Respectable Rubrics: Searching for Black Language in Faculty Training for Equitable Writing Assessment

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Abstract: Research has long claimed that rubrics provide the objective, fair, and equitable means by which to assess student writing. Recent moves in writing programs and composition classrooms have acknowledged the ways that writing assessment perpetuates linguistic violence, and shifts towards anti-racist assessment practices have ushered in grading mechanisms that are based on student-teacher contracts and labor, mechanisms that claim to uphold student-writer agency and voice. In this paper, we argue that though such assessment mechanisms are moving in the right direction, the historical roots of writing assessment, Black performance for a white audience, and the socialization of those who use rubrics to assess student writing run the risk of serving as tools of what April Baker-Bell has named respectability and/or eradicationist language pedagogies. We examine how a lack of faculty preparation to use contract- and labor-based writing assessment tools may perpetuate rather than eradicate linguistic violence in writing classrooms.

In preparing this paper, we sought out our university's writing center to review a draft. On the center's website, the appointment request form included a list of checkboxes where we could specify the kind of assistance we needed, from reviewing organization and arguments to citations and grammar. Encouraged by this seemingly thoughtful approach, we purposefully did not ask for comments on mechanics given our topic of violence in writing assessment. However, we were quickly made uncomfortable after small talk in our awkward virtual session. Our reviewer began reading our paper out loud and as they did, contorted our words—adding conjunctions, punctuation, rewording clauses. Exactly what we had not asked for. With each minute, our rage grew as we frantically messaged each other. There had been no conversation about who we were as writers, as students, or as people. And yet it felt as if we were being judged as writers, as students, as people. A negotiation that had been implied felt like deception. As lovers of writing, we have lived the narrative of writing as an open creative space. We have also been witness and victim to policing that has undermined our voices. From that session, we took anger instead of relief, shame rather than support. We left with yet another reason to turn away from the university as a resource.

As writing instructors, this experience was not surprising. Writing programs use various forms of assessment to guide student writing, particularly embracing rubrics and the argument that they serve as equitable practice (Feldman, 2019; Ragupathi & Lee, 2020) because they are regarded as consistent and clear. Yet rubrics are one of the ways teachers engage in a colorblind practice that honors White Mainstream English (WME) as the standard of academic language. Despite talk of

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equity, the temptation to correct grammar or critique clarity often conflicts with the norms of marginalized linguistic systems like those of Black Language (BL). Our experience with the review from the writing center exemplifies such a risk. The checklist provided in the portal used to set up the appointment serves as a type of rubric in that it specifies the varied domains of writing, requesting that writers identify the domain in which they are requesting feedback. In requesting that our paper be reviewed for argument, organization, and cohesion, we were creating our own rubric, one that identified criteria focused on the throughline of the ideas, not on the mechanics used to communicate those ideas. Despite having such a mechanism against which to read our paper, our reviewer relied on their limited understanding of what constitutes good writing, resorting to their own sense of what they consider academic language by focusing on their granular preferences for word choice and sentence structure rather than on the global argument as we'd requested. In the same vein as labor- or contract-based rubrics, described later in this paper, the writing center's checklist had the potential to center writer agency and voice, but our experience suggests the reviewer was ill-prepared to effectively use such a tool, which resulted in an experience that disparaged our language rather than providing the requested feedback on our ideas. Our experience is not dissimilar to those often tolerated in writing spaces, including classrooms. A concerning lack of research on faculty preparation to navigate rubrics means that supposed common sense notions of academic language are likely to kick in even when using labor- or contract-based rubrics. In practice, the nature of such rubrics continues to leave judgments of what writing is good and acceptable to individual instructors and enacts anti-Black pedagogies.

In this paper, we respond to the following question: How are faculty members prepared to use assessment tools like labor-based rubrics, and how does that preparation address anti-Black linguistic racism (Baker-Bell, 2020)? What does that mean for how April Baker-Bell's (2020) eradicationist and respectability language pedagogies are embedded in curriculum? Given the white supremacist imperative of performance in the history of American Black Language from enslavement through to today, we argue that while trends in writing assessment have long supported the use of rubrics, more recently including those that espouse labor-based practices, as fair and equitable (Dawson, 2017; Inoue, 2022; Ragupathi & Lee, 2020), a dearth of research on faculty preparation to use such rubrics fails to examine how ill-prepared faculty could embrace a respectability ideology of colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2022) that at best only supports BL to facilitate WME acquisition. This facilitates the policing of Black Language as a fundamental aspect of academic success, carrying on a violent legacy of Black performance for white audiences. In order to confront this legacy, writing programs must develop faculty training on labor-based rubrics within a larger project of anti-racist actions.

About the Authors

Taylor Lewis is rooted in the genealogies of Black diaspora communities currently in Piscataway and Susquehannock territories. A descendant of the enslaved and a queer femme, she centers her subjectivities in order to acknowledge the intimacies of Blackness, language, gender/sexuality, and knowledge-passing. She is able to do so in great part because of relationships with Indigenous activists during graduate studies in Hawai'i. Her work lies within a larger framework of linguistic liberation for Black communities that reaches for communal definitions of culture—past, present, and future. She does so as a BL speaker herself, of the Maryland and eastern Pennsylvania dialects. She has taught writing courses for international students within a university English Language Institute and is currently an instructional assistant for graduate-level courses on writing and literacy pedagogies. Central to this instruction has been the topic of multiliteracies and marginalized languages, with critical pedagogy (Crookes, 2010) engaged in order to empower student voices even as they navigate the academic demands of WME.

The second author of this paper, Jenni Eaton seeks to interrogate practices in writing instruction that devalue, dehumanize, and inflict violence on students in writing classrooms. As a white writing teacher of racially diverse students at both the secondary and post-secondary level, she is a perpetual student of liberatory and culturally relevant writing pedagogy, working to complicate what it means to be a writing teacher by interrogating the deeply rooted pedagogies, aesthetics, and epistemologies of white supremacy culture. She is an adjunct professor in the Writing Program for a branch of a state university. The courses she teaches are introductory writing courses, and because they are general education courses, they are standardized in content, assignment, and assessment; that is, the online platform contains the same resources for accessing the content (readings, videos, etc.) and the same writing assignments, all assessed on the same rubrics. The program embraced Inoue's research (2019a, 2019b) when it emerged, shifting program practices and policies to create a more anti-racist writing program ecology.

Centering Black Language

The use of the terms Black Language (BL) and White Mainstream English (WME) here is in reflection of the anti-Blackness that necessitated the field of Black linguistic studies. As April Baker-Bell (2020) states, the centering of Blackness in the term foregrounds "the relationship between language, race, anti-Black racism, and white linguistic supremacy" (p. 2). It also works towards decentering English and the nation-state of the United States to pull focus to the experiences of Black communities within Turtle Island who have suffered under the monolinguistic nationalistic ideologies attached to the notion of ideas of American English(es). Rosina Lippi-Green (2012) muses on the construction of a Standard American English that is riddled with prejudice: that speakers of the standard are educated, that they are not "sloppy" (p. 60), that they are easily understood. The co-construction of this ideal of not just a standard English, but an *American* standard in which to be "American means white" (Morrison, 1992, p. 47). This aligns with the stigmatization of BL, where speakers have been labeled as uneducated, grammatically unruly, and unintelligible.

This is not to say that all Black people do not self-affiliate with the American nation, but that the American nation struggles to affiliate with Blackness. The numerous terms associated with Black Language (Ebonics, African American Vernacular English, Black English, African American Language) align with the constant reclamation of Black self-identification and the inability of whiteness to understand Blackness. This paper honors the former while having to respond to the latter. Part of this means centering Black living through the aesthetic of a capitalized Black that disrupts white normativity and dominance. As Geneva Smitherman (2006) notes, BL is not simply the recognition of linguistic grammaticality, but also of the continuation of ancestral African heritage through to contemporary Black cultures. To speak Black Language is to deliberately not align with nation-state ideologies of language, but to acknowledge the complex web of patois and creoles in the geography of Black linguistics. It is to simultaneously address the anti-Black linguistic racism that does not take into account the personhood of the speaker and the revolutionary cry, "Say it loud, I'm Black and I'm proud!"

Black Language and the Coercion of Performance

In exploring the histories of Black Language and American English, it is vital to understand the role of performance that undergirds a culture of anti-Blackness. To this end, we look to the performance in the sociolinguistic sense as "understood as a special mode of situated communicative practice, resting on the assumption of accountability to an audience for a display of communicative skill and efficacy" (Bauman, 2000, p. 1). For Black folks, performance in all realms has been a practice of survival. Understanding the state of surveillance that the community is perpetually in, Black children

learn early on to put on a face particularly for the white listening/speaking subject (Rosa & Flores, 2017). It is this constant movement between the insular and the external that W.E.B. DuBois named a double-consciousness, that James Baldwin (1995) felt being "defined and described and limited" (p. 23) by white society, and that Geneva Smitherman (2006) terms as linguistic push-pull. Accountability to whiteness is the reason for code-switching. White supremacy defines code-switching according to an ideology where language unintelligible to white people does not belong (Young et al., 2014). Black speech as naturally spoken is effectively not language at all, and thus the Black performance of language is situated in an anti-Black world. To follow this lineage of anti-Black linguistic racism (Baker-Bell, 2020) from the apocalyptic event of slavery, we engage Saidiya Hartman (2022) and the role linguistic performance demanded of enslaved folks as a genesis for the post-apocalyptic policing of BL through to the present day. In doing so, we depart from traditional positivist research of BL to engage queer feminist theory to center Black feelings under the violence of assessment. This also recognizes the destruction white supremacy has wreaked on Black knowledge where written historical records are sparse and oral histories and mythologies are rendered invalid.

The dilemma of subjecting millions of Black people to violence under the power of a relative white few was not solved strictly via the whip. It also required an entanglement of logic that stripped the racialized enslaved of their humanity to replace it with an objectivity and calculated animation articulated through performance. Saidiya Hartman (2022) describes this "willed self-immolation" (p. 88) of African personhood enacted through nonconsensual performance as a pillar of slavery—creating a false scene of enslaved agency in order to justify the institution. Part of this constructed mundanity was language performance of enslaved people for white audiences. The relevance for the entangled history of Black Language and American English here is twofold: the demanded use of English and for specific kinds of English intelligible for white audiences. As part of the separation of communities and families through the Middle Passage, the American enslaved were not left to cultivate language(s) without surveillance. Matt Richardson's (2013) analysis of *The Highest Price for Passion* by Laurinda Brown and "Miss Hannah's Lesson" by LaShonda Barnett identifies neo-slave narratives that highlight how Black women had to perform linguistic Blackness "as a method of survival" (p. 50) while also balancing demands for mimicry of white speech. This is substantiated by actual minstrel song lyrics mimicking Black people, such as "Massa made de darkeys love him / cayse he was so kind" (Hartman, 2022, p. 43) as well as the testimony of the formerly enslaved having to sing Confederate nationalist songs like "Dixie" (p. 73). In these performances, Black people were forced to co-construct narratives of anti-Blackness that situated their languages as unintelligent and them as joyfully ignorant. Thus laid the ground for coerced performances of WME that simultaneously resigned communal language practices to appropriate places and times where white audiences were either not privy or already expected deficient speech.

The continuation of this linguistic performance after slavery may be seen in the writings of Black literary forces. Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Morrison are just two examples of coercion and resistance. In honoring the life story of Kossola/Cudjo Lewis in her anthropological work on *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo,"* Hurston declared the need to record his words in his own speech. However, Viking Press would not publish the work unless it was written in "language rather than dialect" (Hurston, 2002, as cited in Plant, 2018, pp. xxii) in 1931 and so it wasn't until 2018 that Kossola/Cudjo Lewis's story became accessible to the public.

More than 60 years later, Toni Morrion (1992) outlined Africanism in American literature as the distinction

> by which the American self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; not history-less, but historical; not

> damned but innocent; not a blind accent of evolution but a progressive fulfillment of destiny. (pp. 52)

These Africanist themes upheld a master narrative in the mainstream of Black peoples that relied in part on the usage of BL as different and deficient. The deployment of the "Africanist idiom" was used to distinguish "speech and speechlessness" (Morrison, 1992, p. 52) that depicted Black people as unintelligible and alien. These characters spoke in this context while simultaneously situated as enablers and surrogates for white fears. Black fictional characters perpetuated real-life roles where a false Blackness validated the humanity of whiteness via the erasure of culture and racial violence. The power of Morrison's writing is because of her consciousness on the significance of racialized language. In order to have Black characters speak authentically, one must recognize how Black people have been forced to perform coercively.

The experiences of these Black folx provide a more robust picture of the interconnectedness of anti-Blackness both within and outside of the classroom. April Baker-Bell (2020) captures this violence in her students' linguistic double consciousness as they comfortably speak Black Language, but are policed by teachers, family, and community. BL is not the "language of school" (Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 50) as it is normalized in opposition to intelligence and success. Major policies that normalized anti-Black linguistic ideologies include the 1979 Ann Arbor decision and 1996 Oakland Ebonics controversy. Less discussed is the 1967 *Hobson v. Hansen* decision that explicitly discussed assessment, race, and language.

Assessment, Eradication, and Respectability

A key aspect of linguistic performance is "the assumption of accountability" (Bauman, 2000, p. 1). The performer will be assessed by their audience according to certain standards. Geneva Smitherman (2006) discusses two key moments in the policy history of Black Language—the Ann Arbor decision and the Oakland Ebonics controversy—as points of progress within the marathon that is working for Black linguistic rights. While these moments certainly are vital in the recognition of BL, we point to the continued demand of Black speakers to either assimilate to white speech norms or perform as feeble-minded beings in need of white care. The 1979 decision of *Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School Children, et. al., v. Ann Arbor School District Board* that legitimized "Black English" as a dialect did so to facilitate the acquisition of a "standard English" (Smitherman, 2006, p. 12). Almost 20 years later, the 1996 Oakland School Board's Ebonics Resolution attempted to apply action to BL research by declaring African-American Language a language to be addressed by federal Bilingual Education Act regulations. However, the same outcome of supporting the "acquisition and mastery of English-language skills" (Oakland Unified School District Board of Education, 1997) was desired. Before both of these decisions, however, was *Hobson v. Hansen* in Washington, D.C. In 1966, local D.C. activist Julius Hobson sued the Board of Education of the District of Columbia and superintendent Carl Hansen alleging that segregation remained educational policy through the tracking system that placed students in schools based on standardized assessment results. Ultimately, the court crudely ruled that being Black and poor cultivated "a language form alien to that tested by aptitude tests. Slang expressions predominate; diction is poor; and there may be ethnically based language forms" (Hobson v. Hansen, 1967) which structurally upheld racial segregation. In this effort to rectify educational injustices, the court reified the perceived unintelligibility of Black Language. At each major decision-making step, education has only recognized BL in order to eradicate it and uphold WME.

Understanding the demands of Black performance and the role of assessment in BL policing in education, we engage April Baker-Bell's (2020) outline of eradicationist and respectability language pedagogies within the context of anti-Black linguistic racism in education. April Baker-Bell (2020)

defines eradicationist language pedagogy (ELP) as an approach that positions BL as "linguistically, morally, and intellectually inferior" (p. 29) and a defect of the student. Respectability language pedagogy (RLP) appears more progressive in acknowledging BL as valid, but only as a tool for acculturating students into WME. The goal of both pedagogies is to destroy students' BL knowledge and replace it with WME, with no regard for the trauma enacted. In other words, both view BL as a problem, but RLP also positions it as a resource.

While April Baker-Bell (2020) does not elaborate on what ELP and RLP look like in practice, we can draw conclusions about how these pedagogies show up based on other literature. Corrective feedback, such as seen in Brittany Frieson's (2022) and Danny Martinez's (2017) observations and Black/Latinx student testimonials, explicitly treats BL grammar as incorrect to be replaced with WME conventions. This type of response promotes eradication in not even treating BL as language. Respectability, however, might be seen in contrastive analysis or code-switching practices that dictate there is a place and time for BL (Baker-Bell, 2013; Hankerson, 2022). In both cases, BL will be marked as inappropriate in the final assessment. Such practices are ultimately codified through assessment tools such as rubrics.

A Brief History of Rubrics

Rubrics emerged as a practice of writing assessment in the early 1900s when Eric Noyes elucidated what he argued was a "universally applicable" scale for writing assessment developed by Hillegas, an associate at Columbia University (1912). He attested that this scale, developed by a collective of composition instructors, would, "enable any teacher to correct his individual judgment by reference to the combined opinions of many good judges" (Noyes, 1912). Use of such a scale would do what these Columbia professors sought: "to establish standards of composition that will make it possible to compare the work done in one school with that done elsewhere and to make it difficult for mere opinion to control so much of our schoolroom practice" (Noyes, 1912). The sentiment endures in the Outcomes Statement from the Council of Writing Program Administrators (2019), which includes a series of statements regarding conventions, including the declaration that first-year composition students should "develop knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, through practice in composing and revising." To be clear: the linguistic structures identified here are those of WME. To demand such outcomes puts anti-Blackness in the syllabi and on their corresponding rubrics, requiring BL users in composition classrooms across the country to perform using the linguistic structures of WME.

Rubrics became mainstream in the 1990s with the surge of educational reform that prioritized standardization and shifted towards a test-based model of assessing the skills of students across the country (Murphy & O'Neill, 2023), though the usefulness of rubrics as a standardized assessment of writing has often been contested amid questions of context and purpose (Turley & Gallagher, 2008). While some research upholds the assertion that rubrics provide a fair, consistent, equitable way to assess student writing (Crusan, 2015; Dawson, 2017; Ragupathi & Lee, 2020) (with some even going so far as to suggest that automated writing evaluation systems have credibility due to their consistency (Correnti et al., 2022)), others question whether rubrics can be used consistently given the varied domains within writing that are subject to assessment, e.g., meaning and mechanics (Wind, 2020). Evidence has long existed to show that even with rubrics, assessment of writing is rarely consistent (Diederich, 1974), as the activation of knowledge of so-called good writing is not only highly individualized, but is also socially constructed (Inoue & Poe, 2020) and therefore rooted in the social, cultural, and historical legacy of anti-Blackness in the United States.

It was nearly fifty years ago that the NCTE's Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) identified students' right to use their own language in classrooms (Committee on CCCC

Language Statement, 1975), and the CCCC revised its position statement in 2022 to include additional considerations for language, inclusion, diversity, and labor-based practices (CCCC Executive Committee, 2022), and yet rubrics still routinely include assessment of a writer's use of "conventions" or "mechanics," criteria that are measured against WME. Despite research that shows discrepancies between faculty and student interpretations and uses of rubrics for writing assessment (Li & Lindsey, 2015), writing programs not only continue to use rubrics as a standard course of assessment for writing performance, but have routinely embraced the argument that rubrics serve as equitable practice (Feldman, 2019; Ragupathi & Lee, 2020).

In 2015, Asao B. Inoue introduced the idea of grading contracts that focused on student labor rather than on assessment of perceived quality or identified proficiency as a mechanism for course grades. In composition classrooms, a shift to labor-based assessment meant centering student agency, which can show up on assignment rubrics with markers that identify the presence of criteria in student work, e.g., complete/incomplete, rather than those that identify quality, e.g., advanced/proficient/developing/inadequate. The question remains, however, as to whether writing faculty are prepared to use such rubrics given the inherency of White Mainstream English in the assessment of student writing (Inoue, 2019a). Ideologies that define good writing and academic language as that which aligns with WME may influence one's use of a rubric intended to be more equitable, creating the risk of eradicationist or respectability tendencies in which faculty interpret and score linguistic choices and rhetorical moves outside of those conventional in WME as incomplete. Without an understanding of how such a rubric accommodates for linguistic choices outside of WME, faculty are likely to interpret complete the same way they have historically understood proficient. Thus, even a rubric intended to embrace student agency and voice across a spectrum of linguistic choices may still hold student writing to a standard of WME.

Methods: Research on Faculty Professional Development for Rubric Use

Given the history of anti-Blackness in the judgment of linguistic performance and the role that such assessment has played and continues to play in coercive violence against those who were enslaved and their descendants, such a shift in assessment of writing performance piqued curiosity. The research on anti-racist writing ecologies (Inoue, 2015) and labor-based writing assessment (Inoue, 2022) was intriguing in its inclusion of rubrics that attempt to address this violence by centering the agency and voice of the writer, but what of the research on faculty use of such assessment? To answer our research questions on how faculty members are prepared to use labor-based rubrics and addressing anti-Black linguistic racism, we sought literature that examined faculty preparation for labor-based writing assessment.

A search for peer-reviewed articles published since Asao B. Inoue and Mya Poe's 2012 publication of *Race and Writing Assessment* turned up very little with regard to faculty preparation for use of equitable rubrics in the assessment of writing. All EBSCO databases, all ProQuest databases, JSTOR, and ERIC were searched. The following search terms provided the baseline body of work considered:

RUBRIC AND

faculty OR instructor OR professor OR college teacher	AND	"writing instruction" OR "writing assessment"	AND	higher education OR college OR university OR post secondary OR postsecondary

Initial searches also coupled the terms "labor-based OR contract-based" with the search term "rubric"; these searches yielded only Asao B. Inoue's work, and were thus excluded as a search term. In addition, articles were found forward chaining from Asao B. Inoue and Mya Poe (2012) and Asao B. Inoue (2019b) through Google Scholar using the search terms "training" AND "rubric." These search terms and the forward chaining yielded 96 results.

In examining the results, we used four exclusion criteria. We eliminated literature that a) was not published between 2012 and 2023, b) focused on contexts outside of institutions of higher education given our focus on college faculty, c) focused on multilingual learners, i.e, those who are learning English as another language unless they explicitly identify BL speakers, and d) included research outside of the United States, as our focus as American authors is on Black Language histories and college faculty within the United States given the specific history of American white supremacy and its defining of American English(es). For example, as opposed to forced linguistic assimilation, enslavement in nations like Suriname and Haiti enforced linguistic segregation (McKittrick, 2006; Wekker, 2006) creating different geographies of language ideologies. In Canada, the erasure of African enslavement means that the recognition of Black linguistic histories requires a specificity that cannot be lumped in with that of the United States (McKittrick, 2006). This paper has historicized Black Language within an American context, and so traces the lineage of BL within education in relation to its American geographies. Black geographies (McKittrick & Woods, 2007) have and will reconceptualize what it means to be in relationship with space, as BL does with language. However, in focusing on institutions, this paper recognizes that the white supremacist structures of higher education have yet to consensually be in conversation with Black geographies. Related to this vein, studies that examined the results of rubric use for writing assessment that were not explicitly focused on providing racially and linguistically equitable assessment were also excluded.

Based on this criteria, we found just six articles that examine faculty preparation to use contract-based grading (Baez & Carlo, 2021; Falconer, 2022; Inman & Powell, 2018; Michaud & Hardy, 2023; Stuckey, Erdem, & Waggoner, 2020; Tinoco et al., 2020). There is research on the impact and influence of rubric use on specific domains within student writing (e.g., Sladek, 2022), and there is research on the consistent scoring of writing on specific rubrics across a number of faculty scorers (e.g., Shabani & Panahi, 2020), but literature that specifically examines how faculty are prepared to use labor- and contract-based writing assessment is very thin.

Our Findings

The methodology of these articles included narrative descriptions (Baez & Carlo, 2021; Tinoco et al., 2020), analysis of departmental changes (Michaud & Hardy, 2023), and case studies (Falconer, 2022; Inman & Powell, 2018; Stuckey, Erdem, & Waggoner, 2020). In Elizabeth Baez & Roseanne Carlo's (2021) work, masters' students in the authors' English classes engaged with the first edition of Asao B. Inoue's work on labor-based grading contracts (2019) in preparation to teach undergraduates in the Writing Program, and adjunct faculty participated in reading group discussions of other of Inoue's work. Similarly, both Heather Falconer (2022) and Joyce Inman & Rebecca Powell (2018) examined voluntary programs to introduce faculty, including graduate students teaching undergraduates and faculty outside of the college's writing program, to equitable practices, including labor- and contract-based assessment of writing. Lizbett Tinoco et al. (2020) shares the experiences of six faculty members in using labor-based grading, including how each wove Asao B. Inoue's ideas into their writing course practices. Christina Michaud & Sarah Hardy's (2023) work sought to examine policies and practices in a university's writing program, as well as its TESOL program, through a critical language lens, including the use of labor- and contract-based grading. In Michelle Stuckey, Ebru Erdem, & Zachary Waggoner (2020), a first-year writing program launched and examined a pilot to

use labor-based grading, relying heavily on Inoue's work and negotiating faculty preparation to use such assessment practices, including inviting Asao B. Inoue himself to the campus.

Based on our research questions, we open-coded the data to capture commonalities across the literature. Then we conducted a second pass of axial coding in review of those commonalities to generate major categories. Inductive coding provided deeper analysis of those categories to better understand how they were thematically defined across the literature (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019). We found the following categories in the discussion of faculty training:

1. Description of Training Methods
2. Goals of Training & Developments
3. Outcomes of Training & Development

Across these categories, we found two themes of community and focus on equity and social justice.

Category 1: Description of Training Methods

Community was an essential foundation for all training methods taken in the literature. This included reading groups, workshops, discussions, and meetings to discuss literature on assessment and social justice. These methods were designed to promote the "importance of self-interrogation" (Tinoco et al., 2020, p. 1) and "consider how traditional writing assessment is a practice that reifies racial hierarchies and biases" (Baez & Carlo, 2021, p. 107) in the pursuit of implementing contract grading. Three studies (Baez & Carlo, 2021; Stuckey, Erdem, & Waggoner, 2020; Tinoco et al., 2020) specifically mentioned Asao B. Inoue's work as part of faculty readings or even having Inoue himself visit with the department. This emphasis on reflection was reflected in the literature read by faculty, which also included April Baker-Bell and local histories of writing programs. These intentional interrogations demonstrate a thoughtful relationship between training ideologies and training methods.

Collaboration was also crucial, as in the case of Christina Michaud and Sarah Hardy (2023) who worked with Spanish and French departments to "unify our faculty's varied, and valuable, perspectives on language even as it allows us to make our stated commitment to justice concrete and practicable" (p. 4). As with the reflexive intentionality of the literature, communal approaches proved beneficial to prompting critical action. In three cases, this led to wide-scale longitudinal change (Baez & Carlo, 2021; Michaud & Hardy, 2023; Tinoco et al., 2020) because the implementation of contract-based grading was part of wider administrative action. In the absence of community, the sustainability of contract-based grading efforts wavered. This was from a lack of administrative support or departure of a supporting research team (Inman & Powell, 2018; Stuckey, Erdem, & Waggoner, 2020). Of course, the loss of funding (Falconer, 2022) was a major factor in sustainability.

The intentionality of these training methods demonstrate how much thought is necessary for resisting anti-Black linguistic racism because of how ingrained harm is in writing assessment. A holistic investment in contract-based grading to address racism thus represents a devotion to change that recognizes structural inequities built on diverse critical scholarship.

Category 2: Goals of Training & Development

No matter the conditions of faculty training, the goals focused on creating better conditions for both instructors and their students, conditions that would "begin to build new habits of thinking about learning and teaching outside of grading for both students and instructors" (Stuckey, Erdem, & Waggoner, 2020, p. 1). For faculty, this meant examining administrative responsibility for hiring, scheduling, and sharing expertise to foster a culture among faculty that embraces the philosophies

that undergird labor-based assessments (Michaud & Hardy, 2023) and providing support for faculty members who inevitably feel disoriented when they are no longer assessing student work as they have done for years (Inman & Powell, 2018). For students, goals focused more on success, centering students, and creating less stress. Students who are similarly disoriented when they no longer receive grades as they have likely done for their entire academic careers need additional support and time to adjust (Inman & Powell, 2018). Woven within these goals was critical language that also framed the training as efforts in reframing, reflecting, increasing awareness, and thinking about positionality and power. Several articles identified how conventional practices, including rubrics (Falconer, 2022) and the demands for code-switching to adhere to the norms of WME in writing (Baez & Carlo, 2021), cause harm to and perpetual racial hierarchies across university structures (Michaud & Hardy, 2023), but though ideas of white language supremacy and marginalization might have been mentioned in the theoretical sections of these articles, only Tinoco et al. (2020) explicitly mentioned race and violence as central to the work of supporting students: "We have also observed in both programmatic- and department-level meetings increased recognition and explicit discussion of the ways assessment is a fraught, political practice that can reaffirm White language supremacy and inflict racialized violence on students" (p. 2). It should be noted the initiative detailed in Tinoco et al., 2020 was led by the white male director of the First Year Composition program, Scott Gage, who had previously engaged in thorough self-reflection about his positionality at the university. The degree of his self-reflection speaks to the need to support and foster similar self-reflection among all faculty in order to ensure improved conditions as programs work to achieve the goals of training for more equitable writing assessment.

Category 3: Outcomes of Training & Development

Community, as an essential part of training, was also often noted as a generative outcome. The collective effort of bringing faculty together in the pursuit of equity and supporting students promoted "greater self-awareness of power and positionality in their courses, leading to more equitable and empathetic classroom environments" (Tinoco et al., 2020, p. 1). In response to a holistic training approach, holistic results were just as important as traditional proficiencies. In some cases, the training fostered fruitful faculty-student relationships: "[W]e are seeing how important the relationship between students and teachers is in helping students listen to and develop their own voices, rather than parroting that of the teacher" (Baez & Carlo, 2021, p. 122). In other cases, the intentionality of training for labor-based assessment fostered a shared recognition that "many other aspects of our work with students—from the programmatic level to the level of the classroom—require honest and ongoing scrutiny," (Tinoco et al., 2020, p. 9), a reflexive stance that resulted in some changes at the programmatic level, such as policies requiring an English language proficiency test (Michaud & Hardy, 2023).

However, the authors also heavily considered how contract grading has "the potential to improve student and teacher experiences…[and] increase equity in writing assessment by expanding grading categories to account for the diverse writing knowledge and experiences first-year students bring to the [First Year Composition] class" (Stuckey, Erdem, & Waggoner, 2020, p. 11). While intentional training approaches did not always lead to unanimous use of contract-based grading (Michaud & Hardy, 2023) or universal student acceptance of nontraditional grading (Inman & Powell, 2018; Stuckey, Erdem, Waggoner, 2020), the turn away from traditional grading that is contract-based grading means that those "traditions" become irrelevant. As April Baker-Bell (2020) demonstrated, anti-racist language education transforms success away from rigid rubrics. Instead, critical consciousness is the priority, which the literature reflects. Christina Michaud and Sarah Hardy (2023) write about success beyond the classroom such as transitioning to a directed self-placement process for students and addressing faculty prejudices against multilingual students that show up in course

scheduling. In this structural approach of which contract-based grading is an important piece, they acknowledge "the level of control that universities are still attempting to exert over multilingual students' language and identities—particularly when these students are students of color and are from countries other than the United States" (Michaud & Hardy, 2023, p. 8). It is how institutional blindness seeps into individuals that needs to be addressed, not Eurocentric ideas of intelligence and proficiency. However, the authors gave more weight to the critical reflection of the instructors and in cases of long-term change, such revisions to program documents to include language of criticality and cross-departmental collaborations to expand the conversation beyond the writing program (Michaud & Hardy, 2023), significant strides towards centering language and developing assessment.

Discussion

A deep pool of research for writing program administration has identified the domains that are often assessed on writing rubrics: clarity and development of ideas, organization, language choices (including syntax and diction), and conventions (including grammar, usage, and mechanics) (e.g., Diederich, 1974). Writing program administration research, however, has only just begun to address the need to critically examine practice and pedagogy with a magnifying lens on the racial disparity in student performance when assessment tools like writing rubrics are employed. Over a decade ago, researchers examined the connections between race and writing assessment and called for a critical examination of the ecologies of writing assessment in writing programs across the country (Inoue & Poe, 2012). What has emerged in the interim is a thin, muddied body of research that upholds the value of rubrics as clear communication of expectations, but asks for a scale that shifts from measures of proficiency to measures of labor. However, often lost in the search for a general equity is the specific focus on race and anti-Blackness.

What is missing from the conversation is an examination of the best ways to prepare faculty to use such labor-based tools in ways that confront anti-Blackness thoroughly. As Asao B. Inoue (2015) points out, a singular tool does not make for an equitable writing ecology. How then, are we to understand the role of the poorly-trained faculty who has been provided with or stumbled upon a model for an equitable writing rubric but does not yet have the mindset, framework, or compassion to use it in a just way? As noted in Scott Gage's reflection on his own complicity in perpetuating white supremacy via WME in writing program administration (Tinoco et al., 2020), the integration of such a tool requires intentionality, a cohesive ecology not only within writing programs but across the campus, and a shift in both policies and culture to support the goals of honoring student agency and voice (Michaud & Hardy, 2023).

Assessing Student Writing and the Violence of Performance

When undertaking the task of providing feedback on student writing, faculty must activate their knowledge of both the content about which the student is writing, as well as their knowledge of what defines clear writing, i.e., the writing skills students are expected to employ. They also activate their prior experiences, including experiences as a writer. In the absence of explicit guidance for use of labor-based rubrics, this runs the risk of not only subjectivity, but deeply rooted, anti-Black biases, what Asao B. Inoue (2015) calls "a dominant white racial habitus that informs writing rubrics and expectations for writing in classrooms, even ones that ask students to help develop expectations for their writing" (p. 127). Even when presented with a labor-based rubric intended to serve as more equitable assessment, faculty will tap into their individualized knowledge for purposes of assessment of performance, including biases that favor WME. This dissonance is evident in faculty reflections from all of the papers we examined, in which faculty had to negotiate ways that their framework for assessment was closely tied to grades and that uncoupling feedback from grades was initially

disorienting but ultimately necessary for authentically anti-racist assessment. Guiding faculty to reflect as both writers and instructors in community is not just a rigorous process, but a critical one. If they cannot understand the connection between the violence of the institution and that within their classrooms, then the goal of transformation is lost.

ELP rubrics bear scales that include ratings such as advanced, proficient, developing, and basic. In considering anti-Black linguistic racism, we can understand these kinds of rubrics as categorizing the grammaticality of BL as unconventional and deficient in contrast to "advanced" so-called academic language conventions. The challenge is that faculty have spent the past several decades rating students as "proficient" and "developing" against an internalized model of what constitutes "good" writing, a practice that has been long documented (Diederich, 1974); what we must recognize is that these parameters of "good writing" are deeply rooted in WME. The risk is this: a professor who activates both individualized and socialized knowledge of writing, thinking, and race and who would judge a piece of writing to be "developing" or "basic" on a traditional rubric, is likely to mark "incomplete" on a labor-based rubric, even if the domain is fully present in the student writing.

The literature demonstrates that in order to empower student voice in writing, the effort must be collective and critical from the designation of goals and design of training methods. If the outcome of an equity-based approach is a return to inequitable practices, anti-Blackness will remain embedded in contract-based grading, couched in RLP. While labor-based rubrics are regarded as flexible, accommodating a wide range of skills, styles, and voices, in practice, the subjective nature of the rubrics leaves judgments of what writing is "good" and "acceptable" to overwhelmingly white faculty members who invoke a demand of Black linguistic performance embedded in both the instructor and violently coerced for the Black student. To espouse the power of student voice in assignment instructions and then deduct points based on the voice in a student writing assignment is to perpetuate the coercion of RLP. If in the public space "on the page," Black bodies and minds are required to conform, then whole-body ideological transformation is the remedy.[1]

Conclusion: In Pursuit of Black Language Liberation

As we examine the function of rubrics as an assessment of writing, we must consistently consider the wider history of anti-Blackness in the United States and the impact that such a tool has on students (Poe et al., 2014). Although the intention of labor-based rubrics is equitable assessment of writing, the absence of research on faculty preparation to employ such rubrics runs the risk of simply evolving ELP and RLP in their function within white language supremacy. In order to prepare faculty to use labor-based rubrics as anti-racist work for BL speakers, training must be place-based, center anti-Blackness, and understand the university institution in its power as a decision-making audience defined by white supremacy.

Drawing from the literature reviewed, Tinoco et al. (2020) provide a template for how place must be central to understanding the histories of anti-Blackness local to the university and how that intersects with the Black and non-Black communities students come from. This requires more than just land acknowledgements or cultural celebrations. It requires the community that Scott Gage made central at Texas A&M University - San Antonio, both within a department and with communities perceived as outside of the university bubble. In taking on the directorship, Gage had to acknowledge the university's land and the "neglect of San Antonio's colonial history" (Tinoco et al., 2020, p. 2) that laid the foundation for its treatment of a student population that is 74% Hispanic/Latinx. To be truly place-based, attention should not be solely based on demographics, but on the history of communities both highly visible and rendered invisible. Black Language is just as diverse as Black people, and geography is a powerful part of that diversity.

The inclination to comprehend Black communities with no account of pasts, presents, and futures is a function of anti-Blackness. Assessment of (writing) performance has been enlisted in that white supremacist work. To name white supremacy but not center anti-Blackness is to claim a crime has no victim. Having faculty acknowledge their white privilege without knowing who it has impacted makes it easier to erase how rubrics make Black students distance themselves from their language and culture. None of the literature analyzed here explicitly stayed with anti-Blackness throughout their implementation of social justice and labor-based approaches. Looking anti-Blackness in the face provides a key context to why student voices need to be centered over those of mostly white instructors and administrators who may claim years of teaching experience. It provides a starting point for deconstructing what instructors think they know about language, writing, and their students.

Heather Falconer's (2022) outline of her training modules starts with an important topic in bringing extensive histories of place and anti-Blackness to the writing classroom: "What is 'good writing'?" (p. 3). If faculty members rely on their knowledge of what constitutes good writing they may be inclined to mark criteria on a rubric that does not honor Black student agency, voice, choice, and relationships to Black linguistic performance. Suppose a rubric contains a criterion that indicates a student paper should have a thesis statement that makes a claim and provides a preview of the paper's argument. A faculty member, inadequately trained in labor-based rubrics as anti-racist tools addressing anti-Blackness, may employ this tool as a mechanism of ELP or RLP. They might allow students to use BL as a preliminary step towards WME in brainstorming or outlining. Within ELP, there might not even be this recognition of BL, but instead an emphasis on writing within the narrow stylistic and mechanical confines of what is considered correct, proper, or academic. According to a rubric where the indicator complete earns a full score while the indicators incomplete or missing do not, they would be positioned to mark BL use as incomplete or complete with commentary indicating that students revise the thesis statement to include language that has been historically considered formal or academic, i.e., WME. This response communicates a lack of understanding in the instructor's position as an extension of the university audience. Deeming BL incomplete or as informal states that Black culture in its honest expression does not belong within the prestige of the university. If the Black student does not perform language properly for the white university audience, they will suffer.

With little research into the way faculty are prepared to and indeed use such a rubric, and none that directly address anti-Black linguistic racism, there is a likelihood that tools of liberation are in fact further embedding respectability and eradicationist pedagogies. It is imperative that department leaders enlist the lessons that have been learned from what little research there is to design their own professional development to implement labor-based and contract-based grading as a part of holistic approach to transforming their writing programs. The taking on of this communal work to address anti-Blackness provides more opportunities for research and the sharing of knowledge required to consistently reflect on what it means to embody anti-racist language pedagogy.

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Note

[1]Additional critiques of labor-based grading include ways in which the practices overlook the legacy of teachers' and students' socialized value of grades and student intersectionality, particularly for Black students with disabilities. For further information, see Inman and Powell (2018) and Carillo (2021).

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