CHAPTER 2.

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

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> "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."
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> – 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

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2023.1626.2.02

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—[1]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.

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1 [8] 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 TAships that involve teaching FYC, at least to start, to graduate students of all disciplines, it's important to consider how re-theorizing these TAships 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 adviser[3]

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 "peerness" 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 TAship 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).

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