” does a deep dive into the particular needs and challenges of TAs for whom English is not a first language. One of the challenges faced by many TAs is the contrasting genres and practices encountered as they move along in their experiences and development. This section concludes with Trixie Smith and Rachel Robinson-Zetzer’s work “I Feel It in My Body: WC and Administration as Embodied Praxis,” which explores LGBTQIA+ identities in writing center TA work.

Inhabiting also includes five brief narratives that complement the chapters in this section and help us to remember that lived experience is so important, especially when grad students are trying to survive and thrive. The narratives interspersed throughout this section include: “Student, Teacher, Teaching Assistant: Janus and Institutional Identity” by Jonathan Marine; “Teaching Rhetoric

without a License” by Megan Friess; “IGTA” by Thir Budhathoki; “Always Beginning: Inhabiting the TAship after a Career” by Elizabeth Topping; and “Who is that Girl I See? Navigating the Identities of Student and Administrator as a Graduate WPA” by Analeigh Horton.

These narratives help us to understand the lived conditions of inhabiting RCTAships.

TRANSCENDING RCTASHIPS

Our 11th chapter is Courtney Adams Wooten’s “The Pursuit of (Un)Happiness in Composition and Rhetoric TAs’ Experiences.” This chapter seeks to explore and understand more thoroughly the emotional and affective labor of TAs learning to teach writing. Melba Vélez Ortiz does a deep dive into language and identity to relate past experiences as a graduate writing tutor to current theory and teaching of writing in communications. Nicole Warwick’s “From Deficit to Asset: Rethinking Graduate Student Narratives” makes an argument for narratives and narrative research as ways to understand and explore more deeply the development of RCTAs, as well as give voice to the emotional and affective facets of TAing. Meghalee Das, Michelle Flahive, Jiaxin Zhang, and Michael J. Faris’ “Integrating the Marginalized and the Mainstream: Women of Color Graduate Instructors’ Experience with Identity, Difference, and Belonging” closes out the section with their careful discussion of identity and TAing, focusing on the process of reconciling identity and role in the TAship and beyond. The collection includes Dylan Dryer’s “Afterword: The Elephant in the Room,” which explores the very real questions and conditions of programs within which WPAs and RCTAs exist and work. And he even offers some solutions. The collection closes with a selection of “program profiles” that discuss a range of approaches to writing TA support systems.

Transcending also includes five brief narratives focused on how RCTAs thrive and transcend the boundaries of their TAships. These narratives testify to the creativity, endurance, and persistence of our RCTAs. The narratives in this section include “Collegiality as Transcendence Beyond the TAship” by Matthew Sansbury; “Worth” by Sarah Lonelodge; “Multiple Atypical Identities” by Gitte Frandsen; “Mom, Cancer Patient, Doctoral Candidate, TA” by Megen Farrow Boyett; and “Displacement in the Classroom” by Charlotte Kupsch. Each of these pieces exemplifies what it takes to not only be an RCTA, but what it is taking for these individuals and those like them to inhabit the RCTAship effectively.

That’s how this edited collection does its work. *Threshold Conscripts* is a collection focused on the liminalities and thresholds of RCTAships, writ large and small. It works to question and amplify the unclear relationships between these

TAships and the too often tacit assumptions of professionalization, toward careers in rhetoric and composition in higher education. This edited collection is also about the thresholds that the RCTAship is, that it includes, that it introduces, and the thresholds and liminalities that can so often threaten to overwhelm our TAs. It is about institutional, disciplinary, and programmatic boundaries experienced by those newly (usually) in our field, about practical and pedagogical third spaces that are inhabited by rhetoric and composition professionals (Soja), and about theoretical, intellectual, and rhetorical crossings that are necessary even while dramatically disruptive to neophytes' understandings of rhetoric and composition in higher education (Land et al.). And the overarching challenge is questioning and clarifying what these RCTAships are beginning and what kind of finish they are intending. We hope, also, that RCTAs now and in the near future will be able to use this edited collection to critically prepare for their own participations in the future of rhetoric and composition, toward a deliberately integrated understanding and richly developed integration of RCTAships as one of several key moments in careers in this field.

For now—for this collection—we set our sights modestly. A strong start is important—small successes accomplish so much more than big failures. What RCTAs are being prepared for, what their liminal experiences and multiple threshold crossings contribute to, and the un/intended outcomes are important ends in themselves and should not be undervalued. They can be important parts of answering more global questions about these TAships even while they serve essential roles in answering more localized ones. However, I would ask that we think more broadly than that here:

When we think about the task of presenting this “world” of composition and its positioning in the university to a new group of graduate student writing teachers, we must contend with our relationship to all that defines composition and its positioning in the university today. The preparation of graduate students to teach writing needs to be continuously immersed in what we know about our writing programs, our undergraduate students, the ways in which writing pedagogy has been researched and theorized, and—I would argue—this still murky story of first-year writing's conflicted relationship to the larger university, to the existence of WPAs, and to what it means to make “knowledge” in this field. When we can prepare new writing teachers with an honest consideration of “what we are doing,” we are [. . .] equipping them to one day join this world, more fully, as change makers. (Restaino 112)

Amen! And, in order to present that more accurate and less murky story, we must first clarify for ourselves what RCTAships are in lived terms, with all of their liminalities and thresholds, and understand them within the contexts where they live and breathe—in fact, where they are lived and breathed from. To do so, we start here, with research that seeks to elucidate from inside the TAship what that experience and role are and could be, as a starting point for a more coherent conception of preparing our future colleagues. Nearly 30 years ago, Fontaine & Hunter wrote in their collection a way of understanding their important work, a framing that remains relevant today and for RCTAs and *Threshold Conscripts*, too:

Real changes in the way the story is unfolded, then, will not come from our simply being included or alluded to in the current narratives. To become heard does not mean to become part of the center or to move away from the borders . . . the voices gathered together here may not be raised again next year in another collection. And then again some may be. As we write ourselves into the story of composition, our unheard voices will not necessarily become tomorrow's heard voices. There's no guarantee. (15)

Let's hope that TAs' voices here and elsewhere do not simply pop up here and there and then simply fade away. They are too important for that.

WORKS CITED

- Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Elizabeth Wardle, editors. *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*. Utah State UP, 2015.
- Anson, Chris M. "Rites of Passage: Reflections on Disciplinary Enculturation in Composition." *Writing Ourselves into the Story: Unheard Voices From Composition Studies*, edited by Sheryl I. Fontaine and Susan Hunter, Southern Illinois UP, 1993, pp. 246-265.
- Berlin, James A. *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*. Southern Illinois UP, 1987.
- . *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth Century American Colleges*. Southern Illinois UP, 1984.
- Bettencourt, Patrick J. "Voicing Experience." *In Our Own Voice: Graduate Students Teach Writing*, edited by Tina Lavonne Good and Leanne B. Warshauer. Allyn and Bacon, 2000, pp. 2-18.
- Bly, Brian K. "Uneasy Transitions: The Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Composition Program." *In Our Own Voice: Graduate Students Teach Writing*, edited by Tina Lavonne Good and Leanne B. Warshauer, Allyn and Bacon, 2000, pp. 19-27.

- Brereton, John C., editor. *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925: A Documentary History*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995.
- Brewer, Meaghan. *Conceptions of Literacy: Graduate Instructors and the Teaching of First-Year Composition*. Utah State UP, 2020.
- Brown, Eric D., and Savanna G. Conner. "Forty Years of Resistance in TA Education." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2019, pp. 65-70.
- Brown, Stuart C., and Theresa Enos, editors. *The Writing Program Administrator's Resource: A Guide to Reflective Institutional Practice*. Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002.
- Carroll, Tobias. "The Ground Didn't Stop Moving Beneath My Feet: Hermione Hoby on Writing 'Virtue'." *Vol 1. Brooklyn*, 20 July, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2twa7u6v>.
- Connors, Robert J. *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997.
- Crowley, Sharon. *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998.
- Deans, Thomas Anthony. *Community-Based and Service Learning College Writing Initiatives in Relation to Composition Studies and Critical Theory*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1998.
- Dickinson, Emily. "Tell all the truth but tell it slant." *Poetry Foundation*, 23 March 2021, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/56824/tell-all-the-truth-but-tell-it-slant-1263>.
- Diogenes, Marvin, et al. "Creating the Profession: The GAT Training Program at the University of Arizona." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 10, no. 1-2, 1986, pp. 51-60.
- Dively, Rhonda Leathers. "Standardizing English 101 at Southern Illinois University." *Ecologies of Writing Programs: Program Profiles in Context* edited by Mary Jo Reiff et al., Parlor Press, 2015, pp. 41-67.
- Dobrin, Sidney I. "Introduction: Finding Space for the Composition Practicum." *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney I. Dobrin, National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, pp 1-34.
- Estrem, Heidi and E. Shelley Reid. "What New Writing Teachers Talk about when they Talk about Teaching." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2012, pp. 449-480.
- Fontaine, Sheryl I., and Susan Hunter, editors. *Writing Ourselves into the Story: Unheard Voices From Composition Studies*. Southern Illinois UP, 1993.
- Gold, David. *Rhetoric at the Margins: Revising the History of Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1873-1947*. Southern Illinois UP, 2008.
- Good, Tina Lavonne, and Leanne B. Warshauer, editors. *In Our Own Voice: Graduate Students Teach Writing*. Allyn and Bacon, 2000.
- Goodburn, Amy, et al., editors. *Rewriting Success in Rhetoric and Composition Careers*. Parlor Press, 2013.
- Green-Howard, Rachael. "Building a WPA Library: A Bibliographic Exploration of the Field." *Landmark Essays in Writing Program Administration* edited by Kelly Ritter and Melissa Ianetta. Routledge, 2019, pp. 328-344.

- “Groupthink.” *Google Definitions from Oxford Languages*, July 2021, <https://www.google.com/search?q=groupthink>.
- Harris, Joseph. *A Teaching Subject: Composition Since 1966*, new edition. Utah State UP, 2012.
- Hawk, Byron. *A Counter-History of Composition: Toward Methodologies of Complexity*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007.
- Kitzhaber, Albert R. *Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1900*. Southern Methodist UP, 1990.
- Land, Ray, et al. “Editors’ Preface: Threshold Concepts and Transformational Learning.” *Threshold Concepts and Transformational Learning*, edited by Jan H. F. Meyer, Ray Land, & Carol Baillie, Sense Publishers, 2010, pp. ix-xlii.
- Latterell, Catherine. “Defining Roles for Graduate Students in Writing Program Administration: Balancing Pragmatic Needs with a Postmodern Ethics of Action.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 27, no. 1-2, 2003, pp. 23-39.
- Lerner, Neal. *The Idea of a Writing Laboratory*. Southern Illinois UP, 2009.
- L’Eplattenier, Barbara, and Lisa Mastrangelo, editors. *Historical Studies of Writing Program Administration: Individuals, Communities, and the Formation of a Discipline*. Parlor Press, 2004.
- Lombardi, Amy. E-mail to WPA-L. 26 April 2021.
- Malenczyk, Rita, editor. *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators*, 2nd ed. Parlor Press, 2016.
- Micciche, Laura. “More Than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work.” *Landmark Essays in Writing Program Administration*, edited by Kelly Ritter and Melissa Ianetta. Routledge, 2019, pp. 266-290.
- Morgan, Meg. “The GTA Experience: Grounding, Practicing, Evaluating, and Reflecting.” *The Writing Program Administrator’s Resource: A Guide to Reflective Institutional Practice*, edited by Stuart C. Brown and Theresa Enos, Lawrence Earlbaum, 2002, pp. 700-728.
- Palmeri, Jason. *Remixing Composition: A History of Multimodal Writing Pedagogy*. Southern Illinois UP, 2012.
- Pemberton, Michael A. “Tales Too Terrible to Tell: Unstated Truths and Underpreparation in Graduate Composition Programs.” *Writing Ourselves into the Story: Unheard Voices From Composition Studies*, edited by Sheryl I. Fontaine and Susan Hunter. Southern Illinois UP, 1993, pp. 154-173.
- Phelps, Louise Wetherbee. “Turtles all the Way Down: Educating Academic Leaders.” *The Writing Program Administrator’s Resource: A Guide to Reflective Institutional Practice*, edited by Stuart C. Brown and Theresa Enos, Lawrence Earlbaum, 2002, pp. 31-99.
- Rankin, Elizabeth. *Seeing Yourself as a Teacher: Conversations with Five New Teachers in a University Writing Program*. National Council of Teachers of English, 1994.
- Reid, E. Shelley. “On Learning to Teach: Letter to a New TA.” *WPA Writing Program Administration: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp. 129-145.

- . "Preparing Writing Teachers: A Case Study in Constructing a More Connected Future for CCCC and NCTE." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 62, no. 4, 2011, pp. 687-703.
- . "Teaching Writing Teachers Writing: Difficulty, Exploration, and Critical Reflection." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2009, pp. W197-W221.
- Reid, E. Shelley, et al. "The Effects of Writing Pedagogy Education on Graduate Teaching Assistants' Approaches to Teaching Composition." *Writing Program Administration*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 32-73.
- Reiff, Mary Jo, et al. *Ecologies of Writing Programs: Program Profiles in Context*. Parlor Press, 2015.
- Restaino, Jessica. *First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground*. Southern Illinois UP, 2012.
- Ritter, Kelly, and Melissa Ianetta, editors. *Landmark Essays in Writing Program Administration*. Routledge, 2019.
- Rose, Shirley K. "First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground, Jessica Restaino: Conference on College Composition and Communication. Studies in Writing and Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2013, pp. 227-231.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1996, pp. 29-40.
- Soja, Edward W. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Blackwell Publishing, 1996.
- Soliday, Mary. *Everyday Genres: Writing Assignments Across the Disciplines*. Southern Illinois UP, 2011.
- Strickland, Donna. *The Managerial Unconscious in the History of Composition Studies*. Southern Illinois UP, 2011.
- Tobin, Lad, and Thomas Newkirk, editors. *Taking Stock: The Writing Process Movement in the '90s*. Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 1994.
- Ward, Irene, and William J. Carpenter, editors. *The Allyn & Bacon Sourcebook for Writing Program Administrators*. Longman, 2002.

SECTION 1.

**APPROACHING THE RHETORIC
AND COMPOSITION
TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP**

Phillip K. Lovas

UC Merced

Brady Edwards

New Mexico Junior College

When we discuss the idea of new graduate students approaching the RCTAship, what exactly are we talking about? It is fairly common to think about the process of approaching a TAship as a checklist to complete: the TA orientation, meetings between mentors and TAs, gathering copy codes and textbooks, checking out one's classroom, etc. While these are all meant to help transition a novice scholar/teacher into the field, they can have another impact: they can potentially separate the individual teaching assistant into a list of tasks to accomplish. This is understandable, as so many things must occur before a semester gets underway, but it can potentially have unintended consequences as well. By centering one's focus on what TAs need to accomplish prior to the commencement of a semester, WPAs can marginalize the necessary individualized education needed for each teaching assistant's professional development, instead focusing on the needs of the cohort as a whole. But what our contributors will show is that professional development is a highly individualized act and should be thought of and incorporated into curricula in that way.

As new RCTAs, these early moments of individualized training help begin the development of certain dispositions for socialization within their respective rhetoric and composition programs, and within the broader rhetoric and composition field, conditioned by their burgeoning position as they approach the RCTAship. Ultimately, the individual dispositions of the TAs will solidify into a scholarly habitus as they settle into the RCTAship and the field itself (Bourdieu). For our idea of approaching the RCTAship, these developed habitus represent how programmatic cultures and a graduate student's own history begin to shape their growth into the larger academic discipline. These new minds entering the discipline are enculturated into the field of rhetoric and composition and the

specific graduate program that they enter, and, depending on their program, will shape the attitudes, mannerisms, tastes, moral intuitions, and habits of those new to the RCTAship. So, the approaching stage of the RCTA is structured by both the individual TA's past life experiences but will also help guide the TA's future life path.

Rachel Gramer, in "Putting Learning First: Challenges and Possibilities for New Writing Teacher Research," begins our collection with an in-depth piece that focuses on the fact that New Writing Teachers (NWT) are often acclimated to new departments and curriculum, not according to what they most need to learn, but what the department needs them to know/do. Gramer, then, exposes a common issue within writing programs: their focus can be on the tasks RCTAs need to perform, but not necessarily on individualized RCTA professional development. To address this oversight, Gramer argues, through an application of Susan A. Ambrose et al.'s *How Learning Works*, that WPAs—and composition studies as a field—should shift the focus of TA professional development to learner-center—as opposed to program-centered—professional development that expands aspects of prior knowledge, motivation, mastery, and course climate to better serve NWTs.

Next, Jacqueline Lugg, in "The Gifts of Authenticity: Writing Center Pedagogy and Integrated Identity Work in TA Education," argues that instead of focusing on the dos and don'ts of becoming a teacher, graduate teaching assistants are better served by thinking about authenticity within themselves and their students in the classroom. For Lugg, this is accomplished through the application of writing center pedagogy in the teaching assistant practicum. Such an approach, as Lugg shows readers through the sharing of her own experience, could involve reading and discussing WC scholarship in the practicum along with observing writing center visits with students. This option can provide an opportunity for RCTAs to see authentic exchanges between tutor and tutee, which can be useful as RCTAs are still learning the field themselves and might benefit from viewing the give and take of writing center interactions. Lugg argues that these writerly exchanges and scholarship can then transfer to the classroom to help the RCTA continue to establish an authentic identity.

Our third contributor, Kali A. Mobley Finn, also focuses on the individual TA in "Adapting, Not Resisting: A Preliminary Understanding of TAs' Relationships with Writing Pedagogy." Mobley Finn's chapter presents its preliminary findings of a qualitative study of eight 1st-year Ph.D. students in a large research-focused English department. The findings of this study allow Mobley Finn to posit that one way to improve writing pedagogy education (WPE) among experienced teaching assistants is to transition to an adaptive transfer method of WPE (this volume). The hope of this piece is twofold. First, it affords

WPAs a more thorough comprehension of their individual TAs understanding, therefore creating better writing program communication. Second, it allows TAs to reflect upon both prior and current pedagogical knowledge in order to better adapt to various departmental and programmatic expectations.

The next section of “Approaching” is “Coming to Teaching: Moving Beyond a Blank-Slate Model of Developing Pedagogical Expertise,” by Kathleen Blake Yancey, Rob Cole, Amanda May, and Katelyn Stark. This chapter begins with the voices of the TAs, as authors Cole, May, and Stark share many of their background experiences that preceded their arrival as doctoral students in the writing program at their university. Kathleen Blake Yancey, afterwards, synthesizes those experiences, suggesting that their contact with this particular writing program can be representative of many TAs in programs across the country. Yancey et al. then, make recommendations for WPAs: it is vital to help TAs turn tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge; writing programs must help develop TAs in safe spaces; writing programs can help TAs by supporting various professional development opportunities; and bring other graduate services—such as university writing centers—on board to help develop one-on-one teaching skills among TAs. This chapter further supports the value of learning from TAs themselves as a way to strengthen their own—and a writing program’s—pedagogical diversity in the present and for the future.

The concluding chapter of this section is Emily Jo Schwaller’s “Becoming and Belonging: The Three Domains of New Teachers of Writing.” This is a valuable bookend of this section, as it shows the vulnerability of those in the RCTAships due to specific community practices, individual motivations, and role expectations. Schwaller writes, “We carry forward a variety of narratives and choices that play out in new situations as we define our roles,” reminding readers that individuality and personal history are paramount in professional development. Through her use of these three domains, she argues for the need to “facilitate more transparent and meaningful discussions” of experiences that RCTAs have both inside and outside of their graduate programs. Ultimately, her work focuses on the development of new identities for a new role that defines the RCTAs place in the broader rhetoric and composition community.

In order to better understand teaching assistants, it is vital that we as a field understand who they are, where they come from, and what knowledge they have when they arrive in our departments. In other words, we must think of them and educate—and be educated by—them in individual ways. To help commence this education, we have interspersed four narratives written by graduate teaching assistants themselves within the “Approaching” section of the collection. These four narratives—I-Hsien Lee’s “First Day of Class”; Janelle Chu Capwell’s “Locating Sound While Learning How to Teach”; Eliza Gellis’ “More Than My

Teaching”; and Matthew Schering’s “Back to the Start”—work to share their stories and are an important part of the collection because they show the depth of potential RCTAship research. These TA voices, we feel, effectively portray the feelings, contributions, and struggles that RCTAs have as they approach the field of rhetoric and composition as more than just students beginning their evolution to teachers, researchers, mentors, etc. within the field. As readers explore these narratives, it is worthwhile to contemplate their open-endedness. The narratives themselves might feel almost unfinished, incomplete. This is intentional. These accounts—with their potential lack of a complete narrative arc—underscore the lack of knowing how the story ends in regards to individual RCTA growth as students and scholars. In essence, these RCTA stories are still being written, still being revised, and we all should be excited to see how they end.

Both the academic pieces and the narratives of the “Approaching” section share with readers the vast experiences that new RCTAs have as they approach their new roles as students, researchers, and instructors. Each chapter in this section focuses on the types of early experiences that a new RCTA has and how those experiences shape their dispositions (Bordieu), their goals, and their choices in their programs, with their own research and in their classrooms. From a programmatic view, each piece allows for a better understanding of the labor, the mentoring, and communication needs between WPAs and their RCTAs. We hope you find these selections as thought-provoking and valuable as we do.

WORKS CITED

Bordieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice, Cambridge UP, 1970.

CHAPTER 1.

PUTTING LEARNING FIRST:
CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES
FOR NEW WRITING TEACHER
RESEARCH

Rachel Gramer

Illinois State University

More than fifteen years ago, Kathleen Yancey asked, “What other kinds of needs would we identify for TA development if our central concern were not local exigence but TA development more generally?” (64). Her question still begs an answer today when we still largely place immediate writing program practices at the core of new writing teacher research. Our study of *programs* and *their* exigencies often centralizes program structures as the primary object of analysis with the consequence, however unintended, of positioning newcomers’ deep learning and long-term development as a liminal concern. Concentrating on local program exigencies makes institutional sense yet remains short-sighted in relation to disciplinary goals of better supporting newcomers in learning to be professionals across diverse sites and contexts (Yancey; Anderson and Romano; Moore and Miller; Moore). Virginia Anderson and Susan Romano argue that graduate programs offer situated, time-bound training that does not often enough prepare them for longer-term lived realities: “The common experience of dislocation and forced self-reinvention suggests that dreams dreamt in graduate culture cannot easily be sustained in the harsh light of working conditions—not, at least, without the vision to explain not so much *what* needs to be done, but *how* it should be done” (6). We continue to struggle as a field—even as we succeed—to support newcomers in the value-laden, often conflicting identity work not of *what* to teach but of *how* to be/come a college writing teacher. Further, we continue to struggle in supporting people in the challenging identity work of teaching beyond first-year writing—whether professional and technical writing, or other areas across and beyond English studies—and working in professions beyond academia when hiring patterns in higher education are concerning at best and deeply problematic at worst.

New writing teacher (NWT) research frequently privileges existing program structures (i.e., the practicum, orientation, professional development, and formal faculty mentoring) as a primary site (e.g., Powell et al.; Rickly and Harrington; Dobrin; Guerra and Bawarshi) and disciplinary preoccupations (e.g., academic writing) as central lenses for understanding new writing teachers (Reid; Dryer; Camp), which might reveal (some of) graduate student instructors' perceptions and experiences with their current programs and writing in/for school. However, this scene privileges and norms what we value and influence as a field—rather than beginning with NWT identities, learning, and motivated behaviors at the center of inquiry, as this collection calls us to do. As Sidney Dobrin argues that the practicum is a site for maintaining (and increasing the scope of) the cultural capital of composition (20-28), so too would I argue that our program structures and disciplinary commitments function as a similar means to buttress and expand our claims to disciplinary and institutional territory surrounding writing (Hesse; cf. Adler-Kassner). The unfortunate, normed consequence is that much NWT research predominantly examines newcomers in the sedimented roles of practicum students, academic writers, and composition teachers within specific programs (see also Yancey 41). This collection calls us to make visible and examine more complex positionalities—which we have historically flattened—and to concentrate on diachronic teacher development rather than synchronic teacher “training,” positing that as a field we can benefit from more complex approaches to studying NWTs as human beings whose self-understandings exceed the bounds of any singular domain, activity, or role. This chapter extends this logic to argue that we need methodologically innovative approaches in order to work toward such nuanced understandings of—and to show us what we still don't know about—the NWT enculturation scene that we have inherited, perpetuated, and normed. In other words, we need learner-centered research devoted to newcomers' deep learning and development both in and over time in order to contribute new knowledge and perspectives to our established body of program-centered research (see also Estrem and Reid). In making a distinction between program-centered and learner-centered research, I do not mean that the two are never aligned or cannot overlap. But neither do I conflate the two—or assume that, in negotiating the lived differences and overlaps of program and learner needs, NWTs are structurally encouraged or systematically supported in learning to privilege and advocate for their own motivated learning, goals, and identities in relation to their current program contexts.¹

1 One shift that this chapter enacts away from program-centered research is not to use teaching assistant as its primary terministic screen or to retheorize the TAship itself. The title of teaching assistant has a history out of step with the lived experiences of contemporary writing teachers who “assist” no faculty member but are themselves teachers of record (Brown 2000), and putting

This chapter illuminates possible paths for the explicit study of NWT learning. As Heidi Estrem and E. Shelley Reid note, “while research within composition studies has focused quite a bit on *teaching*, there’s not been quite as much focus on *learning*—in this case, learning about teaching” (450). In this chapter, I argue that (re)framing NWT research designs via learning theories is one way to re-story our traditional focus on immediate institutional practices and disciplinary preoccupations, and instead centralize NWTs’ multiple motivations, conflicting goals, and shifting identities as they are being learned in ephemeral, interactional moments that exceed the bounds of any singular spatio-temporal program structure. First, I offer a methodological meta-analysis of NWT research that raises critical questions about what, when, where, and how we study NWTs, with particular attention to how our normed NWT research practices bely assumptions about learning—and evidence of learning—that need to be destabilized and re-examined. I then explicate four relevant learning principles from Ambrose et al.’s *How Learning Works*, one oft-cited text from scholars in education, statistics, psychology, and anthropology, and articulate how each principle might alter—not just extend—our usual lines of NWT inquiry. Finally, I turn to an illustration from a year-long (and continuing) narrative interview study with NWTs. I offer up narrative not as *the* methodology to provide evidence of learning but as *one* capacious possibility for laying bare our own methodological assumptions and giving glimpses into NWTs’ motivations, goals, and identities (see also Yancey et al., Wooten, and Warwick, this volume). Throughout this chapter, I maintain that taking up explicit theories of learning can help us learn how to tell a different kind of story: one that illuminates rather than elides learning and places learners explicitly at the center, rather than remaining implicit or peripheral. As a field, we certainly have a responsibility to acknowledge how TAships benefit institutions and might function as a gateway to rhetoric and composition (or not); we also have perennial opportunities to listen to and continue to improve NWTs’ learning experiences and development—as this collection calls us to do. Ultimately, this chapter directs attention to the fact that NWT research seldom *explicitly* designs studies that *begin with* theories of learning at the outset. As a result, we have not yet developed and adapted methodologies to study learning in the situated contexts of learning to be/come a college writing teacher. And without our own customized, systematic means of centralizing learning and development beyond the time-space of official structures of support and entrenched disciplinary concerns, we re-centralize again and again immediate program exigencies, thus relegating evidence

TAships at the center can be seen as a program—or institution—centering move that defines new writing teachers first and foremost in relation to their institutional role rather than a more capacious understanding of newcomers as lifelong learners across contexts, in and over time.

of NWTs' motivated learning to liminal spaces of marginalized importance in our research with long-term consequences for NWTs and those who supervise, mentor, and study them.

METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN EXISTING PARADIGMS FOR NEW WRITING TEACHER RESEARCH

Historically, studies of new writing teachers in our field have also been studies of graduate and writing programs and the institutional conditions that support them—or not. Collectively, this work reveals concomitant methodological trends in what we study as well as when, where, and how we study NWTs. In recent research, writing studies scholars have worked to shift what we study; however, this change has not yet radically transformed how we begin and conduct contemporary NWT research. Thus, our methodological trends continue to sediment us in particular narrative grooves that do not illuminate occluded stories about NWT learning. The following methodological meta-analysis is not intended as a critique of any NWT researcher's study design, implementation, or conclusions. It is instead a means of asking us, as a collection of scholars committed to NWT mentoring and support, to reconsider what questions we might ask (and how we might ask them) to better illuminate learning as one means of redressing the liminality of NWT learning, development, and experiences in our research and administrative practice.

Much NWT research focuses on individual programs and practices and studies; what Yancey calls the delivered curriculum, or “the one we design” (17). Many studies focus on official structures of programmatic enculturation, such as mentoring (Rickly and Harrington; Blackmon and Rose; Christoph et al.), professional development (Yancey; Hea and Turnley), and the practicum (Dobrin; Skorczewski; Welch; Powell et al.). Evidence in this work typically comes in the form of institutional documents (e.g., practica syllabi, Bolin, Burmester, Faber, and Vandenberg), classroom artifacts (e.g., writing assignments, Reid; Juzwik et al.; or teacher portfolios, Kitchens), administrator surveys (Latterell; Burmester), or WPA experiences with the practicum (Huntley; Trubek).² Such program data is valuable and necessary (as Laura Davies argues in “Taking the Long View”), has emerged from and contributed to WPA research as intellectual work (see Payne and Enos), and has enabled us to tell stories about how we (think we) teach NWTs in our field. However, this body of research has often made visible what/how faculty-administrators teach rather than what/how

2 Many WPA practicum experiences attempt to trace when the course has gone awry, an oft-told story WPA lore of which Huntley and Trubek are two clear examples.

NWTs learn, studying only the delivered curriculum, or “the ‘easy’ curriculum... that is visible—in syllabi, in reading and writing tasks, in course outcomes and goals” (Yancey 41). Yancey’s critique of the delivered curriculum points to why studying such a visible, specific slice of NWT experience is deeply problematic:

The delivered curriculum, all too often, is the curriculum. At the same time, the delivered curriculum (over)relies on students playing a singular role: as it is conventionally played, the school game, which spins off from the delivered curriculum, asks students to tell us what they know, not what they don’t know. It rewards students for strongly asserting their claims to knowledge. . . (41)

Historically, then, what we study—the delivered curriculum—has provided evidence of what we say new teachers should be learning (in syllabi, assignments, and administrator narratives) and has told us what graduate students say they know as they perform the role of Student. While such work often provides evidence of WPA learning and of the institutional constraints of NWT enculturation, substantive evidence of NWT learning remains occluded. And our reliance on looking at/through institutional documents and administrative practices (which are limited in scope, audience, and rhetorical force beyond situated institutional and programmatic bounds) leaves us with unanswered methodological questions: what does evidence of NWT learning look like? what artifacts or actions demonstrate NWT learning? how might we better capture and articulate the nuances of such evidence?

Providing such a restricted view of new teacher enculturation, NWT research relies on relatively limited means of studying NWT experience not only in what we study, but also when and where our research takes place. In focusing attention on the delivered curriculum, NWT research is most often conducted in authorized sites of programmatic learning within institutional bounds—implicitly suggesting that learning takes place at school throughout the academic year. Titrularly, Jessica Restaino’s *First Semester* is the clearest demarcation of what NWT researchers have normed as a temporal locus of study. Agreeing that the first semester is largely when new teachers *begin* to learn how to teach, Restaino notes that “much of what new teachers do [during that first semester] has an air of just keeping it together, proving themselves (to themselves as well as students)” without much time for substantive reflection (24). Even if “self-discovery and professional development may be at work during the first semester,” Restaino identifies this as a time of “isolated chaos” in which NWTs often “[feel] removed from feelings of growth and self-determination” (24). Restaino asks, “What happens if, in these early efforts to survive, to stay afloat, new teachers

learn to teach writing in a way that undermines their potential for the enduring, lasting contributions of instruction, even to their own development as teachers?” (24). If, as a field, we conduct NWT research within the artificial time-boundness of such problematic “early efforts,” then we should call into question how much development can reasonably be accomplished, what we expect to see or to learn from NWTs in this time-space, and the extent to which such data collected during this time provides evidence of deep learning, rather than of pressurized institutional constraints. Such questions are especially salient given what we *know* about learning (see Reid) but cannot articulate often enough: that deep learning takes longer than a single 15-week term, that it precedes and exceeds institutional sites, that it does not begin and end at the moment when students “enter” or “exit” a single class or program, first semester or first year. Estrem and Reid describe it as something that “seems obvious now both in a ‘We already knew that!’ way and in a ‘Why weren’t we thinking more about that?!’ way: learning to teach (writing) is a protean and lengthy process, its uncertain and recursive progress often obscured by the myths of quick competence on which learners, teachers, and institutions rely” (450).

Recent NWT research has turned to methodological innovation in the form of more granular interview studies that focus on the *experienced* curriculum, “the curriculum that *students construct* in the context of both the lived curriculum they bring in with them and the delivered curriculum we seek to share” (Yancey 58, emphasis in original). These studies (Barr Ebest; Dryer; Kitchens; Restaino; Camp; Rodrigue) follow a path first explored by Elizabeth Rankin and Christine Farris in the early 1990s, enacting the long-called for inclusion of graduate student voices (Burmester 127) and relying on NWT perspectives and experiences as visible, valued evidence. However, even as NWT researchers have attempted to shift *what* we study—to the experienced, rather than delivered, curriculum—collectively, we are still entangled in problematic trends of *when and where* we study NWTs and the disciplinary commitments that shape *how we begin* our research, both of which keep us from investigating more fully the lived experiences of NWTs and their complex learning.

Two notable examples of oft-cited granular interview studies in NWT research are Sally Barr Ebest’s and Dylan B. Dryer’s studies, which are conducted during the spatio-temporal commonplace in NWT research (in school during the first semester or year of teaching college writing) and focus on resistance, a repeated locus of analysis often attached to disciplinary commitments in writing studies (e.g., process pedagogy, academic writing). Barr Ebest’s study relies on NWT interviews about and during the practicum, though she does collect such data from NWTs during that transitional time over the course of 10 years. Barr Ebest’s monograph opens with a clear articulation of resistance as her primary

framework for understanding NWT responses to the practicum (6-9), which is one of the most common terministic screens and loci of analyses in NWT research (Hesse; Welch; Powell et al.; Grouling). Similarly, Dryer begins by suggesting NWTs' resistance to the practicum as a certainty and positing that resistance exists in relation to one of our most entrenched disciplinary commitments: academic writing. Dryer writes, "On the whole, GTA resistance to the practicum may be a given, but we have not located that resistance in the deep ambivalence these self- and institutionally designated teachers feel toward the academic writing conventions they have been charged to teach" (423). In his interview study of questions about school literacies and genres,³ Dryer concludes that NWTs at his institution "expressed considerable anxiety about—and frequent hostility toward—academic writing conventions and then projected disconcertingly reductive versions of these anxieties and writing practices onto students" (421).

This combination of NWT research commonplaces is methodologically problematic for two reasons. First, resistance during the practicum is complicated by administrative power dynamics and perceptions of newcomers by more experienced faculty-teachers-administrators conducting research while working with NWTs during their first semester or year. And second, resistance in NWT research is often correlated with other disciplinary commitments that precede newcomers' actual lived experiences as college writing teachers: resistance to academic writing conventions (Dryer), to process pedagogies that we espouse as a field but do not often enough practice in graduate courses (Barr Ebest), to an emphasis on theory before practice (Powell et al.), or to the single-model pedagogy on offer in any individual program (Farris; Welch). Thus, even recent research that has attempted to study the experienced curriculum has turned our attention back to disciplinary constructs that shape our thinking in often invisible, internalized ways, rather than toward motivated NWT learning. This is unsurprising given that our experienced curriculum is mediated by the disciplinary expertise of NWT researchers as a collective and of individual WPAs situated in their own specific histories, programs, and institutions. While an argument could be made that any study of NWTs is a study of learning, the methodological transparency of recent NWT research illustrates that, as a field, our attention in this area of inquiry is not explicitly focused on NWT learning. Much existing NWT research in writing studies is constrained by—and perhaps more telling of—historical and still-commonplace disciplinary and administrative preoccupations in the contexts of formalized schooling that infuse where and how we begin inquiry and that, therefore, subordinate learning as a liminal concern.

3 See Dryer's "Appendix B Semi-Structured Interview Protocols" (2012, 445-446).

METHODOLOGICAL POSSIBILITIES FOR STUDYING NEW WRITING TEACHER LEARNING

I admire and continue to rely and build upon NWT research and scholars' methodological transparency, which thankfully has drawn into relief how we operationalize NWT inquiry. However, if we seek to illuminate what we don't know, then we need to question and re-envision our beginnings, our study designs, what counts as evidence, and how our methodologies can change to place NWT learning at the center of inquiry. To foreground learning—and redress NWT learning as a vital missing story in our research—we can re-theorize NWT experiences via learning theories, an act that requires substantive shifts in method as well as methodology in what, when, where, and how we conduct such work.

Putting NWT learning at the center requires us to align method and methodology accordingly, presenting us with the challenge of putting learning *first* in our study design⁴ and borrowing from interdisciplinary research of those who specialize in learning. *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* is not the only or best theoretical framework of learning theories; it is an approachable, oft-cited collection of multiple, overlapping learning theories from decades of research and practice across disciplines. Its authors—Susan A. Ambrose, Michael W. Bridges, Michele DiPietro, Marsha C. Lovett, and Marie K. Norman—are also an interdisciplinary collection of scholars in education, statistics, psychology, and anthropology, associated with faculty development, several through The Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence at Carnegie Mellon.⁵ While *How Learning Works* offers specific strategies for improving practice via application of all seven principles, my purpose here is to suggest our need to re-theorize NWT research based on learning principles, not to delineate any specific strategy for doing so.

For the purposes of this chapter, I have selected four principles that are often implicit in NWT research that we might benefit from making explicit: prior knowledge, motivation, mastery, and course climate. Although each of these

4 Reid's recent "On Learning to Teach: Letter to a New TA" [2017] is perhaps the most telling example of how much we rely on often tacit understandings of learning without explicitly engaging in methodologies or study designs that elicit evidence of learning more than lore. Reid's letter draws more explicitly on learning theories than the majority of NWT research. But it is addressed to NWTs and many of the details about, and from, learning theory research appear as numerous endnotes, a visual analogy for how learning theories are often subordinated in NWT research: though implicit in our work, learning is seldom foregrounded or made an explicit heuristic lens for conducting research.

5 Ambrose et al. discuss principles of learning primarily for undergraduate student learners; in their last chapter, they explicitly state that college teachers are lifelong learners for whom the same principles apply.

principles seems obvious and may be already tacitly at work in our teaching, mentoring, and researching of NWTs, they are quite challenging both to enact and to study in the everyday messes of complex lives. In this section, I share four principles with a synopsis of how each one, if enacted more fully in situated NWT research design, could illuminate and centralize learning—hand in hand with concomitant methodological shifts in what, when, and where we conduct our research—to help us, as a field, learn more about what we don't know about NWT learning in relation to (and beyond) the rhetoric and composition TAship.

STUDENTS' PRIOR KNOWLEDGE CAN SERVE TO HELP OR HINDER LEARNING.

The prior knowledge principle offers two possibilities for retheorizing NWT research in both what we study and when. The first is the binary construction—help or hinder—which I would argue is always a both/and. And the second is Ambrose et al.'s distinctions between declarative (what) and procedural (how) knowledge (see also Reid 133-35) with the assertion that changes in procedural knowledge take time and are not always immediately visible (26). To the first possibility, NWT research does not elide prior knowledge by any means, yet we could benefit from a more explicit, thorough concentration on how previous knowledge and experience both help *and* hinder learning. NWTs have been portrayed as hindered by their graduate student identities (Grouling), their own reductive views of writing (Rodrigue), a “shallow history of student-teacher interactions” (Dryer 433), a previous lack of difficulty with writing (Reid W201), “the implicit theory they bring to the instructional setting” (Farris 9), or, in the case of pre-service English teachers, the “limited and impoverished cultural resources from which [they] draw as they construct an identity for themselves” (Ritchie and Wilson 35). Our focus on “hinder” rather than “help” might be related to what kinds of prior knowledge we attune to and that “hindrances” are often rendered more visible. A narrowed focus on prior knowledge of/experience with our disciplinary concerns—academic writing, for instance—might tip more toward “hinder” because it excludes from the beginning a more capacious construction of relevant knowledge/experience that NWTs *do* have about situated, relational learning, in and beyond school, that also has a powerful impact on their learning and development as teachers. To the second possibility, Ambrose et al. insist that changes in procedural knowledge take time—time that many WPAs conducting new teacher research likely do not have, a limitation that hinders the depth of inquiry. Barr Ebest's study is one example of the kind of longitudinal study that aligns with WPA institutional work: a study of those who enter our program over a period of time. Yet we have far fewer, if any, examples of inquiry that trace long-term changes in procedural knowledge, especially

as influenced by continually expanding “prior” knowledge, which is not only cumulative but also recursive, recombinatorial, and transformative. Placing this principle at the forefront of NWT inquiry would require both a shift in *when* we study NWTs (for how long) and how we elicit, code, and value newcomers’ prior knowledge to underscore how such knowledge both helps *and* hinders rather than privileging one side in the parity.

MOTIVATION DETERMINES, DIRECTS, AND SUSTAINS WHAT STUDENTS LEARN.

The motivation principle also presents two prospects for shifting what we study in NWT research and how we account for the power of our own positions and perceptions in doing so. Ambrose et al. maintain that individuals’ perceptions of their environment relate to motivational direction, delineating a relatively finite number of reactions to expectations: individuals can accept, reject, evade, or defy any set of environmental expectations (66-82). Scholars have focused on perceptions of environment and conducted a great deal of inquiry into why NWTs accept, reject, evade, or defy the expectations of their individual programs. Nancy Welch’s insider take in “Resisting the Faith: Conversion, Resistance, and the Training of Teachers” is perhaps one of the most oft-cited articulations of what happens when someone rejects rather than accepts a specific model of composition pedagogy, which Farris also traced in *Subject to Change*. Yet much NWT scholarship underscores resistance as the most commonly *perceived* reaction, rather than turning to a more complex theoretical framework that traces and accounts for a multiplicity of complex co-existing responses.⁶ Another possibility of the motivation principle directs attention to multiplicity, to multiple goals as well as multiple *types* of goals: performance (both performance-approach and performance-avoidant), learning, work-avoidant, affective, and social goals (Ambrose et al. 71-72). This is especially vital since research indicates that individuals with multiple goals are more likely to be successful (Valle et al.; Ambrose et al. 73). Writing studies can benefit from NWT studies that put motivation at the forefront—not the disciplinary motivation for teacher education (cf. Dobrin 20-28), but individual and/or group motivation for varied success. Put into action in NWT study design, the motivation principle would ask researchers to use their—often WPA—power to defer judgment

6 Early on in *Changing the Way We Teach*, Barr Ebest articulates her chosen framework for understanding resistance rather than a multitude of responses. Via Kearney and Plax’s [1992] research of undergraduate student resistance, Barr Ebest shares a list of “student resistance techniques,” including avoiding interactions, failing or refusing to complete assignments, making excuses, challenging teacher authority, or rejecting teacher advice (6-9).

about NWT resistance and instead seek frameworks for accounting for multiple motivational directions, reactions, and types of goals. While many WPAs may assume that not all graduate students in English are evenly motivated to succeed as college writing teachers, we may also assume that they want to be successful at what they do and assume such success includes multiple goals, one of which is their current institutional designation of instructor. Relying on frameworks that put motivation explicitly at the center would engage us in questions of multiplicity—multiple goals as well as multiple types of goals—in ways that exceed a single institutional structure (the practicum, first-year writing, or even the time-space of our administrative relationships with current graduate student instructors) and can also open explicit conversations about how learning to teach writing can be useful beyond first-year writing courses and the academy (learning, for instance, the practice of making tacit knowledge explicit and of recognizing when we're being interpellated as blank slates in the workplace, as Yancey et al. articulate in this collection).

**TO DEVELOP MASTERY, STUDENTS MUST DEVELOP THE SKILLS,
PRACTICE INTEGRATING THEM, AND KNOW WHEN TO APPLY THEM.**

If foregrounded, the mastery principle might support NWT researchers in shifting what and when we study NWTs in order to contribute new perspectives on the development of mastery, a frequent underlying concern in NWT research. Ambrose et al.'s discussion of mastery directs us to our need to trace the intricacies of NWT development in/across four stages: from unconscious incompetence to conscious incompetence, and from conscious competence to unconscious competence, which Reid nods to (131-32) but which has not been the explicit focus of substantive empirical study. Further, they also concentrate on the cognitive load of unpacking the complex tasks of teaching. Ambrose et al. use facilitating discussion as one example that “requires several subskills: the ability to pose appropriate questions, listen empathically, maintain flow, respectively correct misconceptions, [and] manage time effectively” (220)—complexities that we have yet to study empirically with NWTs. Newcomers' cognitive load also includes material conditions and affect or emotional labor—which Restaino attends to as one type of labor, and Elizabeth Saur and Jason Palmeri extend in their “Letter to a New TA: Affect Addendum.” Yet affect or emotional labor was not the focus of Restaino's study, and Saur and Palmeri offer “maxims for teachers” (146) based on their administrative experience and lore.⁷ If made

7 In recent affect research in writing program administration, scholars have predominantly focused on administrators rather than new teachers. See, for example, Davies' “Grief and the New WPA” (2017); Jackson, McKinney, and Caswell's “Writing Center Administration and/as Emo-

the locus of study from the outset, unpacking competency and cognitive load, which takes time and occurs across semesters and institutions, could reveal results that speak back to and alongside some commonplace disciplinary narratives (e.g., resistance, “impoverished” identities) about newcomers’ development of mastery and expertise in needed ways (see Wooten’s chapter, this volume).

LEVEL OF LEARNER DEVELOPMENT INTERACTS WITH COURSE CLIMATE TO IMPACT LEARNING

On its face, the course climate principle seems to appear frequently in NWT research on the practicum; however, Ambrose et al.’s framework is more expansive than the statement of the principle seems, in part because it focuses on social identity development, also in stages (acceptance, resistance, redefinition, and internalization)(166-69), which points to a different spatio-temporal locus of study for NWT researchers. NWT research has few attempts to study social identities; Barr Ebest’s study of gender is one, which yielded more telling results about age and years of teaching experience. Ambrose et al. focus on how development and identity interact with course climate, emphasizing that levels of perceived marginalization and centralization are affected by stereotypes, tone, faculty-student and student-student interactions, and course content (170-79). We already have a robust body of research on course content (i.e., the practicum). Yet, if “the broader climate in which we learn about teaching matters” and “climate will have an impact on us whether we realize it or not” (Ambrose et al. 222), then NWT research could use and expand the course climate principle to trace NWTs’ interactions with faculty and students—including students in their writing courses as well as peer graduate student instructors (calls also made by Grouling, and Estrem and Reid)—in addition to institutional, disciplinary, and broader cultural climates also at work in their learning and development as teachers. Since teacher identity is likely to be a continued interest and investment for NWT researchers and our field more broadly, the study of NWT social identity development in and beyond course content seems especially important since newcomers are learning and experiencing multiple social identities, many of which they bring in with them that intersect with the professional identities they are learning—which include but are not limited to teaching first-year writing.

tional Labor” (2016); Micciche’s “More than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work” (2002) and *Doing Emotion* (2007); also the CFP for the 2020 edited collection *The Things We Carry: Strategies for Recognizing and Negotiating Emotional Labor in Writing Program Administration* (Wooten et al.). See also Wooten’s chapter in this collection, “The Pursuit of (Un)Happiness.”

NIGEL'S EARLY WRITING TEACHER LEARNING: A TWO-STORY START

In a recent year-long (and continuing longitudinal) interview study, I explicitly sought to *begin* my study design to research the learning of five graduate student instructors who are new writing teachers. To do so, I operationalize narrative to examine patterns within and across NWT individual stories of teaching and learning over time (as Warwick calls for in “From Deficit to Asset: Rethinking Graduate Student Narratives” in this volume). Narrative is one generative means to study NWT learning, relying on stories at a slant rather than on self-reported responses to direct questions about prior knowledge, motivation, or social identities. As other contributors to this collection note, narratives demonstrate how identities come to be over time, influenced by diverse experiences with writing, schooling, teaching, and learning (Yancey et al, this volume); and narrative is also a means of maintaining rather than flattening the complexities of lived experiences of graduate student writing instructors (Warwick, this volume). Both simple and endlessly complex, narrative is one methodology aligned with key understandings of learning from Ambrose et al. as well as other learning theorists (e.g., Engeström, Engeström, and Vähäaho; Gutiérrez and Stone; Rogoff; Sford and Prusak; Gee, *Situated Language*; Lave and Wenger; Wenger): that learning is a deeply motivated whole-person process, often tacit and dispersed unevenly over time, mediated by participation in multiple, shifting social groups across/through context-driven activities. This section offers stories from one NWT, Nigel, during his second semester of teaching that illustrate how the principles above might be used as an explicit framework that, together, speak to each other and illuminate NWT learning in needed ways.

When asked about an experience with someone he considers to be a good teacher, Nigel recounts his interactions with a two-year college writing teacher who ignited his interest in composition. Using three of the four learning principles discussed above, this story reveals (1) prior knowledge that helped, rather than hindered, Nigel’s conception of learning; (2) insights into Nigel’s motivational direction and multiple types of goals, both personal and professional; and (3) the complexities of both faculty-student interactions and Nigel’s complex social identities as a working-class and working student:

The reason I was into composition to begin with was my first community college course. So my first day on campus too, so that meant a lot to me. J.A. was the guy’s name. It was the first class, just sort of everything you expected I think in a college professor: old, had a beard like an Amish man, literally a tweed jacket and a radio voice. . . . So he asked us what we

thought composition was, and nobody had any answers. Like, “you enrolled in the class and you had no idea what it was about? That’s okay, I understand, freshmen. That’s okay.” And then he proceeded to give us definitions of composition and ways of figuring it out. And his whole teaching philosophy that I latched onto was “I’m here to help you figure things out and help you think through things.” What a cool idea, right? It’s not catching mistakes, or catching language that’s necessarily bad, or “oh you did this scientific thing wrong.” He’s like, “I’m here to help you figure out ways of thinking.”

So we did all these weird assignments where—“All right, everybody think of as many white edible things as you can.” And then he’d interview us in front of class. “How many did you get? All right, where did you start? How did you do it? Did you start with like major like grains and go all grain? Did you do this?” We all had different ways of going into it, and I’m like, “this is a fascinating field. This is what this guy does? How fun is that?”

Or, “Name every country that begins with the letter ‘I.’” “Okay, where did you start? You started in Italy. Then what did you do? You figured out spatially.” Some people were trying to go alphabetically because they had seen these maps, and so I’m like, “This is a cool thing, just engage with how people think and ways of organizing.”

So I go, “That’s what I want to do in life.” And I told my friends or told girlfriends [when they asked], “what do you want to do?” “Okay, so there’s this professor I had in college, and he was all very much like, ‘so there’s a light switch over there, Nigel. Here’s one way to get over there. There’s another light switch on this wall. Whenever you’re ready, just you know, you don’t have to be in a dim room.’”

This story gives us, first, a counter-narrative to deeply ingrained disciplinary assumptions about the persisting power of the bad teacher and/or literacy shaming stories that we have sought to redress in our curriculum (i.e., the literacy narrative as part of first-year writing) and that led many scholars to seek more complex literacy experiences beyond school (e.g., Brandt; Barton and Hamilton; Williams and Zenger). In Nigel’s story, instead, his prior knowledge of, and experiences with, college-level writing *help* his learning as a NWT. Nigel’s story exposes thoughts about writing that align with some of our disciplinary

commitments: writing is not about “catching mistakes,” labeling language as “bad,” or pointing out what writers have done “wrong.” Such understandings of writing also align with J.A.’s performance as a writing teacher who takes on a primary role of questioner, helping students explicitly and collaboratively “figure out” ways of thinking. Together, this prior knowledge and experience *help*, rather than hinder, Nigel’s learning and development—revealed in later stories of his own teaching—as a NWT who wants to help students figure out ways of thinking, make sure they collaborate in order to see that individuals have “different ways of going into” thinking, and “just engage with how people think and ways of organizing.” Further, this story offers a more nuanced counter-narrative to a script that has become too often assumed: that NWTs have had educational experiences that are too authoritarian or too shallow (Ritchie and Wilson 35; Dryer 433), with limited conceptions of writing (Farris 9; Rodrigue), and through which NWTs learn about literacy in spite of their teachers rather than alongside them.

Nigel’s story also offers a complex counter-narrative to rejecting or resisting the environmental expectations of a writing course or program, illuminating more nuanced complexities of what he already knows as a NWT. Nigel is clearly motivated to accept J.A.’s approach to composition pedagogy, which according to much NWT scholarship places him in the minority alongside NWTs more likely to reject contemporary disciplinary perspectives on writing theories and pedagogies. Nigel declares early on in his college career, “That’s what I want to do in life,” which is also atypical of most first-year writing students. Yet, while perhaps an outlier in his alignment with preferred disciplinary understandings of writing, Nigel illustrates something we would be wise to elicit in any study of NWTs: an understanding of learning and mental model of how learning works. He seems aware of multiple paths to any learning experience (i.e., more than one light switch, more than one path toward each) and of learning as motivated rather than forced, something that happens over time, in times not of a teacher’s choosing: “Whenever you’re ready, you don’t have to be in a dim room.” Using principles of prior knowledge and motivation as a framework highlights, Nigel’s accurate meta-awareness of learning—and his motivation for *wanting* to become a teacher—a story that speaks back to and alongside existing stories in NWT research. For instance, Nigel’s narrative stands in stark juxtaposition with teachers in Rankin’s study who had come to see teaching as an undervalued and therefore dispreferred profession (119-20).

In addition to motivational direction, Nigel’s stories about J.A. can also be productively analyzed—his learning highlighted and theorized—using another aspect of the motivation principle (multiple types of goals) as it intersects with the course climate principle (social identity development in interaction with

course climate). When asked if his experience with J.A. might have changed how he performed as a student, Nigel's follow-up story highlights the importance of multiple types of goals and a teacher-student relationship that served as motivation beyond the course content and is relevant to how Nigel relates to students in his sections as a teacher years later:

To a degree I sort of expected it to be just writing, and I enjoyed writing. But I also was working as the editor for the newspaper at the time and really was worried about taking student loans. So that class I cared a lot about because that class felt like it was investing in me, too. He knew my name. I saw him around campus. So when my measly little editor stipend came in, I bought the Raymond Carver book as opposed to buying the Intro to Psychology book, which I'm like, "I will just Google those things."

. . . And if I was going to skip a class during the week because I didn't have gas money or just didn't want to go—which are like two very different reasons to do it [laughs], but they both existed—it would never have been that MWF course. I'd be like, I'll skip my Tuesday courses. I don't want to bump into him and. . . not have gone.

This addition to Nigel's story reveals interrelated layers of personal and professional motivation in relation to goals that are both social and affective—all in the contexts of the material constraints inflecting his education. Personally, Nigel's story underscores the experiences of a NWT who began as a two-year college student, a social identity with its own set of affective and material complications that is an increasingly statistical norm but is often unmarked or overlooked in much of our scholarship and especially invisible in NWT research. Professionally, as a working-class student with an off-campus job, Nigel was motivated to improve his own performance on the job and connects his writing course to that professional goal. Such motivated identity development interacts with Nigel's co-existing goal of making and maintaining a relationship with J.A. as his instructor—a goal that intersects in multiple ways with the material constraints of what Nigel could afford. While Nigel says he felt as if the class was investing in him, his story also suggests he invested in the class because of his relationship with J.A. as someone he admired and did not want to disappoint and because of his feelings that J.A.'s class was "fun" and "fascinating." It's questionable that any collection of Carver short stories would have a straightforward transferrable impact on Nigel's job at the newspaper; and clearly he was concerned with the financial strain of student loans to pay for books as well as transportation. Yet

he bought the book for, and made sure to attend, J.A.'s class, the one whose instructor he appreciated then and still wants to model in his current teaching. It's equally unlikely that many writing studies scholars reading this would assign Carver as a text in a first-year writing course. And yet, Nigel's story points us to complexities of lived experience that help NWTs learn, be motivated to be present, to teach, and to write—even though they do not necessarily align with some disciplinary preferences for contemporary writing pedagogy. This story illuminates what Ambrose et al. identify as interaction with the course climate, but not with the content—which is a commonplace focus of NWT research on the practicum. Instead, Nigel's story shows us a snapshot of the mediational influence of faculty-student interactions and demonstrates how a social goal can have overlapping affective components that exceed the bounds of what we study if we focus only or primarily on course content—or build a study based on questions we deem relevant to that content—e.g., academic writing.

A later story of Nigel's, one from his classroom teaching, is one that he might *not* want to share with a NWT about a specific student interaction. Using two of the four learning principles discussed earlier, this story reveals: (1) complex layers of competence and cognitive load that are difficult to trace and disentangle in even a singular interaction; and (2) the vital importance of unpacking faculty-student interactions (as a part of course climate) when the NWT is the teacher and not the student. At the storyboarding stage of a multimodal digital project, a student had generic college campus images for her video argument debunking prejudices against body modification and tattoos. After Nigel encouraged the entire class to produce their own artifacts to work toward a better developed ethos, this student “took that to heart” in a way that complicated the questioning strategy Nigel borrowed from J.A.'s classroom. Nigel's interaction draws into relief the complexities of his competence and cognitive load, in the moment of teaching, largely due to his unexpected embodied and affective responses as a male teacher working with a female student:

I had another student—the student who was writing about body modification—share modeling pictures, which were maybe R rated. So she had a tattoo here [points to lower front torso], and they were professionally taken. But totally puts me in a weird place. “Oh that's you, scantily clad in your rough video draft—okay. Now what do I do?” Do I—I totally wanted to say, “I'm so glad that you embraced this, you owned this sort of thing, and that this is your ethos you can talk about it. Because even as you know I've got some [tattoos] here and here and here [points to arms], I embrace that. But it puts me as

a teacher—you're sending me photos that, I don't know, you could find—they'd be on television, nothing pornographic, obscene about them. But they're toeing the line pretty hard."

. . . And I felt like the student made this sort of—took my advice to heart, but maybe in a way that should be pressed on a little bit. So I talked to her after class. I go, "so it should be—understand this is a weird place for me as your teacher to receive that. And I think it makes a lot of sense. . . and the first thing I wanted to tell you was 'is this something you'd be willing to show maybe a future boss? Something you'd be willing to have on the Internet?' Even that is sort of tied in with these prejudices against body modifications and tattoos and stuff."

I go, "I think maybe there's a different way to show your ethos that makes me a little less you know uncomfortable, and we'd be able to show in class if we have the time to show it in class. So you know I'm not going to take off points or anything like that. I actually think it was a really smart move rhetorically, and I think it's disruptive in a lot of ways. But I mean if I were—I just don't know what to do about this". . . She was like, "oh, I just, you know, it was the best picture I had to sort of demonstrate this." And I was like, "well, do you have tattooed friends that are artists? You could focus on what they're doing here, or like stock images or something, but you can see your face in it too?"

. . . And I still think it was a savvy thing to do, savvy performance um, but whether it's savvy enough in that particular situation? [laughs] Or whether it's the type of savviness you want in that type of [situation]? [shrugs]

Nigel's story points to intersections of gendered embodiment, rhetoric, education, and authority in the classroom during his first semester of teaching. His strategy of asking students to produce their own artifacts backfires, according to his retelling, and requires him to adjust, feeling the need to "press on" the student's choices, a moment that may illuminate conscious incompetence for Nigel, who remains unsure of whether or not he has supported the student in figuring out how to be rhetorically "savvy." At the same time, using Ambrose et al.'s mastery principle, Nigel's story could be telling of his development along a more complex synchronous spectrum: conscious of how a solid strategy for teaching digital projects can be problematic, conscious of his need to adjust his questions, and perhaps not yet conscious that he does more than adjust the question asked. He shifts strategies, responding with a question that is so guided, it is an embedded suggestion

to use stock tattoo images or photos from tattoo artist friends. Nigel knows he does not want to be the kind of teacher who tells his students exactly what to do; yet he is also learning that teaching—like rhetoric—can create conditions in which we act in conflicting ways to meet multiple goals for student learning, not always articulating, or conscious of, how we do so. Nigel's story is an illustration of Wooten's point in "The Pursuit of (Un)Happiness" (this volume) that previous "good teachers" can be a location of happiness for NWTs that can collide with infelicitous structures for current working conditions and student learning needs.

Expanding on the mastery principle, Nigel's story can also be one means of capturing a snapshot moment of Nigel's cognitive load as a NWT interacting with a student—and further underscoring the challenges of doing so when mastery interacts with other principles like course climate. Just as Ambrose et al. unpack the intricacies of leading a class discussion (2010, 220), so too can Nigel's story provide evidence of how many subskills are involved in a seemingly simple interaction. He communicates honestly his own affective responses (i.e., discomfort), affirms the student's choices, questions the logic of her thinking, encourages her to consider the consequences of her composing—beyond the project grade—and even acknowledges his own uncertainty about the preferred course of action before offering one possible next step. Nigel's retelling of the story also shows his awareness of options he did not take in that moment: leading with an encouraging reply and connecting the student's work with his own experience to establish his ethos. Nigel's cognitive load as a NWT could likely be unpacked from any story of everyday teacher-student interactions, just as affective load could likely be unpacked simultaneously: what he feels for himself (discomfort, confusion, uncertainty) and what he feels compelled to perform for others (encouragement, reassurance, sincerity) all affective responses to teaching situations that, as Wooten suggests in this collection, are otherwise occluded. In any case, Nigel's experiences with exercising pedagogical strategies—asking his students to deploy rhetorical strategies to improve their ethos in relation to a specific audience—are affective as much as they are rhetorical, revealing his learning about how teaching should work as much as how writing does work. And his stories primarily uncover the mediational influence of otherwise ephemeral, occluded interactions—not with practicum or composition knowledge, or with previous experiences of writing, but with current experiences of teaching (to learn) and learning (to teach)—to borrow Malea Powell's titular construction.

In this single story, both Nigel and the student are clearly multimotivated (him to protect a student, to ease his own discomfort, to encourage students to create artifacts and texts that fit their ethos and purpose; her to earn a grade, to present a text to the class, to speak up about an issue important to her personally) in ways that reveal a range of social identities and commitments across domains

of activity (from imagined workplaces and friends' tattoo parlors to the university classroom) in cultures that precede, exceed, and infuse the writing classroom. In inviting students to bring themselves into the classroom, Nigel finds himself in more powerfully charged interactions surrounding potentially sexualized images that a student might present to the class and circulate beyond—as the project encourages. Though he seeks to model J.A.'s primary strategy of questioning, Nigel is not in J.A.'s classroom anymore, finding himself outside the realm of relatively innocuous questions (about white foods, names of countries) as a young male teacher in a classroom with young female student bodies both present in the room and represented in artifacts for digital composing projects, particularly considering the broader cultural climate of viral videos showing street harassment and the influence of campus rape cases across the nation on localized conversations about sexual assault. This story of Nigel's teaching interaction emphasizes complex issues of gender and sexuality in powerful ways that entangle with issues of writing—process, rhetoric, multimodality—and highlight the complexities of competence and cognitive load for NWTs learning to teach through student interactions, an influential mediational force underexplored in NWT research.

Ultimately, Nigel's stories illustrate how learning theories might illuminate NWT learning in generative ways. They also demonstrate how much we can learn about a NWT's teaching identity, learning, and development in ways that exceed official program structures like the practicum and that might not be uncovered by a narrowed focus on a single disciplinary preoccupation like academic literacies. Nigel's stories do not suggest he lacks prior knowledge about writing or is struggling with grading or academic writing. Instead, they show valuable prior knowledge and experience that *helps* Nigel's development and multiple types of goals—social and affective—that we do not equally privilege in our research. Nigel's stories also show us the complexities of competence and cognitive—and affective—load when NWTs are learning on the spot through situated student interactions in the context of multiple climates beyond the courses we teach or programs we supervise. Equally important is what these stories currently cannot show us: change in procedural knowledge over time. In addition to offering one means of studying NWT learning, Nigel's stories are one means of reinforcing what we know about learning: that it can be mundane, is often open-ended or truncated, and happens in everyday interactions that take time to process, interpret, and reflect on (see Estrem and Reid 450).

CONCLUSIONS

Examining Nigel's stories using some of Ambrose et al.'s learning principles, alongside the NWT research methodological meta-analysis, has drawn into

relief three vital points about the affordances of retheorizing NWT research via learning theories. First, writing studies can benefit from research that puts learners/NWTs at the center of inquiry, an important de-centering of immediate program needs. Historically, much of our writing program research has excelled in a certain kind of problem-solving, often framed as advocacy; in NWT inquiry, this work has concentrated on programmatic structures and studied groups of learners in relation to those structures. This is what good program research does. And yet, since we know our structures are historically inherited, often inefficient and under supported, and still riddled by a myriad of inequities and contradictions, research that puts program structures at the center—even to be helpful for those whom that structure should benefit—is itself structured to keep learners liminal, bringing them in as we perceive they relate to the institutional structure or disciplinary commitment under scrutiny. As a feminist WPA, I acknowledge our need for writing program research that examines the efficacy of our structures, institutions, and program support, yet I am also cautious of implementing changes based on any study that puts program structures or disciplinary commitments at its methodological center and beginning, however unintentionally, and uses gathered data to make broader identarian claims about learners/NWTs.

Second, in addition to putting learners/NWTs at the center of our work, we should be more careful to put learning first in NWT research designs. Retheorizing via learning theories calls for methodologies that enable requisite shifts in study design, not just retheorizing during data analysis but *before* data collection. This is the difference between a grounded-theory approach to an academic literacy study (during which evidence and themes of learning might emerge) and a narrative approach to a learning study (when questions are designed to elicit indirect evidence of tacit learning). In other words, to study learning, many of our methods might remain (e.g., interview, document collection), but the questions themselves and the methodologies we use to ask those questions should change. As Mary P. Sheridan suggests of ethnography, “we in writing studies need to adapt existing research practices for our own purposes even as we draw upon *in informed ways*, the dominant ethnographic paradigms” (80). So too would we need to adapt our practices *in informed ways*, to make learning theories and principles work for us in NWT research. Turning to interdisciplinary, longitudinal learning research, as in Ambrose et al.’s *How Learning Works*, is one generative way to push further into the unknown and into underexplored areas of inquiry, including NWT multimotivation, rapidly shifting competence, and the interactional influence of others on newcomers’ teaching in writing classrooms right now.

Finally, putting learning first, at the center of our work, requires time. In “Time to Grow Them: Practicing Slow Research in a Fast Field,” Julie Lindquist argues that the kinds of research we value as a discipline are often heavily influenced by

institutional priorities and cultural economies—and are perhaps not the kinds of research most valuable to/for our work. Lindquist recommends that writing researchers understand what questions current research hasn't allowed us to ask (or leaves unasked) and make intelligible the relationships between “slow” research, disciplinary values, and labor economies of production (655-63). Lindquist's call to inquire into and push against “business as usual” in disciplinary research is vital for NWT inquiry because the time we research newcomers is not the only or best time when NWTs are learning. As Lindquist argues for slow research in learning about adult writers, I maintain that designing explicit studies of long-term NWT learning can be a productive way to use administrative, disciplinary, and institutional power to better problem-*pose*, rather than only problem-*solve*, alongside and for those who enter our field, practica, and writing classrooms as newcomers each year.

It is this act—of doing things together rather than trying to convert newcomers to bolster the cultural capital of composition—that Paul Prior suggests *is* disciplinary enculturation: “Disciplinary enculturation then refers not to novices being initiated, but to the continual processes whereby an ambiguous cast of *relative newcomers and relative old-timers* (re)produce themselves, their practices, and their communities. These images of participation in disciplinary practices point to *doing things* rather than having something or being someplace; they suggest process views of disciplines” (xii, emphasis mine). In the case of NWT *preparation*, “doing things” might focus more on the practicum, mentoring, and administrative practices. But in the case of broader NWT *research*, “doing things” can focus on the collaborative act of eliciting and articulating how learning and multimotivation work beyond the practicum, what prior experiences newcomers have that *help* them learn (and how those experiences continue to accumulate), or how *all* writing teachers are continually bumping up against uncomfortable moments with conscious incompetence, though we also norm that process. Further, if, as Warwick reminds us in this collection, we have a disciplinary commitment to preparation, our teacher preparation should not be limited only to teaching (first-year) writing; we are also committed, therefore, to opening conversations about how being a teacher helps us learn any number of workplace skills and dispositions toward language, collaboration, and being lifelong learners (this volume). Putting learning at the center of NWT research can help us, as a field, to learn what we don't know and bring us all productively closer to making writing studies enculturation a feminist process that attends to learning and learners first.

WORKS CITED

- Adler-Kassner, Linda. “2017 CCCC Chair's Address: Because Writing Is Never Just Writing.” *College Composition and Communication*, vol.69, no. 2, 2017, pp. 317-40.

- Ambrose, Susan A., et al. *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*. Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Anderson, Virginia, and Susan Romano, editors. *Culture Shock and the Practice of Profession: Training the Next Wave in Rhetoric and Composition*. Hampton Press, 2006.
- Barr Ebest, Sally. *Changing the Way We Teach: Writing and Resistance in the Training of Teaching Assistants*. Southern Illinois UP, 2005.
- Barton, David, and Mary Hamilton. *Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in One Community*. Routledge, 1998.
- Blackmon, Samantha, and Shirley K. Rose. "Plug and Play: Technology and Mentoring Teachers of Writing." *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney Dobrin, National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, pp. 98-112.
- Bolin, Bill, Beth Burmester, Brenton Faber, and Peter Vandenberg. "A Forum on Doctoral Pedagogy." Special issue of *Composition Studies/Freshman English News*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1995, pp. 1-132.
- Brandt, Deborah. "Sponsors of Literacy." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 49, no. 2, 1998, pp. 165-85.
- Brown, Stuart C. "Obscured Agenda and Hidden Failures: Teaching Assistants, Graduate Education, and First-Year Writing Courses." *Reforming College Composition: Writing the Wrongs*, edited by Ray Wallace, Alan Jackson, and Susan Lewis Wallace, Greenwood Press, 2000, pp. 203-12.
- Burmester, Beth. "Writing (into) the Academic Past, Present, and Future: Graduate Students, Curriculum Reform, and Doctoral Education in English Studies." *Composition Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2000, pp.113-35.
- Camp, Heather C. "Exploring Identity-based Challenges to English Teachers' Professional Growth." *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2013, pp.16-32.
- Christoph, Julie Nelson, Rebecca S. Nowacek, Mary Lou Odom, and Bonnie Kathryn Smith. "Three Models of Mentorship: Feminist Leadership and the Graduate Student WPA." *Performing Feminism*, edited by Krista Ratcliffe and Rebecca Rickly, Hampton Press, 2010, pp. 93-108.
- Davies, Laura. "Grief and the New WPA." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp. 40-51.
- . "Taking the Long View: Investigating the History of a Writing Program's Teacher Evaluation System." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2013, pp. 81-111.
- Dobrin, Sidney I., editor. *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2005.
- Dryer, Dylan B. "At a Mirror, Darkly: the Imagined Undergraduate Writers of Ten Novice Composition Instructors." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2012, pp. 420-452.
- Engeström, Yrjö, Ritva Engeström, and Tarja Vähäaho. "When the Center Does Not Hold: The Importance of Knotworking." *Activity Theory and Social Practice: Cultural-Historical Approaches*, edited by Seth Chaiklin, Mariane Hedegaard, and Uffe Juul Jensen, Aarhus UP, 1999, pp. 345-74.

- Estrem, Heidi, and E. Shelley Reid. "What New Writing Teachers Talk about When They Talk about Teaching." *Pedagogy*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2012, pp. 449-480.
- Farris, Christine. *Subject to Change: New Composition Instructors' Theory and Practice*. Hampton Press, 1996.
- Gee, James Paul. *Situated Language and Learning: A Critique of Traditional Schooling*. Routledge, 2004.
- Grouling, Jennifer. "Resistance and Identity Formation: The Journey of the Graduate Student-Teacher." *Composition Forum*, vol. 32, 2015.
- Guerra, Juan C., and Anis Bawarshi. "Managing Transitions: Reorienting Perceptions in a Practicum Course." *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney Dobrin, National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, pp. 43-66.
- Gutiérrez, Kris D., and Lynda D. Stone. "Synchronic and Diachronic Dimensions of Social Practice: An Emerging Methodology for Cultural-Historical Perspectives on Literacy Learning." *Vygotskian Perspectives on Literacy Research: Constructing Meaning through Collaborative Inquiry*, edited by Carol D. Lee and Peter Smagorinsky, Cambridge UP, 2000, pp.150-64.
- Hea, Amy C. Kimme, and Melinda Turnley. "A Tale of Two Tech Chicks: Negotiating Gendered Assumptions about Program Administration and Technology." *Performing Feminism*, edited by Krista Ratcliffe and Rebecca Rickly, Hampton Press, 2010, pp. 109-124.
- Hesse, Douglas. "Teachers as Students, Reflecting Resistance." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 44, no. 2, 1993, pp. 224-231.
- . "2005 CCCC Chair's Address: Who Owns Writing?" *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 57, no. 2, 2005, pp. 335-57.
- Huntley, Lu Ellen. "Finding Myself Lost in the Practicum." *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney Dobrin, National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, pp. 284-300.
- Jackson, Rebecca, Jackie Grutsch McKinney, and Nicole I. Caswell. "Writing Center Administration and/as Emotional Labor." *Composition Forum*, vol. 34, 2016.
- Juzwik, Mary M., Anne Whitney, April Baker Bell, and Amanda Smith. 2014. "Re-thinking Personal Narrative in the Pedagogy of Writing Teacher Preparation." *Teaching/ Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, vol. 3, no.1, 2014, pp. 27-35.
- Kearney, Patricia, and Timothy G. Plax. "Student Resistance to Control." *Power in the Classroom: Communication, Control, and Concern*, edited by Virginia P. Richmond and James C. McCroskey, Erlbaum, 1992, pp. 85-100.
- Kitchens, Juliette C. *The Postdisciplinary of Lore: Professional and Pedagogical Development in a Graduate Student Community of Practice*. 2012. Georgia State University, PhD dissertation.
- Latterell, Catherine G. "Training the Workforce: An Overview of GTA Education Curricula." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1996, pp. 7-23.
- Lave, Jean and Etienne Wenger. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Lindquist, Julie. "Time to Grow Them: Practicing Slow Research in a Fast Field." *JAC*, vol. 32, no. 3-4, 2012, pp. 645-666.

- Micciche, Laura R. *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching*. Boyton/Cook Press, 2007.
- . "More Than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work." *College English*, vol. 64, no. 4, 2002, pp. 432-58.
- Moore, Cindy. "Mentoring for Change." *Rewriting Success in Rhetoric and Composition Careers*, edited by Amy Goodburn, Donna LeCourt, and Carrie Leverenz, Parlor Press, 2012.
- Moore, Cindy, and Hildy Miller. *A Guide to Professional Development for Graduate Students in English*, National Council of Teachers of English, 2006.
- Payne, Darin, and Theresa Enos. "TA Education as Dialogic Response: Furthering the Intellectual Work of the Profession through WPA." *Preparing College Teachers of Writing*, edited by Betty P. Pytlik and Sarah Liggett, Oxford UP, 2001, pp. 50-62.
- Powell, Katrina M., Peggy O'Neill, Cassandra Mach Phillips, and Brian Huot. "Negotiating Resistance and Change: One Composition Program's Struggle Not to Convert." *Preparing College Teachers*, edited by Betty P. Pytlik and Sarah Liggett, Oxford UP, 2001, pp. 121-134.
- Powell, Malea. "Learning (Teaching) to Teach (Learn)." *Relations, Locations, Positions: Composition Theory for Writing Teachers*, edited by Peter Vandenberg, Sue Hum, and Jennifer Clary-Lemon, National Council of Teachers of English, 2006, pp. 571-580.
- Prior, Paul. *Writing/Disciplinarity: A Sociohistoric Account of Literate Activity in the Academy*. Erlbaum Associates, 1998.
- Pytlik, Betty P, and Sarah Liggett, editors. *Preparing College Teachers of Writing: Histories, Theories, Programs, Practices*. Oxford UP, 2002.
- Rankin, Elizabeth. *Seeing Yourself As a Teacher: Conversations with Five New Teachers in a University Writing Program*. National Council of Teachers of English, 1994.
- Ratcliffe, Krista, and Rebecca Rickly, editors. *Performing Feminism and Administration in Rhetoric and Composition Studies*. Hampton Press, 2010.
- Reid, E. Shelley. "On Learning to Teach: Letter to a New TA." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp.129-145.
- . "Teaching Writing Teachers Writing: Difficulty, Exploration, and Critical Reflection." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2009, pp. W197-W221.
- Restaino, Jessica. *First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground*. Southern Illinois UP, 2012.
- Rickly, Rebecca J., and Susanmarie Harrington. "Feminist Approaches to Mentoring Teaching Assistants: Conflict, Power, and Collaboration." *Preparing College Teachers of Writing*, edited by Betty P. Pytlik and Sarah Liggett, Oxford UP, 2001, pp. 108-20.
- Ritchie, Joy, and David Wilson. *Teacher Narrative as Critical Inquiry: Rewriting the Script*. Teachers College Press, 2000.
- Rodrigue, Tanya K. 2013. "Listening Across the Curriculum: What Disciplinary TAs Can Teach Us about TA Professional Development in the Teaching of Writing." *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2013, pp. 33-41.
- Rogoff, Barbara. "Observing Sociocultural Activity on Three Planes: Participatory Appropriation, Guided Participation, and Apprenticeship." *Sociocultural Studies of Mind*, edited by James V. Wertsch, Pablo del Río, and Amelia Alvarez, Cambridge UP, 1995, pp. 139-64.

- Saur, Elizabeth, and Jason Palmeri. "Letter to a New TA: Affect Addendum." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp.146-153.
- Sfard, Anna, and Anna Prusak. "Telling Identities: In Search of an Analytic Tool for Investigating Learning as a Culturally Shaped Activity." *Educational Researcher*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2005, pp.14-22.
- Sheridan, Mary P. "Making Ethnography Our Own: Why and How Writing Studies Must Redefine Core Research Practices." *Writing Studies Research in Practice: Methods and Methodologies*, edited by Lee Nickoson and Mary P. Sheridan, Southern Illinois UP, 2012, pp. 73-85.
- Skorczewski, Dawn. "From Playing the Role to Being Yourself: Becoming the Teacher in the Writing Classroom." *Teaching Composition: Background Readings*, edited by T. R. Johnson, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008, pp. 99-116.
- Trubek, Anne. "Chickens, Eggs, and the Composition Practicum." *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney Dobrin, National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, pp.160-182.
- Valle, Antonio, et al. "Multiple goals, motivation and academic learning." *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 73, no. 1, 2003, pp.71-87.
- Welch, Nancy. "Resisting the Faith: Conversion, Resistance, and the Training of Teachers." *College English*, vol. 55, no. 4, 1993, pp. 387-401.
- Wenger, Etienne. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Williams, Bronwyn T. and Amy A. Zenger. *New Media Literacies and Participatory Popular Culture Across Borders*. Routledge, 2012.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake. "The Professionalization of TA Development Programs: A Heuristic for Curriculum Design." *Preparing College Teachers of Writing*, edited by Betty P. Pytlak and Sarah Liggett, Oxford UP, 2001, pp.63-74.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake. *Teaching Literature as Reflective Practice*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2004.

NARRATIVE 1.

FIRST DAY OF CLASS

I-Hsien Lee

Georgia State University

As I looked around the classroom with the attendance sheet in one hand, suddenly, I became very wary of my identity in the classroom. *Who am I?* The truth was that, as a graduate teaching assistant, I was both a teacher and a student at the same time, which was something I've never experienced before in my life. *Am I a teacher? Or am I a student?* In the past, I had always been one or the other. I never had to juggle these two identities at the same time. What made things even more confusing is the fact that, at this point in my life, I am first a student, then a teacher. My current official occupation is a student, and the F on my US visa confirms it. However, now, with twenty-five students sitting in front of me, I am aware, all of a sudden, that I am a teacher. While I completely *understand* the student/teacher identity, something inside of me just wasn't computing. For some reason, it just felt weird to know that, after being in class yesterday afternoon as a student I am now a teacher, who this afternoon at 1pm would once again transform back into a student (for a split second, I felt like Cinderella).

Yet there was something else, besides this student/teacher dilemma, I was caught in. Something about a question a student had raised earlier, the one about my English, had gotten to me somehow. And then I realized what it was.

I am an Asian teaching native English speaking students English composition.

There was something extremely destructive, almost impairing, in that thought—the fact that I am a *foreigner* teaching native speakers how to write in their own language. It was as if my identity as a teacher had been stripped away from me, and all that was left was my foreignness—a complete stranger to this country. The thought made me feel like a hypocrite. I suddenly became very aware of the fact that I was not confident with my English at all. It had been years since I last read or wrote anything using academic English. What's worse, it had been nearly two decades since I last spoke with a foreigner in English. While living back home, I had gotten so comfortable with the fact that my English was *good enough* to cover the basics that I had often prided myself on my language skills. Yet, as I stood in the classroom now, all that self-confidence just flew right out the window. In front of my students, I felt like prey surrounded by a pack of wolves—like something you'd see on the Discovery Channel. I became

conscious of the embarrassing stutters I made, the various awkward moments of silence when I couldn't find the right words to express my own thoughts, and how they came off to the students.

Standing in that classroom as I reflected back on the months leading up to this point, it finally sank in. It was something that I had never imagined back home before I flew halfway across the world. Something I had not realized until this point. Something I was going to have to continue fighting against for the entire duration of my time here.

My identity was in jeopardy.

CHAPTER 2.

“THE GIFT OF AUTHENTICITY”: WRITING CENTER PEDAGOGY AND INTEGRATED IDENTITY WORK IN TA EDUCATION

Jaquelyn Davis Lugg

University of Nevada, Reno

“Though we certainly need to help new teachers make sense of their classrooms, we need to spend at least as much time helping them make sense of themselves.”

– Lad Tobin

When I was offered a teaching assistantship as part of my acceptance package for the masters in English program at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), my emotions transitioned quickly from excitement to disbelief. Sure, I knew that such offers were fairly standard practice for graduate programs in English, and I recognized that I should be grateful to have my graduate education funded, but I couldn't escape the instantly stress-inducing thought that in six months—despite never having taught a class before—I would be handed a roster of twenty-two first-year students and given the green light. How was I—a 22-year-old woman who just five years previously sat in the very course her soon-to-be students would enroll in—going to have any legitimate authority standing at the front of the room as a teacher?

As it turns out, I had plenty of sources to turn to for advice about this. Guidebooks like *First Day to Final Grade* and *St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*, blogs like Arizona State's "Diary of a New TA," and a personal network of mentors and colleagues all provide new graduate teaching assistants with how-tos, horror stories, and hero narratives to guide them through their processes of becoming teachers (Curzan and Damour; Glenn and Goldthwaite; "Diary of a New TA"). In my own examination of these sources and conversations with new colleagues during the week-long TA orientation before the Fall 2016 semester began, I received a vast amount of advice about how to take on the first semester successfully. I was struck by just how much of that advice had to do with the degree to which

I should cultivate an air of authority: “You should/shouldn’t have your students call you by your first name.” “You should/shouldn’t dress more formally than you normally would.” “You should/shouldn’t say hi to your students outside of class or talk to them about anything non-class-related.” The “Diary of a New TA” blog, for example, features extensive posts about these kinds of decisions, including photos of the outfits to opt for and those to avoid. Procedural elements of teaching related to authority were also foregrounded in the advice I encountered. For instance, *First Day to Final Grade* offers a 21-page chapter devoted entirely to the first day of class, complete with the pros and cons of such decisions as whether to arrive early and where/how to take off your jacket when arriving.

Surely, I did worry about these things. The advice from these sources reflects real concerns I and other first-time teachers certainly have. But to me, these worries and the advice they inspire also imply something else: to be a new teacher is to play a role, not unlike putting on a costume and performing the actions prescribed by the part. Anne Curzan and Lisa Damour acknowledge this explicitly: “As you get more experience and confidence, you will be able to act more natural in your role as an instructor. You then will be better able to be more like yourself when you are teaching” (2). Being authentically yourself, Curzan and Damour—among others—imply, is *not* how a new teacher can wield authority in the classroom. Instead, authority as a new teacher comes only from taking up elements of a predetermined role and performing them, regardless of whether or not that role fits from those qualities, experiences, or values that make up one’s own identity.

In this chapter, I seek to challenge the problematic framework that guides the ways we talk about new TAs becoming teachers and re-theorize how TAs form their multifaceted, ever-shifting identities as teachers, students, and scholars. First, I discuss how the identity development of new teachers is currently under-explored in scholarship on TA education and propose how authenticity can serve as a useful guiding concept for discussions of TA identity. Next, I explain how integrating writing center pedagogy into the TA practicum can help guide new teachers to reflect on and better understand their constantly evolving identities. Finally, after explaining a model TA practicum, I suggest how such a model can foster what I call authentic authority and help new TAs be more successful, both in the classroom as first-time teachers and in the academy more broadly.

1⁸ See, for example, the Northern Michigan University School of Education’s “Tips for Beginning Teachers.” The first principle, “Be Professional,” offers guidelines that include “Be professional in dress, manner, and attitude from the first minute that you are present in the classroom. Act professionally in public. Use language appropriately. Don’t resort to using slang too often. Speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard. Don’t be late to class.” While the list of tips does include “Be a Real Person, and Honor Each Student as a Real Person” as the fifth principle on the list, the order is telling.

TA TRAINING: DEFINING GOALS AND LOCATING IDENTITY

As my discussion of the resources available to new TAs suggests, authority is a central concern for new TAs and those who train them. This authority is defined as a sense of power or control over the classroom. This power is derived from the accumulation of the roster, the physical place at the front of the room, the title “instructor” or the “Ph.D.” after a last name, or even from the acquisition of knowledge about composition theory in TA education courses or practica (Calderwood and D’Amico; Anglesey, this volume). The way we define the functions of TA education highlight that a grasp on composition theory and pedagogy leads to authority. In her contribution to *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators*, E. Shelley Reid defines TA education as “a specific subset of faculty development that focuses on the education and support of novice or relatively inexperienced teachers who are positioned as students in your [the WPA’s] program to help them prepare to move into independent classroom teaching” (197). In her chapter on the graduate TAship in *The Writing Program Administrator’s Resource*, Meg Morgan also indicates that theoretical and pedagogical training in composition are the key components of TA education. The practicum course that Morgan outlines “prepare[s] [TAs] for the professional (if not teaching) life that lies ahead. . . by giving them general tools, such as the framework of goals, curriculum, and pedagogy (which translates into general ‘where to,’ specific ‘what,’ and specific ‘how’), methods for understanding professional evaluation, and reflection” (408). TA education, in this light, helps new teachers absorb the skills they need to be successful, filling them with the knowledge they need to be adequate authority figures in the classroom.

The concise definitions of TA education presented in indexes such as those discussed above don’t, and perhaps can’t, capture the broad scope of all that is TA education because of the ways that teaching is not a discrete skill, the filling in of a blank slate. In their study, “What New Writing Teachers Talk About When They Talk About Teaching,” Heidi Estrem and E. Shelley Reid reveal that the typical one-semester practicum course perpetuates the negative assumption that the learning of writing and teaching is like checking a box—once you’ve attended a few trainings and gotten the stamp of approval on your syllabus, you’re good for life. Estrem and Reid conclude that:

Just as scholars have worked hard within composition studies to make clear that first-year writing is *not* successful as a one-shot writing inoculation, so too do we need to make clear—in what we say, in our institutional structures, in our work with new TA

instructors themselves—that one graduate pedagogy seminar is not and cannot be a one-shot teaching inoculation. (474)

In other words, it is problematic to understand TA education as a simple, one-time delivery of a skillset that will help TAs survive their time as beginners in the classroom, until they get more comfortable and experienced. In reality, becoming a teacher is just that, *becoming*, which entails growth and a process that is all but linear. Therefore, Estrem and Reid argue, TA education is more than teaching about the field's theoretical foundation or the day-to-day tasks of classroom management. Instead, it is important that “pedagogy educators teach explicitly for integration and transfer of new material, as well as for increased reflective problem-solving, rather than for knowledge of the field or even full competence as classroom practitioners” (Reid et al. 60). In this view, TA training is vastly more complex than Reid's own definition in *Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators* would suggest. More accurately, TA training is a process through which TAs begin to form integrated identities as teachers, students, scholars, and critical agents across contexts.

While it is clear that TA education must involve far more than teaching procedural skills to guide TAs as they embark on the process of becoming reflective practitioners, treatment of TA identity formation in our scholarship is—to use Dylan Dryer's word—“skittish” at best (Dryer 424). The lack of discussion about identity and TA education, however, does not reflect simplicity of the topic. As the narratives in this collection demonstrate, the process through which TAs negotiate the production of identity is deeply complex. This complexity begins with the simple fact that TAs are often novices in many more roles than one. Melissa Nicolas describes the precariousness graduate students in English wrestle with as a result of their many intersecting identities. Nicolas explains that:

On the one hand, graduate students are most definitely *students*, people who are learning about and becoming initiated into a field or discipline. On the other hand, these same students are often given institutional roles, like teaching their own classes, or tutoring, or running a writing program, that give them a greater level of institutional authority and responsibility than undergraduate students and even some of their graduate peers. Graduate students, in many ways, are betwixt and between. (1)

Though granted institutional power by being given classrooms of first-year students to teach, TAs are disempowered in a variety of ways, not least of which includes their material status as underpaid labor and their inexperience as scholars in the field. Because of the seemingly contradictory locations graduate

students occupy, particularly as they assume—at least partial—institutional authority as teachers, “graduate students can only experience the practicum as a conundrum” (Dryer, this volume). New to graduate school, sometimes new to teaching, new to the scholarly ins and outs of the academy, TAs arrive to practicum courses with a considerable amount of baggage. The TA education course is the place where many TAs are first exposed to composition theory. It’s the place to troubleshoot challenges they’re facing in their classrooms that week. It’s the place to ask about where they can finally track down some whiteboard pens and learn to use the department’s copier. And on top of all that, it’s also the place where they will invariably begin to negotiate their liminal positionalities.

Some scholars have begun to explore the ways TAs engage with these challenging intersections in the TA practicum course. In examining the journals of new TAs and the ways those TAs narrate the experience of becoming teachers, Jackie Grutsch McKinney and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater conclude that while TAs struggle to construct a vast array of teaching narratives to negotiate their new identities—some more vexed than others—the aim of the practicum course should not be to guide TAs to compose static teaching identities grounded in composition theory from the start. Rather, “what seems far more important is for TAs to have an opportunity to invent, try out, and perform their new identities as writing teachers” (Grutsch McKinney and Chiseri-Strater 73). In other words, new TAs need the space to work through the similarities, tensions, and divergences between their various positions in the university now that they are also teachers. The lack of this very opportunity, Jennifer Grouling suggests, is perhaps the cause of the resistance many TAs display against learning composition theory. The difficulty TAs have with negotiating complex and often completely foreign composition theory is parallel that fact that the relationship between their student and teacher identities has not been interrogated.² These “dichotomies,” Grouling warns, “work against the formation of a coherent graduate student/teacher identity and our construction of our GTAs as complex, multifaceted learners” (para. 3). The inability of new TAs to integrate their teacher and student identities limits their ability to productively engage with composition theory in the practicum course, and more broadly, their sense of self in the academy. “Student and teacher identities can either work against one

2 Though Grouling doesn’t dwell on this, it seems worthwhile to note that the resistance stemming from the inability to integrate teacher and student identities is particularly significant for those TAs teaching first year composition (FYC) who are *not* pursuing graduate work in Rhetoric and Composition. Because English Departments in institutions like mine, for example, offer TAs that involve teaching FYC, at least to start, to graduate students of all disciplines, it’s important to consider how re-theorizing these TAs affects students in this position, too, not just those specializing in Rhetoric and Composition.

another or be reconciled. Ultimately, the GTAs who are struggling in one area bring that resistance into the other,” Grouling concludes, “Likewise, those who are able to accept their dual nature as student-teacher in a way that allows each identity to inform the other are more positive about graduate school and teaching in general” (para. 3). The production of related rather than oppositional identities, then, seems a critical yet under-explored concern for discussions of TA education, so TAs can more productively engage with not only composition theory but also their experience in graduate school as a whole. Given the importance of the question of identity in TA education, the TA practicum course and the TAship in rhetoric and composition would benefit from being re-theorized, from a site of theoretical and pedagogical training in which TAs gradually build up authority, to a place in which TAs practice the cultivation of authenticity in their teacher/student/scholar identities.

AUTHORITY AND/OR/NOT AUTHENTICITY

In contrast to authority—which is assumed through the accumulation of credentials, knowledge, or institutional power—authenticity is defined as a productive negotiation of relationships (Akoury; Calderwood and D’Amico; Cranton and Carusetta; Jones et al.; Oral; Vannini). To be an authentic teacher—or person for that matter—is to deeply consider the connections that exist between you, your values, your students, your daily practices, your institution, and so on, and determine how to best live out your sense of self in those many connections. The experience of being authentic, “when individuals feel congruent with their values, goals, emotions, and meanings,” is a “self-feeling” that fosters positive emotions (Vannini 237). Significantly, being authentic is not a static state or condition to be achieved—as Madelyn Pawlowski and Brad Jacobson discuss later in this collection—rather, the work of authenticity is a continual negotiation of relationships to different communities. In this sense, authenticity is not an “on-off phenomenon, that a person possesses or not, but rather that it is an ongoing developmental process of becoming more authentic” (Cranton and Carusetta 19). Authenticity, then, is a continual, critical engagement with one’s many identities, positions, values, and relationships that works to bring a sense of one’s genuine self to the lived experience of teaching.

In their discussion of affect in the TAship, Elizabeth Saur and Jason Palmeri explain that there are plenty of good reasons to openly discuss and interrogate one’s embodied identities and positions in the classroom in efforts to be authentic, citing bell hooks: “We must return ourselves to a state of embodiment in order to deconstruct the way power has been traditionally orchestrated in the classroom” (qtd. in Saur and Palmeri 151). However, striving to be authentic is

not a one-size-fits-all decision about whether or not to be oneself that applies across contexts and individuals. In a study of intersectionality and authenticity, Susan R. Jones et al. note that participants’ and researchers’ choices about how to portray their identities in different contexts are “often related to issues of professionalism, survival, or safety and almost always occurred within structures of oppression and privilege” (718). Material, social, political, and economic conditions dictate what degrees of authenticity are safe or even possible, both in and beyond the classroom. Therefore, Saur and Palmeri suggest to new teachers directly, “you should choose an approach to addressing embodiment that feels comfortable for you and that you be open to letting that approach evolve” (151). In this light, authenticity is in constant negotiation and fluctuation; it is “a complex act of care of the self—an act that demands we select among competing values, meanings, and emotions” (Vannini 255). Authenticity, then, is an experience that varies across contexts and individuals but is grounded in the continual work of relating one’s genuine sense of self with the world.

For new TAs, the experience of authenticity is often treated as a privilege, a way of being that is possible only once authority is secure. The conditional status of authenticity stands in stark contrast with the concept of authority, framed as an essential quality TAs secure through external factors like titles, credentials, or the “inoculation” of expert knowledge. Though this is rarely the explicit message of TA education courses and writing programs, it’s a belief about new teachers that creeps into the ways we talk about new TAs, whether in the resources provided to new teachers that I described at the beginning of this chapter or even in our informal conversations. During my second semester as a teacher, I mentioned to a more experienced colleague at a department social that I talk to my students about my own reading assignments and writing projects in my graduate seminars. He responded in disbelief and only thinly veiled disapproval: “Why on earth would you do that?!” In his eyes, I was actively undermining what little institutional authority I possessed via my teacher identity by giving away my simultaneous identities as student and novice instructor.

If practicing authenticity cultivates a productive integration of identities and positive self-feelings about those many positions, it seems critical to consider how authenticity can serve as a genuine source of confidence, fulfillment, and even authority for new TAs. In what follows, I will discuss how the pedagogical practices of the writing center may be integrated into the TA practicum to achieve this goal, allowing new TAs to feel authentic in their roles as teachers from the beginning. Drawing from my own transition from peer writing adviser³

3 At the Center for Writing Across the Curriculum (CWAC) at Saint Mary’s College of California where I worked, “adviser” was the title for tutors that faculty, staff, and students collaboratively decided on when CWAC first opened.

to first-year composition (FYC) teacher, I theorize a model for a TA practicum course that integrates writing center pedagogy to aid TAs in developing an authentic sense of authority, one that draws on and values the engagement of multiple, liminal identities rather than clean-cut, role-derived power. This authentic authority, I argue, is productive for their teaching in the composition classroom and in their personal and professional positions in the academy.

TEACHING, TUTORING, AND THE VALUE OF COMMON GROUND

The relationship between teaching and tutoring pedagogies has been explored and often contested in our literature. Many discussions about the overlaps or differences between the two practices argue for the liberatory nature of the writing center session compared to the authoritative classroom space, notably, Stephen North's "The Idea of a Writing Center." Stephen Corbett explains that this narrative, so central to writing center literature, works to establish "a theoretical and practical dividing line between 'we' in the center and 'them' in the classroom" (11), pitting tutoring and teaching as irreconcilable opposites. A more productive view, however, understands teaching and tutoring not as isolated, entirely different practices but co-informing ones. Helon Howell Raines explains that teaching and tutoring might be more accurately viewed as dialectically related to one another in a tension that works to generate something new rather than to affirm their difference. "This way of envisioning the relationship between tutoring and teaching," Raines argues, "seems to me to be closer to the realities in many classrooms and of many tutoring sessions. A dialectical image also reflects a desirable process that avoids privileging any particular position except in the situational context" (157). In this view, teaching and tutoring are not opposites but iterations in which pedagogical choices vary in degree according to context. Classroom teaching and tutoring practices are brought together in synergy, recognizing "the best of what each contributing collaborator has to offer" (Corbett 21). Rather than dichotomous practices, teaching and tutoring are deeply connected, involving differences of authority and logistics rather than pedagogical foundation.

Recognizing the rich pedagogical connections between teaching and tutoring experience, numerous scholars praise the ways that tutoring experience in the writing center benefit those tutors who become—or are also—classroom teachers (for example, Adams et al.; Clark; Coulbrooke; King et al.; Van Dyke). In an attempt to provide quantitative evidence to support the individual observations of previous scholars, Melissa Ianetta et al. reviewed scholarship and surveyed writing program administrators nationwide to assess the idea that tutoring can benefit TA training. The authors report that the unanimity in the field

regarding the positive relationship between tutoring and teaching largely centers on “comprehension of subject matter; communication of subject matter; and assessment of student needs” (106). TAs with experience in the writing center as tutors, these findings suggest, are better prepared to understand the subject of writing, to talk about it with others, and to discern a student’s pedagogical needs. Ianetta et al. conclude that “the overall suggestion that respondents agree that writing center experience is a useful component of TA preparation seems highly persuasive,” affirming the anecdotal accounts we hear so often (115).

As Ianetta et al. point out, scholars generally agree that writing center experience benefits new FYC teachers because it exposes them to the subject matter and gives them practice talking about writing. However, little attention is drawn to the ways that writing center tutoring provides important practice for new teachers in cultivating a comfortable sense of identity that draws on and pulls into conversation the roles of reader, writer, and student as well as that of an experienced responder and listener. Given what we know about the vexing process of developing a feeling of authenticity as a new teacher, it is worthwhile to consider how the constant negotiation and reconciliation of identity required by tutoring can be a highly valuable practice for new TAs, as well.

Writing center tutoring experience is well-suited to foster the development of authenticity in new teachers because tutoring pedagogy relies on collaboration. As Andrea Lunsford explains, Burkean parlor-style sessions, which are founded on the idea that tutors and students alike have something to contribute to the conversation, hinge on collaborative activity that “engages the whole student and encourages active learning; it combines reading, talking, writing, thinking” (3). As tutor and writer talk, write, read, and think together, both draw on the knowledge they have about the paper assignment, the course it’s for, the sources it’s drawing on, high school writing courses, individual writing processes, and more to come to some greater understandings about what the piece of writing can be (see Amanda May’s rich description of this process in Yancey et al., this volume). The tutoring process incorporates the whole of each person in the interaction, bringing multiple identities as student, writer, and peer into productive conversation with one another. Trained to think of themselves as collaborators, tutors work within an identity reminiscent of what E. Shelley Reid describes in her article, “Letter to a New TA,” as a teaching learner. Tutors are teaching their peers about writing and, more broadly, writing habits, process, and interpersonal communication, among many other topics. But more importantly, tutors are explicitly framed as co-learners, making discoveries of all kinds in sessions simultaneously with their peers.

Because of the engagement as whole people by tutor and writer, the collaboration that happens at the tutoring table is often strikingly honest and open. If,

for example, a student is unsure about the particulars of the most recent MLA update, a tutor has full license to admit that they don't know either and to suggest that they look up the guidelines together. This degree of openness about expertise stems from the fact that writer and tutor are encouraged to relate to one another as whole human beings as opposed to limiting roles like expert or novice. Tiffany Rousculp describes this as "a construct of expertise as an act of relationship" (83). Writing tutors foster a shared sense of purpose, agency, and respect in tutoring sessions by positioning expertise as something that is grown collaboratively through the relationship that's being built at the tutoring table. It strikes me that this is authenticity in practice, the negotiation of relationships and identities in order to grow a different, more genuine kind of authority, one that comes from the nexus of our many liminalities rather than their denial.

Here, I want to be careful not to idealize the "peeriness" of tutor and tutee in the center. As John Trimbur explains, the title "peer tutor" is inherently oxymoronic because the terms "peer" and "tutor" signify entirely different social allegiances and institutional statuses, one as a fellow student and the other a representative of the university. To some extent, this power differential is unavoidable as tutors in the writing center have been granted a degree of institutional authority beyond their peers. The discrepancy in power is even more true in the TA/first-year student relationship. It is an unavoidable reality that the TA must evaluate student work and assign grades. While this tension can never be eliminated in the traditional classroom setting, it can be productively reframed. As Nancy Sommers argues, effective response to student writing should be about conversation and relationship building: "the exact wording of any comment is less important than what it evokes in a student and the relationship it fosters" (24). For TAs in the position of graders, the best kinds of evaluative moments are those that encourage authentic engagement on the part of both student and teacher; those that rely on the drawing out of genuine questions, interests, and concerns of the participants in the dialogue.

Both Sommers' ethic of conversation and the collaborative relationship promoted in writing center sessions foster authenticity in those involved. As John Trimbur notes of writing center tutors, the seemingly divergent identities of peer and tutor "come together in meaningful ways as tutors learn to work with their tutees, when together they jointly control their purposes, set the agenda, and evaluate the results of their learning—as autonomous co-learners" (27). Framed as a collaborative enterprise with no stake in reinforcing expertise or any lack thereof, the experience of tutoring provides tutors the ability to recognize the students they work with—and perhaps more importantly, themselves—as writers, learners, and real people engaged in reciprocal dialogue about writing. Re-envisioning feedback as dialogue is a practice of authenticity, and while it

may always be in tension with the differences in power that exist between teacher and student, or tutor and peer, it is essential in helping us reframe what it means for TAs to engage their many liminal identities in the work of teaching.

Here’s one example of how I was able to foster authenticity in my role as a new TA, specifically in my feedback on student writing. During my first semester of teaching English-101, the first of UNR’s two-course FYC sequence, I implemented grading conferences for each of the three major assignments. For these conferences, students turned in their papers online at the due date and subsequently brought a printed copy to a prearranged meeting with me in lieu of a day or two of regular class meetings. At these conferences—which ranged from 20-30 minutes—we would read through the paper together, marking up the copy using the post-outlining strategy.⁴ We also noted questions or concerns on the draft as they came up. I’ll note that I’m saying we, but the student held the pen or pencil and made all the marks on the draft. At the end, we spread out the pages, looked through the marked main ideas, comments, or questions, and assessed the paper against a holistic rubric we’d already gone over and used to assess sample papers during class. We negotiated where various elements of the paper, like purpose or organization, fell on the rubric, to come up with a grade. To conclude the conference, we’d clarify remaining questions and concerns and develop a plan for revision since the course is centered on process and culminates in a portfolio of revised pieces.⁵

I chose to grade in conferences because, to be honest, I was extremely daunted by the prospect of collecting a stack of papers and evaluating them alone in my office. Grading alone felt a little bit at odds with the open dialogue I was used to practicing with students in the classroom and my past experiences as a writing adviser. I naturally gravitated to conferences and the pedagogical principles of dialogue and collaboration, and with no past experience grading,

4 The post-outlining method involves reading the piece aloud, stopping after each paragraph to underline the main idea(s) of the paragraph, noting the function of the paragraph (introducing, providing evidence, etc.), and reviewing the structure of the piece to assess adherence to a central argument, organizational logic, idea development, among other areas for potential revision. This method was developed by my mentor, Tereza Joy Kramer for use in the Center for Writing Across the Curriculum at Saint Mary’s College of California. Similar methods are referred to elsewhere as reverse outlining and post-draft outlining. See Susan Hubbuch’s *Writing Research Papers Across the Curriculum* 5th ed. for further discussion of this revision strategy (162).

5 The grading conferences described here are a mash-up of my own invention, informed by colleagues at the University of Nevada, Reno. I revised the process depending on the length of each assignment and as my students and I discovered what worked well and what didn’t. Generally, when teaching two sections at a time, I cancelled two class meetings to accommodate meeting individually with each student for twenty minutes. My English 101 course includes four major assignments throughout the semester, the last of which is a reflective portfolio, so I typically hold three grading conference sessions throughout the semester.

I figured I may as well try to incorporate the adviser part of who I am into the teaching part. My openness to this approach—I think—stemmed from the fact that being a writing adviser already made me quite comfortable with adapting to new, uncertain situations. As an adviser, I was continually practicing authenticity by drawing on past experience, being honest about my identities as a student, learner, and writer, and opening myself up for learning in order to advise the diverse range of students and faculty I worked with. I was able to incorporate that same adaptability and openness into my teaching as a whole and particularly in the way I approached student feedback.

The benefit of authenticity was exemplified most for me in a particularly memorable conference during my first semester, when one of my most diligent students arrived promptly for her second grading conference of the course. Knowing that I'd ask her to get something to post-outline with, she hurriedly rummaged through her pencil case. "I'm just looking for my red pen," she told me. When I jokingly told her I'd probably get in trouble if I marked up student work with red pen, she looked at me in utter confusion. I explained that when I comment on papers, I'm trying to start a conversation with students about what they've written by sharing my questions as a reader and that what I want to work on with students is revision, not shutting them down by "correcting" errors in red. Her deadpan response did not disappoint: "That's what comments on papers are for?"

In this student's experiences with feedback from instructors, it was never suggested that assessments of assignments could be spaces for relationship-building and growth, not solely one-sided evaluation. By the end of the semester, while the student still certainly cared about her grades, she was far more comfortable sitting down with me, many times beyond the mandatory conferences, and hashing out ideas, concerns, and plans for her writing, and never with the red pen in hand. For my part, I felt fulfilled as a teaching learner who had the benefit of working and figuring things out alongside her—literally—rather than from afar, hidden behind my scrawl in the margins. From a sense of genuine identification, in which we both were honest about our responses, questions, and experiences while never denying the fact that I had to give her a grade, we built a foundation of authenticity from which to work.

Authentic identification with students and the development of common ground, like that demonstrated in grading conferences, is perhaps most possible for new TAs, among all teachers. In E. Shelley Reid's advice to new TAs, she grants that there will be a moment when they have to accept that they don't know everything and dive in anyway. However, Reid notes, the new TA's position as "an intensive still-at-the-beginning teaching learner," who very obviously doesn't know everything, can be especially useful in working with first year students, who are in

much the same boat (139). This sentiment echoes Thomas Recchio who observes that graduate student TAs are perhaps best positioned for forging authentic identification with students: “the apparent weakness of a graduate student’s position within the university is, in fact, the graduate student’s greatest strength; for the transitional status of graduate students compels an experientially immediate sensitivity to the process of learning, a sensitivity that all too easily diminishes with age and experience” (58). Both new TAs and first-year students occupy transitional, vulnerable positions as they navigate their new roles, which is one reason TA education is so challenging. Programs are tasked with “training one of the most vulnerable and powerless populations in the university—graduate students—to teach another vulnerable and powerless group—first-year students” (Grutsch McKinney and Chiseri-Strater 59). However, rather than seeing this as a challenge, Recchio points out, it’s useful to think about this similarity as a useful platform on which TAs can establish an authentic sense of identity, one that moves beyond simply taking on the role of teacher. Through this lens, TA and first-year student aren’t defined roles into which each person who takes them up must fit. Rather, they are people with nuanced, overlapping identities as students and budding scholars who can participate in the learning process together. For we TAs, Erec Toso notes, this kind of “reflective humility levels the field to make us colleagues who are making it up as we go along, aware that students are doing the same self-fashioning. When students and [GTAs] can see this as part of their work, a learning relationship is forged where we all start to connect the familiar and the known to the strange and the unknown” (Brobbel et al. 428). The ways that writing center sessions encourage tutors to practice authenticity, then, could serve as a useful way for TAs to begin thinking about authenticity in their identities and relationships with students, in individual conferences and in the classroom.

A MODEL FOR TA EDUCATION

Given that identity formation is under-explored in TA education literature and that writing center tutoring can provide the opportunity to productively practice authenticity in tutors, my proposal is this: in order to re-conceive TA education as not only a site of theoretical or pedagogical preparation for entering the classroom but also a place where new TAs begin the complicated work of building integrated identities, we can incorporate writing center tutoring pedagogy into the design of the TA practicum course. Such a design could work in a number of ways, but considering that a substantial portion of TA education models are structured as a practicum course that TAs take either in advance of or concurrently with their first semester of teaching—as my own TA education was—I will describe how writing center pedagogy could be integrated in that kind of format.

Before describing a potential model, however, I want to acknowledge that despite scholarship supporting the idea that writing center experience is beneficial for TAs in training, there are significant problems with requiring tutoring in the writing center as a prerequisite for teaching in the classroom. As Nicolas argues, making writing center tutoring a requirement for TAs who will go on to teach composition casts the writing center as training wheels for the more significant work of teaching. As a required, preliminary component of TA education, “the writing center is positioned as a place for novices, the not-ready-for-the-classroom place, not necessarily a place for people with skills and training. . . . simply a place for graduate students to bide their time until they are ‘released’ and allowed to enter the classroom” (17). Such a structure communicates to TAs that no training or expertise is needed for the writing center; further, it upholds the marginal status of the writing center—and of rhetoric and composition within English studies—by suggesting that anyone who writes well enough to get into graduate school can tutor or teach it. Ianetta et al. echo this criticism about the consequences of integrating writing center work as a preliminary stage of TA education: in the training wheels model, “writing center work becomes pre-theoretical, pre-professional practice that precedes, for example, the “real” expert knowledge gained through the composition pedagogy course and the “real” work of teaching in a classroom environment” (118). These scholars are right to raise concerns about the effects of such a TA training arrangement on the writing center; tutoring in the writing center certainly is not an easier, less important form of teaching to be positioned as training wheels for the actual work done in the classroom. Therefore, I do not believe that writing center tutoring should be a prerequisite; instead, tutoring pedagogy should be incorporated into the TA practicum itself, built in as an equally important piece of teacher preparation.

To tap into the experiential pedagogical practice and resultant identity building writing center tutoring provides, a useful practicum design would enact tutoring pedagogy throughout the term as part of the coursework—not as an add-on. Such a design would risk implying that the writing center pedagogical practice was superfluous to the real work of teaching. This could involve a selection of readings and discussions about writing centers and tutoring pedagogy early in the semester to serve as a foundation, and from there, class time could be spent practicing tutoring—and being tutored—in pairs, working on weekly writing assignments or assignments for other courses. This practice can be paired with reflections about the experience of tutoring/being tutored and how it informs or diverges from teaching in the classroom. Occasional observations of sessions at the writing center itself and workshops guided by writing center staff—on responding to student writing or designing effective prompts, for example—could also be incorporated into the course to help fulfill existing course outcomes.

A skeleton of the kind of framework I’m proposing already exists in tutor training courses. For example, before working at the Center for Writing Across the Curriculum (CWAC) at Saint Mary’s College of California, students enrolled in the adviser training course are required to both observe and practice live advising in the center for a set number of hours throughout the semester. Paired with this experiential training are reflections on advising sessions and interactive presentations to other advisers about key concepts students have learned in class and in sessions. These assignments synthesize the work advisers in training do with students, the theory they read in class, and their personal reflections on these experiences and translate them into training for their peers. In so doing, the structure of the course explicitly brings their identities as students, writers, and advisers into constant conversation.

The benefits of integrating tutoring pedagogy and practice into TA education are numerous. First, by utilizing writing center tutoring pedagogy as a tool to deliver course content, the TA resistance to composition theory so widely discussed in our literature might be mitigated. As Kali Mobley Finn suggests later in this volume, the dissonances that TAs encounter and the “resistance” that they demonstrate are a product of failing to make connections between and transfer among their multiple sets of knowledge and experiences. By practicing tutoring pedagogy, TAs take up the composition theory in daily practice rather than only through articles and seminar-style discussion as they might be in other graduate courses. In repeated one-to-one sessions with their classmates and reflections on those sessions, students embody effective strategies as responders and collaborators rather than encountering theory about those topics purely academically. As Jennifer Grouling observes, “we expect GTAs to engage with composition theory as teachers, but they may only know how to connect to it as graduate students” (para. 9), which is why utilizing enacted practice of pedagogy rather than using only theoretical texts to teach concepts might help students more easily negotiate the disconnect they sense between their student and teacher selves.

Second, extended practice using writing center tutoring pedagogy within the TA practicum course works to establish TA identity as that of an authentic partner in inquiry with their fellow TAs and with the first-year students they teach. Reid et al. assert that “if we want TAs to solve teaching problems in part by reflecting on and critically applying concepts from composition research and scholarship, they need practice in becoming those reflective, critical practitioners” (60). Therefore, if we want TAs to be able to develop an authentic sense of self that connect the multiple positions they occupy, they need continued practice doing that identity work. Writing center pedagogy built into the practicum is that practice. Because tutoring encourages—in fact it requires—the tutor to draw on all of their overlapping identities rather than privileging the assumed

position of writing expert, tutoring experience allows TAs to develop an understanding of their liminal, often confusing positions of teacher and student that puts them in conversation rather than in opposition. In other words, tutoring experience gives TAs practice being their most authentic selves in interactions with students, a way of being that encourages both positive emotional and professional experiences as teachers.

THE GIFT OF AUTHENTICITY

I have attempted to show here that authenticity is a source of authority, one that's different from but far more accessible than the dictionary definition of the word, the "power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior" (Merriam-Webster). Rather than understanding authority as a quality derived from my title, the clothes I wear to class, or the socially understood connotations about power surrounding the role of teacher, authority founded in authenticity draws on the trust that grows from real relationships, the confidence that comes from being honest about my experiences, and the fulfillment that my deep pedagogical and personal values are enacted in my daily interactions with students. Being fully *with* my students in the classroom has done more for my sense of authority than any performance of role-derived power. This is a way of being I first had the opportunity to cultivate in the writing center—over hundreds of sessions with undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members—in which I learned not only about writing, and how to talk about it, but also how to be myself in those conversations. As Phillip Vannini explains, investing energy in the form of care for myself as an adviser at CWAC gave me the opportunity to experience authenticity, which encourages a feeling of self-efficacy: "caring about [one's] being-in-the-world brings not only validation via authenticity, but also the feeling that one's self is meaningful and real" (253). In short, my writing advising work gave me continued practice in relating my roles as student, writer, and writing adviser and assessing how my simultaneous enactment of those roles aligned with my sense of self. By the time I arrived at the classroom, I was well prepared to view my teaching work in a similarly integrated way.

As we have long discussed in our literature, the education of graduate TAs is no easy feat. While a central function of that training is providing a theoretical foundation in composition and pedagogical training for the classroom, it seems clear that these goals are actually part of a bigger task that those who educate new TAs must confront: to help TAs cultivate an authentic sense of identity as a student/teacher/scholar. As the epigraph of this chapter asserts, "though we [in teacher education] certainly need to help new teachers make sense of their classrooms, we need to spend at least as much time helping them make sense of themselves" (Tobin

79). TAs desperately need guidance through the “murky, stressful, overwhelming, exasperating, challenging, exciting, hopeful, and full of potential” in-between the positions they occupy (Nicolas 1). As the place where these positions encounter each other most, TA education must be re-theorized to provide that guidance. By incorporating writing center tutoring pedagogy—which engages both tutor and tutee in authentic, collaborative learning—into models of TA education like the practicum course, those who teach new TAs can begin to guide them anew toward the building of authentic identities and developing senses of authority more genuine than that which comes from putting on a professional outfit and taking up the “role” of teacher. As Dawn Skorczewski tells us:

Students, like their teachers, want to be authentic participants in the educational process. And like their teachers, they fail at this all the time. A teacher who is herself in the classroom offers the gift of authenticity to her students. . . . Students want honesty, although they may resist it, and they want permission to be themselves. . . . Seen in this way, teaching is not like building a model airplane, getting the right part in the right order. It is dealing with real people rather than the roles to which they are assigned, and reaching inside to figure out what feels right about that. (110)

When TAs can see their teaching work as integral to their studies as graduate students and also their work as apprentices of their disciplines, Skorczewski’s argument suggests, that work is humanized. Rather than an obscure process TAs must confront mechanically, teaching can be an authentic daily practice about relationships, about building on past experiences and sets of knowledge, about vulnerability. Re-theorizing TA education and, more broadly, the TAs hip as a whole to be the site of identity work, one that prepares graduate students to negotiate their dynamic, complicated, authentic identities in and beyond the academy, seems a wise and necessary step for the field of rhetoric and composition. Our field does not need nor want model airplane builders. It needs teacher/student/scholars empowered by the “permission to be themselves” (Skorczewski 110).

WORKS CITED

- Adams, Ronald, et al. “Training Teachers for the Writing Lab: A Multidimensional Perspective.” *The Writing Center Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1987, pp. 3-19.
- Akoury, Paul N. *Teacher Authenticity: A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation*, Ph.D. diss, Boston College, 2013. <http://unr.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.unr.idm.oclc.org/docview/1336000525?accountid=452>.

- “Authority.” Merriam-Webster.com, Accessed August 16, 2017, <https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/authority>.
- Brobbel, Amanda, et al. “GAT Training in Collaborative Teaching at the University of Arizona.” *The Writing Program Administrator’s Resource: A Guide to Reflective Institutional Practice*, edited by Stuart C. Brown and Theresa Enos, Lawrence Earlbaum Associates, 2002, pp. 411-428.
- Calderwood, Patricia E. and Kathleen M. D’Amico. “Balancing Acts: Negotiating Authenticity and Authority in Shared Reflection.” *Studying Teacher Education: Journal of Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2008, pp. 47-59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17425960801976347>.
- Clark, Irene Lurkis. “Preparing Future Composition Teachers in the Writing Center.” *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 39, no. 3, 1988, pp. 47-50.
- Corbett, Stephen J. *Beyond Dichotomy: Synergizing Writing Center and Classroom Pedagogies*, The WAC Clearinghouse/Parlor Press, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2015.0599>.
- Coulbrooke, Star. “When the Teacher is also the Tutor.” *Writing Lab Newsletter*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1999, pp. 10.
- Cranton, Patricia and Ellen Carusetta. “Perspectives on Authenticity in Teaching.” *Adult Education Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2004, pp. 5-22, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713604268894>.
- Curzan, Anne and Lisa Damour. *First Day to Final Grade: A Graduate Student’s Guide to Teaching*. 3rd ed., University of Michigan Press, 2011.
- “Diary of a New TA.” *Arizona State University*, 2016, <https://diaryofanewta.asu.edu/>.
- Dryer, Dylan B. “At a Mirror, Darkly: The Imagined Undergraduate Writers of Ten Novice Composition Instructors.” *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2012, pp. 420-452.
- Estrem, Heidi, and E. Shelley Reid. “What New Writing Teachers Talk About When They Talk About Teaching.” *Pedagogy*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2012, pp. 447-478.
- Glenn, Cheryl and Melissa A. Goldthwaite, editors. *The St. Martin’s Guide to Teaching Writing*. 7th ed., Bedford/St. Martins, 2014.
- Grouling, Jennifer. “Resistance and Identity Formation: The Journey of the Graduate Student-Teacher.” *Composition Forum*, vol. 32, 2015.
- Grutsch McKinney, Jackie, and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. “Inventing a Teacherly Self: Positioning Journals in the GTA Seminar.” *WPA: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators*, vol. 27, no. 1-2, 2003, pp. 59-74.
- Hubbuck, Susan M. *Writing Research Papers Across the Curriculum*, 5th ed., Wadsworth, 2005.
- Ianetta, Melissa, et al. “Taking Stock: Surveying The Relationship Of The Writing Center And TA Training.” *WPA: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators*, vol. 31, no. 1-2, 2007, pp. 104-123.
- Inoue, Asao. *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future*, Anderson: Parlor Press, 2015.
- Jones, S. R. et al. “(Re-) Framing Authenticity: Considering Multiple Social Identities Using Autoethnographic and Intersectional Approaches.” *The Journal*

- of Higher Education*, vol. 83, no. 5, 2012, pp. 698-724, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2012.0029>.
- King, Lynnea Chapman, et al. “Writing Center Theory and Practice: Pedagogical implications for teacher training.” *Writing Lab Newsletter*, vol. 21, no. 8, 1997, pp. 1.
- Lunsford, Andrea. “Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center.” *The Writing Center Journal*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1991, pp. 3-10.
- Morgan, Meg. “The GTA Experience: Grounding, Practicing, Evaluating, and Reflecting.” *The Writing Program Administrator’s Resource: A Guide to Reflective Institutional Practice*, edited by Stuart C. Brown and Theresa Enos, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002, pp. 393-409.
- Nicolas, Melissa. “(E)Merging Identities: Authority, Identity, and the Place(s) In-Between.” *(E)Merging Identities: Graduate Students in the Writing Center*, edited by Melissa Nicolas, Fountainhead Press, 2008, pp. 1-8.
- . “Writing Centers As Training Wheels: What Message Are We Sending Our Students?” *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2005, pp. 15-18.
- North, Stephen M. “The Idea of a Writing Center.” *College English*, vol. 46, no. 5, 1984, pp. 433-446.
- Oral, Sevket B. “The Teacher’s World: Heideggerian Authenticity and Existential Thinking in Initial Teacher Education.” *Interchange*, vol. 44, no. 3-4, 2013, pp. 219-239.
- Raines, Helon Howell. “Tutoring and Teaching: Continuum, Dichotomy, or Dialectic?” *The Writing Center Journal*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1994, pp. 150-162. www.jstor.org/stable/43441952.
- Recchio, Thomas E. “Parallel Academic Lives: Affinities of Teaching Assistants and Freshman Writers.” *WPA: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1992, pp. 57-61.
- Reid, E. Shelley and Heidi Estrem, with Marcia Belcheir. “The Effects of Writing Pedagogy Education on Graduate Teaching Assistants’ Approaches to Teaching Composition.” *WPA: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 32-73.
- Reid, E. Shelley. “What is TA Education?” *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators*, edited by Rita Malenczyk, Anderson, Parlor Press, 2013, pp. 197-210.
- Reid, E. Shelley. “On Learning to Teach: Letter to a New TA.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp. 129-145.
- Rousculp, Tiffany. *Rhetoric of Respect: Recognizing Change at a Community Writing Center*, Conference on College Composition and Communication/National Council of Teachers of English, 2014.
- Saur, Elizabeth and Jason Palmeri. “Letter to a New TA: Affect Addendum.” *Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp. 146-153.
- Skorczewski, Dawn. “From Playing the Role to Being Yourself: Becoming the Teacher in the Writing Classroom.” *Teaching Composition: Background Readings*. 3rd ed., edited by T.R. Johnson, Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2008, pp. 99-116.
- Sommers, Nancy. *Responding to Student Writers*. Bedford/St. Martins, 2013.
- “Tips for the Beginning Teacher.” *Northern Michigan University*, 2017, <https://www.nmu.edu/education/tips-beginning-teacher>.

- Tobin, Lad. "Teaching against the Pedagogy: Reading Our Classrooms, Reading Ourselves." *Reader*, vol. 33-34, 1995, pp. 66-84.
- Trimbur, John. "Peer Tutoring: A Contradiction in Terms?" *The Writing Center Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1987, pp. 21-28. www.jstor.org/stable/43441837.
- Van Dyke, Christina. "From Tutor to TA: Transferring Pedagogy from the Writing Center to the Composition Classroom." *Writing Lab Newsletter*, vol. 21, no. 8, 1997, p. 1.
- Vannini, Phillip. "Dead Poets' Society: Teaching, Publish-or-Perish, and Professors' Experiences of Authenticity." *Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2006, pp. 235-257. www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/si.2006.29.2.235.

NARRATIVE 2.

LOCATING SOUND WHILE LEARNING HOW TO TEACH

Janelle Chu Capwell

University of Arizona

On a night before my teaching debut, I remember getting up from a chair in an empty classroom and grabbing my phone from my back pocket. I placed it on a desk, all desks in this room were fashioned into one piece and adorned with wheels. I tapped open my phone and played a song—a lyrical melody that I was familiar with that calmed my anxiety. I placed the phone on the desk, closed my eyes, and swung the desk to an unknown corner of the room. Then I took a few steps around—eyes still closed—and I tried to locate the melody lazily crooning through my phone. I had to try to hear it, to locate the sound. I identify as Hard of Hearing and was born with primarily unilateral profound hearing loss, rendering it most difficult for me to pinpoint individual sounds.

In Fall 2019, I earned the opportunity to start my instructional journey in a first-year composition course. I was fat, a person of color, Hard of Hearing, and disabled—I felt like all the odds were stacked against me. During the interview process, I ran through every question the interviewers could possibly ask while asking myself how I could be myself without being myself. After the joy of being accepted into the program, I told my Disability Student Services coordinator that I did not want accommodations as an instructor. I typically use Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) in my own courses as a graduate student, but I did not want to be faced with ableism, discrimination, or even judgement in my role as an instructor. I had never seen an instructor use visually recognizable accommodations before, and my internalized ableism at the time did not want myself to be the first.

Now looking back on that semester, I witnessed so much growth in my students, as well as myself. I walked through the door on that first day of instruction reciting how I was going to tell them about my hearing disability, or how classroom discussion might look a little bit different with the use of exaggerated visual cues, and how I might not be able to pinpoint the direction of voices. I cried almost every day for the first few weeks, especially after a lively classroom discussion—but for more complex reasons than I probably understood at the time.

On the first day I went over the syllabus, but I also went over my lived experience. I openly and vulnerably explained to my students how I navigate my disabled identity and how this would sometimes affect them. Together we encouraged visual cues during class discussion and students were forgiving when I was not too sure who was speaking or where they were speaking from. Together, we read and discussed identities far beyond our own and they got a glimpse of my own lived experience.

Throughout the course, students chose their own topics to write about. Many of these students chose to write about disability focused readings and videos I had slowly and carefully incorporated into the curriculum. Students wrote passionately about disabilities, both those that were more apparent and less apparent, they read articles and research on how to better serve their disabled peers. Some of these students mentioned that they had never read, learned, or considered disability experiences prior to this course. Even though I continue to take small steps in my own learning and research about my disabled experience and that of others, I am hopeful about the future.

CHAPTER 3.

ADAPTING, NOT RESISTING: A
PRELIMINARY UNDERSTANDING
OF TAs' RELATIONSHIPS WITH
WRITING PEDAGOGY EDUCATION

Kali A. Mobley Finn

Independent Scholar

In composition scholarship about writing pedagogy education (WPE), the term “resistant” has been applied to TAs when they are not conforming to the standards or teachings of a given teacher, department, or institution.¹ This term implies active agency in deciding to rebuke the task or diverge from the curriculum, and it actively hinders mentorship and professionalization. For example, I assume I was once labeled as “resistant” when I began my doctoral program at a public R1 university. Prior to a required pre-service orientation, I was asked to submit a syllabus and assignment sheets to the composition office, and even though they provided standardized instructional materials, I thought it’d be best to design something I was more confident in delivering. I wanted the familiar. While the award-winning first-year composition (FYC) program was grounded in rhetoric and transfer theories, I didn’t understand what “*stasis*” or “transfer” meant or how to teach these concepts—even after a grueling three-day pre-service orientation program.² I arrived to this program without any formal WPE from my MLA program. In my MLA program, I was not required to take any pedagogy courses or participate in a practicum, as is more typical of MA programs that provide TAs. Before starting to teach a 2-2 load, I attended a one-day workshop that focused on curriculum values (WAC), teacher *ethos*, syllabi development, and grading practices. And yet—as I was asked to come into the

1 See Bishop 1990, 1997; Welch 1993; Rankin 1994; Powell et al. 2002; Farris 2002; Ebest 2005; Reid 2009; Reid, Estrem & Belcheir 2012.

2 At my R1 institution, first-year Ph.D. and MA students were required to attend a 3-day pre-service orientation. The orientation was comprised of workshops, lectures, and guest speakers. In workshops, attendees practiced effective grading strategies, mapping issues in a debate (*stasis*), and identifying Aristotelian appeals, to name a few. Orientation was designed to be a quick-and-dirty introduction to the writing program’s values and focused on what to expect when teaching the first composition course of a two-course sequence.

office to discuss necessary revisions to my materials—I was confused and angry because what I had submitted was a design encouraged by my previous institutions, which were based in WAC curricula. I was resistant; I was like “Barbara” in Sally Barr Ebest’s *Changing the Way We Teach Writing and Resistance in the Training of Teaching Assistants*.

At the 2017 CWPA conference, the term “resistant” was used to describe TAs such as myself and theorize approaches to WPE. As I listened, I began to wonder how that particular term limits not only our engagement with TAs, but also our understanding of their learning processes. To what extent does the term affect the relationship between a TA and a writing program administrator (WPA)? To what extent does this term obfuscate a TA’s learning process of a new concept or curriculum? And while there’s scholarship about new TAs who are MAs or MFAs, research into the development of experienced TAs is limited. E. Shelly Reid et al. examined new TAs’ learning from the first year to the third year, and their findings yielded that “regular, formal, directed pedagogy education *must* continue beyond the first year if we hope to have any substantial, lasting effect on how TAs teach and think about teaching writing” (61). Yet, due to labor constraints, it is difficult for WPAs to provide ongoing WPE. As a response, compositionists have encouraged WPAs to consider *who* TAs are, such as their prior experiences, and to recalibrate WPE by considering TAs’ prior experiences (Weiser; Bishop, *Something Old*; Bishop, *Teaching Lives*; Welch; Neeley; Farris; Yancey; Stenberg). In addition to learning who TAs are, scholars and WPAs alike also need to consider TAs’ learning processes, particularly how their prior knowledge and experiences inform their pedagogical identities, practices, and values. With such considerations, WPE can be recalibrated to encourage generative discussions about writing program goals, teaching values, and appropriate practices.

Investigations into TAs’ learning and implementation of pedagogy are burgeoning, but there is more to understand. One scholar, Dana Driscoll, examined the extent to which TAs understood curricula values (transfer theory) and implemented such values in their pedagogical practices. TAs’ comprehension of transfer, whether it required explicit instruction or occurred naturally or passively, informed how they taught for transfer, which she termed as either connected or non-connected pedagogies. Driscoll concluded that WPE should consider these two types of pedagogies as well as who TAs are. While Driscoll examined how TAs’ beliefs impacted their pedagogies, Donna Qualley examined MA-level TAs’ learning as they critically transitioned into FYC instructors. She constructed a conceptual map of these transitions from *The Elon Statement*. This map begins the exploration of TAs’ learning, particularly how they negotiate their prior knowledge and experiences, how they maintain or cross boundaries, and how they use pedagogical affordances—e.g., standardized syllabus—and curricular

interventions—e.g., textbooks and sample assignments. Both Driscoll and Qualey have opened pathways to exploring TAs' learning processes, particularly how they transfer their learning into their pedagogies, but further examination is needed. How do TAs transfer WPE into their pedagogical practices? How do they negotiate their prior experiences and knowledge for a new teaching context?

To answer these questions, I propose that we inquire into the *who* and the *how* of TA learning, specifically focusing on experienced, Ph.D.-level TAs who have prior pedagogical knowledge, values, and practices. Who are these TAs? How might their prior WPE and academic writing experiences affect their learning of a new institution's FYC curriculum? And how might that learning manifest in their instructional materials and pedagogical practices? In this chapter, I present preliminary findings from a qualitative study about first-year Ph.D. graduate teaching associates (TAs) in the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's (UTK) English department. The purpose of this study is to examine how experienced, first-year Ph.D. TAs negotiate prior and current WPE and to investigate how that learning transfers into, or manifests in, their instructional materials and pedagogical practices. With this examination, WPAs could have a better understanding of TAs' learning processes to better inform a recalibration of WPE and pedagogical affordances. With such insight, TAs and WPAs could engage in active, generative dialogues about learning and teaching that would ensure the implementation of FYC curricula, thus decreasing the assumption and ascription of TA resistance.

DEFINING TRANSFER

In composition studies, transfer theory has been the lens through which compositionists understand the cognitive processing of writing knowledge. Scholarship has focused on undergraduate writers' experiences with writing in composition courses to that of writing in workplace or another discipline (McCarthy; Bergmann and Zepernick; Beaufort; Nelms and Dively; Wardle). Other scholarship has examined undergraduate writers' perceptions of learning writing and repurposing that knowledge for different activity systems or genres (Beach; Rounsaville et al.; Reiff and Bawarshi). With each new examination, transfer theory has evolved from Perkins and Salomon's initial theory about "high road" and "low road" transfer.³ While these concepts are still employed in current research, Perkins and Salomon's theory of transfer has evolved and has been recontextualized.

3 Low-road transfer "reflects the automatic triggering of well-practiced routines in circumstances where there is considerable perceptual similarity to the original learning context" (Perkins and Salomon 25). High-road transfer "depends on deliberate mindful abstraction of skill or knowledge from one context for application in another" (Perkins and Salomon 25).

Transfer theory has been reconceptualized to capture the dynamic learning and transferring processes that extend Perkins and Salomon's initial understanding of high road transfer as being either "forward-reaching" or "backward-reaching."⁴ For contemporary transfer theory scholars, transfer is a process of reshaping or repurposing writing knowledge. For example, Nowacek examines how writers recontextualize or integrate writing knowledge, thus citing the importance of metacognition for writing transfer. DePalma and Ringer suggest that writers—consciously or not—reuse or adapt prior knowledge as they "traverse rhetorical situations" (466). This reuse or adaptation can be a means for writers to make sense of a new, unfamiliar context. Yancey et al. found that student writers have three approaches to using prior knowledge in new writing contexts: "assemblage," "remix," and "critical incident" (5). For "assemblage," writers patchwork their prior knowledge with limited connections to their current learning, which leads to unsuccessful transfer of writing, whereas writers who "remix" adapt their prior knowledge with current learning to transfer writing successfully. Lastly, "critical incident" refers to when writers critically assess and learn from the failed or negative transfer (Yancey et al. 5). These three extensions to Perkins and Salomon's conception of transfer theory have informed how compositionists teach writing and understand student writers' cognitive processing for high road transfer.

While much of transfer theory scholarship has been about undergraduate writers' experiences and perceptions, the direct application of transfer theory to writing pedagogy education is just beginning. However, one could argue that transfer theory has existed in WPE scholarship without direct mentioning of the theory. For example, Robert Parker argues that there should be "compatible connections" (412-413) to bridge prior experiences and knowledges to new contexts. These connections are made possible in a reflective, recursive process, which he diagrams as:

Experience ↔ theory ↔ THEORY (Parker 413)⁵

In a pedagogy course, a student would connect prior teaching experiences (theory) with the formal THEORY presented in, say, a textbook or peer-reviewed journal, and these connections would then "transform" the student's pedagogical practices (Parker 416-417). For transformation to occur, THEORY

4 Perkins and Salomon extend their definition of high road by describing the modes of abstraction. "Forward reaching" transfer occurs when one uses current learned skills for future application, while "backward reaching" transfer is recalling prior learned knowledge for the current context (26).

5 Parker defines "theory" as "personal, concrete, context-bound, psychological," whereas "THEORY" is defined as "impersonal, abstract, context-free, logical" (413).

needs to take root within the student, and if development is external, then, such changes, if any, would be “merely adjustments” (Parker 417).

Driscoll directly employs transfer theory as a theoretical lens in her study about how experienced, Ph.D.-level TAs teach for transfer. Similar to Parker’s argument, Driscoll concluded that TAs benefited from connected pedagogies, i.e., direct, explicit connections between experiences and pedagogical theory to inform teaching practices. Qualley, too, found that TAs needed both explicit connections and the ability to articulate their learning and experiences. Additionally, TAs would need to experience either a conceptual break or a reframing of prior experiences to transform their pedagogical practices. While transfer theory is being applied to WPE scholarship, more research is needed to understand TAs’ learning processes, particularly how experienced TAs navigate different teaching contexts and transfer their learning into their pedagogical practices.

In this chapter, I employ DePalma and Ringer’s adaptive transfer. Their conceptual model provides the flexibility and opportunity for teacher research that other terms have yet to allow for. It is with this framework that I will analyze the complex relationship between TAs’ WPE experiences and pedagogies. Specifically, I will analyze the degrees to which pedagogical affordances (e.g., instructional materials, standard syllabi, etc.) are adapted into TAs’ pedagogical practices. To measure this adaptation (or lack thereof), I apply Pamela Grossman, Peter Smagorinsky, and Sheila Valencia’s “five degrees of appropriation” continuum. This measurement assesses the extent to which teachers reuse or adapt “pedagogical tools available for use in particular social environments” (15). By using this continuum, I will be able to identify the extent to which TAs are adapting, reusing, or resisting WPE and prior experiences into their pedagogical practices. The degree to which TAs appropriate WPE and prior experiences could inform WPAs’ understandings of TAs’ attitudes towards WPE, such as resistance, as well as how they develop their pedagogies. With this information, WPAs could recalibrate WPE to meet TAs’ learning needs by addressing their particular knowledges, experiences, and values in context of the writing program’s expectations and values.

A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF WRITING PEDAGOGY EDUCATION: RESISTANT TO THEORY OR STRUGGLING TO TRANSFER?

While compositionists have come to agree that WPE should be balanced in theoretical coverage and practical application, the debates leading to this conclusion were foundational for understanding TAs’ pedagogical practices and theorizing WPE initiatives. Such debates led to empirical studies about the effectiveness of formal WPE (see Dobrin). Studies have examined TAs’ struggle to “reinvent the

university” (Bartholomae) for themselves as students and teachers as well. Findings revealed that TAs’ experience dissonances when negotiating learning from formal WPE, teaching FYC courses, and taking graduate coursework.⁶ When TAs struggle to negotiate these dissonances, they are deemed resistant, a term that obscures learning as a process. In what follows, I’ll examine how literature about WPE frames TAs’ experiences as resistance to ideology, theory, and unfamiliarity.

In the early 1990s, scholars began identifying approaches to WPE that aimed to convert TAs to the best practices and ideology of the program in which they were being prepared to teach; these conversion experiences led to what scholars deemed as TAs’ resistance to ideology. For example, Wendy Bishop’s 1990 study found that TAs’ identities were altered based on preconceptions about teaching, prior teaching experiences, and the pedagogy course. Three TAs, in particular, were more resistant to the pedagogy recommended in the pedagogy course, whereas the other two TAs converted their pedagogies to fit the model. The three TAs who resisted shared similar experiences to what Nancy Welch describes. She recalls her experiences at University A and University B. At University B, her prior knowledge had become taboo, and she was struggling to convert to the language of the new program, whereas University A embodied Bishop’s 1990 “convergent” model, i.e., it brought conflicting ideologies together to inform pedagogical practices (Welch). Through conversion, Welch experiences a loss of identity or “personal history,” which led to feelings of resistance (395). This conversion approach to WPE is problematic because it presumes that TAs are “blank slates,” (Neeley; Reid, “Uncoverage”; Stenberg) who can be indoctrinated into the “theorizing professor” (Neeley). However, as case studies about conversion models point out, such models neither uproot nor connect compatibly to TAs’ lore or experiences (Parker; North; Bishop, *Something Old*; Welch; Neeley). With the emphasis on conversion, TAs’ experiences may appear resistant, but there is a disconnect between what TAs hold for their own pedagogical values and those values of the writing program.

TAs not only feel disconnected from writing program’s ideologies, but their relationships with those ideologies also affect their own identities. In teaching, TAs encounter uncertainty in their relationships with students, particularly in managing authority as a teacher (Rankin; Bly). TAs construct their concept of “teacher” based on their prior experiences with studenthood and family. When those tacit theories conflict with either a writing program’s ideology or scholarship encountered in graduate coursework, TAs develop their teaching personae based on *strategies for survival*, which stem from what they know and/

6 See Weiser; Bishop, *Something Old*; Bishop, *Teaching Lives*; Welch; Rankin; Neeley; Ebest; Reid, “Teaching;”; Dryer; and Restaino.

or previously experienced. By turning to survival tools, TAs are perceived as rejecting theory (Rankin; Bishop; Neeley) because they are likely to criticize the textbook or express dissatisfaction with the writing program due to the confusion from the dissonance (Rankin). Neeley describes the conflict as stepping into “someone else’s theory and pedagogy” (20) instead of developing an individualized teacher identity. This criticism and dissatisfaction are TAs’ projections because, in general, they were not resistant to theory itself, as they were “theorizing constantly” (Rankin 45). Rankin suggests developing TAs’ academic discourse and reflective practices, which will facilitate their ability to identify dissonances and make meaning of the conflict.

Restaino, on the other hand, problematizes the structure of WPE for promoting TAs’ survival strategies. She contends that TAs are forced into teaching prematurely, and with the quick transition from WPE to teaching, she found that TAs uncritically rely upon standardized teaching materials. This reliance leads to a thoughtless, endless cycle of TAs laboring to survive teaching. Restaino recommends a delayed introduction of TAs to teaching and support for them to develop a “fuller picture” (112) of the field as well as a space to experiment and augment theory and practice. However, Grouling believes that TAs’ reliance on studenthood inhibits their ability to transcend their identities from student to teacher. These recommendations, however, are not exploring how TAs are learning theory and how that learning process is intimately connected to their personal constructs of identity. If WPE were to connect to the constructs in which TAs hold familiar, then would TAs be able to transfer pedagogical theories into practice? Would they be able to be seen as students who are learning instead of teachers who are resisting? And then, could these approaches foster mentorship between WPAs and TAs?

For transfer of learning to occur, TAs need to be able to connect the familiar with the unfamiliar. When it comes to pedagogical theory, Ebest argues that TAs “find themselves on unfamiliar ground” because some TAs “are generally unaware of how they were taught” (43). Additionally, they may lack experience in taking a FYC course, as they tested out of it during their undergraduate education (Ebest; Reid “Teaching”). However, Dryer’s study found that those who had taken FYC courses felt neither more familiar with nor more confident in the course than those who had not taken it. In both situations, conflict arises from this dissonance of learning pedagogical theory and failing to connect that theory with prior experiences. Because TAs rely on personal experiences and lore to inform their pedagogical practices, they are more likely to encounter dissonance when the new information or practices contradict their prior experiences (Reid et al). These moments of dissonance significantly impact TAs’ reception of composition theory and their attitudes toward teaching FYC (Ebest;

Reid, “Teaching”; Dryer). Scholars recommend writing assignments that are challenging and reflective (Farris; Ebest; Reid; Dryer). This tactic to use writing, which is a presumed strength of graduate students, serves as a space to develop TAs’ self-efficacy, explore connections between pedagogical practices and composition theory, and develop empathy towards undergraduate student writers. These approaches to WPE aim to develop TAs as learners of the field who are conscientious and reflective (Ebest; Reid, “Teaching”; Dryer; Estrem and Reid).

TAs are students, first and foremost, and their responses to dissonance fall on a messy continuum of learning. Perceived resistance “may be more inertial than consciously directed” (Reid et al.). Formal WPE should connect directly to TAs’ prior experiences in order to take root and thus, in Parker’s terms, internally transform their pedagogical practices. While knowledge from formal WPE holds a “limited and sometimes peripheral position in [TAs’] daily thoughts and practices” (Reid et al. 48-49), WPAs should consider TAs’ prior experiences and knowledges. Their tacit experiences can neither be removed nor replaced (Estrem et al.), but they can be adapted if they are connected explicitly to prior experiences and knowledge (Driscoll). As Christine Farris points out, these moments of deviation or resistance “can be the impetus” for critical discussions and reflection about pedagogical practices between WPAs and TAs. For WPE to be connected to TAs’ pedagogies, compositionists need to continue exploring *who* TAs are, what their teaching experiences and theoretical ideologies are, and assessing the effectiveness of WPE (Yancey; Powell et al.; Stenberg). At the moment, WPE mostly occurs in either the first year of graduate school—typically at the MA-level—or pre-service orientations. While scholars have called for ongoing WPE (Stenberg; Restaino), research into what TAs retain from WPE and thus transfer into pedagogical practices is an area in need of further examination.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

At UTK, I conducted a qualitative study throughout the Fall 2017 term. My data collection consisted of three semi-structured interviews, two classroom observations, and collection of instructional materials, such as syllabi, assignment sheets, lesson plans, etc. The first interview was conducted within 2-3 weeks of the department’s three-day orientation program. The second interview occurred within 1-2 weeks after the first classroom observation, which took place during the third unit (a position paper for an academic audience). The second observation occurred within the fourth unit (a position paper for a public audience), which was approximately 1-2 weeks after the second interview, and then the final interview took place within 1-2 weeks after final exams. At the end of

the study, I requested participants' instructional materials, and they emailed archives of their syllabi, assignment sheets, and course calendars. From these data sources, I present data of TAs' experiences, specifically what they retained from their prior experiences and how they reused or adapted UTK's WPE into their pedagogical practices.

The UTK English department typically accepts approximately ten Ph.D. students in concentrations of English literature, creative writing, and rhetoric, writing and linguistics. For the 2016-2017 academic year, there were nine incoming Ph.D. students, and eight of which consented to participating in the study. Each participant received a gift card after each interview and had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants also either selected or were designated a pseudonym to protect their identities. Throughout the study, I served as the assistant director of composition, and the year prior to this position, I was one participant's mentor.⁷ To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, I neither evaluated nor mentored participants throughout this study. Moreover, I participated in bracketing interviews⁸ to check bias and kept detailed accounts of procedures, interactions, and reflections in a research journal. I also asked participants to verify narratives and reports from data analysis to ensure I accurately captured their experiences.

For this study, there were eight participants, four males and four females. The male participants go by the following pseudonyms: Cornelius, Joseph, Mike, and Spencer. All male participants were Caucasian, and ages ranged from 24-40. Cornelius, Joseph, and Mike were Ph.D. students in the English literature concentration, whereas Spencer was a Ph.D. student in the creative writing concentration. For the four females, they went by the following pseudonyms: Ava, Clara, Liz, and Mandy. All four female students were Caucasian, and ages ranged from 25-45. Clara and Mandy were Ph.D. students in the English literature concentration, whereas Ava was a Ph.D. student in the creative writing concentration. Liz was the only Ph.D. student in the first-year cohort who was in the rhetoric, writing and linguistics concentration.

As for data analysis, I used an existing coding scheme from Grossman et al. They developed "five degrees of appropriation" to measure how the participants reused or adapted "pedagogical tools available for use in particular social environments" (Grossman et al.). In what follows, Grossman et al. define their five-degree continuum:

7 I mentored Spencer in teaching the second course in the FYC sequence.

8 Bracketing interviews are common practices in phenomenological research. This process allows the researcher to "usually explore their own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of their own prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions" (Merriam 94).

- *Lack of Appropriation*: Learners may or may not appropriate pedagogical practices or theories due to the complexity, conflict, or foreignness of a concept, or they may altogether dismiss a concept (16).
- *Appropriating a Label*: Learners know the name of pedagogical practices or theories “but knows none of its features” (17).
- *Appropriating Surface Features*: Learners know parts of pedagogical practices or theories but not “how those features contribute to the conceptual whole” (17).
- *Appropriating Conceptual Underpinnings*: Learners understand the conceptual underpinnings of pedagogical practices and theories, and they are able to adapt this knowledge to new contexts (17).
- *Achieving Mastery*: Learners have appropriated and applied conceptual underpinnings and pedagogical tools to classroom procedures (18).⁹

This schematic allows for researchers to identify appropriation or adaption processes on a learning spectrum. With it, I identified the extent to which TAs were adapting prior and current WPE experiences into their pedagogical practices. For the purposes of this chapter, I analyzed the first interview protocol to identify participants’ prior experiences in writing, teaching, and WPE as well as to examine the extent of their recollection and immediate implementation of UTK’s WPE.

WHO ARE TAs, AND WHAT ARE THEIR PRIOR EXPERIENCES?

TAs have mostly been framed as graduate students who teach FYC classes and more than likely have never taken the course as undergraduates (Weiser; Fischer; Ebest; Reid 2009). As for my participants, that scenario was true for one, Ava, who tested out of the FYC courses and enrolled into 200-level English course. As for the other seven participants, they took at least one FYC course in their undergraduate education. Mandy and Mike tested out of the first FYC course and were enrolled into the second course, and Spencer was enrolled into honors composition. Joseph’s community college only offered one course, which emphasized writing as a process, and Cornelius, too, took a “one-shot” FYC course that was informed by expressivist pedagogy. Liz took both FYC courses and recalled that they emphasized literature. Like Joseph, Clara attended a community college, but her FYC experiences were different. She reported taking basic writing and FYC courses; she also reported struggling in these classes due

⁹ This definition slightly deviates from the original authors’ definitions because their participants had not begun teaching whereas my participants were teaching. For this classification, I looked for the flexibility and multivariate appropriation of theory and praxis.

to unclear expectations and conflicting feedback. In fact, Clara had to retake her FYC course, and from these experiences, she reported feeling “confused” about what constituted good writing. Based on these reports, most participants were familiar with FYC courses from their undergraduate studies.

While most participants had prior experience in taking first-year composition, seven out of eight participants had at least two years of teaching experience before entering UTK’s Ph.D. program. Ava, Clara, Cornelius, Joseph, Mandy, and Mike taught either two-sequenced FYC courses, 200-level courses, or remedial writing courses for two years. In addition to teaching their own classes, Ava and Mandy had co-taught sections with a peer, and Mike taught reading and study skills. Liz, on the other hand, was the most experienced teacher, as she had taught college-level courses for thirteen-and-a-half years. She taught basic writing courses as well as FYC courses. In addition to college-level writing, she taught secondary education for approximately three years. The one TA who had less than two years of teaching experience was Spencer, who taught one semester of fiction writing and a semester of the second FYC course. Based on these teaching experiences in conjunction with undergraduate writing classes, participants had an idea of what a FYC course entailed. These prior experiences informed participants’ vision of how writing classrooms functioned—such as encouraging writing processes—and this familiarity constructed a foundation of teaching practices that they found successful.

This foundation was informed further by their WPE from their respective master’s programs. Participants’ WPE backgrounds varied—ranging from no formal training to multiple pedagogy training courses—and while participants’ experiences overlapped in kinds of WPE they received, the overall structure of WPE was idiosyncratic and localized to the institutions that prepared them to teach FYC, which is common in TA preparation (Yancey ; Hardin; Guerra and Bawarshi). While Reid et al. posit that formal WPE holds a limited, peripheral space in TAs’ daily actions, participants were able to describe the kinds of preparation they received from previous institutions, particularly recalling practical experiences more than composition theory. For example, Spencer received his WPE from UTK, which spanned over two years. Prior to the start of term, he attended a three-day orientation, and, for the first year, he worked in the writing center and participated in a writing center training course. He also was a mentee for a year and had two experienced TAs as mentors (one mentor per semester). In the spring term of his first year, he took a pedagogy course, which incorporated theory and practical application to the curriculum. As part of the course, he developed and taught a miniature lesson, conducted action research, and composed FYC assignments. These practical experiences shaped his pedagogical practices, and he was able to reuse these lessons and assignments in his teaching.

Similar to Spencer's experience, Cornelius took a pedagogy course and claimed that the course was "a condensed version of the 1005/1006 course. [We turned] in all of the assignments ourselves, plus learn[ed] how to teach them." In addition to this course, he worked in the writing center for one term and "shadow[ed] professors, or basically mentors" throughout his first year. Joseph, too, worked in the writing center and took a writing center pedagogy course. He also took a pedagogy course as an undergraduate, titled "Teaching Writing for Credential Candidates." This course introduced him to writing theories but was meant for "improving [his] own writing than it was teaching [him] how to teach writing." As for formal WPE, Joseph claims, "I never had very formal, I would say none of them were incredibly formal, pedagogy-focused courses with the exception of maybe that class as an undergrad for the credential program." He did, however, participate in a weekly practicum throughout his first year of his MA program. In the practicum, he and peers discussed teaching, which is where he first saw how others taught the curriculum. Both Cornelius and Joseph recalled reusing practical activities that were provided via mentorship or the practicum in their pedagogical practices; and they found that these affordances helped them teach the course when they were new to teaching.

Ava's and Mandy's respective WPE consisted of a five-day orientation. After this training, they both participated in a weekly practicum, but the duration of their respective courses varied. Mandy's practicum extended into her second year, whereas Ava's was only a year long. Both participants reported that the subject matter of the training was practical and localized to their respective programs. For example, Mandy recalled composing FYC assignments prior to them being assigned in her classroom. While Mandy appreciated slow, methodical approach to her preparation, she criticized the course for being "a little bit repetitive." Ava's year-long practicum included microteaching lessons and peer observations. She noted that she reused lessons from the microteaching, and the observations helped her to develop a "teacher" persona. At first, she had an authoritarian approach to teaching, but after witnessing a peer's more relaxed approach, she realized that the authoritarian stance inhibited her ability to connect with students. She then adapted a more relaxed demeanor in her teaching. Unlike Mandy's practicum, Ava's included composition theory, but she noted that the theories were "all over the place" and often contradicted one another, which left her feeling confused about what to do with the theories. As for what informed Ava's and Mandy's pedagogies, they, too, relied on the practical tools provided from their practica.

Similar to Mandy's two-year course, Mike took a two-year practicum. This practicum was designed around the second-year MAs delivering presentations to the first-year MAs about teaching; Mike recalled, "Each week someone would

do a presentation on this subject, and then somebody would hand out a lesson plan that worked for them or an assignment sheet. Then, we just talked about those kind of things.” In addition to this weekly meeting, Mike took a modern theories course—which was his pedagogy course—the semester prior to teaching his first course. It consisted of “a lot of comp readings,” which he found to be “very helpful” for teaching. While he elected to take the pedagogy course, he did not state the extent to which the composition readings informed their pedagogies. For pedagogical development, he valued the sharing of instructional materials and observing peers’ microteaching.

Liz, with approximately seventeen years of teaching experience, had a diverse WPE background. She began learning about teaching via the National Writing Project, which carried over from secondary teaching to college instruction. In addition to her MFA, she had a master’s in education (M.Ed.). The coursework for that degree provided extensive, recursive training. Liz exclaimed, “I’ve got a lot of pedagogy just from training. Every year of teaching, there’s always training either in the summer before you start or you go to conference.” She recalled training in reading courses and learning disabilities as well as applying her MFA education to her teaching practices. She was the only participant who did not report experiencing WPE that consisted of pre-service orientation, pedagogy course, practicum, tutor training, or mentorship.

As for Clara, she remembered taking three writing pedagogy courses: digital pedagogies, teaching college composition, and I study of writing. The first course was based in digital pedagogy, whereas the second course introduced her to compositionists like Donald Murray. These courses were taken in her last semester of her MA program, which may have affected her perceived value in recalling and applying course content. She noted that she “just wanted to finish.” What she did recall were particular assignments, such as mapping digital literacies, or compositionists like Murray. As for I study of writing course, she stated, “I don’t remember a whole lot from that class. I will not lie. I don’t remember much at all.” Overall, Clara received a variety of formal WPE, but she did not perceive a need to recall the subject matter of these courses as they were taken toward the end of her MA program.

Contrary to Ebest’s findings, TAs remembered the kinds of preparation they received prior to attending UTK, but those recollections were—as Estrem et al. found—limited and peripheral. TAs mostly recalled practice-based experiences, such as microteaching and peer observations, as most valuable in their pedagogical development. Moreover, they reported reusing shared instructional materials—such as lesson plans or assignments—in their pedagogical practices prior to UTK. Participants’ experiences with composition theory, however, held limited, peripheral influence on their pedagogical development (Reid et al).

While some participants recalled being exposed to theory, they either reported not knowing what to do with the theory or not perceiving a need to apply it to their pedagogical practices. These recollections point to the powerful influence of practical WPE that informs TAs' pedagogies. Even though compositionists have encouraged the balance of theory and practice in WPE, that balance—while present in some participants' prior WPE experiences—did not take root in their pedagogical development. To help them survive teaching, they relied on the lore of shared instructional materials and peer observations (North; Bishop, *Teaching Lives*; Reid and Estrem; Restaino; Qualley). These materials, however, are localized and idiosyncratic; so when TAs transition to a new teaching context, how might those pedagogical practices transfer into a new curriculum that may or may not align theoretically with their prior teaching experiences? By isolating what TAs' prior experiences in FYC and WPE are, WPAs can discover how a new teaching context may conflict or overlap with TAs' pedagogical foundations. Such insight would aid in recalibrating WPE initiatives and thus help TAs adapt to new teaching contexts.

PRIOR EXPERIENCES, NEW CONTEXTS, AND ADAPTATION

By understanding TAs' prior FYC and WPE experiences as well as their attitudes towards current WPE, WPAs can design effective WPE to ensure theoretically grounded, effective teaching practices (Yancey). In addition to TAs having these practices, WPAs also want TAs to teach the curriculum as designed to ensure course and program assessment outcomes. To further assist TAs in teaching a curriculum, writing programs often provide pedagogical affordances, such as a standardized syllabus and assignment sheets (Qualley). At UTK, TAs received WPE through the three-day pre-service orientation, which consisted of workshops that provided theoretical information and practical lessons for teaching a transfer and rhetoric-based FYC curriculum. TAs also received pedagogical affordances—such as syllabi and assignment sheets—to help them transition into the teaching context. As previously discussed, such WPE initiatives and affordances, while issued with good intentions, can be perceived by TAs as subversive attempts to hinder or oppress their perceived pedagogical strengths and values (Bishop, *Something Old*; Bishop, *Teaching Lives*; Welch; Neeley). Therefore, I wanted to explore first how experienced TAs negotiated their pedagogical identities and practices after receiving the proffered training and affordances. Did TAs feel like the program was aiming to convert them to a new ideology, like Welch and Neeley posit? Or did they experience a convergence of similar ideologies of which they could adapt into their existing pedagogies (Bishop, *Something Old*)?

Participants' initial reactions to the pre-service orientation were unanimous:

too long, overwhelming, and a blur. Most participants described their pre-service orientation experience as boring because they found the content repetitive. Some workshop discussions reviewed concepts or teaching practices in which they were already familiar. For example, some participants recalled that the workshops, in general, either reminded them of things “done in the past,” as was the case for Ava, or they “calmed anxieties” because the participants knew how to teach these concepts, as Clara and Mike respectively noted. Participants’ perceptions of being familiar with the subject matter led to them perceiving themselves as “Achieving Mastery” (Grossman et al.). TAs, for the most part, identified these familiar practices as pedagogical tools and knowledge that they already possessed and employed. And even though their prior WPE experiences were idiosyncratic and localized, these TAs believed that the workshops were not applicable to their pedagogical development due to their prior experiences and familiarity. There was not a perceived need to explore or alter practices. They felt confident in teaching the new curriculum.

The convergence and familiarity of past experiences were consistent themes throughout participants’ interviews. They contextualized their immediate impressions of the new context’s values and procedures by comparing the new information with their prior teaching experiences. For example, Joseph discussed how workshops helped “to pinpoint those areas that I need to adjust and be ready to change how I do things.” Similarly, Liz stated, “It helped me with understanding some of the things that we’re teaching in the course and how UT’s course is different.” By reflecting upon the similarities and differences between experiences, Joseph and Liz were able to identify dissonances. However, the other participants did not note differences between experiences; they perceived similarities only—making the pre-service orientation repetitive and boring. These participants did not elect to explore how those similarities functioned differently—that is theoretically—within the new context. For TAs to adaptively transfer their pedagogical experiences, the THEORY of UTK’s curriculum must be understood and explicitly connected to their previous experiences and pedagogical values (Parker; Driscoll; Qualley). Without such understanding, TAs’ adaptation to the new curriculum will be limited.

Based on these responses, TAs detected similar surface features without exploring the underlying theoretical structure of the writing program, particularly how the values and practices were designed for a specific purpose, such as transferring writing expertise. TAs either adopted the practices of the new context or assembled prior experiences that were perceived as similar to the new curriculum. At the end of the first interview, I asked each participant, “Did you use the standardized syllabus and assignment sheets? If so, why? If not, what changes did you make, and why?” There were two common responses:

1. I didn't make significant changes to the standardized documents because I wanted to experience the curriculum first, and
2. Because of teaching experience, I mixed the content of the syllabus.

Five participants claimed the former response and three participants asserted the latter. Using the "five degrees of appropriation," I have coded the first response as "appropriating surface features" and the second response as "lack of appropriation."

While it appeared that five participants (Cornelius, Joseph, Liz, Mandy, and Mike) were adapting the standardized materials (the first response), there wasn't any evidence that they understood the theoretical underpinnings of the course design, particularly in the scaffolding and purpose of each unit. In fact, most of these participants reported a degree of uncertainty with the curriculum. For example, Liz stated, "I did not change the assignments and all the other stuff just because I didn't know. I mean, it's the first semester. There's no way I'm changing anything." Similarly, Joseph stated, "Since I'm still learning the way it is here, I felt like if I'm going to use the standard syllabus, it makes sense to use the standard assignment sheets at least for this first semester until I get more comfortable with the textbooks and the curriculum and stuff." These participants recognized that, even with their prior teaching experiences, they still needed to learn the new curriculum by experiencing it. They all trusted that the FYC program was well-designed, or as Mandy asserted, was "already very successful and already doing lots of really good things." Based on this trust, they adopted the pedagogical affordances to help them survive teaching in a new context.

Restaino argues TAs uncritically appropriate (or adopt) the standardized teaching materials to survive teaching the first semester due to the quick transition from pre-service orientation to teaching. These participants, however, adopted to survive but were not uncritical. They detected similarities in subject matter, such as teaching Aristotelian appeals or writing as a process, which is why I labeled this group as "appropriating surface features." While they recognized familiar subject matter, they struggled to perceive the underlying differences and purposes between their prior and current teaching contexts. The new curriculum was still unfamiliar, which meant that they couldn't foresee what to expect or how to adapt their prior experiences. For this reason, they chose to adopt, thus putting their pedagogical values on hold to learn how the new context functioned. If WPAs want strong, reflective practitioners, then TAs need opportunities to discuss explicitly their detections of similarities and differences between their prior experiences and the writing program's objectives, values, and practices. These discussions could provide clarity into the curricula goals and department culture as well as what TAs value in regard to teaching writing.

Through guided reflection and discussion, TAs can transfer their learning and teach to their strengths to meet programmatic objectives.

As for the other three participants (Ava, Clara, and Spencer), those who gave the second response, their lack of appropriation could be identified as resistant. They altered the syllabus, and they deviated from the pedagogical affordances that were deemed best by the composition office. These TAs made such decisions based upon their prior experiences. Ava even claims that she was resistant because she didn't "like being told what to do." She added, "I've taught for two years already; I know things." While it is easy to label these TAs as resistant, their explanations for the changes that they have made present a more complex narrative beyond that of rejecting the course design. "Lack of Appropriation" doesn't necessarily equate to rejection and could mean that the learning was either too complex or foreign, or even that there's a conflict between prior experiences and new learning. We could also put these alterations in terms of adaptive transfer, as either reusing or reshaping experiences to make meaning of a new learning context.

For example, Ava and Clara reused prior teaching experiences and materials in their UTK syllabi to understand this new writing program's expectations and curriculum objectives. Ava, who came from a genre-based FYC program, assembled prior teaching lessons and materials into UTK's standard syllabus. Her reasons for reusing the materials were because she was "not familiar with the way that everything is scaffolded and everything, and [she's] never done it before." She goes on to describe the foreignness of the new curriculum:

It probably would have been in my best interest to just leave everything, but then, I was like reading the descriptions of each day, and I'm like I don't know what that means. I don't know what you're telling me to do. So, then I got all nervous that I wouldn't do it right, and then it would be terrible and would look like I didn't know what I was doing. So, that's why I was resistant to it.

This new course design did not connect compatibly to Ava's prior teaching experiences. She did not understand the theoretical underpinnings of the curriculum, even though she reported being familiar with transfer theory. She didn't understand why she should accept the standardized syllabus because, after all, she was an experienced FYC educator. To maintain her self-efficacy, she turned to reusing instructional materials like her "cultural eye" activity to replace a department-provided activity about exploring discourse communities. She was more familiar with this previously used activity and perceived its purpose as similar to the one provided in the standardized syllabus. This change reinstated Ava's agency and was a means for her to teach material in which she was confident teaching.

In addition to reusing this activity, Ava also reported reshaping the first assignment, which was a comparative rhetorical analysis, to allow students to freely choose their own texts as long as they connected to the course “in some way.” She did not detect the importance of selecting the texts for her students, as the writing program instructed her to do. She experienced this requisite as limiting to both her teaching and her students’ learning, and she wanted more flexibility in her classroom. When she first began teaching, she was more authoritarian, but through former WPE she adopted a more relaxed teaching persona. UTK’s pedagogical affordances and requirements aligned more with the ineffective authoritarian pedagogy that she shirked. Due to these conflicts, Ava deviated from the writing program’s standardization and described herself as resistant. However, when I analyzed her overall course design, she did not outright reject the curriculum and values. Instead, she reused materials for lessons that were perceived as similar to prior experiences or altered lessons to negotiate perceived conflict and unfamiliarity that she encountered in this new teaching context. If she understood how her prior experiences connected and deviated from the new context, she could have remixed her pedagogies more successfully instead of falling into the dichotomy of adoption or rejection.

Clara also reported reusing prior experiences to inform her pedagogy in this new context. She reported “mash[ing] up” her prior teaching syllabi with UTK’s standardized syllabus. She, too, was unable to directly connect her prior experiences with the expectations and design of this new context. According to her, the standardized syllabus did not provide the “bare bones” for what the writing program expected and she did not foresee how to teach with what she perceived as ambiguous affordances. She redesigned the syllabus and course schedule to “fit the way [her] mind works,” which provided her clarity for what she would teach and how she would go about implementing this new curriculum. Moreover, this deviation was tied to Clara’s identity and learning needs. In past learning contexts, she struggled in and failed undergraduate writing courses where transparency of expectations and procedures were not provided. To negotiate her teaching in this new context, she returned to using previous instructional materials that were familiar and thus transparent. This reuse allowed her to maintain her self-efficacy and provided a means for her teaching survival. Even though the pre-service orientation provided workshops about curriculum structure, procedures, and expectations, Clara needed help in transferring her prior experiences to teach in this new context.

Similar to Ava and Clara, Spencer reused instructional materials and deviated from the standardized syllabus and assignment sheets. Spencer, unlike the other participants, was the only participant who completed his MFA and prior WPE at UTK. Due to this familiarity, he had more confidence and understanding of the

writing program's expectations and curriculum objectives. Even with this understanding, he deviated from the pedagogical affordances to reflect his prior experiences. For example, Spencer didn't accept revisions to an assignment sheet that the composition office had implemented. He reported, "I think I changed the word length in the first paper to be a bit shorter. I think it was 1000 words on the template, I changed it to 750. That's just from experience in the writing center." Spencer's prior experiences in the writing center informed his decision to not accept the revised assignment sheet. Prior to the revision, the assignment was in fact 750 words, which was deemed to be too constricting for students to complete the comparative rhetorical analysis by the composition committee. Because the previous assignment sheet was familiar, he decided to reuse the outdated assignment sheet without considering the department's rationale. In addition to reusing this assignment sheet, he also reported altering due dates and reusing lesson plans that he obtained from his pedagogy course and mentorships. Spencer's lack of appropriation stemmed from a conflict between his prior knowledge and the current curriculum expectations. To teach the curriculum, he relied on what was familiar without exploring the theoretical implications of the practices and requirements that he amended.

Based on these data, TAs are not "blank slates" (Neeley; Reid, "Uncoverage;" Stenberg). They have prior writing, teaching, and WPE experiences that have created foundations for these participants' pedagogies. Whether TAs adopted or adapted their pedagogical affordances, they made that decision as a means to survive in a new teaching context; that decision helped them learn more about a curriculum that was unfamiliar or conflictual. It is important to note that while pedagogical affordances are helpful for both WPAs and TAs, these materials position TAs as "blank slates" as well as contribute to their reliance on practical methods for teaching FYC. As seen from their recollections and impressions of prior and current WPE, TAs prioritize learning or reusing best practices without considering sufficiently the underlying theories that inform and shape those practices. Because these best practices are, in essence, tried and true, experienced TAs didn't perceive a need for ongoing WPE, which is problematic for their pedagogical development. TAs drew from their tacit theories to make meaning of the pedagogical affordances, and their reliance on lore and their trust in the writing program created an endless laboring cycle, as Restaino contends, to survive teaching. I disagree with Restaino insofar that this laboring was thoughtless because TAs were, as Rankin found, thoughtfully engaged in comparing prior and current experiences to inform their pedagogies. However, the availability and use of pedagogical affordances inhibited open communication between WPAs and TAs about their learning and teaching experiences.

While I concede that some TAs may resist their writing programs' practices and values, TAs in this study did not outright resist the curriculum ideology

and values of the new teaching context. TAs who adopted the new program's practices conveyed a deep trust in the authority of the writing program, and they deferred their teaching experiences and values by adopting practices and instructional materials valued by the writing program. TAs who reused prior experiences and practices were also not resistant. Their deviations were "more inertial than consciously directed" (Reid et al. 55). These particular TAs had syllabi that embodied the spirit of the new teaching context's values, but they drew upon familiar prior experiences and lessons to help them learn and thus teach a new curriculum. In this study, moments of adoption and self-described resistance were symptomatic of a larger learning problem. These TAs struggled to transfer their learning from their prior institutions to this new teaching context and, for this reason, they struggled to comprehend the writing program's objectives and values. TAs need explicit guidance in understanding how programmatic practices and curricula are rhetorical and situated, not generalizable. To help TAs adaptively transfer their WPE and teaching experiences, WPAs need to explore not only who TAs are but also what TAs know, and, with this insight, WPAs can recalibrate WPE to foster transfer of learning and pedagogical development.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WRITING PEDAGOGY EDUCATION

These narratives from Ava, Clara, Cornelius, Joseph, Liz, Mandy, Mike, and Spencer demonstrate that learning to teach is a complex and dynamic process. By using adaptive transfer to examine WPE, WPAs can identify how TAs are reusing or reshaping their previous teaching and WPE experiences to inform their pedagogical practices for a new curriculum. Transitioning to a new curriculum can be challenging, as curricula might diverge or converge. As TAs encounter dissonances of ideology, identity, and familiarity, they either adopt a new ideology or reinvent the new context to fit their previous experiences. Those decisions to adopt or adapt are critical moments for assessing TAs' learning processes. TAs are neither "blank slates" (Neeley; Reid, "Uncoverage;" Stenberg) nor "wrongly inscribed" (Stenberg). They are students who are attempting to cultivate a professional space for themselves as theorists and educators. They are *learners*. At UTK, the ongoing WPE that experienced Ph.D. TAs received was too compact and inundating to adapt successfully, and the transition from WPE to teaching was too quick to encourage reflection. And as the data shows, TAs will encounter dissonances as they continue learning to teach and adapt to new pedagogical contexts. The question for WPAs becomes, how can we help these TAs make sense of these dissonances to encourage adaptive transfer at the appropriating conceptual underpinnings and achieving mastery levels?

Based on these data, I recommend that compositionists, particularly WPAs, continue examining *who* TAs are, which isn't a new call (Weiser; Yancey; Reid et al.; Driscoll). TAs are not homogenous populations, and a one-size fits all approach to pre-service orientation doesn't consider their prior experiences. By knowing *who* TAs are, WPE can be tailored to their needs and experiences. At UTK, we redesigned orientation to consider attendees' experiences. Attendees were split into tracks that were based on their position within the program (e.g., lecturers, first-year Ph.D. TAs, first-year MA/MFA TAs, etc.). This separation ensured that each group was comprised of attendees with similar interests and concerns, and workshops were tailored to these interests and concerns. WPAs didn't have to construct generic workshops that would engage all levels of FYC instructors. By considering each audience, the workshops became more purposeful. It was the hope of the composition office that this tactic would provide audiences with a perceived need to learn and adaptively transfer the theoretical and practical information into their pedagogical practices.

My second recommendation is to incorporate reflection into pre-service orientation workshops to learn what TAs know. As Farris notes, "From an administrative perspective, we want confident, *reflective* teachers whom we know will grow and change in interesting ways" (102, emphasis added). With the quick transition from pre-service orientation to teaching (approximately three days), experienced Ph.D. TAs didn't have enough time to reflect about how their identities and ideologies did or did not fit in the new curriculum. For internal transformation to occur, TAs need to be able to articulate dissonances and make sense of their experiences to adapt or transform their pedagogical theories and practices. At UTK, after each day of pre-service orientation workshops, TAs were prompted to reflect about their experiences. Reflection prompts were aimed to facilitate compatible connections and thus transfer by asking the audience to consider prior knowledge and experiences, articulate their understanding of the new context, and reflect upon the connections or dissonances between the experiences and expectations. These prompts were then discussed among the TAs and WPA. By opening this dialogue, WPAs can address misconceptions as well as guide high road transfer of prior experiences.

Transfer theory has informed the field of composition that writing skills cannot be picked up, and what's true for writing transfer is true for teaching transfer. While these recommendations are ideal for most writing programs, I understand the labor constraints that affect the implementation of such recommendations. It is my hope that these examples of how UTK redesigned its WPE to be more transfer-focused by including directive reflections and considering audiences' experiences and needs are helpful to other WPAs. These changes are small steps toward helping WPAs rethink their programs' WPE. TAs need

guided supervision in their pedagogical development, particularly when they transition into a new teaching context. If WPAs begin considering TAs' learning as well as their acceptance or reuse of affordances, then TAs can develop flexible, richer pedagogies to fit not only their values but also the writing program's expectations, objectives, and values.

WORKS CITED

- Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*, edited by Victor Villanueva and Kristin L. Arola. National Council of Teachers of English, 1985, pp. 523-553.
- Beach, King. "Consequential Transitions: A Developmental View of Knowledge Propagation Through Social Organizations." *Between School and Work: New Perspectives on Transfer and Boundary-Crossing*, edited by Terttu Tuomi-Gröhn and Yrjö Engeström. Emerald Group, 2003, pp. 39-61.
- Beaufort, Anne. *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*. Utah State UP, 2007.
- Bergmann, Linda, and Janet Zepernick. "Disciplinary and Transfer: Students' Perceptions of Learning to Write." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 31, no. 1-2, 2007, pp. 124-49.
- Bishop, Wendy. *Something Old, Something New: College Writing Teachers and Classroom Change*. Southern Illinois UP, 1990.
- . *Teaching Lives: Essays and Stories*. Utah State UP, 1997.
- Bly, B. K. "Uneasy Transitions: The Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Composition Program." *In Our Own Voice: Graduate Students Teach Writing*, edited by Tina Lavonne Good and Leanne B. Warshauer. Allyn and Bacon, 2000, pp. 2-9.
- DePalma, Michael-John, and Jeffrey M. Ringer. "Toward a Theory of Adaptive Transfer: Expanding Disciplinary Discussions of 'Transfer' in Second-Language Writing and Composition Studies." *Journal of Second Language Writing*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2011, pp. 134-47.
- . "Adaptive Transfer, Genre Knowledge, and Implications for Research and Pedagogy: A Response." *Journal of Second Language Writing*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2013, pp. 465-470.
- Dobrin, Sydney I. "Finding Space for the Composition Practicum." *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sydney I. Dobrin. National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, pp. 1-34.
- Driscoll, Dana Lynn. "Connected Pedagogy and Transfer of Learning: An Examination of Graduate Instructor Beliefs vs. Practices in First-Year Writing." *Journal of Teaching Writing*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2013, pp. 50-81.
- Dryer, Dylan B. "At a Mirror, Darkly: The Imagined Undergraduate Writers of Ten Novice Composition Instructors." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2012, pp. 420-452.
- Ebest, Sally Barr. *Changing the Way We Teach: Writing and Resistance in the Training of Teaching Assistants*. Southern Illinois UP, 2005.

- Estrem, Heidi, and E. Shelley Reid. "What New Writing Teachers Talk about When They Talk about Teaching." *Pedagogy*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2012, pp. 449-480.
- Farris, Christine. "Too Cool for School? Composition as Cultural Studies and Reflective Practice." In *Preparing College Teachers of Writing: Histories, Theories, Programs, Practices*, edited by Betty P. Pytlík and Sarah Liggett. Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 97-107.
- Fischer, Ruth Overman. "Theory in a TA Composition Pedagogy Course: Not If, but How." *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney I. Dobrin. National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, pp. 200-213.
- Grossman, Pamela, et al. "Appropriating Tools for Teaching English: A Theoretical Framework for Research on Learning to Teach." *American Journal of Education*, vol. 108, no. 1, 1999, pp. 1-29.
- Grouling, Jennifer. "Resistance and Identity Formation: The Journey of the Graduate Student-Teacher." *Composition Forum*, vol. 32, 2015, <https://compositionforum.com/issue/32/resistance.php>.
- Guerra, Juan C. and Anis Bawarshi. "Managing Transitions: Reorienting Perceptions in a Practicum Course." *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney I. Dobrin. National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, pp. 43-66.
- Hardin, Joe Marshall. "Writing Theory and Writing the Classroom." *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney I. Dobrin. National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, pp. 35-42.
- McCarthy, Lucille Parkinson. "A Stranger in Strange Lands: A College Student Writing Across the Curriculum." *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 21, no. 3, 1987, pp. 233-65.
- Merriam, Sharan B. *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Practice*. 2nd ed., Jossey-Bass, 2002.
- Neeley, Stacia Dunn. "'Only Connect. . .': Graduate Instructors Choosing the Margin." In *Our Own Voice: Graduate Students Teach Writing*, edited by Tina Lavonne Good and Leanne B. Warshauer. Allyn and Bacon, 2000, pp. 19-27.
- Nelms, Gerald, and Ronda Leathers Dively. "Perceived Roadblocks to Transferring Knowledge from First-Year Composition to Writing-Intensive Major Courses: A Pilot Study." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 31, no. 1-2, 2007, pp. 214-240.
- North, Stephen M. *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1987.
- Nowacek, Rebecca. *Agents of Integration: Understanding Transfer as a Rhetorical Act*. Southern Illinois UP, 2011.
- Parker, Robert P. "Writing Courses for Teachers: From Practice to Theory." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1982, pp. 411-419.
- Perkins, D.N., and Gavriel Salomon. "Teaching for Transfer." *Educational Leadership*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1988, pp. 22-32.
- Powell, Katrina M. Et al. "Negotiating Resistance and Change: One Composition Program's Struggle Not to Convert." *Preparing College Teachers of Writing: Histories, Theories, Programs, Practices*, edited by Betty P. Pytlík and Sarah Liggett. Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 121-132.

- Qualley, Donna. "Building a Conceptual Topography of the Transfer Terrain." *Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer*, edited by Chris M. Anson and Jessie L. Moore. The WAC Clearinghouse/UP of Colorado, 2017, pp. 69-106. <https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2016.0797.2.03>.
- Rankin, Elizabeth. *Seeing Yourself as a Teacher: Conversations with Five New Teachers in a University Writing Program*. National Council of Teachers of English, 1994.
- Reid, E. Shelley. "Uncoverage in Composition Pedagogy." *Composition Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2004, pp. 15-34.
- . "Teaching Writing Teachers Writing: Difficulty, Exploration, and Critical Reflection." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2009, pp. 197-221.
- Reid, E. Shelley, et al. "The Effects of Writing Pedagogy Education on Graduate Teaching Assistants' Approaches to Teaching Composition." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 32-73.
- Reiff, Mary Jo, and Anis Bawarshi. "Tracing Discursive Resources: How Students Use Prior Genre Knowledge to Negotiate New Writing Contexts in First-Year Composition." *Written Communication*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2011, pp. 312-337.
- Restaino, Jessica. *First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground*. Southern Illinois UP, 2012.
- Rounsaville, Angela, Rachel Goldberg, and Anis Bawarshi. "From Incomes to Outcomes: FYW Students' Prior Genre Knowledge, Meta-Cognition, and the Question of Transfer." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 32, no. 1-2, 2008, pp. 97-112.
- Stenberg, Shari J. *Professing and Pedagogy: Learning the Teaching of English*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2005.
- Wardle, Elizabeth. "Understanding 'Transfer' from FYC: Preliminary Results of a Longitudinal Study." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 31, no. 1-2, 2007, pp. 65-85.
- Weiser, Irwin. "Surveying New Teaching Assistants: Who They Are, What They Know, and What They Want to Know." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 14, no. 1-2, 1990, pp. 63-71.
- Welch, Nancy. "Resisting the Faith: Conversion, Resistance, and the Training of Teachers." *College English*, vol. 55, no. 4, 1993, pp. 387-401.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake. "The Professionalization of TA Development Programs: A Heuristic for Curriculum Design." *Preparing College Teachers of Writing: Histories, Theories, Programs, Practices*, edited by Betty P. Pytlík and Sarah Liggett, Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 63-74.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake et al. *Writing across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*. Utah State UP, 2014.

NARRATIVE 3.

MORE THAN MY TEACHING

Eliza Gellis

Purdue University

I have educators in my family going back four generations, and on both sides: my maternal great-grandmother taught in a one-room schoolhouse in rural Michigan, and my paternal great-grandmother taught Latin and Greek in New York City. My paternal grandfather was an art teacher; my maternal grandmother once worked as a nursing instructor. My parents were both professors.

So it only seemed natural for me to continue the tradition, and, in fact, a career as an educator was the only one I ever considered. It's easy to feel like being a teacher isn't just a job—that it's an integral part of who you are. That it's a calling. A moral stance. Think of the discourse around public school teachers, for example: So selfless, to do such laborious and important work for so little pay; such good people; so passionate about providing for our children—who are like children to them; so invested in our future.

Many educators are indeed drawn to such work because we enjoy building relationships with students. We feel gratified to see them grow. But this sort of discourse makes it difficult to resist the narrative that educators are happily self-sacrificing—people willing to dedicate everything to their jobs just for the love of it all. This is especially true for women—like myself—who are assumed to be naturally nurturing. And there is also an assumption—reflected in economic theory—that if work is considered moral—if it makes you feel good doing it—there will be a higher willingness to supply such labor. This, of course, makes it less necessary to compensate for that labor.

The position of graduate TAs is therefore particularly vulnerable. In addition to the tremendous pressure of doing good work—doing moral work and doing it well—our positions and our funding are highly competitive. Besides our coursework and research, we're expected to provide most of the labor that undergirds our institutions' most popular undergraduate courses. In many cases—like mine—we're even expected to design and facilitate our own courses as instructor of record—to function as faculty without any of the benefits, monetary or institutional.

But feeling good about doing good doesn't add more hours to the day any more than it adds dollars to your paycheck. At a certain point—no matter how

moral the work is—we all reach our breaking point. Theoretically, I'm compensated for the equivalent of 20 hours of work per week—on a salaried basis, of course. No overtime pay. So, at a certain point I began to wonder: If I'm not getting paid for overtime, why am I working overtime? Adopting this mindset was the first strategy I used to disentangle myself from the sense of shame educators are made to feel in treating teaching as what it is: not an identity—and certainly not a sacrifice—but a job.

Thinking about my teaching labor as 20 hours a week—factoring in all the unpaid preparatory work we're expected to do over summer and winter breaks—has helped me establish the necessary boundaries between my work and myself. It's not always easy, and not just because of the graduate school workload. The guilt and shame are still there. Even now, as I write these words, I have a nagging anxiety, somewhere deep down, that this makes me a bad teacher and therefore a bad person.

Make no mistake, I take pride in doing good work as a teacher. (You'll note I avoid saying "being a good teacher.") I do the best I can without compromising my values or my sense of self—and that requires me to acknowledge myself as more than my teaching, to respect my own time and labor in the same way I expect other workers' time and labor to be respected. My work is important, to be sure. That's why I still love it. But I do the work I'm paid for. Because—while I love teaching—that's not the same thing as loving myself. Teaching is not who I am. It's my job, not my whole life.

CHAPTER 4.

**COMING TO TEACHING:
MOVING BEYOND A BLANK-
SLATE MODEL OF DEVELOPING
PEDAGOGICAL EXPERTISE**

**Kathleen Blake Yancey, Rob Cole, Amanda May,
and Katelyn Stark**

Florida State University

THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING, KATHLEEN BLAKE YANCEY

In 1972, I began my career as a teacher as a teaching assistant, a TA responsible for teaching first-year composition (FYC) to two classes of 25 students each. Or that's the way the TA training program saw me, as someone just beginning her teaching career. In fact, even at 22, I had already learned a fair amount about teaching: as a student, I'd observed teachers for over 16 years; as an English major and an education minor, I was certified to teach language arts in grades 6-12; and as a student teacher just that summer, I'd taught two classes, one in 11th grade literature fairly successfully, one a 9th grade English class for students who had failed it earlier that year, pretty miserably. Put another way, I didn't begin my career in teaching on that first day of my TA training program: I began it years earlier.¹

Since the time of my TA training many years ago, many in rhetoric and composition have moved from a TA training model to a TA preparation model, with some giving it a new name: writing teacher education (e.g., Reid et al.). Still, programs preparing graduate students to be teachers of FYC often continue to assume that new TAs are something akin to blank slates,² often because programs subscribe to a model of professional and pedagogical development located in the key concept of liminality, of a time of in-between-ness dividing novice

1 And I'm not alone in bringing other teaching experience with me: the Reid et al. [2012] study, for example, showed that in the Mason program, over 40% of the TAs they surveyed brought such experience with them, and in the Boise State program just over a quarter did.

2 As the authors point out, those TAs there were not blank slates, either. This article thus also provides an exigence for our chapter.

from expert as TAs grow in professionalization. As Ruth Mirtz describes this situation, our programs enact “traditional ‘plots’ of initiate-to-novice-to-apprentice-to-expert” (26), almost as though developing pedagogical expertise could be mapped in a neatly linear trajectory. Many TAs, however—and in some ways, all TAs if we include their undergraduate experiences—“come to us from other . . . degrees and previous careers” (Phelps 128). Put simply, graduate students beginning in TA preparation programs, be they students of literature, creative writing, or writing studies, are not blank slates. As Zack De Piero and Jennifer K. Johnson, in “Doorways to Disciplinarity: Using Threshold Concepts to Bridge Disciplinary Divides and Develop Theory-Practice Praxis” (this volume) observe, “When FYC [first-year composition] TAs arrive at the doorway of their composition practicum on the first day of TA training, they bring life-long histories of literacy with them; they’ve already walked through countless other doorways both within and outside of the university,” a point also made by Meaghan Brewer’s *Conceptions of Literacy*. Brewer takes TAs’ prior conceptions of literacy as a focus, arguing that graduate students’ prior conceptions of literacy set the stage for their teaching of FYC. Here, we take up a somewhat similar task, attending to TAs’ conceptions of literacy, but considering more fully their developing identities as teachers, especially as informed by their prior experiences.

In fact, as we demonstrate here, new TAs are not really new: they bring with them a wealth of experience that can inform and often enhance their own practices as teachers and those of colleagues. To illustrate this point, and to consider what we in writing teacher education can learn from graduate students about how we might design programs informed by TAs’ earlier experiences, we go to a critical source, TAs themselves.³ Like the editors of this collection, then, we believe that “exploring carefully the lived experiences of RCTAs can begin a deeper understanding of the liminalities and thresholds in these TAs’ships, the programs that host them, and the contexts that engage them.”

We begin this consideration and re-definition of liminality and the re-design of TA preparation programs by defining the key terms informing the chapter: (1) liminality; (2) prior knowledge, practice, and experiences; and (3) teaching assistants (TAs). Given this context, we then provide very different narrative accounts of coming to teaching composed by three doctoral students—each of whom began their graduate work in other fields, but who are now in writing studies, and each of whom took very different paths to the composition classroom, one by way of his own experience as an undergraduate; another by way of writing center activity and teaching overseas; and a third by way of a professional

³ We are not the first to do so: see, for example, Obermark et al. . . . But rather than surveying or interviewing TAs, this chapter, co-authored by TAs, presents sustained narratives leading to a set of recommendations with potential for use across programs.

editing career. The chapter then concludes by drawing from these narratives to make four recommendations for TA preparation programs incorporating what TAs bring to them—from the very start. As the narratives suggest, TAs bring considerable experience to the classroom: if such experience is tapped, TAs are more likely to reflect upon and theorize it, find own teaching better theorized, and provide their students with a better experience; if such experience is not tapped, it still informs teaching, and not always to good effect.

LIMINALITY

The website *Cyborg Anthropology*, drawing on Victor Turner’s work and pointing to several commonplace examples, speaks to the in-between-ness liminality references:

Betwixt and between here or there. Not fully transitioned from one thing to another. A doorway is a liminal space, because it marks the boundary between inside and outside, between one room and the next. A caterpillar undergoes a liminal transition period when wrapping itself in a cocoon. A highway is a liminal space between starting point and destination. An airport is a transition point between here and there.

Turner’s concept of liminality, developed “from observing rituals of the Ndembu tribe of central Africa,” articulated a ritually oriented or marked rite of passage representing “some change to the participants, especially their social status” (Cyborg). The process of change positioned Turner’s liminal participants as “neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony” (Turner, “Liminality and Communitas”; quoted in Cyborg.).

Several observations about this model of development are relevant here. For one, the TA position isn’t nearly as rigid as this description of liminality—with “positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony”—would suggest. The TA development process is defined by conventions, to be sure, although as the Pytlik and Liggett collection on TA preparation demonstrates, such conventions—from kinds of support to kinds of responsibilities—vary considerably from one program to the next. For another, while the TA preparation program is intended to assist with the passage from student to teacher, as Dylan Dryer has pointed out, the passage isn’t neatly demarcated. Even in the classroom as teachers, TAs continue to inhabit dual positions, feeling like students precisely because they are students, although how they are students can be quite diverse, from that of the first-term MA student in literature taking a full

load of graduate classes to that of the dissertation-writing RC doctoral candidate assisting a WPA, presenting at conferences, and publishing research. For yet another, how much TAs feel like students depends on a host of factors, among them the responses of their own students to their teaching; the attitudes of the faculty teaching them and directing their dissertations; and the ways that institutions do or do not value their pedagogical contributions. In sum, liminality is both a very complex and a very differentiated construct.

In this context, what's of interest to this chapter is how the beginning of any TA liminality isn't crisply defined, either. TAs bring with them many, and many kinds of, experiences that set the stage for their formal TA development.

THE PRIOR

As research like that reported in *How People Learn* (HPL) suggests, prior knowledge contextualizes learning of all kinds. Moreover, the expression prior knowledge often refers to more than knowledge; it includes prior processes, dispositions, beliefs, values, experiences, and affect as well (Yancey). Sometimes, this prior knowledge writ large is a very good fit for the new learning; in such situations, there is a foundation on which the learner can build. Some other times, according to HPL and as documented in *Conceptions of Literacy*, prior knowledge is a misfit: the learner's understanding is at odds with the new learning, and/or the learner's beliefs, located in one community, are in conflict with principles or theories grounding the new learning. We see this in writing classes routinely, of course; the FYC student who understands purpose, audience, and genre as critical concepts defining all writing tasks and who thus has much to build on; the student who understands correcting grammatical and usage errors as the most important goal of a writing class and who thus must develop a larger and different conception of writing; and the student who brings faith-based beliefs to a class where quotations from the bible have limited, very specific value as evidence and who thus needs to learn about what we might call the rhetoricity of writing, in this case about what counts as evidence in a rhetorical text circulating in a secular context (see Yancey et al. for a fuller analysis).

Prior knowledge, of course, also shapes the ways that teachers develop. As Rachel Gramer points out in "Putting Learning First: Challenges and Possibilities for New Writing Teacher Research" (Ch. 1, this volume), TA preparation needs to begin with what she calls New Writing Teacher "identities, learning, and motivated behaviors." Such prior knowledge for TAs as for students, also includes, as indicated above, prior processes, knowledge, dispositions, beliefs, values, experiences and affect. Some of this prior knowledge is school-based. A TA's 10th-grade teacher who seemed to model the best in teaching—seeing the

positive in each student and designing writing assignments engaging students—can influence that beginning TA as she begins designing her first writing class. A different TA's experience as a FYC student, with a teacher whose response to writing was located in critique and executed with a red pen, can motivate him to do the same, or to develop a new means of response located in helpful dialogue. And as Dylan Dryer demonstrates, TAs' own anxieties and uncertainty about writing itself can inform their teaching. In addition, beginning TAs can also be influenced by prior out-of-school experiences having no direct relationship to teaching: Jeff Naftzinger's research shows that in one program, at least, beginning TAs were more inclined to use digital technologies in their teaching if they also used them in their out-of-school lives.

In sum, the prior, both in and out of school, influences how TAs begin their careers; tracing the prior is thus a useful strategy for inquiring into how it influences liminality.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

In US higher education, teaching assistants, or TAs, sometimes called Graduate Teaching Assistants or GTAs, typically are the instructors of record, at least in FYC classes, and in those classrooms, they are in fact the teacher. In some cases, beginning TAs are required to use a standardized syllabus (e.g., Dively); in other cases, they devise their own in accord with programmatic outcomes. In some cases, they grade writing according to program standards; in other cases, they create scoring guides with their students. In other words, the conditions governing these TAs vary considerably. This chapter refers to beginning TAs as the instructors of their classrooms who make pedagogical choices, at the least, about multiple classroom activities, including in-class writing activities, peer review, group work, and response to student writing.

THREE NARRATIVES

What do liminality, prior knowledge, and TAship look like in practice? What experiences do TAs draw on even before a TA preparation experience begins, and how helpful are they? And if acknowledged, how much more helpful could such experiences be? The narratives below provide some thinking about these questions; they also provide background for our recommendations concluding the chapter. The first narrative, written by Rob Cole, provides an account of a TA whose invisible prior knowledge locates some of his first teaching practices; the second, written by Amanda May, is an account of a TA with considerable writing center experience, both different from and similar to teaching; and the third,

written by Katelyn Stark, shows how the similarities and differences between professional editing and teaching can both enhance and complicate TAing the first time. Put another way, while this chapter emphasizes the role of prior experiences in shaping pedagogical practice, those prior experiences themselves are wrapped up in the professional/academic identities the TAs had developed before beginning to teach at FSU: Rob identified as a poet, Amanda as a tutor and aspiring writing center administrator, Katelyn as a professional editor. In each case, they brought much to the classroom, although none of it was acknowledged by their writing teacher preparation programs, which Florida State offers in two forms. Those like Rob and Katelyn who brought teaching experience with them take a three-day orientation, followed by a one-credit pass/fail pedagogy course; those like Amanda who had no teaching experience completed two graded courses during six weeks the summer before they teach as well as the one-credit pedagogy course in the fall.

FALLING BACKWARDS INTO PEDAGOGY: ON THE JOB LEARNING, ROB COLE

I was enrolled in a poetry MFA program directly after finishing my undergrad degree, and teaching one section of composition a semester was part of the scholarship package. I had no idea what I was getting myself involved in and had no expectations about what preparations would be available or even necessary. In fact, my only experiences with composition were the two FYC courses I'd completed during my first two semesters as an undergraduate, and those were taught by creative writing MFA students. Moreover, as a history major, my interest in poetry had occurred almost accidentally, through a single upper-level creative writing course, so I wasn't familiar with the culture of English departments either.

The two-week pedagogy preparation before my first semester teaching focused on best practices and theory. It introduced us to Berlin, White, Bizzell, and Bartholomae; and defined the program's parameters. Although it was absolutely invaluable, it was also not nearly enough to prepare me to instruct a class in a field where I had been only a passing observer. Most of those initial theory-heavy readings went over my head and didn't stick, as I was still trying to comprehend how to provide students anything useful in the course: how valuable is an understanding of establishing a classroom ideology when I didn't know how to describe the difference between an essay meriting a B and another earning a C?

I began teaching with two strategies: first, I used the course materials we were given during the pedagogy preparation; and second, I emulated my FYC instructors and brought in literary readings and creative writing assignments. Although I didn't quite know how to connect these two approaches effectively,

they at least provided a starting point. I remembered what was successful in my own FYC experiences—at least for me as a student—and I brought those exercises into my classroom. For example, one of my instructors asked us to write notes to different people requesting funds and then explain our rhetorical choices as a way to demonstrate how we already understood audience. Copying this assignment led to one of my earliest classroom successes as a teacher and gave me confidence in responding to student writing from a shared understanding of audience, in part because I could explain how some moves weren't effective for the audience the student was addressing.

Since my own FYC instructors were also MFA students, they incorporated creative writing approaches into my FYC class, and I did likewise. Not all of these resonated well, but a few of them did—especially workshop feedback and revision. I responded to my students' work just as my FYC instructors had responded to mine. I spent little time on grammar or edit-level feedback since, as a student, I hadn't paid much attention to either; and instead focused on giving feedback geared towards revision—even before I knew to provide multiple opportunities for revision. My FYC instructors had treated my final drafts as works in progress and suggested changes even as they assigned a final grade. I appreciated this as a student, and I hoped my own students would feel the same. Connecting this to the process-based pedagogy of Elbow allowed me to understand why this approach was successful for me as a learner and how I could make it a focal point for my own students' learning. Other practices from my poetry workshops didn't carry over as well. During one class, for instance, I assigned a variation of the cut-up technique where composers scramble the order of their paragraphs and attempt to transition them together as a new draft. I tried this in class only once.

The pedagogy workshop continued to meet weekly through that first semester, and the theory we worked with began to connect to the actual practice of teaching composition as I was experiencing it, albeit slowly. Richard Larson, for instance, exposed why I struggled so much with typical research assignments as a student and why that was also carrying over to my own classes. Over time, I could identify what was failing with my approaches and improve upon them, but I still needed to develop my pedagogy more fully to make projects truly effective. Something else clicked as I began to establish an interest in composition studies. Reading the current issues of *College Composition and Communication* was still difficult, but I could at least make connections to my classroom as I learned more theory. Kermit Campbell, for example, allowed me to expand my definition of composition through hip-hop and other non-academic texts, which, in turn, opened up more connections to my MFA background. Theory, in other words, became an avenue into practice.

As much as I loved poetry, during my three years in an MFA program, I became a composition teacher. My pedagogy was an assemblage of my own FYC experiences, my program's instruction, the scholarship I was seeking out, and whatever I could take from past and current teachers. I modeled much of my classroom persona on my favorite undergrad history instructor, so much so that I began to emulate how he dressed and organized his class. Most of this wasn't a conscious recognition of growth, but rather an understanding of what worked. I used every tool that I knew to be effective and pieced together successful approaches from trial and error, and the more familiar with composition scholarship I became, the more likely I was to recognize why some approaches worked and some didn't. For example, another practice I imported from my poetry workshops was asking students to write introductions of projects in class so we could examine some of the moves they'd made. In response, the students used their twenty minutes of composing to create general, sweeping texts loosely connected to the assignment. In reading Flower and Hayes later, I understood why the practice hadn't worked; but I thought I could transform it into a post-workshop exercise where it reinforced the recursive nature of composing. And so it did.

I began my career as a composition instructor with a hodge-podge pedagogy cobbled together with practices borrowed from my own experiences as a student framed with the materials I was given during my initial pedagogy workshop. This messy combination slowly evolved into a more substantive, informed, and intentional approach as I gained expertise and was able to make connections to the theory I was learning. I brought all of this experience to my Ph.D. program where, for a third time, I went through a TA pedagogy orientation, this one shortened for those with teaching experience. In this orientation, I was once again assumed to be a blank slate; I wasn't asked about my prior experience. Ironically, from my perspective, my prior experience has been critical: my practice-focused experiences have consistently worked best when I could build them around prior knowledge; and they faltered the most when I was unable to ground them in previous practice.

(RE)CENTERING EXPERIENCE AND IDENTITIES: TA PREPARATION FROM WRITING CENTERS AND ABROAD, AMANDA M. MAY

Because I came to Florida State University without teaching experience, I was required to participate in the TA teaching preparation program, a six-week period when I took two graduate courses—one on composition pedagogy and one on writing center theory—and completed two hours of internship work. I found these courses and experiences helpful because, much like Rob's preparation in his MFA program, the summer courses focused on classroom pedagogies and introduced

me to unfamiliar theorists who would inform my teaching—Bitzer, Shipka, and Faigley among them. Through FSU's TA preparation program, I learned much that has helped me develop as a teacher of writing, including lessons on reflection, techniques for classroom management, and appreciation for a variety of expertise in language and discipline, and I appreciated having access to a professional community. At the same time, I also brought considerable related experiences with me to the preparation program and to teaching. Of these experiences, the most influential were two: tutoring writing center students and teaching in Japan. Together, they have informed three significant areas of my current pedagogy.

A first lesson from tutoring has to do with the exchange between participants in any learning situation. The many ELL writers I tutored helped me develop as a tutor, and then teacher, in part because of the challenges they presented. Sometimes, for example, students would ask me if a word, a phrase, a sentence structure, or an idiom sounded natural, a question I encounter now as a teacher who has ELL students in class. Perhaps one of the most memorable of these experiences occurred with a faculty member from China working on an annotated bibliography who wanted help with surface issues and clarity. I was nervous about the difference in our educational levels—she, after all, was faculty, and I was not—but I became comfortable once the session started. As I read aloud, I paused every now and then to offer suggestions, and at one point, she picked up on a grammatical pattern and started self-correcting. When she did, I said to her, “Nice catch!” She asked me about the meaning of the phrase, I explained it to her, and by the end of the session, she was trying that phrase out on me, saying “Nice catch!” when I pointed out a phrase that I thought sounded a little off. This tutoring session helped me understand, first, how students will seek opportunities to improve spoken English as well as written English, and second, that precisely because a tutor or teacher and student bring different expertise to our work together, this means that we also have knowledge to offer one another. In this case, the faculty member learned more about both spoken and written English, and I also learned about her Chinese language and her discipline.

A second lesson that I brought to my TA preparation and subsequent teaching resulted from my experiences tutoring and teaching abroad: they taught me that, like tutorial sessions, teaching conferences are conversations. In Japan, we often had individual counseling with students to help them create or enhance their study plans and set goals. The advice we received in training was to be specific and to set realistic goals with the students, but also to listen and to respond. In some ways, I view tutoring sessions as akin to such conferences. While the power dynamic between a tutor and writer differs vastly from that between teacher and student, writing tutors serve as conversational partners for writers and, by extension, as a sample audience for a piece of writing, a mindset that I

apply in individual teaching conferences now. This view is informed in part by sessions like my tutoring session with the ELL faculty member, described above, but my work as a tutor also showed me what happens on the other side of classroom peer review. In one tutoring session, for instance, a student with recurring appointments came in, clearly disgruntled. From the conversations we'd had, I knew she enjoyed writing, but when I asked her how she was, she expressed some frustration. After a little probing, she explained to me that she hadn't gotten "good" feedback from her peer reviewer, who had been hypercritical of her writing and had focused mostly on her grammar. In response, I explained that I understood her frustration, that as a first-year composition student, I had encountered a similar experience, and I ultimately reminded her that because she was the writer, she would choose what to change. After encouraging her, I offered her the option to talk through the comments with me, and after that, the session went smoothly. From sessions like this one, I learned that conferences are a conversation, an understanding I have enacted as a classroom teacher.

The third lesson I brought to teaching resulted from my work giving written feedback through asynchronous online tutoring, which can be especially difficult given the absence of physical cues. The direction for this tutoring emphasized phrasing: I was told that in online comments, I should avoid phrasing (e.g., the pronoun "you") that could be interpreted as casting blame on the writer. Admittedly, it was challenging to work without having the student in front of me, but the following year, I became one of two co-coordinators responsible for preparing new consultants to tutor online; preparation involved reviewing a consultant's comments on a sample paper and responding to him or her. One day, a new tutor came up and thanked me for my feedback. She explained that it was clear, understandable, and easy to follow; rather than undermining her motivation because her mistakes were highlighted, she said my response made her feel both that she was improving and that there was further improvement to be made. I have applied this lesson to my teaching as well: I typically approach grading with an asynchronous online commenting mindset, limiting my use of direct address (a.k.a. "you") unless something is drastically wrong, balancing my suggestions with praise, and trying to be clear and concise. Of course, as a teacher, I can follow up such feedback with a verbal reminder that anyone with questions can meet with me or email me, so rather than simply adopt online tutoring approaches, I have adapted them to serve the classroom rhetorical situation.

Through tutoring in various sites and teaching abroad, I was inadvertently preparing to teach in the university classroom. My writing center experience has proven invaluable in preparing me for individual student conferences, which I understand as conversations about writing. Tutoring and individual counseling in Japan helped me value the practice of listening to students and writers and

made me attentive to frustrations they may feel from other feedback. And last but not least, my experience as an online tutor helped me learn how to provide students with clear, helpful written feedback. In sum, while not all-inclusive, my previous tutorial experiences have shaped my teaching in the college classroom.

THE EDITOR: TACIT KNOWLEDGE BECOMING EXPLICIT, KATELYN STARK

I am a professional developmental editor as well as a TA, and a large number of my practices in the classroom stem from my career in the commercial publishing industry. Helping people become better writers has always been a part of my editorial practice: my prior knowledge of teaching writing, in my professional, pre-academic context, developed from my experiences building relationships with authors, providing them with heuristic prompts to deepen ideas, and offering constructive feedback for revision. And when I returned to the academy, I also worked as a writing center tutor and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) research assistant. In other words, my development as a writing teacher did not begin in a summer course, pre-semester orientation, or semester-long pedagogy workshop, but rather began tacitly through these other experiences; my teaching ethos, efficacy, and weaknesses thus differ from those represented in much of the TA education scholarship. The prior knowledge gained from my professional experiences shaped me as an instructor, but it was not until I was simultaneously teaching and learning composition theory that my tacit knowledge about writing instruction became explicit and thus available for my classroom use.

My first professional role in the publishing industry was as an intern at a literary agency in New York City. I was fresh out of my English bachelor's program and responsible for wading through the submission slush pile and forwarding the manuscripts I deemed worthy. After a few weeks, I was hired full-time and promoted to executive assistant. All of a sudden, I found myself becoming the liaison between authors and editors of major publishing houses, with very new responsibilities: I trained the new interns on what was quality writing; I corresponded with authors on ways they could improve their manuscript to meet the industry's competitive standards; and I reviewed editors' comments on manuscripts. I became a writing professional. I was an assessor, a critic, and an editor; and the more I communicated with aspiring authors and new interns, the more I became a teacher. After I left the literary agency, I launched my own editing company and have worked as a professional freelance developmental editor since January 2014, nine months before returning to graduate school and becoming a writing center tutor, and over a year and a half before I taught college composition.

I remember rationalizing my decision to leave the publishing industry and return to academia: I would rather have a full-time teaching job where I could

teach writing to a larger number of students on a semester-basis than continue working with only a limited number of authors each year. My perspective was narrow, however; I did not have any comprehension of the intricacies of higher education, nor did I know anything about composition scholarship. The only thing I wanted was to teach people how to write.

I spent the first year of my master's program working in the writing center, where I found that being a writing tutor was a natural extension of my previous work, though my teaching-writing practices lacked a metacognitive rationale for enacting them. I did not know the theory; I just had my intuition of how to best work with authors to improve writing. For example, I knew from editing that beginning with higher order concerns was more important than addressing lower order concerns such as sentence structure or usage: as a tutor, I simply used a different language than I had as editor. I knew the practice, but I did not know the terminology, nor could I cite theory to explain my approach to the students I tutored.

The TA preparation for MA students at my institution included a course in composition theory the spring semester before teaching in the fall and a two-day teaching orientation the week before fall classes started. In the class, we read about process from Donald Murray and revision strategies from Nancy Sommers; we learned about expressivism and social constructionism—and I very clearly remember the professor asking us which camp we fell into and my not being able to give her an answer. Neither quite made sense to me, and I didn't have the experiences with a classroom of students to be able to even imagine the differences. In a reverse of how as a writing tutor I'd had the practices without the theory, I now was given the theory without the practices to ground them. Consequently, the theory didn't make sense to me, and there were no exercises inviting me to connect my prior knowledge to this new theory.

The two-day TA preparation orientation was a crash course on how to conduct ice-breakers on the first day and how to grade papers. As someone who had never taught before, I found it beneficial: I needed a hands-on, logistical breakdown of how to interact with my students for the first time. The orientation also included guest speakers who talked about their experiences and gave us advice on how to conduct conferences, scaffold projects, and balance our graduate workload with our teaching responsibilities. In the midst of this preparation, however, I was still not able to make connections from my prior experiences to my new job responsibilities. I can see now that as an editor and as a tutor, I had already practiced assessment and helped authors scaffold knowledge, but during my orientation, I wasn't able to make this connection.

In addition to teaching as a second-year MA student, I served as the research assistant for the institution's WAC program. My responsibilities included

attending all of the staff meetings, conducting research and creating bibliographies, and assisting with the Writing Across Institutions Conference hosted by WAC each year. The majority of my time was spent reading articles on WAC theory and learning about how these theories were enacted through dialogues with the WAC consultants. During this term, I also took a Writing Program Administrator's (WPA) theory course focused on WAC, and it was the first time I was formally learning the theory of a new concept while simultaneously enacting its practices. In our class, we investigated competing WAC theories, examined different WAC programs across the country, and learned how WAC can be enacted within an institution and be taught as an undergraduate class. As I sat in on the WAC meetings and learned about WAC practices through experiencing them myself as a research assistant, the theory I was reading in the WAC course clicked—I finally got it. It was when my introduction to theory was balanced with practice that my knowledge became explicit.

My editing experience gave me a basic knowledge of how to teach writing, but cognitively, the related practices were disconnected. Even looking back, it seems as though I should have been able to make these apparently obvious connections, but the language of the concepts in rhetoric and composition was too foreign and felt too unrelated to my previous work experience. I know I would have benefited from direct exercises that helped me to recall and connect my prior knowledge to plans for teaching. But when I engaged in all three activities—reading composition theory, practicing the theory in the classroom, and reflecting on my learning—my tacit knowledge of writing instruction became explicit and thus applicable in my classroom.

As these narratives suggest, becoming a teacher is a process of becoming. It begins before a first pedagogical preparation activity, before a practicum accompanying teaching, before a teacher welcomes her first class to campus. What's more: TA preparation programs at institutions are typically offered without reference to each other. Thus, despite their many teaching and teaching-related experiences, Rob, Amanda, and Katelyn as TAs new to Florida State participated in FSU's required versions of TA preparation. With no writing classroom experience per se, Amanda completed FSU's two TA preparation graduate courses before teaching, while Amanda, Katelyn, and Rob all completed a year-long pedagogy practicum. And for her part, while Kathleen hasn't participated in a practicum for some time, she does lead professional development workshops, both at FSU and other institutions. At TAs' request, for example, she conducted a 4-part practicum on classroom assessment in which she learned as much as the participating TAs; and with her colleague Michael Neal, she has twice offered a multi-day Writing Assessment

Institute. Put more generally, many teachers complete more than one TA preparation experience, which makes the concept of liminality even more permeable. In sum and as the narratives above indicate, teaching preparation includes other related professional experiences; undergraduate tutoring experiences; and not least, the experiences of teaching we've encountered as students—which even if only tacitly understood, provide us with our very first models of classroom teaching.

TA preparation is, in a word, multiply-situated.

At the same time, TA preparation is an important component of TA professional development, again as these narratives suggest. Based on our collective experiences, as different as they are, we conclude with four recommendations growing out of these experiences in the hope that they will enhance TA preparation and teaching, specifically by acknowledging and then building on what TAs already bring to that preparation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION ONE: MAKE THE TACIT EXPLICIT THROUGH MAPPING, REFLECTION, AND SIMULTANEOUS THEORY AND PRACTICE

TAs bring a wealth of knowledge from academic, personal, and professional experiences into TA preparation programs, but prior writing knowledge for TAs is often tacit: knowledge that is understood but not articulated. Tacit knowledge can manifest across several teaching practices, including assignment design and assessment. TAs might know what counts as “good writing” (and they might not: see Dryer), for example, but having explicit knowledge of assessment theory when assessing student work is something else entirely. If TAs are not invited to articulate their prior knowledge, it can go unused or, worse, it can even interfere with the uptake of new knowledge, as Rob's narrative suggests. Likewise, as outlined above, Katelyn as a professional editor had developed a language she used in her editing practices, one that was instrumental for her work as an editor, but which did not match her new language as a composition teacher. Such a disconnection can prompt liminality itself, as Ray Land, in *Threshold Concepts: Naming What We Know*, observes: “an encounter with unfamiliar discourse, or different use or forms of language, often was the trigger that provoked a state of liminality” (xi).

Much like the students described by Land, Katelyn had a specific understanding of concepts attached to particular terms. When she entered her graduate program, however, those terms operated within and across two different discourse communities, and they did not always align. On the plus side, much like Amanda and Rob, TAs may tacitly bring experiences that contribute to their pedagogical practice, but even then, such practices only become intentional if

and as they are identified and articulated. Since we can expect that new TAs will bring prior concepts, practices, and language with them, inviting them to connect those prior understandings and practices to new writing concepts, practices, and languages as they engage in TA preparation programs can contribute to their success as classroom teachers—as well as to the success of their students. In addition to asking TAs directly about what they know about teaching writing and how they know it, such an invitation, much like the process used in the Teaching for Transfer (TFT) curriculum, might also focus specifically on naming terms and mapping them.⁴ After creating a glossary of terms by naming what they know, for example, TAs can map these terms, drawing from their experiences as students and employees; making connections across those terms, finding similarities and differences across the contexts the terms represent; and then deciding what all this languaging, as it were, means for their teaching of writing.

Equally as important, it can be helpful to ask TAs to engage in practice, theory, and reflection concurrently, precisely because such an ensemble helps enable TAs make tacit knowledge explicit. Developing explicit knowledge requires language, context, and experience. Moreover, when TAs are asked to engage concurrently in reflecting on their prior experiences, in reading composition theory and in teaching—or possibly co-teaching—in the classroom, their tacit knowledge of writing can be articulated and put into dialogue with new experiences, concepts, and language. Reflection, Kara Taczak argues, “allows writers to recognize what they are doing in that particular moment (cognition), as well as to consider why they made the rhetorical choices they did (metacognition)” (78). Working analogously, asking TAs to engage concurrently in theory and practice and to reflect on writing theory and classroom teaching can facilitate the development of their own theory of teaching writing, a theory bringing together and integrating their own prior experiences and new learning.

Moreover, a study from math shows why such concurrent engagement is helpful. Lee Abdullah and Lena Vimalanandan found that it is the combination of subject matter and pedagogy, interwoven with reflection, that helps pre-service math teachers develop as teachers. Working only tacitly, the pre-service teachers were not able to translate what they knew into successful teaching practices; combining explicit knowledge, practice, and reflection, however, facilitated their development as teachers and helped them to teach students more effectively. In other words, this study demonstrates that providing only theory or content knowledge does not assist new teachers to develop; rather, a combination of theory, practice, and reflection in which the tacit is made explicit does. Thus,

⁴ Erin Workman’s dissertation, situated in TFT, details the efficacy of such naming and mapping for composition students.

thinking in terms of writing teacher preparation (WPE) and as Kali A. Mobley Finn (this volume) observes, “By knowing who TAs are, WPE can be tailored to their needs and experiences”: the suggestions here regarding prior knowledge are intended to foster TA’s sharing of who they are.

RECOMMENDATION 2: EMPLOY A MIXED LONG-TERM SET OF STRATEGIES FOR TA DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF A SAFE SPACE

As these narratives illustrate, the backgrounds of TAs, which are diverse, can present each writing program with a wide range of TA experiences and interests. Accordingly, helping TAs develop explicit knowledge from tacit knowledge requires a set of processes, including those described above as well as others like mentorship, community building, professional development, and research. Such practices, highlighted in the narratives, are much like those identified by Obermark et al., who propose a model of TA preparation extending beyond what they call the “one and done” approach. In part, such a diverse set of TA preparation practices is needed because while many of the best practices in writing teacher education have been identified, the ways they should be implemented isn’t always clear, especially given the diversity in TA prior experiences. As with students in writing classrooms, the makeup of the TAs in any cohort shapes the best direction for learning. Nonetheless, a mix of approaches can better aid TAs in their navigation of the becoming-a-teacher liminal space.

HPL notes that successful engagement in new practices requires “making oneself vulnerable and taking risks,” a factor WPAs and faculty preparing TAs can easily forget (3). In the midst of all of the outside factors often involved with transitioning into a new institution, location, and career, it is often difficult for new TAs to position themselves as new learners, too. As all three narratives in this chapter note, first-time instructors struggle in trying to combine old knowledge with new and with appropriately applying the new to classroom practice: for each, it took time, reflection, and failures for the connection of theory and practice to be made. Acknowledging this liminal space as a different environment for each incoming TA helps create a climate where individual learning needs can be met and where TAs can connect their own prior knowledge with the theory they are encountering. This development takes time.

RECOMMENDATION 3: IDENTIFY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT TA PARTICIPATION IN THEM

As Obermark et al. observe, too often TA preparation is a one-shot experience: in their study of moving from TA preparation-as-single-opportunity to a

“Culture of Collaboration,” Obermark and her colleagues found that TAs often wanted continued professional development, a point that these narratives highlight. Professional development can, of course, take several forms: for Amanda, it has included presenting at conferences; for Rob, it has included attending institutional workshops where he could talk to faculty across the curriculum; and for Katelyn, it has involved becoming a research assistant. In short, providing a diverse array of professional development opportunities can support TAs in a multitude of ways. Moreover, such opportunities—occurring in varied sites: within a department, across campus, and at conferences—can be offered in several ways, which collectively has the effect of encouraging pedagogical development and expertise. Some sessions might be required; some might be initiated and run by an instructor group; some might be offered as a collaboration with a WAC program, a writing center, or a teaching and learning center. Such a professional development program can also help TAs appreciate that the climate of any program is not a universal. If the environment surrounding them, their thesis director, other instructors, and other programs push against the importance of writing instruction, professional development opportunities, especially those from outside the department like teaching centers, can provide another perspective. Even in an ideal and nurturing department environment, professional development opportunities allow for a wider perspective of the profession—one that even the most active departments cannot provide alone. When the framing of writing teacher education is as a temporary activity enabling a degree, the importance of advancing beyond the liminal space of novice instructor dissipates, but by inviting TAs to diverse continuing professional development opportunities, WPAs can help new TAs see their labor in the context of a professional career trajectory, especially when these opportunities involve networking with participating professors and TAs from other departments.

Finally, these sessions can also serve as an introduction to academic presentations outside of the institution. TAs can be encouraged to emulate these presentations and think of them in the wider context of the academic conference. Even when funding or location make participation in conferences difficult, connecting professional development opportunities to discipline-specific conferences serves to dissuade the “temporary staff” framing of TAs.

RECOMMENDATION 4: INTRODUCE THE WRITING CENTER AS AN IMPORTANT SITE FOR TAs AS TEACHERS AND WRITERS

Writing centers, as both Amanda and Katelyn’s narratives attest, often provide a specific kind of TA preparation, one focused on the tutorial setting where TAs can learn about how writing works for individual students. In addition,

TAs often adapt what they have learned in a tutorial setting to the classroom, as Amanda did in learning how to individualize responses to writing. At Florida State University, TAs without 18 credits of graduate work begin working with students not in the classroom, but rather in the Reading Writing Center (RWC). Writing centers, of course, are typically identified with students, as Lil Brannon observes. She frames the writing center as a place where students go for assistance with their writing, but she also describes it as “the place where faculty discuss their teaching and the role that language plays in it.” Carol Haviland, focusing on all writers, defines the writing center more capaciously: as providing “the spaces in which peer and professional writing consultants offer their services to writers” (672). In other words, while a writing center can be helpful to a teacher of writing in providing support to the teacher’s students, the writing center can also be a site of assistance for TAs and their writing. Emphasizing the role of a writing tutor as an audience for all kinds of writing, for example, could open the possibility for teachers to attend writing center sessions focused on their course documents; tutors could help them understand how students will interpret their syllabi and unpack their writing assignments. Likewise, TAs might find that tutorial response to their own work—seminar papers, for instance, conference presentations, and drafts of publications and dissertation chapters—very helpful as well. Moreover, such assistance might be particularly valuable for TAs at campuses without a center for teaching excellence and/or an explicit WAC program.

CONCLUSION

Becoming a teacher is a process of becoming; those who are expert at teaching often say that it, much like learning to write, takes a lifetime. A liminal process, becoming a teacher also begins, as our narratives suggest, long before a formal TA preparation program, sometimes in another professional opportunity; other times in a writing center; always, at least implicitly, in the classrooms where TAs were students. In all these situations, TAs develop knowledges and practices that could be useful were they made explicit; were they were put into a reflective dialogue with new teaching practices; and were they seen as the start of a TA preparation program that includes a variety of professional development opportunities. Our hope is that our recommendations, illustrated by the narratives here, will contribute to such newly strengthened TA preparation programs.

WORKS CITED

Abdullah, Lee and Lena Vimalanandan. “Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching: Making the Tacit More Explicit in Mathematics Teacher Education.” *AIP*

- Conference Proceedings*, vol. 1847, no. 1, 2017, pp. 3-4, <https://aip.scitation.org/doi/abs/10.1063/1.4983887>.
- Bazerman, Charles. "Writing Speaks to Situations Through Recognizable Forms." *Naming What We Know*, edited by Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle, Utah State UP, 2015, pp. 37-39.
- Brannon, Lil. "(Dis)Missing Compulsory First-Year Composition." *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction*, edited by Joseph Petraglia, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc, 1995, pp. 239-248.
- Bransford, John D, Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cocking (Eds.). *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School, Expanded Edition*. National Academy Press, 2000.
- Brewer, Meaghan. *Conceptions of Literacy: Graduate Instructors and the Teaching of First-year Composition*. Utah State UP, 2020.
- Campbell, Kermit E. "There Goes the Neighborhood: Hip Hop Creepin' on a Come Up at the U." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 58, no. 3, 2007, pp. 325-44.
- Cyborg Anthropology. <http://cyborganthropology.com/Liminality>. Accessed May 11, 2022.
- Dively, Rhonda Leathers. "Standardizing English 101 at Southern Illinois University Carbondale: Reflections on the Promise of Improved GTA Preparation and More Effective Writing Instruction." *Composition Forum*, vol. 22, 2000.
- Dryer, Dylan B. "At a Mirror, Darkly: The Imagined Undergraduate Writers of Ten Novice Composition Instructors." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2012, pp. 420-52.
- Haviland, Carol Peterson. "Writing Centers, Writing Programs, and WPAs: Roles by Any Other Names?" *The Writing Program Administrator's Resource: A Guide to Reflective Institutional Practice*, edited by Stuart C. Brown and Theresa Jarnagi Enos, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc, 2002.
- Land, Ray. "Preface." *Naming What We Know*, edited by Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle, Utah State UP, 2015, pp. Xi-xiv.
- Larson, Richard L. "The 'Research Paper' in the Writing Course: A Non-Form of Writing." *College English*, vol. 44, no. 8, 1982, pp.811-16, <https://doi.org/10.2307/377337>.
- Margino, William and Peter Sorrell. "Professionalizing the Amateur: Social Media, the 'Myth of the Digital Native,' and the Graduate Assistant in the Composition Classroom." *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2014, pp. 76-94.
- Mirtz, Ruth. "LAE 5730, Teaching English in College." *Composition Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1995, pp. 20-26.
- Naftzinger, Jeff. *The Growth of Digital Pedagogies and the Factors that Support and Influence Them*. 2014. Florida State University, MA thesis.
- Obermark, Lauren, Elizabeth Brewer, and Kay Halasek. "Moving from the One and Done to a Culture of Collaboration: Revising Professional Development for TAs." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2015, pp. 32-53.
- Phelps, Louise. "Reproducing Composition and Rhetoric: The Intellectual Challenge of Doctoral Education." *Composition Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1995, pp.115-132.

- Pytlík, Betty and Sarah Liggett. *Preparing College Teachers of Writing*. Oxford UP, 2002.
- Reid, Shelley, Heidi Estrem, and Marcia Belcheir. "The Effects of Writing Pedagogy Education on Graduate Teaching Assistants' Approaches to Teaching Composition." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 36, no.1, 2012, pp. 32-73.
- Taczak, Kara. "Reflection is Critical for Writers' Development." *Naming What We Know*, edited by Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle, Utah State UP, 2015, pp.78-81.
- Workman, Erin. *Visualizing Transfer: How Do Students' Conceptual Writing Knowledge Structures Connect to Their Transfer of Writing Knowledge and Practice?* 2017. Florida State University, PhD dissertation.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak. *Writing Across Contexts: Composition, Transfer, and Sites of Writing*. Utah State UP, 2014.
- . "Mapping the Prior: A Beginning Typology and Its Impact on Writing." *Contemporary Perspectives on Cognition and Writing*, edited by Duane Roen, P. Portanova, and Michael Rifenburg, The WAC Clearinghouse/UP of Colorado, 2017, pp 313-330. <https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2017.0032.2.16>.

NARRATIVE 4.

BACK TO THE START: THE TRANSITION FROM ADJUNCT PROFESSOR TO PH.D. STUDENT

Matt Schering

Illinois State University

The start to my teaching career was built on isolation. When I interviewed for my first adjunct teaching position, I was hired, given a textbook, and essentially told to “figure it out.” At the same time, my master’s institution was transitioning into a four-year university, so all my previous mentors were understandably busy with this change and unable to provide the support they had throughout my degree. This trial by fire is the reality of many TAs and adjuncts, and though it was a rough start, I adapted. After three years of adjuncting I decided to go back and earn my Ph.D.

Before my first day of Ph.D. orientation, I felt like I had a pretty good handle on teaching. In addition to my adjunct experience, I also had high scores on evaluations and ratemyprofessor.com to further inflate my ego. I looked at the ten-day orientation as a formality—and a chance to score some free meals—but it turned out to be so much more than that. The orientation was hands on: multiple people were talking to me about my course, my assignments, and even the formatting choices I made on my syllabus! All of this attention was giving me anxiety, and imposter syndrome made its first of many appearances. Throughout my adjunct days there was never any attention paid to what I was doing, and I had free reign to teach as I saw fit. To suddenly have long conversations, and to have an overarching department philosophy was a lot to take in—and I initially resisted.

Resistance turned out to be a mistake. As time went on—and as I adapted to the program and saw the value in their approach—I realized it was a great opportunity to learn from more experienced educators. Teaching can be scary – teaching is scary – but I was lucky enough to have people around to help. I am grateful to have mentors, both faculty and peers, that have the time to answer any questions, and to listen to my ideas about teaching in the program. I thought I knew everything about teaching from my adjunct experience, but there is always something new, new perspectives, new assignments, new assessment models, and you have to be willing to adapt.

Transitions are tough. Going from master's student, to adjunct, to Ph.D. student can be difficult, but it is important to realize there are people around to help! I was someone used to working alone, so the thought of working closely with a department terrified me. I resisted and isolated myself during the first days of my Ph.D. experience, and that was a mistake. When I started to listen I made myself open to learning, and I am a much better teacher and scholar because of it.

As I write this final paragraph, I am now a Ph.D. candidate, on the precipice of finishing my dissertation. Having the opportunity to pause and reflect on my time as a doctoral student made me realize that while the transition from adjunct to Ph.D. student was tough, what I have learned and experienced was worth it. The lessons I have learned, the people that I have met have made me a better teacher and a better scholar. Uprooting your life to start anew can be terrifying, but for me, it was absolutely worth it.

CHAPTER 5.

**BECOMING AND BELONGING:
THE THREE DOMAINS OF NEW
TEACHERS OF WRITING**

Emily Jo Schwaller

University of Arizona

“There is nothing simple about learning how to teach writing, and there is nothing simple to say about writing teachers.”

– Jessica Restaino

I met with my first participant, Allen, in the basement of our main library on campus. I arrived twenty-minutes early, worried I was going to be late or he would not recognize me. I awkwardly asked the undergraduates in the study room to leave. They scrambled out while I made small talk with Allen about his summer and how he liked the town so far. Eventually we settled down and I was able to get my phone out and my coffee ready so we could begin the interview. The first meeting was more formal than the rest as we went over the consent form and what to expect from the research. We started by going down the list of questions I had compiled, checking off boxes, and proceeding forward. Until we got to his past educational experiences. Here was the moment I knew Allen was going to either decide to trust me or not. As Lisa Blakenship writes in her book on rhetorical empathy, “[a]n approach such as rhetorical empathy involves giving up power in certain ways: that is, when we decide to listen to someone’s stories and attempt to discern what is motivating them, we choose to be vulnerable” (121). Allen and I had to decide at this moment if we were going to be vulnerable. He wavered back and forth and I could tell there was more to his story about why he transferred to a small high-school with less than ten students in a class. Eventually, Allen began to open-up about his struggles with mental health and how he felt in his first high school.

Emily Jo: Okay, what made you decide to go [to boarding school]?

Allen: Yeah, that gets into more personal stuff.

Emily Jo: If you are uncomfortable you don’t have to answer.

Allen: Yeah no, I’ll let you in.

The transcript shows the moment of trust, of “letting me in” and allowing me a glimpse of his identity beyond just “teacher” or “graduate student” but “person” became the base for my research experiences moving forward.

We are never just one thing. Coming into my study, I was more than just a researcher and I invited my participants to be more than just teachers/students/scholars. We carry forward a variety of narratives and choices that play out in new situations as we define our roles. My choice to meet Allen in the library basement, to wear makeup and “professional clothing,” and to drink coffee were all rhetorical choices about what I wanted to carry forward into our space—whether I was conscious of them or not. As Deborah Britzman writes, “[B]ecoming a teacher of a classroom is a personal matter” (4). It deals with the emotional, pedagogical, and intellectual interactions between people. These rhetorical choices and narratives that play out in the space of our interviews, classrooms, and interactions are the root of my study and theory building. Throughout this chapter, I outline the experience of five new teachers of writing over the course of two years and develop three domains of identity that new teachers maneuver to become teachers of writing and belong in our communities of practice (Lave and Wenger). The purpose of this chapter is to generate specific theories about identity from the data and represent the experiences of new teachers throughout their first two years of teaching.

WHY STUDY IDENTITY IN WRITING PEDAGOGY EDUCATION

As a field writing studies has dedicated a lot of time and energy on how best to train graduate students as new teachers. From the implications of theory and practice in teacher training (Dobrin; Dryer; Fisher) to types of training programs (Dobrin; Latterell; Rupiper Taggart and Lowery) and professional development (Obermark et al.; Reid et al.), Writing Pedagogy Education (WPE) has carved a place in our disciplinary conversations. WPE is a term coined by Reid and Estrem¹ that “encompasses the ongoing education, mentoring, and support of new college-level writing instructors” (223), specifically Graduate Teaching Instructors (GTIs) entering the specific community of first-year writing (FYW). The scholarship on WPE expands in many directions due to the many demands on administrators and new teachers. As Reid points out, “It can be easy to get caught up in the truly impossible goal of quickly “producing” new teachers who meet all core standards to deliver a curriculum” (247). Studies in the early 2000s focused largely on types of training offered and were primarily reaching a Writing Program Administrator

1 The term GSI comes from Meaghan Brewer’s work who highlights the agency of graduate students as instructors of record rather than assistant teachers (4).

(WPA) audience. The research was often conducted by WPAs attempting to understand best practices for WPE and focused on issues such as disciplinary bias (Dobrin; Latterell; Payne and Enos), funding and labor (Fedokovich and Hall; Murray), and administrative burnout (Belanger and Gruber).

More recently, WPE has switched to emphasize specific individual teacher choices. Dylan Dryer, Carolyn Wisniewski, Meaghan Brewer, and Meredith Reed highlight individual GSI experiences in practicum courses by looking at moments of individual agency and the manifestation of an individual's understanding of teaching and writing. Dryer's article focuses on ten GSIs' responses to student writing and the assumptions about first-year students the novice teachers are making. Specifically, he focuses on how new GSIs "projected versions of their own academic writing histories onto the students" (425). By studying students' responses, Dryer finds moments where graduate students moved beyond these projections and grappled with academic writing at large. Not only is a practicum course an introduction to teaching but students are also confronting their understanding of writing, higher education, and making meaning of their past educational experiences. Meaghan Brewer's work focuses on graduate students' "conceptions of literacy" and how these structures and ideologies about writing and language influence their experiences with WPE. Similarly, Wisniewski's article looks at how twelve novice teachers responded to challenges with students, the curriculum, classroom management, and pedagogy. Wisniewski ends by writing novice teachers "reflect across domains of teaching identities as reflective practitioners who assimilate new learning into their pedagogical reasoning and practice" (49). The concept of maneuvering through domains illustrates the shifting, morphing, and playing within new communities of practice. Lastly, Reed's article focuses on graduate students as *bricoleurs* who shape their teaching practices and materials—and subsequently selves—on four categories of potentially disjointed materials. She suggests WPE can help make these inventions "purposeful" rather than "haphazard." All of these scholars focus on what is happening *within* WPE and training. Very few focus on the external factors that also impact graduate student lives and their experience with WPE.

One way WPE fills this gap is by drawing on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), specifically the work of education scholars Lave and Wenger whose concept of communities of practice upholds many ideas of moving from novice to expert and describing the socially situated learning process of emerging as a practitioner. They define communities of practice as a "set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (98). The concept of community or social awareness filters across WPE research and teacher research through figured worlds (Holland et al.) and Gee's concept of discourse communities.

The large emphasis is the influence of other's knowledge practices and how that informs *how* we become and *who* we become. Thus, identity politics are still an essential aspect of these theories of teacher training.

Despite the recent emphasis on individual identities in writing studies, the concept of addressing the whole person and identity work has a long history of research in teacher education (Alsup; Assunção et al.; Beijaard et al.; Britzman; Danielewicz; Connelly and Clandinin; Gratch; Lipka and Brinthaupt; Palmer; Shulman). As WPE scholarship was emerging in the early 2000s, teacher education scholars were looking at identity work and performance (Alsup; Britzman; Danielewicz). Janet Alsup's work provides a richer understanding of individual teachers' lives and negotiations with professional identities. Within her qualitative study of secondary English teachers, she uses "borderlands" as a framework for understanding how teachers cross between identities within new spaces—such as student teaching. Additionally, Jessica Restraino continues this conversation conducting a qualitative study on the experiences of case studies where she examines their interpretation of materials, classroom authority, and grading practices. In her concluding chapter she notes: "The overarching question we face in our work to prepare and support graduate student teachers is not only how to give them the courage to, as Higgins urges, "write [their] story in pencil" but how to get them to care enough about our world to want to even begin their story here" (119). In order for GSIs to want to write their stories in "our world" they need to feel like they belong in the space of practicum, writing programs, their FYW classrooms, and higher education at large. As Lave and Wenger write "a deeper sense of the value of participation to the community and the learner lies in *becoming* part of the community" (111). GSIs need to value our community of practice and we need to do the same in order to begin this process of belonging. They need to resolve their inner and individual conceptions of teaching and allow researchers to see *their* larger picture. Further, Restaino uses "our world" to describe those within writing studies and WPE, but we should also ask GSIs to include us in *their* world so we understand the merging of the two and how that impacts teacher and personal development long term.

METHODS AND CODING SCHEME

THE HOW AND WHY OF MY STUDY

My research focuses on the experiences of five graduate students over the course of two years, August 2018-September 2020. None of the participants had taught before and did not have formal teacher training prior to coming to the institution, Southwest U. They were recruited at GSI orientation, a week-long immersive training that prepares them to be instructors-of-record starting in their first Fall semester. Table 5.1 provides a breakdown of my participants:

Table 5.1. Participants

Allen	he/him/his; domestic student; LIT
Butterfly	she/her/hers; international student; TESL
Georgie	she/her/hers; international student (university designated ²); CW
Malinka	she/her/hers; domestic student; TESL
Sully	she/her/hers; domestic student; LIT

Note: Participants all chose pseudonyms representing a wide range of external identities: family names, nicknames, pets, etc

Each participant chose to engage in the study as part of their own professional development and also received a modest stipend. Data gathered included: interviews, focus groups, individual reflection prompts, ePortfolios (a writing program requirement that includes lesson plans, observations, course evaluations, etc.), individual coding of interviews, and a survey. These methods are in keeping with previous teacher education and WPE scholars (Alsup; Britzman; Daniewski). Additionally, these methods illustrate my emphasis on feminist methodolgoies of inclusion and participant experience (Alsup; Powell and Takayoshi; Selfe and Hawisher). The ontological underpinnings of my study align with qualitative research, which Merriam and Tisdell state is “interested in *understanding the meaning people have constructed*; this is how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (15). These moments and experiences are weighted based on historical and institutional points of access, which research contributes too. As education scholar Tuhiwai Smith writes in her book on decolonizing methodologies, “research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake that occurs in a set of political and social conditions” (5). In order to address colonized and marginalizing forms of research it is essential to practice ethical and self-reflexive research practices—such as feminist methodologies. One of the central questions driving feminist qualitative methods is: “Can researchers understand and represent the experiences or others without misrepresenting, misappropriating, and distorting their realities?” (Kirsch ix). In order to achieve this goal, there are multiple suggestions made by feminist researchers: collaboration with participants, engaging in grounded theory, greater attention to reciprocity, providing space for participant narratives, and honestly and frequently disclosing thereparathers’ subjectivity, power, and motivations (Cushman; Farakas and Haas; Harding; Kirsch and Royster). I achieved these markers by being

² Here I say “university designated” because Georgie did not identify as an international student.

a peer researcher with my participants—unlike the majority of WPE research I was a graduate student at the time of the study—and used that subject position to experience *with* my participants rather than research *at* them. Additionally, my participants generated codes and revised aspects of the final project based on their interpretations of the data, experiences with the research, and desire to be “seen.” Through these method/odologies three concrete categories emerged due to the interplay of codes and experiences: community practice, individual motivations, and role expectations.

THE THREE DOMAINS OF LEARNING TO TEACH AT SOUTHWEST U

The three domains described transcend the individual experiences of all five participants and illustrate shared ground where each emerging teacher exercises identity in new communities of practice. By drawing on these concepts, I show the fluidity of these domains throughout different moments of time, materials, and with various players. The focus is broader than solely becoming a teacher but instead becoming a member of a community and achieving individual goals within the time frame of graduate school—as these interactions shape the liminal space myself and my participants found ourselves in. Additionally, by looking at external factors beyond WPE, we gain a sense of GSI’s values, which influence their entrance into the community.

It is important to iterate these domains are *not* entirely separate entities, bounded, or distinct from one another. Jane Danielewicz writes in her book *Teaching Selves: Identity, Pedagogy, and Teacher Education* that identities are “produced through participation in discourse” and “are the result of the dynamic interplay between discursive processes that are internal (to the individual) and external (involving everyone else)” (11). Similarly, new teachers’ personas are generated by the “dynamic interplay” between them and is unique although the presence of all three domains remains. The three domains are: 1) community practices; 2) individual motivations; and 3) role expectations. During this section, I outline each of the domains in more depth to provide definition, theoretical framework, and examples from participant experience.

As shown in Figure 5.1, there are three domains of learning to teach GSIs encounter and maneuver through using reflection, experience, and social relationships. These three points of contact represent the learning process of new teachers and the activities they engage in to negotiate the three domains. New teachers use reflection to critically understand their values, experiences, and practices (Alsup; Schulman; Schön); experience as an avenue for entering into new communities of practice (Dewey; Finders and Rose; Flanigan); and

collaboration to socially construct knowledge (Lave and Wenger). These processes are essential avenues for becoming a teacher. Reflection is often cited as a way to interpret experiences and generate productive teacher scholars. In teacher education, the work of Schön and Shulman frequently draws on teachers as “reflective practitioners.” As Alsup writes, “Experience by itself is not inherently useful; it is helpful only if it is subject to critical reflection” (87). Critical reflection is facilitated by experience and the collaboration with peers in practicum courses. These processes are used to maneuver the three domains and their identities are exercised during the negotiation process. Additionally, not all teachers grapple with the same ones equally but instead it is contingent on their own foundational experiences, mentorship, agency, and values.



Figure 5.1. Three Domains of New Teachers

DOMAIN 1: COMMUNITY PRACTICES

Southwest U has a distinctive culture due to its location, recent designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution, and highly rated rhetoric and composition and creative writing programs. Although there are many similarities to other Research 1 universities, the mixture of local culture, resources, and politics (for example English is not housed within the College of Humanities), and academic research creates a distinct mixture of opportunities and constraints. I draw on concepts of Lave and Wenger to define both “community” and “practice” and the combination of the two. In their work on Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) they write, “Participation is always based on situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world” (51). The situated negotiation of participants takes place

within this specific writing program and the community practices participants maneuver through are essential to their participation—and also their ability to exercise identity. The “situatedness” of Southwest U includes the communities’ discourses, opportunities, and constraints that develop and solidify practices of the specific community. As Wenger writes:

Such a concept of practice includes both the explicit and the tacit. It includes what is said and what is left unsaid; what is represented and what is assumed. It includes the language, tools, documents, images, symbols, well-defined roles, specified criteria, coded procedures, regulations, and contracts that various practices make explicit for a variety of purposes. . . (47)

Some practices at Southwest U include: communal discourse and definitions, preceptor/program structures, textbooks and teacher materials for the first-year writing (FYW) curriculum, and assumptions about the student population. One of the largest community practices influencing the new teachers in this study is a FYW curriculum oriented to “genre awareness.” The use of genre as a skeletal structure of the first-year curriculum comes from the scholarly interest of researchers in the writing program and current conversations within the field of rhetoric and composition. Upon entering the community, new teachers are defining and redefining the term “genre” in this new disciplinary context and its influences on their understanding of curriculum, materials, and scholarly work. As Tardy et al. state, “Most novice FYW teachers will not have formally learned about the role of genre in writing instruction, either as teachers or as composition students themselves. As a result, FYW instructors will bring shared and divergent understandings of genre to their teaching.” In a community frequently using the term, a shared definition emerges—or at least a workable one for new teachers to bring into their classes. My participants started with mixed reactions towards the concept of genre and yet in the focus group—a year after teaching for the first time—they valued the concept as a part of FYW curriculum. In Georgie’s first interview, she states:

Coming from a pretty strong writing background I feel like I understand genre very well. I’m not worried about it.” She goes on to describe her own field of non-fiction as a “versatile genre of creative writing” and when asked about the differences between FYW and teaching creative writing she states, “If it was an intro to creative writing, it would probably be broken up into different sections and would focus on different kinds of creative writing so very worldly poetry, fiction, non-fiction,

screenwriting. You could add in as many genres as you wanted.” (Interview 1)

In her second interview at the end of the semester, Georgie states:

I found that most of my students didn't really get it [genre]. They didn't really engage with it, and I think it's more a product of them not being able to think critically about things. Some of them did a much better job than others, but on the whole, I was like, “Oh, this is kind of insipid, it's not really ...” You're just telling me what it is, you're not really interrogating what genre is, how this fits into it and what its purpose is and what it tells us about the community. I mean, we could've just had a whole class on just genre. I could've spent a lot more time on that than I had time to spend. (Interview 2)

Finally, in the focus group a year after teaching for the first time, Georgie argues that an ideal FYW curriculum includes:

A genre analysis and you discuss communities and ways of thinking and forming knowledge and it's a much more epistemological kind of take on what writing is. The goal is to try and get students to think about the way that they're reading and writing in a very large and extensive context.³ (Focus Group, Fall 2019).

These instances illustrate how Georgie goes from a definition of genre that is comfortable and defined by types of creative writing to genre as an “epistemological” form of knowledge making that “tells us about community.” The shift in defining genre comes directly from the writing program's community practices and materials such as the curriculum, which includes a genre analysis, the textbook, which uses genre and a genre-based approach to understanding literacy and community, Georgie's preceptor who was currently working with another scholar on genre-based research, and professional development opportunities focused on genre. Additionally in the first interview she is responding directly to the question “what do you think of the term genre” compared to “what do you think about FYW curriculum” and her organically bringing in the term in the focus group shows a level of familiarity illustrating her move from newcomer to participant because she can draw on its shared discourse. Additionally, she has authority over this discourse by engaging specifically with this concept in her

3 Quote was revised for clarity, specifically terms such as “like” and “um” were removed.

own teaching and translating to students. As Lave and Wenger write, “Peripheral participation is about being located in the social world. *Changing* locations and perspectives are part of actors’ learning trajectories, developing identities, and forms of membership” (37). Thus, Georgie’s learning and changing of perspective is a result of experience, collaboration, and reflection in and about the community. Additionally, her change in location reveals the mix of negotiating her writer identity in an MFA program and her role as a FYW instructor where the term “genre” has different implications.

DOMAIN 2: INDIVIDUAL MOTIVATIONS

Beyond community practices, individuals play an equally important role in understanding and developing the teaching persona. New GSIs bring in their own practices that influence the community. Individual motivations dictate how teacher identities are rhetorically exercised based on personal needs, opportunities, and constraints. Individual’s actions are often a product of these motivations and determine the relationship between the community, new roles, resistance, and belonging. Individual motivations are often conceptualized by teacher educators as resistance or lack of interest rather than an autonomous exercise by new GSIs who are maneuvering this community for their own professionalization (Dobrin; Ebest; Hesse). Obermark et al. write, “[T]he field continues to struggle with how to prepare them [GTAs] meaningfully for the teaching they will do in their immediate future as TAs and for the responsibilities they will take on as they move forward in their careers” (32).

The emphasis on the “field” doing this work frequently ignores the GSIs own agency over how they are experiencing training and interpreting this information. As Fischer writes the reason for the lack of interest in her theory course was that “some of the MFA students were not as interested in teaching English 101—or learning the theory behind that teaching—as they were in producing their own writing, and therefore had little time or tolerance for a pedagogy course that required the kind of rigor that warranted granting three graduate credits” (201). Rather than “not interested” a better term is “not motivated” because it does not align with the goals of the individual. Fischer mentions “time” as a product of this lack of interest and I view this as a constraint that many new teachers face as they are coming into their disciplinary and professional communities. Allen, who is pursuing his Ph.D. in literature describes in his first interview, “I enjoy teaching personally. That’s something that I think there’s inherent value in. To me, personally, it is something that’s important and I feel like when I teach I’m making a difference.” Yet in his last interview he remarks:

It's so hard being a teacher and to spend 60 minutes one on one with a student and not feel like I'm falling behind in everything else I should be doing as a grad student. So I still create that space for students that want it, but I kind of hate that I feel torn professionally between helping people and helping myself. (Interview 4)

Here Allen describes the tension of his own motivations of graduate school—in this case completing his seminars and earning a degree—but also how he enjoys working with students individually as a teacher. It is not lack of interest but instead directly related to his own constraints of time, emotional bandwidth, and other obligations. Yet, despite not having the time to put into teaching he would like, Allen also actively makes the choice to prioritize other parts of his professionalization, despite his vulnerability and subject position. He is exercising agency within the community practices of conferencing with students. He gives students the same choice by making time and space for those that want to exercise *their* agency as well by meeting with him but no longer makes these long conferences mandatory.⁴ He mentions throughout the final interview he chose not to go to continual professional development workshops not because they don't seem valuable but because "I feel like there's a lot I still want to learn but I have to learn more experimentally and that's what works for me. I think it's stuff I'll learn as I continue to teach *if* I continue to teach" (emphasis added). Allen's motivations then are not solely professionalization as a teacher but also exploring whether or not he wants to teach and how it fits into his overall goals.

Malinka frequently came into conflict with her own motivations as a teacher and researcher and the program she found herself in—both with her preceptor and her peers. The applied linguistics degree at Southwest U is primarily a teaching degree and Malinka remarks that "I was cut off. I'm just always excluded. A lot of people view me as nerdy because I get really excited when we talk about identity investment and motivation. I love research. Most of my class hates it. They just want to teach, they don't like doing research" (Interview 2). Throughout her time Malinka reflects on how she both loves teaching but also her main motivation is to learn more about linguistics and pedagogy to do her own research. Her feelings of belonging and isolation are in conflict with the rest of her cohort's whose goals are directly related to teaching. Additionally, her own identity markers as converting to Muslim directly impacts her feelings of isolation. She states:

⁴ These interviews took place during Spring 2020 and a large constraint was the response to Covid-19 and shifting to online. Allen's conferences were shifted to this new medium.

I don't know where I belong since I became a Muslim. In a hijab I'm not seen as American. Other Americans really don't want to be around me. They just see me as super religious. They just assume I don't do things. A lot of my co-workers will go out to a bar or do things that I'm never invited to. And then with Muslims there's been a lot of distrust because they don't know if I'm faking it or I'm a government spy, or someone threatening. (Interview 3)

She goes on to state that "I know my identity, it's just the place and belonging. It's through research and working with refugees." Malinka's motivation in graduate school is beyond earning a degree but working with other populations who feel isolated. Her experience also illustrates a larger tension where an individual's motivations are seemingly unattainable or challenged because of issues of power, agency, and authority. The motivation or goal of "earning a degree" is largely influenced by other factors such as, for Malinka, size, race, nationality, religion, and gender. Regardless of motivation it is impossible to escape issues of access and agency. Malinka describes this problem of access by feeling a sense of belonging in academia but also an outsider in her cohort and America more generally. The overlap of multiple communities of practice and individual motivations directly impact her ability to act and exercise agency in certain situations.

Malinka also describes how her preceptorship group did not support her decisions with challenging situations and this created a sense of mistrust throughout the rest of the year with her preceptor. She continually withdrew from sharing in class because she felt "out of alignment" with the group—or in this case the community. Malinka illustrates in every interview the challenge of personal identity markers as they come into contact with community practices—especially as context is unstable, malleable, and unpredictable. She faces many personal needs such as safety, belonging, and investment in research, constraints through physical size, safety, and connection with peers, and opportunities through her interest in research—she eventually got accepted to her first choice Ph.D. program in linguistics. These factors on her individual motivation continually shift her perspective and ideas of a "good teacher persona." As Britzman writes, "Learning to teach—like teaching itself—is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become" (31). For Malinka and the other participants the motivation to *transform* and *into what* is related to individuals' own sense of belonging and the constraints and opportunities that come with those lived experiences.

DOMAIN 3: ROLE EXPECTATIONS

The third domain is role expectations. This domain is defined by both individuals and communities. Individuals' experiences, feedback, and assumptions about communities and the subject position they are expected to perform; role expectations as a dimension reflects how individual histories and positionality in a context shape certain expectations. These expectations are context specific and are also based on individuals' motivations and expectations of self within the community and how the community can help an individual reach their goals. Additionally, the community members have expectations about individuals' ability to perform and practice within their structure and develop a series of procedures such as teacher portfolios, teacher training, class observations, etc. to help individuals fulfill those roles. Table 5.2 illustrates places within the interviews where participants outlined their expectations.

Through the excerpts found in Table 5.2, we can easily identify multiple patterns:

1. Expectations new teachers had of their undergraduate students (indicated in red).
2. Expectations about the Writing Program (indicated in blue).
3. Expectations placed on the self by the individuals (indicated in green).
4. Expectations about the situation of the classroom or teaching procedures (indicated in purple).

These various expectations show the range of expectations individuals bring into this domain based on their own interpretation of the community and how they anticipate it will function. Expectations are always anticipatory—they are a way to prepare for what might happen either in the short term or long term. Additionally, all of these expectations are centered on vulnerability. In my coding I identified three aspects of vulnerability: 1) the vulnerability of the subject position of graduate students; 2) the vulnerability of entering into unknown spaces and assuming authority and new identity markers; 3) the vulnerability of teachers' undergraduate students (either perceived or projected). Moments of vulnerability were frequently conceptualized by participants as expectations. For example, participants had various expectations about their students like they would behave a certain way, do the completed readings, and challenge grades. Thus, teachers prepared for these outcomes assuming they would be vulnerable because of their own subject positions. The link between expectations and vulnerability is different from community expectations, which focus more on helping professionalize students and guide them into entering into disciplinary conversations.

Table 5.2. Outlined Expectations

Participant	Participant Excerpts of Expectations ⁽¹⁾
Allen	<p>“I kind of had to adjust [a classroom plan] on the fly a lot more than I expected when students didn’t read.” (Interview 1).</p> <p>“I do a moderate amount of lecturing, I think I did actually less than I expected to do though.” (Interview 2).</p> <p>“You don’t go into the college setting expecting to correct behavioral issues. You kind of assume everyone’s an adult and is going to be an adult about things.” (Interview 4).</p>
Butterfly	<p>“I told students ‘I have high expectations. Don’t disappoint me.’” (Interview 1)</p> <p>“I was expecting them to challenge me on grades but they didn’t.” (Interview 2).</p> <p>“I told my students “If you expect me to just be the person who knows everything and should pretend that I know it all, it’s not going to happen.” (Interview 3).</p> <p>“When international students come here it is not clearly communicated what is expected from them or maybe because I’m a graduate student I was supposed to figure it out on my own.” (Interview 4).</p>
Georgie	<p>“There was this unspoken expectation that we knew why we were teaching what we were teaching.” (Interview 1)</p>
Malinka	<p>“You shouldn’t have expectations because there’s always something new in the classroom. Being a teacher or being ideal is being flexible.” (Interview 1).</p> <p>“I did what the writing program would expect out of me. I had good intentions of working with the student.” (Interview 2).</p>
Sully	<p>“The biggest thing coming here was that I wasn’t expecting that everybody uses computers. Everybody here has a laptop.” (Interview 1).</p> <p>“There’s more risk among public speaking amongst your peers. I felt that there’s less expectation with teaching because they’re younger, they’re first years in college. Less imposter syndrome.” (Interview 2).</p> <p>“The first mistake I ever made, I just remember feeling so devastated because my first TCEs⁽²⁾ were not what I was expecting.” (Final Interview).</p>

Notes: (1) Participants would bring up multiple scenarios and expectations in an interview and I limited it to one each. For example Butterfly mentions having “high expectations” of students and herself throughout two of her interviews. (2) Teacher-Course Evaluations.

One of the most tangible examples of community expectations is the C’s “Statement on Preparing New Teachers of Writing,” which outlines various

practices writing programs need to adopt in order to help guide new teachers of writing. These frequently lead to expectations or procedures adapted by a writing program to assess and provide reflective opportunities for new teachers. Southwest U's new teachers do the following: meet weekly with a mentor in a small group; create a teaching portfolio with reflections, assignments, and examples of feedback giving; participate in continual professional development opportunities; complete the summer orientation and subsequent general meetings; submit grades and information at the end of each semester; and following the practices of the writing program (which includes further expectations such as conferencing with students). These layers of procedural expectations point to the values of the community such as providing space for growth, community, and reflective practice; however, it is not the same as the vulnerability teachers bring in individually as they interpret and navigate expectations. Similarly, community expectations are also anticipatory in trying to help students develop practices for their future careers. In Latterell's article she criticizes the "one and done" approach where teacher preparation is in a singular course writing: "such a curriculum raises concerns regarding the shape and direction of writing pedagogy...and the long-term preparation of GTAs as professional teachers" (22). Here, Latterell points to why writing programs should have more procedures for teachers because of her anticipation of the implications of the "one and done" approach on writing pedagogy and future teachers. Writing programs are at large responsible for not only the teachers but also the field of writing studies, the undergraduate students, boards of directors and accreditation, the larger university, and many other stakeholders. These expectations then create the procedures teachers are maneuvering through and trying to decipher.

The combination of individual expectations and community expectations encourages new GSIs to also reflect on their past experiences with teachers and how those models of "teachers" have shaped their definitions of the teaching role. As Alsup writes, new teachers frequently reflect on whether they "fit the social norm or the cultural model of teacher" (45). New teachers either tend to gravitate towards past experiences with teachers and form themselves in their likeness by performing as they were performed to (Reid, Estrem, and Belcher) or "give up or suppress aspects of their personal selves that do not conform to the cultural model or "script" of the secondary [or other] teacher" (Britzman 39). At the end of each interview, I asked a variation of the question "Do you identify yourself as a teacher?" and the answers ranged from emphatic yeses to complex understandings of expectations. Allen particularly struggled with the term "teacher" and instead responded to the term "instructor." In his second interview he states:

It's a really weird sort of ambiguous place that you inhabit as a graduate student, where it's like you're an instructor but a student at the same time. I kind of identify as a teacher but I don't really like the term personally because it kind of connotes having more knowledge necessarily and stuff and a more traditional approach top-down, which just as a term I don't like as much. I think an instructor is a more guiding kind of presence that isn't necessarily always more knowledgeable but has some specialized knowledge that they're able to apply and help in some cases. I think there's no perfect term for it really.

He continues this line of thinking in his third interview where he says, "I feel like the term instructor has less professional associations than teacher does just because you have teachers as a career to a lot of people and instructors I guess you do too but to a lesser degree." Allen's frequent grappling with the term teacher was frequently a product of his own experience with past teachers who preferred a "lecture" style and not wanting to claim teaching as a vocation (Interview 2). Allen's expectations of teachers then include someone who sees teaching as a career, a professional vocation, and has some large "top-down knowledge." This expectation does not fit the experiences he is having as an "instructor" in his FYW class and thus he rejects it because of the narrative he associates with the term teacher. These narratives and expectations frequently shape the way GSIs approach teacher training—especially whether or not they identify as being in that role.

BECOMING A TEACHER: NAVIGATING BETWEEN THE THREE DOMAINS

The three domains—community practices, individual motivations, and role expectations—are not independent but instead form one another and constantly rearrange themselves based on the context and individual interpreting the experience. Jane Danielewicz writes that identities "are the result of the dynamic interplay between discursive processes that are internal (to the individual) and external (involving everyone else)" (11). The dynamic interplay of individual and context is always shaping and creating the boundaries of the experience. As reflections, experiences, and social interactions occur so does a reshaping of understanding teacher identity. Additionally, the expectations one has of the other for this interplay plays a large role in what is acted upon and what is left unsaid. The three domains are also representative of the continual debate of the role of selfhood in communities. Scholars have long debated questions about the role of

self within a community of practice and the influence of individual autonomy. Raúl Sánchez states that:

Generally, we [compositionists] prefer to see identity as enmeshed with, informed by, or resulting from a range of other factors that converge at the level of both the individual and the collective. Because of our interest in agency, we also prefer to see identity as something individuals can construct for themselves to some degree, through writing or other forms of symbolic action. (61)

The relationship between domains accounts for these factors. Specifically, the concept of *agency* acts as the tether for new teachers that sustains their role in the tangled knot of community, individual, and language practices. Agency is both seen in opposition and fostered through these relationships. For example, instructors bringing in their own readings into the curriculum was an agentic act seen in opposition to the community (which has a set textbook) but also is fostered through the community whose policies and emphasis on learning outcomes rather than standardized assignments allows for instructor autonomy. Additionally, instructors' interpretation of this policy is largely based on their own expectations of their job, themselves, and the community they practice in. The combination of these domains accounts for the complexity of the new teacher subject position.

Becoming a teacher while belonging in a community is the blend of individual motivations, community practices, and role expectations. Through the intersection and experience of all three, GSIs become something new and gain a sense of belonging in the community and the community itself begins to belong to these instructors. Additionally, new teachers' roles are malleable as time and context shifts. In his final interview Allen stated: "I guess I was coming into grad school to feel more concrete as I progressed...but life changes and you just never know what's going to happen. I feel like being adaptable is the moral of the past two years for me at least." Despite this feeling of ambiguity and loose space when asked, "Do you still see yourself as an instructor or a teacher or how would you define yourself?" Allen stated:

I don't know if I'm any more comfortable ascribing myself with any of those terms as I was when I first came here honestly but I have more of a sense of what it means to be a lot of those things. I don't see myself as any of those things, but I don't see myself as not being any of those things either. The identities of all of that to me aren't hard categories and are very fluid. (Interview 4)

Compared to earlier interviews when Allen adamantly described himself as an instructor, the adaptability and fluidity he notes suggests some sort of transition into the community or role or a phenomenon of becoming. Allen's reluctance to claim a term though illustrates the time it takes to become or belong—after two years he is still adapting and still becoming. What he does have after three years is “a sense of what it means” and through that learning he is able to exist within the community and role ascribed to him.

I suggest that WPAs, GSIs, and other stakeholders take up these domains by responding to the following questions:

1. What role expectations, individual motivations, and community practices are each stakeholder bringing into WPE?
2. How does our community define “belonging” in the writing program?
3. How do *external* factors impact GSIs experience with WPE and how do we adapt our community practices to fulfill these individual motivations?

Through these questions we can begin to facilitate more transparent and meaningful discussions of the GSI experience in and outside of WPE, with the hope of generating more productive communities, revising what we mean by “resistance,” and further communicating to one another our goals. Additionally, these questions act as a starting place to reinterpret some of our community practices—such as composing a teaching philosophy—and examine it through the lens of multiple stakeholder's expectations and motivations. At the beginning of the chapter, I stated we are never just one thing. We also never *stay* the same thing. We shift and maneuver throughout our lives based on the communities we find ourselves in, the motivations we have for ourselves in a space or role, and the expectations we have of ourselves and others.

WORKS CITED

- Alsop, Janet. *Teacher Identity Discourses: Negotiating Personal and Professional Spaces*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2006.
- . “Beyond Member Checks: Moving Toward Transformative Data Analysis.” *Change Matters: Qualitative Research Perspectives for Moving Social Justice Theory to Policy*, Eds. Sj Miller and David E. Kirkland. Peter Lang, 2010, 97-104.
- Assunção Flores, Maria, and Christopher Day. “Contexts Which Shape and Reshape New Teachers' Identities: A Multi-Perspective Study.” *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 22, 2006, pp. 219-232.
- Belanger, Kelly, and Sibylle Gruber. “Unraveling Generative Tensions in the Composition Practicum.” Dobrin, pp. 113-140.
- Blankenship, Lisa. *Changing the Subject*. Utah State UP, 2019.

- Brewer, Elizabeth, et al. "Flipping Professional Development: Engaging Instructor Needs and Changing the Visibility of WPA Work." *Pedagogy*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2018, pp. 483-510.
- Britzman, Deborah P. *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*. 2nd ed., SUNY Press, 2003.
- "CCCC Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing." Conference on College Composition and Communication, Nov. 2015, <https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/statementonprep>
- Creswell, John. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 3rd ed. Sage, 2013.
- Creswell, John W., and Dana L. Miller. "Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry." *Theory Into Practice*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2000, pg. 123-140.
- Cushman, Ellen. "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change" *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1996, pp. 7-28.
- Danielewicz, Jane. *Teaching Selves: Identity, Pedagogy, and Teacher Education*. SUNY UP, 2005.
- Dobrin, Sidney I. "Introduction: Finding Space for the Composition Practicum." Dobrin, pp. 1-34.
- , editor. *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2005.
- Dryer, Dylan B. "At a Mirror, Darkly: The Imagined Undergraduate Writers of Ten Novice Composition Instructors." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2012, pp. 420-452.
- Ebest, Sally Barr. *Changing the Way We Teach: Resistance in the Training of Teaching Assistants*. Southern Illinois UP, 2005.
- Estrem, Heidi, and E. Shelley Reid. "What New Writing Teachers Talk about When They Talk about Teaching." *Pedagogy*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2012, pp. 449-480.
- . "Writing Pedagogy Education: Instructor Development in Composition Studies." *Exploring Composition Studies: Sites, Issues, and Perspectives*, edited by Kelly Ritter and Paul Kei Matsuda, Utah State UP, 2012, pp. 223-240.
- Farkas, Kerri R., and Christina Haas. "A Grounded Theory Approach for Studying Writing and Literacy." Powell and Takayoshi, pp. 81-97.
- Fishman, Jenn. "Longitudinal Writing Research in (and for) the Twenty-First Century." Nickoson and Sheridan, pp. 171-184.
- Fedukovich, Casie, and Megan Hall. "GTA Preparation as a Model for Cross-Tier Collaboration at North Carolina State University: A Program Profile." *Composition Forum*, vol. 33, 2016, <http://compositionforum.com/issue/33/ncsu.php>.
- Finders, J. Margaret, and Shirley K. Rose. "If I Were the Teacher: Situated Performances as Pedagogical Tools for Teacher Preparation." *English Education*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1999, pp. 205-222.
- Fisher, Ruth Overman. "Theory in a TA Composition Pedagogy Course: Not If, but How." Dobrin, pp. 200-213.
- Fonow Mary Margaret, and Judith Cook, "Feminist Methodology: New Applications in the Academy and Public Policy." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2005, pp. 2211-2236.

- Gee, James Paul. "The New Literacy Studies and the 'Social Turn.'" *The Norton Book of Composition Studies*, edited by Susan Miller, Norton, W. W. Norton & Company, 2009, pp. 1293-1310.
- Good, Tina LaVonne, and Leanne B. Warshauer, editors. *In Our Own Voice: Graduate Students Teach Writing*. Pearson, 2008.
- Hardin, Joe Marshall. "Writing Theory and Writing the Classroom." Dobrin, pp. 35-42.
- Harding, Sandra, editor. *Feminism and Methodology*. Indiana UP, 1987.
- Hesse, Douglas. "Teachers as Students, Reflecting Resistance." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 44, no. 2, 1993, pp. 224-231.
- Holland, Dorothy, et. Al. *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*. Harvard UP, 1998.
- Kirsch, Gesa. "Multi-Vocal Texts and Interpretive Responsibility." *College English*, vol. 59, no. 2, 1997, pp. 191-202.
- Kirsch, Gesa, and Jacqueline Royster. "Feminist Rhetorical Practices: In Search of Excellence." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 61, no. 4, 2010, pp. 640-672.
- Latterell, Catherine G. "Training the Workforce: An Overview of GTA Education Curricula." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1996, pp. 7-23.
- Lave, Jean, and Etienne Wenger. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Lipka, Richard P., and Thomas M. Brinthaupt. *The Role of Self in Teacher Development*. SUNY UP, 1999.
- Marshall, James, and Janet Smith. "Teaching as We're Taught: The University's Role in the Education of English Teachers." *English Education*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1997, pp. 246-268.
- Merriam Sharon B., and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Miles, Matthew et al. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. Sage, 2014.
- Obermark, Lauren, et al. "Moving From the One and Done to a Culture of Collaboration: Revising Professional Development for TAs." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2015, pp. 32-53.
- Payne, Darin, and Theresa Enos. "TA Education as Dialogic Response: Furthering the Intellectual Work of the Profession Through WPA." *Preparing College Teachers of Writing: Histories, Theories, Programs, Practices*, edited by Betty P. Pytlik and Sarah Liggett, Oxford UP, 2001, pp. 50-62.
- Powell, Katrina M., and Pamela Takayoshi, editors. *Practicing Research in Writing Studies: Reflexive and Ethically Responsible Research*. Hampton Press, 2012.
- . "Accepting Roles Created for Us: The Ethics of Reciprocity." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 54, no. 2, 2003, pp. 394-422.
- Pytlik Betty P., and Sarah Liggett. *Preparing College Teachers of Writing*. Oxford UP, 2002.
- Raúl, Sánchez. *Inside the Subject: A Theory of Identity for the Study of Writing*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2017.
- Reed, Meridith. "Enacting Bricolage: Theorizing the Teaching Practices of Graduate Writing Instructors." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2020, pp. 107-128.

- Reid, E. Shelley, et al. "The Effects of Writing Pedagogy Education on Graduate Teaching Assistants' Approaches to Teaching Composition." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 32-73.
- Reid, Shelley E. "Anxieties of Influencers: Composition Pedagogy in the 21st Century." *WPA: Writing Pedagogy Education*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2007, pp. 241-250.
- . "On Learning to Teach: Letter to a New TA." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp. 129-145.
- . "Preparing Writing Teachers: A Case Study in Constructing a More Connected Future for CCCC and NCTE." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 62, no. 4, 2011, pp. 687-703.
- . "Teaching Writing Teachers Writing: Difficulty, Exploration, and Critical Reflection." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2009, pp. W197-W221.
- Restaino, Jessica. *First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2012.
- Rupiper Taggart, Amy, and Margaret Lowry. "Cohorts, Grading, and Ethos: Listening to TAs Enhances Teacher Preparation." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2011, pp. 89-114.
- Saur, Elizabeth, and Jason Palmeri. "Letter to a New TA: Affect Addendum." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp. 146-153.
- Selfe, Cynthia L., and Gail E. Hawisher. "Exceeding the Bounds of the Interview: Feminism, Mediation, Narrative, and Conversations about Digital Literacy." *Writing Studies Research in Practice*, edited by Lee Nickoson and Mary P. Sheridan, Southern Illinois U P, 2012, pp. 25-35.
- Shulman, Lee S. *The Wisdom of Practice: Essays on Teaching, Learning, and Learning to Teach*, Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- Smagorinsky, Peter, et al. "Tensions in Learning to Teach: Accommodation and the Development of a Teaching Identity." *Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2004, pp. 8-24.
- Smagorinsky, Peter. "The Methods Section as Conceptual Epicenter in Constructing Social Science Research Reports." *Written Communication*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2008, pp. 389-411.
- Takayoshi, Pamela, et al. "The Construction of Research Problems and Methods." Powell and Takayoshi, pp. 97-122.
- Tardy, Christine M, et al. "Evolving Concepts of Genre." *Composition Forum*, vol. 38, 2018, <https://compositionforum.com/issue/38/evolving.php>.
- Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. Zed Books, 2012.
- Wenger, Etienne. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Wisniewski, Carolyn A. "Looking through Narrow Windows: Problem-Setting and Problem-Solving Strategies of Novice Teachers." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2018, pp. 36-55.

SECTION 2.

INHABITING THE RHETORIC
AND COMPOSITION
TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP

Brady Edwards

New Mexico Junior College

Phillip K. Lovas

UC Merced

Inhabiting an RCTAship can mean many things. For us, it means the ability to perform, sometimes serially and other times simultaneously, the roles of a TA. It is about shifting from student to instructor, from instructor to mentee, from mentee to student—and everything in between—often within a matter of hours. With these shifting roles comes shifting mindsets, from being thought of as experts in writing in first-year composition classes to working as novice scholars in rhetoric and composition seminars to becoming experienced listeners and guides as writing center tutors. Put another way, TAs wear a variety of hats and become used to—if not proficient in—wardrobe changes. The mere repetition of these role changes can help TAs grow as teachers and scholars, learning to inhabit and even thrive in constantly shifting environments, even as they might be tempted to push against and question some roles. And inhabiting a RCTAship can assist those in these roles to consider their reality within the ever-changing landscape of full-time professorships on the horizon, if not the entire academic experience. Inhabiting an RCTAship, with its ever-changing roles, means that these individuals live an extremely liminal and even chaotic life. But a question that surfaces when thinking about this chaos and liminality, though, is what does this mean for them in the throes of the RCTAship and after, not to mention the profession?

This is not a new question. In fact, it simply retraces one of the arguments Nyquist and Wulff brought to the attention of rhetoric and composition scholars over twenty years ago, namely that we need to put teaching assistants in positions to succeed developmentally (49), allowing them to become “more authentic members of [the teaching] community” (Sachs, Fisher, and Cannon 82). But the fact that such questions are still being posed suggests a few possibilities: these questions

have not been answered, current answers are somehow lacking, or the issues are pervasive in nature or scope to the point that scholarship hasn't been able to get its arms around them. Regardless of the explanation, two things are clear: these challenges persist and so does the absence of TA voices as full contributors to the discussion. A reconceptualization could be useful in order to help these burgeoning college-level instructors perform their roles in ways that are both satisfactory for their employment and beneficial to their individual growth as scholars (Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir 62). Our contributors make important strides forward in understanding and responding to these conditions within the RCTAship.

In the first chapter of this section, Leslie R. Anglesey's "Survival is Insufficient': Reimagining TA Orientation as a Meaningful Threshold Boundary," posits that TA orientations, often the first (and sometimes only) threshold to inhabiting a TAship, are too focused on survivalist methods for novice teachers. These survivalist techniques include tasks such as how to create a lesson plan, do a student/instructor conference, design group work, etc. Undoubtedly, these are valuable aspects of teaching but, Anglesey argues, TA orientation designers could shift their focus to listening learning models in the creation of orientations in order to step away from disseminating composition lore. In other words, Anglesey hopes such a shift in orientation thinking and design could allow TAs to not simply wear the "how-to-be-a-teacher" hat in orientations but to be taught as if that wardrobe change had already occurred. This new focus then allows programs to more fully center their attention on professional development through reflective processes that can be missed in survival-oriented orientations.

Following Anglesey's insightful chapter is Madelyn Pawlowski and Brad Jacobson's piece, "Shifting Roles and Negotiating Identities: TA Learning in Landscapes of Practice." These authors discuss the experience of developing a rhetoric and composition textbook as TAs, drawing heavily on communities of practice research and scholarship to highlight the various roles they (and all TAs) perform. Pawlowski and Jacobson argue WPAs can more fully develop TAships through what these authors see as core concepts in professional development: engagement, imagination, and alignment. The authors end the chapter with numerous survey questions for WPAs to help them better understand their TAs' personal interest in professional development. Pawlowski and Jacobson's insights, then, amplify the value of social learning environments for TAs.

Zack K. De Piero and Jennifer K. Johnson's "Doorways to Disciplinarity: Using Threshold Concepts to Bridge Disciplinary Divides and Develop Theory-Practice Praxis," shares results from a mixed-method study of eighteen teaching assistants from various backgrounds. De Piero and Johnson suggest that in order to create more effective teaching practica, WPAs should focus on threshold concepts to help TAs who come to composition from other disciplines and

varying backgrounds. Further, the authors suggest that this type of preparation can deepen individual TA understanding of the field by allowing them to take part in empirical research on those same threshold concepts. In so doing, TAs can begin to step out of the liminalities they experience, for example the push and pull of being an expert in their area of study and playing that role against working as a novice teaching FYC.

The next chapter is Soha Youssef's "International Teaching Assistants (ITAs)' Needs and Undergraduate Native English-Speaking Students (NESS)' Expectations: Meaning Negotiation as a Rhetorical Strategy." Youssef's piece focuses on international graduate TAs and WPA awareness of the unique needs and interests of this often under-theorized group. Youssef asserts, through a mixed method approach focused on both ITAs working with NESSs, that in order to have a balanced and cohesive educational experience, meaning must be negotiated between these groups. ITAs, the author suggests, should be more aware of the classroom dynamic in US schools. Additionally, pedagogical preparation is improved when WPAs listen to and use the information given them by ITAs to design pedagogical preparation programs. Youssef's insight strengthens the argument that WPAs not only need to be aware of the roles their TAs perform but that such performances can occur on foreign stages and in front of unfamiliar audiences. Youssef's contribution to this collection can help WPAs more fully appreciate the diversity of their TA cohorts and their varying professional development needs.

In the final chapter of the "Inhabiting" section, Rachel Robinson-Zetzer and Trixie Smith's "I Feel It in My Body: WC Teaching and Administration as Embodied Praxis," explores the need for discernment in spaces filled with emotion, especially when individuals are not trained to deal with these emotions. Such spaces might include classrooms, offices, or writing centers. The authors do this through a mixing of narrative and academic literature on the liminality of these spaces, arguing for a need to "embrace the emotions around us instead of ignore them, and we do this by paying attention to the ways our bodies feel and move in particular spaces" (Chapter 10, this volume). Often the spaces that graduate students and TAs inhabit are made up of traces, stories, and objects of TAs that have come before, and these traces can physically or emotionally change the atmosphere of a space or even a program. There is value in examining these places.

Often, when research looks at RCTAships, the individuals who inhabit the TAship are overlooked in the search for a better understanding of the writing program as a whole. Choosing a programmatic focus is understandable, but it also relies on something other than lived, direct experience and grounded knowledge that TAs can provide. More specifically, our discussions within this collection, especially in the "Inhabiting" section of the collection require TA voices as direct informants, researchers, scholars. We didn't want to tell RCTAs'

stories for them yet again, when they, as researchers and educators in their own right, can do so in informed, immediate, and direct ways.

Through these chapters, these contributors have shifted the conversation about TA professional development from what is needed in the moment to what is needed to individualize training in ways that will allow TAs need to thrive now and in the future. These are their stories, their research. It is incumbent on us to listen and learn from them, not only for their own wellbeing, but for ours as well—not to mention the continued development of the field. To that end, in addition to these chapters, we have interspersed five RCTA narratives throughout this section. In these narratives—written by Jonathan Marine, Megan Friess, Thir Budhathoki, Elizabeth Topping, and Analeigh Horton—the RCTAs share insights that allow readers to better understand the wealth of stories and experiences that many TAs go through within their programs. These specific TA voices have, we feel, helped us portray the observations and developments that the RCTAs have as they inhabit programs that move them beyond the individualized roles of student, teacher, researcher, mentee, etc. and into something bigger and messier as they begin to think beyond their programs.

While the “Approaching” section of this collection highlights the value of an individualized approach to TA training, the contributors in this section suggest that when inhabiting a TAship, professional development can be more effective when accomplished through social learning and activities. Put another way, every performance is strengthened when each player completely understands everyone else’s role. Each piece in the collection, be it academic or narrative, was chosen because it focuses on ways the RCTAships are inhabited by those wearing the various hats of students, researchers, and instructors. From an immersed and lived point of view, this section hopes to elucidate how programs can improve the labor, mentoring, and communication opportunities for RCTAs.

WORKS CITED

- Nyquist, Jody D., and Donald H. Wulff. *Working Effectively with Graduate Assistants*. Sage Publications, 1996.
- Reid, E. Shelley, Heidi Estrem, and Marcia Belcheir. “The Effects of Writing Pedagogy Education on Graduate Teaching Assistant’s Approaches to Teaching Composition.” *WPA* vol. 36, no.1, Fall/Winter 2012, pp. 33-73, <http://associationdatabase.co/archives/36n1/36n1reid-estrem.pdf>.
- Sachs, Gertrude Tinker, Terry Fisher, and Joanna Cannon. “Collaboration Mentoring and Co-Teaching in Teacher Education.” *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability* vol. 13, no. 2, 2011, pp. 70-86. Research Gate, <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10099-011-0015-z>.

NARRATIVE 5.

STUDENT, TEACHER, TEACHING ASSISTANT: JANUS AND INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY

Jonathan M. Marine

George Mason University

Before I was a GTA I was an adjunct—in the same department and program—at the same school. As a result, I didn't think much about how shifting to a TA position would affect my job: I was still teaching the same classes to the same students. To me, it seemed like a lateral move with the added benefit of covering my Ph.D. course costs. To my peers, I joked it was a “demotion” (and who ever knew you could be demoted from adjunct?).

But the reality was different—mostly in ways I never anticipated. Less books from the library, less copies from printing services, no parking discount, a new ID, etc. Little things you don't think about until they aren't there anymore. The truth was that even though in a strictly functional sense the labor at the core of my job (teaching) had stayed relatively stable, in the eyes of the institution I was now a “student” and not an “employee”—and this entailed a subtle but significant shift in not just my status as an employee, but so too the nature of my work.

(Many of) my students took notice, now regarding me as less than a professor. My bio on the department web portal changed to “Graduate Teaching Assistant” and not “Professor” or “Instructor.” Never mind the fact that I had spent years teaching the class—to them, as to the institution, I was now merely another student. Caught in special type of bureaucratic and professional purgatory; at once a teacher *and* a student (I would point out). But only one part of that identity seemed to matter once I became a GTA.

This isn't a plea for reparations or even a promotion. I'm not angry or feel owed anything. There are advantages to being a TA (free access to the gym!). Yet, caught in these shifting webs of institutional employment status are the lived experiences of **real people**—teachers, admins, professionals, and yes, students. How can an instructor *who also takes classes* be denied a part of their own identity? It's not an either-or situation—the Ph.D. classes come *in addition to* my responsibilities as an instructor (or GTA, whatever). The responsibility hasn't lessened; in fact, it's increased significantly. My identity simply doesn't match

the latticework of institutional designations which amalgamate to comprise my status as a member of the school.

In ancient Roman mythology, Janus was the god of beginnings, transitions, and endings. For him, as for the other deities of ancient mythology, beginnings and endings were indistinguishable. For the TAs and GTAs of modern higher education, Janus represents an important referent—we are at once facing outward to the institutions we serve much as we face inward to our own selves *at the same time*. Caught between beginnings and endings, perpetually in transition, like Janus before us.

CHAPTER 6.

“SURVIVAL IS INSUFFICIENT”: REIMAGINING TA ORIENTATION AS MEANINGFUL THRESHOLD BOUNDARIES

Leslie R. Anglesey

Sam Houston State University

It's only 10:00 am but the air conditioning unit in the room is already working at maximum capacity in the one hundred seat auditorium, its gentle hum more felt than heard. The room seems to stretch off into eternity, the eggshell-colored walls blending into the beige linoleum, and the only things that give me a sense of perspective in the space are the thirty or forty bodies scattered around the room. It's the fall orientation meetings for new and returning adjuncts at my new institution and, as a new faculty member, a colleague had recommended that I attend even if it's not required for me. "It'll help you get the lay of the land," she had said brightly, "and afterward, we can get lunch together."

Forty-five minutes into the meeting, however, I wish I had suggested we get lunch and skip the non-required meeting. Because even though I'm at a new institution, I have quickly learned that the lay of the land isn't entirely different from what I've seen in the past. Or, rather, while the land itself (the student body, the region in which my institution is situated, etc.) is vastly different, the ways in which the presenters are laying the land (the orientation) is no different than what I've heard in the past. My phone sits inches from my hand and, as the speaker demonstrates how to leave student feedback for essays submitted through the learning management system, the phone beckons me to pick it up and illuminate its LED screen.

I'm a little disappointed to realize that the only notification on my lock screen is one from Timehop, a social media app that shows you posts you created on that day in years past, enticing me to open the app with a click bait worthy message: "See if you can remember 11 years ago. . ." Even though I don't want to be, I'm tempted. I divert my attention back to the speaker but the little devil on my shoulder tells me that this learning management system is not significantly different than what I've seen in the past. I'm not missing anything. I look up and down the rows of instructors to see if anybody is looking my way and, picking up my cellphone, I turn it back

over, so we are again face to face. There sits the notification and, now without hesitation, I click the bar, show my iPhone my face and, voila! My memories sit before me.

I scroll absentmindedly at first. A picture of my niece and I that makes me smile. A Twitter post asking my followers for book recommendations. Lodged between these memories—though much of the content hardly qualifies as such—I come to a picture I had taken exactly five years ago. It is a close-up image of a legal notepad, scrawled with my nearly illegible handwriting. The picture shows the notes coming to the bottom of the page. With the black and white filter that I've laid on the digital photo, the memory takes on a kind of archival quality that leaves me with an odd tingle of *déjà vu*. Five years ago, to the day, I was sitting in room much like the one in which I was currently sitting in a nearly identical orientation. It takes me a moment to make out the words I've written: a recommendation about how many pages of reading I should assign my first-year writing students, a point about the benefits of student-facilitated class discussions, and a note about how to encourage students to put their voices first and use sources to amplify their points, not the other way around. Below these seemingly useful reminders, I've quoted one of my orientation leaders as saying something I'm sure nobody wants me to have recorded: "welcome to hell."

The original intent of this orientation's leader most-likely off-the-cuff comment is long lost to history. She could have meant that being a graduate student was its own form of hell. She could have imagined it was the first-year writing class that belonged in Dante's *Inferno*. But here, in 2019, in another orientation, I begin to imagine that it is orientation, or the process of being oriented to a new institution or program, that is particularly hellish. Because even though I am at a new institution, as a new type of employee (now a tenure-track employee, not a graduate student), and armed with a new orientation schedule, I suddenly notice how two things never seem to change from one orientation program to another.

One of these consistencies is the mode of learning. In every orientation I have attended, most of the time is spent in short classroom like sessions. Facilitators stand in front of those being oriented and disseminate knowledge. Sometimes facilitators have handouts. Sometimes they organize time for the audience to work collaboratively among themselves in ways that replicate a teacher organizing students into group activities. The other commonality among orientation programs is that the focus is on the *I*—rather than the *hows*—of teaching. TAs are taught that they should offer students opportunities to be discussion leaders, for example, but they aren't properly prepared in organizing this kind of learning environment. And while the easy explanation for these less than ideal commonalities has to do with the temporal limitations of many orientation programs (which may range from only a few hours, to a few days, to potentially a few weeks before teaching begins) or the financial constraints of universities in a neoliberal world, this predicament

underscores how TA orientation programs operate under the premise of functional survivalism, a point Joanne Addison underscores when she remarks that her program’s “first-year practicum is based on surviving” (310).

Even though survival is often the goal of TA orientations, you don’t need to be a Trekkie to know that, as Seven of Nine once proclaimed: “survival is insufficient” (“Survival Instinct”). The problem, of course, is that focusing on the mere survival of TAs and the programs that house them flattens the liminal space new TAs inhabit. While they are no longer students, they are not yet instructors. And while TA orientations are meant to inform new TAs about the policies, practices, and procedures—the ways of moving—that are central to their new identity, the mode of instruction stymies new TA’s ability to recognize the complex negotiations they are making, thus inhibiting their growth as new teachers, as graduate students, and as members of an academic community. In other words, orientation programs often function more as a stopgap to maintain the structural integrity of first-year writing courses and programs and, while such an aim is important from a university and programmatic level, it does little to serve the TAs whose institutional identities are situated on unstable ground. This chapter begins with a discussion of how TA orientation programs function as threshold boundaries. Next, I draw on my experiences as a TA to demonstrate how orientations tend to reinforce a student-oriented identity (rather than a teacherly one) and argue that such approaches insufficiently locate TAs as liminal beings at threshold boundaries. I conclude with a discussion of how orientation programs might be reframed to articulate meaningful threshold boundaries that encourage a stronger awareness of TA’s liminal positions and prepare them to leverage that space and identity in their classrooms.

TA ORIENTATIONS AS THRESHOLD BOUNDARIES

This collection argues that TAs experience unique states of liminality as they move through their graduate programs and their professionalization activities, such as designing, implementing, and writing up research, presenting and networking at professional conferences, and most importantly (for this collection), as they move through their classroom spaces as newly minted instructors-of-record. Their liminality is connected with the intensive identity *re/*formation they experience as they wrestle with threshold concepts that are “crucial for epistemological participation” in the teaching of writing (Adler-Kassner and Wardle 3).

Liminality, when conceptualized through the lens of threshold concepts, is necessarily bounded by threshold boundaries: ontological, conceptual, and experiential markers that define the limits of a community of practice and community membership. As Jan Meyer and Ray Land suggest, the metaphor of threshold boundaries “conjures the architectural space of the doorway, a transitional point

or intersection rather than a space” (379). TA orientations can be a useful demarcation between students-as-students and students entering a liminal space from which they will emerge as community members. But these boundaries can sometimes be arbitrary, marked by chronicity rather than meaningful engagement with a community of practice: a student taking an introduction course in the major, for example, or a required TA orientation in order to receive a stipend and work experience. Instead, I want to consider what it would be mean for threshold boundaries to be meaningful spaces. In this chapter, I will argue that for TA orientations to be meaningful threshold boundaries, orientations must model the types of knowledge construction that are foundational to writing studies rather than operating on models of teaching that function as stopgaps that temporarily attempt to prepare underprepared instructors for the classroom.

TA orientations are not the only threshold boundary graduate students will experience and they may not even seem like the most significant threshold boundary. Writing program administrators may even resist putting significant weight on orientations’ impact on TAs’ identity formation given that orientations are significantly constrained by the availability of financial, material, and human resources, which may be a moving target year-to-year. Nonetheless, TA orientations function as an essential component of a TA’s development. As Michael Stancliff and Maureen Daly Goggin’s study of their TA training program emphasizes, TA orientations can be “disorienting” experiences (16). As they describe it, the TA orientation functions as “an immersion theory of teaching” in which soon-to-be-TAs “confront the complex set of procedures and expectations that make up any large writing program” (Stancliff and Goggin 16). Further disorientation for future TAs include the complex sociomaterial considerations: moving and relocating, navigating new cities, and acclimating to new environments. These very real disorientations are only compounded by the emotional and mental disorientations of identity formation as students prepare to inhabit the role of graduate student and teacher when, just months prior, many wore the hat of undergraduate students. These significant shifts, while they begin and occur within the compressed time of an orientation, are worth investigating as part of TAs’ overall liminal experiences as they move through professional and academic development. Viewed in this light, the lack of research on TA orientations presents an important area of underdeveloped terrain if we are to more fully understand how TAs navigate their liminality and how programmatic development might better support them.

A PORTRAIT OF TA ORIENTATION

As Rachel Gramer has suggested in this collection, much of the scholarship on new writing teachers focuses on the program structures rather than beginning

with new teachers’ identities and their learning. While this piece certainly locates a program structure as a central site of research, my goal here is to illuminate how my own identity, goals, and learning inform how orientation programs can impact TAs’ ongoing growth and development. To accomplish this goal, in this section I sketch out my own experiences as a TA in an orientation program, from which I will—in the following section—analyze how the structure of the orientation impacted my own liminality.

I have had the opportunity to be a TA at two institutions: once, as a master’s degree student and once as a doctoral student. Out of respect for both these institutions, the portrait that I will draw here intentionally has identifying names and details removed or altered. I’ll call the institution at which this orientation program takes place Western University. The program ran for two weeks prior to the start of classes in August. Approximately a month and a half before orientation began, we—the new TAs—received a copy of the required textbook, a required syllabus that we were to use during our first semester, and a faculty handbook. Armed with these resources, we were asked to select the essay assignments from the models provided that we would assign our students, then prepare a draft syllabus—it should be noted that our work was primarily focused on the course calendar as the syllabus policies were mandated in the required syllabus—and be ready to workshop those items throughout orientation. Unless a TA in our program had previously taken a course on composition theory and/or pedagogy, a TA would walk into that orientation with no idea of how to make these choices and how such choices might be informed by theories and pedagogies. As an undergraduate student, I loved receiving the syllabus during that first week. I spent a great deal of time marking important policies—like attendance policies and grade breakdowns—and would quickly take the course calendars and copy them onto my own planners. But my study of these documents as an undergraduate student did not help me understand how to suddenly create these documents as an instructor, or, if they did, I did not recognize how to recognize or operationalize that knowledge into action.

Even though attendance was mandatory, the timing of the orientation fell before our semester start date, which meant that we were not paid for attending. This soured many TAs’ feelings—including my own—toward the orientation more broadly. For me, the timing of the orientation meant increased financial obligations: I would need to quit my current job a couple of weeks earlier to move and set up my home weeks before I would see a paycheck or receive financial aid that is typically disbursed at the start of the school semester. As a way of “making it up to us,” snacks and coffee flowed from tables on one side of the classroom we met in and several lunches were provided for us.

For two weeks, from 9 am until 4 pm, we met in the same classroom. sitting at the same rectangular tables our students would occupy in just two weeks' time. Our cohort of twelve TAs, along with two new non-tenure track instructors, dutifully took our places in the audience and listened to the presentations. The day was divided into one-hour blocks during which various presenters taught us about the teacher's life. In one such presentation, for example, several advanced graduate students presented on integrating readings into the writing classroom. Such presentations tended toward anecdotal training: the presenters might give a rationale for the topic. In the case of the presentation on incorporating reading, for example, presenters would advise us that incoming freshman often do not take the readings seriously or, when they do, they don't know how to read for anything except plot points, regardless of genre. These conclusions, while pronounced as facts, reflected little more than the presenters' generalized experiences while teaching. Not all presenters provided rationales. These facilitators typically launched directly into a presentation on "best practices": explanations about how much reading to offer, suggestions on differing the types of readings assigned, and reminders that, if you assign it, you need to cover it in class and use it toward larger projects in some way. In the latter portion of these presentations, TAs would often receive a copy of a handout used by the facilitators in their classrooms for us to use as templates in our classes, should we desire. And yes, I so desired. I gobbled those handouts up like final meal rations on a desert island. These handouts offered me a sense of security: an idea of how to do something that would be in line with what I imagined was acceptable in the program. Replicating these activities, in my mind, would keep me in line and out of trouble, while hopefully giving my students the kinds of experiences their peers had.

After their presentations, the facilitators would then open up the session for questions and answers. For as much as our cohort complained amongst ourselves of feeling lost and confused, these Q&A moments tended along three general trajectories. Some sessions were filled with questions that mostly ran along logistical and practical lines. In the Q&A on reading, TAs asked questions about whether they should give reading quizzes and, if so, for how many points. Some questions were answered, and others were not. A second direction our Q&As would go resulted in a relatively silent fifteen minutes. I sometimes found myself unable to ask questions in these moments in part because I still processing the presentation and trying to imagine what questions I should ask about the presentations. I often feared that I would ask the wrong questions, which in my mind would reveal how underprepared I was to be a TA. Other times, I was still trying to imagine what questions I should ask: I was trying to figure out what I still needed to know, but with little experiences as a teacher, it was difficult to

project the kinds of questions that would help me prepare for my work.

A third direction that our Q&As would take involved TAs asking for information or guidance about how to make choices as new TAs. As new TAs, for example, we were required to use a new custom reader that the department would be using, yet none of our presenters had used the textbook or were required to use it. When our questions interrogated teaching from our specific location as new TAs, required to use a text we were still unacquainted with, our presenters did their best but often fell woefully short. Many times, they could not answer our questions and would just tell us to ask the orientation coordinators or the WPA. On their way out of the room, our facilitators would leave their emails on the whiteboard with promises of answering any more questions and, with a casual smile on their face, they wished us good luck.

Day in and day out, for two weeks this was our life. We sat. We listened. We furiously wrote notes and, when we left for the day and congregated in bars or commiserated over a refrigerated package of Nestle Tollhouse cookie dough, my thoughts often devolved into ruminations that I had no idea what I needed to know about teaching and what I didn't realize that I still needed to know. In our conversations, we would wonder what from the day had just been one possible way of doing something—an instructor's individual inclination; what was “good teaching?”; and, perhaps most pressing, what did our department expect, want, or require of us? Mostly, we asked each other questions of *how to* and *why*, and these questions burrowed deep into minds. How do we teach reading? Beyond our recollections of classroom life, a student reader, and a smattering of hand-outs from other teachers, we were left with no answer. Sometimes we realized, in retrospect, what we needed, but nowhere on the orientation schedule was there a block of time dedicated to answering the questions we realized only too late we had. Tomorrow, reading wouldn't even be on the schedule.

It is only by reflecting on these experiences that I have come to see how reparatet these nagging and sometimes oppressive questions were to me, my fellow TAs, and for all teachers. Some of those questions, especially about who we would be—and become—in the classroom could only be answered over time as I learned, grew, tried new things, and then tried others. These bigger questions seemingly cannot be answered or perhaps even articulated in the short span of a pre-semester orientation and may appear, from the outset, as better left for the TA practicum course or for the conversations TAs have in the privacy of their advisors' offices, yet I would argue that orientations can nonetheless better prime TAs to grapple with these questions and transitions as unavoidable and, in fact, generative features of their lives as liminal beings in the academy. In the moment, these questions smelled of fear, not of growth. They made me feel like an outsider, not someone already on a path through a liminal space.

TA ORIENTATIONS' LORE-FOCUSED MODEL OF TRAINING

In the preceding section, I have tried to emphasize some of the features of my orientation experiences that have felt most salient for me. Perhaps the single most prominent feature in my memories is how much time I spent in silence. In these moments, I feel Freire's argument that "banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power" (62). In my dutiful silence, it is easy to assume the position of student-as-sponge, meticulously converting what I'm told into lists of dos and don'ts. I don't know—nor did I believe back then—that my orientation leaders desired my cohort to assume an obedient, studently identity, but the pedagogical choices that framed the orientation encourage such performances and, by my recollection, none of the leaders that presented during orientation resisted these relationships. This type of TA preparation illustrates a functional approach to TA training, in which the day-to-day, nuts and bolts of teaching (Roen et al.). In other words, a functional approach to TA preparation emphasizes survival while delaying reflection, growth, and development for some later point in TA training.

Beyond the nature of some TA orientations, which reaffirms a student-as-sponge identity, orientations can also function as an ineffective threshold boundary when they place an over-emphasis on lore. Orientations build upon lore's educational tradition by focusing on a logic of pragmatism, or a logic that "is concerned with what has worked, is working, or might work in teaching, doing, or learning writing" (North 23). Stephen North has likened the building of composition to the building of a "rambling. . . delightful old manse," (27) one that bears a striking resemblance to the Winchester Mystery House in northern California. As North describes it, lore is passed on from generation to generation, but once knowledge has been inducted as lore, it can "never be dropped from it either" (North 24). Because of this, lore can be imagined as a mansion with "wing branching off from wing, addition tacked to addition, in all sorts of materials. . . with turrets and gables, minarets and spires, spiral staircases, rope ladders, pitons, dungeons, secret passageways—all seemingly random, yet all connected" (North 27). Each new generation of practitioners inherits lore in the same haphazard way: they are "ushered around some of what there is, and then, in its turn, [a new generation] adds on its own touches" (North 27).

Orientations teach by lore in two distinct ways. One way that the orientations I have attended do so is in how they are organized and run. As described previously, these sessions typically focused on what to do, and such proclamations tended to carry considerable weight among TAs, especially when the TAs had no previous teaching experiences. Returning to North's metaphorical House of Lore, the ushers that take the new cohort of TAs around the house pick and choose based either on their own whim or that of the orientation coordinator.

These decisions are largely built into the larger logic of pragmatism: of filling the TA with as much information to help them survive their first time in the classroom. This is not necessarily a bad thing: much of what they have to offer can be useful in some circumstances. But while compositionists may recognize that orientations provide TAs with ideas to implement, modify, or later discard, in the eyes of a new TA, this seems to be a tour of the Word of God: of proclamations from on high to be obeyed. Freire may take an even more severe reproach to such a practice for, in this moment, facilitators enact the paternalistic instincts of a banking model of education, turning TAs into “welfare recipients” (55).

A second way that orientations further function as learning by lore is apparent when we consider who organizes and under what circumstances. At Western University, for example, orientation was organized and run by a coordinator and this coordinator was typically selected from two groups: the first being graduate students who applied for the position. These facilitators were typically interested in composition and who were paid a modest stipend to do this work. The second group of coordinators consisted of lecturers within the department who also served as associate directors of the first-year writing program. These lecturers also applied for the position and received at least a course release to serve as an associate director (it’s unknown if they received a further stipend for coordinating orientation). What this meant was that each year new coordinator(s) created their own idea of what orientation should include. This involved reviewing past orientation schedules, receiving direct instructions and feedback from the department’s director of the writing program, and then using their own intuition, training, and experiences to fill in the gaps. In the language of the House of Lore, our “ushers” are selected not necessarily because they make good tour guides, but because of an individual’s availability, willingness, or who they know.

Following a model of learning that bears uncomfortable similarities to Freire’s banking model of education reinforces what Brian K. Bly has observed to be one the crucial components of the liminal space of graduate teaching assistantships, “[B]alancing the role of the teacher with the role of the student” (2). This balancing act, according to Bly, raises a conflict within graduate instructors between the authority they possess as instructors and the authority they lack as students in graduate programs (2). The lack of balance between TAs’ conflicting identities leaves many TAs less than satisfied. As Bly’s study into TAs’ perception of their training has revealed, many TAs experience a pre-semester training course “helpful ‘as far as assignments and the syllabus, but not much as far as how to act in front of the class or how to do daily work’” (4). In other words, some common models of TA training give TAs the materials to support the complex identity formation they are caught up in but do little to support the day-in and day-out ways of being that scaffold and creating a teacherly identity.

REIMAGINING TA ORIENTATIONS AS A MEANINGFUL THRESHOLD BOUNDARY

Thus far, this chapter has critiqued TA orientation programs for how they stymie TAs' growth from a former undergraduate student to inhabiting multiple identities including college instructor. While this dilemma is in part constructed by the demands of teacher training within neoliberal institutional spaces that are not within a WPA's power to ameliorate (if only), my goal with the remainder of this chapter is to locate areas of orientation programs that WPAs do have the power to transform. Rather than attempt to boil these complex questions down to a narrowly defined checklist, in this section I explore how a re-examination of the role and use of listening in TA orientations may cultivate more meaningful experiences for TAs who are negotiating murky liminal waters.

While it would be easy to define listening as a process that begins in the ear and ends in the mind when aural sounds are converted into meaningful symbols, listening is far more complicated than that. Jacqueline Jones Royster has called for listening that is "awake" and that:

operat[es] deliberately on codes of better conduct in the interest of keeping our boundaries fluid, our discourse invigorated with multiple perspectives, and our policies and practices well-tuned toward a clearer respect for human potential and achievement from whatever their source and a clearer understanding that voicing at its best is not just well-spoken but also well-heard. (40)

Krista Ratcliffe, building on Royster's work, has argued that listening is better understood as a "trope for interpretive invention," and as such it "signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture" (1). This stance of openness is embedded with multiple cultural logics, ones that for Ratcliffe are also embedded in logics of whiteness and gender. Gender and whiteness, as tropes, "signif[y] socially constructed 'common-sense' attitudes and actions" associated with gender and race (Ratcliffe 9).

Because listening is a socially constructed practice, WPAs and orientation leaders should consider the assumptions embedded in the listening practices that make up orientation learning spaces. For example, as members of an academic discipline, it can be easy to assume that listening to presentations during orientation is a similar learning and listening act that we experience as speakers and audience members at academic conferences. In those spaces, audience members are listening attentively and while they are silent, they are often busy taking and making sense of what the speaker says by measuring it against their own experience

or interpretations of texts and concepts or applying the presentation to their own set of constraints. In these spaces, silence is often a productive time when listeners prepare to engage in dialog with speakers. It is an enactment of Kenneth Burke’s parlor: a time when listeners are catching “the tenor of the argument” which prepares them to “put in their oar” and enter the conversation (110).

But this is not necessarily how TAs use listening during orientations; and it most certainly was not how I experienced listening in this space. When I was a TA, I was deep within a liminal space but without a vocabulary to articulate that fact or much of what I was experiencing. In retrospect, I see how I used listening more like I did when I was an undergraduate student and in ways that mirror the banking model of education. I did my best to absorb what I was being told. I did not imagine that I was really supposed to engage in dialog with the facilitators and I assumed that they asked for questions to allow for clarification of what they had said. But I also assumed that to admit that I needed clarification would have been tantamount to admitting I couldn’t do the job I had been offered.

That I—or any TA—would fall back on our listening practices that served us during times in which we identified as students can be understood as a phenomenon related to our liminality. Liminality is about the acquisition of “troublesome” threshold concepts that are foundational to our target profession or community of practice. As Meyer and Land describe it, learners in the midst of liminal spaces experience an oscillation between their former ways of being and the new states of being (376). But unfortunately, what sometimes happens in states of liminality is that learners can experience an inability to acquire the new identity, a space called “stuck places,” in which learners are presented with “‘epistemological obstacles’ that block any transformed perspective” (377). These epistemological obstacles—like understanding how to be an instructor when you’ve never taught before—not only cause learners to lean back on prior experiences and identities rather than continue toward their transformational identity, a process that seems to be highlighted when I engaged with TA orientation. In other words, the vast uncertainty that I felt about becoming a teacher presented challenges to which I responded by returning to “student mode” rather than engaging as a participant.

All of this is to say that the dutiful student listening that echoes banking models of learning may, in fact, be a marker of TAs’ liminality within their writing programs. When orientations and training sessions maintain new TAs as the listeners and program directors, WPAs, continuing faculty, and others as the speakers, the mandate to listen reinforces their marginalized position. To help TAs negotiate their liminality while also preparing them for the job they are about to assume, TAs must be taught in ways that draw on their vast experiences as student participants in the classrooms and in ways that complicate listening beyond the lecture and listen model. What might benefit TAs more

in an orientation setting would be to help them begin activating their existing knowledge of teaching and learning and transferring that knowledge to their new positions as teachers. As is pointed out by Kathleen Blake Yancey, Rob Cole, Amanda May, and Katelyn Stark in this collection, TAs do not come to their orientation as *tabula rasa*. E. Shelley Reid sharply reinforces this notion: “[composition] TAs are not blank slates . . . they have spent many years in classrooms developing theories about writing, learning, and teaching.”

Allow me to illustrate this point with an example. At the orientation I attended at the fictitious Western University, all TAs were required to review the textbook our students would use, review the faculty handbook, the syllabus we were expected to use as a template, and to select from a series of options the major writing assignments we would assign that semester before orientation began. This preparation invited us as TAs to act like the teachers we would be within a matter of weeks. In this moment, the Western University engaged us as teachers-in-training and, no doubt, they expected that (as liminal beings that were not yet teachers) our attempts to carve out the beginnings of our course would be uneven, our processes would be frustrating, and our ability to invent a curriculum for first-year writing rudimentary. In other words, I think that WU knew we would struggle and saw that struggle as a learning process and that through the orientation process we would revise our curriculum, rehearse our assignments, and reinvent our classrooms.

But this second half—the revision, the rehearsal, and the reinvention—did not come for me or for many in my cohort—if our conversations are any indication—and I think that part of the reason this never came about is because when orientation began, we reverted to our student identities. Imagine, for example, if orientation had started with a day of reflection and conversation initiated by the TAs about what they had experienced while trying to prepare their course materials. What would it have been like to ask them to write, talk, and listen to each other articulate their struggles and triumphs. If their voices dominated those first interactions and, in those first few hours, they had a chance to name the space they were in—liminality—it could help TAs feel seen and understood as a liminal being. To give over some of the orientation space to the TAs themselves, to make orientation about, if only partly, understanding what it means to be a TA—not quite a student and not quite a teacher—would engage a new set of relationships among TAs, their mentors, and the programs in which they live through new listening practices.

It might seem like the likely response to the banking model of TA orientations is to simply replace it with a model that is based on popular models of collaborative learning. And while collaborative learning can be a powerful learning tool, it should not be deployed unreflexively. It's important to recognize that collaborative models of learning in composition studies gained traction during roughly the same time that critical pedagogy—with its commitment to democratizing learning

spaces—also began in earnest (Bruffee; Holt; Jackson and Clark). Because of this relationship, compositionists maintain that by situating knowledge as the product of co-production among knowledgeable peers, teachers and students would constantly share speaking and listening roles among themselves (Bruffee). Even in such collaborative moments, however, we can still see how speaking and listening are part of larger systems of power. By choosing to intentionally resist making the facilitators the authority (and, thus, the speaker), we still acknowledge that those who are routinely asked to listen instead of being asked to speak are marginalized.

The democratization of learning by sharing power through discourse has been critiqued as a reductivist model for how learning and power work in the context of writing. Andrea Lunsford has argued that the notion of collaboration has been appropriated by some scholars and practitioners reflexively; and in our attempts to get on the “collaboration bandwagon,” it often becomes a tool for “the same old authoritarian control” rather than for democratic learning (3-4). This is partly because when collaboration is used uncritically, instructors may fail to address some of the biggest forms of resistance to collaboration. Lunsford claims that this occurs due to our inherited concept of the Romantic genius in his/her garret (4). The belief in the Romantic genius is just as engrained in students as it has been in teaching practices. Many students simply believe that they lack any form of “genius,” and would prefer, instead, that the master—the teacher—tell the apprentice how to write.

Collaborative learning pedagogies have also been critiqued for the ways in which it can flatten difference and replicate dominant power structures that disenfranchise marginalized groups. John Trimbur’s seminal critique of collaborative learning argued that collaboration’s ultimate goal of coming to consensus has a tendency to “[suppress] differences and [enforce] conformity” (602). This inclination toward consensus is significant, given that consensus can reinforce political and social hierarchies that perpetuate racism and sexism and by extension, ableism, heteronormativity, ageism, classism, gender binarism, and other oppressive ideologies (Fox; Leverenz). Christina V. Cedillo argues “Bodies are the academy’s dirty secrets.” In collaborative group environments, the voices that hold the floor are the voices that are most at home asserting domination and leadership, even when it seems as though such voices are acting on behalf of the group or in the interest of the group’s tasks.

These critiques can be extended to TA orientations. As Lunsford states, “Creating a collaborative environment and truly collaborative tasks is damnably difficult” (6). This is partly because group collaborations can have a tendency toward “the kind of homogeneity that squelches diversity, that waters down ideas to the lowest common denominator, that erases rather than values differences” (7). I experienced this “damnable difficulty” recently when I had the opportunity

to facilitate part of a TA orientation that focused on designing activities and assignments. As part of this presentation, we broke participants out to work on brainstorming in-class activities that would help them teach to the student learning outcomes of the course. In so doing, I hoped to engage the TAs as beings within meaningful threshold boundaries. By drawing on their collective experience as students and teachers—if they had such experience—the goal was to invite them to re-imagine classroom activities as actions that help students and teachers move toward meeting student learning outcomes, which the TAs had learned about in reading required orientation materials and preparing for orientation. I wanted to engage them as teachers-in-training.

During this time, I tried to engage with the groups, to listen to their ideas and promote dialogue and discussion while also helping them ask each other questions about meeting FYC students' needs. When I approached one group in particular, two of the group members were quick to volunteer the idea offered by a third group member I will pseudonymously call Norma. Norma's idea was, indeed, a nice activity that would help FYC students, but as I asked the other group members what other ideas they had discussed, they indicated that they liked Norma's idea so much they really didn't think their own ideas were worth mentioning and, as a result, the group did not generate any other activities. As the four of us collaborated, it soon became apparent that Norma had previous teaching experience—something the other group members already knew.

Reflecting on this experience, it seems like a classic example of the kinds of failed collaboration described in the critiques previously outlined. Because two of the group members were fresh out of their undergraduate degrees, they looked to Norma for the good idea that the group would later report out but, because of this, all group members lost out. Norma didn't have a chance to hear ideas that may have taken fresh approaches to student learning outcomes with which she was already familiar, and the two other group members lost out on opportunities to try applying their own experiences to their new roles as educators. Their loss is ultimately a failure of collaboration brought about by listening. Norma and her group members were listening for agreement, for the bright idea that would help them get by during the group discussion that was to follow. Instead of finding ways to listen to each other's ideas about teaching, the group's impulse to find consensus quickly, in order to move on to the next activity, stifled their ability to really take something useful from the activity.

So, if lecture-based models of orientation are insufficient because they focus on functional survivalism; and collaboration-based models of orientation run the risk of marginalizing some participants, how should WPAs and orientation facilitators design orientations? If the goal of a TA orientation program is to introduce TAs to their new institutions and to offer some preparation prior to

their first day in the classroom, then orientation programs should help TAs activate their existing knowledge about teaching while helping them recognize their liminality and, ultimately, leverage that liminality in their own classrooms. Such endeavors—marked by two distinct features—would create a TA orientation that facilitates a pedagogy of vulnerability that is informed by listening.

One way to rethink TA training is to rethink “risk” and “safety.” Much of what I experienced in my TA orientation at Western University, I believe, was meant to help minimize the riskiness of the classroom. By sharing the tried-and-true techniques that made up the lore around first-year writing at our institution, it seems obvious that the goal was to help TAs be “successful” in the classroom. The act of replicating these taught practices in our classrooms, a move of safety that protects the teacher and provides a sense of uniformity to the classroom, is a move that forecloses vulnerability and invention as a natural part of our discipline for the TAs. For Shari Stenberg, “To stand over a text, or another’s voice, to assume that it is immediately knowable (and thus dismiss-able), is to remain squarely in the familiar. It is to remain safe. To listen. . . is to take a risk” (262). Teachers committed to developing pedagogies of listening must be open to stepping outside the safety of tried-and-true approaches to FYC and risk “open[ing] our classrooms to different kinds of interactions, potentially allowing that which is typically deemed ‘excess’ to enter in” (262).

For Wendy Wolters Hinshaw, this kind of risk is situated within allowing for teachers to experience vulnerability as well as creating learning spaces where vulnerability can be experienced by learners. To experience vulnerability as teachers in FYC would require instructors to confront the emotional experiences and reactions of FYC students differently, especially student resistance. While Hinshaw observes that student resistance and conflict are a natural response to “introducing new frameworks for thinking about relationships between identity and power,” TAs often approach student resistance as a negative experience (268). Bringing listening to the center of classroom life enables instructors to present resistance and vulnerability as characteristics of academic life that can be utilized for productive purposes as opposed to negative experiences that must be shunned, ignored, or dealt with outside the classroom. In this way, the emotional “excess” that academia has long closed its doors to can be imaged as moments for invention and reflection and as productive spaces for engaging readings and student writing.

A pedagogy of listening based on vulnerability may at once be very attractive and outright horrifying for TAs. Because TAs subjectivities are so fraught with their own liminality, the idea of exposing themselves—and their students—to risky classroom moments may seem like the least attractive option. Given their often lacking teaching experience, it might be tempting to believe that new TAs

are not prepared to grapple with resistance, vulnerability, and disorderliness in pursuit of developing listening. However, actively cultivating listening as vulnerability may actually result in the exact opposite. For example, many who teach first-year writing at some point experience tense moments in the classroom. This may come in the form of a student saying something borderline or outright sexist or racist. Instead of TAs being blindsided by FYC students' emotional reaction, resistance, or even to group discussions that may bring forth student opinions that can be threatening for other students and teachers, an overt attention to TAs' liminality and vulnerability during orientation can prepare them for such moments. But rather than *tell* TAs simply that such moments must be handled, orientation can leverage TAs' liminality by helping them to begin negotiating these moments. In Wendy Swyt's study of a TA training session related to diversity issues, for example, one of the TAs explains what she wants from these trainings: "Rather than questioning 'what are my goals, how does my presence as a white woman from an upper middle-class background, a lesbian and a Jew produce a specific teaching environment?', I was supposed to solve the problem" (27). Swyt's work reveals that some TAs are aware of their liminality, even if they don't have the language to talk about it and they want to interrogate the classroom in relation to their emergent and evolving sense of identity.

What we can learn from Swyt's research is that in order to harness TAs' vulnerability, WPAs, mentors, and TAs themselves must learn to reimagine TAs' statuses as novice instructors not as a secret to be hidden away but instead as a source of invention and power, and this reimagining can begin with the orientation schedule. I can distinctly remember my first days as a TA. I was so afraid to go into the classroom and felt nearly paralyzed with fear at the thought that my students would find out it was the first time I had ever taught a college course. As that first semester rolled on, I found myself always feeling so frustrated at my missteps in the classroom and excessively worried that I wouldn't be able to earn my students' respect. In hindsight, it seems more than likely that my students never even registered my awkward moments as a teacher and, if they did, it was more likely the result of trying to overcompensate for my miscues, in my attempt to cover up the evidence of my inexperience.

I suspect that I am not the only current or former TA to experience these frightening moments, yet I never discussed these feelings with my cohort of new TAs nor mentioned them to my mentor. I suffered with them silently, believing them to be my own emotional toll to be disciplined and suppressed. Those who work with TAs, however, can work to undo this kind of culture. Rather than positioning these kinds of TA emotions as the necessary consequence of difficult situations, as the excessive and unorderly experiences that don't belong in our scholarly conversation, or even as merely the objects of our sympathy, TA

mentors, orientation facilitators, and faculty could anticipate these experiences and build orientations reframed around TAs’ liminality.

CONCLUSION: THRIVING RATHER THAN SURVIVING

In this chapter, I have argued that models of TA training that replicate banking models of education and that focus on disseminating lore miss out on other opportunities to foster TA growth. This approach appears strongly connected to the institutional constraints within which WPAs work rather than a lack of care or attention on the part of those who facilitate orientation sessions. Thus, the institutional contexts, the reliance on lore, and the use of educational settings that mirror banking coalesce into learning environments that operate on a logic of pragmatism—of surviving—that prevents orientations from operating on alternate logics of thriving. Despite the financial, temporal, and institutional limitations within which we build orientations, altering the learning models upon which orientations are organized can better focus on TAs’ growth rather than mere survival.

What we need are orientation programs that embrace multiple needs: the need to introduce TAs to institutional expectations, best practices, and standard or uniform approaches to first-year writing as well as the need to help TAs recognize their liminality as a source of strength and as a site of invention as they develop their identities as instructors. To thrive as a TA is not to avoid mistakes, frustration, confusion, or heartache. Rather, to thrive as a TA is to be able to articulate the challenges we face, to recognize how and why things in the classroom did not work out the way we had hoped, and to see that our experiences are similar to many that have come before and will come after us. In other words, to flourish as a TA is to have our vulnerability listened to, accepted, and encouraged.

WORKS CITED

- Adler-Kassner, Linda and Elizabeth Wardle. “Threshold Concepts, Naming What We Know, and Reconsidering Our Shared Conceptions.” *(Re)Considering What We Know: Learning Threshold in Writing, Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy*, edited by Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle, Utah State UP, 2019, pp.3-13.
- Bly, Brian K. “Uneasy Transition: The Graduate Teaching Assistant in the Composition Program.” *In Our Own Words: Graduate Students Teach Writing*, edited by Tina Lavonne Good and Leanne B Warshauer, Allyn & Bacon, 2000, pp. 19-27.
- Bruffee, Kenneth. *Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence, and the Authority of Knowledge*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1993.
- Burke, Kenneth. 1973. *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, 3rd ed. U of California P, 1973.
- Cedillo, Christina V. “Race, Disability, and Critical Embodiment Pedagogy.” *Composition Forum*, vol. 39, 2018, <http://compositionforum.com/issue/39/to-move.php>.

- Fox, Thomas. "Race and Gender in Collaborative Learning." *Writing With: New Directions in Collaborative Teaching, Learning, and Research*, edited by Sally Barr Reagan et al., SUNY P, 1994, pp. 111-121.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, Continuum Books, 1970.
- Jackson, Brian, and Gregory Clark. *Trained Capacities: John Dewey, Rhetoric, and Democratic Practices*. U of South Carolina P, 2014.
- Leverenz, Carrie Shively. "Collaboration, Race, and the Rhetoric of Evasion." *JAC*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1996, pp. 297-312.
- Lunsford, Andrea. "Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center." *Writing Center Journal*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1991, pp. 3-10.
- Meyer, Jan H. F., and Ray Land. "Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge (2): Epistemological Considerations and a Conceptual Framework for Teaching and Learning." *Higher Education*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2005, pp. 373-388.
- North, Stephen M. *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1987.
- Ratcliffe, Krista. *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*. Southern Illinois UP, 2005.
- Reid, E. Shelley. "What is TA Education," *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators*, edited by Rita Malenczyk. Parlor Press, 2013, pp. 197-210.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "When the First Voice You Hear is not Your Own." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1996, pp. 29-40.
- Roen, Duane, et al. "Teaching of Writing and Writing Teachers through the Ages." *Handbook of Research on Writing: History, Society, School, Individual, Text*, edited by Charles Bazerman. Routledge, 2008, pp. 347-364.
- Stancliff, Michael, and Maureen Daly Goggin. "What's Theorizing Got to Do with It? Teaching Theory as Resourceful Conflict and Reflection in TA Preparation." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2007, pp. 11-28.
- Stenberg, Sheri. "Cultivating Listening: Teaching from a Restored Logos." *Silence and Listening as Rhetorical Arts*, edited by Cheryl Glenn and Krista Ratcliffe. Southern Illinois UP, 2007, pp. 250-263.
- "Survival Instinct." *Star Trek Voyager*, directed by Terry Windell, season 6, episode 2, Paramount Pictures, 1999. *Paramount Pictures*, https://www.paramountplus.com/shows/video/6SZhFoH93BkNCv6_CFywHz5S_NSwHr6n/.
- Swyt, Wendy. "Teacher Training in the Contact Zone." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1996, pp. 24-35.
- Trimbur, John. "Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning." *College English*, vol. 51, no. 6, 1989, pp. 602-616, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/377955>.
- Wolters Hinshaw, Wendy. "Making Ourselves Vulnerable: A Feminist Pedagogy of Listening." *Silence and Listening as Rhetorical Arts*, edited by Cheryl Glenn and Krista Ratcliffe, Southern Illinois UP, 2011, pp. 264-277.

NARRATIVE 6.

TEACHING RHETORIC WITHOUT A LICENSE

Megan Friess

Chapman University

I felt like I was teaching rhetoric without a license as I prepared to teach my first class. My own first-year composition class in undergrad was more of a literature-analysis class reminiscent of something you would find in a high school, not something focused on the components and techniques of writing. On top of that, I had never heard of rhetoric in an academic context before walking into day one of my “Teaching Composition” class as a graduate student. What qualifications did I have to teach?

There are seventeen students looking to me as the ultimate authority of this classroom; and it is both terrifying and heady. This position is something I have longed and worked hard for, but there were still plenty of lingering doubts. But I was not left to drown in the deep end of the pool. As part of my role as a TA, I was in a graduate course with my cohort of fellow TAs where we not only continued our training through readings and other work but also acted as a support network for one another as we developed our professorial identities. The transition from solely acting as students to acting as both student and professor was not an easy one. It was uncomfortable at times; but being able to have my fellow TAs act as sounding boards was indispensable for if instructions for a project were clear or if I should be lenient with a student who skipped multiple classes or just chatting about funny things students had said or done that week.

Mistakes were made during my first semester. Sometimes I was not as clear as I could have been when explaining my expectations for an assignment to my students, and I’m sure I could have assigned a better reading or two than what I did. I bet that there are mistakes that I don’t even know about. However, what I learned about being a TA was that this is inevitable and expected. Despite what I may have believed going in, I wasn’t going to be able to be a perfect teacher right away, or ever really. That was the real kicker I learned from both training and experience, that behind the scenes teachers are struggling, making mistakes, and always learning. It is alright for me to second-guess my assignment prompts or how I am running my class because my fellow TAs, and even tenured professors, do too.

As we move into our second semester as TAs, my cohort's professorial identities are a little more stable, but they are not solid yet. I anticipate that this identity may never really be considered finished. But I learned it does not have to be. The best teachers are ones willing to learn, change, and grow. And that's my goal.

CHAPTER 7.

SHIFTING ROLES AND NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES: TA LEARNING IN LANDSCAPES OF PRACTICE

Madelyn Pawlowski

Independent Scholar

Brad Jacobson

University of Texas at El Paso

Early in our TAships in a large writing program, we accepted positions as co-editors of an annually revised custom textbook for first-year writing. While working in this capacity, our web of roles and responsibilities was complex: we were instructors of record and curriculum decision makers, graduate students and teacher educators, newcomers to rhetoric and composition, and representatives of the field.¹ In some ways, the multiple roles and responsibilities we took on enhanced our perspectives and work. For example, we drew upon our own teaching experiences as we imagined improvements to the textbook, and our work on the textbook helped us develop insights into the goals of the writing program and disciplinary philosophies about writing that made us more confident instructors and scholars.

However, our competing responsibilities and in-between-ness also made the work challenging at times. We often felt the weight of our editorial decisions was made heavier and more complicated because of our TA status, as our own precarious reputations and relationships were seemingly at stake. On one

1 During our graduate experiences, we also individually took on roles such as faculty development workshop leader, mentor to incoming cohorts, graduate student organizer, program committee member, student placement advisor, in addition to our graduate coursework and research requirements. This juggling of roles will sound familiar to graduate students in rhetoric and composition programs who are encouraged to perform a wide array of activities and professional development positions due to shifts in job market demands and TAship models emphasizing professionalization beyond teacher training (Thomas; Long et al.; T. Miller; Sandy). In this chapter we extend our discussion of TA learning beyond the practicum to acknowledge this range of potential experiences and opportunities for development.

memorable occasion, a fellow TA stopped Madelyn in the hallway to enthuse about a textbook section that we had just decided to cut from the forthcoming edition. Madelyn was unsure how to break this news and feared that the editing team had made an error of judgment or would be faced with backlash and disappointment from colleagues. As our writing program shifted toward a curriculum guided more explicitly by the *CWPA Outcomes Statement*, we frequently struggled to engage productively with instructors who were resistant to the curricular changes, including our co-editor, a Ph.D. student studying literature. Our co-editor felt that the field of composition and rhetoric, the CWPA, and we—by proxy—were ruining writing instruction by failing to incorporate literary analysis in the writing classroom. Reflecting on these and other experiences throughout our editorship, we recognize that while our immediate goal was to produce a new edition of a textbook, we were also learning—and struggling—to represent composition and rhetoric’s values, histories, practices, and goals in conversation with others.

As this edited collection makes clear, these kinds of challenges in the TAship are not uncommon. While navigating multiple roles and responsibilities is a reality of academic life—and professional life, in general—such negotiation presents unique challenges for TAs who occupy liminal positionalities: not-quite faculty, not-quite administrators, not-quite representatives of a field. Previously published work has found that new TAs may struggle to negotiate their positions as novices in their graduate courses while simultaneously serving as experts in their writing classrooms (Dryer; Restaino) or as graduate administrators (Edgington and Taylor). Furthermore, TAs may see their disciplinary affiliation as separate from the writing courses they teach (Grouling). To address such identity-related challenges, Dryer calls on composition and rhetoric scholars to “move past skittishness on the question of teacher identity” (424), acknowledge the influence of TAs’ prior experiences and affiliations on their practices, and plan for “what sorts of learners and teachers [TAs] will *become*” (444, emphasis in original).

In this chapter, we respond to Dryer’s call as we draw from the works of the learning theorist Etienne Wenger-Trayner (nee Wenger) and his collaborators to re-theorize the TAship with particular attention to identity development. This framing aligns with others in this volume who seek to reconsider the TAship from a learning perspective that takes “a more capacious understanding of newcomers as lifelong learners across contexts, in and over time” (Gramer, this volume; see also Warwick; Yancey et al, this volume). In the sections that follow, we illustrate how a social learning lens has helped us to better understand some of the challenges we faced in our TAship, and we offer concrete strategies based on this framework for supporting TAs (and faculty) in their learning trajectories.

TAS AS LEARNING TRAVELERS

Wenger's *Communities of Practice* theorizes the social process of learning in ways that have helped researchers and professionals in education, government, and other organizations better understand the identity-related challenges newcomers may face as they learn to contribute to shared enterprises. According to Wenger, engagement with the members and practices of a community changes who we are by affecting our ability to participate, to belong, and make our way in the world (226). In other words, learning to participate is a process of identity development. People do not arrive in learning situations as blank slates, a point made clearly by Yancey et al. (this volume), and they do not leave their old identity behind and take on a new identity in practice. Instead, Wenger suggests that identity is neither unified nor fragmented but is instead a "nexus of multimembership" (159). A person's membership in multiple communities of practice is inevitable, as are the tensions experienced at the boundaries between communities. According to Wenger, the practices we engage in and the perspectives we adopt may differ across communities, and coordinating these forms of participation requires the "work of reconciliation" that "entails finding ways to make our various forms of membership coexist" (160). Indeed, in our TAship we found it difficult to reconcile our various commitments and locate ourselves constructively across different communities.

As we reflect on our "work of reconciliation" in the editorship role, it is helpful to consider what Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner would call our "landscape of practice." According to the authors, even a single profession's body of knowledge can be best understood as a complex landscape composed of multiple communities of practice (15). For example, the body of knowledge that constitutes first-year writing (FYW) is distributed across various communities, including the fields of composition and rhetoric, education, second language writing, and communication, as well as adjacent communities such as a university's general education or writing across the curriculum program, or closely related programs of study such as literature, linguistics, or creative writing. Communities of practice beyond the academy also participate in knowledge-making about writing. Policymakers, nonprofit organizations, and corporations, for example, play a significant role in constructing the public narrative about writing education (Adler-Kassner).

Participants in the landscape of FYW (TAs and faculty, for example) can be thought of as travelers navigating a complex terrain of multiple, overlapping, shifting, and sometimes contradicting communities. As Fenton-O'Creevy et al. explain:

These learning travelers have to find their way into and around specific practices, build an image of where these practices are located in the landscape, engage with multiple places

in the landscape at once, cross boundaries, and develop an identity that is resilient and productive. (151)

When we view our editorship through this metaphorical lens, we can see how often our struggles were related to understanding our positionality in the landscape and knowing what to do when faced with boundaries both local (institutional) and more wide-ranging (disciplinary). Our purpose for sharing our TAship narrative is not to complain or to critique our supervisors, program, or colleagues, nor are we suggesting that after a two-year professional development position we could or should have necessarily developed “resilient and productive” identities enabling us to identify and cross boundaries without fail. In fact, we recognize that we are always travelers finding our way through landscapes or into new ones, not travelers in search of a particular destination. To see TAs as learning travelers means recognizing the unique practices, places, boundaries, and identities they encounter as newcomers in what is most likely an unfamiliar landscape. We hope to use our experiences to remind those working in writing teacher education that “moving across a landscape and learning at its boundaries requires identity work” (Fenton-O’Creivy et al. 151-152). With identity work in mind, we suggest that a landscapes of practice lens that foregrounds the process of professional identity development through learning and reconciliation can benefit all who engage with the TAship, including TAs from across disciplines and the faculty members who support them.

DESIGNING FOR LEARNING IN A LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

Wenger has acknowledged the need for learning communities to actively support identity formation through mindful educational design. More specifically, learners should have access to three modes of identification—engagement, imagination, and alignment—that can help a learner make sense of the landscape and their own position in it (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner). Designing opportunities for learners to access these modes requires attention to:

1. Places of engagement;
2. Materials and experiences with which to build an image of the world and themselves;
3. Ways of having an effect on the world and making their actions matter (Wenger 270-271).

In this section, we describe these three modes of identification and suggest ways to design the TAship with them in mind. We hope to show how TAships

designed through a landscapes of practice lens can better support TAs in finding their place, seeing the value of their work, and communicating with others across the diverse landscape of writing education.²

ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is the *doing* of things in a community—using and producing artifacts and talking about things that matter—often in collaboration with more experienced members (Lave and Wenger; Wenger). Composition and rhetoric TAs are engaged in the practices of a community when they are designing lesson plans, grading papers, serving on committees, developing curricular materials, and having conversations in the hallway, among other activities. As Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner write, “there is no substitute for direct engagement in practice as a vehicle for learning the competence of a community” (20). Throughout our TAship, we were certainly involved in the *doing* of a community of practice. In our two years as editors, we created two editions of the textbook, artifacts which remain an important part of institutional history and our own learning trajectories. We were also FYW teachers responsible for developing syllabi and lesson plans, assessing student writing, and discussing our practices with friends and colleagues. These were all opportunities to participate in a community of practice.

However, designing for engagement should consist of more than simply encouraging or making room for TAs to participate in ongoing activities. As Wenger suggests, people begin to develop a sense of self in practice when they invest in their work and in relations with other people. In our editorship, opportunities for collaboration and negotiation with others were limited. Much of our work unfolded in our “editor’s cave,” a small, isolated corner of the TA office building. We received little feedback on our work from administrators or other experienced instructors, and we were even physically removed from these members of the community in our TA office, located in a building separate from the English department. Due in part to these institutional constraints, we lacked the intergenerational encounters Wenger identifies as important for incorporating historical knowledge into our practice.

Our lack of access to mutual engagement is one reason we struggled to make meaning in our work. As a result, we endured a period of stagnation in the

2 Following Wenger, we must make the important distinction that one can design *for* learning but learning itself cannot be designed (229). In other words, we can create situations to open learning opportunities, but predicting results is not possible. With this in mind, what we offer here is not a prescriptive plan, but rather a framework for rethinking the educational design of the TAship.

planning stages of the editing process. The textbook had 34 previous iterations before our input, and some of the content had remained static for decades. How could we respect this history and the instructors who had used the same material for years while also moving the book forward to support our program's impending curricular changes and reflecting advancements in the field? In the end, we erred on the side of caution, making changes to the text to improve usability while largely maintaining the status quo. We were certainly engaged in the act of producing the text, but we struggled to develop a sense of meaning, or a sense of ourselves, through our engagement. Wenger explains that newcomers are often more conservative in their actions, like we were, because they are invested in gaining a foothold in the community; paradoxically, more experienced members may actually want newcomers to shake things up. Designing opportunities for intergenerational encounters may help TAs develop a contextual understanding of their roles and actions, build relationships across boundaries, and chart their own paths in negotiation with other members of the landscape.

DESIGNING FOR ENGAGEMENT

Designing for engagement should emphasize the social aspects of practice, including negotiating meaning with more experienced members within and across communities. In our editorship, different kinds of mentorship may have opened such opportunities. For example, a more apprenticeship-oriented editorship structure would allow for collaboration with a more experienced member of the community, such as a faculty member or WPA involved in program-wide decision-making. Importantly, this faculty member could still defer to the graduate editors but would be there to talk through the rationale for certain choices and engage in conversations from what Wenger would call an "old timer" position, thus allowing the TA editors to participate in the practice with a more enlightened and reflective perspective. Such mentorship could have also helped us experience disciplinary and pedagogical boundaries with our co-editor and other writing instructors as a learning asset. Ideally, a faculty mentor could have helped facilitate a more constructive conversation during tense situations by providing a more informed and nuanced account of the institutional and disciplinary histories of the writing education landscape.

Creating space for intergenerational collaboration in the TA practicum can also provide TAs with access to fellow learning travelers facing similar challenges. As TAs complete the many tasks required of them as new writing teachers in a program or institution, they may engage in actions without considering their own developing identities as writing teachers. To address this issue Rupiper, Taggart, and Lowry suggest inviting experienced TAs to explain the ways their

course policies and calendars reflect their teaching ethos, situating seemingly static artifacts and routines in more dynamic ways. Inviting advanced TAs to reflect upon their teaching identities and share their expertise could help less experienced instructors identify more deeply with their practices while also learning the value of reflexive practice. Creating opportunities for novice TAs to co-construct classroom materials with advanced TAs or facilitating peer-to-peer teaching observations can also help support the formation of an intergenerational cohort of learning travelers.

Planned opportunities for mutual engagement will increase the visibility of boundaries, but Wenger reminds us that “boundaries are regions worth paying attention to” as sites of learning (254). TAs may face boundaries when their prior experiences feel disconnected from new areas of competence or when their roles as graduate students or affiliations with a discipline seem to misalign with their roles as teachers (Grouling). Such clashing of memberships and experiences can lead to resistance or, even worse, abandonment of a practice, affiliation, or trajectory. Therefore, making these boundary encounters visible and providing TAs with strategies for addressing them should be part of TAs hip design. The TAs in Dryer’s study of teacher feedback demonstrated such challenges when they encountered a boundary between practices. According to Dryer, TAs’ pre-existing expectations of teacher-student dynamics affected how they positioned themselves as teachers and imagined their own students as writers. In their struggle to reconcile their identities as novices in graduate school with their role as “experts” in the writing classroom, TAs were unable to see parallels between their own challenges and those of their students. Dryer suggests offering opportunities to “deroutinize” teaching practices, such as asking TAs to offer feedback first “as a teacher” and then “as a colleague.” Such an approach might “create new interplays of [prior] experience and competence” (Wenger 254), inviting a boundary encounter that can challenge pre-conceived notions of teaching (Dryer 442-443). One can imagine conducting similar role-playing activities with TAs and faculty from English studies or other disciplines in order to engage with and across other boundaries. For learning travelers moving through a landscape, these intergenerational and/or interdisciplinary boundary engagements can also help them better locate their practices—and themselves—within the landscape.

IMAGINATION

While engagement provides a means for doing things in a community and making visible the boundaries in a landscape, designing for imagination can help a learner develop a reflective practice about these activities and boundaries. According to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, imagination allows learners to

visualize the landscape of practice and to locate their role in it. As the authors explain, a nurse is aware that there are other nurses working in different hospitals, and imagining this network of people aids in the nurse's journey to better understand positionality and interpret experiences in relation to other communities in the landscape (21). Imagination helps learners develop a sense of identity and belonging and can also help learners locate themselves on a learning trajectory to make sense of where they are, where they have been, and where they are going (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner).

Challenges related to imagination were prominent in our editorship experience. On the one hand, as composition and rhetoric Ph.D. students we had opportunities to read about and debate different approaches to composition pedagogy in our coursework, helping us develop and examine our commitments to different theories and principles of our discipline. In Wenger's terms, we were able to construct a picture of the world and make sense of where we belonged. We could imagine other learning travelers reading the same texts and having similar conversations, and this construction of a social world was important to our developing professional identities. Course readings that included case studies and writing program profiles also heightened our awareness of how writing is taught in different contexts and even how other writing programs have approached custom textbook publishing, helping us to orient our work in relation to a more expansive network of teachers, administrators, and textbook editors.

However, we faced difficulties imagining our expertise in relation to those outside our disciplinary community, which resulted in frustration and impasses with our co-editor. Like many TAs, our co-editor did not have the same opportunities to engage deeply with composition scholarship outside of the one-year practicum course that focused more on practical know-how than theory-based training or acclimation to the field. To our co-editor, English literature as a subject and discipline was under attack by composition and rhetoric, with the *CWPA Outcomes Statement* and our program's curricular changes as the reified proof. In our often-tense conversations, we became our co-editor's proxy for the entire field of composition and rhetoric, as we suspect we were for other TAs whose perspectives of the study and teaching of writing may have been limited to a single textbook in a single writing program. Looking back, it seems we all could have benefited from more opportunities to use the facility of imagination to reflect upon our roles and other perspectives shaping the landscape.

DESIGNING FOR IMAGINATION

The TA practicum itself could create opportunities to envision the landscape of writing instruction beyond the local context. Supporting imagination in the

TAship means helping participants explore their learning trajectories by creating opportunities for them to try things out, test boundaries, and discover possible futures (Wenger). Designing for imagination could begin with taking the landscapes of practice metaphor literally and asking TAs to make maps illustrating their commitments and relationships to various communities of practice. In our TA position, a new editor might map their own affiliations and those of other textbook stakeholders in order to see their role from multiple perspectives. TAs in a practicum course could map their past and future scholarly and extracurricular affiliations in order to locate their interests and set meaningful goals. Repeatedly returning to this map throughout a graduate seminar or even over the course of an entire TAship would allow TAs to see their own trajectories evolving, as where they saw themselves on day one would likely change with experience. Yancey et al. (this volume) similarly explore the possibilities of mapping exercises. The authors suggest helping TAs name what they know about writing and teaching from their prior experiences to create a glossary of terms, and then using mapping to find connections and tensions between their prior experiences as students and/or professionals and current experiences as writing instructors.

Like these mapping exercises, other opportunities to reflect on teaching and professional development experiences can help TAs look at their roles, practices, and relationships with new eyes (Wenger). In our case, we turned to journaling as we struggled to locate ourselves in our editing work. With the initial intention of simply documenting and processing our experiences, we wrote about our successes and the obstacles we were facing, including our challenging interactions with colleagues. In this exploratory, personal writing we began to work through our conflicted feelings about the work and better understand our TAship in relation to our other commitments and our fellow learning travelers. This informal writing led to the kinds of self-assessment and reflection recognized as a central aspect of scholarly work (S. Miller et al.). We found support in our reflective efforts and encouragement to share our findings with others in a graduate seminar on writing program administration. Through this course, we were able to develop our TAship reflections into a research project and earn course credits for doing so. Designing such opportunities for informal and/or formal reflective writing in the practicum, graduate coursework, or professional development settings can help TAs develop these reflective scholarly habits.

The teaching philosophy presents another writing opportunity for teacher learners to locate themselves in the landscape of FYW. While often considered a job application genre, the teaching statement can also hold value for learning travelers long before they enter the job market. During our first year as TAs, we were tasked with writing a semester-long “intertextual teaching philosophy” in

a graduate pedagogy course. On three occasions we exchanged working drafts with a different group of colleagues, and each time we revised we had to include ideas gained from reading others' statements. This intertextual collaboration not only allowed for engagement with learning travelers across experience levels and intellectual commitments, but also helped us (re)position ourselves with respect to our practice at different points in the semester. With each new iteration of our statements, we had to project ourselves as a teacher in connection to our past and future affiliations, imagining ourselves anew and in connection with other members of the community. In a TA practicum, a project like this could help build a cross-disciplinary imagination, through which new teachers might decide whether and how to re-appropriate the values projected by others. This activity might also help TA learners imagine and prepare for potential boundary encounters such as conversations with administrators, university-wide committees, or faculty from other departments who wonder what it is we do in our corner of the academy.

As this discussion has emphasized, the landscape of writing instruction extends beyond one's immediate classroom or writing program. Thus, it is important to help TAs extend their imagination beyond their local institution in order to see the purpose and significance of their work within the broader enterprise of writing education. Wenger suggests developing this sort of imagination through sharing stories and "exploring other ways of doing what we are doing, other possible worlds, and other identities" (185). One way to expose TAs to the stories and practices of more geographically-distant members of the landscape is through reading program profiles, such as those published in *Composition Forum* and in this collection, or scholarship with case studies involving TAs, teachers, or administrators. Arranging visits or video conferences with scholars or facilitating cross-institutional TA partnerships could also help TAs better contextualize their work and locate themselves in relation to other members and communities of the landscape.

Involving advanced TAs in writing program administration (Rupiper, Taggart, and Lowery), distributing professional development across institutional sites (Obermark, Brewer, and Halasek; Yancey), and including more direct faculty mentorship from across programs and departments could also help to expand the TA imagination, allowing them to better understand roles they might wish or need to inhabit across time and space in a landscape of practice. Imagining how the TAship fits within a professional landscape may especially help TAs who do not already see themselves as writing teachers or scholars aligned with composition research. Through imagination, learning travelers are engaging in the work of reconciliation required to develop a flexible, productive identity as a graduate student, teacher, and scholar.

ALIGNMENT

According to Wenger, engagement and imagination can help a person understand their position and the practices of a community, but alignment is needed to bring ideas into action or contribute to broader goals that extend beyond a single community in a landscape. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner further explain that alignment involves “making sure that activities are coordinated, that laws are followed, or that intentions are implemented” (21). Alignment is evident when individuals share commitment to a goal or engage in similar practices to meet a directive. It can be “a way of taking part in something big” (Wenger 196)—like a faculty-wide walkout to protest working conditions—but alignment practices can also take more mundane forms like following a syllabus template or enlisting a colleague’s collaboration designing an assignment. In a landscape of practice, alignment might simply mean developing a shared discourse so that a conversation can take place across boundaries. Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir describe this type of alignment work when they remind us of the field’s “commitment to pedagogical outreach” that requires “confident, mature, reflective composition teachers representing us—and extending our scholarly reach—at all levels” (61-62). Here we suggest that focus on alignment in the TAship can support this goal.

As our prior discussions have indicated, the boundary work required for a successful editorship was evident as we struggled to align our work across communities in our landscape and communicate with other instructors in our writing program. Though we had no problem imagining each other as fellow writing instructors, beliefs about the purposes and practices of writing instruction were often in conflict. One semester, we made efforts to meet with first-year TAs to hear about their experiences using the textbook with hopes their insights would help us make editing decisions more reflective of community needs. What we heard were mostly requests for more workbook-style grammar activities. At our editing meetings, our co-editor similarly insisted on incorporating decontextualized rules about academic grammar and mechanics. We knew these suggestions from our peers did not reflect research on student learning and writing development, but we also knew that these ideas about writing and writing instruction were not uncommon in our program and in broader public and academic discourses. Caught in alignment dilemmas, we often simply moved on, not wanting to (or not feeling ready to) engage in dialogue about our pedagogical and disciplinary differences. We now recognize these moments as potentially generative opportunities. Perhaps we could have brought the suggestions of our peers into a broader discussion with WPAs about the goals and values of our program and worked together to create textbook additions aimed at helping teachers address the language-related needs of their students in more effective ways than decontextualized grammar drills. While we recognize it was not our

job alone to convince anyone of the efficacy of broader goals and practices of FYW, with the help of more experienced members of the landscape we could have used these boundary encounters as opportunities for learning, extending our reach, and working toward more meaningful collaborations.

DESIGNING FOR ALIGNMENT

As we reflect on our TAs hip, we recognize that it is one thing to become a knowledgeable and reflective teacher or scholar, but another to be able to communicate this knowledge with others or to engage with participants in a landscape who have different scholarly commitments and teaching philosophies. Wenger has argued that in our interconnected world, the goal for all education should be to support learner identities that are able to move across boundaries (274). Designing for alignment in the TAs hip requires the facilitation and support of boundary encounters and coordinated efforts that extend across a landscape.

One way to design for alignment in the TAs hip is to make visible the histories and philosophies underlying certain practices. Such a process allows the learning traveler to see the ways a community encompasses multiple perspectives while also understanding the role of local practices within the broader enterprise. Writing about a podcast she created to introduce an assigned text in an education seminar, Polin suggests that teachers of graduate students can make visible the histories and tensions within scholarly conversations. She explains:

Via podcast, I was able to offer a bit of a history about the author, his academic lineage, his current work, and the role the book plays in a landscape of writing on the subject. I explained why I had selected the text and what my intentions were for them as readers. In this way, I was able to not only help the students make meaning more easily, but also to connect them with a sense of the community of researchers pursuing this line of work. (174)

In creating this explanatory text, Polin is helping newcomers locate their reading within the history and practices of a community.

Making curricular decisions transparent, like Polin does by explaining the text selection process for a course, can improve alignment between learner needs and the expectations of educators and open opportunities for learners to negotiate the terms of their experiences. Miller et al. similarly suggest that graduate teacher educators should be more transparent with TAs about the curricular philosophy of the practicum. By modeling their process of curricular decision making, educators are offering TAs “the tools to develop their own methodologies in their writing

classrooms, to evaluate those methodologies, and to evaluate [the teacher educator's] methodologies in the practicum itself" (88). Making explicit the coordinated actions and productive tensions that help a practice like the TA practicum evolve can invite graduate students to engage in processes of alignment.

Acknowledging moments of tension as learning opportunities, rather than as problems or impediments to progress, can also help members of a community remain productive in the face of difference. For example, as practicum instructors introduce policies, standards, or outcomes, they can also discuss the ways these policies came to be and make visible the ways a policy—such as an outcomes statement—may not please everyone, even those who created it. Providing TAs not only with the CWPA outcomes statement but also with some of its critiques may help novice TAs “hear controversy and contention, to understand this tension as healthy and productive, and to learn to participate in it” (Polin 175). We wonder if more open discussion about the history of tension surrounding topics like grammar instruction, for example, may have led to more productive conversations with those who disagreed with our editing approaches.

We do recognize that emphasizing tensions may raise concerns among writing teacher educators, especially in writing programs where disciplinary boundaries are quite visible. Faculty may fear bolstering TA resistance or further delegitimizing composition and rhetoric in the eyes of those already skeptical of its value. Thus, it is important to reflect on one's local context and consider prevailing beliefs and topics that could lead to tense moments. Hosting interdisciplinary roundtable discussions in TA training focused on a controversial issue (like grammar instruction or assessment) might be one way to highlight multiple perspectives in an ongoing scholarly conversation while modeling work across boundaries.

Extending TA training across institutional sites also creates opportunities for alignment across boundaries. Showing what this might look like in practice, Obermark, Brewer, and Halasek describe a three-part workshop on diversity in writing classes. The program was designed to enable TAs to learn about campus resources, learn from experienced teachers in the English department, and collaborate with peers in designing instructional opportunities. The authors conclude that this workshop showed TAs the university's “broad commitment to teaching,” and ultimately led to TA satisfaction and program sustainability (46). Because the teaching of writing is a shared enterprise, representatives from writing centers, teaching and learning offices, and related academic units have much to offer in TA training. Directly incorporating their perspectives in TA training may help show TAs potential resources and expand their ability to align with communities across the landscape of practice.

While in this section we focused primarily on challenges related to disciplinary and programmatic boundaries, we must acknowledge that learners will inevitably

encounter additional boundaries arising from relations of power. The process of alignment is particularly troublesome because it involves coordinating practices with others. Alignment might include, for example, expectations to follow guidelines or policies, which can potentially feel forceful or coercive. Writing teacher educators must recognize that TAs bring knowledge, experiences, and subjectivities that influence if and to what extent they may align themselves with the ideas, values, goals, and practices of a landscape. Designing the TAs hip with power relations and identities in mind is thus critical to the process of alignment.

TOWARD A LANDSCAPES OF PRACTICE APPROACH

While composition and rhetoric scholars have long agreed that the goals of the TAs hip should encompass more than preparing teachers of writing for the classroom (T. Miller; Yancey; S. Miller et al.), planning for identity development has been largely elided until recent years (Dryer; Grouling). We are pleased to see others directly engaging with issues of identity in this volume (Lugg; Yancey et al., this volume), and we are encouraged by calls to re-think the TAs hip from a learning rather than teaching perspective (Gramer, this volume). Together, insights from this collection make clear that TAs enter a landscape of practice consisting of a complex, overlapping web of communities of practice. As learning travelers, they need opportunities to engage with practices and across boundaries, to construct an image of the landscape and their evolving place in it, and to explore ways their work can have meaning. To this end, we have offered suggestions for designing the composition and rhetoric TAs hip from a social learning perspective by foregrounding attention to identity development. Actively designing the TAs hip to support learning travelers requires providing opportunities for different forms of identification (see Table 7.1).

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner remind us that while it can be helpful to consider engagement, imagination, and alignment as distinct, they are most effective when they are activated together. Engagement without imagination or alignment can lead to reification of practices without a reflective understanding of why they are carried out. Similarly, alignment without engagement or imagination can lead to “unthinking compliance” or resistance (22). On the other hand, the combination of imagination, engagement, and alignment makes for a reflective practice in which a learner is doing things with others, thinking about this work and their role in it, and extending themselves to achieve goals within and beyond the boundaries of the enterprise. Many of the examples we have provided show the interrelatedness of these modes. For example, co-constructing curricular materials is a form of engagement, but may also contribute to one’s ability to envision the landscape or align with a different perspective.

Table 7.1. Designing for Identification

	Engagement	Imagination	Alignment
Key Questions	<p>Who do TAs interact with during practicum? After their first year? What mentorship structures are in place?</p> <p>What opportunities do TAs have for collaboration across boundaries (disciplinary, intergenerational, etc.): How can we design for these?</p> <p>How often do TAs discuss their practices with more experienced TAs or faculty?</p> <p>What physical spaces offer opportunities for interaction?</p>	<p>What opportunities exist for TAs to access their prior experiences? To project their future experiences?</p> <p>How are TAs offered opportunities to reflect on their teaching? On their learning? On their engagement with others?</p> <p>What opportunities exist for TAs to learn more about the role of writing in the university? In their program or discipline?</p> <p>How can we help TAs extend their imagination beyond a single institution or program?</p>	<p>How are TAs introduced to policies and curricular materials?</p> <p>What kinds of interactions are possible with TAs and faculty from other programs and disciplines?</p> <p>How are TAs supported in communicating their expertise across boundaries?</p> <p>Do TAs have a broader understanding of the goals of the TAship?</p> <p>How are TAs prepared to address tensions and conflicts?</p>
Strategies to support identification	<p>Discuss lesson plans, activities, grading, etc. with more experienced TAs and/or faculty</p> <p>Construct course materials collaboratively</p> <p>Serve on committees in writing program, department, or at university level</p> <p>Discuss “threshold concepts” with TAs from other programs and/or disciplines</p> <p>Assess or co-develop practicum curricula</p>	<p>Support ongoing development of teaching philosophy, with opportunities to read others</p> <p>Create consistent opportunities for reflection on teaching, writing, and disciplinary</p> <p>Make power relationships visible</p> <p>Map university writing landscape</p> <p>Initiate cross-institutional partnerships</p> <p>Read program profiles and case studies</p> <p>Coordinate visits from scholars</p>	<p>Encourage teaching observations and feedback discussions</p> <p>Talk to faculty across the university about their writing goals for students</p> <p>Host interdisciplinary roundtable discussions</p> <p>Share histories of policies, standards, and program-level decisions with TAs</p> <p>Highlight the productive tension inherent in disciplinary scholarship and programmatic decision-making</p>

NOTE: The questions and programmatic activities listed are not prescriptive; they are meant to serve as a starting point, and are, of course, incomplete and decontextualized.

Though we see great possibilities in reimagining the TAs^{hip} for social learning, we want to be realistic about the potential outcomes of enacting this approach. Of course, it would be nearly impossible for a TAs^{hip} design to incorporate all of the strategies listed in Table 7.1, and some may be impossible to enact depending on contextual factors. We also do not hold or promise utopian visions of TA identity transformations or boundary crossings. As our narrative has demonstrated, we came across fellow TAs (and faculty) who did not wish to learn more about some of the practices in their landscape. We also recognize that race, class, gender, sexuality, language, first-generation status, ability, and other identity markers factor into the degree of risk, access, difficulty, or desirability TAs may experience when learning in a landscape (Alexander; Craig and Perryman-Clark). While we have tried our best to be mindful and realistic in our discussion, as white, cis-presenting, native English speakers we acknowledge that our own boundary encounters were experienced from places of privilege and that our perspective on learning in a landscape is not the only narrative to consider. When designing the TAs^{hip} it is important for writing teacher educators to learn from and alongside TAs about potential boundaries that impact TA learning and prepare to address challenges and tensions that may surface. It is also important to recognize that not all boundaries are necessary or navigable. Eliminating unnecessary and inequitable barriers wherever possible is fundamental to supporting TAs in their learning trajectories. People in places of privilege and power should start by securing TA access to a livable wage and healthcare, for example, and creating clear pathways to success through fair, transparent, responsive, anti-racist, and anti-ableist policies and practices.

As with any discussion of graduate student labor, it is important to acknowledge the very real potential for exploitation in the TAs^{hip}. Designers of TAs^{hips} must be careful not to place unnecessary burdens on graduate students or mask exploitative labor under the guise of professional development or learning opportunities (Leverenz and Goodburn; Edgington and Taylor). This is why, for example, we have cautioned against providing engagement opportunities without careful design and consideration of TA identities and learning trajectories. While there are certainly risks of exploitation in any TAs^{hip}, we believe much of what we have suggested, such as designing opportunities for collaboration and negotiation across boundaries, can help protect the working rights of graduate students in precarious positions and may even create conditions for productive advocacy efforts.

Despite potential challenges, we maintain that the TAs^{hip} is a unique opportunity to develop professional identities that enable one to explore and work across boundaries. The ability to cross boundaries, particularly disciplinary boundaries, is a valuable asset for composition and rhetoric professionals whose

work must reconcile multiple memberships in a landscape and serve as “brokers,” bringing elements of one practice into another (Wenger 105). For example, when faculty members serve on university-wide committees they are “extending [their] scholarly reach” (Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir 62) to listeners who may have different understandings of writing or student writers. TAs will also face situations in which they must translate their expertise for others. When discussing writing or what writing teachers do with fellow TAs in a seminar, with colleagues at a cross-disciplinary organization meeting, or with a stranger on an airplane, composition and rhetoric TAs are negotiating their place within the field and learning how to communicate their expertise across boundaries.

We now realize this was the work we were trying to do in our roles as TA editors of a custom textbook. In our struggles to reconcile our multiple memberships, we learned about our commitments to composition scholarship, about the institutional and programmatic histories of FYW, and about the challenges of engaging across boundaries. While we do not discount these invaluable lessons and experiences, we suggest that an educational design more like the one proposed in this chapter might have provided us a way of understanding our challenges and goals in clearer terms. Rather than avoiding difficult conversations with others or feeling stagnant in our work, we may have been able to embrace boundary encounters as learning opportunities. As Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner explain, making boundaries visible “confronts explicitly the problematic nature of boundary crossing and the potential tensions or conflicts between practices as sources of accountability” (18). Designers of TA learning experiences can better support brokering and coordination across a landscape by helping TAs locate boundaries and approach them as learning assets.

Such changes are already occurring at our prior institution. A recent publication of the custom textbook was the result of a collaboration between TAs and an associate director of the writing program, a faculty member who could serve as a facilitator for boundary crossing. The program has also increased efforts for collaborative engagement, including an initiative in which TAs and long-time instructors from different disciplinary backgrounds worked in the same room to develop sample teaching materials. Prominent scholars have been invited to offer workshops on issues that frequently lead to tensions such as written feedback and writing assessment practices. Activities like these provide opportunities for engagement, imagination, and alignment within and across boundaries.

Given the contentious role of writing and writing instruction on our campuses and in public discourse, writing instructors, including TAs, can expect to encounter multiple and competing perspectives with which they are called upon to engage. As Adler-Kassner explains, representatives of writing education can benefit from “thinking strategically about how to shape stories about students and

writing” (“Activist WPA” 2). Actively designing the TAship for learning in landscapes of practice is one way to bring us closer to this goal by helping TAs develop flexible, boundary-crossing identities that will enable them to more effectively communicate with others about the values and practices of writing education.

WORKS CITED

- Adler-Kassner, Linda. *The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers*. Utah State UP, 2008.
- . “The Companies We Keep or the Companies We Would Like to Try to Keep: Strategies and Tactics in Challenging Times.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 119–140.
- Alexander, Jonathan. “Literacy and Diversity: A Provocation.” *Council of Writing Program Administrators*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2009, pp. 164.
- Craig, Collin Lamont, and Staci Maree Perryman-Clark. “Troubling the Boundaries: (De) Constructing WPA Identities at the Intersections of Race and Gender.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2011, pp. 37-58.
- Dryer, Dylan B. “At a Mirror, Darkly: The Imagined Undergraduate Writers of Ten Novice Composition Instructors.” *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2012, pp. 420–52.
- Edgington, Anthony and Stacy Hartlage Taylor. “Invisible Administrators: The Possibilities and Perils of Graduate Student Administration.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 31, no. 1-2, 2007, pp. 150-170.
- Fenton-O’Creevy, Mark, et al. “Challenges for Practice-Based Education.” *Learning in Landscapes of Practice Boundaries, Identity, and Knowledgeability in Practice-Based Learning*, edited by Etienne Wenger-Trayner, Mark Fenton-O’Creevy, Steven Hutchinson, Chris Kubiak, and Beverly Wenger-Trayner, Routledge, 2014, pp. 151-161.
- Grouling, Jennifer. “Resistance and Identity Formation.” *Composition Forum*, vol. 32, 2015.
- Lave, Jean and Etienne Wenger. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Leverenz, Carrie Shively and Amy Goodburn. “Professionalizing TA Training: Commitment to Teaching or Rhetorical Response to Market Crisis.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 22, no. 1-2, 1998, pp. 9-32.
- Long, Mark C., et al. “Beyond Apprenticeship: Graduate Students, Professional Development Programs and the Future(s) of English Studies.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 20, no. 1-2, 1996, pp. 66-78.
- Miller, Susan K., et al. “The Composition Practicum as Professional Development.” *Don’t Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney I. Dobrin, National Council of Teachers of English. 2005, pp. 82–97.
- Miller, Thomas P. “Why Don’t Our Graduate Programs Do a Better Job of Preparing Students for the Work That We Do?” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2001, pp. 41-58.

- Obermark, Lauren, Elizabeth Brewer, and Kay Halasek. "Moving from the One and Done to a Culture of Collaboration: Revising Professional Development for TAs." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2015, pp. 32-53.
- Polin, Linda G. "Graduate Professional Education from a Community of Practice Perspective: The Role of Social and Technical Networking." *Social Learning Systems and Communities of Practice*, edited by Chris Blackmore. Springer and Open University, 2010, pp. 163-78.
- Reid, E. Shelley, Heidi Estrem, and Marcia Belcheir. "The Effects of Writing Pedagogy Education on Graduate Teaching Assistants' Approaches to Teaching Composition." *Writing Program Administrators*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 32-73.
- Restaino, Jessica. *First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground*. Carbsouthern Illinois UP, 2012.
- Rupiper Taggart, Amy, and Margaret Lowry. "Cohorts, Grading, and Ethos: Listening to TAs Enhances Teacher Preparation." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2011, pp. 89-114.
- Sandy, Kirsti A. "After Preparing TAs for the Classroom, What Then?: Three Decades of Conversation about Preparing TAs for the Job Market." *Preparing College Teachers of Writing: History, Theories, Programs, Practices*, edited by Betty P. Pytlik and Sarah Liggett, Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 28-39.
- Thomas, Trudelle. "The Graduate Student as Apprentice WPA: Experiencing the Future." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1991, pp. 41-52.
- Wenger, Etienne. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Wenger-Trayner, Etienne, and Beverly Wenger-Trayner. "Learning in a Landscape of Practice : A Framework." In *Learning in Landscapes of Practice Boundaries, Identity, and Knowledgeability in Practice-Based Learning*, edited by Etienne Wenger-Trayner, Mark Fenton-O'Creevy, Steven Hutchinson, Chris Kubiak, and Beverly Wenger-Trayner, Routledge, 2014, pp. 13-29.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake. "The Professionalization of TA Development Programs: A Heuristic for Curriculum Design." *Preparing College Teachers of Writing: History, Theories, Programs, Practices*, edited by Betty P. Pytlik and Sarah Liggett, Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 63-74.

NARRATIVE 7.

IGTA

Thir Budhathoki

University of Arizona

My experience as an International Graduate Teaching Assistant (IGTA) has been marked by border crossings and negotiations on different levels. Returning to grad school after working as an assistant professor for many years was a different experience compared to most of my cohort in their mid-twenties. Likewise, traveling 8,000 miles from home was not just about crossing physical borders; I was in a different world where I had to navigate every single thing both on and off campus. To a person who learned English as a foreign language and studied and worked in a different education system, getting ready to teach a class of domestic students after a five-day training—no matter how good—was scary.

My teaching experience was helpful even though college composition was new to me but preparing the syllabus and navigating instructional technologies like D2L's Brightspace learning management system, which I had never used before, were most challenging. Besides, self-consciousness about my accent and fear of not being understood added additional strain to my already impaired self-confidence. The preceptorship class that met once a week provided a safe space to discuss classroom-related issues but, as the only IGTA in the group, it took me more time to navigate even that safe space. I felt overwhelmed and lost on many occasions but the report systems in the writing program, Office of Instruction and Assessment, and 24/7 tech support helped me handle those situations.

The most unnerving experience was going online in the mid-spring of 2020 due to COVID-19. It was an unprecedented time and there was little time for this shift. Additionally, I was taking my comprehensive exams. But, in retrospect, I feel that we all did what was humanly possible. Since then, I have been working online, quarantined alone in my studio and experiencing a range of conflicting emotions every single day: frustration over lost freedom, the canceled trip home to get my wife and daughter here, and all the challenges and complexities of online instruction on one hand, and a sense of privilege and gratitude for being able to work safely from home, learn about new technologies, and focus on my academic and professional development on the other.

In sum, the dual role as a student and an instructor in a different country has put me in what Gloria Anzaldúa would call the borderlands—where confusion and contradictions give intense pain but offer creative possibilities as well.

Switching back to student life after a long gap, leaving my family behind initially due to the fear of visa denial and lack of health insurance coverage and later due to the pandemic, navigating the new spaces and technologies as an IGTA who, as Tao Zhang writes, often finds himself “trapped by invisible forces in difficult pedagogical relationships and the subsequent emotional drain while working late nights to catch up with necessary work” have been exhausting (11). Yet, I haven’t stopped seeing the light at the end of the tunnel where I am eager to get in 2023 and chart my way ahead.

WORKS CITED

Zhang, Tao. ““Your English is Accented!”: Surviving With Otherness While Approaching Positive Becoming.” *International Review of Qualitative Research*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2021, pp. 476-496, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940844720943510>.

CHAPTER 8.

**DOORWAYS TO DISCIPLINARITY:
USING THRESHOLD CONCEPTS
TO BRIDGE DISCIPLINARY
DIVIDES AND DEVELOP
THEORY-PRACTICE PRAXIS**

Zack K. De Piero

Northampton Community College

Jennifer K. Johnson

UC Santa Barbara

Our initial working title for this piece was “Feeling a Little Frazzled:’ Troublesome Knowledge in the TA Practicum.” One of our first-time composition TAs used this phrase in a reflective survey after a day-long TA preparation¹ session, to describe his feelings about using composition theory to plan his first first-year composition (FYC) course. As we guided graduate students—all of whom were pursuing Ph.Ds. in humanities disciplines—towards cultivating theory-practice connections for teaching FYC, we caught glimpses of their discomfort with negotiating two distinct roles that they inhabited: they were near-experts in one domain (their respective humanities disciplines) and novices in another (the composition field). And while adopting the ways of thinking and practicing of any field is challenging in and of itself, these TAs’ sense of liminality was likely exacerbated because they were trying to accomplish this feat while also being steeped in the privileged literate practices of their home disciplines.

So how can WPAs help TAs navigate these novice/expert dualities? What experiences from TAs’ own fields can they draw on to inform their developing

1 we prefer using the term “TA preparation” instead of “TA training.” Although the literature clearly identifies numerous approaches to “TA training”—each with their own theoretical foundations and practical considerations—we see a consequential difference in the connotation of these two terms: while “training” invokes a top-down, prescriptive model, “preparation” suggests a bottom-up, constructivist negotiation. For further discussion of the nuances between these terms, see Fulkerson; Dobrin; and/or Stenberg. In 2012, Reid et al. introduced the term “Writing Pedagogy Education,” which we also use throughout this chapter.

composition praxis? To what extent does their expert knowledge move them towards seeing composition as a discipline in its own right? And what theories and approaches can guide TA preparation efforts to allay TAs' liminality? In this chapter, we examine these questions and consider how threshold concepts—transformative insights about situated literacy—can be used to bridge disciplinary divides and help first-time writing instructors become *less* frazzled. We illustrate how TAs can move through liminality by drawing from their prior knowledge to conceptualize literacy within their home disciplines, which in turn, enables them to make theory-practice connections for FYC education.

Four conceptual strands are woven throughout our work in this chapter: liminality, threshold concepts, composition praxis, and disciplinarity. These ideas are captured within another TA's practicum reflection when he describes the role that threshold concepts can play in orienting students to new disciplinary paradigms:

[T]he feeling of ambiguity and uncertainty that accompanies entrance into a new field is often overwhelming, and students initially question the relevancy of the “big picture” concepts we try to get them to engage with. Exposing these threshold concepts directly can help introduce a new sense of meaning for students and help them understand what exactly it is we are trying to do. In history, this takes the form of competing narratives and the lived experience that they construct as they conflict or expand upon one another. This is a much more dynamic academic experience than trying to understand some distanced idea of what history “was” from a god's eye view.

Although this TA is focusing on the undergraduate experience, we contend that this excerpt also illustrates the challenges that TAs from non-composition disciplines encounter when cultivating FYC praxis. This population of TAs is sizable: according to the 2012 *National Writing Census*, non-composition graduate students (including those from English and literature) teach FYC far more regularly than those from composition programs.

STEPPING THROUGH THE DOORWAYS OF DISCIPLINARITY: CROSSING LIMINAL SPACES

Doorways are an apt metaphor for thinking about liminality. Individual courses might be thought of as rooms, disciplines as hallways, and disciplinary paradigms (i.e., social sciences, hard sciences, humanities) as wings of the building. The structure of the university itself might be conceptualized as architecture—or

perhaps *architexture*—comprised of multiple domains, each of which have their own established ways of constructing knowledge. The individuals who produce this knowledge represent a wide range of disciplines, and consequently, have particular ways of thinking and practicing (Kreber; Donald). Compositionists, for instance, have focused on generating insights into disciplinary differences in authorial stances (Hyland), styles (Sword), epistemologies and methodologies (Hyland), and genres (Soliday), among other topics. Doorways thus provide a useful framework for this piece, especially because we focus on threshold concepts, which have been conceptualized as portals that facilitate heightened epistemological participation in a given disciplinary domain (Meyer and Land).

The composition field reparatns like a hallway in the university: an academic domain whose mission is to produce new knowledge. It's unique, though, because the production, consumption, and distribution of texts *spans* disciplines, and therefore, the composition field also functions as a meta-discipline. Consequently, the field's body of knowledge extends opportunities for more consciously moving through the liminal spaces of the university. In this latter vein, the composition discipline isn't so much like a physical space—rooms, hallways, wings, or the building itself—as it is like light permeating through the space. Liminal movement, then, can be conceptualized as piecemeal progress through increasingly illuminated disciplinary spaces.

In this chapter, we consider how TAs move through these doorways so that they can conceptualize and enact their FYC pedagogy to guide their students through these doorways. This metaphor of moving through doorways suggests that liminal activity is more than mere movement through isolated rooms, hallways, or buildings; it's a learner's conscious awareness of his or her movement through space. Liminal movement suggests mindful embodiment of the ways of thinking and practicing *within* and even potentially *across* disciplines—and for novice writing instructors (or what Gramer refers to in this volume as “New Writing Teachers” or NWTs), specifically, this trajectory requires negotiating theory-practice connections while guiding students' literate development in situated academic contexts.

When FYC TAs arrive at the doorway of their composition practicum on the first day of TA preparation, they bring life-long histories of literacy with them; they've already walked through countless other doorways both within and outside of the university. They are hardly “blank slates,” as Yancey, Cole, May, and Stark (this volume), Stenberg, and others throughout this collection have made clear. And as graduate students in various disciplines, they've opened numerous “doors” en route to achieving near-expert-level ways of thinking and practicing in their own fields; consequently, they have also successfully moved through considerable liminal space in their respective disciplines. Their prior knowledge

about literacy practices in their respective humanities fields, then, is abundant—even if it remains tacit.

By encouraging TAs to access this valuable prior knowledge (Reid “On Learning”; Harris; Bishop), writing pedagogy educators can facilitate novice TAs’ movement through that metaphorical doorway and heighten their awareness of disciplinarity. Identifying threshold concepts in their home disciplines enables TAs to build upon their prior knowledge about disciplinary epistemology so that they can more deeply understand writing in and across the disciplines, and thus encourage their students to make similar connections. Activating TAs’ and other new writing teachers’ (NWTs)² prior knowledge about how literacy functions within *their own disciplines* is one pivotal step in cultivating novice writing instructors’ development. In this study, we exclusively focus on TAs’ responses to one practicum reflection prompt where they were asked to do this by exploring a threshold concept in their own discipline.³

TA PREPARATION APPROACHES AND HOW THE PRACTICUM CAN ADDRESS LIMINALITY

The observations in this chapter stem from our shared experiences guiding TAs in a “genre studies” FYC program infused with writing about writing (Downs and Wardle) and teaching for transfer (Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak) perspectives. At this site, TAs lead their FYC students through the *study of* and *practice with* writing, using concepts that are central to the discipline such as genre, exigence, audience, purpose, and context. This approach is designed to equip students with flexible lenses that might guide them towards more nuanced and situated views of how and why writing functions across disciplines and within genres. While our study at this site is context specific—connected to our TAs’ disciplinary backgrounds and our FYC curriculum—it also offers expansive implications for theorizing TA preparation efforts.

This writing pedagogy education (WPE, via Reid) program reflects what Haring-Smith would refer to as an “integrated” approach, in which theory and

2 We’ve tried to carefully distinguish between graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs) who are teaching composition for the first time and “New Writing Teachers” (NWT), a term we adopted from Gramer in this collection. While all first-time composition TAs are NWTs, the reverse isn’t true: not all NWTs are first-time composition TAs. We see NWT as a much more expansive term that holds applications for faculty across the disciplines who are learning to teach writing (e.g., through campus-wide WAC/WID workshops). In this sense, NWT is a much more generalizable term.

3 Our writing program’s then-WPA, Linda Adler-Kassner, designed and taught this TA preparation course for several years just prior to the year we are reporting on, which was our first year leading the course. In this piece, we are analyzing the TAs’ responses to a reflective prompt that she developed.

practice are fully integrated into TA preparation, so that the symbiosis between them is evident. Yet because filling and managing class time are often key concerns for new TAs who are grappling with their sense of liminality, they may be initially reluctant to embrace theoretical considerations. Both Huntley and Recchio chronicled TAs' resistance towards theory in favor of more practical information. TAs' interest in practice over theory has been similarly characterized as resistance by Ebest; Dobrin; Fischer; Hesse and others. From the perspective of a TA who is unfamiliar with the composition field and therefore occupying a liminal space, though, it's entirely understandable. After all, identifying and adopting a new set of theoretical paradigms is a time-consuming and challenging task that heightens a sense of defamiliarization and liminality. As Reid et al. reported in their study of new TAs' development over a three-year period, it can take several years for TAs to embrace key composition principles.

However, while a "nuts and bolts" approach may seem like a quick fix, it likely leads to even more frustration for TAs over the long run; without trekking through any of the composition field's theoretical terrain, TAs may be left wading in liminal space well into their FYC teaching appointments. At stake, then, is the development of TAs' praxis: this task of reconciling theory and practice can be managed by adopting a "novice as expert" stance—a paradox that Sommers and Saltz associated with first-year writing students, though it can apply to new TAs as well. Sommers and Saltz also conclude that the most successful college writers embrace their novice status early on; rather than viewing writing as a set of mechanical rules and tasks, they embrace it as a set of possible strategies for accomplishing goals. Similarly, the most successful TAs are likely those who grapple with theory as a means of developing a sustainable praxis, however daunting that Reid et al. contend that it may initially seem.

In her piece "On Learning to Teach: Letter to a New TA," Reid invokes Sprague et al.'s four sequential—though somewhat recursive—stages of developing competence in any new subject: *unconscious incompetence*, *conscious incompetence*, *conscious competence*, and *unconscious competence* (also discussed in Ambrose et al.'s *How Learning Works*). Upon initial consideration, this final stage might seem counterintuitive: don't experts have a conscious awareness of their trade? Oftentimes, though, experts' mastery becomes habituated and can remain tacit thereafter. Reid introduces these stages to help new TAs recognize that becoming familiar with the practices and principles embraced by the composition field is a process that takes time. Invariably, this process involves considerable self-doubt and frustration.

Reid contends that when TAs inhabit the first stage of unconscious competence, they are blissfully unaware of all they do not yet know. The liminality that new TAs experience is particularly evident at the next stage—*conscious*

incompetence—as they recognize that they’re not yet fully competent in their roles. During the next stage—*conscious competence*—TAs’ sense of liminality naturally decreases, although they must remain carefully focused on the task at hand. We contend that once TAs reach the level of *conscious competence*, they are positioned to move through the doorway of liminality.⁴

METHODS

In this mixed-methods study, we analyzed one practicum reflection prompt that asked eighteen TAs from one WPE cohort to describe a threshold concept in their respective humanities disciplines: history, religious studies, English/literature, comparative literature, music, classics, and feminist studies. We felt that this particular reflection offered the most theoretically rich opportunity for gauging how this group of NWTs began to navigate their disciplinary divides and adopt the ways of thinking and practicing in the composition field. Because this practicum reflection embodies the lone meta-threshold concept of composition by asking TAs to conceptualize writing as a subject and an activity (Adler-Kassner and Wardle), we hoped it would illuminate aspects of TAs’ experiences with liminality during a crucial phase of their pedagogical development.

This section below opens by introducing our research site and participants. We then elaborate on our rationale for selecting this particular data set and briefly outline our coding procedures.

RESEARCH SITE

FYC at UC Santa Barbara is a component within a general education program; students must complete or place out of WRIT 2, “*Academic Writing*.” Our TAs are generally hired from the Humanities and Fine Arts Division (HFA), and, collectively, these graduate students teach the majority of these FYC courses on campus. For instance, during the 2015-2016 academic year, 27 HFA graduate students taught 67% of the total sections. Many of the TAs who participated in this study were actively preparing for their Ph.D. qualifying exams, while others had reached “ABD” status. As such, this population of TAs was deeply steeped in the ways of thinking and practicing of their home disciplines.

Prior to teaching FYC, HFA graduate students complete an intensive two-week summer training workshop. After this workshop, TAs enroll in a practicum (see Appendix 2 for the syllabus) that runs parallel to their first teaching

⁴ Due to the brevity of our 12-week-long TA preparation program, it’s unlikely that NWTs can achieve the level of *unconscious competence* within this timeframe. As such, our TA preparation efforts are confined to the first three stages.

appointment. This TA preparation sequence introduces TAs to a wide body of composition scholarship, ranging from the writing process (Elbow), to reading (Bunn; Reid 2010), to genre (Dirk; Reiff and Bawarshi), to transfer (Robertson, Taczak, and Yancey; Wardle) to threshold concepts (Meyer and Land; Adler-Kassner and Wardle), to disciplinarity (Middendorf and Pace), to FYC itself (Downs), and assessing and responding to student writing (Huot).

Here, we arrive at an important distinction about the expectations that this program places on its TAs, due to its “integrated” (Haring-Smith) approach. Because TAs design their own syllabi (they also have opportunities to review and modify former TAs’ syllabi), they must bridge theory-practice connections as they consider how the course objectives align with the major assignments and how to scaffold students’ learning on a week-to-week basis to prepare them for those assignments. TAs are also encouraged to assign readings from the *Writing Spaces* book series. However, by and large, TAs have autonomy in their classrooms to meet the program’s goals through a shared conception of what it means to teach FYC at this university.

An implicit hope underlying this principle is that TAs will not merely *adopt* their FYC curriculum—e.g., importing a former TA’s syllabus with minimal changes—but rather *adapt* their own FYC curriculum to the range of course goals based on precise self-generated pedagogical goals that evolve throughout the quarter. Novice instructors are thus encouraged to engage with both theory and practice as a way of moving towards *conscious competence* (Reid 2017), and, consequently, one step closer to expertise.

To emphasize the importance of synthesizing theory and practice, the mantra “there is no *what* without *why*” is repeatedly referenced throughout the practicum. This phrase reflects the same theoretical foundation and in-class activities that we hope TAs will integrate into their FYC pedagogy. In fact, if FYC students are also invited to make “*what* with *why*” connections—i.e., *what* is being done is accompanied by *why* it’s being done—they’ll likely be better positioned to enact those same conceptualizations.

Thereparatum itself, then, models the theory-practice connections that are so crucial for preparing novice instructors to teach writing. For instance, during the practicum, TAs bring a draft of their first writing prompt to class and engage in a peer/reader review activity. Before and after the “*what* with *why*” mantra is reinforced, TAs exchange formative feedback to improve their drafts. The activity models the collaborative approach that we hope TAs will take into their FYC classrooms, particularly since engaging in formative reader review isn’t necessarily instinctive. In fact, based on our experiences working with TAs in WPE contexts, graduate students in non-composition disciplines may not have been acculturated to formative peer/reader review within formal classroom settings, especially if they did not take FYC as undergraduates, which, as Fischer points out, historically

many haven't. Altogether, the literate activity embodied within the process of engaging in reader review reflects numerous threshold concepts of writing studies, including: (1) writing is a social and rhetorical activity; (2) text is an object outside of oneself that can be improved and developed; and (3) learning to write effectively requires different kinds of practice (Adler-Kassner and Wardle).

During this practicum, TAs are required to complete various projects intended to facilitate their abilities to become reflective composition practitioners and engage in ongoing immersive praxis. Course observation reflections are one such project. The majority of these practicum reflections are primarily descriptive; per the prompt's directives, TAs offer in-class observations of teaching and learning without evaluation: counting, observing a student, observing a mentor's classroom, considering reading, and observing student-to-student interactions. These prompts are non-evaluative; they ask TAs to examine teaching and learning through a microscopic lens and take stock of *what is* rather than *what could or should be*. Two additional practicum reflections are unique because they don't call upon TAs to actively observe an educational context but, instead, require them to jostle their memories and reflect on their existing disciplinary expertise: examining writing in their disciplines and identifying a threshold concept in that discipline (see Appendix 1 for the prompt).

Of course, it's unrealistic (and likely, counterproductive) to believe that a single practicum—however thoroughly theorized—will equip NWTs with the theoretical and practical foundations necessary to teach writing. As Micciche notes in the foreword to this collection, “becoming a teacher is just that, *becoming*, which entails growth and process.” Nevertheless, we believe that this latter prompt offers potential to create traction towards this state of becoming. Finn (also in this collection) characterizes this liminal movement as an “internal transformation,” which requires “be[ing] able to articulate dissonances and make sense of their experiences to adapt or transform their pedagogical theories and practices.” To facilitate such transformation, Finn relies on reflective prompts that enable TAs to “consider prior knowledge and experiences, articulate their understanding of the new context, and reflect upon the connections or dissonances between the experiences and expectations” (this volume). In this chapter, we analyze a similar reflective prompt that provides a liminal theory-practice scaffold by activating TAs' prior knowledge about a transformative lens in their humanities fields so that they can begin to think about their FYC pedagogy through composition's threshold concepts.

CODING AND DATA ANALYSIS

We examined eighteen TAs' reflections from the third week of their practicum. Their responses ranged from 477 to 1,245 words. We used a grounded theory

(Bryant and Charmaz) approach to our coding methodology to maximize our ability to detect emergent themes and patterns. Our codes emerged over the course of two phases. During the first phase, we relied on “initial coding” (Saldaña) to maximize our flexibility in capturing the existing themes that were present within TAs’ responses. Following this first phase, we refined our initial set of codes by lumping, splitting, rephrasing, and discarding them as needed.⁵

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Two broad patterns permeated the data. First, in their responses to this practicum reflection, TAs outlined a range of characteristics associated with the threshold concept that they identified, oftentimes capturing the transformative power that these disciplinary ways of thinking and practicing held for the humanities. Second, TAs elaborated on the particular roles they embodied when they experienced these insights; collectively, they referenced how being an instructor, student, and researcher each created affordances for more productively grappling with higher forms of disciplinary literacy. Together, these patterns in our TAs’ responses reveal how asking NWTs to analyze threshold concepts in their respective fields can enable them to navigate the liminal space between two academic domains: their home disciplines and the composition field.

EXAMINING CHARACTERISTICS OF THRESHOLD CONCEPTS

TAs attributed four specific characteristics to threshold concepts in the humanities: (1) the foundational nature of threshold concepts within distinct sites of academic activity; (2) the frequent misperceptions that others hold about their discipline; (3) the social power of a particular threshold concept; and (4) the particular ways in which readers engage with texts.

5 For example, during phase one, “navigating uncertain terrain” emerged as a noteworthy code. However, in phase two, we split this code into two separate codes: one that indicated *teachers’* uncertainty—i.e., TAs’ expressed uncertainty with their FYC pedagogies—and another that specified *students’* uncertainty—including TAs’ FYC students—along with TAs themselves when they reflected on their experiences as undergraduate or graduate students. Another revealing example of splitting codes occurred when we reviewed our initial code “students’ struggles with grasping a threshold concept.” We divided this code into three separate codes: (1) “students’ struggles with grasping a *humanities* threshold concept;” (2) “students’ struggles with grasping a *compositions* threshold concept;” and (3) “students struggles *in general*.” This decision reflected a broader trend that we detail in greater depth throughout our analysis: TAs, perhaps unsurprisingly—given their disciplinary backgrounds and the nature of the prompt itself—provided considerably more insight about their humanities disciplines than they did about the composition discipline. In the third phase, we applied our refined set to the data.

FOUNDATIONAL NATURE OF THRESHOLD CONCEPTS WITHIN DISTINCT SITES OF ACADEMIC ACTIVITY

Tacitly or explicitly, eight of eighteen TAs referenced the foundational nature of a particular threshold concept, using phrases such as “constantly important for me in my own work” and “central to my teaching.” After naming a threshold concept in her field, Joan⁶ notes that it “has fundamentally shaped the way I utilize and interpret sources,” while Beverly emphasizes “how important it was to lay out this [particular threshold] concept for the students explicitly on the first day of class and again throughout the course.” Similarly, Mark clearly captures the integral role that threshold concepts play. Commenting on the study of music, he writes:

Once one understands [that music can be understood through culturally dependent conventions and practice], there are a number of new possibilities. We can understand how and why the internal logic that governs a given piece of music came about and how a composer or performer might play with those conventions, increasing our enjoyment and understanding of the art-form.

Maya explains that her field, folklore, is also culturally dependent, stating, “Once one grasps this fact, it’s hard to look at folklore, especially in its narrative forms, without analyzing the constants and the variables of a given piece.” Like Mark’s earlier utterance about music, Maya’s “once/without” phrasing implies a causal series of events. Stripped down, her response can be looked at in the following way: “Once one grasps [X] it’s hard to look at [Y] without analyzing [Z],” which directly echoes Jan Meyer and Ray Land’s (2005) claim about threshold concepts; oftentimes—once an individual grasps such knowledge—it cannot be easily unseen (or un-known). Any given threshold concept holds the power to produce a lens-like cognitive embodiment that re-orientes and re-calibrates learners’ future literate activity.

As Mark and Maya’s responses indicate, when a particular threshold concept is so foundational to a site of academic activity, it seems to hold transcendent value for a broad range of scholars within (and perhaps beyond) that discipline. The ways of thinking and practicing required and afforded by a threshold concept appear to shape disciplinary scholars’ perspectives, as another TA noted, “regardless of their objects of analysis.”

6 All names have been changed to pseudonyms.

FREQUENT MISPERCEPTIONS OTHERS HOLD ABOUT THEIR FIELD

Twelve out of eighteen TAs referenced common misperceptions about their discipline, and TAs often used these as a basis for recognizing discipline-specific troublesome knowledge. In other words, thinking about others' misperceptions helped TAs consider threshold concepts in their respective domains. Mark most directly captures this phenomenon, claiming that "Often, when I've had conversation about music with non-musicians, I get the general feeling that while they love listening to music, as a subject [of study], it is completely opaque to them. Many people claim to be tone-deaf [or] believe that music simply springs unbidden from the fingertips and voices of those who are gifted with the talent."

Kurt, a TA from comparative literature, echoes how others' misconceptions can reveal fundamental values of a given domain. He notes that assuming that texts were originally written in English can influence readers' perceptions and constrict their capacity for meaning-making. Consequently, he cautions against:

reading and scrutinizing translated work as though it has always and only been written in English and as though the words bore all the language's attendant contextual significance [...] the original sense of words and texts may have been quite different in the cultural, linguistic and temporal context in which they were first situated.

With this disciplinary awareness, Kurt interprets texts with restraint, knowing that translation(s) shapes meaning-making possibilities.

THE SOCIAL POWER OF A PARTICULAR THRESHOLD CONCEPT

Seven TAs pointed to the social power of threshold concepts. This idea is, in fact, the individual threshold concept that Barbara identified for English/literature. In explaining that "Literary Texts Have Social Power," Barbara argues that:

literary texts operate as social agents, meaning that they are imbued with an ongoing vitality that allows them to impact readers across social and historical contexts and different time periods [...] social power that exists beyond the limits of time and space. This social power allows literary texts to impact readers by altering their cognition and changing their sympathies.

Elizabeth articulates the socially powerful implications of a threshold concept in feminist studies: "The Personal is Political." She emphatically elaborates

that this idea “[A]sserts that everyday experiences can—and must—be made public in order to highlight the commonalities across different experiences.” For example, “Issues that are presumed to only affect individuals (such as healthcare, division of labor, sexuality, pay, media representations, personal liberties, etc.) must be publicized and politicized in order for change to occur.” She concludes that “[M]aking the personal political disrupts the structures of power that allow the rights of disenfranchised populations to be violated or ignored. Expanding the realm of politics to also include personal, seemingly individual, issues brings these everyday lived experiences into public consciousness.”

THE PARTICULAR WAYS IN WHICH READERS ENGAGE WITH TEXTS

Seven TAs associated a particular way of reading—oftentimes, a systematic strategy or distinct stance—with the threshold concept that they identified. Hunter observes, “History as a discourse community is predicated on the idea that different historians will read documents differently.” Similarly, Kurt claims that in comparative literature, expert readers’ engagements with texts are governed by a particular orientation towards reading, which is necessary to fully assimilate the notion that “language is a social and cultural phenomenon, and that all writing is metaphorical or translated.” More specifically, Kurt contends that “Every comparatist is keenly, perhaps painfully aware that connotations of words and turns of phrase are circumscribed by language.” Comparatists, according to Kurt, approach texts with a sophisticated awareness that translation is oftentimes already embedded within written language.

The threshold concept that Maya identified, “Folklore is Both Conservative and Dynamic,” also touches upon the implications of translating texts across languages and, therefore, considers the affordances and constraints inherent within the act of translation. She notes that it “is transmitted and tweaked not because people can’t remember every detail or couldn’t come up with something new, but because well-known stories of the past hold cultural value for us, and tweaking them in new and exciting ways breathes new life into something familiar.

Close reading is perhaps the clearest example of how integral the act of reading is to literate participation in the humanities fields. James, an English/literature TA, states that, “literature is made up of elements of language that exist independent of content but still influence meaning.” He turns to *close reading* to unearth these elements: a process that entails “what to look for in a text, how to identify metrical and sound patterns, how to analyze the way a sentence is put together, the arrangement of words in a sentence, how to consider word choice and diction.” These internal reading-based processes that James describes embody the requisite literate aptitude for thinking and practicing like a literary scholar.

IDENTIFYING THRESHOLD CONCEPTS THROUGH DISTINCT ROLES: INSTRUCTOR, STUDENT, RESEARCHER

Aside from the particular characteristics of threshold concepts, another noteworthy pattern emerged from TAs' practicum reflections: these NWTs often cited their various roles or "hats" they wore within the academy—as instructors, students (undergraduates and graduates), and researchers—and how they recognized the presence of various threshold concepts within these roles. By detailing memorable experiences from each of these three roles, TAs were able to pinpoint fundamental literate orientations in their humanities fields that had since become habituated as tacit knowledge. Each of these responses indicates liminal movement towards conceptualizing academic domains as distinct disciplinary sites that contain particular ways of thinking and practicing. By extension, this participation facilitates TAs' abilities to bridge theory and practice in relation to their FYC pedagogy: because TAs are asked to elucidate the movement, they've made along the path from novice to expert in their respective humanities programs, they become more consciously aware of how they've developed disciplinary literacies.

AS INSTRUCTORS

Ten of the eighteen TAs referenced a transformative moment that occurred when *their students*—typically in large survey-style lower-division courses—encountered bottlenecks in the curriculum. In these instances, TAs had breakthroughs in understanding *their own* discipline-specific ways of thinking and practicing—a shift that held considerable value for their ability to reconceptualize teaching and learning. After identifying *close reading* as a threshold concept of English/literature, James noted that “it was first necessary that I recognize precisely how troublesome this kind of knowledge was for my students, and then find ways of conveying the implications of this knowledge in a way that wasn't overly complex or confusing.”

A response offered by Anne underscores the importance of tacit knowledge for acquiring foundational principles in music. She cites the concept, “music is a universal language,” which first crystallized for her when she taught a music fundamentals class. She recalls:

Students would often ask me why the rules of musical notation were the way they were, and my best answer would often be the universally unsatisfying, “Because they...just ...ARE!” After a few weeks of TAing and being faced with questions like that, I realized that the reason I had trouble answering their ques-

tions was because I didn't have to think about reading music anymore. Although I never got to a point where I could always answer the students' questions in a way that was satisfying to them (or, really, to me), it did teach me the importance of stopping to think before I launched into an answer.

By being reminded of students' challenges, TAs like Anne are positioned to pinpoint previous curricular moments that required scaffolding which, in turn, may inform their FYC pedagogy.

Carlos elaborates on a threshold concept that he identified as a TA in religious studies: "theology is anthropology." "Students who are religious struggle with this threshold concept," he observes, "because it requires that they distance themselves from the claims of their tradition and recognize that their understanding of that tradition is historically specific [...] if one is to cite the Bible in religious studies, one needs to have an understanding of the historical context both for the Bible and for the traditions of its interpretation that one is drawing upon."

Similarly, Tom points to his former students' struggles in his explanation of a threshold concept from history, noting that "The concept that flummoxed the greatest number of students was the idea that history as it comes to us in textbooks and lectures was in fact written. Somebody took a lot of disparate primary documents, or more accurately for a textbook or lecture a lot of secondary source books, and synthesized them into a narrative."

As instructors who were in the process of realizing that these various essential ways of thinking and practicing were, in fact, threshold concepts in their disciplines, numerous TAs remarked feeling frustrated by the challenge of teaching or "explaining" these concepts. James, for example, noted that he was, at first, "oddly dismayed and frustrated" at his students' difficulties with conducting close readings of literary texts; however, upon later reflection, he admits that "it was first necessary that I recognize precisely how troublesome this kind of knowledge was for my students, and then find ways of conveying the implications of this knowledge in a way that wasn't overly complex or confusing." James' experiences as an English/literature instructor helped him reorient his teaching practices by considering his students' struggles with enacting the expert-level ways of thinking and practicing in that domain. In this way, he developed a more student-centered pedagogy.

AS STUDENTS

Seven TAs reported detecting disciplinary epiphanies as students. They made inductive insights by extrapolating patterns across artifacts, ideas, movements, or scholars to make connections and draw broader generalizations. These insights,

in turn, can offer clues to what a particular discipline values. As Adler-Kassner and Wardle point out, “Learning threshold concepts amounts to learning some of the assumptions of a community of practice” (8).

Tom recounts an exercise his high school history teacher used to introduce the class to historiography. The selected readings about the Civil War

. . . were written predominately by Southerners and contradicted nearly everything we knew about the Civil War. We discussed how the story differed from the history we knew. Despite employing largely the same “facts” and narrating the same events, Ulrich Phillips told a story that seemed alien to all of us. We discussed how this happened and learned that history as we understand it, despite happening just once, has been written and rewritten by every generation.

Tom also recalls a second formative instance in becoming a historian when he was a sophomore, and again, he clearly benefited from an inductive “ah ha” method of learning. As he explains, “I took a gateway seminar into the history major. They gave us a battery of about 500 pages worth of primary documents on the 1946 US presidential election, and after a couple weeks of reading told us to turn them into a historical narrative. Even though there were 15 people in the class, and we all used the same documents, none of us told the same story.”

The insights that Tom was able to make as a student—predominantly facilitated by how his instructors introduced content—is echoed by Joan, who realized as a first-year graduate student in an African American history course that “the narratives [historians] produce reflect their own perspective, personality, lived experience, and prior knowledge.” She explains that she identified this threshold concept through reading authors’ explanations of how they came to their subjects of study and notes that it was made apparent to her “when two scholars had very different interpretations of the same topic. This threshold concept was the most self-evident concept for the professor to comprehend, but for a new scholar of history, me, it was mind-blowing. I guess that’s why I love the idea of threshold concepts so much.” Tom and Joan each point to how their instructors constructed bottom-up learning experiences that held profound implications for their disciplinary orientations.

Detecting intertextual connections played a role in how another TA, George, learned to think like a historian. During his master’s program, George “trac[ed] developments of western political thought from Plato to Machiavelli to Rousseau.” Postulating an overarching question—“To what extent did the ideas of a particular historical moment reflect the social conditions in which they were

developed and disseminated?”—helped him pinpoint a threshold concept: “social contradictions, indeed, characterized nearly every aspect of society.”

AS RESEARCHERS

Seven TAs invoked their role as doctoral researchers when identifying a threshold concept in their discipline with language such as, “Within my own research project, I see this threshold concept at work in many ways;” “This threshold concept is actually the focal point of what I do within my own research;” and “This concept has played a major role in my research.” Stephen and Barbara both conceptualize larger disciplinary principles by tapping into their roles as researchers. Stephen, for instance, studies “one particularly powerful narrative of a bishop who defined the way that people characterized the theological controversies [...] As I trace this narrative and its reproduction in other contexts, I can develop a broader geographical/political picture of how individuals create a textual community and memory across space and time.”

Barbara’s ability to draw connections across “scholars from [different] schools of thought ranging from new criticism, structuralism, deconstruction, reader-response theory, psychoanalytic theory, Marxism, new historicism, gender studies, [to] postcolonial theory” helped her recognize that “one common thread could be found across all of these different movements.” She noticed this thread while preparing for her qualifying exams as a second-year graduate student, and it led her to conclude that these seemingly disparate movements “all treated literary texts as profound agents in society that should be considered for their potential impact on human thought and society.”

BUILDING ON DISCIPLINE-BASED INSIGHTS FOR PRAXIS: A MODEL OF RAISING CONSCIOUSNESS FOR TEACHING FYC

TAs’ responses to this practicum reflection yielded unique characteristics of threshold concepts and invoked memories about how they initially acquired such literacies. By acknowledging various ways of thinking and practicing *in disciplines*, TAs were able to bridge the disciplinary divide from the humanities to the composition field by developing an awareness of discipline-based learning. Such *across the disciplines* awareness offers a crucial milestone for NWTs tasked with teaching FYC from teaching for transfer and writing about writing perspectives.

As we analyzed the two patterns that we discussed in the previous section—that is, in naming threshold concepts, TAs (1) characterized their transformative power and (2) invoked their roles as instructors, students, and researchers when

they experienced these disciplinary breakthroughs—we began to see a model emerge. This model depicts TAs' movement from (ostensibly) *unconsciously competent* humanities experts towards *consciously competent* composition instructors, and it can therefore provide insights for WPAs who are interested in emphasizing threshold concepts as a means of helping NWTs move through liminality in their TA preparation programs.

The following sections illustrate our three-tier, six-step model for how TAs make a paradoxical transition from (1) experts in their own fields to (2) novices in composition to (3) near-experts in composition. We begin most broadly by laying out three separate tiers that TAs navigate en route towards attaining *conscious competence*. We then examine the six steps that constitute these tiers. Lastly, we offer a brief case study that illustrates the role of the three tiers in one TA's liminal movement. While the practicum reflection focuses on *consciousness* rather than on *competence*, per se (i.e., thinking versus practicing), the two are inextricably intertwined, and we argue that TAs' enhanced *consciousness*—triggered by this practicum reflection—sets the stage for their *competence* to evolve and for the TAs to step through the doorway of disciplinarity.

The data revealed three tiers that portray how this practicum reflection facilitates TAs' paradoxical transition: (1) using disciplinary expertise to activate prior knowledge about threshold concepts; (2) using threshold concepts to (re)conceptualize literacy across the disciplines; and (3) cultivating praxis for teaching FYC. Each tier is distinguished by its disciplinary domain and level of difficulty.

The first tier is straightforward; TAs channel their existing expertise and formulate a transformative idea in their respective humanities disciplines. The second tier is more challenging because TAs must step outside of their domains and conceptualize literacy within disciplinary sites, including the composition field's disciplinary ways of thinking and practicing. The third tier asks TAs to consider how their still-developing theoretical foundation of composition's threshold concepts will apply to their FYC classrooms. This task is particularly challenging because they've had very little in-class pedagogical experience to draw from at this point (two full weeks, to be exact). Figure 8.1 depicts these tiers. Across these three tiers, we see six unique steps at play—two steps per tier—that each play a pivotal role in facilitating TAs' ability to move towards *conscious competence*. As TAs take these steps, they move through their liminality from tier one (*conscious competence* in the humanities) to tier two (*unconscious incompetence* in composition) and towards tier three (*conscious competence* in composition).

First, TAs (1) identify and explore a threshold concept in their home (humanities) discipline and, in turn, (2) recognize that threshold concepts do, in fact, exist. These first two initial steps encourage TAs to then (3) understand that threshold concepts are discipline-based ways of thinking and practicing. Once TAs have

crossed these three steps, they are positioned to (4) conceptualize how the composition field, like their own home discipline, also has particular threshold concepts. This fourth step is imperative because it is intended to trigger TAs' ability to identify the meta-threshold concept of composition: that writing is an activity *and a subject of study*. Because composition investigates the production, consumption, and distribution of texts—and such inquiries span disciplinary boundaries—the composition discipline examines other academic sites, like these TAs' humanities disciplines. Developing this awareness of literacy-mediated disciplinarity is crucial to TAs' development, especially because this FYC course's "genre studies" focus is predicated on the importance of transfer across disciplines.

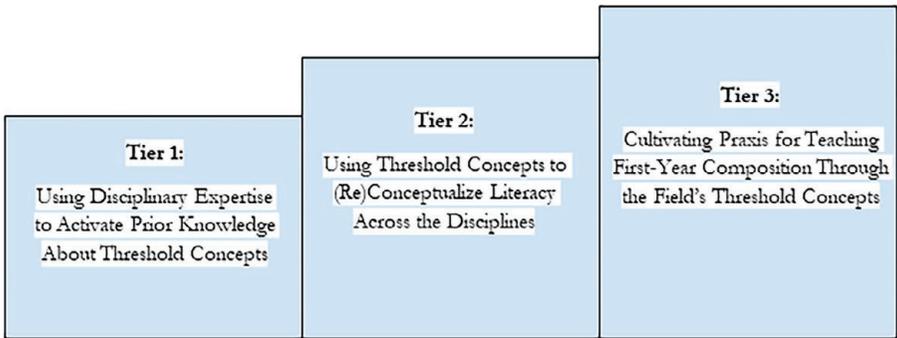


Figure 8.1. Three Tiers Towards Conscious Competence in Teaching FYC

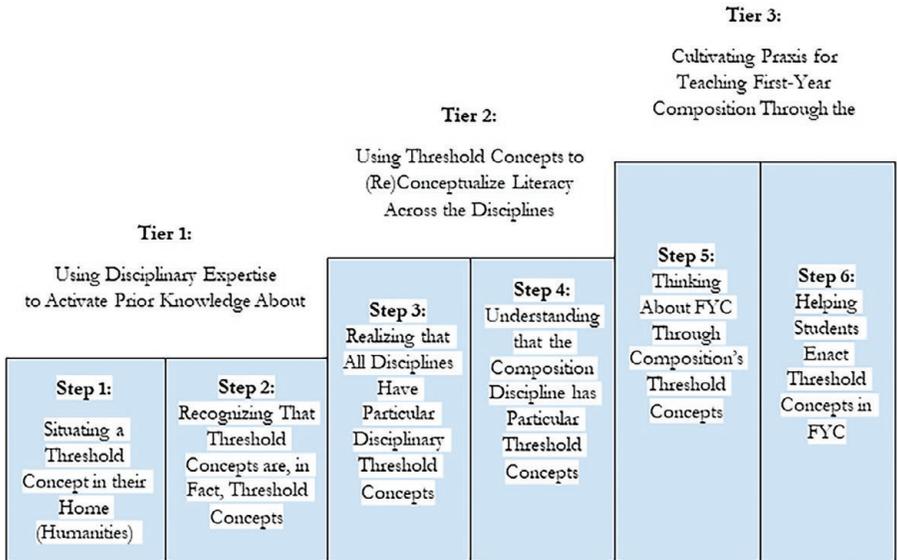


Figure 8.2. FYC TAs' Six Steps Through the Doorway of Disciplinarity

The remaining components of the reflective prompt ask TAs to (5) consider implications for their FYC course in light of these threshold concepts, as, ultimately, they are being asked to (6) help their students access and enact these same concepts. This process is designed to help the TAs become more conscious about not only composition but about their own disciplinary paradigms, as well. Figure 8.2 provides a visualization of this liminal trajectory.

STEP 1: SITUATING A THRESHOLD CONCEPT IN THEIR HOME (HUMANITIES) DISCIPLINE

In this initial step, TAs use their existing knowledge to pinpoint a threshold concept in their discipline. Chris notes that, “The discipline of history focuses primarily around one central threshold concept: the study of competing narratives.” And Beverly demonstrates Step 1 when she says, “The threshold concept in my discipline that I confront the most often is the idea that the academic study of religion is really about the study of people, not God or god.” In this way, the reflection draws out TAs’ expert-level *unconscious competence* in humanities fields to identify a transformative disciplinary insight. Unsurprisingly, Step 1 presented no challenge for this group of TAs because it merely asked them to identify habituated knowledge.

STEP 2: RECOGNIZING THAT THRESHOLD CONCEPTS ARE, IN FACT, THRESHOLD CONCEPTS

In Step 2, once TAs have identified a threshold concept in their field, they begin to recognize that threshold concepts are actually cognitive phenomena. This recognition is evident in Anne’s response when she states, “Reading Meyer and Land over the summer was a uniquely enlightening experience for me: I was finally able to put a name to this experience that I’d been facing in my classes all year, and even better, it was something that wasn’t unique to me or to the class!” Similarly, Cheryl thought back to “unlocking” foundational discipline-specific ideas as an undergraduate French major. She recalls that, “During my process of identifying a research question for my senior project [and] through the process of answering that question [...] I stepped through a couple of important ‘portals’ or threshold concepts that resulted in what Meyer and Land describe as a ‘transformed internal view.’”

STEP 3: REALIZING THAT ALL DISCIPLINES HAVE PARTICULAR DISCIPLINE-BASED THRESHOLD CONCEPTS

As TAs approach the second tier (Steps 3 and 4), they move away from their *conscious competence* in various humanities fields and begin moving towards

unconscious incompetence in a new field (i.e., composition). In Step 3, TAs discern that all disciplines have threshold concepts—a revelation that lends itself to realizing that threshold concepts are embedded within composition as well, thereby mounting Step 4. While *competence* does not suggest mastery, it does reflect the ability to operate effectively, albeit with careful attention.

Most of the TAs didn't explicitly address the third step in their reflections. A few TAs casually referenced other disciplines, like Douglas did when he notes that "One of the key threshold concepts in history, as in quite a few of the humanities [and] social science disciplines, is the idea that there is no single path of 'primitive' to 'modern' that all societies take." However, Douglas' acknowledgement of other disciplines doesn't seem to reach sufficiently useful depth for bridging his disciplinary expertise in the humanities with others' disciplinary expertise elsewhere; he doesn't spell out a particular transformative idea in another field. In another passage, Douglas points to the importance of guiding students toward recognizing threshold concepts in different fields, but also the difficulty: "Whether in history, or writing, or any number of other fields, threshold concepts can be one of the most difficult types of concepts to convey – and to convey fully, and successfully – but they are also easily among the most important." While accurate, these remarks are overly vague and therefore not particularly valuable for bridging disciplinary differences through threshold concepts.

To be fair, no other TAs explored a threshold concept from a field outside their own (aside from composition). Barbara's practicum reflection, however, begins to tap into other disciplines' distinct ways of thinking and practicing through the lens of a composition threshold concept. Her response demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of how the composition field enacts literacy across all disciplines. She notes that, "Heidi Estrem's threshold concept in writing studies that 'writing creates and enacts identity and ideology' has helped me realize that writing was essential for helping me understand this foundational threshold concept in my discipline of English." She continues, "Disciplines have particular ways of asking and investigating questions that are enacted through and demonstrated in writing; teachers or researchers demonstrate their memberships in disciplines by using writing in ways validated by disciplines. It is thus through writing that disciplines, and writers' affiliations with those disciplines, are enacted."

Barbara's comment here reflects both Steps 3 and 4; she not only recognizes that all disciplines have threshold concepts, but she also transfers this understanding to composition. Her ability to navigate both steps simultaneously suggests that she's able to use the composition discipline as a lens *through which* to conceptualize literate practices in other disciplines. For this reason, Steps 3 and 4 may be best conceptualized as mutually reinforcing and iterative steps: an awareness that threshold concepts exist across disciplines and can heighten awareness that the

composition discipline is a discipline with particular ways of thinking and practicing. Conversely, knowledge about composition's threshold concepts—as Barbara demonstrates by referencing Estrem's (Adler-Kassner and Wardle) passage that “writing creates and enacts identity and ideology”—might lead to thinking about how writers create and enact these identities and ideologies in other disciplines.

STEP 4: UNDERSTANDING THAT THE COMPOSITION DISCIPLINE HAS PARTICULAR THRESHOLD CONCEPTS

As TAs approach Step 4 and enter the doorway of composition, some TAs' liminal movement begins to sputter. Evidence of both Steps 3 and 4 is much less prevalent than Steps 1 and 2. One likely explanation is because this group of TAs is still becoming acculturated to the ways of thinking and practicing in composition. In Steps 3 and 4, they're no longer relying on their prior knowledge to respond to the practicum reflection; instead, these steps require them to actively build knowledge in a new domain.

In *Naming What We Know*, Wardle and Adler-Kassner point to the importance of the overarching metaconcept that grounds all the other threshold concepts of composition: “The threshold concept that writing is a *subject of study as well as an activity* is troublesome because it contravenes popular conceptions of writing as basic, ideology-free skill” (p 16, emphasis added). Simply put, because texts and their production exist everywhere across (and beyond) the academy, it may be difficult to understand how these issues are all taken up by one field. In their practicum reflections, TAs oftentimes didn't explicitly refer to the composition discipline *as a* distinct field; however, a number of TAs alluded to the composition field's disciplinary knowledge base by paraphrasing and quoting the threshold concept literature.

The fourth step becomes central for TAs' composition praxis. By conceptualizing composition as a distinct discipline—that is, a discipline (like TAs' humanities disciplines) with a unique set of particular threshold concepts that are necessary for achieving expert-level proficiency in that domain—TAs are able to more fully theorize the goals of their FYC courses. They're taking their knowledge of disciplinaryity—including the composition field—and beginning to think through its applications for teaching composition.

STEP 5: THINKING ABOUT FYC THROUGH COMPOSITION'S THRESHOLD CONCEPTS

Ultimately, the practicum reflection is intended to raise TAs' consciousness so that they can bring their still-forming theoretical foundations of the composition

discipline into their in-class teaching practices. In Step 5, as TAs begin to conceptualize their FYC course through the lens of these threshold concepts, they're striving for *conscious competence*, a process that continues to unfold as they further shape and hone their praxis. However, they inconsistently articulate these connections, which we also saw in Step 3 and 4, indicating that both tiers present challenges to TAs' liminal progression.

Nevertheless, some TAs were able to step through this fifth doorway. In the excerpt below, Barbara not only enacts Step 4, but she also points to the "vitally important" work her first-year students are doing "at [this] crucial moment in their academic careers." She goes on to say that "since the practice of writing is so key to discovering [students'] disciplinary identities, the work that they are doing in FYC (such as learning how to identify the different conventions of genre and to write within those different genres, especially the various genres of the academy) constitute a vital foundational step on their journey to becoming scholars and thinkers." Barbara grounds her understanding of her FYC course in the composition field's threshold concepts. Two phrases she utters, "the different conventions of genre and to write within those different genres" and "the various genres of the academy" implicitly invoke the meta-threshold concept—writing is an activity and a subject of study—and she uses this as the foundation for her course.

Maya also embodies Step 5 by invoking three specific threshold concepts of the composition field: "text is a subject outside oneself that can be improved and developed," "writing enacts disciplinarity, and "writing is informed by prior experience," all of which are integral to her FYC classroom. The last one is particularly essential for Maya's evolving praxis: "I think the big picture of Writing 2 actually shares a lot with this threshold concept: students need not get rid of what they know, but learn how to apply their knowledge effectively, with new strategies and approaches to help them do so." By pointing to these threshold concepts, Maya is using theory as a way to see the "big picture" of FYC's distinct role within the academy.

STEP 6: HELPING STUDENTS ENACT THRESHOLD CONCEPTS IN FYC

In Step 6, TAs put their activated knowledge into practice by helping FYC students enact composition threshold concepts. The prompt for the practicum reflection doesn't explicitly address the sixth step, likely because the TAs have only just begun to teach FYC; TAs aren't yet positioned to reflect on how they are guiding their students toward recognizing the threshold concepts in the discipline. Reid et al.'s finding that it can take several years for composition TAs to embrace key principles of the field is reflected here. Indeed, the process of traversing Steps 4, 5, and 6 is ongoing while TAs continue to refine their FYC courses over time and use these experiences as a feedback loop to drive their praxis.

Our examination of TAs' responses to this practicum reflection indicate that TAs do not *consistently* address the elements of Steps 3 through 6, and so these two tiers present a source of liminal disorientation. However, one noteworthy pattern consistently emerged from the data, even for TAs who seemed to have challenges with these last two tiers: in their responses, over half of the TAs made explicit reference to the “there is no *what* without *why*” mantra that was continuously reinforced throughout TA preparation. This finding suggests that this group of TAs used this mantra as a foundation for bridging composition theory and practice. Even when they can't clearly articulate the composition discipline's threshold concepts—or how these concepts may manifest within their classrooms—they're nonetheless able to conceptualize the intertwined nature of praxis. TAs who are able to begin using praxis as a foothold to gain traction as they move through liminal space, we believe, have stepped through the doorway of the composition discipline and are moving towards *conscious competence*.

NEGOTIATING LIMINALITY: ILLUSTRATING ONE TA'S MOVEMENT TOWARDS CONSCIOUS COMPETENCE

An excerpt from one TA's response encompasses all three tiers and demonstrates movement from *unconscious competence* in his home discipline of English/literature to *conscious competence* in composition. As such, it offers a useful illustration of how TAs negotiate liminality. Like so many of the other TAs, James moved his prior knowledge about his humanities discipline forward, which he then used to think through his composition praxis. He then gains liminal traction through this now-activated knowledge; he pivots from his role as an *expert* humanities scholar and then uses his previously habituated knowledge to facilitate his development as a *novice* compositionist.

When James recalls students' struggles understanding that “texts are made up of formal elements”—an essential practice for close reading in literature courses—he enacts Tier 1, “using disciplinary expertise to activate prior knowledge about threshold concepts.” He uses this knowledge, though, to think about teaching and learning in another context, thereby showing his ability to traverse Tier 2: “using threshold concepts to (re)conceptualize literacy across the disciplines.” Commenting on how students' challenges with close reading have impacted his pedagogical disposition, he continues, “I try not to underestimate just how troublesome this knowledge is, and I try to ease my students into this threshold concept slowly and deliberately, with the hope that, once fully comprehended, this knowledge might change the way they think about texts, writing, and the world around them.” At this point, James' (previously) *unconsciously competent* expertise in the humanities has already helped him move towards *conscious competence* of teaching FYC.

This “milestone,” as he describes it, is an important moment in James’ FYC praxis; it reveals a new understanding of how students develop as learners and reflects his developing composition praxis, reflecting Tier 3 “cultivating praxis for teaching FYC.” Although he has yet to apply his student-centered awareness into his FYC classroom in practical ways, the likelihood that he will do so is promising. When James says that he “tr[ies] to remind myself [...] not to underestimate” the troublesome nature of this knowledge for his students, he is demonstrating *conscious competence*. The fact that he does this “slowly and deliberately” further indicates that he has attained the level of *conscious competence* because it still requires his careful attention, yet his ability to support his students by scaffolding their learning in this way, reveals the progress he has made in recognizing and enacting the literacy practices of the composition field.

By reflecting on his past experiences as an English/literature instructor, alongside his students’ experiences in that context, James achieves liminal traction in his emerging composition praxis. Other novice composition instructors, however, may encounter challenges when they overlook these types of connections. Indeed, Lugg (in this volume) attributes the “difficulty [that] TAs have with negotiating complex and often completely foreign composition theory” to instances when “the relationship between their student and teacher identities ha[ve] not been interrogated” (92-93).

Altogether, James’ practicum reflection is unique in that it reveals successful movement across all three tiers. While this brief excerpt does not illustrate all six of the steps, per se, James’ reference to “knowledge [that] might change the way [students] think about texts, writing, and the world around them” captures the essence of this model: he is conceptualizing the goals of FYC through the ways of thinking and practicing like a compositionist, suggesting that he has indeed moved through the model. Collectively, the rest of the TAs in the cohort demonstrated similar liminal movement, albeit with varying degrees of mastery.

CONCLUSION

TAs’ experiences as experts within one disciplinary paradigm—humanities doctoral candidates—and novices within another domain—first-time FYC instructors—merit valuable opportunities for exploring liminality. Our analysis reveals how a particular practicum reflection prompt provides traction for NWTs’ liminal movement as they negotiate these two domains. Three sequential goals are embedded in this prompt: (1) activating TAs’ knowledge about the ways of thinking and practicing in their respective humanities disciplines; (2) creating knowledge *about disciplinarity* and using such insights as a means of detecting discipline-based literacy practices; and (3) eliciting the ways of thinking and

practicing of the composition field based, in part, on notions of disciplinarity. In this way, the notion of *transfer*—that is, the repurposing of literacy across disciplines—becomes leveraged as a way of bridging TAs’ theory-practice connections for their FYC praxis.

Using Reid’s (“Ten”) four stages of expertise as a frame, we contend that this particular practicum reflection facilitates TAs’ movement towards *consciousness* of composition praxis. By situating their own literate practices within context-dependent domains—e.g., history, religious studies, or comparative literature—TAs begin to situate literacy itself. This moment marks a pivotal transition in TAs’ liminal movement towards gaining expertise—or becoming *less* novice—as composition instructors. When NWTs can successfully demarcate these insights, they are able to “step through the doorway,” so to speak, of the composition discipline. The lens of disciplinarity yields the clarity necessary for transfer, and TAs’ prior knowledge of their own disciplinary literacies provides a basis for navigating this liminal space.

Based on TAs’ practicum reflections, some TAs appear to effortlessly make this leap. Others, though, seem to encounter a bottleneck when thinking about threshold concepts beyond their humanities disciplines. Despite reading about threshold concepts in *Naming What We Know*, numerous TAs didn’t point to specific threshold concepts in their practicum reflections, thereby overlooking fundamental ways of thinking and practicing of compositionists that they can—and hopefully will—bring to their FYC pedagogies.

We offer two ways for WPAs to make this practicum reflection prompt even more robust: (1) refining it through a series of more targeted directives and (2) expanding it to include opportunities for conducting empirical research. The first suggestion, drawing future TAs’ attention towards the four primary characteristics of threshold concepts that these TAs identified—their foundational nature, their social power, others’ frequent misperceptions, and ways of reading—may more firmly ground their understanding of threshold concepts. Further, encouraging TAs’ exploration of the three different “hats” they invoked when recollecting a transformative “ah ha” moment associated with disciplinary knowledge (i.e., students, researchers, and teachers) would also likely facilitate a deeper understanding of threshold concepts. In fact, the more that TAs invoke these various roles in their practicum reflections—and the deeper the experiences they draw upon to concretize their characterizations—the more fluid their liminal movement towards becoming a composition instructor seemed to become.

Secondly, instead of primarily relying on NWTs’ past reflections of disciplinary knowledge—i.e., their humanities-based literate expertise—this practicum reflection prompt—and others like it—might consider asking TAs to construct new knowledge through empirical investigation. Methods that are

conducive to education research such as surveys, interviews, and observations could yield valuable avenues for NWTs to examine threshold concepts, particularly for contexts that are unfamiliar to them. For instance, as a component of TA preparation, TAs could collectively apply Middendorf and Pace's decoding the disciplines framework in discussions with faculty. Such WAC partnerships would likely heighten TAs' ability to conceptualize literacy as a context-dependent activity, thereby providing a more concrete and nuanced view of the ways of thinking and practicing across the disciplines.

The six-step model that emerged from our analysis of TAs' responses to one practicum reflection prompt has the potential to cultivate *conscious competence* for teaching FYC by bridging divides between TAs' prior experiences and the composition field's ways of thinking and practicing. And despite this study's context-specific nature, this approach isn't limited to our specific site; it can be utilized in any writing program that employs NWTs. The composition field's threshold concepts can be used to privilege NWTs' existing expertise, guide their theory-practice connections, and assuage their sense of liminality.

WORKS CITED

- Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Elizabeth Wardle, editors. *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts in Writing Studies*. Utah State UP, 2015.
- Ambrose, Susan A., et al. *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*. Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Bishop, Wendy. *Something Old, Something New: College Writing Teachers and Classroom Change*. Southern Illinois UP, 1990.
- Bryant, Antony, and Kathy Charmaz. *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*. SAGE, 2007.
- Bunn, Mike. "Reading Like a Writer." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*. In *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, edited by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, Parlor Press, 2010, pp. 71-86.
- Dirk, Kerry. "Navigating Genres." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, edited by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, Parlor Press, 2010, pp. 249-262.
- Dobrin, Sidney. Editor. *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*. National Council of Teachers of English Press, 2005.
- Donald, Janet. "The Commons: Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Encounters." *The University and its Disciplines*, edited by Carolin Kreber, Routledge, 2009, pp. 35-49.
- Downs, Doug. "What Is First-Year Composition?" *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators*, edited by Rita Malenczyk, Parlor Press, 2013, pp. 50-63.
- Downs, Douglas, and Elizabeth Wardle. "Teaching About Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)envisioning 'First-Year Composition' as 'Introduction to Writing Studies.'" *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2007, pp. 552-84.

- Ebest, Sally Barr. *Changing the Way We Teach: Writing and Resistance in the Training of Teaching Assistants*. Southern Illinois UP, 2005.
- Elbow, Peter. "Teaching Thinking by Teaching Writing." *Change*, vol. 15, no. 6, 1983, pp. 37-40.
- Farris, Christine. *Subject to Change: New Composition Instructors' Theory and Practice*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1996.
- Fischer, Ruth Overman. "Theory in a TA Composition Pedagogy Course: Not If, but How." *Don't Call it That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney I. Dobrin, National Council of Teachers of English Press, 2005, pp. 200-213.
- Fulkerson, Richard. "Foreword: Preparing the Professors." *Preparing College Teachers of Writing*, edited by Betty Pytlik and Sarah Liggett, Oxford UP, 2002, pp. xi-xiv.
- Haring-Smith, Tori. "The Importance of Theory in the Training of Teaching Assistants." *ADE Bulletin* 8, 1985, pp. 33-39.
- Harris, Joseph. *A Teaching Subject: Composition Since 1966*. Utah State UP, 2012.
- Hesse, Doug. "Teachers as Students, Reflecting Resistance." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 44, no. 2, 1993, pp. 224-231.
- Huot, Brian. *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment*. Utah State UP, 2002.
- Huntley, Lu Ellen. "Finding Myself Lost in the Composition Practicum Course." *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney I. Dobrin, National Council of Teachers of English Press, 2005, pp. 284-300.
- Hyland, Ken. "Disciplines and Discourses: Social Interactions in the Construction of Knowledge." *Writing in the Knowledge Society*, edited by Doreen Starke-Meyerring, Anthony Paré, Natasha Artemeva, Miriam Horne, and Larissa Yousoubova, Parlor Press, 2011, pp. 193-214.
- Kreber, Carolin. "The Modern Research University and its Disciplines: The Interplay between Contextual and Context-Transcendent Influences on Teaching." *The University and its Disciplines*, edited by Carolin Kreber, Routledge, 2009, pp. 19-31.
- Meyer, Jan, and Ray Land. "Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge: An Introduction." *Overcoming Barriers to Student Understanding: Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge*, edited by Jan H.F. Meyer and Ray Land, Routledge, 2005, pp. 3-43.
- Middendorf, Joan and David Pace. "Decoding the Disciplines: A Model for Helping Students Learn Disciplinary Ways of Thinking." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 98, 2004, pp. 1-12.
- National Census on Writing*. Council of Writing Program Administrators/Swarthmore College, 2017, <https://wpacouncil.org/aws/CWPA/pt/sp/national-census>.
- Recchio, Thomas. "Essaying TA Training." *Preparing College Teachers of Writing*, edited by Betty Pytlik and Sarah Liggett, Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 254-265.
- Reiff, Mary Jo. And Anis Bawarshi. "Tracing Discursive Resources: How Students Use Prior Genre Knowledge to Negotiate New Writing Contexts in First-Year Composition." *Written Communication*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2011, pp. 312-337.
- Reid, E. Shelley, et al. "The Effects of Writing Pedagogy Education on Graduate Teaching Assistants' Approaches to Teaching Composition." *WPA Journal*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 32-73.

- Reid, E. Shelley. "On Learning to Teach: Letter to a New TA." *WPA Journal*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp. 129-145.
- . "Ten Ways To Think About Writing: Metaphoric Musings for College Writing Students." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, edited by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, Parlor Press, 2010, pp. 3-23.
- Robertson, L., Kara Taczak, and Kathleen Blake Yancey. "Prior Knowledge and Its Role in Transfer." *Composition Forum* vol. 26, Fall, 2012, <https://compositionforum.com/issue/26/prior-knowledge-transfer.php>.
- Saldaña, Johnny. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Sage Publications, 2009.
- Soliday, Mary. *Everyday Genres: Writing Assignments Across the Disciplines*. Southern Illinois UP, 2011.
- Sommers, Nancy, and Laura Saltz. "Novice as Expert." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2004, pp. 124-149.
- Sprague, Jo, Douglas Stuart, and David Bodary. *The Speaker's Handbook*. Harcourt College Publishers. 2000.
- Stenberg, Shari. *Professing and Pedagogy: Learning the Teaching of English*. National Council of Teachers of English Press, 2005.
- Sword, Helen. *Stylish Academic Writing*. Harvard UP, 2012.
- Wardle, Elizabeth. "Creative Repurposing for Expansive Learning: Considering 'Problem-Exploring' and 'Answer-Getting' Dispositions in Individuals and Fields." *Composition Forum* vol. 26, Fall, 2012, <https://compositionforum.com/issue/26/creative-repurposing.php>.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak. *Writing across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*. Utah State UP, 2014.

NARRATIVE 8.

ALWAYS BEGINNING: INHABITING THE TASHIP AFTER A CAREER

Elizabeth Topping

Georgia State University

When I first taught, I was paired with amazing mentors who taught me so much I didn't know. With an aborted attempt at an engineering major and a heavy industry career behind me, I knew how to work as a professional, but I knew little about the college classroom or process composition. This my mentor showed me, generously, but the other half of the new TA program was for those without my past. So, in many ways the program didn't resonate with me. Too often, I felt, they weren't speaking to me—and that loneliness followed me through and after my MA.

When I finally landed a full-time job, I found for the first time a wealth of professional development programs that alleviated that loneliness from my first MA term. I had already determined to forge ahead myself. I earned a TESL certificate, peer mentored, co-developed new courses, and volunteered to teach them. When my teaching was less effective, my students asked me to change—and I listened. Collaboration, particularly with my students, was what I realized my TAship didn't teach me. Maybe because I am a loner or didn't fit in with my cohort? I don't really know.

When I returned eight years later for my Ph.D., I was excited to grow in new ways, but I imagined it would be like my faculty experience, especially since the assignment sequence was so different for me. Again, the bulk of what I encountered, at least in the first year, seemed geared for those inhabiting the TAship for the first time.

The mentoring relationship was really a peer relationship—much like my first one—and mutually beneficial. But the other kinds of understanding I sought occurred more in the classes I took and came in pieces. I needed up-front discussions and workshops to understand and plan new-to-me assignments before I taught my first assigned composition class. We are a large program, and I thought there would be more opportunities for those of us in the first year to be, not begin as, teachers together.

My experience in WAC/WID workshops, the Flipping the Classroom course, and my collaborative experience in developing completely new courses

at the request of the company taking over my old faculty program led me to seek similar experiences. I wanted someone to show me through how they taught new-to-me assignments. Instead, it was more like my first experience—the basics, the groundwork, the how-tos that must happen before we can put a whole class together. I ended up figuring a lot of this out on my own before I felt like I had a place—again, mostly alone. Sure, we each need to find our own professional identity and inhabit our profession in ways that make the most sense to us. But reflecting on my TAs that bookended an ESL faculty and adjunct career, I still wish for more opportunities for each of us to have inhabited, instead of beginning, what it means to be a teacher.

CHAPTER 9.

INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS' NEEDS AND UNDERGRADUATE NATIVE ENGLISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS: MEANING NEGOTIATION AS A RHETORICAL STRATEGY

Soha Youssef

Thomas Jefferson University

Since English is not my first language, I need [] some time to speak. . . First, sentence in our mother tongue. Then, translate to English. . . I think I didn't handle well their questions. They asked me, but I think I spent a little time.

– ITA

[I]f they do not understand what the student is asking to be polite enough to address that so maybe the student can reword their question so that the ITA [International Teaching Assistant] can understand it and give the proper response.

– Undergraduate NESS (Native English-Speaking Student)

Back in 2007, I took what I consider to be a leap of faith; if it was not for that decision to change careers from being a customer service representative to a college-level English instructor, I would not be writing this chapter. That decision was informed by my passion for English as a language and the desire to ignite a similar spark in my students. What was shocking to me, then, is that the prestigious private Egyptian university where I taught writing did not offer any teacher preparation. Retrospectively, I suspect that that lack of teacher preparation was due to one or more of the following common misconceptions: that anyone with a bachelor's degree in English is—naturally—prepared to teach

writing, that writing studies is not a discipline, and/or that anyone can teach.¹ Period. I have to admit, however, that not having to go through any orientation or preparation was a relief—until reality hit, and I realized that I had no clue about what I was doing in the classroom.

Two years later, I decided to rectify that situation. I started a master's in TESL and linguistics at Oklahoma State University, where graduate students are required to spend their first year of assistantship serving at the writing center, while simultaneously enrolling in a teaching methodology course as well as observing experienced teachers or TAs, before they can be assigned any teaching responsibility. Since working with International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) resonates with me, I chose to teach an ITA preparation course.² What struck me—perhaps not then, but a few years later—was not only the stark contrast between teacher preparation in Egypt (or lack thereof) and that in the US but more importantly the nature of ITA preparation in the US. Preparation programs tend to feed on and amplify ITAs' vulnerabilities and instructional insecurities in the US setting. They tend to cast ITAs as “a remedial population” (Seloni 134). Furthermore, studies on ITA preparation mak[e] one-sided recommendations, such as creating accent-reduction classes or providing handbooks for assisting in the cultural adjustment of ITAs in class and for enhancing [their] communication proficiency and confidence in the classroom (Athen; Gareis & Williams; Seloni). In other words, ITA preparation programs tend to be grounded in ethnocentric views, with the goal of “Americanizing ITAs' foreign accents” (Zhou 21; Mutua). Such Americanization might underscore ITAs' feelings of otherness and emphasize their/our perceived linguistic deficiency. Not only do ITA preparation programs amplify ITAs' insecurities, but they also have been excluding their/our voices from the conversation. In other words, a plethora of literature examines ITA preparation from the perspective of undergraduate NESSs (Fox and Gay; Hsu; Li et al.; Liu et al., “Integrating;” Meyer and Mao), underscoring

1 My bachelor's degree in English entailed British literature, drama, poetry, translation studies, linguistics, cultural studies, and a few writing classes. No courses with pedagogical emphasis were offered.

2 At Oklahoma State University, ITAs are required to take an ITA test before they are assigned any teaching responsibilities. For that test, they are allowed a maximum of five minutes to present on any topic from their field of study. Based on their performance on the test, ITAs are assigned either a pass, provisional pass, or no pass. A “pass” allows them to start teaching immediately. A “provisional pass” also allows them to teach; however, they have to simultaneously enroll in a course that focuses on presentation skills (i.e., GRAD 5092). A “no pass” places them in a course that focuses on oral proficiency (i.e., GRAD 5082). After passing either course with a B or higher, ITAs are required to retake the ITA test and pass it if they are to be released to teach without additional help. For my assistantship, I taught GRAD 5082, which was pre-designed to revolve around simulations, with the goal of developing ITAs' oral proficiency skills.

deficiencies about ITAs and drawing conclusions about what ITAs need to do to meet Native English Speaking Students' (NESSs') expectations and needs. It was not until the last couple decades that ITAs were consulted about their needs, lived experiences, and/or whether or not a particular type of preparation benefits them or addresses those needs (Ashavskaya; Bresnahan and Cai; Jia and Bergeron; Luo et al.; Mutua; Ruecker et al.; Williams and Case; Zhang; Zhaou). What is scarcely present, however, is research that creates channels of conversation between ITAs and NESSs. Realizing these shortcomings in the scholarship on ITA preparation, I considered it my duty to fill these gaps by, first, creating a space for fellow ITAs to have a seat at the table and, then, inviting NESSs' voices, all while imagining possibilities for a dialogue where the two groups see eye to eye.³

It was not until the 2016-17 academic year that I finally had the opportunity to actually listen to ITAs, exploring the topic of ITA preparation from the perspectives of ITAs themselves, with the intention of amplifying their voices. During the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters, I was teaching an ITA preparation course—ESOL 5050—at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), as part of my own ITA assistantship as a doctoral student in composition and rhetoric.⁴ The course was predesigned to center around pronunciation, pedagogical skills, and US classroom culture. While teaching the course, I conducted a mixed-methods study that spanned both semesters. The goal was to examine the academic needs of ITAs and put those needs in conversation with NESSs' expectations of ITAs, with the intention of looking at ITA preparation from more than one perspective. In the context of BGSU's ITA preparation course, this study sought to answer the following research questions: 1) What are the needs of ITAs in order to effectively teach in the US classroom? 2) What do undergraduate NESSs expect from ITAs in the US classroom? 3) For an effective teaching-learning experience, how do ITAs' needs align with undergraduate NESSs' expectations?

In this chapter, I will first explore the scholarship that examines ways ITAs and NESSs interact in an intercultural setting. Then, I will introduce the mixed-methods study I conducted at BGSU to gain an understanding of ITAs' needs and undergraduate NESSs' expectations for effective teaching-learning to take place. I will then present the findings of the surveys, interviews, and focus groups, followed by discussion and implication sections. The study uncovers the alignment between what ITAs need and what NESSs expect in the US

3 During that timeframe, I was an ITA.

4 This study re-envisioned a section from my doctoral dissertation. The goal of that dissertation study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing ITA preparation course in terms of addressing the particular needs of ITAs and the expectations of undergraduate NESSs as well as program administrators who are involved in preparing ITAs.

classroom, calling for a shared responsibility that takes the form of a rhetorical preparation, namely meaning negotiation preparation, of both parties involved. Unlike the rest of the chapters in this book, this chapter focuses on ITAs in primarily STEM-oriented disciplines rather than domestic TAs in composition and rhetoric; however, the results are not specific to ITAs and are generalizable to any TA in any discipline.

Before attempting to answer those research questions, one needs to understand how undergraduate students learn in an intercultural setting in the US classroom. To do that, Oppenheim proposed a Student Mediation Model (as opposed to an information transmission model) and conducted a study where she sought to examine whether that model is helpful in understanding how undergraduates enrolled in calculus and computer science courses learn from ITAs. More specifically, she compared the performance of undergraduates enrolled in introductory courses to those enrolled in the advanced levels of the same courses. The Student Mediation Model basically acknowledges that students come to the classroom with their own background knowledge, skills, and objectives, which in combination “will have an effect on the student’s achievement and his/her joint construction of meaning with his/her ITA” (Oppenheim 13). This model implies a joint meaning construction between each student and their ITA. Thus, based on this model, students’ readiness variables—students’ prior knowledge, “self-regulation skills, self-efficacy beliefs, motivation, pre-existing attitudes towards ITAs and the first language of the student and the student’s family” (Oppenheim 12)—play a major role not only in students’ evaluation of their ITAs’ teaching effectiveness, but also in their own academic achievement. The study treated teaching effectiveness as a “relational attribute” instead of a teacher attribute (Oppenheim 13), which implies that students play a part for the teaching to be effective.

Oppenheim’s study examined more than 8,300 students enrolled in introductory and more advanced calculus and computer science courses. The findings suggested that when the instructor is an ITA, advanced students outperform their beginner counterparts, which reflected on their grades and evaluations of their instructors. The results might imply that beginner students lack the readiness to negotiate meaning with ITAs, suggesting that ITAs should not be assigned introductory courses and be assigned advanced courses instead, where students have more prior knowledge of the subject matter and of domain discourse patterns. Such knowledge enables students to construct and negotiate meaning with ITAs. In other words, students in introductory courses might lack *the cognitive capacity* to communicate effectively with ITAs and, as a result, evaluate ITAs’ communicative skills poorly. Conversely, advanced students might have sufficient knowledge of the domain that allows them to communicate

effectively with ITAs and, consequently, evaluate ITAs' communicative skills positively (Oppenheim 39). In other words, undergraduates' readiness variables play a role in their academic achievement and inform their meaning negotiation skills with ITAs. So, if students' readiness variables shape their meaning negotiation skills with ITAs, then what happens if that readiness is catalyzed?⁵ What happens if, rather than waiting for students to become ready to negotiate meaning, we equip them with such skills?

Kang and Rubin did just that when they proposed a structured contact approach that prompts interaction between undergraduate NESSs and ITAs. The intergroup contact exercise that they used in their study took the shape of "a mystery puzzle-solving activity," in which each member was given eight clues and was supposed to use only verbal communications with the rest of the members in order to solve the given crime mystery. After completing two exercises and rotating among groups, group members debriefed by sharing their differences in nonverbal communication and common cross-cultural misunderstandings (Kang and Rubin 160). The rationale for this structured contact approach was grounded in the authors' belief that "the responsibility for effective communication between native English-speakers (NESs) and nonnative English-speakers (NNESSs) should lie not only with the latter as speakers, but also with the former as active, responsive, and empathetic listeners" (Kang and Rubin 158). In other words, the authors believed in a shared responsibility between NESs and ITAs for effective communication to take place. However, in order for the proposed intergroup contact exercises to reduce undergraduates' prejudices, specific conditions need to be fulfilled. For instance, the setting needs to be casual; all participants have to hold equal statuses; and groups need to be "interdependent in ways that require or encourage frequent communication across cultural boundaries" (Kang and Rubin 159). In order for Kang and Rubin to measure undergraduates' attitudes towards ITAs before conducting the activities, 63 undergraduates rated 11 audio recordings of ITAs' five-minute mini lessons. They rated them based on "comprehensibility, overall oral proficiency, degree

5 In early 1980s, meaning negotiation was initiated by Michael Long in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) discipline as a theoretical framework that was referred to as the interaction hypothesis. The hypothesis claimed that nonnative speakers acquire the language when they engage in meaning negotiation through comprehension checks and clarification requests, particularly to overcome a communication breakdown with a native speaker. However, later scholarship was skeptical about the willingness of learners to engage in meaning negotiation in the classroom for fear of reflecting their ignorance or negatively impacting their social relationships in the classroom. Later research argued that meaning negotiation ought to be initiated by the instructors or the more experienced interlocutor (Van Der Zwaard and Bannink). The responsibility for meaning negotiation, I contend, needs to be shared by both listeners and speakers, regardless of their native- or nonnative-speaker status.

of accentedness, and teaching competence” (Kang and Rubin 161). After the contact exercises, the same group of undergraduates re-rated the same mini lessons. The success of these activities was reflected in NESSs perceiving ITAs to be “more comprehensible and instructionally competent” than they did beforehand (Kang and Rubin 157).

Another strategy that suggests a shared communicative responsibility between ITAs and NESSs and fosters their meaning negotiation skills is constructed simulation. Halleck constructed a simulation to orient new ITAs and undergraduate NESSs in the training program that she directed. The objective of the simulation was for both groups to “become familiar with the issues related to the use of international teaching assistants (ITAs) as instructors in undergraduate courses” (Halleck 137). The various roles laid out in the simulation were meant to raise ITAs’ awareness about the “problem” they may not have known existed and undergraduates’ awareness about the role they play in the “problem.” The end goal was for the simulation to “probe[] the cross-cultural competence of all the stakeholders involved” (Halleck 137). Though I reject the common perception of ITAs or their preparation as a “problem,” simulations—very much like the structured contact approach—equally engage ITAs and NESSs, in ways that can be deemed beneficial not only for preparing ITAs, but also for jumpstarting undergraduate NESSs’ readiness variables and, by extension, their meaning negotiation skills with ITAs. Moreover, strategies such as structured contact and simulations reject the traditional mindset of perceiving ITAs as deficient interlocutors. Instead, those strategies allow ITAs and NESSs to share the responsibility of conducting effective communication.

Since I was aware that BGSU’s ITA preparation program does not do that, I wanted to know what it does. So, I used my ITA preparation classroom and BGSU’s institutional setting as a research site to listen to the two groups who are directly impacted by ITA preparation: ITAs and NESSs.

THE STUDY

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The ITA preparation course is offered through the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program, which is housed in BGSU’s English department. BGSU was established in 1910 as a teacher-training school (i.e., normal school) and is ranked as a tier-one institution. The population of the ITA preparation course is ITAs who lead labs or instruct classes but score between 18-24 on the Spoken English Test (SET)⁶ or 21-23 on the speaking section of the TOEFL iBT test.

6 The SET test is a locally-designed test that assesses ITAs’ linguistic and teaching perfor-

PARTICIPANTS

The first group of participants was comprised of ITAs enrolled in the ITA preparation course during the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters. The Fall 2016 cohort consisted of ten ITAs: four doctoral students from photochemical sciences, two master's students from physics, one master's student from mathematics, one master's student from geology, one doctoral student from statistics, and one master's student from American culture studies. In other words, the majority of this cohort members were from STEM-oriented disciplines. Eight of these ITAs were from Sri Lanka and India; only one was from China and one from Japan. The Spring 2017 cohort, on the other hand, consisted of seven ITAs: four doctoral students from photochemical sciences, one master's student from mathematics, one master's student from pop culture studies, and one master's student from art. Like the Fall 2016 cohort members, the majority of this cohort was from STEM-oriented disciplines. What was unique about this cohort, though, was its heterogeneity in terms of ITAs' countries of origin: two from China, two from Serbia, one from Bangladesh, one from Italy, and one from South Korea.

The NESSs group consisted of undergraduates (regardless of rank) who were enrolled at BGSU during the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters. I did not collect demographic information of the NESS participants, since the goal of the study was to learn about the nature of their overall experiences with ITAs. The decision to exclude non-native English-speaking students (NNESSs) was informed by research that suggests that NESSs tend to hold more prejudice towards ITAs than their non-native English-speaking counterparts.⁷

DATA COLLECTION

Upon receiving approval for my study from BGSU's Institutional Review Board, I started collecting data. Three methods were employed to collect data during Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters: surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

During the eighth week of each of the two semesters, all ITAs enrolled in the ITA preparation course were emailed a link to an anonymous Qualtrics survey.

mance. For that test, ITAs are instructed to give a ten-minute lesson on any chosen topic from their discipline. ITAs who score between 18 and 24 are allowed to teach while simultaneously being enrolled in the ITA preparation course (ESOL 5050). Once they pass the course, they re-take the SET test with the goal of scoring 25 or higher to be released to teach. ITAs who do not meet the cut score are usually enrolled in Speech for Graduate Students, which is a course offered through the Communication Sciences and Disorders program.

7 See Mutua; Borjas; Liu; Plakans; Rubin.

Only one open-ended question from that survey is presented in this chapter. That question asked ITAs about their needs in an ITA preparation program in order to teach effectively in the American classroom.

NESSs were also recruited during the same semesters. I used the institutional email listserv to reach out to 1,000 undergraduates who were randomly chosen by the office of Institutional Research Data. Since I received only a few responses, I decided to, instead, reach out to students in person by visiting several Graduate Associates' sections of first- and second-year writing courses. During those class visits, I explained my study, requesting of students who demonstrate interest in the topic to provide their email contacts, which I subsequently used to send them a link to an anonymous Qualtrics survey. Only one question from that survey is presented in this chapter. It was an open-ended question that asked NESSs about their expectations from ITAs for an effective learning experience.

Interviews. ITAs who participated in interviews for this study were enrolled in the ITA preparation course during the Fall 2016 semester and were interviewed after course grades were released. Then, I sent an interview recruitment email to my entire former class list to gauge potential interest. Two ITAs expressed interest, and I conducted the interviews separately in my office. My questions to both ITAs inquired about their perceived needs in a preparation program. Both ITAs chose to reveal their true identities in the published study. Table 9.1 demonstrates ITAs' names, countries of origin, and academic programs.

The NESSs who participated in the interviews were the ones who expressed interest in doing so by providing their email contacts at the end of the survey. The two students who showed interest were interviewed separately in my office during the Spring 2017 semester. The interview questions revolved around their expectations of ITAs in the classroom or lab setting. One participant chose to be referred to by their real name; the other chose a pseudonym. One was a computer science sophomore; the other was a fourth-year middle childhood education student. Table 9.2 represents NESSs' names/pseudonyms, ranks, and academic programs.

Focus Groups. To abide by ethical conduct, I did not conduct the Spring 2017 focus group sessions. I made this decision because I was the primary investigator of the study and course instructor. Instead, I requested a colleague, Adam Kuchta, to facilitate two focus group sessions with the Spring 2017 cohort on my behalf. Ahead of the focus group sessions, I had informed ITAs about my study and clarified that participation in those sessions was voluntary and would not affect their grades. I provided Adam with the focus group questions, which were the same questions asked during my interviews with ITAs. Six ITAs participated in the first session; one in the second. All ITAs chose to go by pseudonyms. Table 9.3 demonstrates ITAs' pseudonyms, countries of origin, and academic programs.

Table 9.1. Interviewed ITAs' Names, Countries of Origin, and Academic Programs

ITAs' Names	Countries of Origin	Academic Programs
Yahampath	Sri Lanka	Master's in Geology
Suthakaran	Sri Lanka	Doctorate in Statistics

Table 9.2. Interviewed NESSs' Names, Ranks, and Academic Majors

NESSs' Names/Pseudonyms	Ranks	Academic Programs
Alexander	Sophomore, first-year (due to earned credit from high school)	Bachelor's in Computer Science
Marina	Fourth-year student	Bachelor's in Middle Childhood Education, Science and English

Table 9.3. Pseudonyms, Countries of Origin, and Academic Degrees of ITAs Who Participated in Focus Groups

ITAs' Pseudonyms	Countries of Origin	Academic Programs
Rick	Bangladesh	Doctorate in Photochemical Sciences
Jim	Serbia	Doctorate in Photochemical Sciences
Fred	Serbia	Doctorate in Photochemical Sciences
Tom	South Korea	Master's in Pop Culture Studies
Alice	Italy	Master's in Art
Gu	China	Master's in Mathematics

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

METHODS AND METHODOLOGIES

The research practices for this study were informed by feminist methodologies and grounded theory. Feminist methodologies were used as a theoretical framework in order for me to negotiate my subject positionality as an ITA

and the primary research investigator. The transparency, accountability, and self-reflexivity—i.e., “the fact that the researcher is part of the world he or she studies” (Maxwell 109)—that feminist methodologies offer allowed me to acknowledge and negotiate my subjectivities as an ITA to avoid a reproduction of my biases. Feminist methodologies, therefore, were used to navigate those biases that could have otherwise been disregarded or considered as factors that negatively impacted the validity of this study. Feminist methodologies insist on “a more explicit understanding and acknowledgement of how subjectivity, subject position, and sociocultural position shape our research processes and the knowledge that results from those practices” (Takayoshi et al. 113), as well as recognizing that “data are always shaped, to a large extent, by researchers’ values, theoretical perspectives, and personal histories” (Kirsch 195). Thus, feminist methodologies allowed me to not only understand but also acknowledge and question my assumptions as an ITA.

Similarly, grounded theory was an additional methodology—and method for that matter—that helped mitigate my subjectivities and account for my “position, privileges, perspective, and interactions” (Charmaz 13), allowing the data to lead the conversation. It is important to acknowledge that my ITA subject position might have guided my interpretation of the data (Takayoshi et al. 107). However, grounded theory coding was applied in order to bring participants’ perspectives to the forefront, enabling me to “define what constitutes the data and to make implicit views, actions, and processes more visible” by “conceptualiz[ing] what is happening in the data” (Takayoshi et al. 113). More specifically, like feminist methodologies, grounded theory allowed me to be reflexive during the coding and data-based theory construction. Furthermore, I maintained an open mind during the coding process. Instead of imposing my assumptions on the codes or considering those perspectives as truths, those perceptions were considered as merely one way—rather than the only way—of understanding the data (Charmaz 132-3). Because “very few studies can actually only be accomplished using one method” (Takayoshi et al. 111), I used a mixed-methods approach, consisting of surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Those data were analyzed through the implementation of grounded theory. Data coding was “a series of passes” (open/initial and selective/focused). During open coding phases, “fragments of data—words, lines, segments, and incidents—[were examined] closely for their analytic import” (Charmaz 109). Open coding was followed with focused coding which “reveal[ed] points of interest, insight, and discovery that [were] not evident just from the name (or definition) of a given code” (Broad 5). During focused coding, “the most significant or frequent initial codes” were used to “sort, synthesize,

integrate, and organize large amounts of data” (Charmaz 113). Eventually, super codes and theory emerged from the flexible-yet-rigorous process of grounded theory.

RESULTS

ITAs SURVEY RESULTS

A total of sixteen ITAs participated in the survey. This chapter explores ITAs’ responses to only one of the survey questions. That question asked them about their needs from a preparation program in order to effectively teach their students. In response, three ITAs expressed satisfaction with the components of the existing preparation course in improving their communicative skills. One of the three listed “pronunciation” and “teaching method[s]” as needs from the preparation program. More specifically, two of the three ITAs identified mini lessons⁸ as “very helpful” in making them “more confident” and in exploring “strategies to use with students.” In addition, one ITA described the required audio “self-reflection” as “very valuable and helpful because we are becoming consciousness [sic] about our improvement and development.” Contrastingly, three ITAs expressed dissatisfaction with the existing preparation course, with one of the three stating “this program should have training for ITAs like us who need[] to run labs.” Similarly, another ITA said that they need “training related to subject matter.” Two ITAs were specific about needing “communication with native English-speaking students” and “more exposure to native speakers or other persons [who] have similar fluency levels like native [speakers].” That should help improve their “aural comprehension” especially because the English they find in textbooks is different from “real’ daily English among students.” Three ITAs were more concerned about their “pronunciation skills” and their fluency. One of the three stated that they need someone to “correct” their individual sounds. Another ITA said, “I need to learn how to make natural pauses, to [expand my] vocabulary[,] and become more [comprehensible].” And one ITA simply stated, “Keep practic[ing] teaching to students.”

Figure 9.1 represents ITAs’ needs that were expressed in the survey based on the frequency of their mention.

8 Mini lessons are interactive ten-minute lessons that ITAs were assigned to present on any chosen disciplinary topic. During those lessons, their peers and I interacted with the presenters like undergraduates would. The lessons were video recorded. Within a week, ITAs were asked to watch the video and record an audio self-reflection, identifying strengths and areas for improvement in their performance.

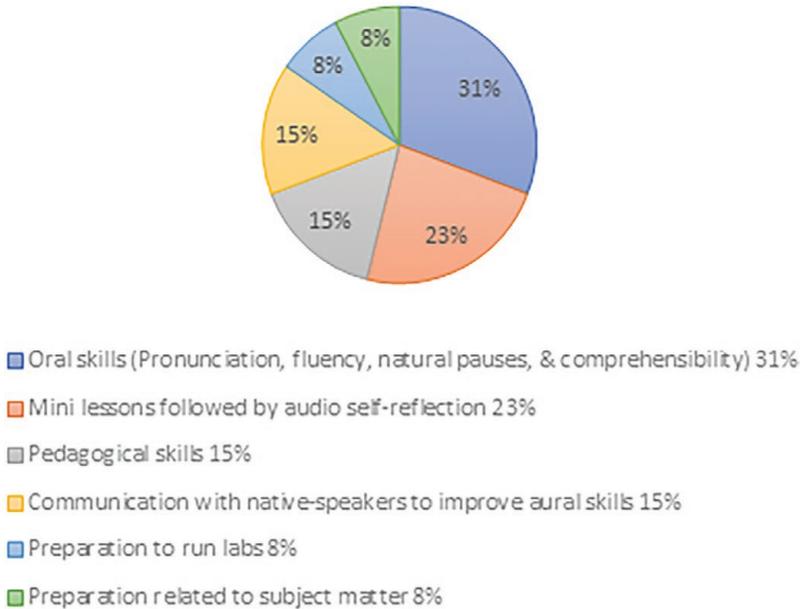


Figure 9.1. Pie Chart of ITAs' Needs as Expressed in the Survey and Their Frequency

NESSs SURVEY RESULTS

A total of sixty-seven undergraduate NESSs completed the survey, forty-four of which indicated they had had actual experiences with ITAs. Therefore, the responses of the twenty-three remaining participants were excluded since they were not based on actual experiences. This chapter examines the responses of those forty-four NESSs to only one of the survey questions—the one that asked them about their expectations from ITAs, whether in the classroom or the lab, in order for them to learn effectively.

Pedagogical expectations. Thirteen NESSs ($\approx 30\%$) made comments relating to ITAs' pedagogical skills. Three NESSs expressed their expectations of ITAs to be able to teach, saying, "I expect ITAs to be able to teach me well enough that I understand and retain the information" and to be able to "teach to multiple learning styles." Closely related, three NESSs discussed ITAs' ability to explain concepts. For example, they stated, "I expect them to be able to explain the material coherently," and "to help [me] understand what the professor is saying." The third NESS suggested that ITAs should "read instead of explain[]" the assigned pages as a way for ITAs to "feel comfortable"

explaining the material. Four NESSs addressed their expectations of ITAs to be knowledgeable about the content area, material, and subject matter of the class. Three expected ITAs to “be able to communicate with [students]” clearly in terms of articulating course requirements, teaching effectively, helping students “better understand the material [they are] trying to learn,” and “making sure [ITAs] help me until I understand.”

Fluency and clarity of speech. Ten NESSs ($\approx 23\%$) focused on their expectations from ITAs to speak the English language fluently, clearly, and slowly. For example, NESSs expect ITAs to “[h]ave clear English,” be “fluent in English and-[] confidently speak it,” to “effectively speak the language spoken in the classroom,” and to “know the proper English to be able to teach the material.” One NESS addressed the pace of ITAs’ speech, expecting ITAs to “[t]alk slow [sic] and pronounce things more clearly,” as “some times [sic] they just talk to [sic] fast, and it sounds like their first language.”

Understanding and responding to questions. Nine NESSs ($\approx 21\%$) referred to their expectations from ITAs to understand and respond to their questions. For example, one stated that they expect from ITAs “[t]o be able to understand and answer questions effectively.” Another said, “[t]o be able to assist us with questions from lectures.” Two indicated that they perceived such question/answer interaction as “a joint effort” in terms of “stay[ing] on the same page and avoid[ing] miss communication [sic].” The second comment further added, “Or if they do not understand what the student is asking to be polite enough to address that so maybe the student can reword their question so that the ITA can understand it and give the proper response.” In other words, NESSs expect ITAs to not only be able to understand and respond to questions, but also to negotiate meaning with students by asking for repetition or paraphrase in a way that ensures that both interlocutors are on the same page, avoiding miscommunications. Contrastingly, two of the nine NESSs did not see themselves as active agents in communications with ITAs, placing the onus entirely on ITAs. They expected ITAs to be able to “explain what they mean,” paraphrase themselves “[i]f they cannot think of the word(s),” and “efficiently bypass language barriers in order to convey their messages in an understandable way.”

Equal university-wide pedagogical and communicative standards of TAs and ITAs. Seven NESSs (16%) indicated that they have no different expectations from ITAs than they have from any other instructor. In other words, they hold ITAs and domestic TAs to the same expectations, such as “[p]rovid[ing] an environment for [students] to learn and understand clearly,” being “able to teach the material,” and “effectively communicat[ing] any misunderstandings in directions for lab, anything to help understand that

material that they are wanting [students] to know for the course/lab.” One NESS elaborated saying:

I expect them to be as prepared as native North American teacher assistants. There should be a standard which the University sets, and if people can't reach that [sic] they shouldn't be allowed to be in the classroom. That goes for any TA, foreign or “American.”

This comment calls on the institution to set equal standards for TA and ITAs in terms of their pedagogical abilities.

Four of the 44 responses were eclectic, addressing NESSs' expectations from ITAs to be “understanding and patient,” be “willing to help,” “adapt to the class eventually,” and use “real life examples of the material that is easy to relate to.” Only one of the 44 NESSs skipped the question. Figure 9.2 represents NESSs' expectations from ITAs that were expressed in the survey based on the frequency of their mention.

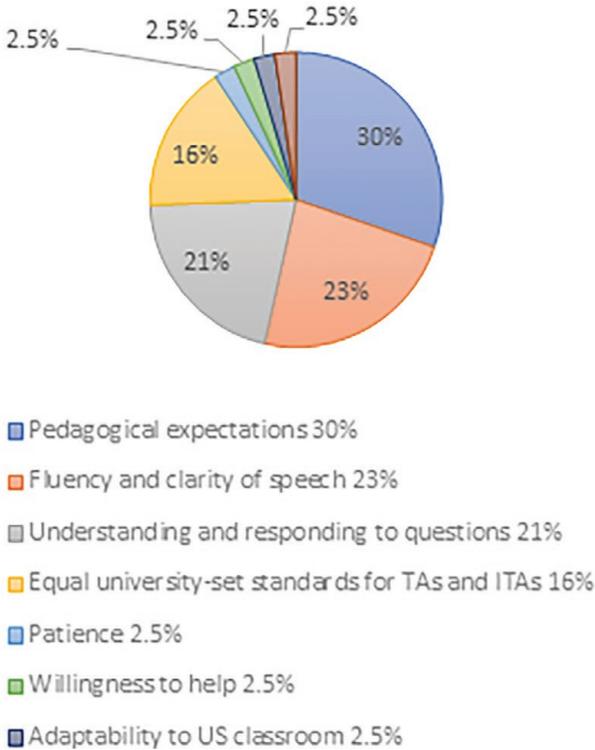


Figure 9.2. Pie Chart of NESSs' Expectations from ITAs as Expressed in the Survey and Their Frequency

Codes that emerged from surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Five codes emerged from the analysis of the survey results, interviews, and focus groups. Table 9.4 demonstrates those five codes.

Table 9.4. Codes that Emerged from Surveys, Interviews, and Focus Groups

Codes that Emerged from Data Analysis
Contact with native English speakers
Meaning negotiation strategies
Creating rapport with ITAs
Creating rapport with undergraduate NESSs through slang (but when?)
Classroom cultural differences

Contact with native English speakers. During my interview with Yahampath, he expressed a sense of satisfaction with the existing ITA preparation course; however, he identified a need to spend more time with native English speakers. He stated, “I think we need more friends from [the U.S.] to [practice English with]. We don’t automatically come to that accent.” However, because the affordance of practicing English with native English speakers is not available for him, he enjoys practicing English with the professor of the lab he is running. And the fact that she, the professor, is also a nonnative English speaker makes her more comprehensible for him. He stressed, “She’s the person which I understand mostly in our department because [she] speak[s] slowly and she mainly stress[es] words so I can listen (laugh).” Thus, from an ITA’s point of view, it is important to have opportunities to interact with undergraduate NESSs during the semester; however, when these opportunities do not present themselves to ITAs, then practicing communicative skills with someone who does not speak English as a first language becomes additionally beneficial since they tend to speak at a slower pace than a native speaker does and are generally more comprehensible. Yahampath suggested that “arrang[ing] some time [for ITAs] to meet with native [English speaking] students” would be a necessary component in an ITA preparation course.

During focus group sessions, Rick echoed the same need for more opportunities to interact with native speakers. Like Yahampath, Rick found such interactions to be a pressing need. He clarified:

So I think the course structure is okay, but what I found very much helpful here is just I mean, we learn pretty much everything about English before coming here like grammar, pronunciation, intonation, everything, but what we lack was

that some native speakers in my country, for myself. I say that I didn't meet any native speaker before coming here. So I mean just speaking with native speakers helps a lot.

Thus, an obvious need for ITAs is to be provided with opportunities to interact with “native speakers” by way of practicing speaking English and listening to it being spoken. Though, technically, practicing English with nonnative speakers is beneficial for English language learning, ITAs seem to prefer their interlocutors to be native speakers.

In the second focus group session, Adam asked Rick's opinion about whether he envisions those interactions with NESSs to be taking place in the ITA preparation course, to which Rick responded immediately in the affirmative. Rick explained, “it's because of improving your pronunciation like native speakers. Sometimes language is easier to learn by just mimicking. Not by following rules or something.” More specifically, Rick suggested that NESSs could be invited to class on a volunteer basis and participate in “maybe some kind of discussion, or [ITAs] explaining some topics to them. Also having something interesting, just discussing with them.” Due to graduate students' typically busy schedules, Rick had little opportunities to interact with native English-speakers outside the classroom. Rick characterized his interactions with native-speaking colleagues to be limited to “academic materials and those kind of things.” Even when Rick added that he had a couple of native English-speaking “friends,” he elaborated saying, “sometimes I share with them, just everyday stuff, nothing else.” Rick's brevity in describing those friendships reflects their quotidian nature, possibly, due to the heavy workload of graduate school. Rick commented, “You know how things go in the grad school.” With the heavy demands of graduate education, ITAs find the ITA preparation course to be an ideal space where those desired interactions with native English-speakers could take place.

Therefore, the ITA preparation course should make room for authentic interactions with undergraduate NESSs—interactions that might bear close resemblance to their everyday experiences in the lab or the classroom. Those interactions could take the shape of either small-group discussions, engaging activities, or invitations for undergraduate NESSs to be potential audience for ITAs during mini lessons, which, by extension, could create meaning negotiation opportunities that might expand the rhetorical prowess of not only ITAs, but also NESSs.

Meaning negotiation strategies. During focus groups, a few ITAs expressed communicative struggles with undergraduate NESSs. Tom, for example, pointed out that his struggles are rooted in “two problems:” first, “aural comprehension” challenges due to students' use of “different pronunciation and slang;” second, difficulties in handling student questions. Tom elaborated:

Since English is not my first language, I need [] some time to speak because, as Rick mentioned, we need time. First, sentence in our mother tongue. Then, translate to English. But at times, yeah, I think I didn't handle well their questions. They asked me, but I think I spent a little time. Okay, so? (laugh)

Tom, like Yahampath, struggled with aural comprehension; they both expressed difficulty in understanding their students' speech. Fred and Jim chimed in, expressing similar struggles in terms of needing more time to be able to respond to students' questions. What Tom, Fred, and Jim were actually expressing is a need for meaning negotiation strategies that would help them navigate communicative situations and buy themselves some time to be able to formulate responses to students' questions. Tom's struggle with handling student questions echoes NESSs' expectations of ITAs to understand and respond to undergraduates' questions as well as know how to request paraphrase or repetition when needed.

As an undergraduate NESS, Alexander engaged in meaning negotiation with ITAs in labs and classrooms. When I asked him if he faced trouble during those interactions, he stated, "Yeah. Sometimes you have to ask [the Geology ITA] to repeat herself or to speak up." Alexander affirmed that often times he took initiatives to negotiate meaning with that ITA by asking her for repetition or requesting that she raise her voice. Alexander did not, however, express any frustration about having to negotiate meaning with ITAs. In fact, he expressed his willingness to exert effort or labor to reach full comprehension. He explained, "as long as I can pretty much piece together what [ITAs]'re saying, I'm usually not too picky about how they say it." A sense of empathy can be inferred from Alexander's responses, especially when he explained:

She wasn't bad. She was actually a really good teacher. She reiterated things very well. Pronunciation was like the thing and like volume. So I feel like she was a lot more quiet. But I feel like it wasn't necessarily her fault. I feel like it might have been a cultural thing. But other than that I've never had any problems or anything like that. No.

Hypothesizing that the ITA spoke quietly due to cultural norms, Alexander showed a sense of empathy toward his ITA. Instead of expecting her to quickly adapt to the US classroom culture, he expressed willingness to compromise, especially as he recognized her as "a really good teacher" who "reiterated things very well."

But Alexander was not an exception in his willingness to negotiate meaning with ITAs. Marina expressed not only willingness to negotiate meaning with

nonnative English speakers, but also a sense of gained intellectual stimulation. Marina's awareness, for instance that ITAs often struggle with slang, shapes her speech production. She explained:

It's usually like helping me to take a step back and be like, "How am I speaking when I'm speaking to somebody who doesn't speak English as a first language?" cause obviously like I use a lot of slang, I grew up here. So like a lot of the times I have to like stop myself and be like, "No [Marina]! Use real words!"

Like Alexander, Marina did not express any frustration during meaning negotiation practices. In fact, she perceived them as intellectual stimulants or brain games. She elaborated:

I know that one friend, he's from Turkey, and a lot of the times we'll be having conversations, and you know like deep conversation going on for hours. Super intelligent man, but sometimes he couldn't get the right word. So he would sit there and try to describe it. And I almost feel like we're playing Charades sometimes because he'd be like, "ah, ah, when there is steam coming," and I'm like, "Smoking?" and he'll be like, "Yes" (laugh). So I think that like I feel like that helps my brain sometimes because of like I don't know it makes me think a little bit more.

It could be hypothesized that Marina's daily interactions with nonnative English speakers at the young age of fifteen might have informed her perception of meaning negotiation as a practice that is not only integral to communication but also intellectually stimulating.

Though Alexander and Marina cannot be considered an epitome of the undergraduate NESS population who have had little or no prior interactions with nonnative English speakers, their successful interactions with ITAs are inspirational; they can inform the conceptualization of ITA preparation in two ways. First, early interactions between ITAs and NESSs can accelerate the latter's readiness variables for meaning negotiations with the former. Second, both groups need to share the responsibility of effective communication as they collaborate to negotiate meaning.

Creating rapport with ITAs. Marina had dramatically more positive experiences with ITAs who tried to create rapport with undergraduates and connect with them than those who did not. Though she "wasn't super fond of" the first ITA she had due to his initial nervousness in class, she realized that in time he started

feeling more comfortable and even being “silly” with students, which completely changed her perception of him. Similarly, she had quite a positive experience with a nonnative English-speaking professor because “[h]e’s like trying to interact, trying to get to know us, cares about us, and trying to connect with us.” Contrastingly, ITAs who did not try to create rapport with undergraduates were perceived negatively by Marina, who explained, “But the ones I’ve had for chemistry and right now biology, they’re very science-focused, like they’re like ‘I am only here to like grade your papers and you know give you the information.’” Marina’s observation might have implications on ITA preparation in terms of addressing undergraduates’ needs for rapport, a sense of care from and connection with their instructors.

Creating rapport with undergraduate NESSs through slang (but when?).

During focus groups, Tom, Fred, and Jim expressed common struggles understanding the slang that NESSs often use. Rick, on the other hand, had a different experience. He stated:

I understand idioms very well. I mean my aural comprehension is good, my academic language is also good. . . . But the problem is I work in labs, so it just sound weird when you always use academic language with the students, I mean I don’t want to do that. I don’t want to sound academic all the time.

Rick seemed to be at a more advanced stage of second language acquisition than his peers were. Unlike Tom, Fred, and Jim, Rick’s struggle did not stem from his inability to understand the slang that NESSs use, but rather from his inability to produce those expressions in a way that could help him create rapport with students. Such rapport, in Rick’s opinion, is impossible to create when an ITA relies on academic language. He explained:

[Academic language] creates a bit of a distance between students and the instructor, I think. It seems like you’re not connecting with them, you know. I mean that some language makes you more closer to your students than other language. If you use standard academic language all the time, students sometimes don’t feel comfortable to ask you questions. In lab they have so many questions that they feel maybe stupid, I don’t know; “I don’t need to ask them to the instructor.” That’s not true. They should approach and ask those questions. So I think when you can get more close to your students in the way that they use the language, they feel more connected to you.

Rick believes that ITAs’ use of slang—unlike academic language—could have a powerful effect on their approachability and the rapport that they desire

to develop with undergraduate NESSs, who, by extension, would feel a sense of relatability and trust toward ITAs.

Though ITAs seemed to agree that their use of slang would help them create rapport with NESSs, they disagreed about when such production would be deemed appropriate. Alice, for example, contended that ITAs' comprehensibility should take precedence over their ability to use slang. She explained, "[Rick]'s an instructor, so he has to speak in an academic way. And the slang will come in later, you know." She directed her advice to Rick, saying, "I just feel that right now you have to worry about being comprehensible. And to give the class the information. . . This is important." In other words, Alice saw a need for ITAs to comprehensibly deliver subject matter to students, and slang production should happen organically at a later stage.

ITAs' emphasis on slang was also echoed by undergraduate NESSs. Alexander expected ITAs to be able to understand the slang that NESSs typically use in the classroom and lab. He explained that it "would be good for [ITAs] to learn I guess lingo and like slang. . . like the extremely crucial thing is obviously the classroom, but I feel like [understanding slang] would completely help them understand their students a lot better." Though Alexander did not identify slang production as an expectation from ITAs, he viewed ITAs' ability to understand slang as important for their aural proficiency.

Classroom cultural differences. When I asked Marina about what ITA preparation should entail, she listed "pedagogy skills" as an important component. Second on the list was understanding classroom cultural differences, such as US students' expectation for quick responses and fast information. However, the one aspect that had the worst impact on Marina's learning experience is NESSs' unmet need for detailed instruction and scaffolding of information. More specifically, Marina pointed out that ITAs often forget that undergraduates in the US do not necessarily have the same amount of knowledge that ITAs have or the level of knowledge that they would expect of undergraduates in their home countries. Marina shared an experience with an ITA that could clarify this specific need of NESSs. She related:

So one of my issues right now is that my TA doesn't, like he will lecture on the concepts real quick, but then he doesn't really tell us like what we're doing. Like he'll read the title. So he'll be like, "This is your diffusion lab," and then he'll be like, "Okay, start." And we're like, "Okay. I read the lab, (laugh) but I don't know what this thing is that they're talking about. Can you just like point it out real quick?" And then I know he definitely gets frustrated because we're asking him so many

questions, but um I wish that he would just lay everything out before, so we know where we're going, what we're doing.

In other words, that ITA did not provide much details to transition from the theoretical part of the lab to the practical part. Such lack of scaffolding as an instructional strategy, Marina hypothesized, might be informed by ITAs' wrong assumption that undergraduates would know how to make that transition on their own or possess the knowledge that helps them to do so. Additionally, ITAs expressed "frustration" with students' questions, making the latter feel inadequate in requesting clarification. One additional factor that could have amplified the tension between ITAs and their undergraduate NESSs is the fact that it was an introductory-level course—courses that are typically anxiety-ridden for undergraduates, especially those who are not science majors.

Marina's negative experience with that ITA reflects the complexity of cross-cultural classroom settings, calling for an ITA preparation that demystifies several ITA misconceptions and addresses undergraduates' unmet needs. Therefore, a US-classroom-culture component seems to be essential for ITA preparation. However, what could be even more beneficial than merely teaching ITAs about the US classroom setting is creating cross-cultural contact zones where ITAs and undergraduates could actually interact. Those contact zones should revolve around the following: ITAs' misconceptions about the amount of content knowledge undergraduate US students typically bring to introductory courses, undergraduate NESSs' expectation for a fast-paced classroom, NESSs' need for informational scaffolding, NESSs' expectation of ITAs to show willingness to address questions, and ITAs' unawareness of undergraduates' anxiety in introductory courses and the cultural cues that might be construed as rudeness in the US classroom, such as belittling students' limited knowledge about the subject matter and showing frustration with their questions.

DISCUSSION

In my positionality as an ITA, I approached this study with my own biases and prejudices, anticipating tension⁹ and discrepancies to emerge as I listened to ITAs and undergraduate NESSs. However, as themes emerged, I soon realized that there is a wide area of agreement and overlap between ITAs' needs and NESSs' expectations when it comes to ITA preparation (see Table 9.5).

ITAs unanimously expressed a need for interactive opportunities with undergraduate NESSs. Though ITAs interact with NESSs in classrooms and labs, ITAs

9 See Liu; Major et al.; Mutua; Plakans; Rubin.

lamented the fact that the intense demands of graduate school—that emotional labor that Courtney Adams Wooten in this collection tries to untangle—prevent them from taking part in extracurricular activities or creating friendships with NESSs. To address ITAs' needs for additional interactions with undergraduate NESSs, the ITA preparation classroom can be a space where NESSs are invited to participate in mini lesson activities, which is another need for ITAs where they can practice their pedagogical and meaning negotiation skills in an authentic classroom setting. Alternatively, these interactions can take place through a structured contact approach (Kang and Rubin) and/or constructed simulations (Halleck). Such structured contact activities and simulations can take place during orientation week, when undergraduates and ITAs are getting acclimated to their new educational environment. Engaging in those activities as early as the orientation week might also act as a catalyst for undergraduates' readiness variables (Oppenheim). Those activities have the potential of enhancing meaning negotiation skills as well as oral proficiency skills such as clear pronunciation, fluency, natural pauses, and comprehensibility—areas where ITAs' needs aligned with NESSs' expectations. In a sense, like Leslie R. Anglesey's chapter in this volume, this reenvisioning of orientations resists the banking model where ITAs—and undergraduate students, for that matter—are made to perform as mostly-idle listeners rather than being active participants during orientations. As ITAs and undergraduates do so during those meaning negotiation activities, the former can gain experience in addressing the latter' questions by adopting strategies that could help them buy time, allowing them to process student questions and articulate responses accordingly. Moreover, undergraduates can practice ways to request paraphrasing or repetition of information from ITAs.

Those meaning negotiation activities could also address the pressing need for intergroup rapport that was expressed by not only ITAs but also NESSs. Such rapport could be initiated during those activities that take place before the semester starts and continue throughout ITA preparation. Since ITAs unanimously expressed a need to understand and produce slang by way of creating rapport with NESSs, a slang component could be added to ITA preparation, especially considering that NESSs also expressed the expectation that ITAs should be able to comprehend the slang they typically produce in classrooms and labs. However, from my own experience, teaching and learning slang does not work if done in a vacuum. In other words, rather than explicitly teaching ITAs slang terms, they should be encouraged to organically learn slang *in situ* during interactions with NESSs and use the acquired terms during ensuing interactions; otherwise, there is a risk that the terms might remain in ITAs' inactive vocabulary instead of moving to their active vocabulary. ITAs should also be encouraged to request paraphrasing from NESSs, if needed, rather than pretending or assuming that they understood what was said.

Table 9.5. ITAs' Needs, NESSs' Expectations, and Where There is an Overlap

ITAs' Needs	Where Needs and Expectations Overlap	NESSs' Expectations
Opportunities to interact with NESSs	Pedagogical skills	Express willingness to address NESSs' questions (without frustration)
Mini lessons followed by self-reflections	Oral skills (clear pronunciation, fluency, natural pauses, & comprehensibility)	Adjust unreasonable expectations of ITAs about NESSs' content knowledge
Preparation specific to running labs	Meaning negotiation skills (NESSs expressed willingness to negotiate meaning with ITAs, & ITAs expressed a need to buy time to respond to NESSs' questions)	Information scaffolding as an instructional strategy
Preparation related to subject matter	Rapport and sense of care (ITAs expressed a need to learn slang, & NESSs expect ITAs to understand slang)	ITAs' awareness of NESSs' anxiety in introductory courses
		ITAs' patience & willingness to help
		ITAs' adaptability to US classroom culture & use of real-life examples
		University-wide standards for pedagogical and communicative skills of domestic TAs and ITAs

Though ITAs and NESSs agreed that rapport is essential for building successful instructional relationships, NESSs articulated that expectation from a different angle than that of ITAs. While ITAs perceived their acquisition of slang to be a necessary means for achieving rapport with NESSs, NESSs perceived rapport through an intercultural lens. They craved a sense of care from ITAs. Since instructor-student rapport might be culture-specific, ITAs should be made aware of a variety of cultural practices that NESSs pointed out and that are valued in the American classroom and lab settings that might otherwise be lost on ITAs. For example, showing care for undergraduate students, learning and calling them by their names, and getting to know them through small talk in the beginning of class are all practices that could create rapport between ITAs and NESSs.

ITAs' adaptability to US classroom culture could also be achieved through various means. For instance, as NESSs underscored, ITAs need to express willingness to negotiate meaning with undergraduates and address their questions without showing frustration, demonstrate awareness of students' typical anxiety in introductory courses, adjust unreasonable expectations about undergraduates' content knowledge, and reflect their patience and willingness to scaffold information. It was noted that ITAs often made what would be perceived in the US classroom as rude remarks as they commented on students' level of knowledge and/or moved from theory to application in labs without enough scaffolding of information. ITAs' adaptability to these cultural expectations could reflect well on their pedagogical performance, which is another need that was identified by NESSs as well as ITAs.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings demonstrate more alignment than tension between ITAs' needs and NESSs' expectations (see Table 9.5). In fact, those shared needs and expectations can be encapsulated in three components: meaning negotiation, awareness of US classroom culture, and pedagogical preparation. The rest happens organically.

Beyond orientation week, and since it can be challenging to have NESSs volunteer their time in the ITA preparation classroom, one way meaning negotiation can be implemented is through programmatic collaborations—collaborations between ITA preparation programs and any other program whose students need interactions with English language learners (ELLs), such as linguistics and/or TESOL programs. The rationale for envisioning programmatic collaborations is the fact that, ideally, meaningful collaborations are the ones that accrue mutual benefits to all parties involved, which is also how ITA-NESS relationships ought to be. The typical focus of courses like methods in TESOL, phonetics, and applied phonology is for students to establish a foundation of the English phonetics system as well as the proper pedagogical methods to help ELLs acquire clear pronunciation. Because of that focus, students might benefit from interacting with ITAs and better understanding the pronunciation challenges of speakers of various languages. And since the typical student population of those courses is either NESSs or ELLs whose command of the English language is considered sufficient, then ITAs would also benefit from these interactive opportunities—a need that ITAs have expressed.

To achieve such collaborations, undergraduates in linguistics and/or TESOL programs could be invited to ITAs' min-lesson presentations, where authentic, mutually beneficial interactions between ITAs and NESSs could take place

and, by extension, oral proficiency, meaning negotiation, and slang acquisition organically happen. More specifically, ITAs and NESSs can become conscious of, and benefit from, meaning negotiation processes through a few rhetorical interventions, such as posing and responding to questions, requesting repetition or paraphrasing of unclear questions or responses, using fillers to gain time while trying to articulate responses, and implementing comprehension checks.

Those meaning negotiation practices could also raise ITAs' awareness about the US classroom culture—a prominent NESS expectation—as ITAs imagine ways to create rapport with undergraduates and understand their anxiety about the subject matter. In addition to meaning negotiation, ITA preparation could also guide ITAs in conducting beginning-of-semester needs analysis in order to understand students' academic needs and level of content knowledge. Furthermore, ITA preparation courses should present informational scaffolding as an instructional strategy, where clear explanation is provided to transition students from theoretical to hands-on components in labs and classrooms. An agenda is offered for each lesson, and the board is used as a compensation strategy.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY AND CONCLUSION

This study did not come without limitations. My subject positionality as an ITA could have been problematic in the sense that my biases might have influenced not only the data analysis process, but also data collection. My obvious identity as an ITA, which presented itself in my accented speech and race, could have silenced NESSs or made them uncomfortable sharing their honest perspectives about ITAs during survey recruitment and interview phases of the study. This concern might be valid, though unavoidable. That is why, during data analysis, reflexivity was vital as I acknowledged my own biases and assumptions as an ITA, constantly reminding myself that it is data that should guide my findings—not my own biases.

Despite the limitations, this study underscores and reifies the importance of listening to ITAs in order to understand their needs and use that knowledge to design preparation programs. There is a danger in assuming that ITAs come to the US classroom as empty vessels (to echo Kathleen Blake Yancey, Rob Cole, Amanda May, and Katelyn Stark's astute observation in this collection), and in offering them preparation programs that make them feel deficient. That is why it is essential to capitalize on their pedagogical experience and learn what they know about the US classroom culture, and, then, to build on that existing knowledge. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that undergraduates' readiness variables are not homogenous; thus, rather than waiting for them to be ready to negotiate meaning with ITAs, they need to be engaged in ITA

preparation by way of preparing them for the increasingly diverse US classroom. Otherwise, ITAs would continue to shoulder the meaning negotiation labor that ought to be shared with their undergraduates for an even and fair distribution of labor in the American classroom.

WORKS CITED

- Althen, Gary. "Teaching "Culture" to International Teaching Assistants." *Preparing the Professoriate of Tomorrow to Teach*, edited by J. Nyquist, R. Abbott, D. Wulff, & J. Sprague. Kendall/Hunt, 1991, pp. 350-356.
- Ashavskaya, Ekaterina. "International Teaching Assistants' Experiences in the U.S. Classrooms: Implications for Practice." *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2015, pp. 56-69.
- Borjas, George J. "Foreign-born Teaching Assistants and the Academic Performance of Undergraduates." *The American Economic Review*, vol. 90, no. 2, 2000, pp. 355-359.
- Bresnahan, Mary Jiang, and Deborah H. Cai. "From the Other Side of the Desk: Conversations with International Students about Teaching in the U.S." *Communication Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2000, pp. 65-75.
- Broad, Bob. "So Many Data, So Much Time: Living with Grounded Theory in a Rhetorical Autoethnography." *Reflections on Qualitative Research in Language and Literacy Education*, edited by S. Mirhosseini. Springer Link, 2017, 91-104.
- Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed., Sage, 2014.
- Fox, Wanda S., and Geneva Gay. "Functions and Effects of International Teaching Assistants." *The Review of Higher Education*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1994, pp. 1-24.
- Gareis, Elizabeth, and Williams, Leigh. "International Faculty Development for Full-time and Adjunct Faculty: A Program Description." *Journal of Faculty Development*, vol. 20, 2004, pp. 45-53.
- Halleck, Gene. B. "The ITA Problem: A Ready-to-use Simulation." *Simulation & Gaming*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2008, pp. 137-146.
- Hsu, Chia-Fang (Sandy). "Open and Positive Attitudes toward Teaching." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, no. 138, 2014, pp. 41-49.
- Jia, Cai Lun, and Amy Aldous Bergerson. "Understanding the International Teaching Assistant Training Program: A Case Study at a Northwestern Research University." *International Education*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2008, pp. 77-129.
- Kang, Okim, and Donald L. Rubin. "Intergroup Contact Exercises as a Tool for Mitigating Undergraduates' Attitudes Toward Nonnative English-speaking Teaching Assistants." *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2012, pp. 159-166.
- Kirsch, Gesa. *Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research: The Politics of Location, Interpretation, and Publication*. SUNY P, 1999.
- Li, Li, Joseph P. Mazer, and Ran Ju. "Resolving International Teaching Assistant Language Challenges and Opportunities for Clarity and Credibility." *Communication Education*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2011, pp. 461-478.

- Liu, Jun. "Chinese Graduate Teaching Assistants Teaching Freshman Composition to Native Speaking Students." *Nonnative Language Teachers: Perceptions, Challenges, and Contributions to the Profession*, edited by E. Llorca. Springer, 2005, pp. 155-77.
- Liu, Min, et al. "Integrating Nonnatives as Teachers: Patterns and Perceptions of Compliance-Gaining Strategies." *Communication Education*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2006, pp. 208-217.
- Luo, Jiali, et al. "Instructional Issues for Teaching Assistants." *Innovative Higher Education* 25, no. 3 (2001): 209-230.
- Major, Roy C., et al. "The Effects of Nonnative Accents on Listening Comprehension: Implications for ESL Assessment." *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 36. No. 2, 2002, pp. 173-190.
- Maxwell, Joseph A. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. 2nd ed., Sage Publications, 2005.
- Meyer, Kevin R., and Yuping Mao. "Comparing Student Perceptions of the Classroom Climate Created by U.S. American and International Teaching Assistants." *Higher Learning Research Communications*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2014, pp. 12-22.
- Mutua, Consolata. N. "Opposite Worlds, Singular Mission: Teaching as an ITA." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, vol. 138, 2014, 51-60.
- Oppenheim, Nancy. *Undergraduates Learning from Nonnative English-speaking Teaching Assistants*. 1996. University of Texas, Austin, PhD dissertation.
- Plakans, Barbara. S. "Undergraduates' Experiences with and Attitudes Toward International Teaching Assistants." *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 1, 1997, pp. 95-119.
- Rubin, Donald L. "Nonlanguage Factors Affecting Undergraduates' Judgments of Nonnative English-speaking Teaching Assistants." *Research in Higher Education*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1992, pp. 511-531.
- Ruecker, Todd et al. "Language Difference can Be an Asset': Exploring the Experiences of Nonnative English-speaking Teachers of Writing." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 69, no. 4, 2018, 612-641.
- Seloni, Lisyia. "Going Beyond the Native-nonnative English Speaker Divide in College Courses: The Role of Nonnative English-speaking Educators in Promoting Critical Multiculturalism." *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, vol, 23, no. 3, 2012, pp. 129-155.
- Takayoshi, Pamela, et al. "The Construction of Research Problems and Methods." *Practicing Research in Writing Studies: Reflexive and Ethically Responsible Research*, edited by Katrina M. Powell and Pamela Takayoshi. Hampton Press, 2012.
- Van Der Zwaard, Rose, and Anne Bannink. "Nonoccurrence of Negotiation of Meaning in Task-Based Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication." *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 100, no. 3, 2016, pp. 625-640.
- Williams, Gwendolyn M. and Rod E. Case. "Tale of the Tape: International Teaching Assistant Noticing During Videotaped Classroom Observations." *Journal of International Students*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2015, pp. 434-446. Missing
- Zhang, Mei. "Rapport and Knowledge: Enhancing Foreign Instructor Credibility in the Classroom." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, vol. 138, 2014, pp. 29-39.

Zhou, Ji. "What is in the International Teaching Assistants Training Curriculum?" *Journal of Faculty Development*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2009, pp. 19-24.

Zhou, Ji. "Managing Anxiety: A Case Study of an International Teaching Assistant's Interaction with American Students." *Journal of International Students*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2014, pp. 177-190.

NARRATIVE 9.

“WHO IS THAT GIRL I SEE?” NAVIGATING THE IDENTITIES OF STUDENT AND ADMINISTRATOR AS A GRADUATE WPA

Analeigh E. Horton

University of Arizona

I'd like to become a WPA one day, so it made sense for me to pursue my writing program's graduate assistant director (GAD) position. When I applied for the opportunity, I didn't expect to get it because I was only a first-year Ph.D. student. I guess other people didn't expect it, either; some peers expressed their doubt in my abilities since previous GADs were more advanced students. These questions of my fitness foreshadowed ongoing difficulties I would encounter as a student administrator.

My service technically began in the fall of 2020—my second year—but the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on our program led to me beginning administrative tasks in April. I remember being happy to step up but feeling somewhat out of place as my predecessor had not yet fully transitioned out of her role. Later that year, when our writing program began revising its bylaws, I was appointed co-chair of the subcommittee. Graduate students repeatedly challenged my allegiance, asking if I advocated for certain policies because I had “sold out” to faculty administrators and forgotten my primary role of graduate student. I confronted my own uneasiness when transitioning from faculty and staff meetings to conversations with graduate students. At one point, I made the difficult decision to resign from a service position in our graduate student organization when the tension became unbearable. As months passed and contentions arose, I struggled to communicate these feelings. I couldn't talk to faculty without feeling like the traitor I was accused of being. I couldn't talk to fellow students because there were details to which they weren't always privy. Personally, I enjoyed my work and felt proud of my principled contributions. I didn't understand why my integrity was under question and the confusion of my bifurcated identity—student, administrator—diminished my confidence.

When I did confide in a faculty mentor, she explained that some GADs before me had felt similarly. I remained confused, though; I had been a student administrator before in the writing center at my previous institution, yet never experienced this kind of animosity. Now, I was conflicted by my desire to stay in the role, my commitment to my professional development, and the temptation to step down.

As I write these reflections, I see the faces of former friends and hear the words of recent disagreements. I juxtapose them with our writing program's commitment to compassionate pedagogy and wellbeing. I wonder how much of this narrative is a pity party versus a reality for other student administrators. I think about how much 2020 affected everyone's nerves and how perhaps these tensions would not have arisen in a less stressful year. I ponder how these experiences are preparing me for a future career, when I'm no longer "student," just "administrator." I confront my own values, beliefs, priorities, and identities. I hear the words of my mentor, "Not everyone's going to get you, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be you." I encourage my fellow student administrators; the job is hard, but we are not alone.

CHAPTER 10.

I FEEL IT IN MY BODY:
WC TEACHING AND
ADMINISTRATION AS
EMBODIED PRACTICE

Rachel Robinson-Zetzer

Fairfield University

Trixie G. Smith

Michigan State University

Put simply, as much as I hope for us to grapple with the identities that circulate through writing centers and tutoring, I also want us to think about the transparency of identity, where bodies and affects seem to exist and perform beyond or past identity, where they seem the “same” or “other.” Facing the center requires an awareness that the identities at the center signify just as richly as those at the margin. (2-3)

– Harry C. Denny

My personal philosophy and my philosophy for the center is that we’re all just humans working with humans; we have to remember that we’re working with people—people with bodies, feelings, and lives outside the academy—and this way of thinking, for many, is rather queer indeed. (19)

– William P. Banks et al.

The ceiling of The Writing Center @ Michigan State University is covered with the traces of those who’ve worked in that space. Separate ceiling tiles are adorned with individual pictures, quotes, and the general artwork of past consultants—part of the face Harry Denny refers to can be found here.¹ These tiles are always

1 At MSU, we use the term “consultant” to refer to those graduate and undergraduate tutors in the writing center. We see them as teaching assistants because they teach and mentor one-to-one as well as in small groups and may facilitate class and community workshops. In addition, many of the graduate students, as well as a few undergraduates, take on administrative roles as coordinators of various programs in the center and across partnerships with the university and community.

there, disembodied from the person who created them, but holding a moment in time, a moment frozen forever, hanging above the work of the center. While the people who created the tiles might be long gone, traces of these humans remain in these tiles. Periodically, you might even find a current consultant staring up at the tiles during a session to get their bearings or daydreaming while looking at tiles between sessions. These tiles, and the ceiling they make up, are more than just pictures; they are a collage of emotions frozen in time. The drawing of Tina Belcher or the picture of blue sky with Samuel L. Jackson as God are more than a funny nod to pop culture; they are pieces of the consultants' past made present every day in a busy writing center where people come in and notice the "cool" ceiling.

We draw attention to the ceiling tiles at The Writing Center @ Michigan State University to illustrate a point: writing center spaces are emotional spaces because clients, consultants, and others bring their emotions and experiences into the writing center space when they come; they bring them on their bodies, in their writing, and in the interactions that occur in/through the space of the center. Furthermore, these emotions and experiences often linger, like ghosts, charging the space with emotions that can, sometimes, be confusing and exhilarating. Our ceiling tiles charge our space with the emotions of consultants of the past, and when we mix those emotions with the ones of the consultants whose bodies make up the center itself (along with the writers), the center can become a space where emotion is everywhere, all the time. Sometimes, consultants can become overwhelmed with this emotion and feel stifled by it. Other times, consultants thrive in having a space to really feel their feelings.

Generally, though, the writing center space is one in which emotions and feelings are one-sided; they come from the client, the writer—not the consultant. When consultant emotions and feelings show up, we're taught to set them aside in favor of the needs of the writer. However, what do we do when a space, like the space at MSU, is already filled with consultant emotions? What do we do with the emotions of the past that already take up the room of the writing center space? How do we let—or not let—these emotions affect us as consultants, teaching assistants (TAs), and administrators while still helping our writers become better? Our simple answer is that we work to embrace the emotions around us instead of ignoring them; and we do this by paying attention to the ways our bodies feel and move in particular spaces. According to Blitz and Hurlbert, "Our stories—our own and those of the students with whom we have worked in writing centers—are from various quiet margins. We're not even sure that writing centers themselves are central to anything other than the living stories that fill, not only the students' writings, but also the air in the rooms" (84). This air affects the way we, as consultants who are in the writing center space

more often than the writers themselves, move and work in the space and what we allow and don't allow ourselves to feel at work. Ultimately, though, this air is haunted by those who've come before; the center is made up of the ghosts, the traces of former consultants and writers, whose leftover emotions can physically change the atmosphere of the room.

In this chapter, we explore what it means to work in a space filled with your own and others' emotions when you haven't necessarily been trained to deal with either. We welcome the varied emotions and experiences in the writing center space as a way to visibilize writing center liminality, and we demonstrate this through the telling and theorizing of personal stories coupled with writing center and administrative scholarship. We present this collage of stories/bodies/theories through a mixing and blending of our own authorial voices and previously published voices, indicated through the use of italics, as a way to show the blurred lines that emotionally-charged, heteroglossic spaces, like the writing center, can create.

BUT FIRST, A STORY

This closer look at the individual is important to us, perhaps, because graduate student administrators are positioned between two worlds. Socially and experientially, we are graduate students with important personal ties to the lives of other GTAs: they are our friends, our own support network, and our most immediate peers and colleagues. But as administrators, the director relies on us to supervise and administer those same people, to help her monitor, train, and develop their teaching performance. It is in this greatly undefined, overlapping space that we often find ourselves in very complicated positions that are never truly of our own choosing. (106)

– Stephen Davenport Jukuri and W. J Williamson

Before 2018, as a TA and research assistant (RA), I, Rachel, always felt a little emotionally and professionally stifled in the writing center because I'd come back to school with lots of professional writing center experience under my belt and not always an outlet for it as a student consultant. I felt like I was walking around with two faces: one was the outward-showing face that I displayed to friends and co-workers at work that seemed to go along with the rules and duties of the jobs in front of me, and the other was the one I saved for my family and home life that was professionally frustrated with a lack of a release for my professional experience. In 2018, all that changed.

My mother had a stroke in November of 2017, and, for a while, it looked like she was going to recover, but the recovery road was going to be long and

hard. After fleeing to my home state of Tennessee upon hearing news of the stroke, I finally felt comfortable enough to return to Michigan in early 2018, just in time for the spring semester and for our spring writing center orientation to begin. Sitting in this orientation, I was noticeably distracted. My family had started a large group text during my mother's illness, and the constant beeps and chirps from my phone felt like imminent warnings that I couldn't look away from. With my phone silenced, I tried to pay attention as Trixie, the writing center director, led the group in a team-building exercise—but my phone buzzed and I grabbed it. Instead of a private message to me, I found out in the group chat that my mother had suffered a second stroke, and that this one was much more devastating. Initially, upon reading the news, my first instinct was to *act cool* because I was at work surrounded by a lot of people and this is what I'd been trained to do, not only as a professional but as a woman. This lasted mere moments before I fled to a nearby empty classroom and broke down.

Soon, a friend and writing center administrator followed me out to check on me, all the while reassuring me that it was okay for me to head back to Tennessee to figure out what was going on. I'm grateful for many things during this time period, but when I look back on this particular day, I'm especially grateful for that friend and that private classroom.

My mother would eventually go on to pass away from that second stroke, the one I found out about during writing center spring orientation, and while I continue to grieve her loss every day, I'm surprised at how much I associate her loss—and my grief—with that particular writing center. After coming back from the funeral, my entire association with emotions and feelings in the writing center changed. When once I felt guarded and two-faced, I now didn't have the strength to care if friends, colleagues, and writers saw me express my emotions freely. I cried openly at work all the time because I couldn't help it, and I talked about death and grief. A lot. The writing center became a place for me that was not just a workplace, but also a place that housed the last visual of me before my mom passed, the last visual of me as a daughter with a mother. The writing center is literally the place where I found out about her illness getting worse, and it's the place where my own emotions bubbled over at almost every table and in almost every session for a season. And I let them. In fact, I was encouraged to allow my emotions to be at the forefront of everything I was doing by my administration because they knew there was no way for me to keep them in.

During this time, I leaned, as much as I could, on my administration to tell me when I needed a break or, even, to simply tell me what I needed because a lot of times I didn't know myself. I'd experienced loss before, but never like this, and I'd never experienced it while going through the academic and professional struggles of graduate school. When I was struggling with whether or

not to come back to school after my mother's funeral, I was transparent with my writing center administration, Trixie included, because I knew I could trust their judgment as colleagues, bosses, and friends. While the advice they gave me didn't come from places of experience, I trusted that they had my best interest in mind. The truth is, none of us are trained to handle deep family tragedy as academics, much less as TAs and writing center consultants, so we do the best we can. We muddle through it, and, in doing so, we sometimes let our messy lives show to the very people we've been trained to keep them private from.

When I finally decided to come back to school and work, I was messy. Gone were my two masks from my earlier days as a graduate student, replaced now with a gaunt stare and free-flowing tears. The writing center space that I came back into wasn't the space I left. Now, this space holds different memories and emotions for me. I would find myself looking around the room and think: "that was the table at which I used to talk with mom on the phone during my break; that was the table I was sitting at when I got the text message; that was the window I would stare out blankly when I wasn't tutoring." I was not okay, and I allowed myself not to be okay in public because I didn't have a choice in the matter.

Ultimately, my grief forced me to experience my emotions in a very public way in a very public space, but there was something comforting about crying and being sad in the writing center. Knowing that others had come before me and carried their emotions in that space allowed me to feel a sense of freedom that I don't think I could have gotten everywhere. In the thickest parts of my grief, I would sit at my "grief table" in the writing center, look up at the ceiling tiles, and know that somehow I wasn't alone. For me, I could feel the emotions in the air that Blitz and Hurlbert talk about, and while I, myself, felt like a ghost and a shell of a person, I felt like I was also walking with the ghosts of past consultants who'd cried and grieved silently and publicly in the writing center.

NOW, LET'S PAUSE FOR A BIT OF THEORIZING

I think a lot about ghosts. No, not white-sheeted apparitions, but the ghosts who appear in the stories we tell each other here in the academy. Not only those arisen from the mess of blood and bones upon which "America" is literally built, but also those rooted in other knowledges, other ways of knowing, other ways of being and becoming that frequently go unheard and unsaid in much scholarly work. For me, ghost stories are both the stories of material colonization *and* the webs and wisps of narrative that are woven around, under, beneath, behind, inside, and against the dominant narratives of "scholarly discourse." I think a lot about what ghost stories can teach us, how in telling them I might *both* honor the

knowledge that isn't honored in universities *and* do so in a way that interweaves these stories with more recognizable academic "theorizing" as well. For me, this is the most exciting component of "alternative discourses"—telling a story that mixes worlds and ways, one that listens and speaks, one that participates in Lyotard's language games as both a rule governed subject and a paralogic trickster, a *use*, as deCerteau would have it, that is more tactical than strategic, a pose that uses historical knowledge as a heuristic in creating a written, writing self (Royster 2001b). (12)

Malea Powell (emphasis in original)

In their article "If You Have Ghosts," Blitz and Hurlbert open with the story of Gloria, a refugee coming to the writing center for help with a piece of writing. During her sessions, as one is sometimes apt to do, she opens up to her tutor about the danger her family faced—still faces—fleeing El Salvador to come to America. And then, one day, Gloria stops coming to the center, as writers usually do when they are finished with a piece of writing. The consultants are shaken by her absence and worried about Gloria's safety, but, of course, they have no way of contacting her, and they know that's inappropriate anyway. It's as if Gloria is a ghost. The authors say, "Gloria carried the stories which must be told and heard but which are easily lost against the 'academic wallpaper of words' (Okawa, 1997, 94), the empty formalities of what too often passes for serious academic work" (86). The "serious academic work" of the writing center, is, of course, helping students to become better writers, and not necessarily tuning into their emotional states; however, isn't writing just that? To be a good writer, doesn't one need to be aware of, if not in tune with, their own emotional state? Blitz and Hurlbert say that the ghosts of former students "haunt" the writing center, and their presence shows up in our lives in everyday moments that we might not expect or anticipate. As Powell notes, we have to pause and think about what these ghost stories can teach us.

Likewise, Sara Ahmed would say the lingering is because the writing center is a sticky place where emotions cling to the objects in the room, and when we are oriented toward certain objects, we are likely to get the stickiness of others on us. How does one measure what is sticky and what isn't, then? "I do not want to presume an associate of the literal with the physical body and the metaphorical with language" says Ahmed (91). She goes on:

Certainly, there are different forms of stickiness. But the sticky surface and the sticky sign cannot be separated through any simple distinction between literal and metaphorical. Rather, stickiness involves a *form of relationality*, or a "with-ness," in which the elements that are "with" get bound together...When

a sign or object becomes sticky, it can function to “block” the movement (of other things or signs) and it can function to bind (other things or signs) together. Stickiness helps us to associate “blockages” with “bindings.” (91; emphasis added)

The “with-ness” of objects creates an invisible sticky film on/in/through them that leaves traces behind. These traces literally and invisibly bind us to certain objects. Additionally, these traces, then, cling to other objects creating a transference. To elaborate, Ahmed says:

A sticky surface is one that will incorporate other elements into the surface such that the surface of a sticky object is in a dynamic process of re-surfacing...But stickiness of that surface *still tells us a history of the object that is not dependent on the endurance of the quality of stickiness*: what sticks “shows up” where the object has travelled through what it has gathered onto its surface, gatherings that become a part of the object, and call into question its integrity as an object. (91; emphasis original)

Much like the effects of a sticky substance on a surface, emotions that fill a room get stuck to the surfaces of the room. As Blitz and Hurlbert would say, emotions fill the air. However, Laura Micciche explains, “Rather than characterize emotion exclusively as a reaction to a situation or a tool used to create a reaction in an audience, we need to shift our thinking to examine how emotion is part of the ‘stickiness’ that generates attachments to others, to world-views, and to a whole array of sources and objects” (1). Emotions, in other words, help to form our relationships; they are relational, and when we form relationships with objects and places, our emotions become attached to those things as well as leaving them open for others to experience when they come in contact with the same objects and spaces. However, we have to be careful how we view emotion because, historically, it has been bound up with unintellectual thought. “As a result, then, of historical processes that have constructed emotion as dangerous and untrustworthy,” Micciche says, “emotion has been the object of a large-scale dismissal, rendering invisible its principal work on how we come to orient ourselves to the world, including how we develop, interpret, and analyze our own investments in the things we value through complex social and cultural rituals and norms” (6). While emotion has largely been invisible, “what gets mystified in traditional views of emotion is the extent to which emotion expression and perception are mediated rather than natural responses to a situation” (Micciche 6). Rachel’s grief was a natural response to the situation she was in;

her expression of it in the public space of the writing center, while perhaps not *natural* or *unnatural*, was, thankfully, also not mediated because she was fortunate enough to have administrators who understood that the writing center is a place where humans help humans, and humans emote, sometimes publicly.

The field of writing center studies has taken up the mantle of emotion work of late, with the recent publication of several works on mindfulness and self-care in writing centers (Brentnell et al.; Caswell et al.; Concannon et al.; Degner et al.; Giaimo; Green; etc.). While this is good news for consultants and administrators, the practice of being emotional in the writing center *as a consultant or GA* is still uncommon praxis. Scholastically, a consultant's identity is still one wrapped up in the hats they wear (Ryan and Zimmerelli) or the approaches they take to consulting. Additionally, we recognize that "it's often uncomfortable to be vulnerable with others, especially within public spaces" (Brentnell et al.). Yet, we see vulnerability in the center from writers all the time. Why is it harder to recognize vulnerability from our consultants when they express it? We might argue, as Brentnell et al. do, that we actually see vulnerable moments from consultants all the time. They say, "evidence of vulnerability is present in the objects left behind in the center: in neglected plants left to die on the tables...in the magnetic poetry constructed to describe a client or consultant's grief or apathy, in the toys and crayons broken and pulled apart after an anxiety-riddled session" (Brentnell et al.). These moments are made possible because the writing center, like the classroom, is a place "alive with bodies, hearts, and selves, and because learning is joyous, exciting, frightening, risky, passionate, boring, disappointing, and enraging" (Micciche 105). Because "emotion matters have materiality" and "they are lived and expressed in and through bodies and cultures," we/consultants are sometimes at the mercy of our/their own emotions (Micciche 105). Likewise, "writing involves sticky attachments that evolve and materialize through the writing process, including emotioned attachments that find their way onto the page [and into the air] sometimes against our will or without our conscious assent" (Micciche 106). In the world of writing centers, where writing has power and objects are sticky with the emotions of former and current writers and consultants, space becomes messy. It is important to acknowledge the messiness of emotions and the liminality created for writers, teachers, and administrators when the space welcomes both ghosts from the past and living, breathing emotions in the present.

AND NOW, ANOTHER STORY

...working in the writing center really equipped me to deal with confusion and uncertainty. No two days are ever the same, and that's part of

what makes it fun and rewarding. Whenever a student sits in a tutoring session with me, for example, she needs my help immediately. I am forced to be resourceful when I don't know answers, and I'm forced to be calm even when panic seems a more obvious state-of-being. Helping to direct the writing center as a coordinator amplifies both the challenges and the lessons of being a writing tutor. But I have learned to accept that I do not know everything I need to know before I need to know it--I learn as I go. This aspect of my work in the writing center has been instrumental in helping me to meet the challenges of being a graduate student, even when it's still confusing, scary, and uncomfortable. (116-117)

– Andrea Alden

My, Trixie's, office has seen, and now holds, a wide range of TA emotions, reactions, and experiences. The box of Kleenex has a prominent place on my desk, right between my seat and where TAs and other consultants, and even clients, often sit across from me in the room to talk through questions, issues, and opportunities. As books and papers pile up on my desk—which inevitably happens every semester—the box of tissues gets moved to the top as a signal that emotions, tears in particular, are welcome in the space. Over the years, these tears have accompanied many different embodied experiences and feelings: hurt, anger, rage, disgust, distress, confusion, worry, grief, excitement, possibilities, and ah-hah moments.

I remember, for example, the grad student who couldn't decide if staying in academia was the right choice for her: did she want to be a part of the racist, patriarchal academy that was enraging her in this moment? Did she even need to finish her dissertation? Would serving on one more committee or getting X fellowship help her know what she wanted to do, or not do? Each question was sobbed through apologies for crying in my office.

There was also the graduate coordinator in the writing center who was mad at the disrespect she was feeling from a couple of her colleagues. Her angry tears fueled her anger even more as she exploded in my office and sought ways to be professional and firm with her co-workers. She wanted to demonstrate her knowledge, her sound pedagogical choices, her deliberate choices for policies, procedures, and curricula in a clear and expert manner. Rightly, she saw this experience, this work as a graduate leader in the writing center as practice for her future career as a writing center director, where she would have to demonstrate her knowledge over and over again to various stakeholders throughout the university.

Likewise, I remember several instances of hurt and confusion from gay men in my office. They all knew that they had much to offer our program, the field, the academia at large, but they were also unsure of their ability to both publicly and privately handle the emotional labor of this work. Writing about the needs of LGBT graduate students and administrators, for example, was emotion(al)

work as they received public backlash from leaders in the field where they expected to receive support or at least consensus. It was also creating additional labor at home as it affected their relationships and own wellbeing.

These stories—and so many more not told here—resonate in my office every time I enter it. The emotions linger and remind me why I stress over and over to those I'm mentoring the reason why I have an open-door policy and why I see mentoring as the key component of my job. They also echo in the space as new graduate coordinators enter through my open door to talk about the experiences on their minds. The stories of my office as safe space are not just told by me; the graduate students themselves pass along these stories and encourage their colleagues and mentees to seek out the space when they need advice, have a good idea to share, have struggles or questions, want to learn more about their roles in the center and the academy. This lingering stickiness means that I continually live with these emotions and experiences; some days they are stronger than others, depending on my own embodied feelings and emotional labor on any given day, but they are always there reminding me of the students, amplifying their work, my work.

A REFLECTIVE MOMENT

A MENTOR'S PERSPECTIVE: LEIGH

Finally, as someone who directed the writing center while a graduate student, I know that the stresses of academic life can affect mentees' lives and, consequently, their work. As they cope with tough courses, qualifying and comprehensive exams, theses and dissertations, job searches—and with disruptions to their personal lives like moves, weddings, divorces, and children—I try to be supportive and make reasonable allowances. Often that translates as being a friend and listening; sometimes it means a temporary adjustment of a schedule or workload, like covering their classes or hours.

As professionals, directors/administrators have a responsibility to share their expertise and help the next generations of directors/administrators, but, in doing so, the journey is very much a complementary one. (57)

– Leigh Ryan and Lisa Zimmerelli

CONCLUSION

Nevertheless, many of us seek this very difficult job [WPA] because we love to teach and are thoughtful about curriculum development. If we are honest, some of us believe we can do better than the WPA we knew. Some of us prepare ourselves to do such work through coursework; still others take a job assisting the WPA in order to put some of our ideas

into motion. However, graduate students who prepare themselves for the intellectual work of the WPA may carry with them unacknowledged feelings of conflict about the job. (43)

– Roxanne Mountford

How do you, as a graduate student, prepare for the conflict of the job when the job itself is emotion-filled, ever-changing, and human-dependent? In what ways can we really prepare to handle other people's emotions in public places, as well as our own? As we've said, we might argue that one can prepare for this by remembering that empathy goes a long way in the writing center, and that consultants, just as much as the writers they work with, need to be able to express their emotions in spaces that make them feel safe or brave. We might also argue that in the space of the writing center we are always already feeling emotions—ours and others'—all the time, and this emotion must have an outlet. Acknowledging that the center space—the very air in the room—is complicated and messy helps us to remember that consultants are not *only* in the writing center to help writers with their writing. Sometimes, consultants come to the writing center because it is a liminal space already filled with lingering traces of happiness, joy, anger, frustration, grief, confusion, rage, etc. As administrators, and as seasoned consultants, it is our job to understand that the writing center space can be transformative, even when there is no writing involved.

WORKS CITED

- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Routledge, 2007.
- Alden, Andrea. "Writing Center Work." *What We Wish We'd Known: Negotiating Graduate School*, edited by Ryan Skinnell, Judy Holiday, and Christine Vassett. Fountainhead Press, 2015, pp. 115-120.
- Banks, William P., et al. "Writing Program Administration: A Queer Symposium." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2020, pp. 11-43.
- Blitz, Michael and C. Mark Hurlbert. "If You Have Ghosts." *Stories from the Center: Connecting Narrative and Theory in the Writing Center*, edited by Lynn Craigue Briggs and Meg Woolbright, National Council of Teachers of English, 1999, pp. 84-93.
- Brentnell, Lauren, Elise Dixon, and Rachel Robinson. "The Hidden and Invisible: Vulnerability in Writing Center Work." *Wellness and Care in Writing Center Work*, edited by Genie Nicole Giaimo, Press Books, 2020.
- Caswell, Nicole, Jackie Grustch McKinney, and Rebecca Jackson. *The Working Lives of New Writing Center Directors*. Utah State UP, 2016.
- Concannon, Kelly, et al. "Cultivating Emotional Wellness and Self-Care Through Mindful Mentorship in the Writing Center." *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, vol. 44, no. 5-6, 2020, pp. 10-18, <https://wlnjournal.org/archives/v44/44.5-6.pdf>.

- Degner, Hilary, Kylie Wojciehowski, and Chris Giroux. "Opening Closed Doors: A Rationale for Creating a Safe Space for Tutors Struggling with Mental Health Concerns or Illnesses." *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2015, <http://www.praxisuw.com/degner-et-al-131>.
- Denny, Harry C. *Facing the Center: Toward an Identity Politics of One-To-One Mentoring*. Utah State UP, 2010.
- Gaimeo, Genie Nicole. "A Matter of Method: Wellness and Care Research in Writing Center Studies." *Wellness and Care in Writing Center Work*, edited by Genie Nicole Gaimeo, Press Books, 2020, <https://ship.pressbooks.pub/writingcentersandwellness/chapter/chapter-1/>.
- Green, Neisha-Anne. "Moving Beyond Alright: And the Emotional Toll of This, My Life Matters Too, in the Writing Center Work." *The Writing Center Journal*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2018, pp. 15-34. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26537361?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.
- Jukuri, Stephen Davenport and W. J Williamson. "How to Be a Wishy-Washy Graduate Student WPA, or Undefined but Overdetermined: The Positioning of Graduate Student WPAs." *Kitchen Cooks, Plate Twirlers and Troubadours: Writing Program Administrators Tell Their Stories*, edited by Diana George, Boynton/Cook, 1999, pp. 105-119.
- Micciche, Laura R. *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching*. Boynton/Cook, 2007.
- Micciche, Laura R. with Allison D. Carr. "Toward Graduate-Level Writing Instruction." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 62, no. 3, 2011, pp. 477-501, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27917909>.
- Mountford, Roxanne. "From Labor to Middle Management: Graduate Students in Writing Program Administration." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2002, pp. 41-53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/466112>.
- Powell, Malea. "Listening to Ghosts: An Alternative (non)Argument." *Alt Dis: Alternative Discourses and the Academy*, edited by Patricia Bizzell, Chris Schroeder, and Helen Fox, Heinemann, 2002, pp. 11-22.
- Ryan, Leigh and Lisa Zimmerelli. "Mentoring Graduate Students as Assistant Directors: Complementary Journeys." *(E)Merging Identities: Graduate Students in the Writing Center*, edited by Melissa Nicolas, Fountainhead Press, 2008, pp. 53-64.
- Ryan, Leigh and Lisa Zimmerelli. *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, 6th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2015.

SECTION 3.

TRANSCENDING THE RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP

Phillip K. Lovas

UC Merced

Brady Edwards

New Mexico Junior College

How does one move beyond the teaching assistantship? How does a TA continue to grow and develop after finishing an assistantship that has heavily influenced her life for a number of years? While there is no obvious, single answer to these questions, there are ways to address them: take part in (or create) opportunities for professional development at new places of employment; utilize principles learned in teaching practica courses, the classroom, with cohorts, from mentors; understand that the teaching assistantship is only the beginning, where one got their feet wet with scholarship and teaching, but continual immersion with the field is necessary. We—the editors—also think there is value in remembering that imposter syndrome might not ever fully go away, that all former TAs in some small way still feel like they are walking into a classroom for the very first time. Such understanding can help us, you, and the field have greater empathy for, and better support, the new recruits entering the department. The four following chapters come at transcending the TAship in various ways, namely discussions of labor, identity, narrative, and marginalized voices. In so doing, our contributors highlight the depth of this area of inquiry, as well as reveal again the underdeveloped research opportunities that exist in teaching assistantships.

Courtney Adams Wooten's argument in "The Pursuit of (Un)Happiness in Composition and Rhetoric TAs' Experiences" is an important beginning to the "Transcending" section because of its work on teaching as emotional labor. In the chapter, she discusses the need to "delve into TAs' affectual and emotional responses to teaching as they take a practicum course and teach first-year writing for the first time." To do this work, Wooten examines the lived experience of TAs through interviews and written documentation dealing with interpretations of happiness within a TAship. Ultimately, her work helps both TAs and WPAs

transcend TA labor through various avenues. For TAs, this research may help “negotiate the[ir] responsibilities in their personal and professional lives.” For WPAs, Wooten’s work can help “confront what it means for some of our TAs to not identify with the happy objects in writing studies that make our work so valuable to us.” These findings are important for all of those involved in successfully negotiating TAships.

Readers will next come to the work of Melba Vélez Ortiz in “Anti-Colonialist Listening as Writing Pedagogy,” which deals with writing centers and their connections to TAships. Unlike Lugg’s chapter from earlier in this collection that deals with authenticity, however, Vélez Ortiz uses this chapter to explain the importance of how writing centers on college campuses can influence TAs to better understand their own identities. Vélez Ortiz shares her personal experiences as a non-native English speaking (NNES) tutor within a writing center and the influence of those experiences on her identity. She then argues, through Romeo Garcia’s “Unmaking Gringo Centers,” for the value of developing and recruiting NNES tutors for their unique perspectives and identities, adding depth to the writing center, one of the most important spaces for rhetorical development on campus for TAs and so many others.

In “From Deficit to Asset: Rethinking Graduate Student Narratives,” Nicole Warwick claims that there is a need for more perspectives of TAships through the use of narratives, or as Warwick calls them “Sacred Stories” (this volume). Her work focuses on a narrative study that showcases the stories and experiences of graduate students in TA programs. These opportunities for graduate students to share their experiences creates “a more complex understanding of graduate students, the ways we work with them, and what we accomplish together.” She emphasizes the need for these stories to allow growth and learning for both faculty and graduate students. These stories could potentially help prevent deficit models of learning, those that rely on issues of shortcomings, or the too often unquestioned idea that TAs lack something—which hinders learning or gaining from experience. Ultimately, she argues that programs and faculty can better help graduate TAs transfer knowledge from their programs to other areas of their lives through the contemplation of these types of narrative assets.

We end the “Transcending” section with Meghalee Das, Michelle Flahive, Jiaxin Zhang, and Michael J. Faris’ valuable chapter, “Integrating the Marginalized and the Mainstream: Women of Color Graduate Instructors’ Experience with Identity, Difference, and Belonging.” These authors argue that their work is “driven by the field’s need to hear the experiences of non-White or otherwise-marginalized graduate instructors and that collaboration can be a site of feminist and antiracist interventions in scholarship.” This argument is vital to the idea of transcending the traditional RCTAship; moreover, their work asserts

the need for hearing from marginalized voices to better understand the true needs of the RCTAship. In so doing, they maintain a focus on “differential belonging” as well as an understanding of privilege to help neglected communities within RCTAships. They then offer theoretical takeaways to improve both writing programs and the experiences of TAs in these areas.

Much like the other sections of this collection, we believe that it is important to hear from the teaching assistants themselves. In the “Transcending” section, TA voices shine a spotlight on movement beyond TAships, and they reveal the development of professional identities. We have interwoven five of these narrative voices in the section, all of which show some seminal moments of transcendence in the TAship. They are Matthew Sansbury’s “Collegiality as Transcendence Beyond the TAship”; Sarah Lonelodge’s “Worth”; Gitte Frandsen’s “Multiple Atypical Identities”; Megen Farrow Boyett’s “Mom, Cancer Patient, Doctoral Candidate, TA”; and Charlotte Kupsch’s “Displacement in the Classroom.” These narratives remind us once more that TAs are more than just labor and research subjects. They show individual identities as students, people, and professionals, on their way to becoming more developed teachers, researchers, mentors, etc., both within the field of rhetoric and composition and, in some cases, outside of it.

These Transcending chapters and the narratives share with readers some of the numerous experiences that RCTAs have as they begin to move beyond their student-centered roles and focus more on becoming professionals in rhetoric and composition (or other) fields. Each piece is included because it focuses on the lived experiences of RCTAs in their programs and ultimately how those experiences prepare them for the next steps of their journeys. We—the editors—find that each piece allows for a better understanding of the development of labor needs within writing programs, the mentoring that is still needed for TAs, and the evolution that can happen among WPAs and their experienced RCTAs.

NARRATIVE 10.

COLLEGIALITY AS TRANSCENDENCE BEYOND THE TASHIP

Matthew Sansbury

Clayton State University

My professional identity began to take shape during my time as a teaching assistant (TA) at Georgia State University, and I am extremely grateful for the TAship in rhetoric and composition because it made me the professor I am today. Personally, I identify as a cisgender, gay man who grew up a preacher's son in the Deep South and overcame unique challenges long before graduate studies. The TAship, however, allowed me to be myself at work. I could celebrate my identity openly without reprisal, research my community without shame, and model this newfound acceptance in the classroom. In fact, the most empowering professional moments I have experienced involve students trusting me with their own conflicting identities. The TAship also afforded me the skills necessary to craft my professional identity, which exists at multiple intersections: rhetorician and compositionist, teacher and researcher, literacy sponsor and beneficiary, print enthusiast and digital mentor.

TAships can be grueling at times with limited funding, precarious living situations, and long hours split between work, graduate studies, and professionalization; however, I found many opportunities to amplify my own identity and professional interests, and—for me—the path to these affordances was collegiality. I formed incredible connections with fellow TAs as we exchanged ideas, hosted gatherings, cooked meals, carpooled to conferences, and covered one another's classes, giving me a sense of stability early in the program. I understood quickly that they were my first colleagues, a term becoming increasingly important. I also joined supportive regional and national organizations like the South Atlantic Modern Language Association and the Graduate Student Standing Group at CCCC. These communities fostered my growth as a professional while recognizing the conflicting identifying experiences of a TA.

Collegiality was the way I ultimately pushed out of my TA mentality to craft a professional identity. Partway through the TAship, I realized that my professors and advisors were beginning to see me as a colleague, which I attributed to my

gregarious nature, but purposefully breaking through the TA ethos proved to be quite a challenge; however, once I did so, the rewards quickly materialized: publishing with mentors, serving with academic organizations, and teaching beyond first-year writing. Collegiality became the thread that holds together my professional identity, and in 2019 I graduated from my Ph.D. program and accepted a position as assistant professor at Clayton State University.

Having transcended the TAship, I am currently pondering the realities of pandemic pedagogy as a new professor, but my thoughts are never far from those formative days as a TA. With fresh experience serving on a search committee, I know undoubtedly that the profession—from TAs to Ph.D.s—seeks colleagues. The best advice I could give TAs is to start acting like a colleague until they feel like one; the process will reassure them, fellow TAs, current advisors, and future search committee members who hold open the doors of our profession, waiting for new colleagues to enter.

CHAPTER 11.

THE PURSUIT OF (UN)HAPPINESS
IN COMPOSITION AND
RHETORIC TAs' EXPERIENCES

Courtney Adams Wooten

George Mason University

Helping graduate students to teach writing courses—or what Heidi Estrem and E. Shelley Reid more succinctly term “writing pedagogy education” or WPE—is a difficult charge for many WPAs. At my previous institution, every spring I taught a three-credit-hour graduate course for master’s students as they prepared to teach first-year writing the next semester or year, and each semester I taught a one-credit-hour practicum to support graduate students as they taught for their first two semesters. At my current institution, I often teach a three-credit-hour graduate course for master’s and Ph.D. students, and I lead monthly professional development workshops for new Ph.D. TAs each year. This work is rewarding but challenging, rather like attempting to teach a child how to tie their shoes while also explaining the history of shoe-tying, theories of shoe-tying (making two rabbit’s ears to fold over each other, making criss-crosses over a bridge, making a bow), different materials needed in shoe-tying, and ways to mentally and emotionally approach shoe-tying. Even a seemingly simple task such as tying one’s shoes can take on complexities when faced with this potential amount of information, and much more so a politically fraught subject such as teaching writing.

As William J. Macauley, Jr. notes in his introduction to this collection, previous scholarship has paved the way for WPAs like me who find themselves asking, “What do I teach rhetoric and composition TAs? How can I cover the broad range of theories and practices they need while helping them to intellectually engage with this work? What are the best forms of support to provide new TAs with so that they can feel empowered to teach their students?” Texts such as Betty P. Pytlík and Sarah Liggett’s *Preparing College Teachers of Writing*, which provides a broad overview of histories, theories, programs, and practices of teaching rhetoric and composition TAs, and Sidney I. Dobrin’s collection *Don’t Call It That* about the composition practicum provide instructors with avenues for thinking about how to support rhetoric and composition TAs while

engaging them in intellectual considerations of their teaching. More recent work has expanded upon WPE, the creation of the term itself indicating that scholarship about rhetoric and composition TAs has blossomed and coalesced over the past two decades, even if we have more work to do as this collection indicates. Some of these studies pay attention to the design of TA training itself, including what the format and curricula should be (Duffelmeyer; Dryer; Latterell; Reid; Stancliff and Goggin). Others examine specific issues that TAs struggle to articulate and address (Smagorinsky, Wilson, and Moore; Taggart and Lowry). Quite a few argue for the importance of reflection in the education of TAs, especially as they prepare to teach and begin exploring their teacherly identities (Brewer; Hesse; Estrem and Reid; McKinney and Chiseri-Strater; Reid; Welch). Taken together, these studies illustrate how complex designing effective WPE can be, especially when taking into account specific contexts and TA populations.

Despite this breadth of scholarship, there is a major gap in the field's research: the lived experiences of TAs teaching in our writing programs, including, as I investigate in this chapter, their emotional labor as they experience what Macauley describes in the introduction as "significant and sometimes competing changes" in TAships. Elizabeth Saur and Jason Palmeri's recent "Letter to a New TA: Affect Addendum" offers a start to this work "by turning the focus to the affective and emotional dimensions of teaching" through a series of maxims to new TAs (146). These are framed as ways TAs can think about the emotions they experience and how to fruitfully address these emotions; for example, Saur and Palmeri tell TAs, "It's not always about you" (148) and explain that students often have other things happening in their lives that can affect their reactions to TAs' classes. Thus, this short piece is set up as a sort of grounded advice column for new TAs who might struggle with the emotional work involved in teaching. However, it does not tell us from the perspective of TAs how they experience the emotional or affective labor that takes place in their lives as TAs, labor that pervades everything they do.

This chapter extends the work Saur and Palmeri began, reaching beyond advice for new TAs to delve into TAs' affectual and emotional responses to teaching as they take a practicum course and teach first-year writing for the first time. Teaching is a fraught form of labor, something that experienced teachers often forget until they encounter a particularly difficult student, class, or semester. Drawing attention to scholarship on emotions and affect, I argue that theories of happiness offer a useful heuristic through which to examine the affective and emotional support writing programs offer TAs. Applying this heuristic to actual TAs' experiences allows WPAs to view TAs' emotional labor through their own eyes and to consider how we can better address this aspect of their teaching experiences in WPE.

EMOTIONAL LABOR IN RESEARCH ABOUT RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION TAs

Following calls from scholars such as Jenny Rice who draw connections between rhetorical studies and affect studies, this interdisciplinary body of scholarship devoted to studying the many ways our bodies interact with their environment (including people, objects, animals, etc.) has more recently been taken up in our field. As other scholars have noted, emotion has a complicated position in rhetoric and composition studies. Rhetorical studies from Aristotle to the present day often cite emotions as a weaker form of persuasion, a manipulative force with potentially devastating power (Quandahl). More recently, feminist scholars have tried to reclaim emotions as a valuable and integral facet of our lives, work that has sometimes reified the position of emotion work as women's labor. In the past two decades, however, scholars have paid more attention to emotions as they affect administrators, teachers, and students. Here, I offer a brief sketch of some of this work, including how other scholars have examined the emotions of TAs, in which to situate my discussion of happiness theory.

One of the earliest texts about emotions in composition studies is Lynn Worsham's "Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion." Worsham explicates how emotions operate in pedagogy to reaffirm the hegemonic and to bolster the status quo while seeming to offer revolution. Her text offers the field a valuable starting point to thinking about emotion and affect, particularly our own roles in the social structures around us that often lead to violence. Building on this work, Laura Micciche is one of the most recognized scholars to take up Worsham's call for our field to pay more attention to the emotional and affective dimensions of our labor. First in *A Way to Move*, a collection co-edited with Dale Jacobs, Jacobs and Micciche offer the research of scholars exploring the ways that emotions influence what we teach, how we interact with others, and how we live our lives as administrators and teachers. Several years later, Micciche offers her own extended analysis of emotion work in composition studies in the book *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching*. In this text, Micciche offers "emotion as a category of analysis" (1) through which to examine writing, including writing program administration. Her chapter "Disappointment and WPA Work" draws attention to the "toxic leadership" (83) that WPAs often build their emotional lives around, and the following interchapter addresses the resistance WPAs often feel when their work or affectual states are characterized as "disappointment." Courtney Adams Wooten et al.'s *The Things We Carry* extends this attention to the affectual and emotional to interrogate what emotional labor WPAs perform and how they can effectively negotiate this labor. Several chapters in this collection speak to TA concerns, notably Carl Schlachte's

argument that WPAs should integrate responsiveness to events such as natural disasters into teacher training and/or ongoing professional development (156). My chapter builds on these affectual theorizations of WPA work by examining further WPE in particular and the emotions that TAs themselves experience as they prepare to teach and begin teaching.¹

Several extended studies of graduate student TAs' experiences touch upon their emotions, even though these are not the central focus of these projects. For example, in the Afterword to Elizabeth Rankin's *Seeing Yourself as a Teacher* she explores why she resisted the thru-line of "taking it personally" that kept recurring in her study of five rhetoric and composition TAs:

What the TAs were telling me was that teaching writing is a personal act. It engaged the emotions, not just the intellect, and involved human interactions that cannot be separated from the other acts we perform as teachers of writing . . . But the fact is, we rarely talk about the personal aspects of teaching. Or if we do, we tend to talk behind closed doors. . . . (126)

But there are ways to get behind these closed doors. Sally Barr Ebest's study of TAs found that reflection is one way to address their resistance to modifying their teaching in response to graduate course content. Ebest's attention is not on theorizing these TAs' emotions, but her study reveals how these TAs experience resistance as a constellation of emotions that affect the links they make between their teaching and their WPE (for other perspectives on TA resistance, see Kali A. Mobley Finn's chapter in this collection). More recently, Jessica Restaino's study of four TAs in *First Semester* demonstrates how emotions can become central for the TAs at times, such as Tess's encounter with her student Philosophy Phil at an institutional hearing, even though their emotions are not the central focus of this study.

A recurring thread in our field, then, is the emotion work involved in teaching writing, as Micciche notes in her introduction to a recent issue of *Composition Forum* dedicated to emotion work. This scholarship, however, has not often directly intersected with studies of WPE, despite the additional emotional burden TAs often carry as teachers who are in new teaching environments with little frame of reference for the experiences they are going through. Failing to take particular account of the emotions TAs experience places them in a tenuous position where they are viewed as teachers capable of handling the emotion work of teaching but without having support in place to help them negotiate

1 For further examples of the ways that rhetoric and composition scholars have taken up emotion and affect, see Caswell 2014; Chandler 2007; Johnson and Kruse 2012; Vogel 2009; Winans 2012.

this type of work. This study draws explicit connections between the emotions of happiness and unhappiness and TAs' experiences as they prepare to and begin teaching. While such connections are sometimes implied in previous studies of TAs, centering them offers WPAs a unique and important lens through which to consider the emotional labor TAs do and what this means for writing programs.

HAPPINESS THEORY AND TA LIVED EXPERIENCE

Affect theory offers ways for rhetoric and composition scholars to consider the work they and other teachers do, linking emotion with a consideration of the ways that our bodies interact in minute and almost undetectable ways with the people and things around it (Hardt; Massumi; Sedgwick and Frank). I here examine in particular Sara Ahmed's theorization of happiness, which bridges affect and emotion, to sketch out a heuristic for examining some of the emotional labor of TAs. While scholars disagree about the relationship between affect and emotion,² I view emotion as affect that has risen to a conscious level and manifested in particular feelings that we can identify and often ascribe to particular events, people, etc. even as an entire affective network—one that we are largely unaware of—has contributed to those emotions. My intention here is to draw attention to the ways that Ahmed's happiness theory asks us to consider those often-hidden aspects of our reactions and to parse out how those manifest as emotions in the lives of TAs so that writing programs can more adequately prepare for and account for these.

Some of the most basic emotions people experience are happiness and unhappiness. Often, other emotions such as joy, excitement, sadness, and rage can operate conterminously with happiness and unhappiness, making happiness and unhappiness über categories for other emotions. Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness* theorizes the way that happiness operates to delineate how we view our own and others' lives. She claims that happiness, rather than a state of being, is the way that social norms are seen as good and goods (11). We associate particular objects—what Ahmed calls “happy objects” (22)—and choices with happiness because they directly relate to our society's ideas about who someone should want to be or become.

According to Ahmed, happiness thus helps people determine why they desire what they do (203); in the context of WPE, this concept points to why TAs may

2 For example, Jenny Rice distinguishes “critical emotion studies,” or “the effects of emotions . . . on various areas of everyday life” from “critical affect studies,” or “the interdisciplinary study of affect and its mediating force in everyday life” (201-202). She draws on the work of Massumi to discuss the narrativizing and cultural components of emotions that affect does not have, pointing to his argument that emotions typically have objects associated with them whereas affect does not.

want to be professors and to what end. Ahmed contends, “The science of happiness could be described as performative: by finding happiness in certain places, it generates those places as being good, as being what should be promoted as goods . . . The science of happiness hence re-describes what is already evaluated as being good as good. If we have a duty to promote what causes happiness, then happiness itself becomes a duty” (6-7). Often, this process occurs for TAs through their identification with their own professors and sociocultural conceptions of faculty that reinforce teaching (and associated activities such as course planning, grading, etc.) as a good and as good. Teaching then becomes so associated with happiness that experiencing unhappiness can be unsettling for TAs because they are not fulfilling their duty to be happy as a teacher. Those people who cause happiness by submitting to and illustrating happiness according to social standards—such as TAs and other faculty—are then viewed in Ahmed’s interpretation as “good” people with “good taste” (34) who contribute to the common good.

In constructing these ideas of happiness, Ahmed posits that happiness scripts are created that govern happiness for individuals: “Going along with happiness scripts is how we get along: to get along is to be willing and able to express happiness in proximity to the right things” (59). Such happiness scripts are dependent upon sociocultural ideas of what is “natural or good” (59) and they can vary depending on particular sociocultural contexts. In other words, happiness scripts are not universal and can vary from place-to-place, institution-to-institution, and department-to-department. Happiness scripts can also be extremely limiting: “Happiness scripts could be thought of as straightening devices, ways of aligning bodies with what is already lined up . . . To deviate from the line is to be threatened with unhappiness” (Ahmed 91). Putting together Ahmed’s ideas about what happiness is, happiness scripts can come to govern many choices individuals make if they give in to the pressure to make others happy by conforming to social norms of happiness. However, particular happiness scripts are not available to everyone all of the time. Ahmed claims that “Ideas of happiness involve social as well as moral distinctions insofar as they rest on ideas of who is worthy as well as capable of being happy ‘in the right way’” (13). Happiness therefore is contextual, relying on sociocultural ideas about individual bodies and whether these bodies should be happy and whether they can be happy in ways that society approves of.

In Ahmed’s conceptualization, outlined in this and her previous work, she often examines how race, gender, and sexuality figure into the happiness scripts that are constructed and who is viewed as able to be happy in the right ways. For instance, in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Ahmed explores compulsory heterosexuality and how queerness can be seen not just as a failure to align with

happiness scripts built around heterosexual reproduction but also as the rejection of these scripts and the embrace of what is viewed as non-normative (146). The rejection of these scripts is not simply individual; it is seen “as a threat to the social ordering of life itself” (145) because rejecting compulsory heterosexuality means also rejecting the social norms that surround it. While I do not in this chapter specifically attend to race, gender, and sexuality, Ahmed’s explication of the reverberating effects of rejecting happiness scripts—or unhappiness—draws attention to what it means to be “happy” or “unhappy” in a particular context. In the case of TAs, this speaks to whether or not they can or want to enact particular teacherly identities that writing programs demand of them, identities that seemingly promise happiness but constrain who they are as writing teachers (and, as a result, what they do, how they present themselves, and so on).

Just as Brewer found that the TAs she studied often experienced disconnects between the views of literacy being sponsored in the program they taught in and their own views of literacy, my study finds that TAs often struggle to negotiate the affectual and emotional disconnects they experience as instructors. Although from the outside it can seem that happiness scripts for teachers are extremely positive and affirming, in reality these scripts demand extreme personal sacrifice for the common good of students coupled with the idea that teachers must experience deep fulfillment through student success. Part of TAs’ struggle, which can be seen in my research, is to reconcile what they know of this happiness script with the reality they experience as they begin teaching. When faced with contradictions between the ideal and the reality, TAs often find themselves in the position of challenging these scripts and, as a result, challenging WPAs and other instructors’ conceptions of happiness and unhappiness in relation to teaching writing. As Brewer found with regards to conceptions of literacy, TAs do not always want to align with the happiness scripts put in front of them, even as these scripts are ones WPAs and writing programs depend on in order to align TAs with their program’s philosophy, courses, and so on. When this occurs, Ahmed explains that people can become “killjoys . . . simply by not finding the objects that promise happiness to be quite so promising” (65). While she centers on feminist killjoys as those who particularly question gender dynamics that govern happiness scripts, this concept extends to others such as TAs. They are typically operating from a less powerful position in a writing program where they are being asked to take up particular affective identities. However, when they do not want to or cannot align with these identities, their unhappiness spreads to those around them. This forces WPAs and other faculty in writing programs to confront scripts that may have previously been invisible to them and to consider whether they will ask or try to force TAs to assimilate or whether, instead of or in addition to this, they will reshape writing programs around TAs’ affective experiences.

OASIS MOMENTS AND ANXIETY: TAS SPEAK ABOUT HAPPINESS AND UNHAPPINESS

In order to gain insights into the ways TAs experience happiness and unhappiness, I conducted a series of interviews and collected written material from five TAs during Spring 2017. These TAs were part of the first-year writing program I directed at a midsize, regional, master's-granting public institution in Texas.³ My central research question was how do TAs experience happiness or unhappiness while teaching college writing for the first time and how can WPAs facilitate TAs' emotional experiences. In this chapter, I focus on three of the five TAs—Anna, Lily, and Diane⁴—who had completed a writing pedagogy course and were in either their first (Anna) or second (Lily and Diane) semester of teaching. While teaching, they were taking part in a graduate-level, one-hour practicum course that met once per week while TAs were teaching for their first two semesters. As Yancey, Cole, May, and Stark point out (this volume), TAs often are not blank slates when they begin teaching for us; in this group, one TA had taught high school English for one year and another had homeschooled her children. None, however, had taught college-level writing before. All were completing either literature or creative writing thesis projects in their masters' programs; none were focusing on rhetoric and composition in their studies. TAs at this institution taught two classes per semester after completing the three-hour course, were eligible for medical insurance coverage at half the employee rate, and received a modest TA stipend but no tuition reimbursement.

Seeking two different types of data, I completed two interviews with each TA—one in the first half of the semester and one near the end of the semester. These typically lasted from twenty to forty minutes (although one was as short as sixteen minutes and one was as long as forty-eight minutes) and asked TAs to think about their approaches to teaching, conceptions of happiness and unhappiness, and specific moments when they experienced these emotions. I also collected weekly reflections in which they wrote about what was happening in their classes, things they were re-thinking as they taught, etc. These ranged from philosophical and reflective to practical and grounded.⁵ This material allowed me to see not only what TAs told me about teaching in our interviews but what was reflected back in these ongoing written products. In total, I transcribed approximately three and a quarter hours of interview material and had 123 pages of written material to analyze.

3 I have since become the WPA at a different institution.

4 All names are pseudonyms to protect the identities of the TAs involved in the study.

5 For studies of the ways that reflective writing can positively affect student teachers and TAs, see Foehr 2000; McKinney and Chiseri-Strater 2003.

Following methods outlined in Johnny Saldaña's *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, I coded the material first using in vivo coding to mirror TAs' own language to describe their emotions. Then, I used emotion coding in order to define broad categories under which their specific emotions fit. Going through this process while writing analytic memos enabled me to identify major themes in TAs' experiences that I explore further below. Because happiness and unhappiness are broadly defined terms, TAs' emotional experiences did not always fit neatly into these concepts. However, I use these as the axes around which TAs' emotions revolve in order to explain some of the positive and negative feelings they experienced as they went through the process of learning to teach and becoming teachers. By drawing largely from TAs' own language about the emotions they experienced, this project advances current considerations of TA experiences by providing a space in which TAs can speak for themselves about their emotional labor as they teach writing. This can help WPAs draw our understandings of their emotions from TAs' own experiences so that we can better account for their emotional labor without basing this work on our own assumptions about what they experience.

DEFINING HAPPINESS AND UNHAPPINESS

While many people talk about, think about, or reference happiness on a daily basis, it is difficult to pin down exactly what happiness is. When asked directly, many people reference other people or things as components of their happiness rather than defining or describing happiness in its own terms. Thus, people more often reference Ahmed's happy objects when describing happiness instead of explicating this emotion in the abstract, which makes sense given her emphasis on how happiness is built around happy objects. Thus, it is not surprising that, when asked, TAs struggled to explain how they define happiness and unhappiness, often defaulting to descriptions of happy (or unhappy) objects, times in their lives, and so forth to explicate these concepts.

In defining happiness, several of the TAs reference a feeling of contentment, sense of accomplishment or satisfaction, and positive feelings as ways to think about happiness. These tend to reference particular happy objects, especially tasks or work that is done or recognized by others as good. For example, Lily explains, "Happiness, for me, I guess, would just be feeling content, like not feeling so anxious all of the time. And actually enjoying my days rather than living in fear of disappointing all of my professors."⁶ Happiness in this case is constructed as an internal feeling and as a relationship to professors' reactions to her work. Similarly, Anna claims, "Basically I am the most happiest or the happiest when someone tells

6 Lily. Personal interview. 26 Jan. 2017.

me that I'm doing a good job,"⁷ seeing this validation of her work as an important part of her feeling content in that work. Often, TAs view their work as good—or what Ahmed terms happy—only when others confirm that it is good. This supports Ahmed's view that happiness coheres to those things valued by others as good and as goods; in this case, TAs identify strongly with the ways their mentors both value their work and recognize its value.

Perhaps not surprisingly, TAs generally defined unhappiness as a feeling of anxiety or nervousness, a sense of dissatisfaction or lack of respect from others, or an overall pessimistic stance. Often, their definitions of unhappiness spring from feelings of inadequacy either originating with themselves or others. Lily, who was working on her thesis at the time, identified unhappiness with the academic environment. She talks about unhappiness for her being linked to anxiety and nervousness explicitly in relation to her academic work: ". . . the reason for that definition of mine is just because of academia and I'm trying to impress people. And so my unhappiness springs from not being able to impress those people [faculty], especially this whole thesis thing."⁸ The time spent on her academic work also meant Lily was unable to do other things that she wanted or needed to do, such as sleep. She mentioned how her very hectic schedule, which involved taking a full course load, working on her thesis, being a TA, and working other jobs, meant she was "always on the go" and felt "so anxious."⁹ Even though she also said she was "very content and . . . happy," it's clear that she is exhausted by the ways in which academia shapes her time, goals, and even her body's functions.

One TA, however, offers a different view of happiness. Diane struggled to define happiness because it was largely outside of her worldview. She explains, "I am the daughter of a Baptist minister and was trained all through my childhood and upbringing that happiness is an irrelevant term."¹⁰ Later, she comments, "And what I had drilled into me was the opposite, that happiness is irrelevant. No one truly has happiness at the work of this existence,"¹¹ a belief in part predicated on the idea that there is a life beyond this one on Earth that is worth considering. Diane's experiences ask us to consider how those TAs who don't have a clear framework for happiness and unhappiness might characterize their teaching experiences and what effects this might have on their work and their relationships with WPAs and other mentors.

Considering happiness and unhappiness through these TAs' perspectives helps us to consider what happy or unhappy objects—such as teaching and scholarly/

7 Anna. Personal interview. 27 Jan. 2017.

8 Lily. Personal interview. 26 Jan. 2017.

9 Lily. Personal interview. 26 Jan. 2017.

10 Diane. Personal interview. 25 Jan. 2017.

11 Diane. Personal interview. 25 Jan. 2017.

creative work—are possible and why. Their definitions are perhaps not surprising, but they do illustrate how much power mentors hold over the emotional lives of TAs, whether WPAs who are assessing their teaching work or other professors who are assessing their scholarly and creative work. This highlights how important relationships with mentors can be and brings up questions about how mentors, especially WPAs, respond to TAs and any unhappiness they express, which is discussed further in the conclusion. The following sections delve more deeply into several ways TAs experience happiness and unhappiness to show how their conceptions of these emotions reverberate to other aspects of their lives as TAs.

ENGLISH AND WRITING STUDIES AS (UN)HAPPY OBJECTS

One of the central things that TAs identify as a happy object is the subject of English itself. This conception of English ties into the popular notion that English as a subject is good because it addresses so-called literacy crises¹² and is a good that can be bought and sold, not the least through the teaching of English in schools. Without identifying the value of English, it is doubtful that these TAs would experience as much happiness in teaching writing, a subject that is primarily outside of their chosen fields of study.

One TA, Lily, shared how she identified English as a happy object. She claims, “I think it’s worth the time and effort because what we teach them [students] therefore continues, and they build on those skills and that knowledge for the rest of their career and if we mess up that could impact them.”¹³ Later on, she further explains, “You’re not putting on the roof, you’re putting down the flooring or the foundation.”¹⁴ Lily views English generally and writing specifically as a foundational subject, one which she finds happiness in because it is valuable, something that students will continue to build on and take with them into their future courses and careers. Later, I discuss how the weight of the responsibility of teaching such important skills can cause unhappiness in TAs if they feel that they are failing. However, their basic identification of English as a happy object can allow them an entry point into viewing teaching writing as an endeavor worthy of their time and effort that allows them to experience happiness about their work.

While Lily identified English and even writing as a foundational subject and a happy object, TAs also had more complicated relationships with rhetoric and composition as a field. Diane and Lily, who were in their second semester of

12 Such literacy crises have particularly risen up around the publications of Rudolf Flesch’s “Why Johnny Can’t Read” in 1955, Merrill Sheils’s “Why Johnny Can’t Write” in 1975, and, more recently, Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa’s book *Academically Adrift* in 2011.

13 Lily. Personal interview. 15 May 2017.

14 Lily. Personal interview. 15 May 2017.

teaching, both had a stronger identification with this field than other TAs in this study including Anna. Lily in her final interview talks about how much more strongly she identifies with composition pedagogy than literature pedagogy, in part because there is not as much of a support structure for teaching literature both disciplinarily and at her institution. She says, “I guess because there’s an abundance that I’ve seen for rhet/comp, I want to read them [journals] and so I feel like through reading them and through finding them I’m learning more about this than I am my own field.”¹⁵ She goes on to explain that she feels more community around writing pedagogy because of the monthly workshops and support structures in place at her institution. Because this amount of support does not exist for literature pedagogy, Lily finds it difficult to identify herself as belonging to a community of literature instructors.

Similarly, Diane highlighted the communal aspect of teaching first-year writing that helped her identify with writing studies: “I do think there’s something about sitting down with other people who are teaching first-year comp[osition] . . . it’s different. We’re being very specific, we’re talking about very specific things and it’s very focused and all of that is where I want to be. I want to be able to touch base and to get to know other faculty members.”¹⁶ The community and support systems formed around teaching first-year composition offer avenues through which TAs can negotiate happiness scripts by seeing and talking about what others are doing in their classrooms and revising happiness scripts so that they make sense for themselves in their particular institutions.

Anna, however, as a newer TA in just her first semester of teaching, was more ambivalent about how rhetoric and composition might serve as a happy object and struggled to articulate how she might fit into this field. Even though Anna mentioned that first-year writing is “practical” and “useful,” she connected this with students’ work in other classes rather than an identification with writing studies. When asked about whether she felt involved in writing studies, she mentioned that creative writing “does take precedence,” although she acknowledged that she could see parallels between writing studies and creative writing.¹⁷ She also identified some of the ways she transferred what she had learned as a student in creative writing classes into her role as a teacher of first-year writing because, as she mentions, she tested out of taking first-year writing herself. It was clear, however, that despite taking a semester-long course that introduced TAs to material from writing studies, Anna did not identify strongly with this field. Since I was one of only two rhetoric and composition scholars in that department and

15 Lily. Personal interview. 15 May 2017.

16 Diane. Personal interview. 15 May 2017.

17 Anna. Personal interview. 22 May 2017.

no master's track in the field was available to students, part of this ambivalence may have come from the lack of focus on the field in the department. Given Anna's short time teaching first-year writing, this may also speak to the time needed to develop any attachment to rhetoric and composition as a happy object.

CONFLICTED TEACHERLY IDENTITIES

Given the high esteem with which these TAs hold their professors, it is perhaps not surprising that they desire to feel as comfortable teaching as they think their professors are, even as they recognize that they need more experience to feel this particular happiness. As they struggle to develop teacherly identities, these TAs experience wildly diverse emotions, illustrating how happiness is often built on social standards that are particular to specific contexts and that have different effects on different people.

Some TAs experience moments of identity crisis that make it difficult for them to feel happiness in teaching. Anna struggled to negotiate her teacherly identity in the midst of a very difficult first semester of teaching that involved a situation with one male student that necessitated myself, the department chair, and another office on campus stepping in to mediate. Early in the semester, Anna writes, "I've felt pretty down about myself lately and I think that's probably the source of these panics, the source of my anxiety inside the classroom. I definitely put on the persona that I'm sweet but firm in front of my students, but really I'm a ball of unease just taking it a day at a time."¹⁸ A combination of personal and professional anxiety as well as the need to "put on a persona" contributes to Anna's unhappiness about her teaching. About midway through the semester, Anna tries to work through some of the complaints she has about her students and her overall attitude toward teaching: ". . . I should be more appreciative of those good times that I do have direct control over and forget about instances that may or may not have anything to do with me . . . I can't see or control everything going on, so I need to let it go."¹⁹ Her ruminations here revolve around what it means to be a good teacher: how much can a teacher control? How can a teacher create an ideal learning environment in every class? What does it mean if some of these things aren't possible? If following the happiness script for teachers is part of what makes TAs happy, Anna reveals how difficult it can be for TAs to understand what their version of this script might be.

There are moments of relief, however, when TAs become more comfortable in

18 Anna. "Reflection." 31 Jan. 2017. Practicum in Teaching First-Year Composition, student paper.

19 Anna. "Reflection." 21 Mar. 2017. Practicum in Teaching First-Year Composition, student paper.

their teacherly identities and experience what Diane calls “oasis moments.”²⁰ In a semester where Diane continually returned to the question of what was and was not her responsibility as a teacher, she identifies oasis moments as those when her students respond well to her teaching. She claims, “I don’t expect every student will give my methods rave reviews . . . But if a significant part of my job is to challenge students to think about things in new ways—to think critically—then based on these discussions [with some individual students], I am doing my job.”²¹ Diane seemingly has learned that teaching will not bring happiness every day and that not every student will respond well to her teaching. However, she has negotiated these feelings and moved toward a place of identifying student learning as a happy object that solidifies her identity as a first-year writing instructor.

Similarly, Lily’s second semester of teaching traced her becoming more comfortable and confident with her teaching identity. In her first reflection she writes, “Well, my first week went better than it did last semester, that’s for sure! I started out a little nervous with my first class, but by the time I got to my next section, all of the jitters went away.”²² While she still notes potential problems, she is confident that since she “survived last semester” she can “survive this one too.”²³ Lily also carves out more space to think through her teaching identity. Her reflection from week six explains, “I have decided that I want to be a marshmallow teacher; however, just a little on the toasty side. . . I like this analogy because it shows that I can stand by my rules when I need, but I can also be understanding and flexible with the needs of my students. And as a student myself, I have always admired professors who are able to understand things from a perspective other than their own.”²⁴ Throughout the semester, Lily’s negotiation of her teaching identity overlapped with her need to deal with some personal situations, which led to her identifying the need to care for herself and her family as a priority. While this seems to be in conflict with the common conception that teachers should put work and their students above everything else, Lily concludes, “I know that if I do this for myself, my students will also benefit.”²⁵ Lily’s

20 Diane. “Reflection.” 28 Mar. 2017. Practicum in Teaching First-Year Composition, student paper.

21 Diane. “Reflection.” 28 Mar. 2017. Practicum in Teaching First-Year Composition, student paper.

22 Lily. “Reflection.” 29 Jan. 2017. Practicum in Teaching First-Year Composition, student paper.

23 Lily. “Reflection.” 29 Jan. 2017. Practicum in Teaching First-Year Composition, student paper.

24 Lily. “Reflection.” 26 Feb. 2017. Practicum in Teaching First-Year Composition, student paper.

25 Lily. “Reflection.” 31 Mar. 2017. Practicum in Teaching First-Year Composition, student paper.

resistance to a happiness script demanding she sacrifice her life for teaching helps her determine what teaching identity makes sense for her given other needs she has and is unwilling to give up. This back-and-forth process can be expected of TAs, and it draws attention to the difficulties of navigating teaching identities that are affectively inflected and implicit rather than explicitly discussed.

EXPECTATION DISCONNECTION

One of the most prevalent themes in TAs' experiences is the difficulty students have in reaching the expectations TAs have for them, which often causes TAs to feel unhappy and to question whether they are competent teachers. Although all teachers experience unhappy moments, often these are hidden from the TAs we are training because we do not necessarily want to talk about our or our students' failures.²⁶ This means that happiness scripts created around teaching tend to revolve around successes and happiness rather than failures and unhappiness. TAs have to confront the problems with this happiness script when they encounter difficulties with their students and face the prospects of their and/or their students' shortcomings.

Anna, Diane, and Lily each mentioned aspects of their students and classes that were disappointing to them. In an interview at the beginning of the semester, Anna discussed her expectations about college-level teaching she had formed in contrast to her previous experience teaching high school and how these had changed in the pedagogy course and then as she taught her own classes. When she taught in a high school, she mentions that she had been ready to quit by October because she had anxiety issues, but she had managed to finish the year. Some of the problems she notes experiencing there were dealing with parents, lack of curricular freedom, and immature students. She had expected, in contrast, for college-level students to be "better writers, better thinkers, better students" than she experienced.²⁷ She identifies looking at student writing samples in the pedagogy course as a clear moment when these expectations began changing: "And so seeing some of the samples—I just thought that they would be better writers than they were and I realized that they were still after several years having some of the same issues."²⁸ Anna had viewed the identities of high school teacher and college faculty as operating differently, even though the happiness

26 The concept of student and/or teacher failure is understudied in our field. Jacob Babb and Steven J. Corbett's article "From Zero to Sixty: A Survey of College Writing Teachers' Grading Practices and the Affect of Failed Performance" helps to open this conversation by recounting the results of a survey of writing teachers and how they emotionally respond to student failure.

27 Lily. Personal interview. 26 Jan. 2017.

28 Lily. Personal interview. 26 Jan. 2017.

scripts for these positions are similar. While she expected her identity as a college faculty member operating and interacting with students to be different than her identity as a high school teacher, Anna is disappointed when these differences do not materialize as she had anticipated because her first-year writing students are not so different from her high school students.

The way student expectations overlapped with TAs' conceptions of themselves as faculty members and the happiness they did or didn't experience in these roles as a result also carries through Diane's reflections about what realistically she could be expected to do to support students and what students had to do themselves in order to succeed. Two weeks into the semester, she writes:

I think I must be under an afternoon curse: no class after noon will perform as anything other than zombies. Apathetic. Requiring supreme effort and sacrifice on my part: oh, wait. Not this semester. Because now I know it's not me, it's them. They don't eat, probably because they don't have the time, I realize, but still that's their choice not mine. They don't read, for the most part. They don't want to talk or move or think or. . . . But it's not me, it's them. Their choices, not mine.²⁹

Diane's frustration and unhappiness about her student's lack of engagement is evident in this passage. However, her struggle to figure out a healthy approach to this problem is also clear. Her description seems to imply the existence of a happiness script of an ideal teacher who has engaged, prepared students even as she is working to realize that she can only do so much to influence what students do. Her struggle, as with the other TAs, is to figure out how to rewrite the happiness script so that she can enjoy teaching even when students fail to reach her expectations.

For some TAs, the disconnect between their expectations and students' work causes them to reflect anxiety back on themselves and their ability to perform the happiness scripts they identify as part of being teachers. Anna particularly struggled to fit the teacher happiness script with her experiences teaching two especially difficult classes. During our initial interview, Anna mentions feeling "terrified" about teaching, explaining, "I want to give them the proper information. And also I don't want to waste their time. And it's, I think it's hard, well it is for me at least, to find a balance between what they need to know and just how much they need to know exactly."³⁰ Part of the problem here is TAs trying to put themselves into the shoes of first-year writing students when they themselves may not have had to take similar classes or when they may have taken them long ago. In the final interview,

29 Diane. "Reflection." 31 Jan. 2017. Practicum in Teaching First-Year Composition, student paper.

30 Anna. Personal interview. 27 Jan. 2017.

Anna comes back around to the anxiety she felt about teaching: “Mainly I wanted to make sure that I was teaching them everything that they needed to know and I was just worried I wasn’t doing that or I was teaching them something wrong or, I don’t know, I didn’t want to ruin them.”³¹ Her unhappiness springs from feeling as if she isn’t teaching students what they need to know, even though she took a semester-long pedagogy course prior to teaching. Such unhappiness seems to originate in Anna’s uneasiness with the embodiment of the teacher role. Because this role feels uncertain for her, she is especially conflicted about the happiness script she is supposed to follow, including what to teach.

Near the end of the semester, TAs often reached a point of recognition or resignation about what they could and could not do to help their students. This is their way of integrating students’ failure into their happiness scripts. Diane comes to terms with this dilemma: “I find, having been specific with my expectations . . . I no longer feel guilty about letting students feel the pain of not meeting my expectations. It is something of a breakthrough for me. This new-found lack of guilt gives me greater confidence that I can do this. For reals.”³² With the recognition that teachers cannot always keep their students on track, TAs are better able to articulate happiness outside of every student’s success. Anna similarly says in her final reflection, “I don’t understand these students, but at this point, I’ve done my job and it’s not my problem if they want to tank their own grade.”³³ In the rest of her reflection, Anna is careful to couch her conclusions with concern about her students, and it is clear that she is seeking to identify ways for her to move forward as a teacher who cares about her students without sacrificing her own emotional and personal wellbeing.

Examining TAs’ experiences through the lens of happiness theory helps us explore what it means at an emotional and affectual level to begin teaching first-year writing classes as TAs. While some of these reactions are positive, TAs’ negative reactions draw attention to the problems they face when the realities of teaching run against the happiness scripts about teaching they have internalized. These disconnects are often viewed by WPAs as problems that need to be addressed by aligning TAs with the teaching scripts in their programs. The conclusion offers a heuristic for considering how writing programs are taking into account and supporting the emotional needs of TAs. However, it also asks us to consider what it means to ask TAs to assimilate to our program’s scripts and what alternative responses may ultimately benefit more the TAs and writing programs they teach in.

31 Anna. Personal interview. 22 May 2017.

32 Diane. “Reflection.” 2 May 2017. Practicum in Teaching First-Year Composition, student paper.

33 Anna. “Reflection.” 5 May 2017. Practicum in Teaching First-Year Composition, student paper.

WPA INTERVENTIONS IN TA HAPPINESS SCRIPTS

Viewing TAs' experiences through the lens of happiness and unhappiness allows us to identify pivotal ways that TAs construct their identities as teachers largely based on existing happiness scripts for teachers that center around particular happy objects. Conflict most often arises for TAs when they experience resistance to or ambivalence about these happiness scripts or happy objects. WPAs and other professors do not always help due to our reticence to engage in open acknowledgment of the ways that we suffer from unhappiness about teaching, or due to our insistence that teaching is always good or happy even when it is not. I begin with a heuristic to help WPAs analyze how their writing programs are supporting the emotional needs of TAs. I then ask a larger question about our approach to TAs and their affective and emotional needs in our writing programs.

Below are questions that will help WPAs assess the affective and emotional needs of TAs in writing programs and consider ways to support these needs. These are based on the results of my own study, and it would be a useful starting point for WPAs to similarly talk with TAs in their programs about their experiences of happiness and unhappiness to determine contextually-appropriate questions and support systems.

- What material conditions do TAs operate within (number of classes taught, salary, provision of benefits, etc.) and how do these affect their emotional health?
- What explicit guidance are TAs given about achieving work-life balance and structuring their work lives? What models do they have about achieving and/or maintaining their emotional health while working as TAs and/or faculty members?
- How is teacher identity development supported across TAs' first several semesters of teaching at a particular institution? What opportunities are TAs provided to reflect on and/or speak with others about their teacher identity development?
- What mentorship opportunities are provided to TAs? How are mentors prepared to support TAs' affective and emotional needs? How does mentorship explicitly address TAs' affective and emotional needs?
- What opportunities for building community and support are TAs provided, especially as they learn more about writing studies?
- What types of consistent, formative feedback are given to TAs as they begin teaching? How often is this feedback provided and by whom?
- How does the writing program recognize and publicize the work that TAs do?

Underlying many of these questions is the theme of helping TAs negotiate the responsibilities in their personal and professional lives, a difficult balance in part exacerbated by often-tenuous working conditions. Diane, who suffered a serious illness in her first semester of teaching, was especially sensitive to her personal needs and how carefully those needed to be balanced with her teaching and graduate work. She explicitly links this to feeling unhappy: “You know, at that point you lose your perspective and you go from just being dissatisfied with your performance and realizing you could do better and you have to change some things to do better in the future. Then you lose perspective and you do, I became downright unhappy. Not just with that but with all the circumstances surrounding it.”³⁴ She points out the unhappiness she feels as she tries to juggle the many happiness scripts set out for her as a teacher, student, and person struggling with illness, or as she goes through what Pawlowski and Jacobson call in this collection “the work of reconciliation.” Several TAs mentioned the importance of having validation from their mentors that they are doing their work well. Their needs speak to the importance of all mentors in a writing program and graduate program, not just WPAs, viewing themselves as people who are helping TAs adjust to the pressures of being teachers and graduate students simultaneously through emotional support.

Because writing programs are the places in which these tensions can often reside, though, they are particularly important sites for providing explicit support for the affective and emotional needs of TAs. To develop attunement to emotional labor as a central concern in teaching and being a TA, we can ask TAs to read work such as Saur and Palmeri’s to initiate conversations about the emotions they are likely to face as they teach in our programs. Other types of support could include having TAs observe different faculty teach so that they identify different types of teacherly identities that can be successfully taken on and having them work through teaching scenarios before they are in the classroom to help them think through their emotional and affectual responses to particular situations and develop action plans; structuring robust mentoring opportunities so that TAs have multiple mentors in a program; and offering ongoing professional development opportunities that are attuned to emotional labor. At a more material level, WPAs also need to recognize the ways that financial constraints can relate to TAs’ happiness and unhappiness, working with graduate directors and others around campus to argue for adequate compensation for those graduate students who teach in our writing program.

Finally, perhaps more difficult but important work would be for WPAs to confront what it means for some of our TAs to not identify with the happy objects in writing studies that make our work so valuable to us. For years, scholarship about TAs has often spoken to their supposed resistance to writing studies as Brewer

34 Diane. Personal interview. 25 Jan. 2017.

points out. Instead of focusing on this resistance, I conclude by asking what would happen if writing programs put TAs' affective experiences at the center (or at least centered them more) of their work? A key part of these experiences often revolves around the identification of the field of English studies—and often more specifically, literature and/or creative writing—as a happy object for TAs, an entry point into their thinking about first-year writing courses. I am not arguing that writing programs must divest themselves of the knowledge built up by writing scholars about rhetoric and writing itself, teaching writing, etc. to appeal to TAs. Instead, I am arguing that we need to rethink the message we send to TAs when we communicate—explicitly or implicitly—that a happy object they identify strongly with and that drove them to graduate school must be abandoned and that another happy object (writing studies) must be taken up through particular scripts in order for them to be successful first-year writing teachers. This ignores the excellent work that so many of our TAs and colleagues who come from English fields outside of writing studies do in writing programs, and it denies TAs the importance of the field(s) with which they strongly identify and are pursuing. I don't have a clear answer to this question, but WPAs' work with TAs demands that we pay attention to their affectual and emotional experiences and, as a result, that we pay attention to what scripts we are asking them (and others) to follow in our programs, what the costs of asking them to follow these scripts are to them and to our programs, and whether those costs justify the lengths to which we try to enforce these scripts instead of allowing them to morph around those teaching in our programs.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

I am very grateful to the TAs who gave me some of their valuable time to speak about their experiences and to be so open about the emotions they experienced as they were teaching. This work would not be possible without them. Oink oink!

WORKS CITED

- Ahmed, Sara. *The Promise of Happiness*. Duke UP, 2010.
- . *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. Routledge, 2015.
- Babb, Jacob and Steven J. Corbett. "From Zero to Sixty: A Survey of College Writing Teachers' Grading Practices and the Affect of Failed Performance." *Composition Forum*, vol. 34, 2016, <http://compositionforum.com/issue/34/zero-sixty.php>.
- Brewer, Meaghan. *Conceptions of Literacy: Graduate Instructors and the Teaching of First-Year Composition*. Utah State UP, 2020.
- Caswell, Nicole I. "Dynamic Patterns: Emotional Episodes within Teachers' Response Practices." *The Journal of Writing Assessment*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2014, <http://>

- journalofwritingassessment.org/archives.php?issue=17.
- Chandler, Sally. "Fear, Teaching Composition, and Students' Discursive Choices: Re-Thinking Connections Between Emotions and College Student Writing." *Composition Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2007, pp. 53-70.
- Clough, Patricia Ticineto, editor. *The Affective Turn*. Duke UP, 2007.
- Dobrin, Sidney I., editor. *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2005.
- Dryer, Dylan B. "At a Mirror, Darkly: The Imagined Undergraduate Writers of Ten Novice Composition Instructors." *CCC*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2012, pp. 420-452.
- Duffelmeyer, Barb Blakely. "Not Just Showing Up to Class: New TAs, Critical Composition Pedagogy, and Multiliteracies." *WPA*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2005, pp. 31-56.
- Ebest, Sally Barr. *Changing the Way We Teach: Writing and Resistance in the Training of Teaching Assistants*. Southern Illinois UP, 2005.
- Estrem, Heidi and E. Shelley Reid. "What New Writing Teachers Talk About When They Talk About Teaching." *Pedagogy*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2012, pp. 449-480.
- . "Writing Pedagogy Education: Instructor Development in Composition Studies." *Exploring Composition Studies*, edited by Kelly Ritter and Paul Kei Matsuda, Utah State UP, 2012, pp. 223-240.
- Foehr, Regina Paxton. "Writing Through the Fear to Reframe Experiences and Discover Values." *Writing and Healing: Toward an Informed Practice*, edited by Charles M. Anderson and Marian M. MacCurdy, National Council of Teachers of English, 2000, pp. 336-354.
- Hardt, Michael. Foreword. *The Affective Turn* by Hardt, Duke UP, 2007, pp. ix-xiii.
- Hesse, Douglas. "Teachers as Students, Reflecting Resistance." *CCC*, vol. 44, no. 2, 1993, pp. 224-231.
- Jacobs, Dale and Laura R. Micciche, editors. *A Way to Move: Rhetorics of Emotion & Composition Studies*. Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2003.
- Johnson, J. Paul and Ethan Krase. "Affect, Experience, and Accomplishment: A Case Study of Two Writers, From First-Year Composition to Writing in the Disciplines." *Journal of Teaching Writing*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2012, pp. 1-26.
- Latterell, Catherine G. "Training the Workforce: An Overview of GTA Education Curricula." *WPA*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1996, pp. 7-23.
- Massumi, Brian. "The Autonomy of Affect." *Cultural Critique*, vol. 31, 1995, pp. 83-109.
- McKinney, Jackie Grutsch and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. "Inventing a Teacherly Self: Positioning Journals in the TA Seminar." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 27, no. 1-2, 2003, pp. 59-74.
- Micciche, Laura. *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching*. Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2007.
- . "Staying with Emotion." *Composition Forum*, vol. 34, 2016, <http://compositionforum.com/issue/34/>.
- Pytlík, Betty P. and Sarah Liggett, editors. *Preparing College Teachers of Writing: Histories, Theories, Programs, Practices*. Oxford UP, 2002.
- Quandahl, Ellen. "A Feeling for Aristotle: Emotion in the Sphere of Ethics." *A Way to Move*, edited by Dale Jacobs and Laura Micciche. Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2003, pp. 11-22.

- Rankin, Elizabeth. *Seeing Yourself as a Teacher: Conversations with Five New Teachers in a University Writing Program*. National Council of Teachers of English, 1994.
- Reid, E. Shelley. "Uncoverage in Composition Pedagogy." *Composition Studies* vol. 32, no.1, 2004, pp. 15-34.
- . "Teaching Writing Teachers Writing: Difficulty, Explorations, and Critical Reflection." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 61, no.2, 2009, pp. W197-W221.
- Restaino, Jessica. *First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground*. Southern Illinois UP, 2012.
- Rice, Jenny. "The New 'New': Making a Case for Critical Affect Studies." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* vol. 94, no. 2, 2008, pp. 200-212.
- Saldaña, Johnny. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. 3rd edition. Sage, 2016.
- Saur, Elizabeth and Jason Palmeri. "Letter to a New TA: Affect Addendum." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp. 146-153.
- Schlachte, Carl. "Shelter in Place: Contingency and Affect in Graduate Teacher Training Courses." *The Things We Carry: Strategies for Recognizing and Negotiating Emotional Labor in Writing Program Administration*, edited by Courtney Adams Wooten et al., Utah State UP, 2020, pp. 145-160.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky and Adam Frank. "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1995, pp. 496-522.
- Smagorinsky, Peter, Amy Alexandra Wilson, and Cynthia Moore. "Teaching Grammar and Writing: A Beginning Teacher's Dilemma." *English Education*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2011, pp. 262-292.
- Stancliff, Michael and Maureen Daly Goggin. "What's Theorizing Got to Do with It? Teaching Theory as Resourceful Conflict and Reflection in TA Preparation." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2007, pp. 11-28.
- Taggart, Amy Ruper and Margaret Lowry. "Cohorts, Grading, and Ethos: Listening to TAs Enhances Teacher Preparation." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2011, pp. 89-114.
- Vogel, Elizabeth. "'Outlaw Emotions' and the Other: Examining the Political Role and Potential of Emotions in the College Writing Classroom." *Journal of Teaching Writing*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2009, pp. 199-222.
- Welch, Nancy. "Resisting the Faith: Conversion, Resistance, and the Training of Teachers." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 55, no. 4, 1993, pp. 387-401.
- Winans, Amy E. "Approaches to Engaging Difference." *College English*, vol. 75, no. 2, 2012, pp. 150-170.
- Wooten, Courtney Adams, et al., editors. *The Things We Carry: Strategies for Recognizing and Negotiating Emotional Labor In Writing Program Administration*. Utah State UP, 2020.
- Worsham, Lynn. "Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion." *Journal of Advanced Composition*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1998, pp. 213-245.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake, et al. *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*. Utah State UP, 2012.

NARRATIVE 11.

WORTH

Sarah Lonelodge

Eastern New Mexico University

I am in my final semester of a Ph.D. program in rhetoric and writing studies. I am a continuing assistant director (AD) in the first-year composition program, a TA teaching an upper-level professional writing course for the first time, and I am finalizing my dissertation. I am waiting on feedback from my committee, scheduling defenses, grading my students' work, planning new lessons that I must deliver through Zoom, and mentoring fellow graduate students. I am developing workshop ideas, working with colleagues across campus to develop new writing courses, and connecting with community organizations that will work with my students this semester. I am sending out papers and writing new ones because I need more publications, and I'm working on conference proposals because I need more for my CV. My son is a second-year university student trying to learn online at home, which sometimes feels like I am in constant office hours. My parents and sisters don't understand what I do. My husband is the only person holding everything together, and I have to rely on him more than is fair. It's a lot.

But that is only my usual workload and situation. I am also graduating this semester. I won't be able to work over the summer since my TAship will end, so I have to figure out how to save money for those months or locate a temporary job. I am also filling out applications for full-time positions that start in the fall. I need to submit as many as possible since the market is limited due to the ongoing global pandemic. I need to revise my CV, write a new cover letter, request recommendations and/or actual letters, write a diversity statement, provide a sample syllabus. I need to help my son enroll. I need to convince my parents to cancel family gatherings so no one gets sick. I need to grade. I still need to revise my dissertation.

I wish the application process were simpler. I wish I didn't have to create an account with each university in order to upload documents and that I didn't have to fill out an application that asks me for information that is already on my CV. How many hours am I wasting on jobs I won't get? I wish the pandemic were finished and that I could see people in person. I wish I got paid a living wage and that there was a smoother transition from Ph.D. programs to "real" jobs. I wish I knew whether all this work and sacrifice will actually be worth it.

CHAPTER 12.

ANTI-COLONIALIST LISTENING AS WRITING PEDAGOGY

Melba Vélez Ortiz

Grand Valley State University

In my current role as a full professor of communications at a liberal arts university in the Midwest, I regularly teach our major's thesis course and various courses with an emphasis on written communication. I also assist graduate students with papers, publications, and final projects. In this sense, teaching and evaluating writing is at the center of my job as a communications faculty member. My journey to becoming successful at teaching writing began over two decades ago with my TAship in rhetoric and composition. I remember the day when I got the call that I got a job at my university's writing center as a tutor. At the time, I had just begun graduate studies in communication and brought in some experience as a TA, but it was still hard for me to believe that I, a native Spanish speaker, would get to tell native speakers how to write in their own tongue. It is worth noting that my first reaction to being hired as a rhetoric and composition TA came from my identity as a colonized subject of the US. Of course, excellent tutoring does not require or encourage that the tutor tell native speakers how to use their tongue, but what I wish to draw attention to is how my initial reaction was unique to my own sense of place and the material, historical realities of that place. As a Puerto Rican, being hired to assist with English-language instruction also produced the kind of quiet vindication members from underrepresented communities in the USA feel when we experience that bit of the rare and elusive ability to be trusted with power.

Don't get me wrong, I did not feel I was being coronated or accepted into white society vis-à-vis the white academy, far from it; I felt I had even more to prove since my duties as a TA required that I interact with clients who would otherwise never look at a tiny brown woman with a pronounced Spanish accent as any kind of authority on the English language (something I also learned is not required to be an effective writing tutor). These were the first identity negotiations I remember making as I began my journey as a rhetoric and composition TA as I attempted to reconcile my dual identity as a colonized subject and a gatekeeper of sorts of the language of the colonizer. I guess one could say that resistance to assimilation is in my DNA. I come from an island whose members are notorious for being most resistant to US assimilation. What place is this? How

did this cultural value impact my identity as a writing TA? What commitments and values had to be negotiated in order for me to succeed as a writing tutor and later as a professor? Did becoming a tutor turn me into a gringo by fiat? In order to answer these questions, I need to tell you a little bit about myself.

I was born and raised in Puerto Rico, the US' (and some say the world's)¹ oldest colony. Our territory was ceded to the US by Spain during the Spanish-American war in 1898 and we have been under U.S.² control ever since then. In 1917 all Puerto Ricans were granted US citizenship under the Jones-Shafroth Act. "Why?" one might ask. Why would it be necessary for the USA to import soldiers in order to fight WWI? The literature tells us it was because this happened at a time when the US population was under an ethos of isolationism and non-interventionism; thus, there were too few men enlisting to fight in the first world war. As one team of scholars put it:

The main reason why the US granted citizenship to Puerto Ricans in 1917 was the strategic imperative that the United States was faced with in the coming world war. They hold that U.S. military planners and civilian policymakers sought to secure this Caribbean strategic outpost by granting citizenship to its dissatisfied inhabitants, thus inducing a sense of loyalty among Puerto Ricans that would curtail the independence fervor³ growing at the time and also ease the conscription of young men into the military⁴ forces. (Venator-Santiago and Melendez 31)

1 One such scholar is former Chief Supreme Court Justice of Puerto Rico, José Trías Monge's 1997 book *Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World*. Yale UP. EBSCOhost, <https://ezproxy.shsu.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000x-na&AN=52950&site=eds-live&scope=site>. Accessed 30 June 2021.

2 A note on the use of the "U.S. or USA as opposed to America. Throughout this essay I deliberately abstain from using the term *America* or *American*. This is done in solidarity with those who feel that the use of such terms erases the existence of three separate continents: North America, Central America, and South America. In Spanish the term *Estadounidense* (roughly translates into *Unitedstatesian*) is used to designate the people of the United States and *Estados Unidos* refers to the country as a whole. For a discussion of the history and politics of using the term see Vero Edilio Rodríguez-Orrero and Jorge Luis Padrón-Acosta, "El Cable Telegráfico Submarino y Sus Nexos Con La Sociedad Regional Cienfueguera (1870-1898); The Submarine Telegraph Cable and Its Links with the Regional Society of Cienfuegos (1870-1898)." *Santiago*, no. 148, Feb. 2019.

3 For a detailed historical tracing of the Puerto Rican struggle for independence see Trías Monge, José, *Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World*, Yale University Press. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=cat08323a&AN=gvsu.b1299116&site=eds-live&scope=site. Accessed 30 June 2021.

4 For a superb analysis of the historical role Puerto Ricans have played in the US military see: Avilés Santiago, Manuel Gerardo. *Puerto Rican Soldiers and Second-Class Citizenship: Representations in Media*. 1st ed., Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

In other words, the political relationship between Puerto Rico and the US was not borne out of mutual aid or partnership but by crude conquest. Puerto Ricans did not opt to build a relationship with the USA but instead were captured by a brutal and global empire. Another scholar confirms the lack of enlistment by U.S. residents at the time Puerto Ricans were granted citizenship: “The National Defense Act of 1916 allowed the regular army to expand to 175,000 and asserted the principle of military service for able-bodied males from eighteen to forty-five and empowered the president to draft militia units if sufficient volunteers did not appear” (432). Perri goes on to note how a few months later the drafting of militias became necessary. He says: “A draft of individuals was adopted in May 1917” (Perri 432). Please keep in mind the events described in the previous quotes happened a short eight weeks after the Jones-Shafroth Act was signed into law. Thus, rather than a historical coincidence many scholars are unambiguous in their conclusions:

The purpose here is to advance an understanding of why Congress in 1917 declared Puerto Ricans to be U.S. citizens. We do so by referring to the relevant scholarship on the 1917 Jones-Shafroth Act (“Jones Act” hereafter), reviewing official documents, and consulting the personal records of several of the principals. We argue that the dominant reason why the U.S. Congress and the Wilson administration granted U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans in early 1917 was the looming engagement by the United States in the First World War—then the “Great War” or the “World War,” of course—thereby forcing the U.S. government to act. German torpedoes sank the *Lusitania* in May 1915, with the loss of 114 American lives; Congress in June and July 1915 authorized a large expansion of the army, increased the construction of warships, and began to mobilize industry and the American people. (Sparrow and Lamm 285)

In explaining the complicated political and cultural relationship between the US and Puerto Rico, I have been careful to provide as much textual evidence as possible to support the claim that the granting of citizenship to Puerto Ricans was not motivated by charitable or moral reasons. Thus, the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the US started and has evolved based on the oppression and marginalization of the will and autonomy of the Puerto Rican people. Furthermore, Venator-Santiago & Melendez (cited above) reference a certain dissatisfaction felt by Puerto Ricans toward the USA and it behooves this discussion to offer a clearer picture of what is meant by this. Legal scholar

Johnny Smith describes the magnitude and depth of said dissatisfaction when he explains that “By the end of Spanish rule, Puerto Rico was suffering from severe conditions of poverty, malnutrition, and unemployment” (173). In other words, the Wilson administration actively preyed on desperate, economically-deprived people. In sum, the starving Puerto Rican populace was forced to take jobs in the U.S. military in order to survive and feed their families, and not out of a sense of loyalty or identification as the authors of the Jones Act purported at time.

Since then, Puerto Ricans have struggled over the centuries with an ambiguous political and cultural status that most recently exploded back into the mainstream due to the devastation left behind by Hurricane Maria. Faced with a rare barrage of news coverage on Puerto Rico during the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, many wondered: “What exactly is the relationship between the US and Puerto Rico? Are they a state? What responsibility, if any, does the American government and public owe these people?”

Few of us think about the historical baggage that non-native English speaking (NNES) tutors and teachers bring and will continue to bring into writing courses, but it is undeniable that the wounds and scars of history will be taking a seat across from tutees along with NNES tutors and TAs in inclusive writing centers and classrooms across the country. Describing his own marginalized upbringing as a Mexican-American along the Texas-Mexico border, writing scholar Romeo Garcia describes how “I was situated within a historical space and connected to historical bodies” (Garcia 30). It is in this respect that global histories of conflict, late-stage capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism are vital, though overlooked, facets of the project of inclusiveness in rhetoric and composition and many other pedagogies. As a Puerto Rican writing TA, I showed up to work every day within a historical space of generational trauma and connected to historical bodies that have endured colonization, as well. The fact that those historical bodies were invisible to others in my tutoring sessions, students, or my supervisors did not mitigate their significance and weight nor limit the barrage of questions around personal and pedagogical identity that reconciling those histories requires.

In my case, the oppression and exploitation to which Puerto Ricans have been subjected since and before the Spanish-American war were a constant presence in my development as an academic, as a writing TA, and now as a professor. The reasons why Puerto Rico has remained a colony of the US are too numerous and nuanced to detail here; however, this issue of citizenship has played a big role in our historical rejection of cultural assimilation. Culturally, Puerto Ricans are very attached to the mainland (meaning Puerto Rico, not the US) and, when this is combined with the ability to travel unimpeded by visa requirements back and forth from the mainland, a recipe for recalcitrance emerges.

Around 5.8 million people living across the country in 2018 identified as Puerto Rican (Cotto and Chen) and, while each individual's experience is unique to their circumstances and not generalizable in scientific terms, I believe there is value in sharing those experiences as they help us get an admittedly limited but useful window into how various minority groups navigate their cultural, and academic identities⁵ in our institutions of higher education,⁶ In order to further contextualize my experience as a Puerto Rican subject in a rhetoric and composition TAs hip, I will now draw from the current literature on NNES teaching and tutoring, particularly as it relates to the teaching of academic writing, and will apply the anti-colonial framework of Romeo Garcia in order to draw parallels between my individual experience as an NNES writing teacher, a Puerto Rican subject, and a colonized subject more generally.

It bears mentioning that the excellent conceptual and theoretical framework Garcia has created was not designed to account for or respond to the experiences of Puerto Ricans as writing TAs or in the academy in general. On the contrary, Garcia is meticulous in situating his experience in a very particular "traceable history and palimpsest of identity" of "The Mexican" as it has operated in the Lower Rio Grand Valley (LRGV) region of the US. Garcia writes about a unique set of experiences that, by definition, would not apply to the myriad of Latinx identities coexisting in the US and around the world. Thus, I make no claim that Garcia's groundbreaking work describes the experiences of all *Latinidades*. Instead, I believe his non-dualistic, anti-colonialist, listening-centered, mobile-oriented framework "that re-imagines the common local and global distinction as a dialectical relationship" (45) is a useful and actionable anti-colonialist listening practice that can and does serve to empower other Latinx identities and modalities. Notwithstanding, Garcia works meticulously to deconstruct, reconstruct, and respond to the specific needs of border subjects, while simultaneously offering a useful and valuable ethical and pedagogical tool other *Latinidades* can benefit from. Like the work of countless other theorists, Garcia's Mobile-Decolonial framework can be adapted or expanded to explain emerging and existing issues the framework was not initially built to explain.

In sum, while Garcia's work is situated in specific historical contexts and materialities, addresses a specific form of colonization, and highlights a particular

5 For a thorough discussion of Puerto Rican identity as it is shaped by its history see: Soto-Crespo, Ramón E. *Mainland Passage: The Cultural Anomaly of Puerto Rico*. University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

6 Perhaps the reader has noticed by now that when I, as the author of this piece, reference the US, I alternate between the use of "our" and "their" pronouns. As an author, I was prepared to make the necessary edits to correct this inconsistency. However, I made a choice to leave them in the final manuscript as they illustrate uncannily, in my opinion, the ambivalence of identity—or Stockholm syndrome, I really don't know—that many Puerto Ricans feel in relation to the colonial power.

history of oppression, I believe many of his insights are well suited to help explain the experiences of other Latinx groups (as writing scholars and teachers), because of its unflinching resistance against coloniality and its “mobile-graphical” dimensions in which colonial subjects are presumed to “continue to make and re-make place and geography” (45).

Above all, the present analysis benefits most from Garcia’s endorsement of practices of listening to be incorporated into writing pedagogy. Beyond, what Garcia denounces as a black/white paradigm to which many histories and experiences of *Latinidades* simply do not fit, Garcia’s approach presents an alternative, non-dualistic framework that remains mindful of the multiplicity of histories of oppression in contemporary society. Ultimately, Garcia’s approach prescribes “rhetorical listening” (50), “transformational listening” (36), or just “listening” (50) as a vital tool in the struggle against colonialism. Extending Garcia’s Mobile-Decolonial framework then, the present analysis proposes the concept of “anti-colonialist listening” to describe various practices of listening that are liberatory in focus and embracing of pluriversality. Thus, anti-colonialist listening practice includes rhetorical and transformative types of listening but is not limited to them or their specific techniques.

Having offered needed caveats and reasons for selecting Garcia’s Mobile-Decolonial to explain my own development and evolving commitment to anti-colonialist listening practice, I’d like to turn my analysis to how the four specific listening behaviors prescribed by Garcia’s Mobile-Decolonial framework have impacted my own pedagogy as an NNES teacher. The four listening behaviors are as follows and will be discussed henceforth in this order: (1) mindfulness of difference; (2) being a decolonial agent; (3) becoming a theorist of race and racism; and (4) reflection and reflexivity.

MINDFULNESS OF DIFFERENCE IN GARCIA’S MOBILE-DECOLONIAL FRAMEWORK

Throughout this discussion I have taken care to elucidate some aspects that are critical to what *Latinidad* Puerto Ricans have experienced historically in relation to the US. When Garcia postulates “mindfulness of difference” as a key dimension of a Mobile-Decolonial interpretative framework and its corresponding listening practice, he is partly addressing the significant cultural and historical differences in place and bodies between and amongst *Latinidades* and other ethnicities globally. In discussing what mindfulness of difference meant to me as a rhetoric and composition TA and how it impacts my writing pedagogy today, I am quick to remember the internal struggle I felt trying to reconcile my culturally-bred anti-assimilationist stance and my role as a writing TA in the US. That

Puerto Ricans have a distinctive and recalcitrant view toward cultural assimilation is something to which many scholars have attested. For instance, one study found that

Upwardly mobile Puerto Ricans do not endeavor to leave their enclave and settle within other non-Hispanic neighborhoods. Rather, a strong ethnic identity creates a powerful affective attachment to the group so that high-status Puerto Ricans choose to remain residentially segregated in their own areas. (Massey and Bitterman 307)

The quote above addresses some of the factors social scientists have discovered motivate the historical spatial segregation of Puerto Ricans in the US, but what of social factors? Luciano and Viera-Haslio found in a 2019 study that there is also a racial component that while not exclusive to Puerto Ricans is of increased significance to Puerto Ricans due to our strong African lineage:

The reason for this refusal to assimilate may be attributed to the fact that the darker complected Puerto Ricans did not feel welcomed and often felt alienated from the white majority culture. (Luciano and Halsio-Viera 28)

Perhaps the most significant factor that has played a role in the refusal of Puerto Ricans to assimilate is, perhaps with some irony, their permanent American citizenship. The reason for this is that U.S. citizenship offers us (Puerto Ricans) the ability to travel back and forth to the island anytime. This means that, on the island, we are free to speak our native tongue, eat our authentic food, celebrate important occasions and holidays, and spend time with relatives and loved ones. This is a luxury that few other, if any, Hispanic U.S. minority groups enjoy in the US and one that has historically caused a great deal of tension between Puerto Ricans and other minority Hispanic groups (Fernandez 2). In sum, for a multiplicity of reasons, these and other studies have shown that assimilation is not a typical concern of the average Puerto Rican.

Understanding the historical places and experiences of the bodies of Puerto Ricans who have suffered under U.S. occupation is an important component of the “mindfulness of difference” that Garcia advocates. For it is morally and factually insufficient to ignore the tremendous differences in histories and cultures of different Latinx cultures living in the US. Thus, to counteract such inaccurate and oppressive discursive practice, Garcia invites the reader to eschew the black-and-white dichotomies of old and instead engage in a listening practice that is interested in acknowledging and celebrating difference, whether this is historical, political, economic, or any other lens.

Working as a writing TA I honed my listening skills to identify differences in values and perspectives. You see, I was so preoccupied with holding on to my own historical identity that it became an extension of my work ethic to resist the easy path of connecting to tutees and tutee writing through perceived similarities and instead choosing to relate to them, paying attention to, highlighting, and celebrating their different styles and views. Today, as a professor, I still engage this type of anti-colonial listening in the way I am vigilant to not indoctrinate or “build” my students but rather I keep myself attentive to perceived differences, acknowledge them outwardly, and demonstrate appreciation for them.

NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH TEACHERS AS DECOLONIAL AGENTS

Perhaps most intuitively, the first issue that might come to mind when discussing Puerto Rican’s vexed relationship with U.S. colonial power is our deep connection not only to the Spanish language but also to the particular dialect spoken inside and outside of the island. This is, of course, true of many different groups, including those in the umbrella designation of Latinx. Frances Aparicio defines this concept as “The plural term ‘Latinidades’ has been preferred by many scholars to refer to the shared experiences of subordination, resistance, and agency of the various national groups of Latin Americans in the United States (Latinidad/es). Aparicio is also sure to note that the term is not a static category but one that continues to evolve and morph as scholars continue to search for helpful and faithful ways to analyze and share our experiences. She says, “The term ‘Latinidades,’ in this regard, has been open to transformations and rewritings. It has been consistently modified by additional labels of identity that anchor it in a particular subgroup within the U.S. Latina/o sector” (or Larinidad/es).

As mentioned earlier, due to our permanent status as residents, Puerto Ricans are particularly attached to their dialect and, in this regard, I am no different. Therefore, part of my initiation as a writing tutor involved negotiating my advocacy and passion for my native dialect versus becoming an arm of the academy which has been complicit in U.S. imperialism all over the world. Would becoming a teacher of English run contrary to my commitment to keeping the patrimony that was given to me as a Puerto Rican? Was I betraying our struggle? Would my Spanish use decrease in my new role as a tutor? Will English, with all of its implicit values and priorities, then spill over into other areas of my life? In becoming a decolonial agent, teachers of writing and especially NNEST must wrestle with their own dispositions and biases as they pertain to their own vernacular and political and economic histories. Rather than a fleeting issue in the pursuit of decolonizing writing pedagogy, this is an issue that is sure to become

ever more prevalent across the board amongst students, TAs, and writing center administrators, as writing centers and classrooms continue to diversify in the US.

The current literature supports the trend that the academy is continuing to diversify on many different fronts including writing instruction. In fact, one team of scholars found that it is an undeniable fact that “the number of non-native English-speaking teachers is steadily increasing all over the world” (Daftari and Tavil 379). And yet: “Although there has been some work focusing on international TAs teaching across the curriculum, research specifically focused on non-native English-speaking instructors of writing, whether part- or full-time instructors or TAs, remains scarce” (Ruecker et al. 613). Puerto Ricans are of course but one small segment of new and future generations of writing TAs who are slowly transforming college writing centers and classrooms across the US. However, Puerto Ricans provide an interesting and multi-layered case study of the complex identity negotiations that move into writing pedagogies as more NNES tutors and teachers become normalized in the 21st century and beyond.

Through that first rhetoric and composition TAship I not only struggled to reconcile the colonized places and bodies of Puerto Rican history with my role as a TA but dealt with the range of issues writing scholars have noted as affecting NNESs most. For example, I struggled with language insecurity as a result of my pronounced Spanish accent and ESL experience. Daftari and Tavil explore the relationship between non-native English-speaking teachers’ linguistic insecurity and their experience of teaching (395). Linguistic insecurity is described as a set of behaviors where “teachers shy away from using language freely and asking questions and resort to rehearsed utterances and simple closed-ended questions, which do not encourage interaction, debates, or student participation” (Drljača and Vodopija-Krstanović 32).

Another scholar highlights the anxiety associated with linguistic insecurity and makes an explicit connection to NNESs’ confidence in their ability to instruct: “The anxiety or lack of confidence experienced by speakers and writers, who believe that their use of language does not conform to the principles and practices of standard language, is called linguistic insecurity” (Daftari and Tavil 380).

As a TA, I was paradigmatic of this pedagogical error in my early days of teaching. I remember typing my lectures from start to finish and more or less reading them to the students. I was afraid of being challenged and made to feel illegitimate in my role as a teacher because of my ESL background and identity as a colonized subject. Thankfully, my work as a tutor did not allow long for such rehearsed performances. As an NNES tutor, a one-on-one meeting with a student client takes on a more conversational, spontaneous character which challenges the NNES tutor to be more vulnerable and also much more effective as an instructor. I would also argue that the one-on-one interactions with tutees

lend themselves more to the questioning of stereotypes and biases as these individual interactions allow for more unstructured dialogue that can more easily breakthrough biases and prejudices than the typical classroom environment. In all of the aforementioned ways, my form of writing pedagogy was uniquely informed by the process of overcoming my limited view of myself and confronting my anxieties as a TA head-on. One might say that the listening behaviors I have developed over the years took on their “anti-colonialist” character early on as a result of having to face my own insecurities and prejudices regarding how I viewed myself in relation to others and to the colonizing culture.

Another challenge that NNES teachers and instructors face is that of the Native Speaker (NS) myth. This evaporating myth captured the popular but erroneous impression that NS are naturally better instructors of a language. This myth conveniently overlooks other important factors that influence teaching effectiveness such as training, listening skills, and even relatability. Furthermore, scholars have linked the prejudices of the NS myth to the negotiation of professional identities of NNES tutors and teachers and regret the lack of more research in this area. As one scholar laments: “The process of challenging the NS myth and negotiating a professional identity as a legitimate, qualified, and confident ESL teacher, though complex, is largely understudied” (Reis, “Non-Native English Speakers” 139).

In short, while insights into the challenges faced by NNES teachers and tutors remain scarce, theoretical contributions such as the Native Speaker myth and issues around language insecurity have provided useful insights into the general issues faced by NNES teachers in the context of the contemporary academy. Thus, as universities and other institutions of higher education continue to diversify, more research should be forthcoming regarding the specific issues faced by NSSE writing instructors tutors. As another scholar protests: “While the experiences of NNES teachers has been thoroughly explored in other fields, especially TESOL, we have noticed a dearth of research in writing studies on this population of instructors that continues to grow as the US population and the field of writing studies itself diversifies” (Ruecker et al. 613).

Having identified language insecurity and the NS myth as challenges the literature in writing and composition studies continues to address, it is necessary to further complicate this picture to get at the particular identity negotiations and challenges I faced as a writing tutor in my particular modality of *Latinidad*. Garcia’s Mobile-Decolonial framework is of special relevance and value. Garcia offers a unique and innovative anti-colonial framework that promotes communicative virtues such as listening. Garcia takes the writing center as a site of identity negotiation, solidarity, and social justice. He writes, “Writing centers function within a tapestry of social structures, reproducing and generating systems

of privilege” (Garcia 33). It is with this theoretical foundation that Garcia builds an approach to decolonizing these centers in the service of the sort of mindful practice and politics that engages and promotes pluriversality. He explains

To be mindful of difference is to: call attention to the structural practices which re-create realities of dwelling; engage in social justice goals by retraining the mind that works to understand capaciously how race and power influence all; and participate in a different logic that invests in a pluriversal understanding of differences. (Garcia 48)

In the pursuit of this paradigm, Garcia sees tutors as agents of change. In his view, “tutors need to become decolonial agents. This ‘work’ will look and be different from tutor to tutor” (Garcia 49). He continues: “To be a decolonial agent is to be ethically and socially committed to social justice for all. It is having those critical conversations that question even the well-intended progressive and leftist practices” (Garcia 49).

As a Puerto Rican, a historically colonized people, it was and is important for me to utilize my work and academic success in a way that advances self-determination and dialogic engagement, something my people have not been afforded, least of all from the U.S. colonial power. Engaging in decolonization at the interpersonal and professional level can take on many forms, but Cortez and Garcia summarize it this way:

At the core of the decolonial edifice is an oppositional rhetorical structure that postulates a mixed (mestizo) subject position from which to impurify what scholars have identified as writing studies’ tendency to universalize knowledge in a way that frames the writing traditions of its Others as inconsequential to the constitution of the putative “West.” (568)

My development as a writing TA began with the fear that I, too, had become a tool of hegemonization on behalf of the empire. In those initial days the thought that my contribution to the writing center could be one of solidarity and shared struggle versus one of “switching sides” took time and rumination to achieve. It took excellent mentorship and experience to arrive at a place where I could understand my role as a tutor as a venue for social justice. In the process of arriving at that place where I could understand my role as a decolonizer I had to understand my position as an other who interacted with my tutees in a non-hierarchical, mindful manner. Cortez and Garcia emphasize the possibility of carrying out decolonizing work while occupying any number of positions regardless of location:

Modernity/coloniality justifies itself in a hierarchical relation to its Other through a geopolitically situated field of knowledge that claims itself as its origin. And while there are some important differences obtaining among various decolonial projects, they nonetheless share grounding in a specific postulation regarding the politics of location—specifically, in the “colonial difference” thesis, which is predicated on an ontological conceptualization of the politics of location. (574)

In short, in my trajectory as an NNES writing tutor, I dealt with the myth of the native speaker phenomena as well as with issues of language insecurity. Furthermore, my own cultural resistance to assimilation motivated me to use my own experience as a member of an oppressed group to negotiate ways for me to carry out the work of decolonization and social justice from my location as a writing tutor.

NNEST RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION TA'S AS THEORISTS OF RACE AND RACISM

“The “NNEST lens,” as it has been called, is “a lens of multilingualism, multi-nationalism, and multiculturalism” that “takes diversity as a starting point” (Reis, “I’m Not Alone” 48). When contemplating the Mobile-Decolonial writing pedagogies, it is necessary to envision an anti-colonialist listening ethic and practice that embraces multilingualism as a fact of our contemporary and interconnected society. “In other words, we can value all dialects and languages equally and then trust students to think about their grammar and language rhetorically, as a matter of choice given a particular situation and audience rather than as mere correctness” (Pittcock 93).

This, though only one approach, is in my opinion a useful tool to combat racism and white supremacy as all vernaculars are assumed to be of equal interest and value regardless of the specific style that is being studied in a tutoring session or a classroom. Hence, attending to issues affecting specifically NNES teachers, the field of writing studies has also produced research exploring new pedagogies that can advance the decolonizing imperatives of inclusion and diversity. Writing studies scholar Sarah Pittcock Peterson traces the evolution of this paradigm as it relates to writing center pedagogy specifically:

Writing center pedagogy thus made a number of important conceptual shifts. Writing was no longer a discrete skill but rather a way of knowing and being that requires students to develop a meta-language that helps them think about writing as

something complex and beyond grammar; disciplines were no longer closed, static domains that require privileged knowledge but rather dynamic communities of practice. The space of the writing center itself became dedicated to developing diverse linguistic, racial, cultural, and social competencies. Students in these more progressive models were no longer deficient, dependent, or flawed but rather capable of making choices and partnering in meaning-making. (Pittock Peterson 93-94)

In the language of Garcia, one might also think of these changes as “mobile” or “in flux,” always in the process of becoming phenomenologically speaking and moving tangibly in the direction of decoloniality. This turn also signals a shift in the epistemologies of writing. However, the literature shows that these efforts are most effective when carried out through different venues at the institutional level as opposed to depending on their success or failure only through the decolonizing work undertaken by writing TAs and centers. On the contrary, the literature shows that in order to better advance a politic of multilingualism and diversity it is critical to engage the university as a whole. From curricula built into many different disciplines, to inclusive hiring, to other initiatives, scholars insist that it is crucial for the contemporary university to embed this politic into many different academic homes simultaneously. Speaking to this challenge, one scholar offers this plea, “It is important to collaborate with programs and offices across campus that promote diversity awareness, thinking about possibilities to include a focus on language diversity and English as a global language in student orientation programs and in other curricula across campus” (Ruecker et al. 635).

While much has been written on the topic of race and racism, Garcia’s Mobile-Decolonial framework puts pressure on the academy and the university as a whole to conduct the work of anti-racism. However, while acknowledging the fact that the struggle against racism is not dependent on isolated individuals, it is important to recognize that TAs and professors can and should see themselves as students of the social dimensions of race, including those perversions that can call out institutional and structural racism. In becoming a theorist of race and racism, I’ve drawn from my personal and collective experiences of racism to take an interest, engage, theorize, and practice “anti-racism” in my pedagogy and scholarship.

REFLECTION AND REFLEXIVITY AND NNES TAs

As a Puerto Rican woman, I came to my work as a writing TA with mixed feelings. On the one hand, a severe language barrier made me a cultural and linguistic outsider. On the other hand, my appointment as a writing TA seemed to

signal some kind of social ascension into institutional whiteness. Furthermore, because of my country of origin's colonized status, I came in with mistrust and an adversarial relationship with U.S. imperialism and, by proxy, the English language as the language of our colonizers. The idea that I was being trusted to safeguard the language of the empire made me feel conflicted, to say the least. Was I now a traitor to my own people? Did I cross that line and join the enemy camp? This kind of reflection then and over the years has proven useful in informing my own anti-colonialist, listening-centered writing pedagogy.

Reflexivity played an important part in my development as a writing teacher as well. Starting with that first writing TAship, I examine and re-examine my own values, those of my people, my worth as a scholar, my identity as a colonized subject, and the list goes on. Having moved to the US as a teenager, I already felt a sense of betrayal against those left on the island, especially family and loved ones. In order to thrive as a writing TA, I had to come up with answers to these questions. As the number of NNES teachers and tutors continues to rise in the academy, scholars have looked into the ways in which complex identity negotiations play out in language instruction in various contexts. Preoccupation with teaching the language of empire, for instance, is reflected in some of the existing literature: "Teaching a colonial language, namely English, carries the traces of colonization no matter what the current status of that language is" (Cakcak 194). It is precisely sentiments like these that most benefited from the reflection and reflexivity I've practiced over the years just as Garcia suggests.

Other scholars have studied the differences in pedagogy and style between NS and NNES teachers pointing to the influence of cultural values (reflexivity) on pedagogy. One 2015 study found the kind of evidence that can easily be used to train and engage both NS and NNES in reflection on their practice: "The findings provide further evidence of the tendency for native English speakers to be more serious in indicating students' errors. Also, based on error corrections and written comments provided by teachers, it was found that NNESTs focused mostly on grammar, whereas NESTs focus both grammaticality and intelligibility in identifying errors" (Bal-Gezegin 768).

Such differences in style can have a lasting impact on the way NS and NNES teachers of languages are perceived by tutees and students of various cultural and academic backgrounds. And yet, "there remains a paucity of research exploring identities and challenges of non-native English-speaking writing center tutors" (Okuda 13). In spite of an acknowledged dearth of scholarship on these specific issues, there are encouraging findings for those invested in the goal of truly inclusive, decolonizing, and multilingual writing instruction. "Research so far suggests that although NNES tutors might be challenged by tutees in terms of their English proficiency in ESL writing centers, tutors might be able to take

on a more instructional role or demonstrate their strengths as bilingual writing tutors in EFL writing centers or in L1-medium tutorials” (Okuda 14).

Put a different way, whatever the residual effect of the Native-Speaker myth, a re-imagined inclusive, anti-colonialist writing pedagogy offers countless ways to practice decolonization, and NNES tutors have valuable and unique contributions to make to abolish coloniality. For example, “in a writing center tutorial with an NNES tutor, the tutor’s linguistic status as a non-native speaker could be one of the factors that impact the learner’s definition of the situation and something that is possibly assessed against their motives for improving writing through writing center tutorials” (Okuda 15). Okuda has observed that “it is necessary to ensure an inclusive environment where NNES tutors can be creative, flexible, and confident in employing a wide range of strategies to help writers with their writing” (22).

In his Mobile-Decolonizing framework, Garcia himself promotes the use of listening portfolios that can help writing instructors and tutors reflect and adjust their pedagogy, especially when it comes to monitoring their anti-colonialist listening practice. Specifically, he suggests the use of “Portfolios as a meditational and reflexive activity of decolonial action” (Garcia 50).

ON ANTI-COLONIALIST LISTENING AS WRITING PEDAGOGY

My work as a rhetoric and composition TA played a big role in the subsequent success I’ve had as a teacher in the academy. Honing my listening skills, learning how to connect one on one with students in a short amount of time, and learning how personal and political writing is for so many have served me consistently in the classroom over the years. I believe that even more than the limited experience I had as a TA prior to working in the writing center, it is my experience tutoring that guided my first confident steps toward a new identity as a writing teacher. It is likely that as a cultural outsider and NNES I also benefited greatly from having to interact with students one on one regularly rather than facing a classroom of 20 or more people who, to my newcomer eyes, it seemed more like a mob than partners in learning.

As an academic and as a teacher, my pedagogical DNA—if you’d like—began to take shape as a writing TA. Furthermore, as I made my way through the academic world first as an undergraduate and then as a graduate student, my own education further confronted me with choices that I felt came pre-loaded with moral commitments. Was I to identify as Hispanic? Latina? Puerto Rican? On that personal front, there was a battle occurring for my essence, and many of those choices felt imposed on me rather than true choices.

For the sake of this discussion, I will confess that both the terms Hispanic and Latina took some time to get used to. Since I was born and raised on the island, I initially identified as Puerto Rican. This was common sense to me. I was raised in Puerto Rico, and thus that is what I was. The term Hispanic was very confusing as it did not point to a country of origin, although I did check with friends and colleagues to figure out where Hispania was located (the Iberian Peninsula during Roman rule, it turns out). Today, having lived in the US for over 30 years, I identify as Latinx. I choose this designation in solidarity with the struggle for freedom from the oppression of all people of Latin-American descent. However, as I hope to have been able to convey, this was a choice that has taken me many years to come to and has been an additional site of identity negotiation in addition to my professional identity.

The negotiation of my professional identity as a writing TA came with its separate but connected set of issues. Take, for example, the designation of NNES that I have used throughout this essay has its critics. One contention charges the use of this designation is “the use of a negative particle to claim an identity, or better a ‘non-identity’” (Moussu and LLurda 337). I agree with this criticism, especially as the literature also shows that “Teachers’ self-perceptions about themselves tend to affect the ways they teach” (Lee 199). Thus, anti-colonialist writing pedagogies must be concerned with the potential exclusionary and colonial implications of designating a group as a “non” group while attempting to empower and amplify their voices.

Key to an effective response to this imperative is making use of what Garcia calls “transformational listening” (36) or “mindfulness of difference” (Garcia 33). Listening is at the heart of Garcia’s Mobile-Decolonialist framework. In many ways, Garcia postulates listening as the foundational, enabling, decolonizing virtue. He promotes the communicative skill of “listening—as a form of actional and decolonial work” (Garcia 33).

Moreover, Garcia situates the possibility of the embodiment of this communicative excellence in writing instruction. He says, “listening is functional and operational towards actional and decolonial work that can expand the role and work of writing centers” (Garcia 33).

Other scholars have suggested specific techniques that complement the Mobile-Decolonialist framework. Take this finding from a 2011 study: “it is critical for teacher educators to create mediational spaces that allow NNESTs to collaboratively challenge disempowering discourses and conceive of legitimizing professional identities, create a sense of individual and group agency, and support NNESTs as they commit to changes in both discourse and action” (Reis, “I’m Not Alone” 48).

Ultimately, writing pedagogy can de-gringo itself, in Garcia’s language, by acknowledging that “For NNESTs, to say that identities are negotiated within

power relations means that NNESTs' professional legitimacy is eroded to the extent that disempowering discourses remain unchallenged" (Reis, "'Non-Native English'" 155). This requires the kind of mindfulness at the administrative level that Garcia foments with his Mobile-Decolonizing framework. In promoting an ethic of de-gringoing writing instruction, he is invoking the term "gringo" as a way to deploy a number of colonialist tropes that span Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinx communities in the US.

"The term 'gringo' has different meanings in different parts of Latin America; however, it is commonly used to refer to North Americans" (Hayes 947). Furthermore, while this term can be understood differently according to context, scholars explain that "Gringo, lightly pejorative, is seen to have had its greatest currency in the Mexican-American borderlands, although usage extends to English speakers from other countries as well" (Sayers 324). In terms of the role this term plays in invoking a de-gringoed writing pedagogy, Garcia is alluding to an open, pluriversal, and mindful organization that is inclusive and adaptable. By way of contrast then, for a writing center to be "gringo" means that it is a closed, hegemonic, and uncritical space where social justice and inclusion take a backseat to other concerns.

A new paradigm of listening-centered anti-colonialist writing pedagogy, then, is tasked with implementing and sustaining a culture where: "In particular, NNESTs can benefit from social mediation and collaboration in conceiving of and internalizing identity options that lead to more professional agency and empowerment" (Reis, "'Non-Native English'" 142-143). As we have seen the identity negotiations and reflections, I as a novice writing TA and now as a professor, are many and quite complex. Evidently, some progress has been achieved as the NS speaker myth has lost much its potency, but more work remains to be done. As we continue to reflect and revise our pedagogies to meet the challenge of rejecting global imperialism and colonialism, we must ensure that multilingualism is welcome and celebrated and that the misconceptions propagated by the NS myth must become a thing of the past as just one aspect of a new writing pedagogical paradigm that can effectively struggle against coloniality. As one scholar points out, the need to attend to long-standing disparities between NS and NNESTs must be addressed: "The NS myth has serious implications for NNESTs' employment prospects and instructional practices. However, while identities are often imposed, they can also be disputed, negotiated, and asserted" (Non-native Speakers 156).

Learning the value of an NNEST teacher and tutor has been an ongoing project. Appreciating the anti-colonialist potential of my position as a writing teacher and tutor has taken lots of reflection, education, and questioning. In many ways, when it comes to our professional identities, we are at the mercy

of our colleagues and clients. One thing is to have a healthy self-image and yet another is to gain the respect and appreciation of our peers. As scholars have noted, “in many contexts, even qualified NNESTs are positioned as less able professionals than native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) by the public discourse, the institutions where they work, their colleagues, their students, and even their social acquaintances” (Reis, “Non-Native English” 143). If that wasn’t enough: “NNESTs frequently question their own value as language teaching professionals, which throws them into a vulnerable psychological condition” (Cakcak 195).

The problem is, of course, exacerbated when there is an absence of supporting networks not just for NNES teachers and tutors but for other identities that converge in inclusive writing classrooms: “a large majority of NNESTs internalize the so-called ‘internal superiority’ of the native-speaker teacher and engage in self depreciation” (Cakcak 195). In this context to de-gringo writing pedagogy is to help tutors and teachers “realize their own strengths and to find their own voices as proficient language teachers” across the board (Cakcak 195). Here, the literature once again offers concrete suggestions for promoting the level of inclusion within the de-gringoed writing classroom: “In the spirit of true praxis, teacher candidates should first engage in reflection about the causes of their oppression via the use of generative themes, and then they should take action by preparing consciousness-raising tasks for English language learners, writing papers, and organizing seminars” (Cakcak 195).

ANTI-COLONIALIST LISTENING AND WCA

Thus far, I have extended Romeo Garcia’s Mobile-Decolonial framework to analyze my experience as a NNES writing TA and instructor in the academy. Garcia himself seems optimistic about the possibility of bringing about the de-gringoed writing center: His work “calls attention to the opportunity for a community of scholars to make and re-make writing centers in productive and meaningful ways” (Garcia 32). One vital factor in the realization of an inclusive writing center is its administration. Garcia says of their role in his framework, “I see the directors playing a critical role in this type of transformative learning and praxis. The director should be the one to initiate these conversations on race and power, holding professional development sessions and monthly meetings dedicated to such topics” (50).

In this regard, I find perhaps the biggest analog of my experience with the existing literature on decolonizing writing pedagogy. My success as a writing TA would have been nearly impossible without the mentorship of a director that fits the description offered by Garcia nearly perfectly. One of his most impactful and

valuable decisions was to have me work with every type of client that came into the lab, NNES or not. His wisdom is backed by the literature:

NNES faculty and TAs should not be relegated to only teaching ESL sections or only teaching “mainstream” sections. Instructors who teach a range of related courses become better informed of the writing needs of students in all sectors of their institution and are able to apply those lessons back to their first-year writing classes; similarly, instructors who know multilingual students’ needs are better equipped to teach beyond just ESL or first-year composition, as the numbers of multilingual students have risen at US universities in general. (Ruecker et al. 633)

It is precisely because of the challenge, support, and exposure I received through my mentor and director that my experience as I reflect back on it was, on the whole, not only positive but also affirming and edifying. Ultimately, effective mentoring played a principal role in my success as a tutor. Specifically, I feel that: (1) working as a writing tutor had a significant and positive impact on my subsequent role as a university professor; (2) it also empowered me as a speaker of “world Englishes” and, by extension, my tutees by exposing them to speakers of English with different accents and backgrounds; and (3) there are numerous anti-colonialist benefits to both NNES tutors and the academy at large in hiring and nurturing those NNES tutoring “newcomers” as the academy abandons the early 20th-century view of education as a vehicle of assimilation and instead a new paradigm of anti-colonialism arises.

LOOKING AHEAD BY LOOKING BACK

Throughout this discussion I have connected my personal experience as a particular modality of Latinx, NNES TA to Romeo Garcia’s Mobile-Decolonial framework and selected existing literature regarding NNES teachers and tutors. As I look back on my growth as a teacher, the impact of my TAship experience is undeniable. Beyond my own experience, scholars offer reasons for optimism in decolonizing or de-gringoing writing pedagogy: “recent voices have advocated the idea that nativeness is not always a synonym or guarantee of successful language teaching because language competence is essential, but that is not all” (Martinez Agudo 1). Furthermore, recent studies are revealing useful and encouraging aspects of NNES teachers’ experience that have not been studied before. For instance, Daftari and Talvin have found that “The most impressive factor, according to the findings of this study, is experience. Experienced NNESTs

feel less linguistic insecurity than novice ones. But in some cases, other factors had bigger impact than experience” (396).

Further research is shining a light on the changing perceptions of NNEST teachers and how a new generation of students seems to have had a shift in perception: “Data showed that students prefer native speaking English teachers when learning speaking and listening techniques (NESTs = 94.2%; NNESTs = 5.8%). However, students preferred non-native speaking teachers when learning reading and writing techniques” (Echong 35). These findings are particularly encouraging when thinking about the inclusive writing center paradigm and suggest that there are heretofore unexplored strengths and opportunities for furthering the goal of valuing and engaging varying backgrounds, identities, and experiences in the service of amplifying those voices and reckoning with those experiences, which at times will include historical forms of oppression and exploitation.

The de-gringoing of writing pedagogy will thus have to be mindful of recent trends and conduct its anti-colonial work by either promoting or challenging shifting perceptions of the many forms of otherness that converge in the writing classroom. Carrying out an anti-colonial politic means challenging these unquestioned assumptions and presuppositions while providing a space where growth and mindfulness of difference, in the language of Garcia, can flourish. “Therefore, it behooves a writing program that employs NNEST instructors to play to their relative strength of knowledge of the metalanguage and learning strategies that are beneficial to learning writing in another language” (Ruecker 634). In short, “writing programs can and should play a role in broadening students’ understandings of and attitudes toward language diversity.” (Ruecker et al. 635) as part of its decolonizing efforts.

CONCLUSION

Anti-colonialist writing pedagogy has much to gain from promoting Garcia’s Mobile-Decolonial framework as its paradigm. This means that in putting its decolonizing role into focus, inclusive writing pedagogy welcomes and acknowledges the complex identities of everyone involved with the organization from administrators to staff to clients. True inclusion means that the US’s long-standing foreign policy of aggression and its exploitative economic practices will also show up in the inclusive writing classroom as part of the identity negotiations that will go on for everyone involved in writing instruction and learning.

NNESTs have a valuable role to play in this new paradigm and accompanying practice of anti-colonialist listening. One scholar suggests that “professional development opportunities for NNESTs must create learning conditions in

which NNESTs are encouraged to become aware of how they are positioned by others and how they attempt to position themselves in terms of their professional legitimacy in local and broader contexts” (Reis, “I’m Not Alone” 46). Furthermore, a de-gringoed writing pedagogy must be committed to supporting the development of NNESTs’ professional identities by “promoting their awareness of how they position themselves professionally and are positioned by others (e.g., students, institutions, the public discourse) in regards to their legitimacy and in relation to the contexts where they work and live” (Reis, “Non-Native English” 144).

Additionally, the literature on NNEST points to a cultural change in values that has shifted the perception of NNESTs as ineffective or deficient:

The positive experiences reported by our participants demonstrate that NNEST writing instructors can be confident teachers and valuable contributors to writing curriculum development, adding their often-unique perspectives and serving as role models for their students. However, without sufficient teaching experience or without programs’ support in terms of emphasizing linguistic diversity in pedagogy courses and understanding that NNEST instructors might have different needs or challenges compared to their NES [Native English Speaker] colleagues, NNESTs might not be able to build the confidence necessary to realize their potential as writing instructors. To that end, we conclude by bringing together suggestions from our participants and our own work in the NNEST movement. (Ruecker et al. 632)

I believe a Mobile-Anti-Colonialist writing pedagogy promotes the idea “diversity can exist within unity” (Hayati 86). And it must be a place where teachers, “tutors and administrators become important partners in the quest for more inclusive, socially just university cultures. One-way assimilation is an ideal of the past, transformation of all the ideal of the present” (Pittock 94).

WORKS CITED

- Abayadeera, Nadana, et al. “Teaching Effectiveness of Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers in Business Disciplines: Intercultural Communication Apprehension and Ethnocentrism.” *Accounting Education*, vol. 27, no. 2, Apr. 2018, pp. 183–207.
- Anderson, Jason. “Buying In’ to Communicative Language Teaching: The Impact of ‘Initial’ Certification Courses on the Classroom Practices of Experienced Teachers of English.” *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, vol. 14, no. 1, Jan. 2020, pp. 1–14.

- Aparicio Frances. "31. Latinidad/es: Frances r. aparicio". *Keywords for Latin@ Studies*, edited by Deborah R. Vargas, Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes and Nancy Raquel Mirabal, New York UP, 2017, pp. 113-117, <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479892532.003.0035>
- Bal-Gezegin, Betül. "Feedback in L2 Writing: Voices from Native and Non-Native English Speaking Teachers." *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 199, Aug. 2015, pp. 763-769, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.609>.
- Cakcak, Yasemin Tezgiden. "A Liberatory Pedagogy for Non-Native Teachers of English." *Journal of Faculty of Educational Sciences*, vol. 51, no. 3, Dec. 2018, pp. 193-211, <https://doi.org/10.30964/auebfd.450234>.
- Cortez, José M., and Romeo Garcia. "The Absolute Limit of Latinx Writing." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 71, no. 4, June 2020, pp. 566-590.
- Cotto, Ingrid ;and Adelaide Chen. "Area's Puerto Rican Population Dips Back to Pre-Hurricane Maria Levels." *Orlando Sentinel, The (FL)*, 21 Sept. 2020, <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/os-ne-puerto-rico-population-florida-census-2019-20200921-1kfid52bljbphgymryglf5k4m4-story.html>.
- Daftari, Giti Ehtesham, and Zekiye Müge Tavail. "The Impact of Non-Native English Teachers' Linguistic Insecurity on Learners' Productive Skills." *Journal of Language & Linguistics Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, Jan. 2017, pp. 379-399.
- Drljača Margić, Branka, and Irena Vodopija-Krstanović. "Language Development for English-Medium Instruction: Teachers' Perceptions, Reflections and Learning." *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, vol. 35, Sept. 2018, pp. 31-41.
- Enchong Liaw. "Examining Student Perspectives on the Differences between Native and Non-Native Language Teachers." *The Journal of AsiaTEFL*, vol. 9, no. 3, Sept. 2012, pp. 27-50. *EBSCOhost*, search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsers&AN=edsers.201592&site=eds-live&scope=site.
- Fernández, Lilia. *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago*. University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- García, Romeo. "Unmaking Gringo-Centers." *The Writing Center Journal*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2017, pp. 29-60.
- Hayati, Nur. "Empowering Non-Native English Speaking Teachers through Critical Pedagogy." *TEFLIN Journal*, vol. 21, no. 1, Aug. 2015, pp. 78-89, <https://doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v21i1/78-89>.
- Hayes, Matthew. "'It Is Hard Being the Different One All the Time': Gringos and Racialized Identity in Lifestyle Migration to Ecuador." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 38, no. 6, May 2015, pp. 943-958, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.943778>.
- Jaksić, Iván. *Debating Race, Ethnicity, and Latino Identity: Jorge J. E. Gracia and His Critics*. Columbia UP, 2015.
- Lee, Miyoung, et al. "Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers' Anxieties and Insecurities: Self-Perceptions of Their Communicative Limitations." *Native and Non-Native Teachers in English Language Classrooms: Professional Challenges and Teacher Education*, edited by Juan de Dios Martínez Agudo, Mouton de Gruyter, Walter de Gruyter, Inc., de Gruyter Mouton, 2017, pp. 119-138.

- Massey, Douglas S., and Brooks Bitterman. "Explaining the Paradox of Puerto Rican Segregation." *Social Forces*, vol. 64, no. 2, Dec. 1985, pp. 306–331.
- Luciano, David, and Gabriel Haslio-Viera. "Adjustment Challenges: Puerto Ricans in New York City, 1938-1945. The Writings of Patria Aran Gosnell, Lawrence Chenault, and Frances M. Donohue." *Centro Journal*, vol. 31, no. 1, Spring 2019, pp. 26–55.
- Martinez Agudo, Juan de Dios. *Native and Non-Native Teachers in English Language Classrooms : Professional Challenges and Teacher Education*. De Gruyter Mouton, 2017.
- Moussu, Lucie, and Enric Llorca. "Non-Native English Speaking English Language Teachers: History and Research." *Language Teaching: Surveys and Studies*, vol. 41, no. 3, July 2008, pp. 315, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0261444808005028>.
- Okuda, Tomoyo. "Student Perceptions of Non-Native English Speaking Tutors at a Writing Center in Japan." *Journal of Second Language Writing*, vol. 44, June 2019, pp. 13–22, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2019.01.002>.
- Oxford, Rebecca L., and Rashi Jain. "Students' Evolving Perspectives on World Englishes, Non-Native English Speakers, and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers Based on a Graduate Course." *The NNETS Lens: Non Native English Speakers in TESOL*, edited by Ahmar Mahboob and Jun Liu, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, pp. 239–262.
- Perri, Timothy J. "The Evolution of Military Conscription in the United States." *Independent Review*, vol. 17, no. 3, Jan. 2013, p. 429.
- Pham Cu Thien, et al. "Students' Perception of the Advantages and Disadvantages of Learning English for Biology with Native and Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers." *Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science - Social Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 2, Dec. 2018, pp. 3–13.
- Pitcock, Sarah Peterson. "Inclusion Takes Effort: What Writing Center Pedagogy Can Bring to Writing in the Disciplines." *WAC Journal*, vol. 29, Jan. 2018, pp. 88–111, <https://doi.org/10.37514/wac-j.2018.29.1.04>.
- Radler, D. H. *El Gringo: The Yankee Image in Latin America*. [1st ed.], Chilton Co., Book Division, 1962.
- Reis, Dovi Shirmer. "'I'm Not Alone': Empowering Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers to Challenge the Native Speaker Myth." *Research on Second Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective on Professional Development*, edited by Karen E. Johnson and Paula R. Golombek, Routledge, 2011, pp. 31–49.
- . "Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) and Professional Legitimacy: A Sociocultural Theoretical Perspective on Identity Transformation." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, vol. 2011, no. 208, Mar. 2011, pp. 139–160, <https://doi.org/10.1515/IJSL.2011.016>.
- Rodríguez-Orrego, Vero Edilio, and Jorge Luis Padrón-Acosta. "El Cable Telegráfico Submarino y Sus Nexos Con La Sociedad Regional Cienfueguera (1870-1898). The Submarine Telegraph Cable and Its Links with the Regional Society of Cienfuegos (1870-1898)." *Santiago*, no. 148, Feb. 2019, <https://santiago.uo.edu.cu/index.php/stgo/article/view/4824>.

- Rodríguez Soto, Isa. "Colonialism's Orchestrated Disasters in Puerto Rico." *Anthropology News*, vol. 58, no. 6, Nov. 2017, pp. e277–e282, <https://doi.org/10.1111/AN.711>.
- Ruecker, Todd, et al. "Language Difference Can Be an Asset": Exploring the Experiences of Nonnative English-Speaking Teachers of Writing." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 69, no. 4, June 2018, pp. 612–641.
- Sayers, William. "An Unnoticed Early Attestation of Gringo 'Foreigner': Implications for Its Origin." *Bulletin of Spanish Studies: Hispanic Studies and Researches on Spain, Portugal, and Latin America*, vol. 86, no. 3, May 2009, pp. 323–330, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14753820902937946>.
- Smith, Johnny. "Commonwealth Status: A Good Deal for Puerto Rico." *Harvard Latino Law Review*, vol. 10, 2007, pp. 263–280.
- Sparrow, Bartholomew, and Jennifer Lamm. "Puerto Ricans and U.S. Citizenship in 1917: Imperatives of Security." *Centro Journal*, vol. 29, no. 1, Spring 2017, pp. 284–315.
- Trías Monge, José. *Puerto Rico : The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World*. Yale UP, 1997.
- Venator-Santiago, Charles R., and Edgardo Meléndez. "U.S. Citizenship in Puerto Rico: One Hundred Years After the Jones Act." *Centro Journal*, vol. 29, no. 1, Spring 2017, pp. 14–37.

NARRATIVE 12.

MULTIPLE ATYPICAL IDENTITIES

Gitte Frandsen

University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

The multiple atypical identities I inhabit as a TA—40+, mom, first-gen, multilingual, and transnational—merge to carve out the path I tread as a teacher and scholar. In my pre-Ph.D. student professional life as a high school teacher and college instructor in English and ESL, my own practice subscribed to a monolingual ideology that I had internalized as a language learner in my home country and that I encountered in many of the English and ESL departments I adjuncted in. I was faithful to this practice even as it felt unsettling.

Coming into awareness of critical scholarship on language difference made me pause for a few seconds, connect to that unsettling feeling, and then take a sharp turn. I began to understand the harm I felt when my own translanguaging practices were delegitimized and considered *language interference, error, and non-standard*. I understood the harm I had done to my students by reproducing this deficit-approach to linguistic heterogeneity as I had by insisting on code-switching and *appropriate* academic discourse.

I think back to just a few years ago when I had a student from my home country in a FYC course. Outside of the classroom and even during conferences when he and I communicated, we would translanguange, mix, and mesh; we would draw on all our linguistic resources to make meaning. “*Du kunne bruge den der source from the journal vi talte om igår? Den kunne måske hjælpe dig med at articulate the argument on cyber security? Hvad tænker du?*” In the classroom space when I graded his papers, however, I would mark up all the *errors* and *awkward language use* he used, wielding all this institutional power to reinforce *standardized American English*. This student came from the same relatively privileged background of whiteness and European language difference, so the harm he experienced might have been minimal. Now, however, I struggle with the harm I have inflicted on students whose experiences intersect across multiple forms of marginalization.

My turn towards a translanguaging and transnational orientation has shaped how I teach, what I teach, and how I assess. It has shaped the routes I see for my future career, and the scholarship I engage in now. My accountability entails leveraging my current privilege and power to enact linguistic justice in all these (and other) spaces. For now, the precarity of my position as TA limits my

Narrative

maneuverability to the classroom and my writing, but with a doctoral degree and (hopefully) entering the world of WPA and the power that affords, I hope to be able to challenge the entrenched monolingualism.

CHAPTER 13.

FROM DEFICIT TO ASSET:
RETHINKING GRADUATE
STUDENT NARRATIVES

Nicole Warwick

University of California, Santa Barbara

In “Negotiating T. A. Culture,” Sandra Mano recounts her struggle with teaching a TA preparation course for the first time, describing how graduate students (mostly literature) were resistant to composition theory. Their resistance, however, is not her main focus. Instead, Mano takes a hard look at herself and the assumptions she made about the graduate students she worked with and the course itself. In her eagerness “to share my theoretical and practical perspectives with new teachers,” Mano realized she didn’t look at the bigger picture (159). She did not take into consideration the different cultures and power relations at work in an English department and how these would impact a TA preparation course, and she did not put into practice the student-centered pedagogy she practiced as a writing teacher.

In exploring the challenges she faced in the classroom, Mano resists what Stenberg calls “the teacher as victor” (71), or the image of a polished, trained teacher. We also might say that Mano is able to put on hold what Clandinin and Connelly describe as “sacred stories,” a “theory-driven view of practice shared by *practitioners*, policy makers, and theoreticians” (25; emphasis mine). In doing so, Mano adopts critical distance, which allows her to examine the different elements which may have contributed to conflict in the TA classroom, among them her actions and beliefs and those of the graduate students she worked with. This process of stepping back and adopting critical distance allowed for a larger, more complex narrative to emerge.

Mano’s story represents a concept at the heart of my research: that expanding perspectives through continued critical examination of sacred stories is a valuable endeavor allowing for growth and learning, and it is a philosophy and practice that is as important for teachers as it is for students. However, when I read the literature on TA preparation, beginning with articles from 1913, instead of finding complex representations of TA preparation, I often found they pointed to some kind of shortcoming, deficit, or lack in TAs. These inadequacy stories

then were frequently used to make calls for preparation and/or to talk about a particular approach to preparing TAs.

In response to these inadequacy stories, I conducted a narrative study. Narrative research, according to Clandinin and Connelly, places emphasis on the stories people tell. As such, this methodology allowed me to showcase words, stories, and experiences of graduate students learning to teach writing in a TA program. In this chapter, I begin by discussing the inadequacy stories I found in the literature on TA preparation. I then move to focusing on my study by presenting my research methods and portions of the research text I created from participant narratives followed by discussion of implications and future research. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, stories play important roles in our lives, from shaping our perceptions to helping us learn. Ultimately, I argue that in inviting graduate students to tell their stories about learning, writing, and teaching, we also create a more complex understanding of graduate students, the ways we work with them, and what we accomplish together. In doing so, we better position ourselves to aid graduate students in transferring knowledge from TA programs to other areas of graduate students' lives, inviting them to be partners in learning.

INADEQUACY STORIES

In this section, I will discuss different aspects of inadequacy stories I encountered as I reviewed the literature on TA preparation. This discussion will include examples of these stories, evidence that these patterns persisted over time, and examples of how these stories were used to create exigency for TA programs. Before I begin this discussion, however, I'd like to offer a caveat about my discussion of inadequacy stories. I don't want to seem as though I'm attacking or unfairly criticizing the writings that I highlight in this section. These stories have contributed to our understanding and knowledge about TA preparation. I also don't cover every example of inadequacy stories that I have encountered. I offer inadequacy stories and my research overall in this chapter as a reflective lens for teachers—a means for thinking about the kinds of stories we all tell about our students—whether TAs, graduate students in general, or even undergraduate students. Much as Betty Pytlik and Sarah Dobrin have shown, we can read the literature for content, but we can also read it to examine how the conversation has been framed and carried forward over the years.

Pytlik's "sprinting tour" of historical articles from 1850 to 1970 inspired my examination of historical literature on TAs and TA programs. In her review, Pytlik briefly mentions inadequacy stories and points out that "That graduate students' writing ability was still a concern during the 1920s and 1930s" (9). She

quotes Harry T. Baker who called graduate student writing “commonplace.” He explains that “no spark of animation touches their pages” (qtd. in Pytlik 9). Pytlik, however, does not stop to investigate these inadequacy stories in any depth, noting that they were but a quick detour in her review, but when we do stop to investigate, we see that the perception of graduate students’ inadequate writing skills is more than a detour—it is a recurring pattern.

Chester Noyes Greenough of Harvard wrote one of the first articles about training graduate students to teach writing. We also see the first inadequacy story emerge here. Greenough explains that:

For some time the Department of English at Harvard has felt that the equipment of the men whom it has been sending forth to teach English has been inadequate This inadequacy has been perceptible both in the very moderate skill displayed by most graduate students in writing theses and reports, and in the dismay with which even the best of them have approached the unfamiliar task of teaching Freshmen to write. (109)

Greenough attributes “the dismay . . . [for] teaching Freshmen to write” to graduate students’ poor writing ability, and thus establishes the kinds of inadequacies we will continue to see described: poor writing, poor teaching of writing, and/or a poor attitude about the teaching of writing. The means for changing poor writing, poor teaching, and/or poor attitudes will be preparation for teaching writing.

In his article, J. M. Thomas continues the thread about graduate students’ bad attitudes about teaching writing, bad attitudes which he suggests lead to bad teaching. He begins his story by characterizing writing teachers as having spent their graduate careers studying such things as “Anglo-Saxon verb forms, or in attempting to discover sources or fix the date of some tale of Chaucer” (453). However, spending their graduate careers on such areas of study, according to Thomas, seems to spoil their attitudes about teaching “freshman” writing:

They ask cogently, “Why should I spend three or four years of my time in graduate study in order that I may do this?” They wish to proceed to the teaching of seminar courses for graduate students at once. As they are unable to do this because certain estimable but inefficient old gentlemen, out of sheer obstinacy, refuse to die or to retire, they resign themselves to the task before them with the feeling that a thirteen-inch gun

has been brought into action to kill a sparrow. Work done in such a spirit cannot but be inefficient. (453)

For Thomas, it seems that a negative attitude toward teaching writing is a product of the college system itself:

The fact of the matter is that their whole training, both undergraduate and graduate, has been such as to give them a notion that courses in composition are little more than a necessary evil. As undergraduates they are required to take one course in composition, and in certain colleges they are excused from that, as though there were a possible danger in being able to write too well. In their graduate work the insistence upon the importance of other phases of English study, by implication at least, confirms their opinion of the relative unimportance of the art of writing. As professor Greenough points out in his paper setting the aims of his course, few graduate students in English write with any sense of style, and the majority express themselves crudely, if not inaccurately. (453)

In these two examples I provide lengthy quotes to capture inadequacy narratives in the authors' words, and these stories don't end here. Sometimes the stories are only a line or two, but the pattern persists from historical to contemporary times. For example, M. Lyle Spencer describes the "glaring need of courses for English instructors" (116). George Morey Miller describes "two evils" as "poor individual teaching and poor co-operation between teachers" (120). Franklin T. Baker notes that "The general level of our ability is not high enough" (336) and that the first order of business in "training teachers of English is to find and encourage the promising and to weed out the unfit" (338). A. B. Noble states, "That the teaching of English presents many problems needs no argument," so he "suggest[ed] a course—or possibly courses in the teaching of college English" (666).

Just to give a sense of the persistence of these themes, here is a list of authors dealing with graduate student inadequacy in subtle and not-so-subtle ways: J. V. Denney, James F. Royster, Ernest Bernbaum, George S. Wykoff, Harry T. Baker, Charles Gott, Warner G. Rice, Wykoff, Tom B. Haber, James Fullington, Wykoff, Oscar M. Haugh and James A. Walker, Philip Wikelund, Joseph Schwartz, Wilfred A. Ferrell, John S. Bowman, Maxine Hairston, and the Position Statement on the Preparation and Professional Development of Teachers of Writing.

Many of the articles I read seemed to advance the narrative that we need to end the days when just anyone without proper training can teach writing and

pointing out inadequacies of graduate students was a start in accomplishing this goal. For example, Ronald Shook describes the problem with the inexperience of graduate students:

The drawback is the teacher has to know what he or she is doing. It is no longer possible to walk into a classroom, a B.A. in Victorian Lit with no training in writing, and teach a class by being one-half page ahead of the students. No longer can one blithely assign five pages of exercises, knowing the answers are in the manual appended to the teacher's edition of the text. One has to by jiminy know what writers do when they write. (45)

Shook's narrative frame seems to address the issue that the field of rhetoric and composition continually tries to remedy: the assumption that just anyone can teach writing. At the very end of this passage Shook seems to make a nod towards disciplinary knowledge—writing is something that we can and should have knowledge about.

I think we all agree that teaching writing is valuable and not everyone can or should teach it without preparation, but the problem—as I see it—is that these stories seem to set up a relationship where graduate students are lacking and TA programs become the means to fill that void. Often in the literature I reviewed, discussions of graduate student inadequacy were followed by a call for TA programs as well as a discussion of educational outcomes and how the outcomes would be achieved. For example, Miller et al. open their essay on TA preparation with this narrative:

When first-year graduate teaching assistants in composition arrive on campus in July or August, they often have had little or no formal teaching experience; they also often have had little or no formal preparation to teach at any level. (82)

This frame leads to a discussion of how TA preparation should approach the education of these future teachers:

In particular, the practicum needs to be conceptualized more broadly as an early foundation for lifelong professional development. A crucial goal for the practicum is to encourage teaching assistants—regardless of the focus of their degree program (literature, creative writing, technical writing, rhetoric and composition, theoretical and applied linguistics, English as a second language, English education)—to view all of their work in the academy as scholarly. (82)

The frame of inadequacy and discussion of how things should be is then followed with suggestions for a specific remedy when Miller et al. write, “In the remainder of this chapter, we offer some practical suggestions for designing a composition practicum that encourages teaching assistants to value these perspectives and to employ these perspectives in their work” (84, 86). The above discussion seems to operate on the assumption that graduate students do not already have this mindset, which is then a deficit that TA preparation can rectify.

The goals that Miller et al. specify are worthwhile goals to have for a TA program. They consider the value of the course beyond short-term goals for preparing graduate students to teach one particular course for this particular university. However, weren't there other ways to frame discussions of this program and its merits? And might other frames have been available to other articles, too? Has framing articles describing TA programs simply with inadequacy stories become habit?

Michelle Navarre Cleary, for example, uses a narrative of inexperience to frame her article on working with adult students: “Most graduate students and new faculty have little, if any preparation for teaching the approximately 40% of college composition students who are 25 years or older” (113). Except for this opening sentence, the entire article focused on discussing adult students in the university and their needs. I question why Cleary would open this article with a frame of graduate student inexperience. It seems to me a much broader frame could be used—a frame of faculty inexperience as opposed to TA inexperience. How often have more experienced faculty worked with adult students? How much pedagogical preparation have they received? For me, Cleary's choice perhaps suggests that inexperience or other perceived inadequacies may be an engrained framing device.

I am concerned about how inadequacy stories—stories that we tell and stories that we read—may shape our perceptions of TAs and the programs we construct. TAs may not have a theoretical background or experience teaching but, as Bishop and Farris point out, graduate students do have histories they bring with them and they use this knowledge, what Bishop calls personal constructs, to process information on learning to teach writing. For example, Farris notes “. . . that instructors teach writing as a limited function of who they are; what they value; what they have read, taught, and been taught; and whom they teach. In the perceptions of many of them, what affects their teaching the most are unique concerns shaping their personal and scholarly lives” (152). As I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter, accessing this prior knowledge and experience—whether it is rich in composition theory or not—is critical for learning. If we want to help TAs transfer knowledge about teaching writing out of TA programs and into writing classrooms, then we need to engage with their prior

knowledge. Furthermore, acknowledging and working with graduate students' histories invites them to become partners in learning, a point which Mano also makes in her article.

I am also concerned that primarily telling inadequacy stories about TAs may create a narrow view which overlooks the experiences they bring with them to TA programs. A narrow view may also overlook their experiences in TA programs as they learn and begin to teach writing. And this is not to say that there is an absence of positive or, better yet, complex narratives about graduate students. For example, Tina LaVonne Good and Leanne B. Warshauer compiled an edited collection featuring graduate student essays about teaching writing as a TA. The essays show us graduate students grappling with knowledge from the field, their experience, and the challenges of working with students.

Good and Warshauer's TA collection also features brief biographies for each contributor, so we get a sense of the experience they brought with them to the TA program. One contributor, Mary Boland, had her J.D. from Duke University. Others are listed as having prior teaching experience and some had already published in the field. The issue is, however, that when I reviewed the literature, I did not encounter as frequently collections, empirical research, and articles that present more complex views of graduate students. As Dobrin points out "there has been little conversation about the composition practicum beyond discussions of how and what to teach in this course" (4).

Teachers and students should be represented in their complexity, the kind of complexity Mano represents in her essay. TA educators are not just victors or heroes, and graduate students are not just deficient. I also believe that TA preparation poses an incredibly complex endeavor rife with difficulty, which Pawlowski and Jacobson (this volume) capture in their discussion of TAs as learning travelers who "have to find their way into and around specific practices, build an image of where these practices are located in the landscape, engage with multiple places in the landscape at once, cross boundaries, and develop identity that is resilient and productive." Furthermore, TA preparation asks TA educators to stand with graduate students at the intersections of different disciplines as well as the intersections of their lives. Because of our past, because of our traditions, because of the important work we do as composition scholars and teachers, we must be mindful of the stories we tell, we must find ways to be critical of these stories, and we must find ways to expand them.

METHODS

As I have been discussing, listening to graduate student perspectives about their experiences as they learn to teach writing helps to create a broader picture of TA

preparation and teaching writing. Such a goal is supported by a growing body of research focusing on student experiences in education (Thiessen and Cook-Sather). However, as I discussed in the previous section, I found that much of the literature on TA preparation is constructed from narratives of TA educators and their meaning and perceptions, narratives which many times focus on graduate student inadequacies. I chose to conduct a narrative study of a TA preparation program as a means of gathering *other* perspectives: graduate student perspectives. My questions were as follows:

- What are the reasons graduate students participate in TA preparation programs?
- What kinds of knowledge do graduate students bring into the TA preparation programs?
- How do graduate students make knowledge together?
- What are graduate students' perspectives of TA preparation?

To answer these questions, I studied the first semester of a two-semester TA program at a California State University, which I will abbreviate to CSU. Through observation and participation and creating field notes (Chan; Connelly and Clandinin; Gubrium and Holstein), I was able to collect narratives, and I was also able to see knowledge being made through storytelling processes (Goodson and Gill; Zull). That is, observation, interviews, and online forum posts allowed me to capture storytelling and thus learning and knowledge-making in process.

TAs in the program I studied teach first-year composition, and as preparation, they take two courses focused on composition theory and practice. The first course takes place during the spring semester (the semester before they begin teaching) and the second course takes place during the fall semester (the semester they begin teaching).

Seventeen students were enrolled in the class I studied, and over the fifteen-week semester of spring 2011, I observed every class meeting, collected participant responses from the course's online discussion forum, conducted two face-to-face interviews, and collected responses to an open-ended survey. Nine individuals participated in the study in its entirety. In addition to the nine participants, three more people joined only the second interview—a large group interview with all participants.

The collection of data in narrative inquiry is called composing field texts “because they are created, neither found nor discovered, by participants and researchers in order to represent aspects of field experience” (Clandinin and Connelly 92). Field texts can take a variety of forms: “. . . journal writing; field notes; letters; conversation; research interviews; family stories; documents;

photographs, memory boxes, and other personal-family-social artifacts; and life experience” (Clandinin and Connelly 92-93).

The final document a narrative researcher constructs is called a research text and it can take a variety of forms, such as letters, poems, and plays. The work of constructing a research text involves figuring out how “to find a way to select and fit together the field texts into an overall narrative text” (Clandinin and Connelly 139). I analyzed other narrative studies to learn different methods for representing narrative data. All the narrative studies I examined composed research texts out of their participants’ words because presenting the voices of their participants was critical to each of their studies. For example, Joy-Ruth Mickelson presented her data by writing letters to her participants. In their narrative studies, Laurie Knis-Matthews’ and Susanna Spaulding constructed profiles using participants’ words.

For my research text, I decided to use profiles, dialogue, and a poem. In this chapter, I present three profiles, an excerpt of dialogue from the large group interview, and a poem. Like the narrative researchers I studied, these forms allowed me to present participants’ words and experiences and how they used that experience in learning about teaching writing. While I focus predominantly on individual experiences, in some instances I am able to show how the classroom community was constructed and shaped by participant stories—stories made up of their experiences and knowledge.

Crafting a research text is considered an interpretation of the data. That is, the profiles, dialogue, and poem are findings. However, I also include analysis after the profiles, dialogue, and poem. While this format may lead to some back and forth between the research text and my analysis, this organizational choice allows me to honor the participants’ stories but also begin thinking about the implications of their stories and what they reveal.

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

In the last section, I discussed both my research methods and my methods for representing my narrative data, and—as I mentioned—I chose profiles as one of my methods of representation. In this section, I include three profiles (a sample from the nine that I created) to provide a sense of the range of purposes graduate students had for participating as well as the range of experiences they had before becoming a TA. To construct the profiles, I transcribed then read and reread the interviews and began copying and pasting any responses that provided information about why participants applied to the TA program and stories about experiences they could draw on as teachers. Again, my goal in my research text is to present graduate student perspectives in their own words. Here are some of their stories:

Aria: I was a journalist for ten years. I actually came here specifically for the teaching. I mean, that was why I went back to school. I definitely wanted to teach at [CSU] and the junior college level. I actually want to go on to get the Ph.D. So eventually, I want to be teaching literature in the classroom but this is a really good way for me to get experience teaching in a classroom. Getting hands-on experience in the classroom is exactly what I need and want and it will lead to being able to teach in the Ph.D. programs as well. Well the SI's. . . I mean, it's such great training ground, it seems to me, because you're actually teaching your own supplementary class. You're in front of the classroom. You're doing your own lesson plans, your own discussions, your own everything, you know? So it's pretty much really good training ground. And then working in the tutoring lab, working one-on-one, you get a really good sense of what prompts work, what prompts don't, what students are confused about, what they're struggling with. All those kind of things which as a teacher, you don't see. . . you don't get the student input, their view. So it's nice to be on the other side of that and kind of get that before we start to teach because it's kind of nice to have all those different perspectives.

Beth: Since I originally came in to teach high school, I was working as a substitute teacher for LA Unified. But I got laid off. And it just also became very clear there's just not any jobs for high school teachers and that's when I started thinking more seriously about, "Gee, maybe I should do my master's" and then I have the option to also teach in college level. And that's when I applied to the TA Program. Part of why I chose [CSU], too, was when I was thinking of going to grad school and then also thinking maybe I will go and get a Ph.D. I was looking at what was the track. And a lot of colleges, if you're getting a master's or Ph.D. in English, they just say, "Oh, you have to go teach composition while you're getting your Ph.D. in order to get financial aid or something." And there's no prep, like it's assumed because you're an English major you can teach kids how to read and write. And there's no training. And everybody looks down on it. "Oh, I'm just teaching freshman composition." And it's really not what they want to do. They really want to be teaching Chaucer or something. It's been a pleasant surprise to see how much value [CSU]

puts on composition and on this program because now that I'm a few weeks into it, I'm seeing, "Oh my gosh, this is the foundation of what they're going to be doing the rest of their college career." I have a theater background. I have a theater degree from when I was very young. So one of the nice things that I bring to the table as a TA is I don't have stage fright. I am completely comfortable getting up. . . . And as a substitute teacher, I had to just walk in to a bunch of kids, every day that I didn't know and make them behave and do whatever it was that the teacher had left. And I just don't have any fear about being up in front of a group and presenting material and trying to create community. I had a corporate job for a long time, also, after I got my business degree where I was a corporate trainer. So I'm used to, again, presenting material to a group of people in a way that they can understand it and trying to make it fun and keep it focused. My teaching philosophy is I always say it's collaboration rather than commandment. I'm not a "you must do it because I said so." I really like a workshop environment. And I really try to honor each student wherever they are which is what I try to do in the writing center, too. . . . to have them be proud of wherever they are at. Because if they can be made proud of that, then they are going to go to the next level. But if they have any shame or discouragement about where they're at right now, they don't have any motivation to go forward.

Eric: Well, it certainly looks good on the résumé. Bottom line, that's one thing, but one of the things that was kind of the scary thing when you approach graduation. . . . I mean, I prolonged my stay here, which I'm fine with, but I was pretty close to graduating. And I thought, "Oh, I got all this great information and knowledge but how the heck am I going to spill it out in the classroom?" I only have a tutoring experience right now so I know it's a different approach entirely. So, I mean, now that I'm going to step into this program, really get my feet wet, I think it's really a good start. And not only just actually engaging with students in the classroom and so on but to be with the group that is actively thinking about how to approach teaching, with colleagues, and that we're having these discussions. It's just a unique experience. I can't think of just even walking into the job market and then just

suddenly teaching a course that's at a community college. Would I get that same hand on my shoulder, like, "Hey, how are you doing?" Why wouldn't I want to apply to this? I tutor at [a] public library. And we have books that really focus on writing. It's really the basics—constructing a sentence, reading a selection, answering questions about them with the student.

PROFILE ANALYSIS

Participant stories about why they decided to participate in the TA program as well as the experience they brought with them show us that they all have experiences they could draw from for the TA program, though those experiences varied. Beth seemed to have the most experience because of her involvement with programs directly related to teaching writing (being a supplemental instructor and a writing consultant) as well as her involvement with positions outside of the academy (substitute teaching and being a corporate trainer). Eric had tutoring experience and other participants not included here had tutoring experience, and, like Beth, extensive experience running corporate seminars and having public speaking engagements. They also brought experience from their lives as students and writers, which we will see more of in the next section. Their stories reflect Yancey, Cole, May, and Stark's (this volume) research which illustrates that "TA preparation is, in a word, multiply situated." Like the participants in their study, my participants' teaching preparation includes other related professional experiences; undergraduate tutoring experiences; and not least, the experiences of teaching they have encountered as students.

Participants' descriptions highlight the ways they approached TA preparation with intentionality and deliberate, strategic decision-making. These patterns emerged in the way participants described their career goals and how TA preparation specifically fit with and aided those goals. While deliberate decision making about participating in the program is present in all the profiles, a few profiles are particularly notable. Aria, for example, stated: "I actually came here specifically for the teaching." Likewise Beth mentioned coming to CSU "because I knew they had a teacher training program . . ." Eric's decision to participate stood out to me because it added a year onto his graduate education in order to participate, and the same was true for Roger, though I did not include his profile in this chapter. Their language of "I chose," their clear vision for how the TA experience would benefit their careers, and their awareness of the value of this particular program demonstrates the thoughtfulness and even maturity participants brought to bear in their decision-making processes and how they approached TA preparation.

In fact, their stories provide an interesting response to Dryer's (this volume) question: "How is it that the ability to produce adequate academic writing predicts the ability to teach academic writing?" All of my participants sought out the TA program because they wanted to learn to teach college writing and they saw this program as an avenue to do so. Based on their reasons for participating, I don't think they believed that their ability to produce good writing predicted their ability to teach writing. They saw teaching writing as something they could *learn* how to do. Indeed, Beth demonstrates awareness of this view and critiques it when she discusses people who participate in TA programs for financial aid where there often isn't training and "it's assumed because you're an English major you can teach kids how to read and write And everybody looks down on it. 'Oh, I'm just teaching freshman composition.' And it's not really what they want to do. They really want to be teaching Chaucer or something." But for her, seeing how much CSU values teaching writing has "been a pleasant surprise."

LARGE GROUP INTERVIEW EXCERPT

The profiles provide us a view of the reasons participants applied to become TAs as well as some of the experiences they had before being accepted to the program, but in this chapter I also wanted to provide a snapshot of how participants used and processed prior experience in the TA program. Sharing their stories both helped them process their prior experience and adapt it to this new setting and also helped them learn from each other. In the excerpt below, participants collaborate to reach understanding about what it means to teach collaboratively with students. This section begins with an excerpt from the large group interview, and after the excerpt, I analyze what I see happening during the exchange.

Beth: For me, one of the things I want to do is have my classroom feel like "Yes, I have more experience than you guys but that doesn't mean I'm smarter than you. You know, I just have more experience and a bigger toolkit. And I'm here to share that with you."

Nicole: Where does that come from? The desire to want to set your classroom up like that, do you think?

Aria: Grad school.

Nicole: Graduate school?

Beth: Yeah, I think you're right because grad school is so much more collaborative. Yeah.

Nicole: So it sounds like a juxtaposition, though, of graduate school against prior learning experiences maybe? Like there

had to be something before that wasn't as open? Or was your earlier education open and graduate school built on that?

Beth: Well see, I'm a returning student.

Nicole: Okay.

Beth: My undergraduate years were a long time ago. So they probably had a different flavor than you guys. But I know when I was an undergrad, especially right out of high school, it was still. . . I mean, process writing was there but it was still kind of. . . A lot of it was still that old school traditional, you know, the teacher lectures, you take notes, you turn in your paper, you get a grade back and some comments. That's it.

Nicole: And graduate school was different? Or is different for you?

Beth: Graduate school. . . because it's more of a seminar format and that input from the students is encouraged and writing is a process and instructors encouraging to meet with them throughout a seminar paper. . . It just felt different. It just feels different.

Nicole: What happens in that kind of learning environment for you? What's that open, collaborative. . . Why that? Why is that better than a more traditional education that you were describing, like where you lecture and handing back papers and. . .

Collette: Well for me, personally, like I just kind of feel more validated like, you know, my opinions might actually mean something. I don't know if they do. There's kind of that openness that you can just kind of like, talk and explore, things like that. Whereas a lot of times undergrad is just lecture and there is that hierarchy and. . . I'm not saying necessarily that there shouldn't be, especially with age and maturity. But at the same time, it's a little bit more motivating knowing that you have a voice in class and that you're going to be heard and that, you know, your point's going to be taken.

Beth: I know I'm less afraid to ask questions in a more collaborative environment. That's probably the big one for me.

Juliana: Yeah, it fosters risk-taking and. . .

Beth: Yeah.

Melody: It's encouraging and also it feels like you are an active part of it, you are participating, you are part of. . . it is not hierarchy.

Aria: Yeah, it's kind of community-building thing. It's like in here, like all of us, you know, we're going to be in 656 next semester and all that. But I feel like because we're all talking, discussing, we kind of have that collaborative atmosphere here, too. That's a nice thing to have in a classroom where everybody kind of feels like they're a part of something so. . .

Beth: I think it creates even more buy in, like you were saying, not only are you getting something back but you're giving something so there's a real. . .

Melody: It's kind of reciprocal.

Beth: Yeah. But because I feel like I have some agency in the classroom, it makes me feel more responsible about what I'm producing in the classroom, too. I'm not just a passive, you know, feed me knowledge and give me my grade and let me go. . . And that's kind of exciting. I mean, obviously a lot of students, that's what they want. They want to sit there and be fed and, you know. . . But for those that don't, they can really flourish

Melody: Be less afraid to ask questions. I think that's a very, very important point that she touched on, feeling like you are encouraged to ask questions and you are encouraged to know and you're not. . . You're allowed to not know everything. And that's a big, big thing. . . .

Nicole: Where does that come from for you? That desire to create that kind of environment?

Melody: I think also from graduate school, seeing that it's very collaborative, all my classes.

EXCERPT ANALYSIS

With some initial direction from my questions, this excerpt of the group interview focuses on defining collaborative education, with participants joining in to construct a definition through stories that help reveal the nature of collaborative learning or through statements that capture its qualities.

Collette, Beth, and Aria all convey a sense that teachers do not have all the answers and that space needs to be created for students and their perspectives and experiences. Beth articulated that she had more experience than students but was there to share that experience as opposed to being smarter because of the experience. Collette talked about benefits that emerge from her own experiences in such classrooms: "I just kind of feel more validated, like my opinions might

actually mean something There's kind of that openness that you can just kind of talk and explore, things like that." Juliana noted that "Yeah, it fosters risk-taking." Melody added that "It's encouraging and also it feels like you are an active part of it, you are participating, you are part of what it is." Aria referenced her experience in the TA preparation seminar: "Yeah, it's kind of community-building thing. It's like in here, like all of us. We're going to be in 656 next semester and all that. But I feel like because we're all talking, discussing, we kind of have that collaborative atmosphere here, too. That's a nice thing to have in a classroom where everybody kind of feels like they're a part of something."

The momentum for understanding the value of a collaborative classroom grew as Aria and Beth identified graduate school as a source for their desire to set up a collaborative classroom. This topic allowed them to share more stories and gain even more understanding. Beth shared two stories, one about her undergraduate years where "A lot of it was still that old school traditional [approach where] the teacher lectures, you take notes, you turn in your paper, you get a grade back and some comments. That's it." The second story was about graduate school and Beth described this class as "a seminar format and [where] input from the students is encouraged and writing is a process and instructors encouraging to meet with them throughout a seminar paper It just felt different. It just feels different." Each story contributed new definitions about collaborative teaching. With each story new understanding emerged. And this process continued as others joined the conversation—Juliana and Melody—and we heard more from Aria and Beth, as well.

As I read through this part of the interview, the difference between narrative/processing and reaching understandings was so clear to me that I was able to compose a poem from the understandings articulated by Collette, Beth, Aria, Juliana, and Melody. Margot Ely suggests that poetry can be a means of representing narrative data. "Poems," Ely remarks, "spotlight particular events in ways that lift them out of the often overwhelming flood of life so that they can be understood as part of that" (575). Constructing the poem was a means for me both to understand and represent what I saw happening in the data. So now I offer this poem constructed of Collette's, Beth's, Aria's, Juliana's, and Melody's phrases/understandings as evidence of the knowledge they made together through their storytelling.

Play around with it. Discover what works best. Play around
with ideas.

Students want to feel a community in their classes.

The teacher was learning as much from the students as the
students were from the teacher.

Input from the students is encouraged.

It just felt different.
It just feels different.
Feel more validated.
My opinions might actually mean something.
There's a kind of an openness.
You can kind of talk and explore.
It's a little bit more motivating—knowing you have voice in
class and that you're going to be heard
and that your point's going to be taken.
I'm less afraid to ask questions.
It fosters risk-taking.
It's encouraging
And it feels like you are an active part of it. You are participating.
You are a part of what it is.
It's not this hierarchy.
It's kind of a community building thing.
It's like in here,
like all of us.
That's a nice thing to have in a classroom.
Where everybody kind of feels
like they're a part of something.
It creates even more buy in.
Not only are you getting something back but you're giving
something.
It's kind of reciprocal.
I have some agency.
It makes me feel more responsible. I'm not just a passive.
Be less afraid to ask questions.
Feeling like you're encouraged to ask questions. You're allowed
to not know everything.

In the large group interview, the specific knowledge about collaboration was encapsulated in the storytelling. The poem helped me see knowledge-making processes as well as understandings that emerged through the storytelling. What becomes clear in this section and vis-à-vis the poem is that storytelling jointly yielded understanding about the nature of collaboration.

IMPLICATIONS: WORKING WITH TRANSFER THEORY

As I mentioned earlier, Bishop and Farris point out graduate students have life experiences that they draw on to make sense of what they encounter in TA programs and in the writing classroom. Transfer research also supports what Bishop and Farris found in their research. For example, based on their research on learning and transfer, Bransford, Pellegrino, and Donovan note, “All new learning involves transfer based on previous learning” (53). Transfer research also offers concrete and evidence-based approaches to working with student prior knowledge. In this section, I present and discuss three questions for reflection based on Bransford, Pellegrino, and Donovan’s research on learning and transfer:

1. What is the purpose (or are the purposes) for TA preparation?
2. In what ways are graduate students supported as they work to transfer what they’ve learned in the TA program to their teaching?
3. What stories are told about graduate students and how do these stories shape TA education?

TA PREPARATION PURPOSE

A major question facing TA educators, I believe, is: What is the purpose (or what are the purposes) of TA preparation? In what ways might we use TA preparation as a mechanism to deliver cultural capital, as Dobrin has argued? Are we training TAs to teach in a particular program? Are we preparing them for future career goals? My main concern in asking these questions is not pinning down the purpose(s) for TA preparation but encouraging reflection on program goals and whether programs align with those goals. Further, educators might reflect on their goals and what influenced those goals and think about whether those goals need to change.

Based on the literature and my own findings, TA programs with a focus on subject matter knowledge seem to have a goal of deepening graduate students’ information bases and conceptual frameworks. And if a goal is transfer, some knowledge base is important (Bransford, Pellegrino, and Donovan). For example, in my research we could see how the framework of collaborative teaching theory helped participants interpret past experiences and build new knowledge together. However, as I discussed above, Bransford, Pellegrino, and Donovan also stress the importance of accessing student prior knowledge, but in this area, TA programs seem to fall short, at least in how much of the literature describes TA programs. As I demonstrated earlier in this chapter, graduate student perspectives are often overlooked, or graduate students’ lack of knowledge and experience is highlighted. And Dryer (Afterward, this volume) also points out that

“we in WPE still cannot seem to get our heads around the fact that new TAs don’t leave their pasts behind when they take up work in a FYC program.” I understand that what is written about in the scholarship of TA preparation may not reflect what actually happens in programs, but these patterns—I believe—suggest that if our goal for TA preparation is learning and transfer, taking a look at actual practices in programs perhaps is necessary.

In fact, Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir recommend finding ways to help TAs connect prior experience to what they are learning and reference Reid’s caution that “The time we spend covering ‘just a little more’ theoretical or practical information may devour the time we intended to provide for reflection on and discovery of related questions” (16). Bransford, Pellegrino, and Donovan also suggest that if the goal is transfer, it is better to choose a few key concepts versus opting for superficial coverage of all topics.

GRADUATE STUDENT SUPPORT

Bransford, Pellegrino, and Donovan pointed out that students need continued support as they work to transfer their knowledge. In the case of TA preparation, graduate students would need more support as they transferred knowledge to teaching their FYC courses. Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir also suggest that support for TAs should extend beyond the first year, explaining that “a program of regular, formal, directed pedagogy education *must* continue beyond the first year if we hope to have any substantial, lasting effect on how TAs teach and think about teaching writing” (61).

The findings from my study also suggest that graduate students wanted more support. For example, in the large group interview I held, several participants mentioned how they were struggling to make sense of the theory and wondered how they were supposed to apply theory to teaching in the fall. They also were struggling to develop their teaching philosophies. In the final reflection, some participants articulated that they wished they had more concrete guidance with the syllabus and the Stretch curriculum. I now see these moments as situations when participants perhaps could have used more support as they *transferred* knowledge from the preparation seminar into their fall teaching, a finding also supported in Farris’ research.

At least at CSU there seems to be a tradition of reading the theory first and then applying the theory toward the end of the semester and into the second semester. However, based on my findings, more interaction between concrete materials and theoretical knowledge of the field could be created. In some ways, starting with concrete materials, like reading the curriculum and analyzing other instructors’ syllabi and courses, could provide a gateway to more theoretical

discussions as a means of understanding what is happening and answering questions that might emerge.

NARRATIVES ABOUT GRADUATE STUDENTS

When it comes to applying transfer to rhetoric and composition—from what I have read—it seems most of the attention has been given to how it applies to first-year writing, and within that focus, much attention has been paid to the importance of prior knowledge (See for example Adler-Kassner et al.; Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak). However, it also seems that not as much attention has been given to how *teacher* prior knowledge might affect what happens in TA preparation programs.

Narratives, in fact, are a kind of prior knowledge. People use narratives to make meaning out of life events. We might experience a thousand different moments in a day, but we cannot store all of those experiences. Stories help us determine what is meaningful from our events. We keep those experiences that fit within the categories or frameworks in our mind and discard the experiences that don't mesh or aren't meaningful. And we weave these events into our life's narrative(s). James Hillman explains that "stories are 'containers' in the back of the mind for 'organizing events into meaningful experiences'" (qtd. in Rowland-Serdar and Schwartz-Shea 220). Furthermore, these containers "are *always* culturally rooted Thus, the stories we tell are variations on themes which we are supplied by virtue of being born into a certain culture and family" (Rowland-Serdar and Schwartz-Shea 220; emphasis in the original). We might consider, then, the inadequacy stories featured in this chapter as culturally rooted containers passed forward through the years.

Teacher prior knowledge seems like a rich vein for contemplation and reflection. As Adler-Kassner et al. note, "the prior includes a good deal more than knowledge: experience, attitudes, and beliefs—in addition to knowledge—constitute part of a larger construct of the prior" (37). For example, we might consider how the issue of disciplinarity might influence how TA educators perceive and relate to TAs and their knowledge, experience and perceptions since, as Dobrin argues, TA preparation programs function as purveyors of the cultural capital of rhetoric and composition. In fact, we might take the continued presence of inadequacy stories as a call to do this work.

FUTURE RESEARCH

We are seeing more empirical research focused on TA preparation, but we need more, and there are many different directions to consider, from looking more

in depth at TA's backgrounds to looking at the backgrounds and experiences of TA educators.

Other studies (Bishop; Farris) have focused on individuals within a program as opposed to how people worked together. As such, my study helped focus attention on the roles graduate students played in helping each other learn. It would be valuable to continue to research how groups learn together. However, focusing on the group in this context kept me from exploring individual participant's narratives more deeply. Looking for patterns in participants' narrative frames, particularly in light of learning and transfer research, would give us more insight into graduate student worldviews, what influenced those worldviews, and how those worldviews influence their interpretation of subject matter knowledge. Focusing on prior experience would also help us examine how prior experience perhaps shapes perceptions of being prepared.

I also only focused on the first semester of this two-semester TA program. I did not follow participants into their teaching. Moving beyond the first semester in future research could provide insight into how their stories influence their perceptions of students and to what extent their stories change based on the first semester of preparation as well as their encounters with students. We could explore to what extent teaching helps them learn. On the other hand, it could also be beneficial to study TA programs taking place only during the summer for a few weeks or less, or study people who teach writing without any preparation at all. Examining their strategies for preparing could give us more insight into how people take charge of their own preparation. What strategies might we see in common between those participating and not participating in a TA program? How do they cope? How do they learn? Such insights may perhaps help us work with people in TA programs, helping educators and TAs see graduate student agency. As Gramer (this volume) notes, "we need learner-centered research devoted to newcomers' deep learning and development both in and over time, in order to contribute new knowledge and perspectives to our established body of program-centered research."

My research along with Yancey, Cole, May, and Stark (this volume) and Gramer (this volume) have also shown the promise of narrative research methods. Focusing on stories revealed the role stories played in participant learning. In my research, participants' stories helped them process new information they were taking in from the course, but stories participants heard from their classmates also promoted learning. Further research would perhaps help us see if stories emerge consistently as a means of processing information and a source of learning for others.

Narrative research seems to hold great promise for researching how people learn and seems like it is a research methodology that would work well for researching transfer and learning. Learning and transfer in TA preparation also stands to be a useful framework for research. A focus on learning and transfer would direct our

attention to graduate students, how they learn, and how they interact with course material. A focus on learning and transfer might also reveal participants' frameworks as well as how those frameworks are impacted by approaches to teaching and exposure to subject matter. A learning and transfer framework would encourage examining how TAs then approach teaching and may help us answer the question: to what extent does subject matter material transfer to the teaching of writing?

Currently the literature on TA preparation seems to be dominated by teacher accounts of various approaches, but more research would give us a more complex understanding of what those approaches are and the impact they have on graduate students. Future research might focus on if those trends also appear in TA programs themselves or if there is perhaps incongruity with TA educators' approaches to TA preparation and the way they write about it. It also would be valuable to understand how TA educators perceive TA programs and graduate students who participate. I pointed out a pattern of framing articles on TA preparation with inadequacy stories. Future research could focus on TA educators' perceptions of graduate students, what informs those perceptions, and how those perceptions influence how they approach TA preparation. In addition to their perceptions of graduate students, it could be worthwhile to study what informs TA educators' approaches to TA preparation. How much research have they read on TA preparation? What other strategies do they use to prepare—talking to colleagues, attending conference sessions, and drawing on their own experiences?

FINAL REFLECTION

I hope that my project illustrates that we can learn about and from people learning to teach writing if we stop and listen and let them teach us for a while about themselves, about what they know, about what they can do, and about what they need. As I have discussed, TA educators may very well already stop and listen, but if that's the case, then we need to write more about those experiences as opposed to focusing on how successful we think our programs are or the problems we have with graduate students. We need to create broader, more complex pictures of TA preparation programs, which can only be achieved by including the voices of TAs themselves.

WORKS CITED

Adler-Kassner, Linda, et al. "Assembling Knowledge: The Role of Threshold Concepts in Facilitating Transfer." *Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer*, edited by Jessie L. Moore and Chris M. Anson, The WAC Clearinghouse/UP of Colorado, 2012, pp. 17-47, <https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2016.0797.2.01>.

- Baker, Franklin T. "The Teacher of English." *The English Journal*, vol.2, no.6, 1913, pp. 335-43.
- Baker, Harry T. "English and the Ph.D." *The English Journal*, vol. 17, no. 10, 1928, pp. 820-24.
- Bernbaum, Ernest. "Graduate Study in English Literature." *The English Journal*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1928, pp. 33-43.
- Bishop, Wendy. *Something Old, Something New: College Writing Teachers and Classroom Change*. Southern Illinois UP, 1990.
- Bowman, John S. "At Pennsylvania State University." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1963, pp. 73-75.
- Bransford, John, James W. Pellegrino, and M. Suzanne Donovan. *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*. National Academy Press, 2000.
- Chan, Elaine. "Ethnic Identity in Transition: Chinese New Year through the Years." *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2003, pp. 409-23.
- Clandinin, D. Jean, and F. Michael Connelly. *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000.
- . "Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes: Teacher Stories—Stories of Teachers—School Stories—Stories of Schools." *Educational Researcher*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1996, pp. 24-30.
- Clery, Michelle Navarre. "What WPAs Need to Know to Prepare New Teachers to Work with Adult Students." *WPA*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2008, pp.113-28.
- Connelly, F. Michael, and D. Jean Clandinin. "Narrative Inquiry." *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, edited by Judith L. Green, Gregory Camilli and Patricia B. Elmore, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006.
- Denney, J. V. "Preparation of College Teachers of English." *The English Journal*, vol. 7, no. 5, 1918, pp. 322-26.
- Dobrin, Sidney I. "Introduction: Finding Space for the Composition Practicum." *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney I. Dobrin, National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, pp. 1-34.
- Ely, Margot. "In-Forming Re-Presentations." *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry*, edited by Jean Clandinin, Sage Publications, 2007, pp. 567-98.
- Estrem, Heidi, and E. Shelley Reid. "What New Writing Teachers Talk About When They Talk About Teaching." *Pedagogy*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2012, pp. 449-80.
- Farris, Christine. *Subject to Change: New Composition Instructors' Theory and Practice*. Hampton Press, 1996.
- Ferrell, Wilfred A. "At Arizona State University." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1963, pp. 78-80.
- Fullington, James F. "Training for Teaching or Research." *College English*, vol. 10, no. 5, 1949, pp. 259-65.
- Good, Tina LaVonne, and Leanne B. Warshauer. *In Our Own Voice: Graduate Students Teach Writing*. Allyn and Bacon, 2000.
- Goodson, Ivor, and Scherto Gill. *Narrative Pedagogy: Life History and Learning*. Peter Lang, 2011.
- Gott, Charles. "An Experiment in Teacher-Training for College Instruction." *The English Journal*, vol. 18, no. 7, 1929, pp. 589-93.

- Greenough, Chester Noyes. "An Experiment in the Training of Teachers of Composition for Work with College Freshmen." *The English Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1913, pp. 109-15.
- Gubrium, Jaber F., and James A. Holstein. *Analyzing Narrative Reality*. Sage Publications, 2009.
- Haber, Tom B. "The Profession of English-A." *The Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 14, no. 5, 1943, pp. 249-53.
- Hairston, Maxine C. "Training Teaching Assistants in English." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1974, pp. 52-55.
- Haugh, Oscar M., and James A. Walker. "Programs for Training Teachers of English." *College English*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1951, pp. 153-56.
- Knis-Matthews, Laurie L. "The Destructive Path of Addiction: Experiences of Six Parents Who Are Substance Dependent and in a Year-Long Drug Treatment Program." 2004. New York University, PhD dissertation.
- Mano, Sandra. "Negotiating T.A. Culture." *Self-Assessment and Development in Writing: A Collaborative Inquiry*, edited by Jane Bowman Smith and Kathleen Blake Yancey, Hampton Press, 2000, pp.157-68.
- Mickelson, Joy-Ruth. *Our Sons Were Labeled Behavior Disordered : Here Are the Stories of Our Lives*. Educator's International Press, 2000.
- Miller, George Morey. "An Experiment in the Training of Teachers of Composition for Work with College Freshmen." *The English Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1913, pp. 119-21.
- Miller, Susan Kay, et al. "The Composition Practicum as Professional Development." *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, edited by Sidney I. Dobrin. National Council of Teachers of English, 2005, pp. 82-97.
- Moore, Jessie L. "Five Essential Principles About Writing Transfer." *Understanding Writing Transfer: Implications for Transformative Student Learning in Higher Education*, edited by Jessie L. Moore and Randall Bass, Stylus, 2017, pp. 1-12.
- Noble, A. B. "The Preparation of College Teachers of English." *The English Journal*, vol. 5, no. 10, 1916, pp. 665-70.
- "Position Statement on the Preparation and Professional Development of Teachers of Writing." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1982, pp. 446-49.
- Pytlik, Betty P. "How Graduate Students Were Prepared to Teach Writing:1850-1970." *Preparing College Teachers of Writing: Histories, Theories, Programs, Practices*, edited by Betty P. Pytlik and Sarah Liggett, Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 3-16.
- Reid, E. Shelley. "Uncoverage in Composition Pedagogy." *Composition Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2004, pp. 15-34.
- Reid, E. Shelley, Heidi Estrem, with Marcia Belcheir. "The Effects of Writing Pedagogy Education on Graduate Teaching Assistants' Approaches to Teaching Composition." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 36, no. 1 pp. 32-73, 2012.
- Rice, Warner G. "Internships for Teachers of English at the University of Michigan." *College English*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1939, pp. 128-34.
- Rowland-Serdar, Barbara, and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. "Empowering Women: Self, Autonomy, and Responsibility." *Memory, Identity, Community*, edited by Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman, SUNY P, 2001, pp. 213-33.

- Royster, James F. "Preparation of the English Composition Teacher." *The English Journal*, vol. 12, no. 6, 1923, pp. 397-404.
- Schwartz, Joseph. "One Method of Training the Composition Teacher." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1955, pp. 200-04.
- Shook, Ronald. "Stalking the Wild TA." *WPA*, vol. 11, no. 1-2, 1987, pp. 45-50.
- Spaulding, Susanna Belle. "A Bricolage of Narratives About Teaching College in Prison: Interpreting through a Performance Text." 2008. Colorado State University, PhD dissertation.
- Spencer, M. Lyle. "An Experiment in the Training of Teachers of Composition for Work with College Freshmen." *The English Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1913, pp.115-19.
- Stenberg, Shari J. *Professing and Pedagogy: Learning the Teaching of English*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2005.
- Thiessen, D., and Alison Cook-Sather. *International Handbook of Student Experience in Elementary and Secondary School*. Springer, 2007.
- Thomas, J. M. "Training for Teaching Composition in Colleges." *The English Journal*, vol. 5, no. 7, 1916, pp. 447-57.
- Wikelund, Philip R. "The Indiana University Program of Training for Teaching College Composition." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1953, pp. 14-19.
- Wykoff, George S. "On the Revision of Ph. D. Requirements in English." *The English Journal*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1928, pp. 213-20.
- . "Teaching Composition as a Career." *College English*, vol. 1, no. 5, 1940, pp. 426-37.
- . "Toward Achieving the Objectives of Freshman Composition." *College English*, vol. 10, no. 6, 1949, pp. 319-23.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake, et al. *Writing across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*. Utah State UP, 2014.
- Zull, James E. *The Art of Changing the Brain: Enriching Teaching by Exploring the Biology of Learning*. Stylus, 2002.

NARRATIVE 13.

MOM, CANCER PATIENT,
DOCTORAL CANDIDATE, TA

Megen Farrow Boyett

University of Louisville

At the end of my third year of graduate school, I wrapped a community literacy program at my research site, completed data collection, hosted an undergraduate writing symposium, graded final projects, and scheduled a biopsy for a small knot in my chest that I'd never felt before.

I nearly skipped the biopsy because I desperately needed to meet with one of my dissertation readers. At my husband's insistence I rescheduled the meeting. I was at the library on a playdate—a happy break from the end-of-semester crush—and missed a doctor's call. And another. And another. I called back after putting my children—nearly four and two—down for rests.

It wasn't just cancer. It was rare, aggressive cancer. Unstudied cancer: my academic heart's nightmare. If I could *know* about it, I could know that it would be fine. I spent the next three months transcribing interviews in hospital waiting rooms. I had surgery the day before I started my position as assistant writing center director, missing the first opportunity to meet the first year master's consultants.

I started chemo in early October and went to the hospital a week later. A fellow grad student had shared a cold, and my immunities were depleted. I came home three days later, fine, but acutely aware of new limitations. I worked only when I could: a weekly grad writing group, a few consultations a week, a day-long symposium. I hated the feeling of not being great. Of just getting by. I parented when I could, trying not to fall asleep while playing, to keep smiling, holding, reading, no matter what. I hated being absent, even when I was present.

In the spring, I healed. I tolerated the second drug. My scars closed up. I dug into the relationships and consultations I had longed for all year. Pandemic came at the start of radiation. I was sad, but I found myself glad of the break and ready for the dissertating I had started a year before. What to make of this lost year? As a TA, I already exist in a liminal space—labor, but not quite faculty. Insured, but not quite secure. I make careful decisions about time spent and opportunities taken, hoping for future security. What should I say in job materials? “Instead of a hot publication record, I have two kids and cancer scars?” Do I say, “during 2019, I did what I could?”

I contend, despite the yearlong hole in my CV, that children and illness have given me rich preparation for what comes next. Not because, as some have suggested, my lack of time makes me more efficient. I can confirm that's a myth. Rather, parenting and chemo have taught me to look for the long game. To see other paths where academia defines only one. They've taught me patience, persistence, and the power of saying "I can't right now," knowing that opportunities for great work will come again.

CHAPTER 14.

INTEGRATING THE
MARGINALIZED AND THE
MAINSTREAM: WOMEN OF COLOR
GRADUATE INSTRUCTORS'
EXPERIENCE WITH IDENTITY,
DIFFERENCE, AND BELONGING

**Meghalee Das, Michelle Flahive, Jiaxin Zhang,
and Michael J. Faris**

Texas Tech University

Despite decades of research and theory on teacher preparation in writing programs, issues of difference along axes of race, sexuality, nationality, language, and disability have largely been ignored, and all too often graduate instructors are figured or assumed by default to be White, straight, U.S.-born, proficient in U.S. Standard English, and able-bodied. The few narratives in the field that do share marginalized graduate instructors' experiences show how racism is endemic to writing programs and the field more broadly, how students treat teachers of color as spectacles, and how teachers of color experience microaggressions from students and faculty (Carey; Craig and Perryman-Clark; Walker et al.; see also Madden et al.; Phillips and DeLeon). Kelsie Walker and her coauthors suggest that the field perhaps has so few perspectives from marginalized graduate instructors because of the time and emotional energy it can take to write about one's own experiences and because of the risks involved (such as calling out a program for White supremacy) (98). And Jasmine Car Tang and Nora Andriamanalina observe, "Studies of graduate students of color paint a bleak picture, citing racial isolation and racial microaggressions as part of everyday experiences of this student community" (11). The lack of attention to graduate instructors' experiences in the field's literature is symptomatic of a larger problem of normativity in writing programs. Genevieve García de Müller and Iris Ruiz observe that "Discourse about race in writing programs have been very scarce" (20). Further, Christina V. Cedillo argues that the field

of rhetoric and composition is structured along “standards of white eurowestern ablebodiedness.”

This chapter addresses this gap by sharing narratives from three graduate instructors in Texas Tech University’s first-year writing (FYW) program. While TTU is officially a Hispanic Serving Institution, it is still predominantly White: roughly 53% of students are non-Hispanic White, and Hispanic students constitute roughly 27% of the student body; further, faculty are overwhelmingly White (72%) (Texas Tech University Fact Book). When the editors of this collection contacted Michael about contributing, he knew that the field didn’t necessarily need another White writing program administrator’s (WPA) perspective on difference within writing programs (though this too is important, as we need White WPAs who actively take up antiracism and other anti-oppression approaches; see, for example, Wible). Michael invited three graduate instructors in the English department—Michelle, Meghalee, and Jiaxin—to collaborate on this chapter. This collaboration is driven by the field’s need to hear the experiences of non-White or otherwise-marginalized graduate instructors and that collaboration can be a site of feminist and antiracist interventions in scholarship. As Alexandra L. Lockett et al. suggest in the conclusion of *Race, Rhetoric, and Research Methods*, collaborative authorship can serve antiracist and coalitional goals because it can promote “difficult conversations about race and improve one’s understanding about how to talk about it” (229). Indeed, as we collaborated on this chapter, we learned from each other about the challenges and opportunities of marginalized graduate instructors and worked through how to talk about our own understandings of identity, power, oppression, and privilege.

Drawing on methodological practices theorized by feminists of color and critical race theorists, we center Michelle’s, Meghalee’s, and Jiaxin’s narratives in this chapter. bell hooks argues for the importance of women’s narratives, especially those that are nondominant, because such stories can place “identity in relation to culture, history, politics” (110). Further, if these stories are not told, we risk reinforcing normative narratives in ways “that all experience that does not fit the model is deemed illegitimate or unworthy of investigation” (110). Victor Villanueva too has spoken of the importance of narratives from people of color, which can validate others’ experiences, awaken consciousness, build solidarity, and build (on) collective memory (“*Memoria*” 15-16). Aja Y. Martinez points to the historical, social, and political systems of oppression that shape knowledge and theory in the field and suggests that to counter these systems, we need methodologies grounded in critical race theory because they challenge notions of neutrality and objectivity in dominant epistemologies that tacitly legitimize white privilege and silence and distort BIPOC epistemologies: “methods that empower the minoritized through the formation of stories that disrupt

the erasures embedded in standardized majoritarian methodologies” (3). As Ruiz notes, “The personal essay brings us into visibility” (29; see also Powell; Villanueva, “Rhetoric”).

As we recognize the ways that telling our own stories bring us into visibility, we also want to take time to acknowledge the race, culture, land, language, sex, gender, and ability privileges that we benefit from in a society that values whiteness as capital. As WPA, Michael acknowledges his privileges that come with being White, cisgender male, visibly able-bodied, tenured, and U.S.-born. Michelle recognizes her privileges as a cisgender woman who is racially White and ethnically Mexican; she grew up in a Spanish/English bilingual household and in U.S. English-speaking public schools. Meghalee is a cisgender female international student from India. She grew up speaking Bengali and Assamese socially and was enculturated into English in primary and secondary school. Jiaxin is a cisgender Han Chinese female, international student from China. She speaks Mandarin Chinese as her primary and native language and learned English from the nine-year compulsory education and senior high school.

As non-Black and non-Indigenous scholars, we acknowledge how the land TTU is built upon was stolen, through violent colonial and imperialist practices, from the *Numunuu* (the Comanche). In the nineteenth century, the *Numunuu* lived on this land before Spanish, Mexican, Texan, and U.S. American colonialism. The land on which TTU is built, like all land in the United States, was cared for and occupied by Indigenous people before settlers arrived. We recognize the settler colonial practices that contributed to Indigenous genocide, and we acknowledge that we benefit from the settler colonial practices that perpetuate a history of violence against Black and Indigenous people in the United States.

We take time to reflect on the ways that excluding Black and Indigenous voices in our classrooms and excluding anti-racist theory from our assessment practices sustain the systems of oppressions that we seek to challenge. We also commit to continuing to reflect on how our teaching and research practices perpetuate oppressive systems of whiteness, ableism, and heteronormativity, and, more importantly, to actively work against these systems in our praxis. An acknowledgement is not enough to combat the historical colonial and racist logics of higher education, but we believe, following Andrea Riley-Mukavetz, that it “is an important gesture of acknowledging Indigenous visibility” (549). Moreover, Vershawn Ashanti Young calls on us to move beyond acknowledgements that merely recognize the systemic oppression of Black people in daily life by personally committing to using our individual platforms to counter injustice and then personally calling upon others to join in the active effort to root out anti-Black sentiment.

By writing this chapter, we hope to open a conversation in the field that centers the experiences of marginalized graduate instructors so that (1) WPAs

begin to seriously consider how to transform their programs to support graduate instructors marginalized along axes of difference; and (2) graduate instructors can engage in dialogue that promotes a collective subjectivity amongst themselves—one in which graduate instructors commit to learning, and putting into practice, strategies for leveraging their own privileges to counter the injustices that each individual subject within their collective faces.

MICHELLE'S NARRATIVE: BRIDGING IN NEPANTLA: REFLECTING ON RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING PRACTICES AS A GRADUATE INSTRUCTOR

Gloria Anzaldúa tells us that within liminal (threshold) spaces—spaces she theorizes as *nepantla*—transformation happens: “Nes tierra desconocida, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement—an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling. Most of us dwell in *nepantla* so much of the time it’s become a sort of ‘home’” (Anzaldúa and Keating 1). In Anzaldúa’s seven stages of *conocimiento*—the shift from fragmented, conflicting identities toward one that embraces the perspectives of one’s own, and the identities of others, as means for transforming reality—*nepantla* is the second stage.

However, Anzaldúa reminds us that it is not enough to dwell in *nepantla*; we must attempt to bridge: “attempt community, and for that we must risk being open to personal, political, and spiritual intimacy, to risk being wounded” (Anzaldúa and Keating 3). This requires rethinking the borders of our race, gender, and identity and developing a multicultural perspective “that takes into account the whole planet” (3). We must connect through our differences to dialogically and collaboratively imagine a new reality, and “act consciously on our ideas” (5).

In this narrative, I examine the processes of relationship building in graduate school that have shaped my teaching and research practices. I begin by considering how I am positioned within my institution: as a Ph.D. student and graduate instructor in a predominantly White English department at a PWI. As a first-generation college student and Chicana, I value a multicultural view of language. I recognize the ways that ideologies that privilege Standard Academic English promote assimilationist pedagogies in the writing classroom and how those approaches to teaching language erase and stigmatize the home languages of minority students (Flores and Rosa), thus perpetuating the raciolinguistic discrimination that ensures that minority perspectives remain minority perspectives instead of allowing those perspectives to shape a shared reality. To promote the development of language identity, a curriculum must connect to, value, and leverage students’ own experiences with language and literacy. When I was a first-year Ph.D. student in technical communication and in rhetoric, I

took courses on entire subject matters in language and communication that did not critically address culture or race. If race or culture was addressed in my early coursework, it was in passing: a week of readings dedicated to issues of culture, race, and gender or a nod to “diversity” in the field. What’s more, discussions about race did not seem welcome, nor were they comfortable in class discussion. In my foundational courses, we discussed feminism and critical theories of culture without discussing experiences of BIPOC; we discussed new materialism without even a nod to Indigenous ontologies of knowing and being that presume non-human agency. Bringing up race or culture in these contexts felt like a faux pas, like discussing politics at a dinner table with the family of a friend. I often spent quite a bit of time after each class regretting that I had spoken and wondering if I had overstepped. When conversations around culture and race came up in many of these classes, they were often brought up by BIPOC students—not by professors and not through course readings. I learned early in my graduate studies that it felt much more comfortable to stay silent; I was not even sure I had a choice. After all, I chose to come here, I chose to come to a PWI to study and teach in a predominantly White field. Perhaps I was a guest at a dinner table who should be grateful for the invite.

As a graduate instructor, I found the curriculum I taught equally passive on issues of race, language, and culture. For example, the course textbook and readings only superficially acknowledged how race, culture, and gender affect rhetoric and meaning. A discussion of cultural language practices by these means can be simply explained by audience and audience awareness—where the audience that students are writing to is often imagined as White at a PWI. That is, in a context that is predominantly White, audiences like the instructor, students in the class, or experts in a field can be presumed White. And if we were to consider the presence of the few instructors or FYW students who are not White to trouble this argument, I would still counter that bodies that uphold values of whiteness in their actions are indeed conduits of whiteness. How can I value my students’ cultural language practices without knowing what they are? Without making space for even discussing them in my classroom? And, if I do have those discussions with my students, how can I honor their linguistic practices in classroom discussion and then assess their work based on Standard Academic English practices? These are questions that troubled me in my first year of teaching.

I struggled with how to integrate multicultural theories of teaching into my classroom and into my research that came from my instinct to survive by clinging to my privileges. As a light-skinned Latina, naturally born U.S. citizen, and native English speaker, I did not feel that I bore any markers that would necessarily separate me as an outsider or other in my program. Taking up a Chicana Feminist epistemology of teaching and research required me to openly position

myself in my work. However, I eventually found that I felt more uncomfortable passively engaging in a pedagogy of assimilation. I knew the value of multicultural perspectives on language; multicultural theories of being had allowed me to find my voice as a writer. However, as a Woman of Color and a first-generation college student from a working-class background, to bring my perspectives of teaching into the classroom felt like risking my positions in the academy—like outing myself as not belonging in the field at all.

As I began to incorporate readings on language, culture, identity, and oppression from BIPOC writers into my classroom, I worried about facilitating conversations on race with my students: I worried whether I was prepared to navigate these conversations, and I held a much more present fear of backlash from student complaints that these conversations might incite. Although, now as I reflect on inviting these conversations into my classroom, I see that the fear of being underprepared to navigate these discussions should be a more fervent concern than fear of backlash. I have found that my students, even in predominantly White classrooms, relate to and actively engage with multicultural theories of language, that they are able to address race, class, gender, and culture in empathetic ways as they negotiate how their own language experiences and knowledge relate to the conversations in class. What I worry about now is how I can reflect on and improve my teaching praxis in a program that does not provide antiracist teacher training nor prepare teachers for navigating discussions around language, race, and culture.

The problem I see, both as a graduate student and as a graduate instructor, is that critical conversations about race and culture are sometimes acceptable, sometimes welcome, but seldom initiated by White colleagues. Indeed, White faculty are often resistant to implementing antiracist strategies in the classroom, either because of discomfort or fear of consequences to their long-term career success (Akamine Phillips et al.). Even White faculty who have noted their personal benefit from multicultural pedagogy feel they lack guidance for approaching antiracist conversations in their classroom (Smith et al. 654). However, without explicitly antiracist programs in place, our curriculum remains racialized as White—inherently racist because it is built in the racist academy and purposed for white domination (Inoue; Peters). As WPAs struggle to address issues of race at all levels of their programs, it is WPAs and compositionists of color who are largely doing the work to account for race (García de Müeller and Ruiz). However, these WPAs—as do I—often feel reluctant to discuss these goals with their colleagues because of the discomfort with discussing race in the field. Without colleagues to discuss and reflect on practices with, I rely on the antiracist, decolonial, and multicultural literature to self-evaluate as I move through each class period, unit, semester.

As I consider my experiences negotiating my positionality as a graduate instructor and assistant WPA with the experiences of my Women of Color colleagues, I imagine the writing program itself as a liminal space, where multiple perspectives and ideologies shape the reality of the classroom spaces that FYW students occupy—a place where those who, regardless of identity, can connect through shared motives of empowerment.

MEGHALEE'S NARRATIVE: IDENTITY AND IDENTIFICATION: BUILDING COMMON GROUND WITH FYW STUDENTS AT PWIS

I am an international graduate instructor working towards my Ph.D. in technical communication and rhetoric, and as I develop my professional identity, I am aware of how much it is a product of the intersections of my nationality, language, culture, gender, and race. Thus, my writing, and by extension how I teach and evaluate writing, is rooted in my lived experiences, which I adapt to the needs of my audience, comprised largely of White students. In my attempt to establish identification with an audience that is so different from me, I make purposeful decisions about which identities to express and suppress. But this can sometimes lead to the loss of those very cultural characteristics that are meant to add value to a PWI through diversity in perspectives and practices. In this narrative, I reflect upon my positionality as a person of color, FYW instructor, and non-native English speaker, and I explore what role my identity and efforts of creating common ground with students at a PWI play in influencing my pedagogical practices. Is adapting to the dominant group's cultural norms and their standards of English and composition an effective teaching approach, or does this marginalize my own identity?

Not all international graduate instructors have the same experiences because we are not a homogenous group. But considering that 70% of international students in the United States are from countries in the Global South, the demography of American higher education is evolving (Duffin). I hope these reflections give a glimpse into the experiences of international graduate instructors; help WPAs consider these factors during orientation, mentorship, and teaching evaluations; and create a space of solidarity with other transcultural and translingual graduate instructors.

Previous scholarship in this area emphasizes the complex identities of transcultural and translingual educators (Canagarajah; Varghese et al.) and that these identities are a resource, not a deficit (Morgan). However, academic and professional writing continue to follow Eurocentric standards, often disregarding other Englishes. In such a context, I see my transcultural and translinguistic identity

as fluid, yet intentional; I strategically express, integrate, reflect, and suppress myriad sociocultural and linguistic characteristics as an instructor, so that I can effectively create common ground and identification with my students. This works particularly well when I ask ice breaker questions and in assignments where students write about a piece of media that shaped their values. During these interactions, a lot of pop culture or sociopolitical references come up, symbols which students might not associate with their “foreign” instructor but are surprised when they realize I do know them. These discussions allow them to perceive me as not so alien anymore, and I feel more comfortable knowing that I am not being solely judged on my ethnicity.

Once a student wrote about my shoes in minute detail in a free-writing class activity, and I was relieved that I was dressed in Western business formal attire while teaching because I didn’t want to be under scrutiny for my sartorial choices. I also used examples, readings, activity scenarios, and so forth that were U.S.-centric because my students would identify with these issues more, and I thought it would improve my credibility and reduce any ethnicity-based micro-aggressions. And even within these U.S.-centric issues, I tried to avoid topics which could potentially lead to heated discussions, such as racial inequities, police brutality, White supremacy, and cultural appropriation. In one class, I had a White student who wanted to analyze White privilege from “both sides,” even justifying how being White can be a disadvantage. His response to my feedback made me uncomfortable, and I wasn’t sure how to handle this project. In another class, I assigned readings on how social media affects behavior because I thought if I assigned texts seen as too political, I would be seen as an outsider by my students if I commented on a sociopolitical theme affecting U.S. society.

Perhaps it was a lack of experience in teaching, uneasiness of interacting with undergraduates in a foreign country, or a cultural hangover of maintaining hierarchies and not questioning the dominant groups, my first semester of teaching was mostly about maintaining the status quo and erasing any differences in my goal of creating common ground. I would watch the sci-fi show *The Expanse*, in which one of the main characters is United Nations Secretary General Avasarala, who exudes power wearing the most vibrant saris on screen regularly, and that would make me miss wearing my traditional Indian clothes or jewelry to work. All the videos, songs, or readings I used for rhetorical analyses in my FYW classes were strictly from the United States, while I educated myself about the civic and historical issues of this country, disregarding my own.

As an instructor, I would ignore things in class which would be considered highly disrespectful and offensive in my culture. One time, a student had his feet on my desk, where I kept my books and stationery. All learning materials in my culture are associated with the goddess of learning, Saraswati, and although

I am not particularly religious, I cannot dream of touching my desk or books with my feet, especially in front of my teacher! But I justified it by thinking U.S. society does not have formal hierarchies between student and teacher like in South Asian societies, and U.S. students don't know the connection between the "impurity" of the feet and the sacredness of learning tools.

I also hesitated to ask for advice from teaching mentors as I come from a high-power distance culture. Sometimes I didn't even know what to ask, and many terms, like "course reserve" and "interlibrary loan," were new to me. Teacher observations and reading student evaluations were anxiety-filled events, and although I have received fairly positive comments, I have been part of numerous conversations with instructors who were mocked by students in class and course evaluations due to their accent or ethnicity. While I was spending so much energy in adapting to the dominant culture's norms, I felt frustrated and confused about how to make inclusive pedagogical choices that did not diminish my identity.

With time, positive feedback from mentors, progress in my own research and understanding of intercultural communication, and an exhaustion from anti-immigrant rhetoric and political gimmicks, I developed a new-found *migritude*, a term coined by Shailja Patel to represent an attitude where migrants "speak unapologetically, fiercely, and lyrically for themselves" (143). I was ready to "break silences—personal, familial, global, historical" (100)—in spite of the risks involved when migrants ask questions, such as losing jobs, visas, even lives. When U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) threatened to deport international students for attending online classes during a pandemic in July 2020, I was in the middle of finalizing my syllabus and answering students' questions for a writing course I was teaching in summer. I was in tears thinking I might not even be in the country the next week but had to keep myself composed for my students even though I was stressed out to the point that I felt sick. But I, along with many international students who were used to keeping a low profile, was done keeping quiet, and I received a lot of support from my school.

During this time, I was researching an interpretive constructivist approach to intercultural interaction, which weaves the individual and social into a dialogue with each other. Out of this process, there emerges an immersive experience of differences, as well as the recognition of their impact on one's identity (Bennett and Castiglioni). My research has influenced not only my attitude but also informed my pedagogical practices. I realized that I didn't need to erase my identity markers to establish common ground with students, and I was forming a state of Aimee Carillo Rowe's "differential belonging," where I embraced my various identities and their influence on my growth as a person and an instructor. In my FYW and technical writing classes, I started including more readings and examples from

non-Western contexts and collaborated with the school's Raider Education program to explore ideas on supporting an inclusive class curriculum and increasing students' cultural intelligence through speaker presentations. I tackled controversial topics in class and was honest with students about what I didn't know. The same student in my writing class who had initially written about the disadvantages of being White started researching and thinking critically, and his final essay took a completely different turn where he highlighted racial inequities and White privilege. This might not have been possible if I hadn't even given him a chance to explore these issues because they made me uncomfortable.

As a graduate instructor, I am in a liminal space, where I gather new perspectives, skills, and knowledge, and also discover and assert my identity in an environment that is culturally, socially, and linguistically different from where I grew up. A school's diversity or mission statements help acknowledge differences and inequities, but they must also be translated into action so that no one feels like their needs don't matter because they are part of a minority group. Instead of expecting only international graduate instructors to assimilate with the dominant group's norms, there should be initiative from both sides to integrate and expand their identity, thereby creating a mutually supportive and productive space.

JIAOXIN'S NARRATIVE: CALLING OUT MICROAGGRESSIONS: PREPARING GRADUATE INSTRUCTORS TO SHARE STRATEGIES AND FACE CHALLENGES IN A FYW PROGRAM

Before coming to TTU, I only had experience teaching during my master's degree as a part-time teaching assistant teaching Mandarin Chinese. As an international graduate instructor and Asian Woman of Color who teaches FYW in her non-native language to (mostly) English native speakers at a PWI, I felt both excited and worried at the same time. Through my teaching experience, I realized that my teaching philosophy and pedagogical approaches are shaped by my complex positionality and adjusted dynamically within the social structure and "across ideological positionings" (Carillo Rowe 33). Identity markers always related to each other. If the professional identity marker "professor" is associated with the racial identity marker "White" and the gender identity marker "male," then if one cannot fit the normative myth of a particular identity, the fit can cause strain (Walton et al. 68). Therefore, marginalized women graduate instructors may face stereotype threats in the classroom because their gender and race could influence how students view the instructor. Unconscious stereotypes and biases can even exist before the semester begins (Lazos). For example, when students register for classes, they can see an instructor's non-European name in the registration portal, and after registration they may be able to see an instructor's

profile picture in other online portals. No matter how hard I try, I can't change my appearance, race, or cultural background.

I was uncertain about sharing the following narrative since it may be considered by some to be overthinking or overreaction. However, I decided to share this story because it's necessary to understand what microaggressions are and how they affect graduate instructors.

One day during a small group discussion in class, a White male student came up to me to ask when I was going to take the attendance that day. While he was asking the question, his middle finger was staying on the bridge of his nose, probably for a second or two. He then scratched his nose with his middle finger and put his hand down. I looked at him and was shocked. At the moment, I asked myself: Is that real? What just happened? Did he just insult me or was he just scratching his nose? Should I say something? Did he do that because I'm Asian? Did he do it on purpose? Or was his nose just itchy? Am I overthinking it? I didn't say anything about his behavior. I answered his question calmly, but I could feel that my facial expression was stiff with a strong feeling. Thankfully, this was my last class on that day.

I went back to my office; luckily, my two officemates were not there. At first, I'd have liked to have company, but later I was glad that no one saw I was crying. I sat at my desk and tried to figure out how to interpret what just happened. I couldn't find the exact answer, and I cried. I felt I needed a hug. I struggled about whether to talk with the program director since I didn't say or do anything in class. What's the point of talking with him now? I texted my friends who also teach FYW classes in other U.S. institutions, to see if they have met similar situations. They tried to comfort me through texts, but it didn't work. I locked myself in my office for an hour. I tried to believe that this student had not flipped me off on purpose.

When I was leaving, I ran into Michelle, the assistant director of the FYW program. I told her what happened in the class. She hugged me and said, "You know, if you're really feeling uncomfortable about it, you can talk with Dr. Faris. He'll provide support." I hesitated again because that might be implicitly telling my supervisor that I cannot handle or respond to an immediate performance in the class and that I am not strong enough psychologically.

After thinking for a while, I emailed Dr. Faris the next day to talk about the situation. I'm glad I did because I received advice on how to respond. He suggested describing the behaviors instead of evaluating them to the student. If I told the student that I believed his behavior was racist or sexist, he could argue that he was simply scratching his nose. It's better to describe behaviors: "I saw you're using your middle finger to scratch your nose. Are you trying to insult me? Please stop doing that."

Microaggression is defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults that potentially have harmful or unpleasant psychological impact on the target person or group” (Sue et al. 273). Racial microaggressions are common in everyday life. It’s hard to recognize microaggressions because they may be conscious or unconscious behaviors. Therefore, Sue et al. further categorized microaggressions as microinsults, microassaults, and microinvalidations. The behavior of showing one’s middle finger to someone is a microinsult, which “convey[s] rudeness and insensitivity and demean[s] a person’s racial heritage or identity” (274).

The second story also happened with the same student. In this class meeting, my throat was dry and hoarse because I had just explained a new unit and assignment in my previous class. As I was introducing the new unit to this student’s class, I said, “Today we’re going to start a new unit. Let’s look at the project rationale and assignment prompt [prɑ:mp] first.” My throat was too tired to loudly pronounce the [t] of “prompt,” and the sentence was gradually quieter. Two students sitting in the back together started to chuckle. I didn’t understand why at first. Everyone else was paying attention to what I was about to explain. I wanted to move on and explain the assignment. Then, I saw the student imitating my pronunciation [prɑ:mp] and the other one laughing in response. I stopped and looked at them; they became quiet. After I introduced the new unit, we started a small group activity. When I checked on the group progress in the back of the classroom, the student pointed to the assignment prompt on the screen and asked me, “How do you pronounce it (prompt)?” The other student (who had laughed before) looked at me expectantly. I said, “[prɑ:mpt]. What’s wrong?” “Nothing,” the student responded and returned to the group discussion.

Although I was a little upset, I didn’t realize that I was offended at first because I know that I’m not a native speaker like most of my students. Therefore, I’m willing to repeat or elaborate on classroom requirements to ensure everyone understands what we’ll do next. Because of that, I ignored the purpose or intention of his question about pronunciation. However, imitating how people speak and asking them how to pronounce something (especially when they know the correct pronunciation) is offensive and rude. If I mispronounce something, I’d rather someone correct me than make fun of it.

After that, I thought about why that difference was noticed. Would that [t] be noticed if I were a native speaker without an Asian face? As a “foreign” instructor, I speak English to my students, and yet I’m not a native speaker. Microinvalidations are “verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color” (Sue et al. 274). To address microaggressions, it’s necessary to understand

what microaggressions are, identify them, and identify how to respond to them. Having anti-racist training in the program is a step towards preparing graduate instructors to share strategies and face challenges. I'm lucky that I talked to people who support me and share a similar experience with me, and I ended with confidence and positive thinking again.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: DIFFERENTIAL BELONGING FOR WRITING PROGRAMS

As we drafted this chapter, we considered providing key takeaways in our conclusion: what are some actionable things writing programs can do to make their programs more inclusive? But such a list seemed overly reductive. Combatting White supremacy, for instance, isn't so easy as "take these steps" or a checklist. And to be honest, we're working through these questions at our institution and in our own practices. Michael, for instance, is reevaluating his graduate-level syllabi after reading Michelle's observation that she didn't read Chicana theories in her graduate coursework at TTU. And the FYW program is re-evaluating assignment prompts for how they reinforce and reproduce Whiteness through the norms of standard academic English (see Inoue) and making plans to incorporate teacher preparation for antiracist pedagogy and how to discuss difference, power, and oppression in classes. Instead of "how-to" takeaways, we offer two theoretical takeaways we believe should be useful for writing programs and for graduate instructors.

We've just shared three individual narratives of Women of Color graduate instructors' experiences teaching at a PWI. While these narratives are individualized, we want to stress, following Carrillo Rowe, that "The meaning of the self is never individual, but a shifting set of relations that we move in and out of" (16). Put differently, one's identity and positionality are never created and performed in isolation but are rather products of and productive of relations. So our first implication is that writing programs need to find ways to discuss identities, differences, power, and oppression in terms of relations rather than solely isolated identities.

The concept of privilege helps to make this point. It is not enough, we argue, to acknowledge one's own privilege (along lines of race, class, gender, ability, nationality, and so forth) in writing programs—for graduate instructors or for WPAs. As Carmen Kynard explains, paraphrasing Zeus Leonardo, focusing on privilege "only offers a passive description of white racial domination as if racial domination happens without active agents, making whiteness a state of being dominant rather than a calculated and calculating series of racist processes" (2). Put differently, discourses that attend solely to privilege frame the problem of domination as static rather than as a problematic that can be analyzed and

changed through social action. As Kynard encourages, we need to “understand ourselves as social actors and not lone individuals” (2) and name and address issues like White supremacy in writing programs.

Second, we find a differential discourse of belonging to be a useful concept for writing programs and for graduate instructors. Feminists of color like Carillo Rowe and Karma Chávez build on Chela Sandoval’s concept of differential consciousness to theorize differential belonging as “differential modes function[ing] by coalescing differently-situated groups and demanding that policy address the deep causes of interlocking systems” (Chávez 137). Differential belonging is in opposition to normative belonging, and practitioners use “differential belonging as a strategy to confront the exclusions” of normative belonging (138).

We point to differential discourses of belonging in writing programs as a way to make space to normalize discussions of graduate instructor positionality and privilege as they relate to teacher-student relationships in teacher preparation and mentorship. For instance, in both Meghalee’s and Jiaxin’s cases, their positionings as “foreign” instructors added to the anxieties they felt about reaching out for help managing relationship building in their classrooms. When considering her narrative in conversation with Jiaxin’s and Meghalee’s, Michelle recognized how her own racial, class, citizenship, and language privileges positioned her to initially choose whether or not to bring issues of culture, race, and language into her classroom. She considered how, by not engaging in these discussions in her work, she is, as Kynard suggests, sustaining the standards of Whiteness that incite the acts of violence that Jiaxin and Meghalee recounted in their narratives. We have found that differential belonging offers a way for WPAs and graduate instructors to understand how the positionalities and privileges of individuals in their writing program are connected and how those positionalities and privileges shape relationships in their institutional contexts.

We also recognize the potential that differential discourses of belonging have to leverage the value that teachers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds bring to writing programs. All three narratives discuss strategies that Jiaxin, Meghalee, and Michelle used as graduate instructors to engage in normative discourses of belonging in their classrooms. In these narratives, normative discourses of belonging served as defense mechanisms and strategies for survival. The narratives also show how each woman assumed that Eurocentric values would put them at a power disadvantage in relation to their students in their classrooms. Aligning with Whiteness by ignoring differences was a means for survival—to be a successful Ph.D. student, they each had to be able to be successful as an instructor, and to be a successful instructor, they had to be able to manage their classrooms. Racial and language privileges affected how each woman experienced challenges related to identity in their context. A writing

program that integrates differential belonging can promote discussions about the challenges teachers face discussing difference, identity, race, culture, gender, and ability in the classroom, and the strategies that they use to overcome these challenges—thereby supporting teachers with marginalized identities as they navigate the challenges of discussing differences in identities. Further, such a dialogue could engage graduate instructors from non-marginalized backgrounds in conversations that make salient the value of addressing difference, identity, and oppression in their own classrooms, as they learn multilingual teaching strategies from their peers.

Perhaps the biggest implication from our discussions is that writing programs should engage in a teacher education pedagogy of differential belonging. Meghalee summed up this point well as we discussed our individual narratives during a meeting; she pointed out that each time we begin a class with new students, we may teach the same curriculum but we adjust our classroom practices based on our students' needs and learning styles. Even when we teach multiple sections of the same course in a semester, each class is different because students have different needs. This same method of differential instruction should be applied to graduate instructor preparation and mentorship. That is, with each new cohort of graduate instructors, WPAs should re-assess the effectiveness of their methods of teacher preparation and assessment based on the positionalities and identities of their teachers. Embedding and normalizing conversations about positionality, privilege, power, and oppression through a pedagogy of differential belonging makes space to share the challenges graduate instructors face and to discover and share strategies for overcoming those challenges.

By reflecting on our experiences as graduate instructors and WPAs, we recognize the relational bonds we share with each other due to our common state of professional liminality, as well as our relation to the land where we live in terms of our respective positionalities. Like Carillo Rowe's concept of differential belonging, we "move among different modes of belonging without feeling trapped or bound by any one in particular" (33). Our experiences with establishing common ground with students, navigating academic conventions, and making marginalized identities visible conveyed the myriad challenges we face and the contributions we make to the FYW program in our university. But although we share some experiences as members of marginalized groups, we have unique identities that we strongly believe in preserving and expressing. Our identities, thus, present identity-in-practice, which Manka Varghese et al. describe as "constituted by the practices in relation to a group and the process of individual identification or nonidentification with the group" (39).

These narratives were an attempt to display the richness of graduate instructors' positionalities and the relational identities forged through coalition

building as we worked with different groups in a PWI. While we refrained from presenting a checklist of things to do, we do hope to have provided ways for readers to begin conversations about how positionality and privilege shape the shared realities of their own programs.

WORKS CITED

- Akamine Phillips, Jennifer, et al. "Barriers and Strategies by White Faculty Who Incorporate Anti-racist Pedagogy." *Race and Pedagogy Journal: Teaching and Learning for Justice*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2019, pp. 1-27.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria, and AnaLouise Keating, editors. *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*. Routledge, 2002.
- Bennett, Milton J., and Ida Castiglioni. "Embodied Ethnocentrism and the Feeling of Culture: A Key to Training for Intercultural Competence." *Handbook of Intercultural Training*, edited by Dan Landis et al., 3rd ed., Sage, 2004, pp. 249-265, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452231129.n10>.
- Canagarajah, A. Suresh. "Negotiating Translingual Literacy: An Enactment." *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 48, 2013, pp. 40-67.
- Carey, Triauna. "'Never Make Yourself Small to Make Them Feel Big': A Black Graduate Student's Struggle to Take Up Spaces and Navigate the Rhetoric of Microaggressions in a Writing Program." *Our Body of Work: Embodied Administration and Teaching*, edited by Melissa Nicolas and Anna Sicari, Utah State UP, 2022, pp. 119-130.
- Carillo Rowe, Aimee. "Be Longing: Toward a Feminist Politics of Relation." *NWSA Journal*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2005, pp. 15-46.
- Cedillo, Christina V. "What Does It Mean to Move? Race, Disability, and Critical Embodiment Pedagogy." *Composition Forum*, vol. 39, 2018, <https://compositionforum.com/issue/39/to-move.php>.
- Chávez, Karma R. "Border (In)Securities: Normative and Differential Belonging in LGBTQ and Immigrant Rights Discourse." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2010, pp. 136-155, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14791421003763291>.
- Craig, Collin, and Staci Maree Perryman-Clark. "Troubling the Boundaries: (De) Constructing WPA Identities at the Intersections of Race and Gender." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2011, pp. 37-58, <http://associationdatabase.co/archives/34n2/34n2craig-perryman-clark.pdf>.
- Duffin, Erin. "Number of International Students Studying in the United States in 2019/20, by Country of Origin." *Statista*. 23 Nov. 2020. www.statista.com/statistics/233880/international-students-in-the-us-by-country-of-origin/.
- Flores, Nelson, and Jonathan Rosa. "Undoing Appropriateness: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Language Diversity in Higher Education." *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 85, no. 2, 2015, pp. 149-171, <https://doi.org/10.17763/0017-8055.85.2.149>.

- García de Müeller, Genevieve, and Iris Ruiz. "Race, Silence, and Writing Program Administration: A Qualitative Study of US College Writing Programs." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp. 19-39, http://associationdatabase.co/archives/40n2/40n2mueller_ruiz.pdf.
- hooks, bell. *Talking Black: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Routledge, 2015.
- Inoue, Asao B. *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future*. The WAC Clearinghouse/Parlor Press, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2015.0698>.
- Kynard, Carmen. "Teaching while Black: Witnessing and Countering Disciplinary Whiteness, Racial Violence, and University Race-Management." *Literacy in Composition Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1-20, <https://licsjournal.org/index.php/LiCS/article/view/939>.
- Lazos, Sylvia R. "Student Teaching Evaluations Holding Back Women and Minorities?: The Perils of 'Doing' Gender and Race in the Classroom." *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*, edited by Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., Utah State UP, 2012, pp. 164-185.
- Lockett, Alexandria L., et al. *Race, Rhetoric, and Research Methods*. The WAC Clearinghouse/UP of Colorado, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2021.1206>.
- Madden, Shannon, et al., editors. *Learning from the Lived Experiences of Graduate Student Writers*. Utah State UP, 2020.
- Martinez, Aja Y. *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory*. Conference on College Composition and Communication/National Council of Teachers of English, 2020.
- Morgan, Brian. "Teacher Identity as Pedagogy: Towards a Field-Internal Conceptualisation in Bilingual and Second Language Education." *Bilingualism and Language Pedagogy*, edited by Janina Brutt-Griffler and Manka Varghese, Multilingual Matters, 2004, pp. 80-96, <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853597565-005>.
- Patel, Shailja. *MigrITUDE*. Kaya Press. 2010.
- Peters, Michael Adrian. "Why Is My Curriculum White? A Brief Genealogy of Resistance." *Dismantling Race in Higher Education: Racism, Whiteness and Decolonising the Academy*, edited by Jason Arday and Heidi Safia Mirza, Springer, 2018, pp. 253-270.
- Phillips, Lisa L., and Raquel L. Deleon. "Living Testimonios: How Latinx Graduate Students Persist and Enact Social Justice Within Higher Education." *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, vol. 65, no. 1, Mar. 2022, pp. 197-212, <https://doi.org/10.1109/TPC.2022.3140569>.
- Powell, Malea. "Stories Take Place: A Performance in One Act." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 64, no. 2, 2012, pp. 383-406.
- Riley-Mukavetz, Andrea. "Developing a Relational Scholarly Practice: Snakes, Dreams, and Grandmothers." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 71, no. 4, 2020, pp. 545-565.
- Ruiz, Iris D. *Reclaiming Composition for Chicanas and Other Ethnic Minorities: A Critical History and Pedagogy*, Springer, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-53673-0>.

- Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed*, University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Smith, Laura. "White Professors Teaching about Racism: Challenges and Rewards." *The Counseling Psychologist*, vol. 45, no. 5, 2017, pp. 651-668, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000017717705>.
- Sue, Derald W., et al. "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice." *American Psychologist*, vol. 62, no. 4, 2007, pp. 271-286, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271>.
- Tang, Jasmine Kar, and Noro Andriamanalina. "Rhonda Left Early to Go to Black Lives Matter: Programmatic Support for Graduate Writers of Color." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 39, no. 2, 2016, pp. 10-16, <http://associationdatabase.co/archives/39n2/39n2symposium.pdf>.
- Texas Tech University Fact Book. *Texas Tech University Institutional Research*, 2021, <http://techdata.irs.ttu.edu/Factbook/>.
- Varghese, Manka, et al. "Theorizing Language Teacher Identity: Three Perspectives and Beyond." *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2005, pp. 21-44, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327701jlle0401_2.
- Villanueva, Victor. "Memoria Is a Friend of Ours: On the Discourse of Color." *College English*, vol. 67, no. 1, 2004, pp. 9-19, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4140722>.
- . "Rhetoric, Racism, and the Remaking of Knowledge-Making in Composition." *Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Lance Massey and Richard C. Gephardt, Utah State UP, 2010, pp. 121-133.
- Walker, Kelsie, et al. "Graduate Student Bodies on the Periphery." *Our Body of Work: Embodied Administration and Teaching*, edited by Melissa Nicolas and Anna Sicari, Utah State UP, 2022, pp. 97-109.
- Walton, Rebecca, et al. *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn: Building Coalitions for Action*. Routledge, 2019.
- Wible, Scott. "Forfeiting Privilege for the Cause of Social Justice: Listening to Black WPAs and WPAs of Color Define the Work of White Allyship." *Black Perspectives in Writing Program Administration: From the Margins to the Center*, edited by Staci M. Perryman-Clark and Collin Lamont Craig, Conference on College Composition and Communication/National Council of Teachers of English, 2019, pp. 74-100.
- Young, Vershawn A. "Say They Name in Black English: George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, Aura Rosser, Trayvon Martin and the Need to Move from College Writing Instruction and Toward Black Linguistic Arts." Conference on College Composition and Communication, 10 Apr. 2021. Chair's Address.

NARRATIVE 14.

DISPLACEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

Charlotte Kupsch

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

For me, the experience of being a TA and a graduate student has always been synonymous with geographic displacement. When I moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, several years ago to begin my Ph.D., I had never taught before, and I'd never lived outside my home state of Wisconsin. In my mind, these sources of newness were intertwined: How could I teach when I couldn't even see the ground beneath my own feet? When the places around us appear hazy gray on our mental maps, how can we construct the spaces of our classrooms?

It is difficult to be a new TA, and it is harder still when one is acclimating to the overwhelming newness of one's entire life. Even the weather is different in Nebraska, where storms rip across the plains in what seems like seconds, where I learned I could count on arriving to my office drenched in rainwater or soaked in sweat—one of the two. Mindful of my obvious gender and my visible youth, I sought professorial authority in blazers and loafers, as if these objects could root me to the ground in ways that my own body could not yet achieve. We may think the body and the mind are separate until we stand or sit in front of a class and feel every movement, every breath, amplified. Can you know where you are in your classroom if you do not know where you are in your city? Can you know where you are in your work if you do not know where you are in your body?

For academics, the classroom feels familiar because it is where we have spent so much of our lives; we may forget that it is a space that we create, a social concept we perceive individually but agree upon collectively. I understand this now because the overwhelming displacement I felt as a new TA drove me to study the concept of place itself—classroom as place and city as place, of course, but also the page as place, the narrative as place, the idea as place. The classrooms we teach in are more than material, more than imagined; they are confluences of hundreds of trajectories, assemblages of bodies, ideas, pens, laptops, coats, air conditioners, beliefs, orientations, perspectives—

For me, being a TA has been entirely about striving to understand place. And the experience of displacement is compounded by the expectation of transience.

Narrative

Even as I lean as far as I can into embracing my new home, on these flat plains I can see all the way to the next geographic move, the next displacement that this career demands, and the ways I will, always, have to begin again.

AFTERWORD.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Dylan B. Dryer

University of Maine

Graduate students taught roughly a quarter of the FYC courses in the departments Anne Gere surveyed in 2009, and 75% of those were appointed by English Departments (which still comes to about 10,000 sections). Each fall, some large percentage of those sections is taught by the new TAs with whom this collection is concerned and whose undergraduate degrees – unlike TAs in, say, biology, history, or engineering – are largely unrelated to the subject they have been assigned to teach. This curious situation is exacerbated because, unlike their biology, history, or engineering colleagues, these TAs are not “assisting” a faculty member who *is* an expert in the field; they are the instructor of record. Yet their lack of content-knowledge about writing is usually occluded from their students and themselves by mutual, if tacit, agreement on a cultural mandate to defend prestige varieties of English, their own usually unchallenged identity as a “good school writer,” and their understandably intense need to legitimate their unearned authority (in this volume, see esp. Lugg; Mobley Finn).

As a thought-experiment on “the accidents of institutional history” that deposit such teachers into such classrooms, imagine a primary school student whose reading habits gave them a precocious vocabulary or a willingness to experiment with figurative language, for which they are rewarded by their overworked ELA teachers as “good at English” and tracked for an AP curriculum that fetishizes swift on-demand production of superficially fluent prose (Phelps 313). Even a middling AP score would be sufficient to catapult this student past first-year composition and into the English major, in which persist assumptions that “the history of ‘literature’ by definition must be told as the history of authorship,” that said authors are “imagined as in control of language,” and their works are to be discussed as if they had been “purposefully engaged in self-conscious artistic and public documentation of their ‘thought’” (S. Miller 27). Given writing studies’ current distance from those assumptions, it’s difficult to imagine a *less* suitable candidate to staff one of these 10,000 sections of composition.

I should talk. After all, back in Fall of 1996 I was one of those candidates myself, and almost certainly you were (or are) one, too. Offered two sections of FYC some instructor had abandoned at the last moment, I called the WPA on a payphone in the neighborhood I’d just moved to, who asked if I was OK with

the textbook this instructor had already ordered or wanted something else. (*How do you go about selecting a textbook? Was there a shelf of them or something I could look at? But how would I know a “better” one if I saw it?*) “No, no,” I said, “I’m sure what she ordered is fine.” I got through that semester just as Cole reports doing (Yancey et al, this volume), cobbling together an approximate impersonation of former teachers, selecting readings I thought would be provocative, preparing bracing lectures on “critical thinking” and having students write papers on topics of their choosing, on which I reiterated—often word-for-word—comments written on my papers when I took composition at a different institution six years previously. I simply did not know what else to do.

Which didn’t stop me from confidently doing what I thought I was *supposed* to do. I castigated bullshit, struck out overwriting, demanded certainty where I sensed waffling, and indignantly corrected spliced commas. I didn’t even *know* that I didn’t know what I was doing. Students loved it (or claimed to—I was probably what they’d been prepared to expect of a college composition teacher); I even got a teaching award for it. So I recognize the choices confronting teachers like “Ava,” “Michelle,” “Lily” and “Joseph” and the reasoning they produce when asked about them. But wait—1996 was more than 25 *years* ago. What’s going on here?

What’s going on is that most of the room we need to get together, discuss findings, design and test curriculum, compare notes, develop scaled-up inter-institutional and longitudinal studies—that is, most of the room we need to develop a coherent subdiscipline of WPE—is arrogated by a sleeping elephant. Although there are risks to waking it, we should also count the risks to our students, to our careers, and to WPE of continuing to step gingerly around it. I’ll kick each of its legs in turn: institutional history, personal memory, recruitment, and method.

INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

The intergenerational contradiction that defines our working conditions is well documented by our field’s historians. Very briefly, once the care of undergraduates’ writing was lodged with departments busy seeking their own disciplinary identity in the formation of a national canon after the US Civil War (see T. Miller), the compromise hardened into *détente*: they (literature) provide us (composition) with teachers seeking graduate study of literature; we (composition) provide them (literature) with the means to a graduate program. If no reader of this collection needs the inequities of this codependency rehearsed, it’s striking how well we sustain the terms of our great-great-grandfathers’ bargain.

De Piero and Johnson (this volume), for example, rightly critique the limitations of the “nuts and bolts” practicum that new TAs continue to believe they want (see also Anglesey, this volume; Johnson), one that helps TAs “get through”

their teaching without troubling them unduly with theoretical infrastructure. Robert Hunting could not agree with that mode more: firmly making a case for a noncredit-bearing “training” course in 1951, Hunting’s first curricular principle was that the “amount of work demanded by this training course should not seriously interfere with the normal pursuit of graduate studies. Those studies should, still, come first” (5). It was Hunting himself who hired the first WPA at my institution in 1972, who fought doggedly for decades to overturn his principle: first securing the one-hour practicum an actual course number and title, then graduation credit, then a grade, then an additional two hours – just like any other seminar. And even today, the voices of certain of my colleagues – unborn when Hunting wrote those words but now nearing retirement – drift down the hall, assuring our students that their fiction or their scholarship “comes first.”

Only a few chapters acknowledge this problem. Yancey et al. (this volume) point out that some department cultures “push against the importance of writing instruction” and Wooten admits that unhappiness in teaching is more a problem of “working conditions [and] graduate school conditions” than TA failure (this volume). Leave it to TA “Beth” to put it bluntly: “it’s assumed because you’re an English major you can teach kids how to read and write. . . . And it’s not really what they want to do. They really want to be teaching Chaucer or something” (Warwick, this volume). Undergraduate and graduate coursework in English literature is not exactly characterized by processual or contextualist approaches to nonliterary writing, and “English education”—as Thomas Miller documents—was long ago exiled to an entirely different college. Given the inevitability of mimesis as TAs try to figure out how to embody a teacher (see Wooten, this volume), conflicts are inevitable.

Of course, I am not saying that there are no excellent or inspiring teachers of literature, only that pedagogy *itself* is seldom a subject of study, even—bizarrely—when many of those “in English” imagine themselves to be English teachers or professors someday. So TAs continue to ask, reasonably enough, “Are they really going to let me do this?” As WPE professionals, it’s our job to ask the substrate question: “who is this ‘they’ that allows this to happen?” It is routinely asserted that English majors are “good readers” (but of what and to what ends?) or that they “care about the language” (but what does it mean to care about it and what do you authorize yourself to do as a demonstration of your caring?).

With those questions unanswered, the present sorry state of affairs—in which an attentive FYC student in a WAW or TFT curriculum could by the end of the semester have as much declarative knowledge about writing studies as her instructor—continues. And those contradictions breed others: leaving us providing what several contributors rightly criticize as “one-shot” orientations even as we disavow lectures as the best way to deliver information, or insisting

that writing studies is a subject of study while allowing anyone with a BA in an unrelated field access to their own classroom to teach it in.

Action Item: Let's make a concerted effort to track down writing studies undergraduate majors who have accepted a TAship in FYC. Since presumably they don't have to struggle to reconcile concepts and content simultaneously, do they experience practica differently? Is their learning curve shallower? Are they less anxious? Better teachers?

PERSONAL MEMORY

Yancey et al. usefully call this “the prior”; I bring it our attention not to join many of these authors in reminding us that TAs are not “blank slates” but rather to wonder that we in WPE still cannot seem to get our heads around the fact that new TAs don't leave their pasts behind when they take up work in a FYC program. Nearly *every single* author in this volume has had to assert, rather than presuppose, that new TAs “have histories they bring with them” (Warwick, this volume); that graduate students bring their own prior knowledge about writing to their FYC training, (De Piero and Johnson); or that non-expert college instructors will likely bring their own notions of how to teach to their new positions (Anglesey).

This collection contains some excellent empirically grounded advice on making the best use of TAs' “prior”: for example, Anglesey's remediation of TAs' listening skills so that they can better hear their students' and their own positionalities, or Gramer's approach to leveraging TAs' “self-understandings” for “negotiating the lived differences and overlaps of programs and learner needs”. But what if much of what is on TAs' “slates” is in fact (and *pace* Stenberg) “wrongly inscribed” with beliefs that obstruct their ability to teach in ways consistent with what we know in writing studies, even among those eager to adopt new practices? They, as Bourdieu would say, “know confusedly” (130) that students need grammar instruction to write or even think clearly, that respect for their authority is the most salient factor in determining the ‘success’ of their classes, and that their chief limitation apart from their anxieties about their authority is their inability to offer such instruction in grammar. Read cynically, how much of the extraordinary flowering of talented, compassionate, and innovative work in WPE simply sustains the structural impossibility that keeps landing would-be literary critics and novelists in our teaching corps? Are we making a virtue of the necessity of graduate students' liminal positions (e.g., hoping that their double-binds will somehow give them special insights into disciplinary formation or lend them extra compassion for their similarly awkwardly positioned students)? How do we hasten the day in which the *limen* on which new TAs are positioned

is between “new to teaching” and “being a teacher,” rather than “new to teaching” and “new to the subject matter”?

Action Item: We face demands to provide new TAs with “safety,” “comfort,” “structure” and to defuse life-or-death rhetorics of “survival.” We need to figure out which parts of these demands are just a matter of providing the humane and responsive space any employer should provide for any new employee to grow into any new job, and which stem from the specific material condition of TAs’ under- or counter-preparation for teaching in writing studies.

RECRUITMENT

Take another look at Macauley’s and Micciche’s “Introduction” and “Foreword,” respectively. You won’t find a better synthetic overview of WPE research or a more vividly rendered account of the experience and uses of liminality anywhere. As we apply these and other readings to our local contexts, let’s always try to remember that our local phenomena of liminality are not natural and inevitable but rather *produced* in the specific processes by which our departments transform candidates from “accepted graduate student” to “teaching assistant”—processes that *may not even include the WPA*. At some point, a graduate admissions committee considered a file of transcripts, letters of recommendation, GRE scores, writing samples, personal statements, etc. to make an informed guess about an abstraction—let’s call it “readiness to do graduate work with us.” A positive appraisal on that abstraction is too-often assumed to also satisfy a very different abstraction: “able to teach composition in our writing program.” How, specifically, is it that the ability to produce adequate academic writing predicts the ability to adequately teach academic writing? Candidates, understandably delighted to have their study subsidized, won’t question that assumption until they’re already teaching, by which point it’s too late.

We must force this question on their and their students’ behalf. There is plenty in this collection that helps us accommodate the consequences of this conflation, but I can’t find anything that helps us challenge this assumption. WPE cannot progress unless and until we interfere with the alchemical system of paperwork that turns “prospective graduate students” into “prospective teaching assistants.”

Action Item: To ensure that the writing program is part of the second decision, WPAs need to disentangle the “admit” decision from the “fund” decision. They can do this by developing separate materials to help rank candidates for TAship. Those materials should be *onerous* as departmental political will permits (an essay, a set of papers to respond to, a learning philosophy) and program-*specific* as possible (a response to an essential piece of scholarship that underpins program assumptions, an attempt to apply local outcomes to a piece of student writing,

etc.). Any progress is a win for WPE—an incremental contribution to recognizing it as its own entity with its own knowledge and set of practices, and an important lesson for candidates whether they are admitted or not or accept their funding or not: programs differ and composition is not composition is not composition.

METHOD

Although we have not quite answered Estrem and Reid’s call for “large-scale, longer-term research on the effects of WPE on TAs,” this collection makes substantial headway on their request for “comparative studies,” and gratifyingly, most are “data-based analysis” (238, 239). De Piero and Johnson in particular go beyond the local by offering us a considered construct-model that we can test in other sites (this volume). Yet material conditions conspire against our work and, cumulatively, against the emergence of WPE itself. These are more observations than action items, but they may help define the methodological challenges. The bewildering complexities of local conditions inhibit the development of robust abstractions we could put toward inter-institutional causal theories. The nature of working with a steady state of inexperience (endless pedagogical remediation and crisis-management) makes it hard to consolidate findings even year-to-year. Because little can be assumed about the knowledge that new TAs bring with them (other than that it will be an important variable in their development), hypothesis-testing remains a distant dream.

State-of-the-art is still primarily loosely coded convenience samples. It is not yet routine in WPE research to provide tables of code, percentages of transcript coverage, sample coding protocols, or resolution of boundary cases, etc. This condition makes it difficult to compile, let alone aggregate, the data we do have. Home departments viscerally disinclined to discuss composition, pedagogy, or assessment inhibit WPE from securing a critical mass of colleagues, funding, or even a space in the curriculum.

It should be clear by now that if all this kicking is to result in much more than a lazy flap of the elephant’s ear, we should focus on the last point. That will mean buckling down for the very longest and least promising haul, the one with the least certain rewards and the most likelihood of benefitting programs other than our own. (In other words, the perfect job for a WPA.)

I’m speaking of changing the English major. I wrote the outcomes for my WPE course as threshold concepts for composition *instructors* (that is, as conceptual *limens* that ENG 101 students don’t themselves need to cross, but that they need their *instructors* to have crossed in order to be assured of the best feedback, class activities, assignment sequencing, and so on). They are:

1. The “standard” is epiphenomenal and has no ontological existence; it is a perception or a feeling that arises from language users’ interactions with other language users and from their encounters with and beliefs about linguistic variation. (These perceptions and beliefs contribute to ongoing—if always ultimately futile—attempts to “standardize” language practices.)
 - Corollary 1: Institutional/cultural formations persist for reasons other than utility.
 - Corollary 2: “Standards” change and so are *changeable*; language users and language teachers can (and should) take an active role in shifting language practices to produce more just and equitable social relations.
2. Writing, like language itself, is culturally and materially mediated.
 - Corollary 1: Although some privileges seem broadly to correspond with fluency in certain privileged discourse patterns, there is nothing *necessarily* or *inevitably* liberatory or empowering about particular styles or genres or registers.
 - Corollary 2: Writing practices, conventions, and routines have consequences for identity (de)formation.
 - Corollary 3: Any utterance or inscription (a classroom pronouncement or exchange, a comment on student text, a conversation in conference) becomes part of complex ecologies of affect, power, expectations, and conventions where individual variables are difficult to isolate and simple cause-and-effect theories have little explanatory or predictive power.

It’s not necessary to agree that these are the most important threshold concepts for composition teachers. But even so, just imagine for a moment a WPE seminar in which the instructor *could simply take for granted that the new instructors know these things*. That far exceeds what is dreamt of in our current best-case scenarios (readiness to entertain these concepts, ability to eventually reconcile these concepts with “the prior”); these new TAs have already read about these concepts, written seminar papers about them, done fieldwork to test and apply them and now are ready to extend them pedagogically.

Now just *imagine* the teaching we could do.

WORKS CITED

Bourdieu, Pierre. “Bodily Knowledge.” *Pascalian Meditations*. Translated by Richard Nice, Stanford UP, 2000.

- Estrem, Heidi and E. Shelley Reid. "Writing Pedagogy Education: Instructor Development in Composition Studies." *Exploring Composition Studies: Sites, Issues, and Perspectives*, edited by Kelly Ritter and Paul Kei Matsuda. Utah State UP, 2012, pp. 223-240.
- Hunting, Robert S. "A Training Course for Teachers of Freshman Composition." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1951, pp. 3-6.
- Miller, Susan. *Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition*. Southern Illinois UP, 1991.
- Miller, Thomas P. *The Evolution of College English: Literacy Studies from the Puritans to the Postmoderns*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010.
- Phelps, Louise W. "Becoming a Warrior: Lessons of the Feminist Workplace." *Feminine Principles and Women's Experience in American Composition and Rhetoric*, edited by Louise Phelps and Janet Emig. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995, pp. 289-340.

SECTION 4.

GRADUATE TASHIP PROGRAM PROFILES

Kathryn Lambrecht

Arizona State University

Being a graduate student TA is difficult work and designing the programs that help them succeed is no different. While supporting TA development constitutes part of our daily lives, our hubs of learning are scattered about the country, sometimes creating a feeling that our work is independent, out-of-network, or solitary in its challenges and complexities. The following program profiles are meant to highlight, among other things, that we are not alone. While our programs are often not extended the resources commensurate with the complex work of TA development, these program profiles show that we always have a resource in each other. Though this collection articulates many of the problems we think should inspire change within programs, these profiles highlight ways we can move our programs forward, outlining options for change and celebrating the great work that programs are doing to support their students. The weight of departmental history may make us sometimes feel like there is no room for new ideas, theories, or practices, but our hope is that these profiles act as examples that spark new ideas.

These profiles act as snapshots in the history of the RCTAship, both celebrating those who have built successful programs and inviting incoming members of the field to look back at what programs looked like in a particular moment.

These profiles are divided into three sections, from program design, to revision and then assessment: 1) Designing Roles and Relationships; 2) Revising and Innovating; 3) Highlighting Student Voices.

1. In the first section, Designing Roles and Relationships, program profiles discuss both the theory and practice of structuring programs and outlining roles for graduate students. Providing a comprehensive overview of their GAsip programs, Laura Hardin Marshall discusses the various roles of graduate student teachers at Saint Louis University, including specific responsibilities and descriptions for how this work is accomplished. Using a similar level of detail, Bilingsley et al. from The University of Alabama outline the development and theory behind one specific role: the graduate student administrator position, and how this position relates to others in the department to build professionalization. Writing studies program director at American University Lacey Wootton offers a comprehensive overview of

- their program design and the philosophy behind treating their students as colleagues in order to help them prepare for the job market. Focusing on designing a model that incorporates mentorship, Emily Jo Schwaller at the University of Arizona outlines how offering research and professionalization opportunities can strengthen the development of students in our field.
2. TAs_{hip} programs are living beings, constantly involving, innovating, and expanding. In *Revising and Innovating*, three programs are highlighted that focus on the process of trying something new. Starting off this section, Sue Hum et al. discuss the effort made at the University of Texas at San Antonio to pilot a program based on holistic mentoring to better serve their students. Malmström and Gustafsson at Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden discuss the development of a physics writing initiative to expand disciplinary literacy for their doctoral students. William Repetto invites us to reconceive what we mean by professional development, using the University of Delaware as an example of how a focus on student identity helped achieve these goals during the pandemic.
 3. In the final section, *Highlighting Student Voices* focuses on the experience of students who have been on the front lines teaching and learning in the programs designed for their development. The program profile from Chapman University offers an overview of the design and structure of their program developed in 2015 and incorporates narratives from students conducting their own research as part of their program. San Jose State University contributors highlight how their program prepares teachers to work with diverse student populations and asks them to reflect on professional development within the program. Finally, Bowling Green State University authors share “A Tale of Two Program Revisions” incorporating doctoral student and faculty experiences with the transition and looking towards future evolutions of their work.

We invite the readers of this collection to imagine these program profiles as constituting a narrative arc of the work of TAs_{hip} design and programming to support them, starting with the nuts and bolts, and working through to revision and assessment for those working within the programs themselves—the graduate students who will define the future of the field. Alternatively, readers might look to specific sections within these profiles for inspiration, to spark ideas for their own program development whether they are in the design, redesign, or program assessment phase of their work in program development. Most importantly, we hope our readers approach these program profiles looking for solidarity and shared experience and walk away with inspiration.

PROGRAM PROFILE 1.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN
ADVENTURESHIP: DIVERSITY,
CONTEXT, AND CASUISTRY
IN GRADUATE STUDENT
PROFESSIONALIZATION

Laura Hardin Marshall

Saint Louis University

At Saint Louis University (SLU), like so many other institutions, the first-year composition requirement generates a considerable number of courses each semester, most of which are taught by graduate students from the Department of English (which houses both the writing program and the rhetoric and composition concentration). Because the course also generates a considerable revenue for the university, the department is able to offer assistantships¹ to all full-time graduate students (master's and Ph.D., regardless of concentration), who are expected to spend 20 hours per week as students and 20 hours as university employees. Although these assistantships are made possible by the expectation of teaching, they are not called teaching assistantships but *graduate* assistantships (GAships). While this distinction may seem relatively small, it reflects an essential difference in the opportunities offered to SLU's English graduate assistants (GAs). Unlike many other rhetcomp programs, these GAships are not reserved exclusively for teaching. Instead, their design allows the department and its students to customize each GA's path with the experiences and professionalization suited to their research and career aspirations.

1 While not directly relevant to my profile of SLU's assistantship program, it's worth noting that these assistantships come with a modest stipend (comparable to the relatively low cost of living in the Saint Louis area) and health insurance. Most positions are 9-month contracts (mid-August to mid-May), though certain positions are 11 or 12 months instead (July to May or July to June, respectively). It is also worth noting that the assistantships offered in the Department of English are different than those offered in other departments and colleges across the university, so *SLU* assistantships as a whole are not necessarily the same as *English* assistantships. For the purposes of this discussion, though, I'm referring exclusively to the assistantships offered in the Department of English (as of 2020).

The primary way that SLU's GAships allow for such versatility is the restriction of GAs' teaching loads. As with TAships, teaching within the writing program or Department of English is the primary and most common responsibility of SLU English GAs.² At SLU, three-credit courses are considered 10-hour responsibilities, but it is a truth universally acknowledged that teaching is more than a 10-hour-per-course commitment when it comes to preparation and grading. SLU's Department of English recognizes this as a potential problem for GAs and, therefore, limits GA teaching loads to only one course per semester. If GAs were to teach two courses ("20" hours), the actual hours worked would quickly eat into the time students need for their studies and to progress in their degrees. This restriction is an intentional move to help GAs—who are first and foremost *students*—balance their lives between their student responsibilities (study, research, etc.) and their work responsibilities, which (theoretically) allows them to maintain a more realistic 40-hour week.

Because these GAships are a 20-hour-per-week employment commitment, the teaching limitation creates the need for another 10 hours of non-teaching duties. The Department of English therefore has a range of other positions that allows GAs to mix and match the types of experiences to suit not just the department's but also their own needs, whether personal, academic, or professional. These roles are spread across a range of professionalization or research opportunities:

- Consulting in the university writing center
- Staffing and maintaining the writing program's multimodal resource room and website
- Assisting faculty members with research or special projects
- Assisting program coordinators, directors, or chairs with administrative duties

The diversity of these roles is where SLU's English GAships truly customize each GA's responsibilities and thereby promote each GA's opportunity to create a cohesive and worthwhile program experience.

In most cases, GAs are expected to take on one teaching and one non-teaching role within the assigned year.³ In certain circumstances, though, GAs can

2 GAs begin teaching immediately upon entering the program if they joined with sufficient training or experience in teaching; if not, in their first semester, they take a composition pedagogy seminar and begin teaching in their second semester.

3 Within the teaching expectation, GAs can still personalize their experiences. The most common course offered within the writing program is ENGL 1900, the university-wide required composition course. Once GAs develop greater teaching experience, those interested may also opt to teach other composition and/or literature courses: a pre-ENG 1900 course for students with lower placement scores, a professional writing course, or introductory-level literature survey courses. With these options, GAs are able to diversify their teaching portfolios beyond the required

double-up on the same type of role. For example, GAs may request 2 non-teaching positions or 20 hours of the same position.⁴ Such requests are common for those who need greater flexibility in their schedules due to various personal situations (health needs, childcare, etc.) or who want to improve professionalization and have a more robust CV line in a certain area (e.g., administration, multimodal and/or digital humanities). Alternatively, some GAs ask to teach two courses. This request is typically only granted to Ph.D. GAs who have passed their comprehensive exams, as they are better prepared to handle the additional work. The additional teaching hours can be invaluable experience, though, and can make the difference in hireability for GAs with minimal prior teaching history or who plan on seeking placement at universities or colleges with heavier teaching expectations. Overall, the mix-and-match design of these 10-hour teaching and non-teaching positions allows GAs to create opportunities that align with their personal, professional, and academic lives.

While student requests are important to GAship assignment, departmental context is the first determining factor in who gets which assistantships. To some extent, faculty members and directors can request GAs they want to work with, but most assistantships are assigned to fill intra- and extra-departmental needs. Certain key positions are required for the department to function and/or to fulfill partnerships with other departments or units across the university, such as the writing center (housed under student development), women and gender studies, and library special collections. Therefore, each year, the department requires a certain number of GAs to hold those key administrative positions, a certain number to teach the required composition course, and a certain number to consult in the writing center—those numbers fluctuate to some extent but are fairly fixed. Therefore, GAs who may desire a non-teaching or non-consulting position may still be called upon to teach or consult to ensure those areas are not left vacant or understaffed.⁵

Outside of departmental matters, the assignment of GAships comes down almost entirely to casuistry, and the department (especially the Director of Graduate Studies, who makes the ultimate decision on assignments) puts considerable effort into understanding and working with and for students' needs to

composition course.

4 Some of the administrative non-teaching roles are more intensive and/or specialized and are therefore deemed 20-hour responsibilities outright, such as assisting the writing program coordinator.

5 Unlike the 10-hour positions, the 20-hour roles are specialized and therefore generally only granted to GAs whose research or professional interests align with the role (rhetoric and composition student for the writing program assistant; an early modernist for certain library collections, etc.). Only in the most extenuating or unusual circumstances are 20-hour positions held by GAs outside their respective areas.

the best of their abilities. No two GAs are the same. Even those within the same concentration will have their own research and professional interests and aspirations, which means their position preferences necessitate completely different GAship experiences. To facilitate the assignment process, the Director of Graduate Studies sends GAs a survey each year to rank their preferred positions. For instance, in the situation mentioned above, where a GA may not want to consult, the director could ask another GA whose survey showed greater interest in consulting if they'd prefer to consult 20 hours (forgoing a teaching position for that year or perhaps just a semester). Such flexibility would still allocate the necessary number of hours to the writing center but would allow both GAs their preferred positions.

However, these assignments rely on much more than preference. The yearly survey also includes a field for comments that students can use to inform the director of any special circumstances the GA might want them to know when deciding who's assigned to which roles. Additionally, the director encourages GAs to schedule one-on-one meetings both with their advisors and with the director himself to speak about their concerns and needs for the coming year (and/or to make their case in the event of special situations or unusual requests). The director is therefore able to consider a wide range of factors when determining placement: each student's year in the program (in terms of whether a position needs experience or whether the requester has seniority), whether the student will be taking comprehensive exams that year, number of credit hours being taken, prior job performance, etc. These considerations—and the work done by the director to collect and make sense of the disparate needs of such a large group of people⁶—are what make or break each GA's experience for that year and whether their professional responsibilities will align or conflict with their academic and personal lives.

Ultimately, though, the quality of each GAship comes down to two factors: self-awareness and disclosure. As is so often the case now given the nature of humanities in general as well as the state of employment in academia, many GAs enter the program having only a general sense of their research interests or their professional aspirations. Many students spend the first few years (and sometimes even the last few years) of their program figuring out what they want to do, both in their studies and professionally. Additionally, students also have

6 For the past several years, this position has been held by Rachel Greenwald Smith. I simply cannot stress enough how much of an amazing job she does every year as an advocate for graduate students' professionalization in conjunction with their academic and personal health and wellbeing, all done while juggling nigh innumerable contextual factors. I have no doubt that her compassion and dedication to her work as director are key reasons that SLU English GAships function as effectively as they do.

to make a decision between the best position for professionalization or for their academic, personal, or other types of wellbeing, as such factors don't necessarily always align. Ultimately, all of the various scenarios and circumstances mentioned above are subject to GAs understanding what their current and future goals are (or might be), realizing which positions best suit those goals, and *requesting* those positions when the yearly survey makes the rounds. The director can only work with what GAs tell them, so the most important factor is the student's self-awareness, foresight, and willingness to be forthright about the intersectionality of their needs and identities.

To a certain extent, GAs who don't demonstrate that foresight (or master's students, who have only two years in the program and therefore can't take advantage of the diversity of GAship positions in the same ways that Ph.D. GAs can) are more liable to be given the most-needed and least customized positions of teaching required composition and consulting in the writing center. Those GAs are therefore more likely to feel as though they are nothing more than "affordable labor" to the department, filling the department's commitments but not their own. On the whole, though, SLU's Department of English is quite intentionally mindful of GA identities and wide-scale needs, and the structure of their GAship program helps to minimize the disconnection that many GAs might experience elsewhere.

POSTSCRIPT

At the start of this profile, I mentioned that these GAships were offered to all full-time graduate students in the Department of English, regardless of concentration (rhetoric and composition, early modernism, romanticism, etc.). Given that this collection spotlights "rhetoric and composition TAships," however, I feel it's important to close by acknowledging how SLU's English GAships affect rhetoric and composition students specifically.

Obviously, the teaching opportunities are directly relevant and also essential to future professional work. However, the entire corpus of roles available within the GAship is invaluable for professionalization in rhetcomp, which is perhaps a little unusual for a relatively small rhetcomp division. As of 2020, there are approximately four faculty members who have degrees or specialties in rhetoric or composition and a comparable number of Ph.D. students pursuing the rhetoric and composition concentration.⁷ Yet writing consulting, working in the multi-modal/digital humanities lab, and serving in administrative positions (especially

⁷ English MA students are required to study across a range of concentrations (four out of an available five areas) and do not technically claim a single concentration.

assistant to the writing program coordinator and the assistant coordinator of the writing center) are all markedly rhetcomp-driven. In fact, if any students may feel a disconnect between their GAship experience and their professional development, it's likely felt by those concentrating in literature (who make up 4/5ths of the department), who at times express resentment toward positions like teaching required composition or consulting. For rhetcomp students, *every* position can be directly relevant to their careers and academic specialties.

The relevance and diversity of these opportunities allows rhetcomp students to cultivate precisely the type of professional experience they will eventually want to pursue on the job market. In fact, our most recent rhetoric and composition graduate (who served many years as the assistant coordinator of the writing center) was hired by the university as coordinator of the writing center, a full-time staff position. Regardless of professional aspirations—whether that's teaching, research, administrative, or alt-ac—the variety of graduate assistantship opportunities offered within the Department of English allows their rhetcomp students to leave the program with robust experiences unique to their academic and professional identities.

PROGRAM PROFILE 2.

DISCIPLINARY TAs EXPLORING THE RECIPROCAL EFFECTS OF PROVIDING WRITING FEEDBACK IN PHYSICS

Hans Malmström and Magnus Gustafsson

Chalmers University of Technology

INTRODUCING THE WRITING CONTEXT

The TA-scaffolded communication, which is the focus of this description, is a writing task integrated in a mandatory first-year course in engineering physics. The course, “Tools of Engineering Physics”, spreads across one and a half semesters of the five-year engineering physics program at Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden. The course is a modular introductory course, the purpose of which is to provide students with fundamental skills necessary for study and future engineering physics work. Module three of the course focuses on fundamental experimental methodology within a context of physics problem solving and is used also for the purpose of introducing students to a key genre in the engineering physics discipline: the laboratory report. During several experimental sessions, pairs of students are expected to plan and perform experiments of physical phenomena, perform basic dimensional analysis and physical modeling, and analyze the results. They then write a laboratory report based on their laboratory notes.

At the beginning of the course, staff from the university’s Division for Language and Communication offer all students a lecture focusing on the laboratory report, the overarching purpose of which is to make students genre aware. Until 2017, Division staff met all student pairs for 30 minutes, offering them verbal as well as written formative feedback on a first draft of the laboratory report. Immediately before or after receiving the writing feedback, students received feedback on their experimental methodology (as articulated in the report and witnessed in the laboratory) from a physics doctoral student acting as a TA (there are usually five TAs involved, working a rotational schedule, usually as part of their departmental teaching duties).

Every year, while expressing their appreciation for the feedback, students complained that the back-to-back feedback sessions robbed them of valuable time in the laboratory, that the feedback overlapped, and that the messages from the TAs and from the communication specialists were not always aligned. What is more, several of the TAs expressed the view that it was odd to treat the methodology and the text as distinct from each other, stressing instead how they are two components on a continuum of learning physics.

This feedback and these insights led to a redesign of the feedback component of the course. It was decided that all of the feedback (addressing methodology as well as text) would be provided by the doctoral students, as credible and knowledgeable insiders of the physics community. The Division would continue to offer the writing-genre lecture; additionally, Division staff would train and support the doctoral students in giving formative writing feedback and be on hand during the writing and feedback process for any matters arising around the students' texts.

TRAINING THE DOCTORAL STUDENTS

The redesign and implementation of the new feedback component, including the training of the doctoral students, was informed by Dannels' situated communication pedagogy and Airey and Linder's understanding of disciplinary (physics) discourse (these theoretical frameworks are grounded within sociocultural theories of learning and arguably owe a particular debt to situated learning theory (cf. Lave and Wenger as well as Wenger). For the benefit of both the students receiving the feedback and the TAs providing it, the feedback sought to be reflective of "context-driven disciplinary instruction" shaped by and shaping "disciplinary knowledge construction" (Dannels 46). Dannels' conception of a situated communication pedagogy is readily compatible with Airey and Linder's understanding of disciplinary discourse; indeed, we talked to the TAs about situated communication as a dimension of "the complex of representations, tools and activities of a discipline" (28). Airey and Linder argue that "students need to become fluent in a critical constellation of the different semiotic resources—or modes of disciplinary discourse as we depict them—before they can appropriately holistically experience the disciplinary way of knowing that these resources/modes potentially give access to" (28). Achieving such fluency is an objective of the target course, and the formative assessment/feedback is intended to scaffold that objective.

The training (preceded by a pilot with a single TA the previous year) was set up to make the doctoral students aware of the long-term stakes involved in undergraduate student writing, notably that "genres are places where students

learn about the rhetorical contexts in which they are interacting” and that texts, e.g., lab reports, “stand as rhetorical representations of the discipline” (Dannels 147). Thus, it was important conveying that the students’ writing in the first-year course amounts to a first step in the socialization into the engineering physics discipline, and that the writing is one dimension of the students’ achieving discourse fluency (Airey and Linder).

The training was primarily text-oriented; we worked off samples of students’ text from the previous year and discussed the extent to which, and how, the texts constituted exemplars of writing in the engineering physics discipline and how student writers did (or did not) embrace the rhetorical conventions of the genre and the disciplinary discourse. The TAs were asked to read and comment on two texts, as they would normally do, focusing on the articulation of the experimental methodology, but this time they were asked to comment also on any aspects of the writing making the text more or less credible as a text in the engineering physics writing tradition (the prompt was deliberately open). We then also read the texts, first without looking at the TAs’ commentary, and then added our own commentary to the TAs’, supplemented by “meta-commentary” relating to the TAs’ observations. We subsequently met the TAs and worked our way through the text, the comments, and the meta-commentary in a systematic fashion. Division staff then accompanied the TAs for three of their first feedback sessions with students, offering constructive critique and a “debrief” after each session, and giving advice about additional perspectives on the texts/writing which could be included in the feedback.

OBSERVED OUTCOMES

In addition to the positive outcomes observed for the undergraduate students (which is beyond the scope of this description), the redesign also had several positive effects on the doctoral students. We will mention three of these mutually supportive and overlapping outcomes here.

At a fundamental level, the laboratory report is a representation of the “language, mathematics. . . images (including pictures, graphs and diagrams) tools (such as experimental apparatus and measurement equipment), and activities (such as ways of working—both practice and praxis, analytical routines, actions, etc.)” of the discipline (Airey and Linder 27). Engaging with the undergraduate students’ texts and providing the feedback on the text and the students’ performance in the laboratory required the doctoral students to attend to and reflect on multiple modes of disciplinary discourse as they were articulated in the texts. The TAs could relate what they saw in the students’ texts with the experience from their own reading and writing in the discipline, as expressed by two of the TAs

during a follow-up conversation:

. . . you often thought of how you would have expressed that yourself.

The feedback is an opportunity for thinking about how you express and behave [as a physicist and physics writer], both how I behave and write, and how others do it.

The reference to “behavior” above is significant. Discussions with the doctoral students revealed that their feedback, and therefore also the content of the reflections, frequently extended beyond the language domain to other modes of disciplinary discourse, for example, issues relating to the integration of visual information and formulae, striking a proper balance between text and visuals, making figures communicate visual content effectively, and the (sequential) location of critical and non-critical content within a text.

A second outcome attributable to the modified teaching role assumed by the TAs is how the feedback appeared to be beneficial for the doctoral students’ own development of disciplinary literacy (in addition to that of the students’), i.e., their “ability to appropriately participate in the communicative practices of a discipline” (Airey 3). This positive dimension was cited by several of the doctoral students during the training and after the “joint” feedback sessions, as exemplified by these statements:

By giving feedback, my ability to critically review a text is improved, something I have benefited from in my own writing.

There is a great likelihood that my own writing develops as a result of reading and giving feedback on the texts of others.

The TAs are themselves doctoral students of the physics discipline, and they are, simultaneously, trying to come to terms with the conventions and expectations governing communication in the discipline. It is clear from the doctoral students’ comments that what they are experiencing amounts to learning. Lave and Wenger remind us that “learning and a sense of identity are inseparable [and] that the development of identity is central to the careers of newcomers in communities of practice” (115). Arguably, it is reassuring if the doctoral students engage in tasks—such as feedbacking—which support their professional development and their emergent physics identity.

There is ample evidence to support a reciprocal effect of providing (rather than receiving) feedback on writing in the research literature. Thus, for example, both Aitchison and Maher et al. have noted how doctoral students engaged in peer feedback in writing groups are able to benefit from “extrapolating from

[another text], things that are relevant to their own writing” (Aitchison 911), and “[performing] effective critical reviews of [their] own [. . .] writing” based on their review of another scholarly text (Maher et al. 274).

In addition to creating a space for reflection and disciplinary literacy development, the tasks involved in reading, critiquing and feedbacking also address several of the graduate attributes for Ph.D.s in the Swedish context, many of which speak to an awareness of and ability to negotiate disciplinary discourse as defined above. Space prohibits a detailed account in this area, but four such attributes will serve as examples. First, a Ph.D. is expected to “demonstrate familiarity with research methodology in general” (“Local Qualifications Framework” 7). Obviously, overseeing, supporting, reviewing and critiquing the methodology of the students’ experimental work will help build a strong fundamental understanding for the critical elements involved in research methodology. Second, several of the graduate attributes speak to the need for critical and analytical ability, e.g., “demonstrate the ability to . . . review and evaluate [scholarly work].” (“Local Qualifications Framework” 8). Scholarly work is standardly presented as text (journal publications, book chapters e.g.), and the skills practiced when providing feedback on students’ writing—critical reading skills, a general ability to analyze and evaluate texts from a disciplinary discourse / “community” perspective, synthesis and presentation of criticism—arguably contribute to the TAs long-term academic and professional skills repertoire. Third, a Ph.D. must be able to “demonstrate the ability . . . to present and discuss research and research findings authoritatively . . . in writing and in dialogue with the academic community” (“Local Qualifications Framework” 6). On the assumption that feedback furthers the doctoral students’ disciplinary literacy—and we have argued above that it does—then feedbacking is a task that directly addresses this attribute. Finally, Ph.D.s are expected to “demonstrate the capacity to . . . support the learning of others” (“Local Qualifications Framework” 8). There is ample support in the research literature for saying that the provision of feedback, whether on texts, experiments or other dimensions of disciplinary discourse, constitutes a critical component of teaching (e.g., Black and William); therefore, enabling TAs who are doctoral students to engage in feedbacking is a worthwhile endeavor.

WORKS CITED

- Airey, John. “The Disciplinary Literacy Discussion Matrix: A Heuristic Tool for Initiating Collaboration in Higher Education.” *Across the Disciplines*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-J.2011.8.3.18>.
- Airey, John, and Cedric Linder. “A Disciplinary Discourse Perspective on University

- Science Learning: Achieving Fluency in a Critical Constellation of Modes.” *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2009, pp. 27-49, <https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.20265>.
- Aitchison, Claire. “Writing Groups for Doctoral Education.” *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 48, no. 8, 2009, pp. 905-916, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070902785580>.
- Black, Paul, and Dylan William. “The Formative Purpose: Assessment Must First Promote Learning.” *Towards Coherence Between Classroom Assessment and Accountability (103rd Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education)*, edited by Mark Wilson. University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp. 20-50.
- Dannels, Deanna P. “Time to Speak Up: A Theoretical Framework of Situated Pedagogy and Practice for Communication Across the Curriculum.” *Communication Education*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2001, pp. 144-158.
- Lave, Jean, and Etienne Wenger. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge UP, 1991.
- “Local Qualifications Framework for Chalmers University of Technology.” *Chalmers University of Technology*, 22 January 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/24ht98xc>.
- Maher, Damian, et al. “‘Becoming and Being Writers:’ The Experiences of Doctoral Students in Writing Groups.” *Studies in Continuing Education*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2008, pp. 263-275.
- Wenger, Etienne. “Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System.” *Systems Thinker*, vol. 9, no. 5, 1998, pp. 2-3.

PROGRAM PROFILE 3.

**TAs AS ADMINISTRATIVE AND
TEACHER RESEARCHERS:
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA**

Emily Jo Schwaller

University of Arizona

There is a wide range of scholarship on mentoring junior and graduate student WPAs (Edgington and Hartlage Taylor; Latterell; Moore) and the importance of mentoring new graduate students as teachers (Estrem and Reid; Fedukovich and Hall; Obermark et al.). However, there is little information on how mentoring graduate students in programmatic and teacher *research* can aid in the professional development of future writing studies professionals. The following program description discusses a series of opportunities for TAs to be mentored as administrative and teacher researchers and how these experiences prepare graduate students to be informed community members. I also discuss how TAs make the program better through their funds of knowledge (González et al.) and adaptability as new teachers (Rupiper Taggart and Lowry). Using personal experiences and programmatic documents, I will discuss my own trajectory as an advanced graduate student with mentorship, opportunity, and applied research through professional development opportunities.

Currently our writing program houses 133 graduate students in five different disciplines. This group makes up over 70% of the overall instructor population of our writing program, which teaches roughly 12,000 students a year in first-year writing courses. Thus, we need graduate students to be in administrative and research positions to attend to the large amount of data, students, and communication required for a large program. To attend to this demand the program has generated a large amount of opportunities that I outline in the description. These positions include: graduate assistant WPAs, transfer and placement advisors for assessment, GTA committee representatives, writing program specific members within the English Graduate Union, research assistantships on writing studies projects, writing center liaisons, editors for the writing program handbook, and service-learning advisory board members. These experiences are

useful for WPAs, teacher mentors, rhetoric and composition researchers, and graduate students at a wide range of institutions where they can be adapted for local needs. Additionally, my experience can speak to how faculty can mentor (and be mentored) by TAs in this research, creating less dissonance between community members and traditional hierarchies.

WORKS CITED

- Edgington, Anthony and Stacy Hartlage Taylor. "Invisible Administrators: The Possibilities and Perils of Graduate Student Administration." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2007, pp.150-171.
- Estrem, Heidi, and E. Shelley Reid. "Writing Pedagogy Education: Instructor Development in Composition Studies." *Exploring Composition Studies: Sites, Issues, and Perspectives*, edited by Kelly Ritter and Paul Kei Matsuda. Utah State UP, 2012, pp. 223-240.
- Fedukovich, Casie and Megan Hall. "GTA Preparation as a Model for Cross-Tier Collaboration at North Carolina State University: A Program Profile." *Composition Forum*, vol. 33, 2016.
- González, Norma, Luis C. Moll, and Cathy Amanti, editors. *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practices in Households, Communities, and Classrooms*. Routledge, 2005.
- Latterell, Catherine. "Defining Roles for Graduate Students in Writing Program Administration: Balancing Pragmatic Needs with a Postmodern Ethics of Action." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 27, no.1, 2003, pp. 23-40.
- Moore, Cindy. "Mentoring WPAs for the Long Term: The Promise of Mindfulness." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2018, pp. 89-106.
- Obermark, Lauren, Elizabeth Brewer, and Kay Halasek. "Moving From the One and Done to a Culture of Collaboration: Revising Professional Development for TAs." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 39, no.1, 2015, pp. 32-53.
- Rupiper Taggart, Amy, and Margaret Lowry. "Cohorts, Grading, and Ethos: Listening to TAs Enhances Teacher Preparation." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 34, no.1, 2011, pp. 89-114.

PROGRAM PROFILE 4.

A FOCUS ON EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Lacey Wootton

American University

Over twenty years ago, I took the two-semester “Teaching of Writing” sequence with Anne Beaufort in the master’s program at American University. Now I am teaching that course and directing the writing studies program. The sequence is, in its broad scope, unchanged; it remains a thorough and thoughtful preparatory experience for teachers of first-year writing. Moreover, it balances conventional graduate education with professional development, as students take a traditional master’s-level pedagogy course but then spend a semester as interns in a writing course, followed by possible adjunct employment. At no point do we refer to them as “TAs”; they learn to be faculty, and then we treat them as faculty—and perhaps most importantly, the writing program doesn’t depend on their labor, so we can focus on their education and development.

AU’s Department of Literature doesn’t have a Ph.D. program; students can earn an MA in Literature or an MFA in Creative Writing. Students from both groups take “Teaching of Writing,” some because they fully intend to teach first-year writing and some because they want to discover whether they want to teach. The course sequence can meet the needs of both groups.

The strengths of this preparation lie in its breadth and depth. The program spans at least two semesters. In the first semester, students take a three-credit course in pedagogy. The parameters of the course are largely left up to the instructor. I’ve chosen to emphasize a “teaching for transfer” model, in which students read, write, and discuss texts centered on practice, research, and theory, drawing connections among them and to their own experiences through metacognitive reflection. Through persistent reflection, connection, and application, I hope to avoid at least some of what Reid et al. described in their article: new teachers falling back on past experiences instead of looking to what they’d learned in their pedagogy course. Students get a broad survey of writing studies practical advice and scholarship, with the opportunity to delve more deeply into topics that interest them via the major projects.

Students must apply to participate in the second semester, the practicum; this written application is reviewed by me and the chairs of the program’s Mentoring

Committee. For the practicum, the Mentoring chairs and I pair each accepted student with a mentor teacher who has volunteered to participate. For the spring semester, students attend every class meeting of a College Writing class, gradually increasing their participation by, for example, working with students during group activities, circulating during writing time, contributing to discussions, and meeting with one or two students for office hours; they also must teach at least a couple partial and full classes and “shadow grade” at least one assignment. Throughout, they meet with their mentor teacher regularly to discuss the class. They meet with me once every two weeks to talk about their experiences and to prepare their teaching portfolio, the culmination of the semester’s work.

At the end of the spring semester, students can submit their portfolio in application to teach as an adjunct-faculty member in the fall. A small hiring committee (the department chair, the Mentoring chairs, and I) reviews their portfolios and conducts interviews. The interviews are meant to be learning experiences for students—more supportive than challenging—but they are also genuine; not every student is hired. (In these rare cases, we sometimes ask the student to do another semester of internship, with no guarantee of employment.) If they are hired, they come in as adjunct faculty in the fall, with no distinction from other adjunct faculty other than a slightly lower salary if they have not yet finished their degree. Over the summer, I conduct a syllabus workshop with them, and I provide individualized support in course development.

These new faculty do receive one more round of support, though—but it’s support that all new faculty receive. Our Mentoring Committee assigns faculty mentors to all our new faculty, including these recent or current graduate students. The mentors (all term—full-time, non-tenure-track—faculty) answer questions, review materials, observe classes, and make themselves available for observation. And all adjunct faculty are welcome to participate in the Writing Studies Program’s faculty-development opportunities, including a full day of workshops before the start of classes in the fall; they are also encouraged to participate in the university’s new-faculty orientations and other faculty development.

I believe that this treatment of graduate students not only as students but as potential—and then actual—colleagues helps to make our program successful. We recognize that students have a great deal to learn; we don’t throw them into the classroom with little preparation. But we want them to feel supported as students and as professionals. Throughout, the “Teaching of Writing” preparation communicates that first-year writing instruction is important work, part of a body of disciplinary knowledge and worthy of institutional respect. The extent of the preparation demonstrates our beliefs that our work deserves study, time, and effort.

This demonstration has benefited the Writing Studies Program’s position in the Department of Literature, too. Literature faculty see the rigor of this

preparation as giving lie to the bad idea that “anyone can teach writing” (Kahn 363). Students in their classes talk about the difficult readings and the challenging writing assignments; they serve as ambassadors of our discipline to our colleagues in literary studies. And the “Teaching of Writing” has had consistent support from the department and its chairs throughout its history. Even as the MA and MFA curricula have changed, the two-semester “Teaching of Writing” sequence has never been questioned.

“Teaching of Writing” has benefited, too, from the perhaps somewhat unusual characteristics of the Writing Studies Program (WSP). The WSP has about 65 faculty, half of whom are term and half adjunct (part-time) faculty. We do not rely on graduate students for their labor; instead, we have a professional faculty, with the term faculty expected to engage in service and governance, and the adjunct faculty fully welcomed into all programmatic activities. The students from the “Teaching of Writing” sequence comprise a very small minority of our total faculty. For this reason, we can focus more on supporting and developing these students as teachers because they aren’t essential to our workforce; there’s no imperative to train them quickly and get them into the classroom.

The success of these students is demonstrated in a couple of different ways. I supervise all the adjunct faculty, and part of that supervision requires review of course materials and class observations. Faculty who come out of the “Teaching of Writing” demonstrate pedagogical decisions in line with current practices in the field, including an emphasis on rhetorical choice and flexibility, instruction in metacognitive reflection, and a focus on information literacy. This is not to say that adjunct faculty with different preparation don’t include these elements, but as brand-new teachers, our graduate students demonstrate remarkable sophistication and fluency.

In terms of employment beyond graduate school, multiple students who have wanted to continue teaching have found full-time employment, including at AU. Others have opted for different full-time careers but have chosen to continue teaching one section per semester as adjunct faculty. Some, too, have used their preparation at AU to benefit them in teaching assistantships in Ph.D. programs.

The employment outlook isn’t entirely rosy, however. A number of our term faculty—including me—came out of the “Teaching of Writing” and got full-time jobs with our master’s degrees. However, we increasingly get applications from experienced teachers with Ph.D.s in rhetoric and composition, and it’s becoming clear that applicants with an MA or MFA might be at a disadvantage in comparison. While I include a unit on academic labor in the “Teaching of Writing” class so that students understand the constraints they might face, I suspect that in the future, our department will need to consider the ethics of

master's-level teacher preparation. The preparation sequence is a meaningful and rigorous educational experience, in which students learn practical approaches to teaching but also the knowledge and values of a discipline that is new to most of them: writing studies. We'll continue to be transparent with students about what this preparation might mean for their future employment in higher education, and we'll continue to keep our ethical obligations to them in mind.

As we continue this work, our program will also need to attend to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The WSP faculty is not sufficiently diverse; we have attended to this problem in our hiring, but with little turnover among the term faculty, it's a slow process. Therefore, we don't always have faculty of color who volunteer to work with a teaching intern, which means that students of color encounter little demographic diversity in faculty they observe and work with. Although we engage with important issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the survey of research and theory in the pedagogy course (including anti-racist pedagogy and linguistic diversity), and although students have chosen to pursue individual projects that allow them to explore these issues more deeply, I'm dissatisfied with the students' opportunities to encounter a diverse range of faculty. What I've been able to do—although it is insufficient—is pair students with mentor teachers who can support them in their own intellectual and professional inquiry and growth; I can offer them pedagogical diversity that will allow them to develop their professional identities.

These two areas of continued growth—ethical preparation for the academic job market and diverse representation—will present ongoing challenges. I'm grateful, though, that we have a firm foundation in the structure of the program—one that will allow us to continue to challenge and support students even as my colleagues and I challenge ourselves to do better by our students.

WORKS CITED

- Kahn, Seth. "Anyone Can Teach Writing." *Bad Ideas About Writing*, edited by Cheryl E. Ball and Drew M. Loewe, West Virginia University Press, 2017, pp. 363-368.
- Reid, E. Shelley, et al. "The Effects of Writing Pedagogy Education on Graduate Teaching Assistants' Approaches to Teaching Composition." *Writing Program Administration*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 32-73.

PROGRAM PROFILE 5.

**EQUITY THROUGH LEADERSHIP:
THE GRADUATE STUDENT
ADMINISTRATOR AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA**

Khadeidra Billingsley, James Eubanks, and Luke Niiler

University of Alabama

To better prepare graduate students for careers in writing program administration, many university English departments have created graduate student administrator (GSA) positions in first-year writing programs. There, the inequities already present in faculty WPA work (noted by McGee and Handa; McLeod; Micciche; and Adler-Kassner) often present themselves in even sharper relief. Peters argues that the GSA position can be characterized by inequitable, even inhospitable, working conditions, and suggests these factors can contribute to WPA spaces becoming “deeply entrenched system[s] of inequity” (133). Mountford notes that graduate WPAs often lack the political experience needed to navigate labyrinthine systems of power (51). In turn, Duffey et al. ask how we can help graduate students “understand and work for change in the material constraints of our local bureaucracies” (79). Navickas et al. emphasize the need for a support system for GSAs’ emotional labor (273), and Latterell centers the role of professionalizing, not “deskilling” graduate students as WPAs (23). With Latterell, then, we wish to argue that the presence of GSAs in writing program administration calls us to “move...away from continued reliance on hierarchical, fixed notions of administration-as-control and toward a view that is more dynamic and responsive” (24).

There are examples of writing programs committed to dismantling this type of hierarchical power structure and promoting equity among faculty, staff, and graduate student administrators. In this program profile, we will describe how the GSA has an established and integrated role within the administrative hierarchy of the first-year writing program (FWP) at The University of Alabama. We will demonstrate how the FWP GSA is perceived, by faculty and students alike, as an equal, not subordinate, of the WPA team: a move toward equity grounded in transformational leadership theory (TLT). This profile will illustrate how

equity is not treated as something that is being worked for; rather, it is something that is wholly present, ingrained in the daily work of the position. Here, we combine the voices, perspectives, and experiences of two former UA first-year writing graduate student administrators and the director who hired and worked alongside them. In collaboratively composing this profile, we reify the underlying principle of equity that contextualizes the relationships between WPAs and GSAs at The University of Alabama.

Each spring, a call for GSA applications is circulated on the English department listserv. A condensed version follows:

The Graduate Student Administrator is an administrative position that carries one course release. The GSA will work ten hours per week, reports to the Director of the First-year Writing Program, and works with the Associate and Assistant Directors, as needed. Responsibilities include:

- Attending and contributing to all weekly FWP administrative staff meetings;
- Completing semi-annual reviews of syllabi, book orders, and grade reports;
- Assisting with program initiatives (e.g, assessment, curating student writing);
- Co-teaching FWP spring and summer orientation sessions;
- Mentoring first-time-teaching GTAs; and
- Contributing to program research.

The GSA should work effectively and independently on all assigned tasks as they arise, and will be encouraged and supported as they pursue projects that coincide with their interests. Applicants must have completed UA's teaching practicum and taught the full First-Year Writing sequence.

As delineated in the above position description, equity is foundational to the GSA role: the GSA “assists,” “mentors,” and “contributes,” with nominal emphasis on clerical tasks. The FWP Director makes it clear in the search process that the expectation for GSAs is the same for the rest of the administrative team. As is the case with the associate and assistant directors, the GSA submits a vita and references, which are then shared with the entire administrative team, which then convenes to interview each candidate. Once in the position, the GSA is expected to contribute to discussions and decision-making as they would if they were a faculty administrator. The position engages students in various WPA work and tasks that many graduate students do not have the privilege to

experience while pursuing their studies. Once a graduate student has completed their one year of service in the position, they have *tangible leadership experiences* they can leverage as they continue their careers.

These leadership experiences are grounded in (TLT). As Dvir, Edent, Avolio, and Shamir have argued, and as Niiler has previously discussed, transformational leadership challenges and supports followers (in this instance, GSAs) to perform beyond expectations. By doing so graduate students acquire a stronger sense of self-efficacy, or the perceived ability to perform a task. Bandura terms such moments “mastery experiences.”

Bass notes that a transformational leader is an *idealized influence*, or role model. Such leaders provide *inspirational motivation* by communicating a vision and making sure that followers are committed to shared goals. Transformational leaders provide *intellectual stimulation*; they’re creative, and they continually seek out new ways of solving problems. In addition, transformational leadership involves *individualized attention*, as per Northington. Drawing upon Bass, Northington finds that highly effective collegiate athletic directors make a practice of “mentoring others, respecting the needs of individuals, respecting the differences of individuals, practicing two-way communication, and developing the potential of one’s followers” (“Transformational leadership behaviors”). Such leadership is key to creating equity in GSA roles. WPAs who employ transformational leadership principles themselves can encourage and enable graduate students to employ those same principles and practices in their administrative roles, which can lead significant transformations within a writing program.

In the GSA position at The University of Alabama, graduate students have the opportunity to experience multiple aspects of WPA work. Over the course of a work week, they might bring the concerns of a graduate student to the administrative staff as an advocate, work with the coordinator of online studies on the curriculum, work with the administrative assistant on an issue with textbooks or classrooms, and do research on other writing programs to present to the rest of the administrative team. This role contributed to both James and Khay’s meaning-making of what writing program administration really looks like and all that it entails, particularly behind the scenes. The GSA receives physical space, which we know is oftentimes limited for graduate students, in the office to complete job duties and responsibilities. In addition, there is also a mental space of encouragement that allows the GSA to cultivate his/her own professional WPA identity. This may perhaps be one of the best benefits of the role.

As a GSA, James created an initiative in which incoming GTAs were invited to a social event near the end of the semester before they assumed the role of instructor of record for a composition class. During this event, they had the opportunity to interact with experienced GTAs and instructors in order to have their questions

about their duties or teaching in general. In planning this initiative, James was able to pinpoint an exigency and bring it to the rest of the administrative group without the fear of being shut down. This was of particular interest and value to James, a Black man who has felt that his perspective has not always been welcomed in academic spaces. This difference of perspective was welcomed and encouraged. He drafted a proposal, which was approved; the logistics of the event were his to plan. Per Bass's conception of transformational leadership, James enacted a mentoring role (idealized influence), provided his GTA colleagues with individual attention, and assumed a greater sense of self-efficacy. Of the experience, James notes, "I benefited greatly from the experienced teachers around me in my early teaching, so I felt it was important to provide that. The fact that, in this case, the mentoring was between GTAs, made for a more relatable situation."

While serving as GSA, Khay was also able to develop a workshop-based GTA training program. In addition, she created a student writing showcase with the authors featured in the program's annual anthology of student writing. After approaching Dr. Niiler with a written proposal for each and receiving the green light, she put these plans into action. In this moment, Khay recalls how she felt "empowered as an agent of change." Both initiatives demonstrated her role as a mentor (idealized influence), her ability to give individual attention, and her willingness to serve as a source of intellectual stimulation. The FWP staff trusted both James and Khay's ability and knowledge to design and implement these programs with little to no faculty interference. However, the collaborative support that Elder, Schoen, and Skinnell argue is necessary for one to handle the challenges of WPA work was always in place in the case that they needed it. Although James and Khay were strongly supported throughout the process of building these initiatives from start to finish, both of them were able to take ownership of their initiatives, showcase their professional agency as trusted members of the FWP administrative team, and lay claim to powerful mastery experiences.

The co-existence of the GSA as an equal member of the FWP staff is not only observed in the English department; it extends to other spaces on and off-campus. During the Spring semester, the GSA travels with the staff to a regional WPA conference. This role is changing the narrative of overworked, exploited GSAs and highlighting that these graduate students can be integrated into an institutional structure in an equitable and advantageous manner. Niiler notes that this position is created to be mutually beneficial for both the FWP and the applicant. The GSA role could be considered a form of experiential learning; one that allows its inhabitants to experiment, observe, and begin to grow as a professional.

One such transformation occurred within Niiler's graduate seminar in writing program administration. Niiler asked his students to write extended reflections on the course in the form of administrative philosophies, in which they

would articulate the principles and practices they would use to direct a writing program. As he reviewed them, he was struck by how much those philosophies demonstrated Bass' four principles of transformational leadership.

James was a member of that class and shared a vision that drew directly on transformational leadership practices. In the excerpt below, James expresses his wish to communicate program goals and build and nurture relationships (note, too, his use of the present tense to indicate how closely he identifies with the role of WPA):

As a WPA, I believe in developing clear, achievable programmatic goals, building strong relationships in order to accomplish these goals, enhancing departmental assessment practices, and implementing multimodal instructional practices.

James gives considerable attention to the kind of inspirational motivation and individualized attention he can provide to graduate teachers. He repeatedly notes that he wishes to place these teachers within his program within areas that “best suit their [individual] talents and interests.” “I think that the way we teach and guide new teachers should be wrapped up in how they see themselves as people, and how they want to develop as teachers.”

Long, Holberg, and Taylor attest that “the best professional development programs... demonstrate a more dynamic and equitable form of administrative collaboration between peers” (76). At The University of Alabama, through their leadership philosophy and collegial actions, the FWP team strives to ensure that the GSA acts and perhaps most importantly feels as if they are an integral member of the organization. Despite the institutional, departmental, and disciplinary hierarchical structure that may typically separate the WPA from a typical paid faculty WPA role, the GSA is viewed as an equal within the FWP at The University of Alabama. GSAs are given responsibility and autonomy, both in the projects they undertake and in how their personal goals, interests and sensibilities align with their developing administrative ideologies. The transferable knowledge and experience that James and Khay acquired during their time as GSAs have concretized into a strong foundation on which they will continue to catapult their careers, both aspiring to be future WPAs who will embody and uphold the same standard of equitable partnership, collaboration, and empowerment with their future GSAs.

WORKS CITED

Adler-Kassner, Linda. *The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers*. Utah State UP, 2008.

- Bandura, Albert. *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, W.H. Freeman/Times Books/ Henry Holt & Co, 1997.
- Bass, Bernard M. "Leadership: Good, Better, Best." *Organizational Dynamics*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1985, pp. 26-40.
- Duffey, Suellyn, et al. "Collaboration, Conflict and Authority: Graduate Students and Writing Program Administration." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2002, pp. 79-87, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/466116>.
- Dvir, Taly, et al. "Impact of Transformational Leadership on Follower Development and Performance: A Field Experiment." *The Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2002, pp. 735-744, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3069307>.
- Elder, Cristyn L, et al. "Strengthening Graduate Student Preparation for WPA Work." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2014, pp.13-35.
- Latterell, Catherine. "Defining Roles for Graduate Students in Writing Program Administration: Balancing Pragmatic Needs with a Postmodern Ethics of Action." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 27, no. 1/2, 2003, pp. 23-39.
- Long, Mark C, et al. "Beyond Apprenticeship: Graduate Students, Professional Development Programs and the Future(s) of English Studies." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 20, no. 1/2, 1996, pp. 66-78.
- McGee, Sharon J., and Carolyn Handa. *Discord and Direction: The Postmodern Writing Program Administrator*. Utah State UP, 2005.
- McLeod, Susan H. *Writing Program Administration*. Parlor Press, 2007.
- Micciche, Laura R. "More Than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA work." *College English*, vol. 64, no. 4, 2002, pp. 432-458, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3250746>.
- Mountford, Roxanne. "From Labor to Middle Management: Graduate Students in Writing Program Administration." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2002, pp. 41-53, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/466112>.
- Wooten, Courtney Adams, et al., editors. *The Things We Carry: Strategies for Recognizing and Negotiating Emotional Labor In Writing Program Administration*. Utah State UP, 2020.
- Niiler, Luke. "The Writing Center, Transformed." *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2013, <http://rapidintellect.com/AEQweb/t5400z3.pdf>.
- Northington, M. "Transformational Leadership Behaviors of Winning College Athletic Program Directors: A Qualitative Exploratory Study." *The Sport Journal*, vol. 21, 2016, <https://tinyurl.com/2p83sw8u>.
- Peters, Bradley. "Enculturation, Not Alchemy: Professionalizing Novice Writing Program Administrators." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 21, no. 2/3, 1998, p. 121.

PROGRAM PROFILE 6.

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION,
OR, REDEFINING RHETCOMP
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

William Repetto

University of Delaware

In light of current circumstances, can we reconceive of professional development? Conventional wisdom would hold that professional development in a countrywide shut down would be the old methods on new media. For a graduate student, say, a department could hold a “Writing for Publication” seminar in some virtual environment. Administrators could likewise transfer general writing instruction (e.g., bootcamps and workshops) or writing center training to synchronous Zoom sessions or asynchronous YouTube tutorials.

I find redefining professional development judicious because professional development does not always happen at the level of the grandiose, particularly in the domain of rhetoric and composition. In the case of an English department, the everyday expectations, responsibilities and allowances that the department places on its graduate students are the most important form of professional development. I would like to demonstrate how this is true by discussing my first-semester experiences in the University of Delaware’s Ph.D. program in English, focusing particularly on how the program encourages the development of group and individual identities; I will then turn to how the department holistically asks its graduate students to conceive of their respective identities as scholars.

The University of Delaware (UD) has alleviated the segregation of TA identities both centripetally by encouraging us to conceptualize of ourselves as a unified group and centrifugally by stretching each of our imaginations separately. The most obvious way that UD has encouraged our group identity is by attaching all of the first-year TAs to one super-section of the department’s introductory writing course. Instead of trading pedagogical strategies in the abstract or exchanging tips about students that only one of us has met, the TAs of our cohort are in the same Zoom room for lectures and in-virtual-class writing activities. We see when students are struggling and can ping each other (using

Zoom's private chat function) to confirm observations, organize who will lend assistance, and impart lessons learned from interactions.

While these processes happen many times per class, and sometimes beyond the Zoom session, the instructor, who also directs the writing program, has enabled us to find our identity as individual instructors as well.¹ Each of us manages a single group of 3-4 students for the duration of the course. At first, we were asked to provide holistic commentary on drafts and complete essays. Then, our instructor asked us to use the tools and functions of the learning management system to provide more pointed feedback. As we get to mid-semester, we will now turn our attention to grading.

As someone who has taught English composition before at both Eastern University and La Salle University, both in the greater Philadelphia area, I considered these instructions remedial—but only at first. I quickly realized that taking a step back and returning to the basics, allowed me to work out some inefficiencies in the feedback I had been giving before. Addressing student work holistically forced me to stop and consider a piece's tenor instead of dwelling on some of the lower-order issues. Considering how and why particular phrases and clauses in a piece require precise feedback forced me to re-define the limits of prescriptivism and descriptivism for myself. As for grading, the Super Section uses specifications grading, which I am excited to incorporate into my personal teaching practice.

The centripetal forces of the program have helped our cohort form a caring, compassionate yet healthily opinionated identity, and the work done on my own time has asked me to conceive of my pedagogical identity as one always being constituted and reconstituted by the seemingly banal, everyday aspects of teaching—underlining a phrase, leaving a comment, towing the line between encouraging and discouraging in the assignment of a grade. Without our noticing, these very actions allow us to continually re-define ourselves; through them, we show our priorities, our preferences, and, perhaps, our own anxieties about composition. I've left unanswered, though, a pivotal question of the present publication: how does the professional development of TAs avoid conflicting and competing roles and responsibilities?

At UD, our professional development is incorporated with other ostensibly conflicting roles and responsibilities.² The healthy collegial relationships that

1 To give you the nitty-gritty details, the class meets Tuesdays and Thursdays for an hour and a half in the early afternoon. The class time is broken down into breakout sessions that the TAs lead, lectures by our instructor, writing exercises, and discussion that sometimes takes the form of small groups in breakout rooms and sometimes is done with the full class. Some Thursday courses are asynchronous, and, while the students are asked to view and reflect on a YouTube video, article, etc., the TAs and our instructor conference to make sure we're all on the same page and to keep each other accountable for rendering assistance to the students.

2 In my editing process, a colleague recommended I remove "ostensibly" from this sentence. I

have developed in our online space as TAs and in our constantly abuzz group text message chain have carried us through other seminars. Our group unity is, in fact, an important professional development tool. We keep each other accountable by reminding one another of due dates; we offer words of encouragement to those striving or thriving; we keep each other abreast of availability for socially-distant/quarantine-compliant socializing.

As scholars of English, in rhetoric and composition programs or in literature, we so often pay lip service to the idea that no one works alone right before we return to our lonely, contemplative cells. UD shows its commitment to actually overcoming the problem by sticking all of its first-year English TAs together in one course, and the payoffs are essentially self-evident: scholars with a better appreciation for togetherness during a time in history that actively discourages the same.

To go more practical, the use of breakout rooms in Zoom, combined with other responsibilities on the interface while the full class is together for lecture has taught us to navigate the myriad functions that such interfaces offer. In the seminars where I take the supposedly conflicting role of student, all of the TAs are adept at talking our grad school professors through the same functionalities when needed. Additionally, as mentioned, the instructor of the class that we TA for has slowly turned over learning management system responsibilities to us. Who can tell how valuable these skillsets will turn out to be moving further into the 21st century? Our leaders never got us all together for a “Using Canvas” seminar or a three-hour crash course on using Zoom; they have entrusted us to discover our own professional deficiencies and empowered us to work together as a cohort to propel one another to professional readiness.

At the intersection of these developments in group cohesion and individual imagination lies UD’s efforts to help us negotiate our layered identities as scholars. UD has tested our time management skills by assigning us responsibilities not only as TAs but also as writing center assistants. In addition to two or three seminars, first-semester students are expected to take another course titled “Introduction to Grad Studies.” Including the course we TA for, this means we attend between four and five classes a week and tutor at the writing center and meet the obligations of that job—meetings, research, tutor report writing and so on. It’s a lot. And it’s difficult. Most importantly, though, these combined experiences help us understand that a scholar is not the same as a researcher; a scholar is not the same as a teacher. We’re getting a taste now of the teaching load, of the relationships we will be expected to develop with students when we secure

do, however, really mean *ostensibly* here. The idea that administrative duties conflict with teaching, which conflicts with research, is a myth that no longer serves our purposes as scholars. Later in this piece, I will ask that we re-think of these responsibilities as part of a single, layered identity.

our first positions, of, yes, the bureaucratic know-how that a scholar needs to thrive these days—might be applicable to any so-called “alt ac” responsibilities we take up as well. These are not the kind of skills that a program can sit down and discuss at the captive audience of a new cohort. These are the skills that a 21st-century scholar must adjust to, slowly. UD has mastered giving TAs this exposure by allowing us to get comfortable and then re-adjust day-to-day as we settle into our new identities.

I posed the question at the beginning of this description-turned-essay: should we redefine professional development? We must. We must now more than ever. UD does provide the normative professional development—invites to job talks, a constant flow of available positions in the field, and one-off events covering any field-specific interests that an intellectual could want. (A quick Outlook search shows me I have been receiving such emails since before our first day in the program.) But, most importantly, UD gives us just enough freedom to professionally develop ourselves with. UD allows professional development to be a gradual process that will be felt day-by-day, year-by-year, and across whole lifetimes. Leadership in other Ph.D. programs should take note.

PROGRAM PROFILE 7.

HOLISTIC MENTORING TO ADVOCATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

**Sue Hum, Kandice Diaz, Victoria Ramirez Gentry,
Karyn L. Hixson, and Abby Leigh Mangel**

The University of Texas at San Antonio

It is a truth universally acknowledged that graduate teaching assistants straddle multiple worlds, and this straddling results in significant precarity due in part to the amorphous professional identity of inhabiting both student and instructor roles simultaneously. At the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), a cohort of four doctoral students worked in partnership with a faculty mentor to teach a lower-division, core curriculum course, Technical Writing, in both synchronous and asynchronous delivery formats. A pilot initiative in holistic mentoring addressed not only the challenges of online teaching, but also explored strategies for facilitating social justice aims in teaching. To nurture opportunities for expressing that professional identity to embodied aims of equity, this pilot initiative addressed four facets of holistic mentoring: (a) psychological and emotional support; (b) goal setting and career path development; (c) academic subject knowledge support; and (d) provision of a role model (Nora and Crisp). This profile begins with a brief overview of course goals, department context, and challenges faced by doctoral instructors in teaching course content, including quantitative literacy. Next, instructors discuss the success in and barriers to performing a professional identity as course instructor, sharing their experiences in achieving the goals and delivering the content of the course, even as they collaborate to update the curriculum with inclusive, anti-racist pedagogies. These collaborative discussions underscore an organic-yet-structured model for the holistic mentoring. Lastly, this article concludes with lessons learned, emphasizing the avenues for growth and improvement and the importance of solidarity and rapport as a community of learners (and colleagues).

TEACHING TECHNICAL WRITING AT UTSA

English 2413, Technical Writing (TW), is a lower-division, core curriculum course that enrolls students from across the university. For many, the course is required of their degree plans, while for others, it demonstrates additional, advanced writing

expertise, a crucial skill. This course contributes to the English major with a concentration in Professional Writing, Minor in Professional Writing, and an undergraduate certificate in Professional Writing and Rhetoric. Offered by the English department, this course is usually taught by doctoral instructors as composition courses are provided by a separate department. TW prioritizes opportunities for technical and professional communication skills for a variety of audiences, contexts, purposes, mediums, and technologies, with particular attention to future career applicability. A value-added emphasis involves quantitative literacy and data visualization, connected with the course's "Q" designation, part of a university-wide initiative, developed in response to the university's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The doctoral instructors, who begin teaching TW in their second year of their program, teach two sections of 25 students each semester. About 30 sections of TW are offered annually. Doctoral instructors, crucial for the success of TW, teach the course content, using previously generated content, resources, and a shared textbook for a common syllabus, which is updated annually. Writing assignments are scaffolded, beginning with the memo and brochure/infographic, followed by an eight-week long recommendation report, built from smaller assignments, including proposal, data and research summary, draft, visual representations of data, and oral presentation. These assignments encourage students to write to their primary and secondary stakeholder audiences, thus shaping their planning, research and content development, delivery, peer critique, and feedback.

HOLISTIC MENTORING

Holistic mentoring prioritizes adequate academic, professional, and social support for doctoral instructors. In the past, those teaching TW for the first time were given access to the course repository for materials and usually relied on informal knowledge networks, along with the advice of more advanced doctoral instructors. This cohort benefited from the robust tools of virtual meetings to engage in regular mentoring and debriefing meetings throughout the Fall 2020 semester. These meetings filled in any gaps, as not all doctoral instructors brought experience in teaching TW or online delivery. During biweekly meetings on Zoom, the department's undergraduate advisor of record facilitated discussions with doctoral instructors, who supported and mentored each other. Each meeting addressed three areas of concern: course content, logistics of teaching, including problem solving, and professionalization. In addition to supporting instructors in adjusting and thriving as professionals, this pilot program benefited from research on holistic mentoring that prioritized the latent variables of educational goal setting, emotional and psychological support, and academic subject knowledge.

Holistic mentoring meetings frequently addressed questions in four areas: (a) using learning management software, Blackboard, such as the logistics of constructing and delivering a completely online class, navigating this platform, using rubrics, giving feedback, navigating breakout rooms, and organizing the gradebook; (b) course management, such as developing a clear schedule, providing students with useful reminders (instead of overwhelming them), using announcements to keep students on track, whether students should be required to turn on their cameras to participate in class discussion, as well as when to record a lecture session; (c) writing pedagogy, such as processes of drafting and revising, engaging in a range of research processes, generating discussion on writing topics and process, and encouraging students to build their reports systematically through the smaller assignments; and (d) handling the paper load, such as time management, turnaround time for assignments (quizzes, discussion, and formal assignments), using rubrics to evaluate student work, and types of feedback to address higher order concerns (content, critical thinking, and organization) and lower order concerns (sentence-level editing and grammar).

Two other challenges remain unique to the course content. The first challenge involves the course's explicit emphasis on quantitative literacy, which was new to the doctoral cohort. To address quantitative literacy, doctoral instructors needed to teach about quantitative information, the development of a body of data, terminology and conventions for working with numbers, their use in an argument or as evidence, and strategies for integrating quantitative information into different types of technical documents. More importantly, instructors had to learn to explain why knowledge, analysis, and generation of quantitative data was important to students' technical writing skills. To do so, instructors developed assignment prompts to facilitate discussion on what quantitative information is, how to read, understand, and analyze qualitative information, how numbers can be manipulated to push a certain agenda, and why collecting, developing, and presenting data is connected to ethical, academic honesty. While the course textbook, *Persuading with Numbers*, offers a helpful foundation, teaching quantitative literacy prompted additional pedagogical demands for doctoral instructors (Hum). Fortunately, the cohort had created a strong, supportive, and collaborative community, and each member generously shared strategies, resources, and even their own recorded course videos through a shared folder. Materials generated to address student questions were also made available, thus the instructors were able to anticipate areas of student confusion.

The second challenge arose in response to social movements, including Black Lives Matter and Me Too, and university-wide initiatives that demanded an emphasis on discussions of diversity and inclusion. To bring attention to the importance of equity, the infographic assignment, given early in the semester,

took on explicit questions both in terms of content and discussion of equity. Coupled with more polarized national debates from the Fall 2020 presidential election cycle, the cohort found themselves navigating similar extreme viewpoints in students' discussions. The infographic assignment, discussed in detail below, was augmented with some examples related to anti-racist topics, such as race and incarceration. Bringing in their own examples, the students in TW were asked to discuss how the design elements of infographics collected, presented, and circulated information about issues related to diversity and inclusion. In addition, students also wrote and designed their own visuals, receiving feedback on strategies that helped them integrate diversity and equity in their literacy choices. Some students appreciated the value of directly connecting such issues to the field of technical writing and the workplace, while others were skeptical and suspicious. Collective meetings for mentorship, separate individual meetings, cohort support, and numerous emails addressed the complications from doctoral instructors' efforts to maneuver these difficult conversations while also representing the institution as responsible, ethical professionals.

MENTORING FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Part of developing a professional identity is not only the performance of an instructor's responsibilities but also learning to teach students how to engage in higher order thinking skills, particularly knowledge construction. The infographic assignment, the second in a series of eight, asks students to create an original infographic, using information from a white paper published by the PEW Research Center. Students are asked to convey information, using a combination of words and images for a specific audience, purpose, context, and rhetorical situation. After selecting a PEW white paper on a social issue, they read and summarized the information, and then integrated that information into an original infographic, paying attention to design and layout, such as words, colors, composition, and visuals (Kim). Students also developed their own visuals from the data, a preliminary step on learning about data visualization that will be reprised in the recommendation report assignment. Existing teaching resources had been revised to address topics of race and inclusivity, as well as including race-related iconography and design ("Depicting"). In addition to class lectures that address race and inclusivity, students engage in discussion by sharing infographics, identifying two to three design strategies, evaluating their successes, and offering ideas or suggestions on how design choices can challenge racism. Thus, this infographic assignment not only introduces students to quantitative literacy but also encourages students to reflect on anti-racism and social issues as they learn to move beyond summary and paraphrase and begin engaging in

knowledge construction through analysis. Knowing that some students might feel called out and defensive, doctoral instructors invited students to participate and contribute to anti-racist efforts. In addition to content changes, the doctoral instructors hoped students would engage critically with each other's perspectives and racial experiences, even as they acknowledged their own positionality. However, through this pilot initiative that the doctoral instructors embraced—learning to facilitate difficult conversations with students to support a social justice agenda, thus responding to disciplinary calls for developing anti-racist pedagogy (Condon and Young)—resulted in polarization and resistance to anti-racist readings, potentially exacerbated by online instruction.

While instructors experienced a broad range of student responses to this anti-racist approach, one doctoral instructor had to maneuver the interpersonal dynamics of a vocal protester, thus spotlighting the challenges of integrating anti-racist pedagogy in the TW curriculum. In response to many students' agreement that inclusivity was relevant to iconography and design, a student expressed his view that further discussions on race would divide the country, concluding that such discussions should be avoided and ignored. While the class proceeded to work on their assignment, the instructor rightly anticipated continued resistance from that one student, who voiced strong views, complaining that gender differences vilified and victimized men. The instructor faced a dilemma with how to deal with this kind of pushback to the anti-racist teachings. In such complex situations, doctoral students' precarity and their in-between status as both instructor and graduate student becomes most obvious. While some scholarship exists on how to handle difficult yet constructive conversations, the unique circumstances of this situation points to the value of a faculty mentor and a strong support community that listened, offered advice, and helped this instructor brainstorm tactics and maneuver pathways for addressing a student's perspective. Furthermore, other students communicated with the instructor to refute that student's protests and defensiveness, although they chose not to engage him on the discussion board. Recognizing the importance of openness, respect, and professionalism, the instructor maintained what Romeo García and Y. Isaac Hinojosa call "strategic neutrality," a stance that acknowledges the ways in which friction becomes an opportunity for cross-racial dialogue. In short, holistic mentoring supported this instructor through the thorny challenges of and difficult conversations rooted in race-related content and aims.

LESSONS LEARNED

Technical Writing remains a generative environment for confronting issues that are related to social justice in a creative fashion. Even during the height of the

COVID-19 pandemic and the limitations of online instruction, the doctoral instructors were able to navigate a number of complicated situations that importantly addressed issues of race, perception, and reality. While doctoral instructors approached the unusual semester with their own commitment to compassion and fairness, the open line of communication between the entire cohort and their mentor facilitated a well-rounded professionalism, imbued with social justice goals. Ultimately, the doctoral students strengthened their appreciation for and investment in difference together in the context of holistic mentoring. This diverse cohort, modulated by an experienced and open-minded mentor, served as an inspirational model for the educational possibilities within their own diverse classrooms.

As the doctoral instructors revisit the infographic assignment and seek to extend anti-racist pedagogy to other portions of the Technical Writing course, they must (re)commit to the belief that the classroom remains a site capable of sparking a revolution or reproducing structural inequities. Despite mixed success, and despite the vocal protests of a few students, the doctoral instructors recognize that the next generation of students benefits from their commitment and efforts to social justice aims. Anti-racist pedagogy is forged by friction and resistance, but the stressors that come from thinking, acting, teaching, and theorizing are worth the risk with the support, partnership, and professional identity enabled by holistic mentoring.

WORKS CITED

- Condon, Frankie and Vershawn Ashanti, editors. *Performing Antiracist Pedagogy in Rhetoric, Writing, and Communication*. The WAC Clearinghouse/University Press of Colorado, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.37514/ATD-B.2016.0933>.
- García, Romeo, and Yndalecio Isaac Hinojosa. "Encounters with Friction: Engaging Resistance through Strategic Neutrality." *On Teacher Neutrality: Politics, Praxis, and Performativity*, edited by Daniel P. Richards, Utah State UP, 2020.
- Hum, Sue. *Persuading with Numbers: A Primer for Engaging Quantitative Information*. Kona, 2017.
- Kim, Erika. "Depicting Race in Iconography." *Noun Project*, <https://blog.thenounproject.com/depicting-race-in-iconography-4ee4e4269875>. Accessed June 22, 2022.
- Nora, Amaury, and Gloria Crisp. "Mentoring Students: Conceptualizing and Validating the Multi-Dimension of a Support System." *Journal of College Student Retention*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2007, pp. 337-356.

PROGRAM PROFILE 8.

**CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY:
BRIDGING THE GAP WITH
ACTION RESEARCH**

**Ian Barnard, Matthew Goldman, Sarah K. Robblee,
Natalie Salagean, Daniel Strasberger, and Candice Yacono**
Chapman University

The graduate teaching associate (GTA) program at Chapman University was initiated in 2015 when the rhetoric contingent of the English faculty saw the opportunity to include a teaching practicum to prepare the MA and MFA graduate students in English for teaching careers in higher education. Chapman University is a mid-sized, R2, private institution in the heart of Orange County, California. The English department offers an MA in English, an MFA in Creative Writing, and a dual degree program.

Ian and Sarah are full-time rhetoric faculty members in the English Department at Chapman, and, for several years, have been involved in interviewing, hiring, and preparing GTAs who serve as instructors-of-record for Chapman's first-year composition courses, Seminar in Rhetoric and Composition. Matt, Natalie, Daniel, and Candice are recent graduates of the dual degree MA/MFA program and served as GTAs while graduate students.

In the English Department at Chapman, all graduate students are eligible to apply for positions as GTAs after they have completed a graduate seminar in teaching composition. Those who are offered and accept GTA positions take a second graduate seminar, composition pedagogy and research practicum, simultaneously with their first semester of teaching. In order to encourage GTAs to develop identities as teacher-scholars, GTAs develop IRB-approved action research projects (Buyserie; Hawkes; Hudson et al.; Souleles) as their major work in this second seminar. These action research projects allow GTAs to research a question they have about the teaching of composition, using their own students as the sources of their data. Thus, they are learning how (their own) teacher-knowledge can be a source of expertise in the fields of pedagogy and composition, and the action research project becomes a central component of and bridge between their teaching (their identities as teachers, since they initiate, shape, and undertake the research as the instructor of their first-year composition class)

and their scholarship (their identities as students, since they are learning how to undertake an action research project and are completing it as a graduate student assignment). Many GTAs have gone on to use their action research projects as the basis for MA theses and conference papers.

In addition, the action research project is designed to allow GTAs to project themselves into the future as teachers, as the vast majority continue teaching after graduation. This project helps GTAs understand how teaching should be an ongoing process of research and reinvention, enabling them to see how they may take charge of their own professional development as teachers when they no longer occupy the liminal position of GTA, without a professor to prompt them to undertake research around their teaching.

AT THE CROSSROADS OF RACISM, NATALIE

My first-year composition course focused on the rhetoric of borders, both figurative and literal, and, through that framework, I explored issues of police brutality, immigration, and homelessness with my students. As so many of the texts we examined in my course explored the dynamics of race, I decided to design my action research project around a question that had plagued me throughout my academic career, one which proved so fascinating it transformed into my MA thesis: How do students feel about discussing race in the classroom? And does a professor's race have any influence on the matter?

Having completed my undergraduate degree at Chapman as well, I went through a radical transformation concerning my own comfort and interest in discussing race within the classroom. In my first few years, I would often sit silently as classmates worked through their racist beliefs in class, too unsure of my own identity as a brown Latina to speak up in defense of myself. But as the rhetoric regarding “illegals” and police brutality grew closer to the forefront of class discussions, I found myself critical of my past inaction and of past classroom environments.

During the first week of classes of the Spring semester when I taught as a GTA, there was an incident on campus in which a White student, loudly and during a morning class, made several anti-Black statements and used racial slurs directed towards Black students. It took me back to a university-affiliated event I had attended four years prior, where I, too, had been called racial slurs by White students. Back then, I felt as though I had no power to address what had been said.

Although teaching this class felt deeply gratifying, especially as a student who had previously had professors allow racist class discussions to carry on without contest, it made my relationship towards being a graduate student and an instructor feel even more at odds. As a GTA, I had the ability to have difficult

race-centered conversations with students one on one, as opposed to subjecting my students of color to either sitting silently or fending for themselves. In graduate school, I still had professors who allowed those racist comments to be made, therefore pushing me into the very position I was working to alleviate my own students of color from. My research project, though it left me with even more questions than I had started with, allowed me to see more clearly the power dynamics and influences amongst students and instructors.

GRADED AND GRADING, MATT

While designing my syllabus for a first-year composition course, I was completing a creative writing MFA. Creative writing is centered around drafting and revision, and it is rare that an instructor assigns a grade based on the student's quality of work. Because of this, as I was considering how to assess my students' work, it didn't make sense for me to use a qualitative grading method. If, as a graduate student, I wasn't being graded on the quality of writing that might take me an entire semester to complete, it didn't seem as if there was a fair standard to hold my students to. I went with a labor-based system to solve this issue. I was only marginally familiar with Peter Elbow's assessment scholarship prior to designing my syllabus, and I had never heard of Asao Inoue. The committee who selected me to teach Fall 2019 pointed out how my assessment method was interesting, suggesting I conduct research on grading for my action research project. They pointed me to other scholars who were experimenting with contract grading, which gave me a greater theoretical framework in which to place my research.

I won't lie: the action research project was the most intimidating aspect of my first semester teaching. I had never conducted that type of research before, nor had I written a scholarly article within that genre. I don't come from an academic family. Most of my time as a grad student was spent battling imposter syndrome and working extra hard to prove that I was a valid member of the community. Once I became fully engaged with the action research project, I fell in love with that type of scholarship and it transitioned into a larger project that I used for my MA thesis. I became confident in my place as an educator and scholar, feeling as if I had joined a pedagogical conversation that was both relevant and important.

My action research project has blossomed into my biggest passion as a professional. I am obsessed with grading methodology and am pushing for a more equitable way to assess student work. My thesis inspired the director of undergraduate writing programs at Chapman University to move into contract grading, and it has caused others within our program to experiment with new grading methodologies as well. Seeing the impact my research had on colleagues has become my proudest achievement as a graduate student.

TEACHING AS LEARNING, DANIEL

In my second year of graduate school, I was given the opportunity to teach my first college class. I designed my first-year composition course around Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs's *Writing about Writing* pedagogy. The semester emphasized drafting, small group workshops, and process. I came into the semester nervous but confident that I was prepared. When starting peer group workshops, I thought I had covered all my bases: running mock workshops, emphasizing higher order concerns such as argument and evidence rather than grammar, and guiding the conversation with leading questions. Yet, as I watched students shuffle around the classroom, I started to question why I arbitrarily assigned groups. Should students remain in the same small group workshops all semester or would they benefit from a different set of eyes?

This question forced me to look at my own teaching strategies, and question what was most beneficial for my students. This led to my action research project, which later became my MA thesis, "The Efficacy of Varying Small Group Workshops in the Composition Classroom." Over the course of the semester, I began to alter my workshop strategies. I varied the groups during workshoping, I read through students' workshop feedback and examined their progress between drafts; though I never conclusively answered which strategy was more beneficial, the project provided me with more insight on how to implement these strategies in a more effective way. It kept me questioning and learning.

ACADEMIC CODE-SWITCHING, CANDICE

My academic identity is tripartite. On any given day, prior to the Coronavirus epidemic, I might teach an 8 am class, then go to my day job as marketing staff at a community college, then come back to Chapman as a student in the afternoons and evenings. This regular donning and doffing of hats, a form of academic code-switching, leaves me occasionally uncertain as to which persona to adopt at any given time.

Although my GTA experience has proved to be the most impactful part of my graduate education, when I started graduate school, I did not realize that I could or would become an instructor. I was the first person in my family to receive a bachelor's degree and had no concrete idea of what graduate school even was. I was encouraged to apply by a night school teacher and only attended because a fellowship was offered.

The teaching composition class quite literally changed my life trajectory. It offered thorough theoretical grounding along with the opportunity to put our learning to use, should we apply to become GTAs, which vaguely terrified me.

(“There’s no way I could teach,” I told my advisor. “Everybody says that,” he replied.) We each were given the opportunity to develop our own FYC course topic and syllabus from the ground up, which I now understand to be relatively rare among GTA programs; this gave us practical experience in curriculum development with the reassurance that our instructor was there to guide us. Then, when we became GTAs, a parallel practicum allowed us to discuss classroom issues while learning core threshold concepts.

I was horrified to learn later that GTAs in other departments only received a brief training—sometimes as little as a weekend “retreat”—before being sent into the classroom. My fellow GTAs and our instructors have been critical to my development as an instructor as well as a graduate student.

I had a wonderful first teaching experience, despite my initial trepidation. Given the department’s focus on multimodal composition, I created a range of such assignments including the creation of a simple video game using Google Slides or Twine, with parallel readings and discussions about topics like procedural rhetoric. That assignment became the focus of my action research project, in which I studied whether motivation and engagement increased with this multimodal assignment compared to the motivation and engagement when assigning a standard essay. Regardless of students’ prior opinions about video games, all of them said afterward that it was a more valuable experience than writing a standard essay. I submitted a paper about my project to the College English Association, expecting it to be rejected. However, it won their Outstanding Graduate Student Essay award.

WORKS CITED

- Alber, Sandra M. *A Toolkit for Action Research*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2011.
- Buyserie Beth Renee. *Approaches to Teaching Language, Knowledge, and Power in a Composition Program: A Participatory Action Research Project Applying Critical Race Theory, Queer Theory, and Decolonial Scholarship*. 2018. Washington State University, PhD Dissertation.
- Hawkes, Martin. “EFL Lecture Courses for Study Abroad Preparation: An Action Research Project.” *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2019, pp. 1–18.
- Hudson, Tara D. et al. “Discovering My Agency: Exploring how Youth Participatory Action Research Facilitates the Development of Capital by Underserved Youth in a College Access Program.” *Teachers College Record*, vol. 122, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1–13.
- Souleles, Nicos. “An Action Research Project on the Use of Facebook in an Undergraduate Visual Communication Study Unit.” *Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2012, pp. 127–141.

PROGRAM PROFILE 9.

NEGOTIATING PLURAL IDENTITIES THROUGH TRANSFER AND INCLUSION: PROGRAM REVISION AT BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Adel Vielstimmig¹

Bowling Green State University

In this program profile, multiple voices from doctoral students, represented by different fonts, describe how two concurrent program revisions align to support students in reconciling identities as conscripted labor and emerging scholars, while also supporting students' evolving personal identities. This multi-voiced narrative includes seven third- and fourth-year doctoral students in the doctoral program in rhetoric and writing studies (R&WS) who hold funded assistantships and two doctoral faculty who lead the UWP and R&WS. Their polyvocal interactions explore the impact of curricular revisions that emphasize writing transfer through writing about writing (WAW), empirical research and leadership, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. After featuring the voices and experiences of graduate students, the profile ends with the voice of program faculty detailing the context of the program revisions.

REVISING FIRST-YEAR WRITING: A FOCUS ON WRITING TRANSFER THROUGH WAW

Coming into the program, I thought I had a clear idea about what teaching writing should look like. The WAW curriculum and focus on transfer completely changed what I believed writing could accomplish and how I approach writing. Instead of teaching “skills,” I adjusted my curriculum to support students in new and

1 Vielstimmig is German for “many-voiced.” For the first name, we generated an anagram using the first two letters of each authors' name. We decided on Adel Kenton Marram or Adel for short. We were inspired by Kathleen Blake Yancey and Michael Spooner's “Textuality, Collaboration, and the New Essay,” written as Myka Vielstimmig.

unfamiliar contexts. I wanted assignments to help them think about writing, value writing, and understand what writing could do for them. Now, we read, talk, and write about writing. I learned to help my students connect with writing. Additionally, writing has a new meaning and value in my life. I'm no longer worried about tackling new genres, as often happens as a graduate student. Instead, I'm excited to use what I know about writing to learn and experience new genres. I've grown more as a writer in my four years of doctoral study than in my undergraduate and master's coursework together, which is no doubt supported by the introduction of WAW and the values that accompany it in my life (Morgan).

It shapes how I teach and talk about writing. WAW helped me understand that writing is a researchable subject, and we teach the *writer* NOT the *writing*. WAW and transfer make it easier for me to talk about writing and the exciting possibilities of meaning making within writing processes. I never thought about writing as making choices before entering this program. But since discovering those choices, it helps me as an instructor and a creative writer. I've come to understand my process as a poet who deals in words and wants to understand words. Rhetoric and writing studies (R&WS) helps me embrace the interdisciplinary nature of poetry and writing studies (Annie).

Before coming to BGSU, I used to give students freedom to choose nearly any topic they liked for their writing assignments. While I learned a lot about a wide variety of topics, there was much less focus on understanding writing. My time with WAW and writing transfer helped me to not only show students how writing is connected to their majors, their future dream jobs, and even their hobbies, but it also helped me connect my researcher and teacher identities. My dissertation focuses on the reading transfer practices of alumni. I now help students learn how to approach reading assignments, providing strategies that transfer to different disciplines and life outside of school (Travis).

Coming into this program I quickly realized that WAW and transfer fit well with my previous experiences teaching writing and helped me better understand and explain why FYC doesn't work as a general skills course. Learning about the WAW focus in the university writing program (UWP) also made me more excited to teach at BGSU because I love writing and rhetoric scholarship. WAW gave me authorization to fully teach my subject instead of trying to fit writing instruction into a course where students chose other content as a focus (Rachel).

REVISING DOCTORAL EDUCATION: A FOCUS ON EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP

The R&WS program's focus on empirical research helps me grow not only as a researcher, but also as a teacher, practitioner, leader, and collaborator. Through

the UWP curriculum, I learned about WAW research and to guide my students through empirical, writing studies-focused research projects. In our composition instructors' workshop, I completed my own small-scale empirical study on imposter syndrome, graduate students, writing, and mentoring, which is now the focus of my dissertation topic. This project also gave me the tools to engage my students in their own empirical WAW research projects. By completing this project, I was a better prepared and more empathetic instructor when engaging my students in their research projects. Our program also has the Words Change Worlds Collaboratory (W^2C^2), a collection of faculty-led, collaborative studies of writing at work in the world. Research studies affiliated with W^2C^2 are collaborative, long-term, impactful, and learning-oriented. After joining these research teams, I grew as a collaborative researcher and leader through faculty and peer-to-peer mentorship. Many of these projects gave me the opportunity to lead others through small stages of the larger project, while also receiving mentoring and feedback. I learned how to create surveys, interview protocols, informed consent forms, and other IRB requirements, valuable experiences which transferred to my dissertation research, my teaching, and course research projects (Emma).

Coming into the program, my background focused heavily on literary and textual analysis. I had no idea that an English-related field could involve empirical research, but I have to say that it completely changed the trajectory of my career in an impactful and positive manner. Since starting the doctoral program, I've been able to work with almost all of our faculty members on different research projects, gaining a ton of experience with different research methods and data analysis techniques. Just as Emma described, most of these projects were involved in the W^2C^2 initiative and helped me to become a collaborative researcher who enjoys everything having to do with research methods. As a fourth-year doctoral candidate, I've now conducted two individual empirical research projects on the topics of contract grading and dual-credit student experiences, along with a number of collaborative projects. No matter where my career takes me, I've learned that being a strong researcher and utilizing the findings to improve my own pedagogical practice is a skill that cannot be overlooked. I'm constantly utilizing empirical research to shape my curriculum, grading practices, and instructional strategies. Even more so, empirical research is something that I promote to my own students. Although I've taught composition courses before, they have never been as engaging or meaningful as they were once I had my students begin conducting their own empirical research. Doing empirical research has shown me that I can teach empirical research, which only enhances the mission of our first-year writing courses here at BGSU (Morgan).

I can relate to Morgan's experience as I also came from a literary background, and the collaborative research I've done with others in the program has shown

me how complex rhetoric and writing as a discipline can be. The research I've participated in on student attitudes toward writing in particular has not only shown me this complexity, but it also helped me improve as a writing instructor. Prior to that, my teaching felt disconnected from my research with a literary focus. The research I engaged with prior to BGSU had no connection to what I brought into the classroom. But now, with the focus on empirical research, I feel like my identities as a teacher and a researcher work together (Travis).

Coming from a literary studies background as well, I was also overwhelmed by the idea of doing empirical research. In my first discussions with faculty about the various research projects they were doing, I realized how much more empirical the research focus was in this program and knew that would be a really exciting but also slightly terrifying challenge. Throughout my coursework, I did several mini studies, or pilot studies, that allowed me to explore questions I was interested in while also giving me low stakes opportunities to practice setting up and conducting research. Because of my initial discomfort with empirical research, I intentionally focused my coursework projects on empirical research rather than falling back on the familiarity of textual analysis. The support I've received from my dissertation chair and other faculty with developing my knowledge and practice of research methods has been invaluable. This program has led to a great deal of growth for me in my confidence in and knowledge about empirical research (Rachel).

Speaking from prior experience, I've never been particularly involved in the development of programs or their operations. What a surprise—I'm now an RSBS officer, a co-chair of the 21st Century Englishes Conference, and a member of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. It's such a wonderful thing: I've never felt so at home until I studied in both of the rhetoric and writing communities (MARW in Findlay and here in BG). In my heart, I truly believe that I am in the place which can help me effect positive change (Krys).

A FOCUS ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESS ACROSS PROGRAMS

One of my favorite classes was with Dr. Chad Iwertz Duffy. We worked with a community partner and performed an accessibility audit. From that course, I learned the importance of conversations about access and disability. Because of our program's efforts to focus on access, I think about how buildings are designed, how bodies are oppressed and excluded, and the changes we can make in the writing classroom to create sustainable and inclusive spaces. Before this program, I never knew about screen readers or how to write an image description. I also have found a new passion in plain language and will be presenting at

4Cs 2022 on the subject. I feel more comfortable participating in conversations about access. It's an area where I can be an ally, inform other people, and help make change. I'm excited to learn more about access and inclusion in our program and from our field (Annie).

Well, where do I start? It's because of the R&WS doctoral program's focus on the aforementioned values that attracted me to the program to begin with. Chiming in with Annie, Dr. Duffy is a superstar who consistently helps shape my research outlooks. Furthermore, I wouldn't be here if it weren't for the program's dedication to equity in access. As I continue to face challenges accessing traditional modes of instruction, each faculty member has made it very clear to me that they will always accommodate my needs as I learn more about my changing abilities. Now, that's what I call dedication. What's more—I'm never made to feel like a burden. Rather than doing the bare minimum to check the basic boxes to avoid some audit, faculty and staff are genuinely concerned with the wellbeing and progress of their students (Krys).

I may be echoing what Annie and Krys have already said, but I learned so much in Dr. Duffy's class on accessibility. As Annie said, there were workshops on screen readers, image descriptions, and captioning. It has helped me so much in my assistantship as department webmaster and social media person. I'm able to make things accessible for everyone who visits our site. It's also made me more capable of making my personal social media accounts more accessible (Laura).

Coming into the program at BGSU, the most imperative question I had for research and study was: can writing be taught equitably without privileging white culture and epistemologies? It was in my TA training course with Dr. Baird that I first encountered Asao Inoue's work on antiracist writing assessment that would be the foundation of my research trajectory. Not only did Dr. Baird introduce me to antiracist assessment scholarship, but all the faculty throughout my coursework then nurtured this interest and helped push me forward to continuously build that trajectory throughout my time in the program. Dr. Nickoson's writing program administration class especially helped challenge and advance my understanding of antiracist writing program and assessment work (Rachel).

One of the biggest impacts that being a part of the R&WS doctoral program has had on me is the development and support of a community of friends, scholars, and peers. Prior to this program, I came from a program that was not nearly as connected. Now, community is a daily experience. We collaborate often and well. We engage in mentorship opportunities. We learn from those who have come before us and those that follow us in the program. We value the time and effort that is required of being a member of the program and understand that, sometimes, other non-academic obligations must come first. There is never a doubt that we are supported as researchers, teachers, *and* people. As I prepare to

graduate and leave the program, I hope to build that same sense of community at whatever institution comes next (Morgan).

I 100% agree with you, Morg. I moved to Bowling Green from another state, and I knew zero people in Ohio. I felt really good about the rhetoric and writing studies program, but it absolutely blew my (already high) expectations out of the water. One experience that sticks out is how encouraging faculty and classmates were of my passion for communication through art. Doodling, painting, and mixed-media art are a large part of my identity. When taking classes, I would doodle as a form of taking notes—it's how my brain makes sense of information. The fantastic mentors I had in this program really pushed this part of my identity to the next level. Now, I create arts-based representations of the research I engage in and use arts-based methods to gather data. Professors started to encourage this engagement when I was still taking classes, and I was lowkey nervous about what classmates would think of my alternate projects. However, they were so darn uplifting and encouraging; my professors' and classmates' attitudes helped me believe in myself as a rhetoric and writing studies scholar-artist (Emma).

The support from faculty is amazing, even in a non-academic sense. I will always be grateful for the ability to bring my daughter to classes with me when she didn't have school. One such time was in Sue Carter Wood's Rhetoric and Public Memory class. We took a "field trip" to the one room schoolhouse on campus. My daughter was with us that day and would raise her hand when Dr. Sue asked questions. She called on my daughter to answer questions as if she were a member of the class. It was great! (Laura)

I agree with Laura. I was nervous about starting a Ph.D. program as the mother of small children. Once on campus, I was incredibly relieved at the amount of support my faculty and classmates showed for me as a parent. I found that several of my other classmates were also parents and I was encouraged to include my family in program events (Rachel).

A MULTI-VOICED NARRATIVE DESCRIBING TWO CONCURRENT PROGRAM REVISIONS

After formally merging with the English department, the UWP, BGSU's first-year writing program, completed a curriculum revision in Spring 2018, featuring a WAW approach that encourages writing research among undergraduate students. Two elements support doctoral students in negotiating plural identities:

1. Central to the UWP's curriculum revision is the threshold concept "writing is an activity and object of study." As TAs, doctoral students teach

undergraduates about writing by sharing writing studies scholarship and positioning students to be researchers of writing. At its foundation, WAW is a transfer-focused pedagogy. Recent definitions of transfer recognize the value of prior writing knowledge and encourage its adaptation. Mentoring structures encourage doctoral students to engage prior writing knowledge and attend to identities' construction.

2. Housing UWP in the English department, alongside R&WS, created several administrative positions, including an assistant director and three program assistants. These positions bring UWP in close alignment with the mission of the doctoral program, which emphasizes cultivating leaders who shape conversations about writing.

Independent of the UWP, BGSU's Doctoral Program in R&WS completed a years-long revision effort in Spring 2020. To keep pace with trends in the discipline, evolving job markets, and the professional commitments of current faculty, the revision set out to reimagine the program's mission and, in turn, the core experiences students encounter in their course of study.

1. A distinctive feature of the reimagined mission is an emphasis on cultivating leaders who possess the intellectual frameworks, practical experience, and public consciousness necessary "to be leaders advocating for the power of rhetoric and writing to change worlds and impact public good as researchers, teachers, program directors, and writers" ("Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Writing Studies").
2. Core experiences supporting that mission throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum include regular encounters with administration, community engagement, diversity, history, mentoring, research methods, teaching, technology, and theory. The program also shifted to focus on empirical research methods to help future leaders develop support for narratives about writing they will share with multiple stakeholders.

Central to both revisions is a focus on diversity, inclusion, equity, and access. For example, one of the primary ways UWP and doctoral faculty are practicing antiracist pedagogy is through labor-based grading contracts. Acknowledging the ways in which traditional grading practices are racist, many UWP faculty have instituted labor-based grading contracts in FYW, and even doctoral faculty have instituted them, with some courses, like research methods, requiring students to keep labor logs.

Historically, UWP and R&WS have maintained a practical association but not a philosophical one. The recent merger of the UWP with the English department alongside R&WS promised a philosophical rapprochement, reinforcing

Vielstimmig

core experiences across programs and thus enhancing support for the negotiation of conscripted, scholarly and personal identities.

PROGRAM PROFILE 10.

**TEACHING TEACHING AS A
PROCESS: SAN JOSÉ STATE
UNIVERSITY'S TA PROGRAM
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
PEDAGOGICAL THINKING**

**Ume Ali, Ariel Andrew, Rachel Crawford,
Steven Domingo, Julia Dunn, Jessie Fussell,
Olivia Lee, Alayna Mills, Jillian Murphy,
Alexis Rocha, Lisa Rose, Elizabeth Rosser,
Ryan Skinnell, Amber Sylva, and Claire Tromblee**

San José State University

San José State University (SJSU) is a large, urban, regional-comprehensive university in the heart of Silicon Valley. SJSU is both an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) and a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and enrolls more than 25,000 undergraduate students each year and an additional 8,000+ graduate students, primarily at the master's level. The university is big, diverse, and complex. SJSU's first-year writing program offers four different writing courses and enrolls between 6,000-8,000 students each year. Internal research has shown that more than 75% of first-year writing students come from multilingual backgrounds. In the English department, there are graduate programs in literature and creative writing, from which the TA program recruits approximately 5-10 new TAs each year to teach first-year writing.

The characteristics that make SJSU unique—the diversity, location, size, and regional-comprehensive mission—also present challenges for people hired into SJSU's English teaching associate (TA) program. For one, most of the students hired as TAs are wholly unfamiliar with rhetoric and composition, which is the pedagogical and theoretical backbone of the writing program. That means they have to learn a whole new discipline at the same time they're pursuing their degree. But equally, if not more, important is that TAs have to learn to teach writing, teach students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and do it all well in—on average—2-3 years. It is a serious challenge, both for the

program and for the people who become TAs, to support new teachers' development under these conditions.

In this chapter, 15 co-authors—14 current and former TAs and 1 tenured-faculty TA coordinator—define and reflect on how SJSU's TA program invites new teachers into the teaching process. We contend that the primary strength of SJSU's TA program is its commitment to process—we teach teaching like we teach writing. TAs begin as graduate students who are excellent learners and writers in their own areas of study. Like a composition course, the program is designed to build on students' skills by incorporating the same recursive practices of the writing process—planning, production, revision, and reflection—to foster TAs' growth as teachers. The program also incorporates peer and faculty feedback, community-building, and professionalization through curricular, formal, and informal professionalization practices with the goal of supporting TAs' growth even beyond their time teaching at SJSU.

CURRICULAR SUPPORT

The first step for students preparing to be TAs in the SJSU English department is completing the required graduate-level course, "English 259: Seminar in Composition Studies." It is the only formal curricular requirement for aspiring SJSU TAs. Just as English 1A: First-Year Writing represents the undergraduate's first formal introduction to college-level composition, for many TAs in the SJSU English Master's program, English 259 is their first formal introduction to composition theory.

In English 259, students learn to analyze and evaluate current approaches to studying and teaching composition. In the process, they engage in productive discussions about teaching methods and how new teachers might apply different methods to the goals and objectives of first-year composition classes at SJSU and beyond. And they produce materials that will be relevant for applying to and teaching in the program.

No fewer than four faculty instructors regularly teach English 259, and while each faculty instructor takes their own approach to teaching the course, they each structure the class to represent not only diverse perspectives about the most effective approaches to teaching first-year composition, but also a diversity of voices within the field of rhetoric and composition. The result is a classroom environment that fosters healthy discussion and debate, where students can challenge and be challenged by the readings, their classmates, and their instructor. Once these students become TAs, they continue to expand and deepen that practice by supporting and challenging their TA colleagues in formal meetings and informal networking. Students who have taken English 259 under different

instructors go on to interact in different ways within the program, in ways we describe below. The result is that we exchange an even wider range of pedagogical approaches, influences, and smaller goals, which are afforded by the larger schema of the class.

As former TAs, we generally agree that learning the vocabulary and theory to enter a discussion about composition pedagogy and defend our stances has been the most lasting and important skill we learned in the program, and 259 is crucial to this process. Whether it is in the classroom or outside of it, being able to synthesize the many debates relevant to a discipline and make appropriate decisions to inform our work is invaluable. When TAs with this experience enter the first-year writing classroom, not only are we able to tell students what is expected of them, but why.

In addition, the discussions of composition pedagogy in English 259 often push students to recognize the pre-existing opinions they have formed about teaching in their decades as students. For those of us who became TAs after taking 259, many of these opinions stem from learning experiences we found constructive, but also many that seemed to us detrimental.

Given the challenges we noted in the introduction, English 259 was a vital component of our development as teachers. The seminar course encouraged us to question our opinions about teaching, consider where these opinions came from, formalize our goals as educators, and evaluate which approaches would allow us to accomplish them best. As we began to develop our own sense of being teachers, having the experiential awareness in English allowed us to recognize the importance of balancing an intellectually challenging classroom with a welcoming, supportive atmosphere.

Once we finally became TAs, we sought to replicate in our writing classrooms the process of metacognition that we learned to value in English 259. We recognized that undergraduate students enter with pre-existing opinions about writing, and we worked to give our students the theoretical framework, language, and tools to examine those opinions and make informed choices in their writing. SJSU's TA program taught us to teach like we teach writing.

To this point, we have focused on English 259 because it is the backbone of the curricular options and the only required prerequisite for TAs. But despite not being a formal program in rhetoric and composition, SJSU's English department offers other courses through which prospective and current TAs network think about pedagogy. The Professional and Technical Writing program invites graduate students to explore practical applications of rhetoric that can easily be translated to the context of a first-year writing classroom. TAs can also create independent study courses where they work closely with SJSU English professors to further explore specific areas of rhetoric and/or

composition, including L2 writing and New Media. There is also a graduate elective in the history of rhetoric that is regularly offered. Although the curricular support the department offers is mostly elective for TAs, it nevertheless demonstrates that “teaching teaching like we teach writing” means TAs, like their writing students, have multiple inroads for learning and development. And each inroad gives TAs the tools to make informed choices in the classroom and expand both their breadth of rhetorical knowledge and their network of compassionate teachers.

FORMAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While English 259 is the only formal curricular requirement for SJSU TAs, it is not the only formal requirement. In addition, the program coordinator oversees formal professional development throughout TAs’ time in the program—trainings, mentoring and feedback, and shared assessment practices—which helps them be more effective in the classroom.

Prior to the first semester of teaching, TAs attend two mandatory training sessions. The program coordinator provides information on course requirements, teaching culture, and classroom planning. During the summer before they enter the classroom, TAs generate a course syllabus that focuses on the General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) and major writing assignments. In the second training session, right before the semester begins, TAs practice the writing process (particularly getting feedback and revision) by workshopping their syllabi and assignment sheets with each other and the TA coordinator. The workshop also gives TAs access to one another’s teaching methods.

Once they begin teaching, TAs attend required bi-weekly meetings that focus on just-in-time discussions about teaching practices. We discuss lesson plans, writing assignments, and real-time classroom experiences, as well as building community amongst ourselves. Even though the program coordinator facilitates these meetings, we have agency to express concerns, share teaching artifacts, and workshop our courses. This again captures the essence of the writing process. We are continuously generating ideas for lessons, implementing them, getting feedback from peers and mentors, and then revising.

Apart from bi-weekly meetings, TAs also undergo two formal observations by the program coordinators during the course of their TAship—once in their first semester teaching and once in their last (plus any additional ones we request). TAs choose the specific class session we want observed, and we provide a lesson plan, access to Canvas, and any relevant course materials to the observer. We meet before the observation to express any teaching concerns and goals with our observer, which allows for more focused observations and generative discussions.

Following the class, we meet again to discuss the observation. Our observers provide specific, intentional feedback regarding teaching practices, including class conduct, student engagement, pedagogy, or class activities. Although it was somewhat nerve-wracking to have the TA coordinator watching us, they are formative rather than evaluative. As such, we came to rely on the constructive dialogue and insights to help us adjust our ongoing teaching practices.

The observations also help the faculty/program leads who process the individual observations into the larger schema of trials and trends that they can use to support future TA classes. This cycle of information has been particularly valuable for those of us teaching during the pandemic. Because of the trust we've built and the recursive process of input and refinement, we were able to efficiently and iteratively modify our teaching practices while adapting to distance-learning. Essentially, the elaborate observation process constitutes a robust learning system between coordinators and TAs, which enables all of us to adjust and improve the strategies in our collective teaching repertoire.

Another formal aspect of the TA training is a shared assessment activity. Each semester, every student enrolled in first-year writing produces a portfolio and reflective essay about their writing progress. The TAs, along with all the other first-year writing instructors, assess whether students have effectively argued and provided strong evidence for the case that they developed as writers. During norming sessions, TAs and instructors gather to evaluate sample reflections on the rubric. From this process, (1) we are included as members of the larger teaching community, and (2) we gain insight about how to evaluate student writing with other teachers in the program. It is both a professional and pedagogical process.

At the end of each semester, the program coordinators pair instructors to assess each other's student reflections. In the process, we gain insight into what other instructors do in their classrooms. The reflections show each TA how well we taught the material to students, and we have the opportunity to revise our teaching practices in successive semesters based on information we glean from our students' reflections. The act of revising lesson plans based on student performance from one semester to the next helps us sharpen our confidence in designing assignments based on course objectives.

Finally, although not specific to the TA program, the first-year writing program also offers workshops, presentations, and other formal developmental activities on a regular basis, which all TAs have access to, and are in fact, encouraged to take advantage of alongside their faculty colleagues. The combination of training, feedback, assessment, and other formal practices in the program helps TAs view themselves as teachers and their teaching as an interactive, flexible process of growth and development over time.

INFORMAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The formal training we each received in the TA program (classes, trainings, workshops, and feedback and assessment practices) was extensive, even if we all came to it through different avenues. And while it was undoubtedly helpful for us to become writing instructors, the informal support systems we developed outside the program turned out to be just as important in our developing identities as teachers. Through brief hallway conversations in our office buildings, coffee meetups before class, and social media chat groups, we found, in one way or another, ways to connect and create community among ourselves that allowed us to explore our teaching ideas in low-stakes environments.

Some of us have come to think of these informal support structures in terms of what Robert Brooke called “underlife”: those behaviors which undercut the roles expected of participants in a situation in order for them to show that they inhabit more complex identities (141). In our informal spaces, we process in real time our experiences as TAs. As new writing instructors, every lesson planning session, class meeting, assignment, and student interaction seems to offer challenges and insights that shape our teaching identities and goals. Yet it can be hard to make time and space to articulate the feelings and non-academic identities we have in conjunction with this work. While bi-weekly TA meetings and coordinator office hours are helpful, sometimes it is through informal text messages about minor hiccups in the classroom or dinner discussions about possible writing activities that we are able to share lessons, strategies, concerns, and mistakes openly.

Analogous to our students’ drafting process, our teaching associate community creates a welcoming environment for experimentation, peer feedback, and pedagogical revision. This community-building is encouraged and supported by the program, but not facilitated or overseen by it. In addition to the tangible and practical benefits of sharing resources, we are able to model for ourselves the processes we wish to impart to our students. The “workshop” nature of our informal conversations encourages us to be collaborative and reflective; oftentimes in giving feedback to each other, we generate new ideas or we’re able to clarify issues in our own classrooms. As teaching associates negotiating between roles as students and teachers, the informal support we receive from this community helps us feel more confident in claiming our identities as teachers.

This informal space, where we are able to process, listen, learn from each other, test norms, and laugh—is a small but deeply important aspect of our experiences as TAs, where we can incorporate our new identities as teachers into our whole selves, and therein, become better instructors. In these moments, we are not just TAs in the San Jose State Writing Program scrambling to adhere to program requirements or grade papers, but individual teachers with unique voices, needs, and contributions.

CONCLUSION

While writing this chapter, we have thought together about what the SJSU TA program has contributed to our lives and careers. Among the 14 of us who are current or former SJSU TAs, we have charted success in many different directions—academic and non-academic publications, grants, awards, conference presentations, growing families, new jobs, professional promotions, leadership positions, and more. It is hard to know how directly to connect any of these successes to the TA program. But as a group, we agree the process of becoming teachers helped us learn to plan, produce, get feedback about, and revise our lives in ways that contribute to our success.

Notably, not all of us intend to go into college teaching. Some of us are still teaching in SJSU's TA program while others teach writing at community colleges or in other SJSU departments. But some of us moved into other areas of education, including student success and K-12 administration. A few of us took industry jobs, and others are pursuing Ph.D.s. A few of us have become more involved in rhetoric and composition while others of us recommitted to literary studies and/or creative writing.

To return to our “we teach teaching like we teach writing” analogy, the TA program mirrors a writing class. From the moment we enter English 259, we begin to think metacognitively about our roles as students while gradually reconciling our “teacher-student” identities. The formal elements of the program push us to think intentionally about our professional goals and decisions, build knowledge, and get our footing, just as first-year writing students in ENGL 1A build a foundation for the writing they'll do throughout their lives. Simultaneously, the informal elements are sources of validation, guidance, and moral support. Stepping into the writing classroom, TAs embark on a process of drafting and revising our work—that is, we put our philosophies into practice and make adjustments based on new knowledge and best practices we accumulate through trial and error. And when we exit the program, we are equipped with skills that help us thrive in a range of subsequent undertakings. We maintain that the central success of SJSU's TA program is that it draws upon our diverse paths and experiences and frames them as a source of strength, which helps us learn to teach and lead. Our paths will all go different directions, but we are confident that we have useful processes to draw on along the way.

WORKS CITED

Brooke, Robert. “Underlife and Writing Instruction.” *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 38, no. 2, 1987, pp. 141-53.

CONTRIBUTORS

EDITORS

Leslie R. Anglesey (she/her) is Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Composition in the Department of English at Sam Houston State University. Her research interests focus on issues of access/ibility in writing pedagogies and in health communication. She is a co-editor of the collection *Standing at the Threshold: Liminality and the Rhetoric and Composition TAship* (June 2021, USUP). Her work has also appeared in the edited collection *Interrogating Gendered Pathologies*, edited by Erin A Frost and Michelle Eble, *Prompt: A Journal of Academic Writing Assignments*, *The Peer Review*, and *Works and Days*.

Brady Edwards is Professor of English at New Mexico Junior College, where he teaches developmental writing, first-year composition, and literature courses. He holds Master of Arts degrees in English and American Studies from the University of Nevada, Reno and Utah State University, respectively. During his time at these institutions, he gained valuable experience as an assistant writing program administrator, where he was able to observe and mentor various teaching assistants. Additionally, as a veteran TA, he was a regular contributor to the annual teaching assistant orientation. Such contributions allowed Brady to share ideas and collaborate with others to improve first-year writing instruction. He has published essays and reviews in *The Peer Review*, *Southern Discourse in the Center*, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, among others.

Kathryn Lambrecht is Assistant Professor of Technical Communication at Arizona State University, and earned her Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition from the University of Nevada, Reno 2018. Her research focuses on interdisciplinary communication, the rhetoric of science, and the ways in which disciplinarity informs communication across different types of audiences, both expert and public. During her TAship, she was able to work with faculty from across the disciplines in a WAC/WID program, mentor fellow graduate students as a first-year writing coordinator, and contribute regularly to the TA training program at UNR, where TAs take a pedagogy graduate course during the first semester that they are teaching. Kat's publications are often collaborative and interdisciplinary—her work has appeared in *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *The Journal of Higher Education*, *The Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *Geoscience Communication*, and the *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*.

Phillip K. Lovas is a lecturer in the Karen Merritt Writing Program at the University of California, Merced, where he teaches courses in first-year writing and research, professional writing, upper division academic writing, and

interdisciplinary seminars for first-year students. The Karen Merritt Writing Program has an interdisciplinary approach to writing that offers students the opportunity to work with creative writing, professional writing, and writing in the disciplines. His research interests are focused on students' writing in the disciplines, professional and technical communication, genre theories, and how students transfer information beyond the classroom.

William J. (Bill) Macauley, Jr. is Professor of English at the University of Nevada, Reno, and was a TA at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Bill directed UNR's writing center and writing in the disciplines program, and has continued to work in the development and assessment of UNR's innovative Silver Core curriculum. Bill teaches undergraduate and graduate courses, including the TA practicum and an advanced undergraduate writing course on affordable housing/homelessness. Bill has worked directly with TAs from all of the UNR English graduate programs: MA-language and linguistics, literature, public engagement, rhetoric and writing studies; MFA-creative writing; and Ph.D.-literature, rhetoric and composition. English TAs typically teach in the Core Writing Program and have opportunities for hands-on professionalization in Composition and Communication in the Disciplines, Core Writing, and the University Writing and Speaking Center. Bill supports TAs in English and other disciplines in the design, development, and assessment of assignments, courses, curricula, and programs; studying writing, the teaching of writing, and research in/teaching of writing in the disciplines; professionalizing in writing center and writing program administration; participating in the development and proctoring of faculty development; and, of course, developing individual teaching, research, scholarship, and service.

CONTRIBUTORS

All 15 contributors to Program Profile 10. "Teaching Teaching as a Process: San José State University's TA Program and the Development of Pedagogical Thinking" either currently work or formerly worked in the English TA program at San José State University. **Ume Ali** teaches at SJSU and is lead poetry editor at *REED Magazine*. **Ariel Andrew** earned an MFA at SJSU and is now is a freelancer in Missouri. **Rachel A. Crawford** is a lecturer at San José State University. **Steven Domingo** is a lecturer at San José State University. **Julia Dunn** is a writer and higher education leader based in the Bay Area. **Jessie Fussell** teaches composition at Evergreen Valley College and West Valley College. **Olivia Lee** is a technical writer at the NASA Ames Research Center. **Alayna Mills** is a recent graduate from SJSU's English MA program and a professional brewer in Nevada. **Jillian Murphy** is an academic and educator from San Jose. **Alexis Rocha** earned her MA and is now tutoring, teaching, and researching Ph.D. programs. **Lisa Rose**

is a writer, editor, and educator in the Pacific Northwest. **Elizabeth Rosser** is an MA graduate who works as a technical writer in Silicon Valley. **Ryan Skinnell** is Associate Professor of rhetoric and writing at SJSU. **Amber Sylva** is a lecturer at San José State University and the University of California Santa Cruz. **Claire Tromblee** is currently working in the educational technology field supporting schools and teachers.

Ian Barnard (they/them/their) is Professor of Rhetoric and Composition at Chapman University.

Khadeidra Billingsley currently serves as Assistant Director of the writing center and Instructor of Record at The University of Alabama. She recently defended her dissertation entitled, *Straight from the Source: A Candid Illustration of Four Secondary English Teachers' Beliefs, Experiences, and Tensions in Teaching High School Writing*. Khadeidra's background in educational psychology and composition and rhetoric greatly informs her current research interests which include composition pedagogy, K-12/college collaboration, and African-American rhetoric. She has won several teaching and research awards and honors, both at the institutional and national level. This past year, Khadeidra received a Dissertation Fellowship from the Southern Regional Education Board as well as the 2020 Early Career Educator of Color Leadership Award from the National Council of Teachers of English.

Megen Farrow Boyett is a community engaged scholar and senior lecturer at the University of Louisville. In addition to teaching writing, she has served in various administrative roles including Assistant Composition Director and Program Assistant in the Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research. She completed her doctorate in rhetoric and composition at UofL, exactly a year after her final cancer treatment, and two weeks before her son's sixth and fourth birthdays. As a community engaged scholar, writing administrator, and instructor, she works to make visible the invisible thresholds that keep students, laborers, and community members from full institutional participation. Her current research develops a listening methodology for community literacy practitioners and program facilitators, arguing for attending to the ways institutional discourses and practices from previous programs shape our ability to hear and interpret participants' stories.

Thir B. Budhathoki is a doctoral candidate in Rhetoric, Composition, and the Teaching of English program at the University of Arizona. Budhathoki is from Nepal and his research and teaching interest is in linguistic justice in first year and professional and technical writing. Currently, he is working on his dissertation where he is developing a responsive and inclusive framework of linguistic justice for writing studies from a decolonial perspective. Budhathoki is a recipient of the 2022 Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship.

Janelle Chu Capwell, M.A. is a Taiwanese, hard of hearing, and disabled Ph.D. student. Their research focuses on accommodation rights for students and student-workers, disability justice through an intersectional lens, and autism. Throughout their B.A. and M.A. programs they advocated for disabled tutors and have designed training workshops for equitable tutoring policies for disabled students.

Rob Cole is currently a Ph.D. candidate in rhetoric and composition at Florida State University. He previously earned an MFA in Creative Writing from Northern Michigan University. His research interests are writing transfer and digital rhetorics.

Meghalee Das is a Ph.D. candidate in Technical Communication and Rhetoric at Texas Tech University. She teaches online and face-to-face first-year composition and technical writing courses and was an assistant director of the first-year writing program from 2021-2022. Her research interests include online pedagogy, user experience, cultural inclusivity, and digital rhetoric.

Zack K. De Piero is Assistant Professor of English at Northampton Community College. During his graduate program (Language, Literacy, and Composition Studies) at UC Santa Barbara, he worked as a TA in the Writing Program. Later, in the Teaching Associate role, he became interested in how writing instructors' backgrounds shape their pedagogical choices, in part, because nearly all of the other TAs were graduate students in humanities disciplines. . Zack's dissertation explored these TAs' perceptions of "good reading" in FYC and the extent to which it transferred to the humanities. This research has since been published in *Journal of College Literacy and Learning* ("Illuminating Reading as Intellectual Work") and *Higher Education Research and Development* ("Leveraging reading-writing connections through three transformative reading lenses").

Kandice Diaz is a Ph.D. student and instructor of technical writing in the Department of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio. She has taught communication, professional writing, and English courses since 2011. Her research interests include linguistics, identity research, and visual representation of ethnicity.

Dylan B. Dryer is Associate Professor of Composition Studies at the University of Maine, where he coordinates the Graduate Program of English and works at the intersections of several fields: rhetorical genre studies, corpus analytics, writing pedagogy and program administration, cognition, writing assessment and teacher-training. He has contributed to projects receiving the Braddock Award, the Bruffee Award, and the CCCC Technical & Scientific Communication Award: Best Article on Pedagogy or Curriculum. He is currently working on a book project, tentatively titled *After Solipsism*, under contract with Utah

State University Press. Continuing-education in research methods remains a priority in teaching and in service to CCCC and CWPA.

James Eubanks is a doctoral candidate with a concentration in Composition, Rhetoric and English Studies in the Department of English at the University of Alabama. His research interests include African-American rhetoric, particularly in the church as well as within the context of digital and social media, writing program administration, digital humanities, and composition pedagogy.

Michael J. Faris is Associate Professor of Technical Communication and Rhetoric in the English department at Texas Tech University. He was writing program administrator for the First-year Writing program from 2018-2020 and researches and publishes on digital literacies and rhetoric, queer and feminist theory, and writing program administration.

Kali A. Mobley Finn is a current Curriculum Development/Instructional Design Producer at Workday. She was the former Director of Composition and Assistant Professor of English at Bemidji State University, and she received her Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Writing & Linguistics from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Dr. Finn dedicated research, mentorship, and writing to examining and discussing how students, specifically graduate-level, adapted their knowledge and experiences for new teaching contexts. In 2021, Dr. Finn left academia to contribute to industry's approach to curriculum and learning development and student engagement.

Michelle Flahive is a doctoral candidate in Technical Communication and Rhetoric at Texas Tech University. Her dissertation research seeks to develop inclusive, equitable approaches to graduate instructor mentorship in writing studies. Michelle's contribution to *Mentorship and Methodology: Reflections, Praxis, and Futures*, edited by Leigh Gruwell and Charlie Lesh, is forthcoming.

Gitte Frandsen is a doctoral candidate in Public Rhetorics and Community Engagement at UWM who came back to graduate school after years of teaching high school English and first-year composition for native and non-native speakers of English. Her research interests include translingual literacy studies, linguistic justice, Cultural Rhetorics, and WPA.

Megan Friess was born and raised in Southern California and earned her Bachelor of Arts in Literature/Writing at UC San Diego. Currently, she is pursuing dual master's degrees in English and Creative Writing at Chapman University where she teaches first-year composition as a graduate teaching associate. An avid, life-long reader and writer, Megan is always excited by the chance to share her love of writing and reading with her students.

Eliza Gellis is currently a doctoral candidate in the Department of English at Purdue University. Her research interests include public rhetorics, rhetorical theory, comparative rhetorics, and pop culture. Outside of academia, she is

involved in the Jewish community and enjoys gardening, embroidery, painting, and doting on her cat, Spock.

Victoria Ramirez Gentry is a Ph.D. student and technical writing instructor in the Department of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio. She started her academic journey at community college and continued her path attending Hispanic-Serving Institutions as a student, tutor, and teacher. Her interests include the hybridity of multiracial/ethnic identities and Latinx rhetoric and literature.

Matthew Goldman holds an MA in English and an MFA in Creative Writing from Chapman University, where he currently teaches rhetoric and composition. He also teaches creative writing at Santa Ana Jail through Rancho Santiago Community College District's Inmate Education Program. His published work can be found in *Entropy Magazine* and the *OC Register*.

Rachel Gramer is Writing Program Director and Assistant Professor of English/Writing Studies at Illinois State University, where she teaches and mentors writing program instructors including MA and Ph.D. students in English Studies. She has taught undergraduate writing courses and graduate writing pedagogy courses for new instructors at Illinois State and Eastern Michigan University, where she also served as Director of the First-year Writing Program. At the University of Louisville, Rachel taught first-year writing as a GTA, mentored new writing teachers as Assistant Director of Composition, and began a longitudinal feminist narrative research study of new writing teachers' stories of teaching and learning. Her work has appeared in *JAC*, *Kairos*, *Computers and Composition Online*, *College English*, and *Writing for Engagement: Responsive Practice for Social Action*.

Magnus Gustafsson is Associate Professor of Academic Writing and Communication in the Disciplines at Chalmers University of Technology (Sweden). His work involves writing interventions for STEM-students and faculty training for course and supervision development in STEM contexts. His main research interests are within the fields of writing studies, integration of content and language, and higher education pedagogy. His current research is oriented towards peer learning and collaborative writing. He also runs a university-wide project on re-thinking assessment in STEM education. He is a board member for the European Association of for the Teaching of Academic Writing and the co-editor of the *Journal for Academic Writing*. He is also a co-series editor for the WAC Clearinghouse book series *International Exchanges on the Study of Writing*. He is also a Distinguished Fellow of the Association for Writing Across the Curriculum.

Laura Hardin Marshall is a doctoral candidate in Rhetoric and Composition at Saint Louis University, and her recent work—found in *The Peer Review* and *Composition Studies*—has been dedicated to initiatives in writing center

and writing program administration. Her research focuses on the intersection of response and revision, specifically how writing instructors and consultants respond to students and how students in turn use that feedback in their revision processes.

Karyn L. Hixson is a Ph.D. student in the Department of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio and a Texas-certified educator. She teaches literary criticism and technical writing. Her interests include African American studies and archiving San Antonio's underrepresented communities.

Analeigh E. Horton is a Ph.D. candidate, Office of General Education Graduate Associate, and former Graduate Assistant Director of the Writing Program at The University of Arizona. Analeigh, a Fulbright alumna, has taught in 5 countries. Her research examines multilingual and international student experiences with writing and literacy, WAC, and program administration. Analeigh is the 2021 recipient of the CWPA Graduate Research Award.

Sue Hum is Professor of English in the Department of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio and a rhetoric and composition scholar with expertise in visual rhetoric, race studies, quantitative literacy, and writing across the curriculum. She has two co-edited anthologies, *Ways of Seeing, Ways of Speaking and Relations, Locations, Positions: Composition Theory for Writing Teachers*. She is also author of *Persuading with Numbers: A Primer for Engaging Quantitative Information* (Kona, 2015). She is co-editor of *Open Words: Access and English Studies*.

Brad Jacobson is Assistant Professor at The University of Texas at El Paso, where he teaches writing studies and English education courses. Brad's work on academic writing development, teacher development, and school-based writing opportunities has been featured in the *Journal of Literacy Research*, *Writing Spaces*, *WPA Journal*, and several edited collections.

Jennifer K. Johnson teaches first year composition and various upper-division writing courses in the Writing Program at UC Santa Barbara, where she also works with new teachers of writing. Jennifer holds a Ph.D. in Composition and TESOL from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Her work has been published in several edited collections, including *What We Wish We'd Known: Negotiating Graduate School* (2015), *A Minefield of Dreams: Triumphs and Travails of Independent Writing Programs* (2016), and *Standing at the Threshold: Working Through Liminality in the Composition and Rhetoric TAsip* (2021). Her research interests include the relationship between composition and literature, TA preparation, independent writing programs, genre theory, and writing about writing.

Charlotte Kupsch is a writer, teacher, and Ph.D. student in composition and rhetoric at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research focuses on ecocomposition, place studies, and first-year writing, and she currently serves as

Assistant Director of the UNL Writing Center. Her academic work has appeared in *Writing on the Edge, Reflections: A Journal of Community-Engaged Writing and Rhetoric*, and *The Dangling Modifier*.

I-Hsien Lee is a Ph.D. candidate in English with an emphasis in literary studies at Georgia State University. Her research interests are in twentieth-century and contemporary American fiction, particularly immigrant narratives and Asian American, multi-ethnic, and transnational literatures.

Dr. Sarah Lonelodge is an Assistant Professor of English at Eastern New Mexico University. She completed her Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Writing Studies at Oklahoma State University in 2021. Her research interests include religious rhetoric, propaganda studies, and composition and TPC pedagogies.

Jaquelyn Davis Lugg earned her Master's in English from the University of Nevada, Reno in May 2018. Her Master's research focused on the intersections between place-based education and service-learning pedagogies and their potential to engage students as writers rooted in their communities. An attention to relationships in her scholarship and experience as a writing center adviser deeply informed Jaq's time as a TA, in which she taught first year writing, mentored fellow graduate students as a gWPA, and co-led the annual week-long orientation for new TAs. Since graduating, Jaq has used the skills gained in her graduate TAship in science and healthcare communication roles. She currently works as the Communication Manager for the only hospital serving her hometown in the rural Sierra Nevada foothills.

Hans Malmström is Professor of Communication and Learning in Science at Chalmers University of Technology (Sweden). His primary research interests are within the areas of integrating content and language/communication in higher education (ICLHE) and English-Medium Instruction (EMI). He is particularly interested in exploring how the use of ICLHE and EMI impacts teaching and learning and the development of academic and disciplinary literacy in educational contexts, and the degree to which EMI provides conditions for students' development of English language proficiency. He is (Co-) Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of English-Medium Instruction* and (Co-) Series Editor for the *Routledge Studies in English-Medium Instruction*.

Abby Leigh Mangel is a Ph.D. student and instructor of technical writing and creative writing in the Department of English at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Jonathan Marine is a writing instructor at George Mason University where he is also a Ph.D. student in the Writing and Rhetoric program. His research interests include content analysis, the pedagogy and theory of James Moffett, and the rhetoric of material/public inscription. He holds an MA in British Literature, a BS in English, and a BA in Psychology.

Amanda M. May is Writing Center Director and an assistant professor of English at New Mexico Highlands University. She received her Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition from Florida State University in 2020, where she taught first-year writing, peer tutoring, and junior-level writing. During her decade of work in various writing centers, she has served as an undergraduate tutor, graduate tutor, and administrator. She also taught conversational English in Japan for two years.

Laura R. Micciche is Professor of English at the University of Cincinnati where she teaches writing, style, and rhetorical and feminist theory. Her research focuses on feminist and affective approaches to writing and teaching practices. Her books include *Failure Pedagogies: Learning and Unlearning What it Means to Fail*, co-edited with Allison D. Carr (2020), *Acknowledging Writing Partners* (2017), and *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching* (2007).

Luke Niiler is Associate Professor of English at the University of Alabama, where he directs the First-Year Writing program. He has directed or coordinated writing centers at the University of Alabama, the University of Texas-Tyler, and the University of Missouri-Rolla. His research and teaching interests include writing program administration, composition theory and pedagogy, first-year writing, and the work of J.R.R. Tolkien. His work has appeared in *Writing Center Journal*, *WLN*, and the *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*.

Melba Vélez Ortiz is Professor at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, MI. Her areas of research are communication ethics and global environmental communication. Her work examines the ways in which the long-term success of conservation efforts depend upon fundamental shifts in cultural values, in aesthetic and moral communication, and in shared understandings of how the individual fits into social and ecological communities. In 2020, Vélez Ortiz published *Maa-tian Ethics in a Communication Context* with Routledge Press. The book details how the classical ethical approach of *Ma'at* guided the ethical and communication practices in ancient Egypt. The book explores the crosspollination between ancient Greek and ancient Egyptian approaches to virtue ethics and the stark differences in their analysis of interpersonal, political, and religious communication. In addition, Dr. Vélez Ortiz has researched and published in the area of Latin-American/Caribbean/Latina-o philosophy and intellectual history.

Madelyn Pawlowski is an independent scholar and UX researcher with a PhD in Rhetoric, Composition, and the Teaching of English from the University of Arizona. Her work on language awareness, writing teacher education, and teacher knowledge has appeared in *Composition Forum*, *Writing Spaces*, and *The Journal of English for Academic Purposes*.

William Repetto is a Ph.D. student in the Department of English at the University of Delaware, where he also serves the community as President of

Graduate Student Government. He has previously taught at La Salle University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania as an adjunct professor of English as a second language and at Eastern University in St. David's, Pennsylvania as an adjunct professor of English composition. His current research focuses on Technical and Professional Communication (TPC). Specifically, he wants to do trans-disciplinary work at the intersection of entrepreneurship and TPC. His work asks what the relationships are between and among the infrastructural texts that constitute an entrepreneurship program at an institution of higher education. What makes this work transdisciplinary is that it also asks how TPC, as a field, might be shaped by viewing such texts as syllabi, internal communication, and program plans/strategies as "infrastructure."

Rachel Robinson-Zetzer is Assistant Director of Core Writing and Assistant Professor of the Practice at Fairfield University. She has been a writing consultant and administrator at various universities since 2002, and she is a Teacher Consultant for the Red Cedar Writing Project. Her research uses feminist, embodied, and cultural rhetorics frameworks to look at embodied in/reactions and vulnerabilities associated with writing program administrators and imposter syndrome. She has several articles and chapters currently under review, and her work has been published in *The Peer Review*, the *WLN's* Digital Edited Collection (DEC) on selfcare, and *Affect and Emotion in Writing Centers*.

Sarah Robblee is the former Writing Center Director at Chapman University, where she also taught rhetoric and composition, technical communication, linguistics, and research methods courses in the English department.

Natalie Salagean holds an MA in English and an MFA in Creative Writing from Chapman University, where she teaches rhetoric and composition. She also teaches first year composition courses at Orange Coast College.

Matthew Sansbury is Assistant Professor of English and Assistant to the Chair at Clayton State University. A recipient of the 2017 *Kairos* Service Award, he has published work in *Computers and Composition Online*, *Kairos – Praxis Wiki*, and *The Rhetoric of Participation: Interrogating Commonplaces in and Beyond the Classroom*.

Matthew Schering is a doctoral candidate at Illinois State University where he studies writing assessment, contract grading, learning contracts, and digital rhetoric. His dissertation examines how student-centric learning contracts can create a more equitable and accessible environment for diverse student populations. Outside of academia he was a former lead guitarist in a thrash metal band, which led to his interest in studying the ways heavy metal music addresses complex issues of social justice, drug abuse, environmentalism, capitalism, capital punishment, and mass incarceration.

Emily Jo Schwaller is Assistant Professor of Practice at the University of Arizona in the University Center for Assessment, Teaching, and Technology. She

received her Ph.D. from the University of Arizona in Rhetoric, Composition, and the Teaching of English. Her research focuses on teacher growth and agency, feminist qualitative method/ologies, and reflection/meaning-making through doing. Her work can be found in *Composition Forum*, *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, and *WPA: Writing Program Administration* where she worked as an assistant editor. The work presented in this chapter is a collaboration with her research participants Allen, Butterfly, Georgie, Malinka, and Sully, all of whom are excellent scholars, teachers, and community members.

Trixie G. Smith is Director of The Writing Center and Red Cedar Writing Project at Michigan State University, where she is Associate Professor in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures and assistant director of the graduate program. Her teaching, research, and publications are infused with issues of gender and activism even as they revolve around writing centers, WAC/WID, and teacher training. These often intersect with her interests in pop culture, community engagement, supporting graduate writers, and the idea that we're just humans learning with/from other humans (you know, with bodies, feelings, lives outside the academy).

Katelyn Stark graduated with her Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition from Florida State University in 2021. Her interests in business writing and communications led her to pursue a corporate writing job after graduation. She is now the marketing specialist for a Florida-based medical marijuana company, where she uses her rhetoric and composition expertise to strategize and produce marketing collateral and patient-education materials.

Daniel Strasberger holds an MFA in Creative Writing and MA in English from Chapman University. Currently, he teaches rhetoric and composition at Chapman University, as well as creative writing to middle and high schoolers at California School of the Arts San Gabriel Valley.

Elizabeth Topping is Visiting Assistant Professor at Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA. She has been teaching in first-year composition and English as a Second Language programs since 2006. She graduated with her Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition from Georgia State University in 2022. Her dissertation focuses on the Frontier Nursing Service of southeastern Kentucky, examining the role of rhetorics of motherhood, midwifery, race, and public health in laying foundations for modern reproductive healthcare.

Adel Vielstimmig is the collective name for the authors of “Negotiating Plural Identities Through Transfer and Antiracism: Program Alignment at Bowling Green State University,” seven doctoral students and two faculty members in the rhetoric and writing studies doctoral program at Bowling Green State University. **Annie Cigic** is a fourth-year doctoral student. Her research interests include critical pedagogy, community-based learning, advocacy writing, and writing

assessment. **Rachel Flynn** is a fourth-year student. Her research focuses on antiracist writing assessment and writing transfer. Dr. **Emma Guthrie-Metag** researches impostor syndrome, writing transfer, and mentoring, and holds writing-related teaching and administrative positions. **Travis Hein** is a fourth-year doctoral student. His research interests include reading research, writing transfer, dispositions, and teacher training. **Krys Ingman** is a fourth-year doctoral student, whose research interests include accessibility, chronic and invisible illnesses, death/mortality studies, healthcare disparities, popular culture, representation, and translation. Dr. **Morgan Buchs's** research interests include writing transfer, dual-credit studies, grading contracts, and first-year composition. **Laura Menard** is a fourth-year doctoral student. Her research interests include rhetoric and narratives in digital media. **Neil Baird** is Associate Professor of English, and directs the University Writing Program at BGSU. **Dan Bommarito** is Associate Professor of English, and directed the Rhetoric and Writing Studies Program from 2019-21.

Nicole Warwick's research interest in TA experiences began over twenty years ago when she was a TA working on her master's degree in the California State University system. She continued her research on TA experiences while working on her Ph.D. at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and has presented her research at the Conference on College Composition and Communication and the Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference. She currently is a full-time lecturer in the Writing Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara where she teaches a variety of lower and upper division courses and mentors TAs as they begin teaching first-year writing. Her other research interests include assessment; transfer and metacognition; and narrative study.

Courtney Adams Wooten is Associate Chair: WPA and Assistant Professor at George Mason University. Her work intersects with feminist rhetorics, affect theory, and writing program administration. She is co-editor of the edited collections *WPAs in Transition* and *The Things We Carry*, and her work has also been published in *Academic Labor: Research and Artistry*, *Composition Studies*, *Harlot*, *WPA*, *Peitho*, and *College English* as well as several edited collections.

Lacey Wootton is Hurst Senior Professorial Lecturer and Director of the Writing Studies Program at American University. She has a Ph.D. in Writing and Rhetoric from George Mason University. Her research centers on academic labor, emotional labor, institutional ethnography, and writing in the disciplines.

Candice Yacono is an adjunct instructor and former graduate teaching assistant at Chapman University, where she teaches first-year composition and composing new media. She also works in college marketing and as a writer and editor. She holds an MA in English and an MFA in creative writing from Chapman University.

Kathleen Blake Yancey, Kellogg W. Hunt Professor of English and Distinguished Research Professor Emerita at Florida State University, has served in several national leadership roles, including as Chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and President of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Leading an 8-site study of transfer of writing knowledge and practice, she is also participating in the Elon University-sponsored Writing Beyond the University research project. In addition to authoring over 100 articles/chapters, she has authored/edited/ co-edited 16 scholarly books—among them *Writing Across Contexts*; *A Rhetoric of Reflection*; and *ePortfolio as Curriculum*. She has won multiple awards, including two FSU teaching awards, the NCTE Squire Award, and the CCCC Exemplar Award.

Soha Youssef is Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Writing at Thomas Jefferson University and the coordinator of Writing 101-Written Communication. Her research interests center around the rhetorical preparation of graduate and undergraduate English language learners, as well as ways that preparation can be conducive to effective pedagogical practices in the composition classroom.

Jiaxin Zhang is a Ph.D. candidate in Technical Communication and Rhetoric at Texas Tech University. She teaches first-year composition and technical communication service courses. Her research interests include user experience, content strategy, digital rhetoric, and crisis communication. She won second place in the 2021 and 2022 SIGDOC Student Research Competition.

THRESHOLD CONSCRIPTS

This richly textured edited collection explores the ways in which graduate teaching assistants are prepared to enter the field of rhetoric and composition. By viewing teaching and learning from the perspective of the TAs themselves, the chapters, personal narratives, and program profiles that make up this collection speak to the diversity and complexity found within and beyond university walls and deepen our understanding of how these preparation programs shape TA identities and practices. Through their stories and reports, the contributors to this volume provide valuable insights into the programs, realities, and experiences that shape their work in rhetoric and composition.

William J. Macauley Jr. is Professor of English at the University of Nevada, Reno, where he has served as the University Writing Center director and director of the Composition and Communication in the Disciplines program. **Leslie R. Anglesey** (she/her) is Assistant Professor of rhetoric and composition at Sam Houston State University. Her research interests focus on disability studies, composition pedagogy, mentorship, and rhetorics of health and medicine. **Brady Edwards** is Professor of English at New Mexico Junior College. In addition to the study of teaching assistantships, his scholarly interests include writing program administration, contingent labor, and first-year composition. **Kathryn Lambrecht** is Assistant Professor of technical communication at Arizona State University, Polytechnic. Her research focuses on interdisciplinary collaboration as well as communication among experts and public audiences, particularly in STEM. **Phillip K. Lovas** is a Lecturer in the Karen Merritt Writing Program at the University of California, Merced. His research interests include writing in the disciplines, professional and technical communication, genre theories, and transfer beyond the classroom.

PERSPECTIVES ON WRITING

Series Editors: Rich Rice, Heather MacNeill Falconer, and J. Michael Rifenburg

The WAC Clearinghouse
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523
wac.colostate.edu



University Press of Colorado
Denver, Colorado 80202
upcolorado.com

ISBN 978-1-64215-162-6