

Chapter 6. Flexing Quantitative Measures of Labor

In her critique of LBG, Ellen Carillo centers on how quantitative measures of labor are used in LBG. She rightly identifies the fact that such measures can circulate as if they were neutral or objective, when in fact they have biases (11). She connects this critique with her larger concern that the standard of labor used in LBG is normative, ableist, and neurotypical because “there is a single standard of labor implicit” in all of the measures of labor used and that single standard centers an able-bodied and neurotypical student (11). I agree that this is a problem, or can be, and appreciate her calling attention to this issue. I also think it is even more complicated than how Carillo represents it, but it is resolvable.

My aim, then, in this and the next two chapters is to think through the ways LBG can resist an ableist, neurotypical standard of labor through the circulation of quantitative measures of labor. That is, I try to carefully consider how teachers and students might understand and avoid the kinds of problems with quantitative measures of labor that Carillo has identified. I believe that such concerns about normative, ableist, and neurotypical biases in the measures used to grade student performances are universal in literacy and language classrooms. They are important concerns that all teachers, no matter their grading ecology, should address. In this chapter, I discuss the ways labor standards might be better understood, flexed or crippled, then move to considering their use in a larger construct of mine, a willingness to labor, that helps me assess the effectiveness of my own grading ecologies.

Flexing Labor Standards

In her criticism of a single labor standard in LBG, Carillo asks important questions about the estimates I discuss in labor instructions (i.e. time on task in minutes, number of words written or read, and prescribed due dates/times), some of which end up being used to determine assignment completion. She asks, “How has this standard of labor been arrived at and by whom? How is this standard different from the static, single standard of quality that labor-based grading contracts are intended to challenge?” (12). These are important questions that I think any conscientious teacher might ask about their own grading ecologies, labor-based or not. What’s my standard and how did I derive it? Where does it come from and who controls it in my course? How is my standard inequitable to some of my students?

Because I work at ASU, I have explicit guidelines for the amount of time all students are expected to spend on their work for any course. It doesn’t matter if the course is asynchronous and online or face to face. The expected hours of

learning activities are the same for either kind of course. Our guidelines are dictated by a national standard in the US.

The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) dictates that a 3-unit course is expected to assign work to students that amounts to 135 hours in the semester. That's 45 hours of work per credit earned.³ This precisely matches the guidelines for college credit hours established by the U.S. Department of Education, under Title 34 CFR 600.2 (U.S. Department of Education 5).⁴ This standard of labor per course is close to or the same as other guidelines at other universities where I've taught (see Inoue, *Labor-Based Grading* 224-225/220-222). It seems a reasonable place to begin my course development and preparation, particularly since accreditation agencies and the federal government expect such labor equivalencies for all college courses.

While these factors don't make this standard of labor fair and equitable, nor do they make it automatically anti-ableist and accessible to neurodivergent students when applied in just any old way, as a standard, it is not inherently flawed. Like my numerical labor estimates of time in my labor instructions, the U.S. Department of Education's standard is just a guide. Courses and students will vary. The key to being fair and equitable, then, is in its flexible application to the grading ecology of a course, and how any given assignment or task is assigned time in the semester. So, if I use my UDA principle as a way to apply this labor guideline—that is, if I work to “afford multiple and collaborative means of judging and assessing student performances and learning, which includes standards or expectations that are responsive to all students' needs and learning conditions”—then I think I can determine how to distribute and administer the 135 hours across a semester in equitable ways.

Thus, ABOR's guideline of 135 hours provides me with an initial baseline to draft the course labor instructions. It guides what I initially give to students for negotiations. I do not expect more than this amount of labor time by any student in any of my courses in order to receive the highest grade possible. In fact, to insure this, I estimate about 20% less labor time than the 135 hours, knowing that some may need more time to complete the assignments for the course than what I've estimated. For instance, in a recent 3-unit, 15-week, undergraduate communications course, I asked for an estimated 107.58 total hours (6,455 minutes) of labor. In a recent 3-unit, 7.5-week, FYW course, I asked for 96 hours (5,760 minutes) of total labor.

In the past, I divided ABOR's number into the number of weeks in the term or semester and assigned work equivalent to that number each week. In a 7.5-week course, that would be about 18 hours of work per week. In a typical 15-week semester, that's 9 hours a week of labor assigned.⁵ The biggest problem, as I see

3. You can find the Arizona Board of Regents Policy Manual online at <https://www.azregents.edu/policy-manual>. The policy that determines workload for course credit is A.8, under section, 2-224 - Academic Credit.

4. The Title 34 CFR 600.2 can be found at <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/34/600.2>.

5. These numbers include contact hours (class time), unless it's an asynchronous online course.

it, is in how such labor is apportioned during any given week or segment of the course, assuming that a teacher can also estimate with reasonable accuracy the amount of labor needed for any particular assignment they have in their course. By reasonable accuracy, I mean, estimates of labor time that are within 20% of the actual time needed for any student to complete any given assignment.

The more I divide up this labor and expect a particular amount of words from that labor in smaller amounts of calendar time, the less fair my grading ecology becomes for students with disabilities and neurodivergencies, or those who work and go to school at the same time. So, a teacher might, as I've done, rethink these units of time to compensate for this problem. While contract negotiation processes mediate how much labor is expected in a course, it is still wise to provide generous time frames for labor asked of students. Even though students can alter the amount of labor required in contract negotiations to some degree and translate those guides in labor instructions as they begin doing the work, carefully considering the time frames of labor and their due dates can mediate ABOR's number and make for more equitable labor expectations, while also responding to the particular group of students in any given course and semester.

Flexing due dates of all labor or assignments is one way to crip the 135-hour labor standard in the grading ecology. For example, I have taken as many due dates as possible off of individual assignments, and made those due dates suggested only. While all assignments are still required to be done, they can be completed by the end of the semester. I've also experimented with having each unit's assignments due by the end of that unit, which can be between two and four weeks long. There are a few exceptions to this; assignments that are time sensitive and need responses by students at a particular moment in the course, for instance, contract negotiation work. There may be other ways to mitigate the inequitable effects of a numerically specific labor standard, such as the 135-hour rule, but the point of my examples is to suggest a few ways any labor standard can be more flexible.

Occasionally during our contract negotiations, students ask to reduce the amount of labor each week or in particular assignments. This is another way to flex those labor standards. Listen carefully to students. For instance, in a recent course, a student made the argument to reduce the amount of reading for each two-week unit by half, arguing that this would allow them to engage more deeply in the work rather than try to cover too much too quickly. They didn't think they would have enough time to do all the reading. This change also reduced how many reflections were required in each unit as well. After discussion and voting, we halved the reading schedule and made the now extra readings and journal entries optional. When all these practices are combined, it gives the best chances to avoid ableist and neurotypical standards of labor through flexible, democratically driven processes. But does this crip labor standards enough?

Obviously, I don't think that a teacher can avoid having labor expectations in any course no matter who or where they teach. The number of hours in a semester may be different, but everyone expects their students to do work in order to

learn. That is, learning is laboring. This means that everyone has labor standards, even if many of us have not put a number on them. But just because we haven't doesn't mean we can't, or that we shouldn't. Since the amount of labor hours necessary to complete any course is the way the federal government, accreditation agencies, and all colleges and universities define their courses and the credit hours earned from each, it seems fair and ethical to make clear what I think my course's labor expectations are in terms of estimated time needed to complete the course, even if I also think that number is flexible by about 20% either direction. Asking students to keep such numerical data on their laboring can also help crip labor standards. Such practices can give students important information to help them plan their work and succeed. It also gives the teacher important information about how well they have estimated the work they assign to students. Is it too much or too little? To aid in such fairness, it is important to be flexible with labor guidelines, offer alternatives when possible, and always negotiate labor expectations with students.

The Nature, Creation, and Use of Labor Standards

Just as Carillo asks about how my labor standard is defined and derived, all teachers might also consider such questions. How might a teacher define their own labor standards for their LBG ecology or some other kind of grading ecology? What dimensions are important? To answer this question, I use my own labor standard as an example to compare to conventional quality-based standards of writing. This comparison helps me consider three important dimensions of any standard. These differences signal important aspects of labor expectations that a teacher might use when defining their own labor standards. Those differences reside in the standard's (1) nature, (2) creation, and (3) use.

First, the nature of a quantitative labor standard centers on labor done. This requires that a teacher make judgements about only the amount of labor that produces a final course grade. The closest measure I've found is the number of words written and turned in. While not a perfect measure of labor done, this is a measure that is, relatively speaking, easy to understand and decide with students. It is also a mostly unambiguous aspect of a text or product turned in. It is not highly interpretable or ambiguous. This makes it more knowable for students. I think of it as a target they can discern, rather than one that is partially mysterious to students.

The potential for being ableist and neurotypical is in how flexibly such a labor measure is used in the ecology. A labor standard can be flexible through a number of ecological elements: student negotiation of the standard; student reflection on their labor; flexibility in due dates and what is accepted as complete when assignments are turned in (what counts against students' contracts); and student choice of which measure to focus on (number of words or number of minutes laboring, for instance). All these things can be a part of the standards used to determine assignment completion in any LBG ecology.

As a way to compare, a quality standard in languaging is one about quality and requires a teacher to make judgements based on their own sense of quality in student writing and work in order to determine a grade or completion of assignments. Quality standards always produce a range of judgements and decisions depending on who is judging and the context of that judging. That is, they are inconsistent in use by their natures, even when only one judge is grading (Diederich 5-6; Belanoff 58). Thus unlike labor standards, the nature of any quality standard is a highly ambiguous and inconsistent aspect of a text or product since it depends on a judge and their biases to determine it. And so, quality standards are always partially mysterious targets for students to shoot towards.

Much of what mystifies any quality standard target for students is the nature of judgment with standards in writing courses. Language standards are not uniformly used across any group of readers (Belanoff 60). That is, writing teachers do not agree exactly on the way standards are applied or discerned in student writing. Each teacher uses their own habits of language and other cultural and social biases, which include implicit and other biases around race, gender, class, heteronormativity, religion, geography, discipline of study, etc., to make decisions about quality from their view (Anson; Baugh; Hardmon; Steele). As illustrated in Faigley's careful historical account of this phenomenon of judging in schools (121, 131), this pits students' habits of language against the teacher's. As a standard for grading, these factors can only be mitigated by not using the standard to determine grades, or giving students many opportunities to revise their work, but this second option introduces even more labor inequality in the ecology. Those whose languaging is judged farthest from the standard have to do more work in order to get the same grades as those who initially are judged to be closer to the standard.

Second, the creation of a labor standard in LBG should be collaboratively made with students in the course. As discussed earlier in Chapter 5 (and in Chapter 4 in the LBG book), labor standards can be negotiated with students at the opening and middle of the semester. In such ecologies, students have quite a bit of control over what measures will be used to determine completion of the assignments. For example, I ask my students to make their decisions after we've read carefully (several times) the grading contract, read a few things about grading, and looked at our calendars and weekly schedules. The aspects of this dimension that can be ableist and neurotypical, as well as provide resistance to such problems, are rooted in who is in the classroom, how negotiations are set up and framed (e.g. at the start of the course with information on disability, neurodivergency, compassion, and Arao and Clemens' "brave spaces"), what in the ecology is available to negotiate, and how such negotiations will occur (e.g. anonymously, on a course discussion board, in class, or in multiple places). All these elements can be incorporated into any LBG ecology.

On the other hand, a quality standard, even when it is negotiated with students, or created by them, tends to be determined by an elite, White, masculine standard of languaging that is hegemonic in the academy and all of its disciplines

and professions. This is a structural condition that Diane Gusa explains as “White institutional presence” (WIP), or a “White cultural ideology” that is embedded in “cultural practices, traditions, and perceptions of knowledge that are taken for granted as the norm at institutions of higher education” (464). Joe Feagin similarly names this larger social and institutional problem in the US more broadly as a “white racial frame.” He explains that a White racial frame “is an overarching White worldview that encompasses a broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions, and reactions to language accents, as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate” (11). Heather Falconer in her study of BIPOC students learning to write in STEM courses illustrates WIP’s and a White racial framing’s influence across the curriculum. What WIP and White racial frames amount to is that even when students themselves create standards for their work, they will draw on what they know about hegemonic language norms—what they’ve been told by past teachers and what they know of the past standards used against them. They will not necessarily use their own habits of language that may differ from those hegemonic norms. Many will view their own languaging habits as deficient and many will have taken on such hegemonic habits of language as well. However, such languaging habits will be unevenly distributed in any classroom.

Using model writing and example rubrics to have students make their own standards still determines the same kinds of hegemonic quality standards, most of which are elite, White, and masculine in nature. I’m not arguing that such rubrics or activities are not meaningful in a classroom. I’m arguing that when used to determine a standard for grading or evaluating, the grading ecology will participate in White language supremacy, that is, creating a “condition in classrooms, schools, and society where rewards are given in determined ways to people who can most easily reach them, because those people have more access to the preferred embodied White language habits and practices” (Inoue, *Above the Well* 15). The *CCCC Statement on White Language Supremacy* offers this way of understanding this condition in education and society:

WLS assists white supremacy by using language to control reality and resources by defining and evaluating people, places, things, reading, writing, rhetoric, pedagogies, and processes in multiple ways that damage our students and our democracy. It imposes a worldview that is simultaneously pro-white, cisgender, male, heteronormative, patriarchal, ableist, racist, and capitalist (Inoue, 2019b; Pritchard, 2017). This worldview structures WLS as the default condition in schools, academic disciplines, professions, media, and society at large. WLS is, thus, structural and usually a part of the standard operating procedures of classrooms, disciplines, and professions. This means that WLS is a condition that assumes its worldview as the normative one that allegedly

everyone has access to regardless of their cultural, social, or language histories (Inoue, 2021). WLS perpetuates many forms of systemic and structural violence. (Richardson et al. n.p.).

And so, the creation of a quality standard often participates in ableist and neurotypical biases because of the institutional, social, and disciplinary forces that determine our desires and views of what makes for “good writing,” even students’ ideas of such things, which are falsely framed as neutral and raceless too often. These forces are a part of WIP and a White racial frame that make “pro-white, cisgender, male, heteronormative, patriarchal, ableist, racist, and capitalist” standards that create more labor for some students, usually invisible and unaccounted for labor. As Bailey and Mobley, Kafer, and Elliott explain and illustrate separately, such Whiteness standards have historically made race, namely Blackness, synonymous with disability and “feble-mindedness.” Thus creating quality standards with students in classrooms easily reproduces such racist standards which also easily participate in ableist and neurotypical historical practices of judgement if they are used to grade or determine completion of work.

Third, the flexible way a teacher uses a labor standard can be clearer and less ambiguous to students than other kinds of standards used for similar purposes. A labor assignment that asks students “to write a 200-word reflection after they’ve read and taken 3 notes on a chapter” is less ambiguous criteria for completion than any quality standard would be. It’s a clearer, more knowable target. Such a labor standard shows more explicitly, in a quantitative fashion, how a teacher will decide what counts as complete than the use of any quality standard that demands that the student be in the head of the teacher. The only interpretations used, then, are to count words and perhaps look for a response to particular questions or for elements the students were to include, such as “offer at least 3 quotations from the text and talk about each in your discussion.”

While this last kind of judgement is a quality judgement, it is not the same kind nor degree as those in quality-based systems. I discuss aspects of this question in the Chapter 7’s section, “Accumulation of Biases in Measures of Grading,” and in Chapter 8 when thinking about hidden judgements of quality in LBG, so I’ll avoid a fuller discussion here. For now, think of these judgements as clearer judgements because there are fewer biases a teacher has to employ in order to make them. There is also more agreement with students about how the teacher will translate the labor standard when determining the completion of any assignment. Thus it is easier for students to translate labor guides into their own practices for planning purposes and they have more control over what grade they get in the course.

The use of a labor standard can participate in ableist and neurotypical biases in a number of ways, all of which I’ve discussed already: (1) if there are not flexible due dates and late policies; (2) if students can’t negotiate the terms of labor in the system; (3) if students do not have some choice in the kinds of laboring or which

measures of labor to follow in labor instructions (i.e. word counts or amount of time on task); and (4) if the judgements made from labor measures are not clear and unambiguous (according to students). Again, all of these elements can be included in LBG.

On the other hand, quality standards must be interpreted by the teacher in order to make grades or decide completion. Their use resides primarily in the teacher's idiosyncratic interpretation and application of them. This means the teacher has to use more of their biases and expectations, more of their languaging, to make any judgement at all. Thus, the process of quality-based standards assessment itself participates much more in White language supremacy, that is, the supremacy of "pro-white, cisgender, male, heteronormative, patriarchal, ableist, racist, and capitalist" habits and biases of language that the teacher already embodies to some degree in order to be a teacher in the academy today.

This also means that rubrics that articulate quality standards are not the judgements that make grades on papers. This important understanding is part of what mystifies quality standards for students. What seems like a "clear thesis" can be quite different from one reader to another, and especially between the teacher and student. Quality standards more easily confuse these two things. That is, using quality standards to grade can confuse: (thing #1) *Standards articulated in rubrics* and (thing #2) *standards in use by a teacher* through their judgements. The first can be agreed upon pretty easily because we all read them in our own ways. And so, the meanings of rubric items and standards too often and too easily "float." We all think we agree because we each read what we want to in the standards' language. We all want our main point to be "clear," but we may not always agree when a main point is clear. The second is a function of an individual's habits of language, their languaging history and training, their biases and idiosyncrasies, and their contexts for judging any given instance of languaging. It's the flip side to the first issue. Students simply do not have full or even significant access to their teachers' habits of language, even when a rubric appears to state it. Another way to put this is that each reader brings their own world to a text when they read or judge it, and we don't share our worlds completely. We might agree that we all want a "clear thesis," but we will never agree on exactly how to do this or how well it is done in specific texts.

This understanding about the use of quality standards in a course is often not explained to students. And so, a great rubric cannot save students from experiencing a teacher's use of it as mysterious, ambiguous, or confusingly applied—this is the difference between agreeing to thing #1 and living with thing #2 in a grading ecology. Rubrics are the lenses by which teachers deploy their biases and languaging habits to make judgements that then are translated to grades. Judgements are made by judges, not rubrics. This is why I spell "judgement" with the "e" retained in it, which is often left out in American versions of the word.⁶

6. For a longer discussion of my spelling of "judgement," see Inoue, *Above The Well* (4).

Through this bit of languaging, I wish to remind myself and others that *judgements* are made only by *judges*. Judges have biases and habits of language that will determine their judgements, no matter the expressed standards. All judges are situated in the world and in their languaging. Because of this nature of judging, the use of quality standards easily creates ableist and neurotypical conditions in a grading ecology. A teacher, who is the embodiment of such elite White masculine, neurotypical, and ableist habits of language, must use those habits of languaging to produce their judgements no matter how they articulate their quality expectations, or even what formal expectations are set for an assignment. That is, we don't have a choice but to use our biases and habits of languaging in order to judge languaging, and assessment is the quintessential act of languaging-judging.

Given the above, a labor standard has more potential for addressing concerns about normative, ableist, and neurotypical standards for grading in writing courses than quality standards do, at least as I can understand their uses now. I think the true test of any grading ecology being fair enough is through the ways their grading standards are articulated, negotiated with students, reflected upon by them, and flexibly used in a course's assessment ecologies—that is, in labor expectations' natures, creation, and use. We might say that when such aspects are thoughtfully designed, then that grading ecology is designed with UDA in mind—that is, it “afford[s] multiple and collaborative means of judging and assessing student performances and learning, which includes standards or expectations that are responsive to all students' needs and learning conditions.”

Measures of Labor and The Willingness to Labor

As the difference between thing #1 and thing #2 illustrates, classrooms can work from a false assumption, that our standards for work equate to our judgements using those standards. Or equally false, we might act as if our standards equate to what students learn or will learn. Standards are not used by themselves to grade students or their performances, nor do they define what students actually learn. A labor or quality standard is a target for students to achieve and, most importantly here, require measures that signify aspects of the standard to a teacher, who then uses their own biases and habits of language to make judgements and decisions about a student's performance based on their own interpretation of the standard and what those measures signify about it. In LBG, a central concern is that numerical measures of time on task and words produced acquire biases that can disadvantage students with disabilities or neurodivergencies. Drawing on Ira Shor's discussion of the growing socioeconomic issues that many students face today, Carillo explains that “while students may be willing to participate, time is a luxury that not all students have” (15). She goes on to say that she “appreciate[s] the multidimensional way” in which I “explor[e] labor with [my] students,” but “we are still dealing with a normative student and a normative sense of time” in labor expectations (16). Thus, drawing on Shor, she believes that “decoupling

the willingness to labor from labor itself is an important way to avoid punishing those whose socioeconomic class does not afford them the luxury of engaging in labor even if they possess the will” (16).

Carillo is arguing against a larger conceptual way I assess the effectiveness of LBG ecologies in Chapter 7 of the LBG book, which centers on what I called “a willingness to labor” (247-248/243-244). This construct references a bundle of noncognitive dimensions in students. Carillo provides this statement of mine: “Thus the overarching goal of labor-based grading contract ecologies, for me, is to get students to practice a network of interlocking, noncognitive competencies (engagement, coping and resilience, and metacognition), which I think of as a *willingness to labor*” (247/243; Carillo 13). She then uses the presence of the “gimme” clause in contracts as evidence that “suggests that one’s willingness to labor is not always accompanied by one’s ability to do so” (13).

In my past contracts, the gimme was a clause that allowed students to dismiss a late or incomplete assignment, take away an absence (for face-to-face courses), or change a missed assignment to a late, or an ignored assignment to a missed. For Carillo, the presence of this clause suggests that LBG does not account well for students who find themselves not having enough time to complete all the labor requirements. Carillo’s logic might be voiced this way: If we need the gimme to help students meet the contract, then there is a problem in the ecology. It is an illustration of the way a willingness to labor is problematic when yoked to students’ actual abilities to labor in a semester. In short, a willingness to labor is not the same as a student’s capacity to labor in any given semester, and so these two issues should be separated in a grading ecology. I agree, and I think there is a clear path through this concern.

While I believe my articulation of the noncognitive dimension that I call a “willingness to labor” in students is important to their meaningful and joyful work in a course, it is not a measure of students’ capacities or abilities to labor in a particular way or for a designated period of time. It is a construct I use in assessing my ecologies that groups together several noncognitive dimensions that are important predictors of students’ future successes. I believe it is a desirable condition for students to be in. Students should be encouraged to practice engagement, coping and resilience, and metacognition, the noncognitives that define a willingness to labor. So I think it is worth measuring and understanding as a teacher, and that’s all I argue for. I also believe that in many cases a “gimme” clause is important to consider having in grading contracts of any kind, no matter how good they are. This second concern is quicker to address.

Certainly, the best grading ecologies would not need gimmes. They’d be fair enough as is. They’d account for all circumstances and conditions students find themselves in during the semester. But I don’t think we ever live in this perfectly fair and knowable world. The gimme is one way, but not the only way, to build additional flexibility in the grading system and communicate that structure to students. No one controls all of the conditions under which they take courses and

do work for those courses. We should account structurally for this unknowable, uncontrollable, but expected occurrence. One can do this in a LBG contract in part by offering a gimme. This helps the ecology account for those uncontrollable forces around us in a structural way. It allows the ecology to be more flexible.

This is also something that I find most writing teachers already do but may not state in syllabi or grading policies. That is, most of us try to be flexible and understanding when life gets in the way, or technology fails students, and they need a bit of leeway in a course. We bend our grading rules for students whom we know are trying but something happened in their life, or when we have made an assignment unintentionally unfair for that student in some way. We cut them slack, we forgive a due date, offer alternatives, or give them extra time. A gimme simply formalizes this common compassionate practice in a way that is explicit for students and teachers, a way that reassures students and helps them plan better, while also making it a negotiable item in the contract. A teacher's compassion for students and their ecology's flexibility to address the unknown or unaccounted for should not be a mystery, nor left up solely to the teacher's goodwill or mood on any given day. The gimme is one way to explicitly show these things. It's a tiny but significant structure that builds equity.

But is a gimme an indicator of a grading ecology that is actually not working for those students with disabilities or neurodivergencies? Given the above, I don't think automatically that the presence of a gimme says anything about an ecology's fairness when it comes to time needed to complete work. In fact, it makes up for our inability to know what the future holds for us, particularly around things like "acts of god," misunderstandings, technology issues, uncontrollable conditions in our lives, illness, or other unforeseen factors that keep us from meeting our contracted responsibilities. If COVID-19 taught us anything, it is that our world can bring us unpredictable conditions that we cannot foresee.

Now, if how often the gimme is used, and why, is any indicator of a LBG ecologies' inability to address the various time constraints of students, then that is a different story, and could mean that the ecology is inequitable. I can only speak from data I have from my courses. In past semesters at UWT and CSUF, around 2-3 students in 25 on average used the gimme in a semester or quarter. Most of those students used it to get the highest grade possible instead of the contracted grade. In the past 5 or 6 years in my courses, it is rare for any student to use it to pass the course. In fact, looking back at all my courses at ASU, which stretches back to Spring 2020 (7 semesters as of this writing), the gimmie has been used only once, and that was to move the student from an "A" grade to an "A+." This phenomenon likely is a function of moving my contract's default grade from a B course grade to an A or A+ course grade. This change happened just after I moved from UWT to ASU. Furthermore, the messages I get from students in course labor journals and anonymous course evaluations conducted by the university tell me that students appreciate the flexibility of our contract and can find the time to do the work of our course. The bottom line: Because the use of the gimme in my

grading ecologies is so insignificant, I cannot conclude that its presence means anything at all, except that we've built one small safety net for those who need it.

The concerns around a willingness to labor as a way to assess the effectiveness of a LBG ecology, is perhaps an ideological or philosophical question for each teacher. Do you, as a teacher, find noncognitive dimensions in students worth centering on and using as a way to understand the effectiveness of your own grading ecologies? I do. Perhaps some readers may not like what "willingness" suggests, since it seems at odds with the uneven and varied life conditions and capacities of any group of students. This can be a problem. Our students' lives and living conditions are always changing and quite different from just ten years ago. As Carillo argues, these conditions can affect many students' abilities to complete work despite their willingness to do it.

I do not think, however, we should give up on focusing students' attention on the noncognitives of engagement, coping and resilience, and metacognition. These noncognitives are how I define a "willingness to labor," and they can be flexible and fair ways to assess the effectiveness of any writing course's grading ecology. They have been shown to be good predictors of students' success in school and in careers afterwards (Robbins et al. 271, 277; Ones et al. 1006; Savitz-Romer and Rowan-Kenyon 6), and I discuss these aspects of the research on noncognitives in the LBG book (244-247/240-243). Mostly though, as a construct, a "willingness to labor" helps me understand the effectiveness of my own LBG ecologies. It does not reference students' actual desires to labor, nor their capacities to do a certain amount of labor. It references the ways students in my courses practice engagement, coping and resilience, and metacognition around their laboring. It helps me ask: What are my students experiencing and saying about their engagement, their coping and resilience practices, and the ways they practice metacognition around labor? Because such noncognitive dimensions in students are predictors of student success in school and in the workforce after college, I care deeply about them.

In fact, Carillo's engagement-based alternative to LBG suggests a reliance on at least one noncognitive, perhaps two, engagement and metacognition. This also suggests that she sees the value in these noncognitives. A student's "willingness to labor" does not need to be at odds with their access to labor time if the course's labor expectations have been negotiated and renegotiated at midpoint, if students continue to pay close attention to their laboring so that they can identify changes that need to be made, and if flexibility is built into how those measures are used to determine assignment completion.

Thus, if a grading ecology encourages engagement in labors, coping and resilience in tasks asked of them, and metacognitive work on their laboring and learning, students can learn and develop as languagelings. A willingness to labor is still, for me, a good way to assess the effectiveness of antiracist and anti-ableist grading ecologies, even though we can also expect an unevenness in access to time and laboring in any group of students. Just because we have that unevenness

does not give me enough reason to abandon these noncognitives as central ways to understand my grading ecology's effectiveness.

Finally, my discussion of the construct of a willingness to labor comes in a chapter that discusses how to assess the effectiveness of a LBG ecology, not how to design one or administer one in a semester. I don't ask students to be willing or interested in our labors, even as I hope they grow willingness and interest in their laboring. While one hopes that one's assessment of a course or its grading ecology informs (feeds back into) the actual grading ecology in practice, these two things, the assessment of the ecology and the ecology itself in action, are not the same things. This is made clear in the first few pages of the chapter where I explain this and the relationship between the measures we use and our ideas about what "effective" grading ecologies mean (237-238/233-234).

I appreciate the reminder that Carillo provides, that we might "decoupl[e] the willingness to labor from labor itself," but remind us that our assessments of our courses' grading ecologies are not the same as our grading ecologies themselves. An important caveat to this is that, of course, what we learn about our ecologies through any assessments of them surely feeds back into future iterations. Therefore, Carillo's reminder is one we should be vigilant about. It helps a teacher remember the difference between our aspirations for our students and their actual learning conditions and capacities. This is one way to understand the difference between our assessments of our grading ecologies' effectiveness and our actual enactments of those grading ecologies.

As a way to clarify, consider the four ecological goals that structure the same chapter and that help me use a willingness to labor to assess my own LBG ecologies:

- "to engage in consistent, mindful, and meaningful practices" (247/243)
- "to consciously labor and work toward resilience" (255/251)
- "to practice metacognitive strategies for understanding one's labor practices" (263/259)
- "to seek an awareness of the politics of language and its judgement" (272/268)
- "to maintain socially just conditions for learning by ensuring equitable opportunities to receive all final course grades possible" (285/281)

All of these goals are descriptive in nature and meant to provide emergent information for me. I take my cues from the good assessment frameworks that Guba and Lincoln offer in *Fourth Generation Evaluation* and Bob Broad illustrates in *Dynamic Criteria Mapping*. Both use social constructivist theories of knowledge to create socially driven and democratic assessments that actually resist singular standards in assessments while embracing the measures we use as highly interpretive, contingent on context, and subjectively-driven (that is, driven by subject position of the assessor). Assessment is a deeply interpretive, subjective, contextual, and rhetorical practice, which both Guba and Lincoln and

Broad remind us, and that I have discussed in another place (Inoue, “Articulating Sophistic”), thus a willingness to labor is a rhetorical way to conceptualize the dimensions that may make an effective LBG ecology. Of course, it is one construct among a universe of other constructs that may serve a teacher just as well. It surely isn’t the only way to understand the effectiveness of a grading ecology, but it is an example of one way I have found meaningful, given my priorities.