Meeting the Promise of Negotiation: Situating Negotiated Rubrics with Students' Prior Experiences

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In negotiating rubric criteria, students are assumed to have the capacity to engage meaningfully and productively in such negotiation, a process that involves an intentional discussion of student and teacher differences to come to a kind of consensus. However, it is not yet clear the extent to which students can participate in these negotiations. I take up this issue, presenting the findings of a study describing what two first-year students—Marie and Anthony—understood about rubrics and about how their prior use of rubrics informed their use of rubrics in first-year writing, including negotiating them. Marie shows an attachment to traditional rubric criteria from prior experience and has a limited language to describe writing concepts. Anthony demonstrates an acontextual use of the rubric as a checklist rather than as a community-based inventive tool for self-assessment.

Rubrics are a familiar tool used to support teachers' responses to student writing: they are often used to articulate and distill expectations for students by providing criteria and operates as a guide for teachers to score or grade student writing based on those criteria. Despite its common use, the viability of using this tool remains contested. Should we decide to use a rubric, WPAs and teachers alike must confront ideological questions about how to use it in our programs and our classrooms: Where does a rubric originate? Who is permitted to participate in creating the rubric? What impact will the rubric have on the values and practices of the classroom? At the core of these questions is not simply how to frame the expectations and criteria informing a particular assignment, but how to use the rubric, given that it is imbued with our classroom and program discussions about writing and its values.

For some teachers, a negotiated rubric—a scoring guide created with engagement of students—might offer the best of all worlds: it can satisfy

concerns with regards to student and teacher control over the values of the classroom and can become a means of keeping both student and teacher accountable while also keeping student learning as the primary goal. A number of researchers have embraced such a rubric-making practice. Asao B. Inoue develops an approach, for example, that stems from Brian Huot's notion that the teaching and learning of writing should actively involve students' engagement with the assessment of their writing. Students "not only learn to assess themselves, taking active learning stances in the classroom, but they begin to articulate how assessment and writing work in their own practices—theorize—that is, they begin to be more self-conscious, reflective writers" (Inoue 209). In a similar way, Chris Anson, Matt Davis, and Domenica Vilhotti use their method of generating rubric criteria collectively with students as a means to "help students articulate and internalize readers' expectations for their assigned writing" (35), thus seeking to make the process of assessment among peers or from teachers more transparent and to promote student self-assessment practices. Chanon Adsanatham offers his negotiated approach to multimodal assessment as a means of resisting "teacher-centered pedagogical and evaluative approaches that posit the instructor as the sole source of knowledge and authority in the classroom" (156). Rather, for Adsanatham, "If knowledge derives from dialogism and social-epistemic interaction . . . then exchanging, debating, and negotiating grading criteria, and revising them accordingly can strengthen our learning and growth as writers and assessors" (156).

For those who engage in rubric-negotiating practices, an overriding assumption is presupposed: students are assumed to have the capacity to engage meaningfully and productively in such negotiations, a process that involves an intentional discussion of differences among students and teacher to come to a kind of consensus. I propose that the capacity to negotiate in this manner hinges on three interrelated elements: (1) that students know what their own values are, (2) that students have a language to articulate tacit writing values, and (3) students' explicit language is robust enough to account for the complexity of their writing experiences. However, it is not clear that students have the capacity to participate in these negotiations. To better understand students' ability to negotiate these values, I explore these elements of negotiation in three parts.

First, I consider the contextual and theoretical factors surrounding the negotiation of rubrics. Second, branching from these theoretical and contextual factors, I unpack the findings of a research study describing what two first-year students understood about rubrics and how their prior use of rubrics inform their current use of rubrics, including their negotiating in first-year composition. In doing so, I argue that the two students—Marie

and Anthony[1]—exemplify some of the difficulties underlying the negotiation of rubric criteria with students: Marie shows an attachment to traditional rubric criteria from prior experience and has a limited language to describe writing concepts, while Anthony demonstrates an acontextual use of the rubric as a checklist rather than an as a community-based inventive tool for self-assessment. Finally, based on the conclusions drawn from the case studies, I consider the implications for WPAs and writing instructors interested in engaging students in negotiating rubric criteria.

Opening the Occasion for Negotiation

As above, and throughout this project, I position rubrics as an educational tool. As Eric Turley and Chris Gallagher argue, understanding the rubric as a tool or technology shifts away from assumptions deeming the rubric inherently good or bad, and moves towards practices or uses attached to the rubric. As the authors explain, much teachers' hesitation in using rubrics originates from the historical top-down rubric practices where teachers and students inherit a predetermined writing scale designed by administrators, testing regulators, or policymakers who have attempted to quantify writing quality. An inherited rubric plays a role in prescribing a "conforming . . . set of imposed expectations" from above instead of playing a descriptive or synthesizing role for community values (Turley and Gallagher 89). Accordingly, in such a model, the criteria are not contextualized for the potential constraints at play in the classroom such as instructors' specialties, students' interests, students' strengths or weaknesses, or the nature of the assignment at hand. Moreover, Valerie Balester, using race as a lens to study writing assessment and its technologies, writes that traditional rubrics can become a kind of roadblock to the inclusion of multiple sets of values because instead of opening a dialog about assessment values and the politics of those values, it prescribes values. The participatory nature of negotiated rubrics, then, appears to be a way to disrupt the inherited, prescriptive nature of traditional rubrics.

Negotiation implies difference: it requires contrasts in order to build values or goals that account for differences in a classroom, usually culminating in some kind of consensus. In a classroom-as-contact-zone model— "social spaces where cultures, meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (Pratt 34)—it is through negotiation of values that teachers and students share identities, share backgrounds, and draw attention to places of difference. Classroom negotiation thus assumes that there are, in fact, differences to negotiate—that students have something to offer to the context of the classroom. In fact, instructors negotiating rubric criteria with their students

(Adsanatham; Anson, Davis, and Vilhotti; Inoue) recognize that students bring into the classroom a whole host of experiences with writing that influence their understanding of it. As Adsanatham writes, teachers "can learn from them [students] as much as they can from us" (155). Moreover, Diane Kelly-Riley believes that such reciprocal learning is a means of holding teachers accountable to students: "classrooms are microcosms of our larger society—complete with injustice and inequality," and accordingly, "teachers or disciplines can [not] be safeguarded against intentional or unintentional bias" (32). Kelly-Riley also suggests that students should be given an opportunity to be involved in how their work will be assessed in order for them to have a stake in the structure of the class.

As these authors indicate, the negotiation of rubrics and rubric criteria offers participants an occasion to grapple with the textual values, expectations, and goals involved in a classroom community. The rubric appears to operate at the cusp of this negotiation: it is a material representation of the negotiated values in the form of articulated criteria. When we negotiate the rubric, we are in fact negotiating the values of the classroom. The negotiation of rubrics, then, becomes much more than the development of a guide for grading; it is the negotiation and articulation of values across a number of discourses including the classroom community, the writing program that supports the course, the students' unique linguistic backgrounds and cultures, and the discourses that emerge from students' experiential values located in their everyday writing practices. Put otherwise, regardless of whether or not negotiated rubrics articulate the values relative to a single text, they also point outward to articulate what both teachers and students value as good writing.

Socialization of Writing: The Score

With the call for greater opportunities for student negotiation, we must also contend with the ways students themselves are not completely safeguarded against or immune to buying into and reproducing the values of a dominant discourse associated with traditional assessment. Susan Latta and Janice Lauer raise questions about students' self-assessment, itself a key aspect of negotiated rubrics because, in the context of negotiation, students interrogate and articulate how they will attend to revising their writing. They question, "By asking students to assess themselves, are we asking them to internalize the strictures and guidelines of a system that may be discriminatory?" (32). In other words, simply prompting students to participate in their own assessment is not enough to insure negotiation: we cannot assume that students will not reinforce the kind of values that negotiation

aims to disrupt, such as a preoccupation with correctness in language or with the acontextual voice.

Many scholars have recognized that students bring with them a host of experiences and ideas about writing that were developed long before entering our classrooms. Certainly, we want students to offer such experiences to help us frame our classroom practices; however, it is also important to better understand where those writing experiences have developed and what kinds of epistemologies may be in play when students negotiate writing values. For example, research conducted by Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak on the transfer of student writing knowledge considers the prior knowledge that students draw upon in new writing contexts at the college level, namely first-year writing. The authors discuss the effect that the culture of testing—specifically, writing for a score—has on students' conceptions of writing, attending particularly at Florida's FCAT.

Take, for example, a student profiled by Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak named Andy. Andy demonstrates the kind of values we might expect from students socialized to high-stakes testing cultures: (1) that the instruction students receive in high school support their success in a standardized writing test by drilling practices that misinform them of the nature of writing; (2) that students do not have the opportunity to develop a language enabling them to discuss the complexities of writing and the writing process; and (3) that students do not recognize that there are writing activities beyond those prompted in testing or the classroom. Each of these three values are demonstrated in their description of Andy:

> Andy, a first-year student majoring in political science, entered the [first-year composition] course [1] believing he had been "brainwashed" with the five paragraph assignments teachers use to prepare students for the Florida standardized writing exam, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, or FCAT. He felt "uneasy" about writing generally, and it's probably not surprising since [2] he had no composing process to call on. Because the totality of Andy's writing instruction had been test-specific, he had developed no composing method other than an abbreviated process attuned to the test environment. Upon entering FYC, [3] he attempted to use the single approach he had relied on in high school, writing up an assignment in an hour. This approach to writing, as [Lisa] Scherff and [Carolyn] Piazza (2005) discover, is common for 90% of high school students in Florida. (107)

This example further demonstrates, as Elizabeth Wardle argues, that being socialized in a culture of large-scale, high-stakes testing represents "an

attempt to limit the kinds of thinking that students and citizens can do" (Wardle). Similarly, Bill Condon argues that when the construct of writing for students is reduced to a measurable unit producing a score, students generate value systems that may not benefit them—in fact, the value system may be detrimental to them considering how these tests misinform students about the nature of writing. Condon, reflecting on assessments for placement, writes that when

> we reduce the construct *writing* to only those parts of writing that are obviously measurable, we carefully train raters to attend to only those factors, and we pretend that the varied set of competencies that combine to produce 'good writing' can be expressed in a single number. (141)

Thus, the score becomes what Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak call the "point of departure," a stance that defines writing for students and is supported and facilitated through an entire system that is invested in reporting writing as a score. Before students enter college writing classrooms, they are immersed in writing environments defined by assessment technologies that distort and misinform them about the nature of writing. Students' exposure to writing in these environments—whether it is for state-mandated tests such as Florida's FCAT or FCAT 2.0[2] or an AP timed essay—nurtures an understanding of writing that may not benefit these students in college writing contexts, and, in fact, such understanding of writing may be detrimental to them because it is at odds with and substitutes for a more robust language to think with and talk about writing.

If Andy represents a generation of students born into No Child Left Behind and thus raised within a testing culture where writing is reduced to a test and especially a score (see Bomer and Maloch; Addison and McGee), then we might further ask whether students have the capacity to participate in the kind of rubric negotiation that a teacher may ask them to engage in. Put another way, when the writing values students hold are derived through years of testing in school, we may be, in asking students to negotiate the criteria for a rubric, effectively inviting them to reproduce exactly what we had hoped to disrupt.

The Study: Two Student Examples

Given the socialization of students in educational contexts, I designed and implemented an IRB-approved research study that sought to explore students' capacity to negotiate rubric criteria used to assess their writing. To report on such capacity, I focus my attention on two, first-year students— Marie and Anthony—at Florida State University. Specifically, I inquired

into what these students knew about rubrics as they entered college, their prior experiences with rubrics, and how such prior experiences or knowledge informs their current use of rubrics. This attention to prior experience has, thus far, not been taken up in research on rubrics and rubric negotiating practices, and attending to students' prior experiences can more directly answer questions concerning what students are bringing with them when we ask them to participate in the negotiation of rubric criteria. Put otherwise, questions regarding students' capacity to negotiate rubric criteria can, in part, be answered through attending to their prior experiences: their awareness of their own writing values, the language they use to articulate those values, and, importantly, the factors involved that have influenced their values and terminology.

Both participants were students in a first-year composition course where the negotiation of rubric criteria was part of the classroom's assessment for one major assignment at the start of the fall 2013 term.[3] Each participant volunteered their time to speak with me twice about their experiences. The first interview for each participant took place within the first few weeks of the semester and served as my introduction to their experiences with rubrics. The second interview occurred at the end of the first project (after the rubric was negotiated and, presumably, used by students). This interview prompted each student to describe how they utilized the negotiated rubric during the composing of the first project, if at all. The interviews of each of the participants offer a partial glimpse into students' histories, dispositions, and motivations and can also indicate some of the kinds of values those students have built around writing and assessment. I would also emphasize that the students' responses during interviews reflect an ongoing process of student-teacher negotiation that occurred over the 15-week course. Since these findings only focus on the first few weeks of the semester, they do not tell a full story of the classroom's progress of negotiating values over the course of a semester. Furthermore, each student should not be understood to represent a "type" of student; rather, each of the students' accounts raise a set of questions and values to which teachers may need to attend if rubric negotiation is part of the classroom assessment and pedagogy.

In each discussion below, I report a pattern of responses that gesture toward the kinds of prior experiences that impact how students may participate and contribute to rubric negotiations. I begin by outlining the classroom context and then present each student separately, each of whom present their own set of questions concerning rubrics, rubric negotiation, and writing generally. Marie and Anthony's accounts both demonstrate a common assumption in writing pedagogy that student knowledge is situated and grounded in prior experiences. As such, the goal of presenting these

students' experiences is to acknowledge that students embody a socialized experience that, as teachers, we should affirm and recognize as we seek to better meet our students' needs.

Classroom Context

As noted, this project is specifically interested in students' prior knowledge as a means of exploring their capacity to negotiate, and as such, I have not explicitly attended to the efficacy of this particular instructor's negotiation of rubric criteria or pedagogical approach. The instructor's method of negotiating rubric criteria is relevant in so far as it relates to how the student used the rubric itself, but given the scope of this project, it will not be the central focus on the findings. Thus, I attend to the classroom only as it is a constitutive factor in how each student frames their responses, most notably when discussing how he or she used the rubric in the first assignment by describing the process through which the rubric was negotiated.

The instructor, a graduate teaching assistant in the rhetoric and composition doctoral program named Peter,[4] designed the course to use personal discovery as an approach to composition. Florida State University's first-year composition program has adopted the learning outcomes provided by the Council of Writing Program Administrators and listed them in its 2013–2014 teacher's guide, a publication made available to all TAs in the program. Instructors are then able to adapt their curriculum to the instructor's interests. In the case of Peter's class, the first half of the course is meant to give students the opportunity "to explore and write about your personal experiences, ideas, and values." The first assignment asks students to construct a literacy narrative using a series of personal moments or occasions. The project, titled "Disjointed Snapshots: All the Pieces That Make Me Who I Am," asks students to create a set of one to five sentence "flashes" of "significant experiences in your life that make you who you are." Peter dedicated the first half of a class session to a peer review workshop where students worked in pairs to read over full drafts of their first project and he dedicated the second half to developing a negotiated rubric with his students for this first project. To begin the negotiation, Peter prompted students to reflect upon the peer workshop and offer criteria that they would like to be assessed against. Peter wrote every suggestion on the board and, with his students, categorized those articulated values into the final rubric: creativity/innovation/x-factor, detail/"show, don't tell"/ imagery, no fluff/ not boring, order/organization, paper length/snapshot length, cohesive/big picture, voice (which included grammar, syntax, word choice), and effort.

Marie: Rubrics in Closed-Circuit Exchange

Marie—a white, first-year student in her first semester at Florida State University—had an extensive familiarity with rubrics, describing in our first interview that she "pretty much [had rubrics] in all my high school classes," not only for writing courses, but for a variety of courses and projects. She drew particular attention to a high school English teacher she had taken the year before who

> would give us, like, this really strict rubric about everything he was looking for, and if we had extra things we knew what kinds of extra points we would get and where he would take away points and stuff like that. So, it was really easy to build our papers.

In both interviews with Marie, what came across clearly was that the rubric was a means of invention, as her comments indicated: the delimitations of the rubric were not restrictive for Marie. In fact, she often discussed the rubric as a kind of window that makes legible (a) the teacher's expectations and, thus, (b) the rhetorical situation of the task at hand. Because rubrics, for Marie, are tethered closely to teacher expectations (and to the writing task itself), she seemed to demonstrate a strong attachment to rubrics and, accordingly, presents two issues in the negotiation of rubrics: first, students may not be motivated to break away from the expectations of the teacher—even former teachers. And second, students may find it difficult to offer writing values that are unlike those developed in environments through which they have been socialized via their previous experiences with school writing. Toward this latter point, teachers may need to account for the limited language used to describe writing in testing environments. This language may circumscribe an otherwise robust discussion of writing and how it works, as alluded to earlier.

A theme that Marie often circled back to in her interviews was the ways that rubrics helped her orient herself toward the teacher's expectations. Particularly in her first interview, Marie placed a lot of value in rubrics because, according to her, it is not often clear what a teacher may value about a written text, and a detailed rubric can offer this kind of information. When asked what makes a good rubric, she answered,

> Something with details . . . so we could get the best grade that we could. So, stuff that showed specific details of what we actually needed to put in the paper and nothing that, like, left us questioning, like, "Should I put this in my paper? Should I add this type of reference?"

Marie's appreciation of detailed rubrics appears connected to her under-standing of rubric's function as blueprint for a grade and, thus, a key com-ponent in invention, very often appearing as the central source of invention. The details of a rubric allow her full view of what the writing task requires of her. In addition, in her initial interview, Marie understood writing pri-marily as a closed-circuit exchange between herself (and her writing) and the teachers, and the rubric often facilitated this exchange. She wrote,

> Well, because sometimes we think different than the teachers do. So, [the rubric] shows us what they're looking for because we might be writing about something that we believe in but—and, like, they're looking for specific things for us to say. So, it shows us what they want.

In a closed-circuit exchange such as Marie described between her writing, a rubric, and the teacher, discussions of writing begin and end with the teacher—anything exceeding the teacher's expectations, including what she may personally believe to be important, is superfluous. Indeed, even when discussing how she responds to her peers during a workshop, she pointed to the rubric as facilitating these discussions: "we would sit down and get a rubric and, like, go through their paper with their rubric—with our rubric—and just make sure they had everything before the teacher saw it." Across both interviews, Marie demonstrated a rubric-oriented disposi-tion in her writing: the rubric is a device through which she makes writ-ing choices. Certainly this use of rubrics, to help make writing choices, is expected and likely encouraged by teachers; however, Marie did not seem to acknowledge expectations of a writing assignment that are *beyond* expec-tations articulated on the rubrics. And, in a way, up to that point, she did not necessarily seem motivated to think beyond the terms of the rubric qua teacher, this closed-circuit exchange of writing and grade.

When asked how she operates without a rubric, she mentioned, "it's a lot harder to write on an assignment because . . . we don't know what they're expecting . . . us to write." When asked to describe how she writes for pur-poses that are not for school and do not have rubrics, Marie indicated that "it's what you think." In making a distinction between writing for school purposes and for everyday purposes, she distinguished such writing as either graded work for a teacher or non-graded work,

> If it's something that's going to be graded it's something that some-body else is going to read, and they are—they have an expectation, and so when you're just writing for [yourself] you don't have to show anybody if you don't want to. So, it's more for yourself. I guess, if that makes sense.

These last comments about her everyday writing processes seem still under-developed—in other words, she may not yet think of everyday, non-school, non-graded writing as writing, and she was perhaps only beginning to think of it as a kind of writing. For instance, in the first interview, when asked whether she gets most of her understanding of writing from school or outside of school, she responded, "definitely school." At least in her phrasing, she unequivocally saw her understanding of writing as developed through school, and as I noted earlier, the construct of writing—the definition of writing that stipulates what is included and excluded in context (see Dryer et al.)—that is taught and testing in school can have a profound impact on how students talk about writing.

Certainly, a fuller, more robust construct of writing represented in a school environment can nurture a more robust language to discuss and articulate writing knowledge in the future; however, it is often the case that the construct of writing is limited to only those aspects of writing that can be summarized into a score (see Condon, above). Although we cannot know the full extent of the kinds of constructs of writing with which Marie has been socialized in school, her responses can nonetheless indicate that much of her experiences with writing in school, up to that point, may indeed have been influenced by a construct of writing as testable and grade-able. Consider, for instance, her response in the first interview regarding the kinds of criteria she might include on a rubric for a writing assignment: The criteria she pointed to seem to gesture toward the same construct of writing that is testable and grade-able, reflecting a more positivist, current-traditionalist epistemology. She began with grammar as a criterion: "Definitely, like, grammar if they're going to check grammar." She continued naming other criteria, "Um, just, like, paragraph structure is, I think, important because some people, like—in high school we learn that a paragraph is four to five sentences, so stuff like that. Um. Length because people always have a different idea of what we want. So, just, like, general information." Marie's comments here seem to signal that there may be another issue that needs to be attended to; namely, her language in discussing writing appeared to be limited by the construct of writing defined by previous rubrics or previous writing instruction that tended to emphasize the parts of writing that can be numerically defined, i.e., that is countable or testable.[5]

Although these interview excerpts offer only a partial view of Marie's approach toward rubrics, she presents at least two considerations for the negotiation of rubrics: teachers should consider the scope of writing experiences students may draw upon during rubric negotiation and the potential limits of their language to describe writing. As I noted earlier, including students in the negotiation of rubric criteria is often meant to give students

the opportunity to offer potentially alternate values of writing that are not often supported in institutional writing contexts. However, Marie appeared attached to past school writing experiences in such a way that she is aligned very closely to teacher expectations. As such, it appeared her writing process is consumed by the logic of traditional, inherited rubrics. Marie's writing process did not seem grounded in any particular rhetorical concepts of writing, but rather in whatever is or has been articulated by a teacher via a rubric. A student like Marie may bring writing values and criteria to the negotiation process that will re-inscribe the kinds of institutional writing values that a teacher would hope to disrupt. Certainly, students offering such values and criteria can be helpful and productive in a negotiation because it may prompt discussion and deeper analysis into the salience of these criteria in new writing contexts. However, teachers should also not be surprised if students offer such values—it may be imperative for teachers to help students understand those values better: where they came from, how to expand from them, or whether to replace them completely.

Anthony: A Theory of Rubrics

Like Marie, Anthony—also a white, first-year student in his first semester at Florida State University—has had extensive experiences with rubrics throughout his schooling, although Anthony emphasized that his primary experiences with rubrics go beyond that of a writing course. In fact, in our initial interview about rubrics, Anthony's first mention of his rubric experiences were with the kinds he would receive in his science and math Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high school, pointing specifically to AP Biology, AP Environmental Science, and even AP Calculus. Anthony appeared to be very reflective about his relationship to rubrics, speaking with expertise about rubrics, drawing on his experience with rubrics of different kinds, for different assignments, and across subject areas. Anthony, a successful student despite his difficulty with writing due to dyslexia, showed a nuanced and complex understanding of the role of rubrics and his understanding of writing, making a concerted attempt to theorize and label how writing and rubrics work. Throughout both interviews, he reflected upon how rubrics function for different kinds of genres and disciplines, but also how he, himself, used a rubric when provided. Although he seemed almost ideal for rubric negotiation given his reflective approach to rubrics, he nonetheless poses a set of considerations for teachers. Namely, Anthony mentions that he doesn't "necessarily look at the rubric" when writing because he can easily recall the axioms of his former teachers, but *does* find it useful when it is focused on what he refers to as "technicalities" or style

and grammar issues, which "are usually what would get me," i.e. in terms of grading. In this sense, he is similar to Marie in how they both tether rubrics to concepts and criteria that reflect a more current-traditional epistemology. However, unlike Marie, Anthony both (a) did not necessarily need or want to use rubrics during his writing process, and (b) when given a rubric, saw its function more as an acontextual checklist for technicalities, thus, he may only draw upon a limited set of criteria based on his use of rubrics.

In our first conversation, Anthony offered his description of a rubric:

> So a rubric would be a guideline to the criteria that we are being graded. Within the paper the rubric should contain information, like, like that states the degree to which you'll be graded upon so you've got the topic and the extent of how well it was executed.

Based on his response, we began to discuss how he had developed this understanding of rubrics. When asked to describe the kind of criteria he might expect from a rubric provided by teachers in an on-level (or non-AP) English course, he began to discuss some conflicts he has had with the criteria on rubrics for writing ability compared to those on a rubric for a science course:

> I think writing is the hardest thing to put a rubric on by far. It's not, like, a science course where there is—you obviously have the information or don't have the information. It's also very hard to really judge creativity, and I think it's also even harder to do that within writing. I took a couple of art classes and rubrics for art classes were very different for rubrics in writing courses even if it is a similar performance; it's much harder to grade a piece of writing unless it's blatantly terrible or unless it's just amazing.

When discussing the nature of work in the sciences and the particular genres therein, Anthony recognized how the purpose of assessment in this academic context is to point out right or wrong answers: he described this as something that's easy (in his use of the word "obviously"). In fact, when describing assessing writing, he pointed out that assessment for a written text is easier if something is "blatantly terrible" or "just amazing," which would appear to be the same conventional wisdom of writing assessment experts: interrater reliability is stronger among writing samples that are on the binary ends of the scoring scale (e.g., Cherry and Meyer; Smith). But Anthony arrived at this conclusion through his experiences with a multitude of rubrics of various kinds, including in the sciences as well as art. And more, he used this knowledge to articulate differences between assessing texts of different kinds. In other words, he was recognizing that assessment in the sciences, art, and writing is different: he's noting differences in dis-

ciplines and how the writing in those disciplines is assessed. For instance, unlike the sciences, writing is often assessed in the gray areas with content that is not easily quantified. Further, he's questioning how to judge abstract concepts that are associated with writing such as creativity; these qualities, he seems to say, were different than in the sciences.

When Anthony discussed the challenges that come with representing his ideas, he focused on what he calls "technicalities": "When I'm doing a research paper, I definitely utilize the rubric more because there's more technical—it's more technical, and those technicalities are usually what would get me." When asked to explain what he means by technicalities, he explained, "Spelling, grammar, punctuation, citations: those are the things that always, like, get me when writing." The challenges that he experienced are not so much the rhetorical ideas—organization, conveying an idea, voice—but rather, the rule-based practices that are easily quantified and identifiable, much like science- or math-based content. As we begin to observe, Anthony used the rubric to help with these trouble areas, these technicalities for this particular assignment. It helped him to draw attention to aspects of writing which, through his dyslexia, he would not have otherwise focused on. Anthony begins to show us how the rubric helps with some aspects of his writing process, namely, rule-based practices.

However, in the second interview, conducted after Anthony completed his first project, I specifically asked how often he used his class' negotiated rubric during his writing process. He replied, "I didn't use it at all." He goes further, the assignment "wasn't a technical piece of writing. There wasn't sources I needed to cite . . . I didn't have to deal with like any in-text citations or giving credit to different authors. It was, it was all my work . . . ." From this excerpt, we can understand that a rubric for this student is helpful for when an assignment calls for rule-governed or enumerable values. The more descriptive concepts—those criteria that exist in the gray areas, not easily quantified—he can handle on his own. As he described, for many writing situations, he has an internal "checklist" of writing concepts that is culled, at least in part, from teachers he's admired. He elaborated on this process:

> I go through my own checklist, I suppose. Checklist with writing things. I try to write good stuff. I don't just put stuff down on paper. My teacher in high school, my senior year teacher, was incredibly challenging teacher. She's an amazing teacher. And so, she's kind of like drilled certain things into my head with my writing that I like just follow, I suppose.

With such comments, we can begin to note some interesting distinctions between Anthony and Marie. For instance, Anthony was able to develop and describe a writing process that is not beholden to a rubric. As such, he recognized the moments where he would want a rubric, when he wouldn't, and why. Where Marie organized her writing process around and through the rubric, Anthony appeared to be more deliberate with his use of a rubric. He has developed a "theory of rubrics" that he uses as a guide to his writing. This was demonstrated clearly when I asked if the process of creating the rubrics in years past had ever been made clear to him:

> It wasn't, but I was able to infer what it means. So, you do a unit and then you would write a research paper or you review it or it would be tested in some way—or quantified in some way and that's—everything that you learned through that unit is expected to be present at the end, and I think that's where the rubric comes in.

Inferring how a rubric is created, he recognized that the rubric is in fact the representation and synthesis of a set of values. He appeared, then, positioned to write *without* a rubric. Anthony recognized that to be successful in a writing situation, he must read across the materials, discourses, and values that surround the writing task—a rubric can often be helpful, but it is one document among many that Anthony can use. Anthony's ability to put the values of the class, the rubric, and his own experiences in conversation with one another is the kind of (personal) negotiation, existing prior to or concurrently with a first-year writing course, that is important to the writing process, and would make Anthony a valuable participant in creating a negotiated rubric. However, Anthony did not appear to need, or want, the rubric for his writing process except in cases where the rubric would remind him to draw his attention to his common pitfalls: spelling, grammar, punctuation, citations.

Conclusions, Implications, Displacements

Reading across these cases, we can certainly observe that the practices we attach to rubrics, including the negotiation of their criteria, are more complex than has been generally recognized. Given that students come to our classrooms with a host of experiences and knowledge with writing and rubrics, it's important to understand how these prior experiences can impact students' negotiation of criteria and use of rubrics. Up to now, research into rubrics has not often raised questions about students' prior experiences—this study, thus, suggests a number of important considerations for the use of negotiated rubrics in the classroom.

For instance, as we've noted with Marie, her points of departure to think and engage with the act of writing has been developed primarily through school and, more specifically, she regards rubrics as her way into a writing task. Rubrics appear to operate within a closed-circuit exchange between teacher and student and thus the rubric seems to impede on her ability to operate outside of this exchange. The rubric, in other words, cuts the writing process short: her writing process begins and ends within this exchange. Such concerns are also reflected in Mary Soliday and Jennifer Seibel Trainor's discussion of students' experiences with various forms of regulation in the classroom, including mandates, rules, dos and don'ts, and "rubrics that 'must be' followed to meet assessments" (126). For Soliday and Seibel, such forms of regulation in literacy education results in students who are unable to "see the rhetorical purposes the assignments set or the opportunities for the authorship they provide" (126). For Marie, she likewise appears hyperattentive to the machinery of regulation in the classroom that control her grade rather than the rhetorical purposes of an assignment.

Thus, engaging in a negotiation of values, developing rubric criteria of her own, or challenging the teacher's rubric criteria would be a completely foreign experience for Marie. In fact, inviting a student like Marie to negotiate a rubric may just reproduce or reinforce the kinds of criteria a teacher might hope to dislodge from a traditional rubric. Put another way, negotiating a rubric from the bottom up may just retrieve the same kind of rubric from the top down. Further research may need to pose additional questions about the kinds of supportive classroom structures that would account for these issues.

As I've also discussed, if Marie—much like Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak's case of Andy—had been socialized within learning environments that drew upon a limited construct of writing due, for instance, to testing cultures in high school, then Marie's language to discuss writing will likewise be limited. In our promise to negotiate students' values via rubrics, we may need to first invite students to articulate their writing values and prompt students and teachers to reflect upon the staying power (or lack thereof) of those writing values, especially as students are asked to complete more complex writing tasks. Researchers such as Mary Jo Reiff and Anis Bawarshi have noted the importance of connecting students' prior knowledge of writing to a more robust language to discuss their writing activities, and Marie's responses have made apparent that language deployed in rubric negotiations must be attended to mindfully and carefully.

Looking through the rubric, Anthony has a wider understanding about how writing works, not simply within particular teacher-student exchanges. With such an outlook, he could in time improve his writing across contexts.

He also uses rubrics strategically to help him draw attention to particular aspects of his writing, the kind that may be obscured by his dyslexia. In this way, while Anthony seems the ideal student to participate in the negotiation of rubrics, he doesn't quite seem to need the kind of criteria that a rubric would delineate, and, in fact, he claims to benefit from conventional and mechanical rubric criteria—the kind of criteria that negotiated rubrics also would seem to challenge or confront. In fact, the negotiation of rubric criteria, generally, seems almost like a zero-sum game: both Marie and Anthony appear to be able to operate without a rubric—but for different reasons. As mentioned, Anthony can essentially operate beyond a rubric and is reflective about what a rubric can do for him for a given task. But also, for Marie, who has relied on or benefited from rubrics, the negotiation may result in the reproduction of previous rubric values, even when such values might be the kind teachers had hoped to disrupt in rubric negotiation.

As mentioned previously, this project did not attend to the specific practices of teachers during rubric negotiation or make claims about effective pedagogy; rather, I have approached rubric negotiation from students' prior experiences that may inform a pedagogical approach. What appears clear, for example, is that the negotiation of rubric criteria potentially gives both teachers and students an opportunity to investigate the ways in which we understand writing and assessment. Once students and teachers bring attention to students' prior experiences with writing, rubrics, and assessment, students may enact greater agency in negotiation. But we also need to recognize that using rubrics displaces an important part of the writing process: rubrics, because they are afforded so much cultural power, tend to replace and reduce the investigation, assessment, and understanding of the discourses that surround a writing task (see Soliday and Trainor). And further, there's a possibility here that when students are able to interrogate values of themselves and others, the rubric becomes unnecessary and redundant while simultaneously reaffirming the technical or scorable aspects of writing.

Notes

1. Both of these names are pseudonyms.

2. The Florida statewide assessments have gone through several transitions in the last few years. The FCAT 2.0 was implemented between 2011 and 2014. Prior to 2011, it was simply the FCAT. Beginning spring 2015, Florida transitioned away from FCAT 2.0 (NGSSS assessments) toward the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA). Similar to the FCAT 2.0, students in grade 10 must receive a passing score on the FSA English Language Arts exam (which includes a writing portion) in order to receive a high school diploma.

3. The first-year composition program at Florida State University does not have a programmatic standard for rubrics or rubric creating; sample rubrics—used at the discretion of the instructor—can be found in the program's teacher's guide. However, the teacher's guide explains that these rubrics should be adapted according to the level of expertise of the student. Because of the flexibility of the FYC program, instructors can design their rubrics depending on the context of the classroom and goal of the instructor which allows for diverse methods of rubric creation and implementation.

4. This name is a pseudonym.

5. In Marie's second interview, she makes an interesting shift away from countable aspects of writing toward whether writing "makes sense" or "flows," which seem much more audience-driven, in the sense of being directed toward an audience beyond that simply of the teacher. I did not study the classroom practices closely enough to understand this shift, but it certainly appears like progress is being made with how Marie thinks about writing and how it works.

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