Rethinking Graduate Student Instructors' Resistance as Acts of Well-Being

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Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs) are often framed as resistant to Writing Pedagogy Education (WPE) (Grouling; Hesse; Reed). Yet, these moments of resistance can (and should be) reframed as acts of well-being, where GSIs are establishing boundaries and identifying their own self-care and needs. I draw on the experiences of five different GSIs in a writing program using data from interviews, focus groups, coding sessions, observations, teaching philosophies, and reflections to illustrate how we can rethink the narrative of resistance as well-being to more productively design and implement teacher training. Using Cochran's PREMISE model, I focus on well-being as related to GSIs and how this model maps onto existing WPE structures. At the end of the article, I provide a table for various stakeholders to identify ways to highlight GSI well-being and establish productive disciplinary practices that can reshape what it means to be professionalized in academia and how we can view acts of well-being as radical acts that challenge traditional academic structures at large.

As we enter the fall semester, a new group of Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs) will enter their programs, many of them teaching for the first time.[1] During the small window between students coming to the university and teaching, mentors and teacher educators are faced with the enormous task of preparing these new teachers to enter writing programs. As Shelley E. Reid states, "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). The impossibility of this task—to help instructors feel confident, know the curriculum, understand the values of the field, and even log into the Learning Management System (LMS)—is a minefield of priorities. This leads to educators preparing new GSIs defensively, anticipating the nervous energy, the short timeline, the questioning of why writing studies matters, and the consequences of putting unprepared teachers in the classroom. However, this defensiveness assumes that teacher educators will be met with resistance, oftentimes creating a self-fulling prophecy. The narrative of GSI resistance is prevalent throughout Writing Pedagogy Education (WPE)[2] conversations and centers on the idea that GSIs resist pedagogical training, especially students outside the discipline of rhetoric and composition (Grouling; Hesse; Reed). Resistance has been attributed to a wide range of tensions

such as the difficulty of academic writing (Dryer), challenges to previously held beliefs and literacies (Brewer; Estrem and Reid), and a "low sense of self-efficacy" (Ebest). Alongside the conversation of resistance, there is also an emerging conversation about the trauma and emotional labor of those in graduate school (Driscoll et al.; Fedukovich and Morse; Saur and Palmeri). These concerns about conditions and emotional labor are especially prevalent as we face the collective trauma of what it means to teach and be in academia in and through COVID-19.

Often, the conversation about resistance is anticipatory, trying to understand how GSIs entering the semester will feel, think, and do in teaching scenarios. Additionally, these narratives are reactive to scenarios that teacher educators find themselves in where GSIs are not engaging with pedagogical discussions, are questioning the curriculum, and are challenging various teaching practices (Fisher). But what would it look like if instead of focusing on resistance, we were responsive to the moment we find ourselves in? What would happen if we gave voice and permission to these feelings (beyond academic journals)? What if these moments of resistance are in fact moments of agency, where GSIs and teacher educators are struggling to address their own well-being and boundary setting? This article takes up these questions through the lens of five new teachers of writing over a two-year period. Drawing on feminist methods and methodologies (Kirsch; Powell and Takayoshi; Selfe and Hawisher), I present data from interviews, focus groups, teaching philosophies, and GSI reflections on how their experience entering these new communities of practice shaped their understanding of self and the profession. Using the PREMISE model (Cochran), I explore how various aspects of well-being are impacted in GSIs' internal and external teaching experiences. The goal is to help us rethink the resistance narrative and develop meaningful training that is responsive to GSIs' needs for well-being and boundary setting. Additionally, I urge us to think through how building well-being into teacher training can reshape what it means to be professionalized in academia and how we can view acts of well-being as radical acts that challenge traditional academic structures at large.

The Resistance Narrative in WPE

Outside of academia, there is a prevailing assumption that teaching is a vocation, especially for those who are in the humanities (Alsup). However, as we know, many graduate students are not coming to the university to teach but to do other activities such as creative writing, research, and administration. Many English graduate students are not preparing to teach first year writing, despite eventually finding themselves in writing programs (Penrose). These conflicting conceptions about teaching itself surround conversations within

English departments where resistance is seen as a byproduct of this vocational concept. The narrative of resistance takes on multiple forms within WPE and represents factions within our field: conversations around disciplinarity (Dobrin; Latterell; Reed), professionalization and integration into new discourse communities (Reid et al.; Obermark et al.), literacy and underlying beliefs (Brewer; Wisniewski), and labor and access concerns (Donegan; Murray). WPE is a rich place to explore how we are grappling with these concerns that represent our larger field, as graduate school is introducing students to the profession of academia (Lutkewitte et al).

One continuous thread within narratives of resistance is that of disciplinarity. There is an us-versus-them mentality between writing studies and other factions within English departments, not only in WPE but also in Writing Program Administration (WPA) and writing studies at large wherein scholars are constantly having to defend the legitimacy of the field (Miller-Cochran). Two recent articles highlight how this tension plays out in WPE, especially between literature students and rhetoric and composition graduate students. In Meaghan Brewer's 2020 empirical study, she was surprised that her MFA students were more interested in rhetoric and genre and that the rhetoric and composition students were more interested in expressivism—essentially that disciplinary perspectives were not indicative of pedagogical interests. Brewer's surprise about MFA students illustrates the deeply ingrained disciplinary assumptions about graduate students we have and how it plays out in their teaching—and most typically in who we anticipate will resist composition theory and practicum courses. In Jennifer K. Johnson's 2021 study comparing literature and composition, she notes, "As a result of these differences, some TAs from English experience more barriers than others in embracing composition's disciplinary practices" (61). In her conclusions, she argues that "the act of interrogating [disciplinarity] and its implications can provide TAs with an important opportunity to critically consider how they are approaching the teaching of FYC and examine their underlying assumptions" (79). These studies recognize that graduate students are grappling with disciplinarity, but they are also emerging into these fields. Graduate school is a time to challenge the us-vs-them narrative, thinking beyond binaries and exploring whether these problems persist because of other inequalities—for example, the number of tenure-track jobs for literature students, creative writing students, and rhetoric and composition students. We should think instead about why disciplinarity persists in the lives of graduate students and how perpetuating it can ignore other avenues of support, such as preparing all student for alt-academic careers.

A second prevailing narrative is that resistance is a byproduct of graduate students entering into new discourse communities. Doug Hesse writes that GTAs feel resistance because TA training is "reminding them what it is to be

a beginner" (226). This claim is echoed in Sally Ebest's book when she writes, "my graduate students' resistance paralleled that of undergraduates" (7). These new discourse communities are not only reminding students they are beginners but also challenging their assumptions about literacy and their past learning experiences (Brewer). By framing these moments as resistance rather than students productively engaging and negotiating new concepts, we see them as problematic instead of essential to the learning process. One study attempting to reconcile this narrative is Jennifer Grouling's 2015 article where she argues that resistance is a product of identity formation and connects it to the difficulties graduate students have with academic writing and their resistance to a practicum. By focusing on genres of writing, she identifies the ways TAs are still positioned as insider and outsider, despite gaining knowledge over texts and being seen as the insider to the undergraduate students they are teaching.

The narrative of resistance is parallel to concerns about labor, emotion, and affect. As studies in Writing Program Administration have begun to conceptualize the emotional labor of administrative roles (Wooten et al.), we need to explore how these similar techniques can be applied to the liminality of graduate students. One productive avenue of research centers on the vulnerability and experiences of graduate students with disabilities (Donegan; Fedukovich and Morse). Donegan asks, helpfully, "How do notions of TA resistance, for example, change in light of disability? When is resistance simply inaccessibility?" (130). We should extend these conversations to other forms of inaccessibility such as the impact on students who are caregivers, who lack access to technology, who financially support families, and who are dealing with dueling mentorship. These conversations provide a kairotic moment in COVID-19 as we explore how we are recovering from the collective trauma. We have a worthwhile exigence to reframe these narratives of resistance to understand how well-being challenges the hegemonic view of the non-resistant TA: a cis-gender, white graduate student in rhetoric and composition who wants to teach writing, who already has complementary beliefs and literacy experiences that align with current writing studies ideology, and who has no significant barriers in their external life.

The PREMISE Model of Well-Being

The term well-being has multiple meanings and can encompass a wide range of the internal and external world of individuals. Within this article, I use Stacey Cochran's definition of well-being as "long-term, optimal *social* and *emotional* health," following the PREMISE model, an acronym which stands for P (positive emotions), R (relationships with others), E (engagement), M (meaningful experiences and goals), I (identities), S (self-compassion), and E

(efficacy and environmental mastery). I use each of the PREMISE concepts in the following ways:

Positive Emotions

These can include both immediate and long-term positive experiences, but for GSIs they are particularly related to experiences, both past and present, with education. In GSI training we often focus more on negative emotions rather than positive ones; it is important that we focus on both to get a more holistic view of WPE.

Relationships with Others

Frequently one of the most important factors for GSI training is the relationship with one's peers (Schoettler and Saur) and their teacher mentors or past teachers (Obermark et al.). Although we have little control over others' relationships with one another, we can help support GSIs when they have concerns with their mentors and/or peers and support positive relationship building in our training.

Engagement

Engagement is a particularly important concept for GSIs who are entering these new communities of practice. As Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger state, "a deeper sense of the value of participation to the community and the learner lies in *becoming* part of the community" (111). For graduate students who do not understand the value of participation, it becomes harder to act and belong as a community member. This is particularly challenging for graduate students who have conflicting values, goals, and experiences (Ebest; Hesse).

Meaningful Experiences and Goals

As GSIs are exploring their new roles, there is an opportunity to understand whether teaching is a meaningful endeavor to them and how to sustain these experiences in ways that help them achieve goals—whether within or outside academia. It is also important to recognize the past experiences students have and how those shape what they and their mentors find meaningful.

Identities (Autonomously Endorsed)

Identity and autonomy are one of the most well-explored areas in WPE (Brewer; Restaino; Wisniewski). These choices are especially important as we consider the many identities GSIs bring into the classroom space. Additionally, the conversation in WPE about how to both empower and support graduate students will continue forward as all GSIs come with different experiences and needs.

Self-Compassion

The concept of self-compassion and self-efficacy has started becoming more prevalent in WPE, especially with the recent publication of Megan Schoettler and Elizabeth Saur's work where they explore reframing shame, community, and failure in WPE. As they write, "Being a TA can be a volatile experience— you are entering into a new space and must instantly negotiate a multitude of influences while trying to better understand the liminality of your role, your capacity, and how you feel about all those expectations and responsibilities" (174). WPE needs to provide space for naming failure and reframing it as self-compassion.

Efficacy and Environmental Mastery

Similar to the above, self-efficacy is useful in understanding how students explore barriers within WPE. These conversations are useful when we understand intersectionality and anti-racist WPE practices that might support or inhibit graduate students' ability to participate. Overall, the PREMISE model helps contextualize the experiences of GSIs' well-being and how these areas were productive or inhibitive to their experience. It also helps create a framework for a more productive conversation about GSIs' choices as moments of engagement and self-efficacy rather than resistance.

Methods

The data in this article come from my dissertation when I was a graduate student myself. The research questions were formed based on my own experiences with teacher training and my interest in identity, becoming, and belonging. My positionality as a fellow graduate student enabled me to form relationships with participants based on peer mentorship and highlighted my own liminality. As LaMance et al. state, "If composition researchers seek to embrace the power of feminist methodologies, their choices, privileges, and situations need to be more intentional and explicit" (592). As a white, cisgender middle-class woman in education, I came to these discussions with privilege and a background in writing studies. My aim was to better understand my own experiences and improve WPE for all graduate students moving forward.

Context and Rationale for Methods

Between August 2018-September 2020, I collaborated with five new teachers of writing through focus groups, observations, interviews, co-coding sessions, development of curriculum, and shared writing. Each participant was a graduate student from the same English department, located at a university in

the southwest United States. Graduate students represent roughly 75% of the instructors of record in the writing program at the university, which teaches roughly 12,000 students a year. The incoming GSI cohort in 2018 had 33 new graduate students across five different graduate programs: Literature, Creative Writing, Rhetoric and Composition, Teaching English as a Second Language, and Second Language Acquisition and Teaching. Participants were chosen across programs, including some with international status. Additionally, the participants had no formal teaching experience and training. The following represents the breakdown of each of the participants:[3]

Allen	he/him/his; domestic student; Literature
Butterfly	she/her/hers; international student; English and Applied Linguistics
Georgie	she/her/hers; international student; Creative Writing Non-Fiction
Malinka	she/her/hers; domestic student; English and Applied Linguistics
Sully	she/her/hers; domestic student; Literature

Participants participated in a wide range of activities designed to help facilitate reflection, social interaction, and co-research opportunities. These forms of participation are especially important for the following reasons:

- Reflection: New teachers use reflection to critically understand their values, experiences, and practices (Alsup; Schön; Schulman). As participants enter new communities of practice (Lave and Wenger), they need opportunities to reflect on their experiences to make meaning in action (Yancey). As Janet Alsup states, "Experience by itself is not inherently useful; it is helpful only if it is subject to critical reflection" (87). Throughout the study, participants had the opportunity to reflect through their interviews, ePortfolios, and various research activities. Reflection activities took multiple forms such as reflecting on their literacy backgrounds, current practices, and future applications.
- Social Interactions: As research in WPE indicates, peers are an essential part of becoming teachers and understanding the community (Caccia). Interacting with others and making meaning socially helps to contextualize and negotiate identities. Participants were able to engage with one another through the focus group and in teaching observations.

- Co-Research Opportunities: Oftentimes WPE research is created by those in power or authority positions, notably WPAs and those who run teacher training. Although these are important voices due to the expertise in designing training and pedagogy, we need opportunities for graduate students to have agency over their experiences. As William Macauley Jr. states, "The scholarship seems to be published at some distance from the TAs; TAs are spoken for and about without their often speaking for or about themselves" (4). By providing co-research opportunities we can facilitate more open and disruptive power dynamics between researchers and participants to create generative research shaped collectively (Kirsch).

Table 1 illustrates the timeline of research, which included the following activities:

1. Interviews: There were four interviews where participants were given topics and added topics. The interviews were all semi-structured to allow for organic forms of conversation and reflection with participants who are "making meaning and formulating interpretations of their experiences" (Selfe and Hawisher 39).
2. Focus Group: The focus group was utilized as a way for us to co-code interviews. There was an initial set of codes that were renegotiated, named, and replaced during this gathering.
3. Teaching Observations: These observations were more of a moment for the researcher to draw language from participant's teaching philosophy and see it in practice. Participants then followed up in Interview 3 about the experience.
4. ePortfolios: These teaching portfolios included assignments, reflections, examples of feedback, a teaching philosophy, and classroom activities. [4]
5. Reflections and Responses to Writing: Participants were given final drafts of the chapters with highlighted portions where each case study was represented. They revised and responded to these moments based on their own observations, experiences, and preferences for identity markers.
6. Study Feedback: At the end of the first-year, participants filled out an anonymous survey about their experiences with the study and what research and data activities would be more beneficial to their learning.

Table 1: Timeline of Methods

1. Meet/Recruit Participants at GTI Orientation	**1.** Interview 3 **2.** Teaching Observation **3.** Survey of Research Experience	**1.** Interview 4 **2.** Collection of Portfolio

Aug. 2018   **Spring 2019**   **Spring 2020**

Fall 2018   **Fall 2019**   **Fall 2020**

1. Interview 1 and 2 **2.** Collection of Portfolio	**1.** Focus Group with Participant Co-Coding **2.** Reflection on Coding/Self	**1.** Member Checks and Reflections and Responses to Writing

Case Study Experiences with Well-Being and Boundary Setting

Within this section, I want to focus on how GSIs are operationalizing their experiences with PREMISE and specifically how these agentive acts are useful tools for ensuring their own well-being. An important aspect of promoting well-being is giving participants permission to explore tools that are useful to their own learning and development. Rather than seeing well-being as static or passive, we can reframe it as agentive to understand how systems enable and inhibit these choices. I focus specifically on the concept of boundary setting as fundamental to well-being rather than resistant to training.

Boundary-Setting in Academia

A struggle for many within academia is the concept of boundary setting. Within this context I use Tollerud and Haliczer's definition of boundaries in a professional space as the "limits that allow for the establishment of a safe and clear connection between two people (generally one with more power) so that the learner's needs can be met." As Kimberly Bain writes, "The boundary lines are not clearly defined [in Writing Programs], and so they become enforced unequally," especially across ranks of instructors. Often the boundaries are between GSIs and their teaching mentors, the writing program at large, and disciplinary mentors. For GSIs there are professional conversations about maintaining boundaries from teacher educators, specifically in the "CCCC Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing." Within the statement

the authors write, "Graduate student teachers inhabit an acutely vulnerable space because they are simultaneously students and employees of a postsecondary institution: their status as both learners and as emerging practitioners in the classrooms must be protected." The acknowledgement of these boundaries is a positive response to GSI experiences and acknowledging vulnerability in professional documents is an important act of supporting GSI well-being.

However, these boundaries are often set by institutional and WPA needs and rarely responsive to GSIs' internal and external experiences, leading graduate students to make choices about their priorities. As Meridith Reed notes, "GSIs [are] agentive bricoleurs and their classroom practice as shaped and pieced into a bricolage pulled from a variety of ideas, experiences, and contexts" (9). By understanding the wide range of scenarios GSIs are drawing on, we can more fully address what the boundaries are and what vulnerabilities are leading to the need for space. For example, we might determine whether they are struggling with institutional needs, programmatic needs, student needs, or something else.

The moments of boundary setting observed from my participants are often those most related to the narrative of resistance, when GSIs are reflecting on their current situation, their values, and their constraints, and making choices accordingly. Although we often frame these as disciplinary decisions, for my participants that was only one part of the piece, and oftentimes it was a result of their external experiences and lives, such as being an international student, struggling with mental health, empathizing with their students, and dealing with the increasingly ominous job market. Within this section I look at how each of my participants used boundary setting as an important aspect of ensuring their own well-being rather than resisting GSI training.

Allen

Allen is a literature student from the Midwestern United States particularly interested in epistemology. Throughout the study, he struggled with identifying as a "teacher" and preferred the term "instructor." He states in his third interview, "I feel like the term instructor has less professional associations than a 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." His struggle is indicative of the vocation narrative that prevails within and outside academia. Due to this tension between teaching as something that one has a passion for and not just a job, Allen felt himself torn between what he was hoping to accomplish in literature with his graduate work and his teaching responsibilities. Allen stated in his final interview: "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 ev-

erything 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." Allen's expressing here that teaching does not align with his goals and is, in fact, potentially harming his ability to reach his goals. By setting aside time for students who want to meet, he is still meeting the professional requirements of his teaching, but his guilt of not doing enough for his students underlies his boundary setting.

As he progressed, Allen began to resolve this tension about his liminal positionality by prioritizing the forms of teaching he found most meaningful—conferencing individually with students and relationship building. These experiences came from both his foundational knowledge as a writing tutor and continual resistance to a top-down approach. Thus, he relied largely on pre-designed courses to supplement lesson planning and assignment design he was less eager about. He also set boundaries in grading, utilizing a portfolio-based approach, and built in peer review and self-assessment opportunities rather than him grading all assignments. His grading is a strategy frequently cited as aligning with writing studies and boundaries we should be teaching graduate students; however, in his mind, he is resisting when, in fact, he is drawing on his strengths as a teacher and identifying his values and priorities and building in healthy work/life balance. These are healthy practices of autonomized identity; he is making choices agentively as a teacher that align philosophically with his identity practices. Additionally, he is taking what is most meaningful and positive for himself, especially during a pandemic, to bring the best of himself to his teaching. However, he often felt "guilt" or was "torn constantly" about these choices because they seemed "against the program" rather than encouraged.

Georgie

Georgie is a creative writing student in non-fiction who writes about Zimbabwe and is interested in environmental topics and justice. The university was a hard adjustment for her because her undergraduate experience had not relied on an LMS and did not use textbooks. In her second interview, she states, "There was this unspoken expectation that we knew why we were teaching what we were teaching," especially in orientation. Her struggles represent the tension within WPE about when to introduce various ideas of writing studies theory and immediate practice (Dobrin). Her immediate experiences with technology positioned her as "behind everyone else" (Interview 1); thus, her understanding of the theoretical concepts underlying assignments became secondary. She states in her second interview, "D2L is extensive. There's a bit of a learning curve to be able to navigate it in a way that doesn't induce a lot of stress and anxiety for me, but I feel like I'm getting there slowly." [5] Ad-

ditionally, she frequently struggled with her international status and those of her students. In her second semester, she stated "I think when I see freshmen here, I'm just like I'm sorry, I know it's hard. It's just so hard. Even if you're native to this area of the U.S., it's traumatic to leave home and to come to college." Georgie invested a lot of emotional energy into helping students find resources to deal with this homesickness rather than learning D2L. Fisher notes, based on her own experience training graduate students, 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" (201). The narrative that Georgie was uninterested does not align with her experiences of a steep learning curve and ignores some of the external aspects of the TA life. Georgie especially struggled to learn this technology during her second year during COVID-19 when she was continually scared for her home country and wondering if she would have a chance to return. She stated in her final interview, "Since all my structures have kind of like, fallen away, I felt very like, just scattered and not really able to focus on one thing. So I was just like, paralyzed." To address these problems, she moved away from the LMS (with the exception of grades) and instead used Google Drive, which caused tension between her and her teaching mentor who wanted to see more of her materials on her course site. Georgie's ability to agentively choose the technology that worked best for her style of teaching and move beyond her paralysis to show empathy to her students is important. In the PREMISE model, Cochran defines engagement as "the attachment an individual feels toward a community that could be measured by the individual's commitment to stay in the community and interact with other members of the community." Georgie felt unattached to some aspects of the teaching community but focused largely on her fellow international students; it wasn't necessarily her commitment to the community but her reconciliation of her past communities and current communities that resulted in her inability to engage fully with technology and writing studies theory. Graduate students inhabit multiple communities at the same time, which results in tensions with program expectations but can also benefit learning.

Sully

Sully is a literature MA student interested in technology. She originally appeared extremely confident in her new teaching, but in Interview 3 she states, "A lot of the anxiety/stress from teaching was a very internal process for me. I wouldn't say a lot of other people could tell I was anxious or nervous about teaching." Her internal processing was oftentimes a "fake it 'til you make it" approach, and it wasn't until we had formed a more trusting relationship that

she was ready to share her vulnerabilities. During her MA, Sully eventually moved away from literature to study well-being and education, the focus of her PhD. Her interest in well-being began with understanding failure as essential to the learning process. Her teaching philosophy starts, "I believe it's okay to fail, but that it is not okay to allow failure to be a default switch." Due to her interest in well-being, she started to get pushback from her disciplinary mentors. But Sully did not identify strongly with disciplinarity and instead focused more on trans- and interdisciplinary education. She also was continuously concerned about how her curriculum of well-being worked with the larger student learning outcomes, remarking, "I think a specific goal I have right now is learning how to develop syllabi that address well-being concerns for students while still meeting university 'standards' or learning outcomes" (Year 2 Reflection). Luckily, Sully had a wide range of mentors and support systems for engaging in well-being research and topics within the classroom. However, outside of the writing program, her maneuvering between disciplines could be read as resistance to professionalization. In her final interview, she notes the importance of reflecting with her teacher mentor and says, "I think without that self-awareness, I would have just kept going in literature and then been like, oh, it's fine, I'll do it eventually…that's another practice of well-being, it makes me aware of what is my most comfortable and authentic self." Her self-awareness allows her to engage productively and maneuver between her different roles, but she still oftentimes feels "isolated" given the narrative of disciplinarity and assumptions that graduate students can't be both teachers and literature students. It becomes especially important then that teacher-educators model the interdisciplinary nature of the work we are doing and provide space for reflection and for students to engage in meaning-making across disciplines, as well as disrupt our own notions of who might be interested in pedagogy.

Butterfly

Butterfly came into the program focused on teaching and was less interested in research, especially research she felt didn't improve her classroom experience. Coming from Eastern Europe, Butterfly was always aware of her international students' experiences and made space to check in on their state of mind. She summed up her teaching philosophy in one word— "caring"— stating, "I do think of myself as a teacher who cares about her students, cares about the choice of materials, method of instruction, and delivery, and cares about creating meaningful learning experiences for my students. For this reason, I always make sure that I check on my students' mental and physical well-being" (Reflection Year 2). Throughout her participation in the study, Butterfly felt her own position in the classroom was that of mentor and fa-

cilitator of relationships between students to promote care and community. These values shaped how she also engaged with others in her learning space. She frequently processed her emotions and experiences externally, stating, "I always very openly talk about my experiences. When I'm angry or when I'm just frustrated about my workload, I want to know how other people do that. I know everyone is struggling, but just articulating that, sometimes it's just easier. We are all in this together. We're all suffering" (Interview 3). Throughout the experience, she asks for feedback from her mentor, creates weekly meet-ups with her cohort, and attributes the social environment as the biggest influence on her teaching and positive graduate school experience (Interview 2). Despite these positive social experiences, Butterfly still resists certain aspects of the graduate experience, describing a grammar lesson by saying, "I hate the modern English grammar, which is online. I hate it. So sometimes I'll just skim-read this, because it's not my research interest, it's not my interest in teaching. So yes, I mean, it's challenging, it's difficult, especially between the teaching and the classes, but I'm surviving" (Interview 3). When asked about how she copes when just "surviving," she cites other peers in her class and the importance of her community members who are invested in teaching and share the same philosophy. In such a large community, she has found a smaller community of international graduate students to share in her experience. In her final interview, at the beginning of COVID-19, she states,

> I definitely chose the right profession. Now, these are not the best times for you to be very hopeful and enthusiastic about teaching, given that the opportunities are really limited. I really, really hate that it's always some external and mostly coming institutional or systemic constraint that it's always like, well, did I really need to do this, or go into teaching? I always end up with the answer, yeah, because that's what you want to do.

Within this quote, there is frustration over systemic problems, but the love of teaching is still an essential part of these conversations. Well-being does not mean that everything is positive, but it does mean that GSIs have found coping mechanisms within their experiences that sustain their goals. There is also a distinct difference in emotional labor depending on GSIs' external lives, such as Georgie's and Butterfly's international student status. Understanding why and what choices are being made (beyond not doing something), can help provide insights into the values and experiences of GSIs throughout graduate school.

Malinka

Malinka is a graduate student in English and Applied Linguistics who is interested in working with refugees and conducting research. Throughout her experience, Malinka describes her identity markers as a queer Muslim white cis-gender woman, and she reports that these markers make it challenging to frame her relationship with peers and her students. She states in Interview 3, "It's a battle being a female and trying to gain your position of authority and respect within teaching or academia because that's just always still a struggle." Throughout the study, Malinka was engaged in interviews and requested more moments for reflection and conversation. Bold and unafraid to share her experiences with teaching, she frequently looked for places to publish on her GSI learning nationally; however, she was silenced by her teacher mentor locally in preceptorship and stopped sharing to protect herself—which was seen as an act of resistance.

During her first semester, Malinka had a problem with a student and felt "unsupported and called out" by her teacher mentor in front of the training class. When asked about the experience in her second semester with her teacher-mentor she responded:

> It's just gotten worse. I'm to the point where I'm depressed, I don't wanna go to class. I'm just like, "I'm so done." [Her teaching mentor] just is making assumptions like how my goals I want to achieve in like, I project those expectations on my students. It's like no, I genuinely care about education; this isn't just a funding thing for me. I don't even want to talk anymore. I'm just done. It's sad that I'm not the only one who feels they can't talk in the class.

Malinka became scared that she was not getting teaching awards, experiences in the summer, or other opportunities because of her relationship with her teacher-mentor and felt very withdrawn. Throughout her second year she began looking for teaching opportunities outside of the writing program, such as volunteering with refugee populations. However, she was afraid to tell her teacher-mentor and peers about this experience in case of backlash. Malinka's lack of engagement and withdrawal from the community is not a process of resistance but instead of recognizing her need for safety, her limits within the classroom, and her desire to achieve her goal of getting into a PhD program at a different institution. It is important we recognize the personal burden of social relationships within graduate school—whether teachers, peers, or mentors—they have an enormous impact on the internal and external lives of GSIs. Part of ensuring the well-being of graduate students is providing them

space to work with a range of people and to find mentors and communities in which they can feel safe and comfortable.

All five of the participants were able to make choices about well-being—specifically those related to their personal lives, professional goals, and social and emotional worlds—within and beyond their first semester. Participants were not resisting the current situation but instead drew on their values as teachers and writers to make choices about their classroom. During the final interviews, which took place in Spring 2020 during the shift to online instruction due to the pandemic, participants talked mostly about their concern for students, their own burnout, and their fears and anxieties. Although they were technically "grading less," (Sully and Georgie) "not studying all the things" (Allen), and "focusing instead on relationships and safety" (Butterfly), their actions were those of informed and experienced teachers. Each participant recognized their own needs and those of their students and worked to provide space for boundary setting within their classrooms. As we prepare graduate students, this agency is something to be celebrated and encouraged, and it is important that teacher educators provide the space and permission for graduate students to make these choices. As Schoettler and Saur note, "In these instances of reflection, the TAs felt comfortable sharing their doubts and insecurities as they reframed their teaching as a continuing narrative, but they were able to do so because they knew it was the intended purpose of those interactions" (174). This explicit permission and modeling are about reframing much of the work we already do in WPE. Focusing on agentive choices and giving permission for boundary setting can help us understand what we truly value as a community. What can't be given up? What needs more space? Where are the boundaries between personal and professional goals in WPE? These are especially important for graduate students who are not white cis-gender domestic GSIs. Additionally, these are sometimes not just decisions for well-being but also decisions necessary for survival and for navigating trauma.

Rethinking WPE and Continuing Professionalization Efforts for Well-Being

In the academic work environment where self-care and well-being are often not prioritized, we can learn a lot from GSIs. Driscoll et al.'s article calls for self-care in professionalizing graduate students to become a "more welcoming, sustaining, and ethical" profession (456). They define this self-care as "the ability to engage in well-functioning practices throughout the course of one's professional life" (456). Participants within this study embodied these experiences through their agentive actions. However, we need to move beyond seeing self-care as activities such as yoga and meditation but also as the boundary negotiation that GSIs are doing. There is a kairotic moment to

understand our own boundaries, influences, and positionalities as we move forward, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. The table below explores ways that different groups can engage in GSI well-being.

Table 2: Ways to Engage in Well-Being Across WPE

Field of Writing Studies	WPAs/Teacher Mentors	GSIs
Meaningfully revise professional documents about GSIs, including the "CCCC Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing" to include GSI voices and explicit references to ensuring well-being	Model our own well-being strategies, specifically boundary-setting, self-care, and community membership	Share your stories (if time and space allows with your goals) in a wide variety of areas, such as academic journals, blogs, conferences, etc.
Generate models of support within professional organizations such as SIGs related to well-being and boundary setting	Survey students about their expectations, access needs, etc. to further understand their needs for boundaries and how to advocate for students[6]	Reflect on your values as a teacher and how to create boundaries that align with these values and preferences
Provide funding, grants, and finances for research with GSIs on well-being in WPE	Provide reflective opportunities for students to engage in all emotional responses and have permission to engage in agentive well-being	If in a position of privilege, find ways to advocate for all GSI's well-being and communicate needs with others
Make space to publish GSI studies about their external lives and create research opportunities with GSIs to provide space for their stories	Prepare resources in advance for GSIs to share with undergraduate students and have explicit conversations about GSI scope of work	Recognize and encourage one another's well-being strategies

Using the PREMISE model, different stakeholders can understand their own well-being and ways to make space for others, especially in terms of engaging graduate students in communities and self-efficacy efforts. It is important to also note the external and internal lives of many GSIs and how these experiences shape their understanding of what it means to teach and engage in teacher training. The practices my participants reflected on help us shift forward and recognize the agentive and forward thinkers many of our GSIs are

and to engage in moves beyond resistance that move toward recognition. As graduate students are the future of our field, I want to recognize their ability to participate in research, challenge our assumptions about disciplinarity, and hopefully make our spaces more productive and meaningful.

Notes

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).

2. WPE is a term coined by Reid and Estrem that "encompasses the ongoing education, mentoring, and support of new college-level writing instructors" (223).

3. Each participant chose a pseudonym they felt represented their identity.

4. Both teaching observations and ePortfolios are a requirement for GSI training and participants were offered these experiences as part of the reciprocal nature of the study.

5. D2L is the LMS at the university.

6. Within this survey, it is important to focus on open-ended questions such as "What can I do to support you" rather than directed questions that might make students feel called out.

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