CHAPTER 5.

CONSTRAINT AND CHOICE IN RUBRIC ADAPTATION

As seen in Chapter 4, drawing on national assessment practice can be a strategic choice to satisfy accreditors and funders. As boss texts, the VALUE rubrics legitimize the work done at local institutions. They also legitimize a certain process of conducting assessment. While the rubrics ultimately used at St. Rita's and Oak are quite different than the original VALUE rubric for Written Communication, both schools began with the idea that assessment meant using rubrics to assess outcomes. As explained in Chapter 2, as outcomes have become connected to rubrics, there has been emphasis on making them measurable. The LEAP outcomes seem to fit with the original philosophy that outcomes are broad, not meant to signal specific levels of achievement. However, the VALUE rubrics operationalized these outcomes and, alongside the DQP, began to dictate national practice in terms of performance levels. Outcomes is a word that is clearly charged with a complex history within education. Most participants in my study used the term "goals" to describe what their programs wanted students to achieve, yet the term outcomes was used by Philip and Dwayne, who were the most closely connected to the AAC&U. By tying their institutions to the AAC&U, matching outcomes with the rubrics became a concern for administrators at both Oak and St. Rita's. Although Gallagher (2012) noted that outcomes assessment means local institutions are only responsible "decisions regarding means, not ends" (p. 51), the means, too, are taken as a given by Oak and St. Rita's. Neither school questions the use of the rubrics as the means for assessing writing. Rather, the rubric is seen as a neutral tool, the logical progression from an outcomes-based approach to education.

But genres are always ideological (Barwarshi, 2000). The rubric—*as boss text*—reinforces institutional power and comes imbedded with views on what assessment, and writing, should look like across institutions. Genres are "both constraint and choice, both regularity and chaos" (Devitt, 2004, p. 156). This chapter examines the tension between constraint and choice when the writing committee at Oak and the general education committee at St. Rita's use the VALUE rubric as an exemplar. I begin by placing the processes at Oak and St. Rita's in national context by showing trends in rubric modification. The VALUE rubrics are often referred to as "meta-rubrics" because they are meant to be adapted to local context. Thus, the VALUE rubrics are seen as exem-

plars of the rubric genre for outcomes-based assessment. As with all genres, "variation is permitted to the degree that it does not negate either function or appropriateness" (Devitt, 2004, p. 149). So, what does adaptation of the VALUE rubric for Written Communication look like? How much variation is seen as allowable?

Anson et al. (2012) have argued that generic rubrics, such as VALUE, "wear the guise of local application," but in reality, only make faculty *think* they agree on generic, generalized criteria. The ideology of the rubric supposes that agreement is possible, and thus faculty spend hours of work dedicated to achieving it. Just as a "writing assignment tells a story of work," (LaFrance, 2019, p. 48), so, too, the rubric tells the story of this work toward faculty agreement and consensus, as well as where that work fails. That work is reflected in the final text of the adapted rubric, but it can never be fully captured by the text alone. It is only through conversations with the people involved in that work that understanding becomes possible. By returning to the actual text-user conversation, or the moment when the participants respond to and use the text, institutional ethnographers seek to make visible how the text coordinates their work (Smith & Turner, 2014). We are able to sort through the mess that is invisible in the final textual product to see how participants negotiate their actual work. In these "moments of negotiation," we see how individual understandings of work function within an institution (LaFrance, 2019, p. 52). This chapter shares moments from meetings and interviews at Oak and St. Rita's where participants engaged with the rubric and wrestled over how to use it in actual assessment practice. After reporting on national trends in adapting the VALUE Written Communication rubric, I examine how the rubric guided the committees at Oak and St. Rita's to consider their own local goals within the ideological framework of the rubric. The heart of an institutional ethnographer's analysis is in noticing when "the knowledge generated in the daily *doing* of work is subordinated by, or in tension with, other (abstract) knowledge that is used or *supposed* to be used to decide and to act" (Rankin, 2017b, p 7). At both Oak and St. Rita's, the process of aligning local goals with the VALUE rubric highlights the tension between what rubrics are able to capture and what goals programs are designed to meet.

NATIONAL ADAPTATION OF THE VALUE RUBRIC FOR WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

The VALUE rubrics were meant to be modified, but what does this look like nationally? Prior to visiting Oak and St. Rita's I sent a national survey to writing program administrators and assessment professionals at 289 institutions who

appeared to be using a version of the Written Communication rubric. I asked specifically about the use of the rubric as well as how it was adapted. I also asked that those who adapted the rubric upload a copy of their new rubric. I received 75 survey responses, and 17 of those uploaded a rubric. However, one of these was an exact copy of the VALUE Written Communication, so I did not count it as a modification. In addition, the AAC&U's Office of Quality, Curriculum, and Assessment (OQCA) conducted multiple surveys about the VALUE rubrics, including a 2018 survey on institutional use. This web-based survey was sent to anyone who had downloaded one or more of the VALUE rubrics from the AAC&U in the past 10 years. The goal was to record how institutions were actually using the rubrics and compare the views of different stakeholders (faculty v. admin). Overall, 1,448 responses were received (McConnell et al., 2019). Both my 2016 survey and the AAC&U 2018 survey asked participants to identify how the rubrics were being used at their institutions. In this section, I compare my specific results about the Written Communication rubric with the AAC&U's overall results of their survey about all the VALUE rubrics. I then explain specifically how the AAC&U Written Communication VALUE rubric aligns with the rubrics used at Oak and St. Rita's.

Written Communication, along with Critical Thinking, is the most used VALUE rubric (McConnell et al., 2019). A full copy of the original rubric can be found in Appendix B. The specific use of the Written Communication rubric parallels how participants are using the rubrics overall. On the AAC&U survey, participants identified general education as the most prominent place the rubrics were used, with 529 responses, or 37 percent, selecting this option. The next most common use was within academic degree programs or majors (421–29 percent) with writing-intensive experiences as third at 325 participants (22 percent) (McConnell et al., 2019). In terms of other common practices, 902 institutions said they used the rubrics for faculty development, and 897 specifically said they were used for assignment redesign workshops (McConnell et al., 2019). In my survey, university-wide assessment was most common use for the Written Communication rubric, reported by 36 participants (33 percent) (Figure 5.1). The next highest use was as an example for faculty at 22 participants (20 percent), which fits with the AAC&U's finding about faculty development and workshops. The third most common use on my survey was for writing program assessment with 19 participants (18 percent). This third category seems to fit the AAC&U's finding about writing intensive courses. The modified rubrics uploaded to my survey mirror these trends. Fourteen of these rubrics were clearly designed for use with general education or program-wide assessment, while one represented assessment of writing within a particular disciplinary course on food science.
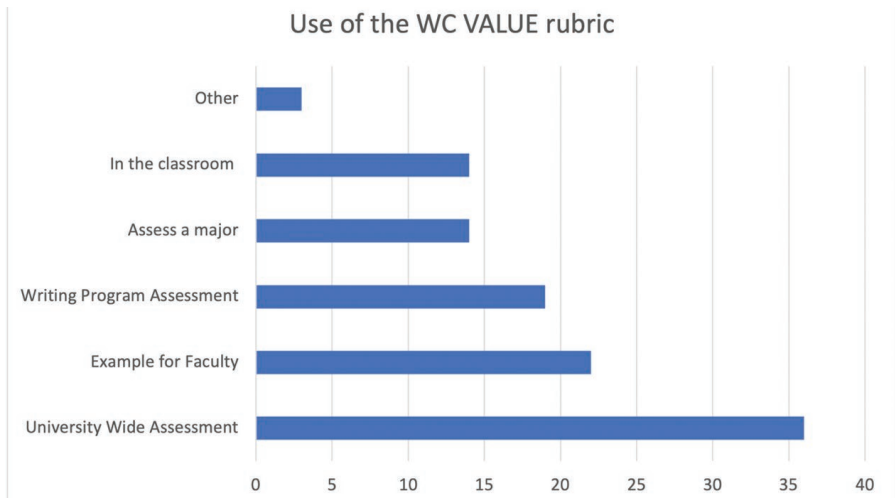
Use of the WC VALUE rubric

Figure 5.1: Uses for the Written Communication VALUE rubric (2016) survey results.

Both surveys also asked about how and why the rubrics were being modified by institutions. As described in Chapter 4, the original VALUE rubrics contain a front page with a definition of the outcome being assessed, a framing section, and a glossary. The rubric itself consists of four performance levels and a number of dimensions as well as specific performance descriptors to describe what is expected at each performance level for each dimension. This format is used across all original VALUE rubrics (AAC&U, n.d., "Parts"). While modified VALUE rubrics tend to maintain the general structure of dimensions on the left side, performance levels, and performance descriptors, the 16 rubrics I collected demonstrated a wide variety of layouts. Some were formatted in Microsoft Word or Excel; others were PDF files. Some neatly fit on one page, others spanned multiple pages. For example, one rubric was four pages long with 18 dimensions, including all the dimensions from the original VALUE Written Communication and many more. Another rubric was brief with only four dimensions and only included performance descriptors for the capstone and benchmark levels, leaving both milestone levels without description. Although the AAC&U explained that the original rubrics were not necessarily meant to line up with academic standing, some rubrics clearly designated which performance levels corresponded with which courses or levels in schooling. For example, one rubric specifies that the fourth level should be addressed in a senior capstone course and that levels one and two should be addressed in first-year foundations courses.

According to the AAC&U survey on all the VALUE rubrics, the details of the performance descriptors was the most commonly modified part of the rubrics, followed by the specific dimensions for assessment (McConnell et al., 2019). Howev-

er, a fair number of schools noted that they changed the names of the performance levels, which sometimes included changing the order of the performance levels so that low was first rather than high (McConnell et al., 2019). In an open-ended question, the AAC&U survey respondents commented that they sometimes combined rubrics, such as Critical Thinking, Oral, and Written Communication. My participants also mentioned changing performance descriptors and dimensions, and one combined the Written Communication rubric with other VALUE rubrics. In addition, the words used to describe the performance levels as well as the order in which they appeared was a common variation.

While the AAC&U asked what was modified, the large scale of their survey could not confirm if those answers matched the actual modified rubrics. My survey went a step farther by asking participants to upload a copy of their modified rubric. For example, the AAC&U study reported that only a small number of participants modified the glossary section of the rubric, but this does not necessary account for participants who did not use the glossary at all, or who were even unaware of its existence on the original rubrics. Of the 16 modified rubrics I collected, only one included a glossary. Nine rubrics had changed the names of the performance descriptors and three used only numbers. Some of the modifications to these levels were minor, such as adding the word "advanced" to the Milestone (3) performance level. However, many changes were in direct contrast to the goals of the AAC&U. The AAC&U stressed that the order of the performance descriptors, with Capstone on the left, was intentionally meant to present a "assets-based" rather than "deficit-focused" approach to assessment (McConnell & Rhodes, 2017). So, too, the language of "benchmark" for the entry-level performance descriptor was meant to signal a starting point not a deficit. Yet, six of the rubrics I examined changed the entry-level performance descriptor to use deficit-based language with words such as "insufficient," "unacceptable," and "poor." Three also put the negative first, against AAC&U's recommendation that capstone always be the left-most side of the rubric. Finally, two rubrics that I examined deleted one of the middle levels, moving from four performance levels to only three.

When we get into the dimensions of the rubric, we begin to see even bigger differences between the adapted rubrics and the original VALUE rubric for Written Communication. Only four of the 16 rubrics uploaded to my survey maintained the language of the original five dimensions:

- context & purpose
- content development
- genre & disciplinary conventions
- sources & evidence
- control of syntax & mechanics.

Six of the rubrics changed the dimensions so significantly that they could be considered an entirely different rubric. Others modified the dimensions less significantly (Figure 5.2). For example, one institution removed the "sources & evidence" category because they decided to score Written Communication alongside Information Literacy, and a dimension for sources was already covered in that rubric. Another school kept the original dimensions but added one for "focus, organization, and cohesion." While composition scholars might recognize organization as a part of "genre and disciplinary conventions," this addition seems to reflect a general sense that organization is missing from the original rubric. In fact, "organization" was the most added dimension and appeared on six of the modified rubrics I examined. Other commonly added dimensions are "central message" or "thesis," "development/support," and "focus." The most common deletion was "genre and disciplinary conventions," which was completely eliminated in eight of the 16 rubrics. A dimension for sentence-level or language concerns was present in all but one rubric; however, only seven kept the specific language of "syntax and mechanics," often modifying this dimension to the more generic "mechanics" and/or "style." It is somewhat concerning that "content development" was completely eliminated in a third of rubrics and was the second most missing category. This deletion seems to signal a view of writing as a skill that can be assessed separately from knowledge and ideas. It may also signal that faculty scoring papers across general education or for programmatic assessment do not feel qualified to judge content outside their own discipline, even while seeing style or organization as universal elements of writing.
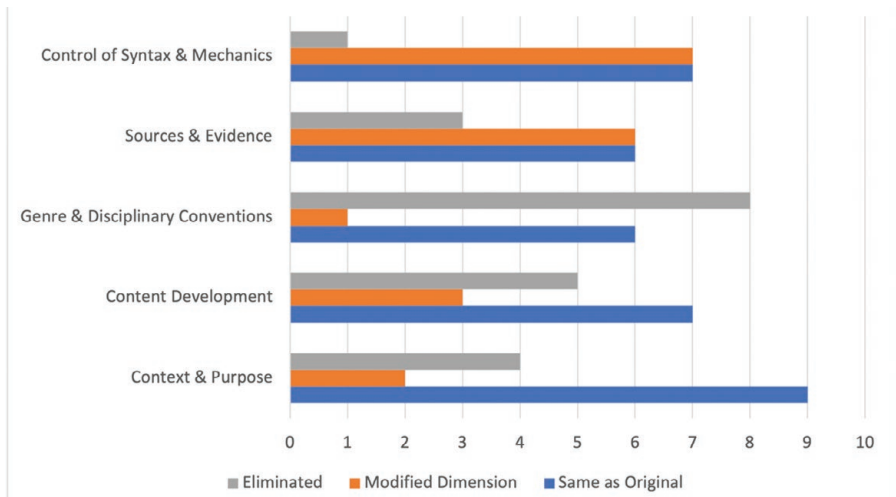

Figure 5.2. Modifications to VALUE Written Communication Rubric 2016 survey results.

Across the board, reasons for modifying the rubrics ranged from changing them to be more specific for classroom use to modifying them for different levels of learning, including graduate study (McConnell et al., 2019). Specifically, my respondents listed reasons for changing the language of the dimensions as making them "less disciplinary" or simplifying the language. When writing about the WPA Outcomes, Keith Rhodes et al. (2005) noted:

> Professional language, characterized by words like rhetoric, genre, and conventions (and register), is useful to people who have grown used to a common set of associations, including the historical uses of these terms. But to others, it smacks of snotty language people use to show that they understand because they are on the in—and of course people who don't understand are on the out. (pp. 14-15)

A tension reflected here is the desire and need to modify rubrics for use in different disciplines and university settings. After all, the rhetoric of consensus by the AAC&U presents this as a major advantage of using the VALUE rubrics. However, much of the good work done by composition specialists in creating the rubrics to fit with the core concepts of our field seems erased in pursuit of this consensus. It is telling that only *one* of the 16 modified rubrics from my survey retains the framework and glossary for the original rubric. Six do maintain a definition of written communication; however, the glossary of terms, the suggestions for the best use of the rubric, and all references to disciplinary documents produced by NCTE and CCCCs are gone. So, too, are the local teams that adapt the rubrics often erased in the texts of the rubrics themselves. Even though I collected modified rubrics, it was often unclear from the text itself *who* was doing the modification. Rather, the rubrics often included a line giving credit only to the AAC&U. This chapter continues by examining how the specific processes of adaptation at Oak and St. Rita's work to flatten disciplinary difference in order to achieve consensus and fit institutional goals with the rubric as an assessment instrument.

RUBRIC MODIFICATIONS AT OAK & ST. RITA'S

Both Oak and St. Rita's provided me with a draft of their writing rubric in 2016, although both noted they were still in the process of development. These drafts fit with these national trends for modification of the VALUE Written Communication rubric.[5] Both of the rubrics kept four performance levels but changed

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5   Rather than include the full text of these rubrics, I choose to use pieces throughout the study

what they were called and the order in which they were presented. Both have the lowest category first and both use more negative language for it. At St. Rita's it was "insufficient," and at Oak, "weak" (see Table 5.1). Both used "developing" to describe the next performance level. Then we have "sufficient" for St. Rita's and "stable" at Oak. Finally, the highest level is "exemplary" for St. Rita's and for Oak, "mature."

Table 5.1: Performance Levels on Local Rubrics

St. Rita's	Oak
Insufficient	Weak
Developing	Developing
Sufficient	Stable
Exemplary	Mature

Although these changes are not insignificant, it is the changes to the dimensions that make these rubrics significantly different from the original VALUE rubrics. Fitting with the changes seen at other institutions, neither rubric has the dimension "genre & disciplinary conventions" or "content development," two frequently changed dimensions nationally. Oak's rubric has four dimensions that seem to draw a bit on the dimensions in the original VALUE rubric:

- Argument
- Audience & Community
- Research & Sources
- Process & Style

In particular, "research & sources" seems similar to "sources & evidence." "Audience & community" makes a nod to both "disciplinary conventions" and "context and purpose," and "style" is a common substitution for the AAC&U language of "control of syntax and mechanics."

St. Rita's dimensions, too, have hints of the VALUE language but vary even more significantly than the Oak dimensions. St. Rita's five dimensions are

- Responding to assignments
- Structure and Coherence
- Evidence and Analysis
- Prose Style and Syntax
- Spelling, Word-Choice, Grammar, and Punctuation

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as relevant. These texts were continually shifting, particularly the rubric at Oak. Thus, pinning down one version for representation in this study seems to misrepresent the overall dynamic nature of the work.

These categories have traces of the AAC&U categories of "syntax and mechanics" and "evidence and sources" but ultimately vary significantly from the original rubric. "Responding to assignments" could be viewed as similar to "context and purpose" but clearly frames that context as only the classroom. In contrast, Kristen (chair of the writing committee) noted on multiple occasions that "audience" on the Oak rubric was meant to push faculty to think beyond the professor as the only audience for writing. Kristen drew on her training with the AAC&U for this push. She remembered being struck that assuming the professor was the audience was listed as the entry-level performance criteria on the VALUE rubric. Meanwhile, the faculty at St. Rita's disagree on whether or not their students are ready to write anything beyond the classroom and whether or not "sources" should be used in papers until they are upperclassmen. Adaptation, then, depends heavily on institutional context and faculty views of writing in the classroom.

The concept of standpoint is significant in the response to and use of the rubric. As shown in previous chapters, Oak and St. Rita's occupy a different standpoint in relationship to higher education as a whole. Oak is a top liberal arts college where there is no question that students have already learned a lot about sources and citation when they enter. St. Rita's caters specifically to "underprepared" students; faculty agree that they do not enter at the "benchmark" level of the AAC&U rubric. So, too, does standpoint within the institution matter to how the texts are viewed. Kristen is trained by the AAC&U and has a good understanding of their philosophy and their rubrics. She also works with others who have such training, including Associate Provost Philip who is able to directly speak with the main staff members of the VALUE initiative and provide them with feedback. Meanwhile, Dwayne (my main information at St. Rita's) is heralded as the VALUE expert on his campus, while admitting to me that he is actually kind of "fuzzy" on the signature assignments idea that he advocates for. A textual analysis of the rubrics at Oak and St. Rita's can tell us what the local "adaptations" of the VALUE rubric look like, what text they keep, and what is changed. But it cannot tell us *how* the process of adaptation is enacted across locations or what those words mean in practice to individuals at these institutions.

To further examine how these local contexts affect the actual rubric modification process, I draw on observations of meetings where the rubrics were discussed and interviews with participants where we talked specifically about the text of the rubric. While Oak and St. Rita's contrast significantly in both their process and the result of that process, one common constraint was the need to reconcile current institutional, program, and course goals with rubric-based assessment. Using outcomes to define what a student should know or do by the

end of a course or program of study is now common practice in higher education; however, how that quest is framed and undertaken can tell us a lot about ruling relationships. Outcomes are a form of currency within higher education, another boss text. They are included on course and program proposals and are necessary to get those approved. They are then added to syllabi, as is often required by accreditation. Finally, those outcomes must be assessed in order to show that we are doing what we promised to do five, ten years ago when we (or someone else) submitted the proposal for the course we are teaching. I do believe that outcomes are important to quality education, and that such outcomes must be communicated to students. However, more often than not, the role these outcomes play *institutionally* separates them from actual practice and confines growth and change within our programs and our classrooms. At Oak, Kristen was very clear that while the committee can make all the changes they want to the rubric, they cannot change the goals of the writing program. Meanwhile, at St. Rita's, Dwayne operates in the opposite direction, using the rubric to "move from a checklist of courses to a set of goals" for general education. In both cases, the need for goals and outcomes interacts with the way faculty use and adapt the VALUE Written Communication Rubric.

OAK'S WRITING COMMITTEE AND THEIR WRITING RUBRIC

Multiple committees at Oak implemented the VALUE rubrics, including the core curriculum committee that used them wholesale for assessment purposes. However, with my particular interest in writing and rubric adaptation, my study focused on the work of the writing committee. Staring ten years before my study, Oak began looking at its writing curriculum and forming a plan for a new writing program. Their approach to teaching writing is a first-year seminar model where faculty from across the disciplines teach in the program, combining writing pedagogy with a topic of interest from their field. For example, Kristen first became involved in the program because she had taught a history course on the Titanic at a previous institution and was looking for a home for that course at Oak. Her department chair suggested she teach it as a first-year seminar. At that point, there was little oversight of first-year seminar courses, and as Kristen noted, "there were no overarching goals, no coherence of any kind" to the writing courses.

As the chair of the new writing committee, Kristen values creating that coherence through both overarching goals and assessment practices. The committee started in 2013 as a part of the new writing program and now approves

courses for the W (writing) designation. They make sure that faculty proposals have a strong writing component that fit the goals of the new writing program. The committee was also tasked with developing an assessment plan for the program. In 2015, before my study began, the writing committee had developed a rubric draft after looking at the VALUE Written Communication rubric. When my study began in Fall 2016, Kristen wanted to introduce new committee members to that rubric and continue working on it before beginning actual assessment. In November 2016, the writing committee used the draft to score several sample artifacts and then offered suggestions for improving and clarifying the rubric. Kristen took these suggestions and made additional changes to the rubric. After a few rounds of this process, Kristen sought additional feedback from faculty beyond the writing committee. In May 2017, she conducted an assessment workshop in which she led six additional faculty members through a sample assessment process. This half day workshop went through the sort of norming session that is typical for assessment training. Kristen provided sample artifacts and led the committee in scoring them based on the rubric. The workshop participants shared their scores and discussed them. This workshop was both to get additional feedback on the rubric and to do a dry run of the assessment training process. After additional rubric revisions, Kristen conducted the first full assessment in May 2018. Six additional faculty members went through a norming session scoring sample artifacts with the rubric and then spent the rest of the day using the rubric to score student artifacts that Kristen had collected from first-year seminar courses as well as from graduating seniors.

In both the committee itself and the assessment workshops, Oak seeks to involve faculty from across the curriculum (see Table 5.2). The writing committee at Oak is made up of six faculty members. The chair of the committee is appointed by the provost for a three-year term. The first chair, Ben, is from computer science, and Kristen is from history. The department chair for English is an ex officio member of the committee, but this does not seem to have anything to do with disciplinary expertise. Rather, Ronnie noted that when the committee was started, the majority of first-year seminars were taught under English, so the department chair was added to the committee because decisions made would "affect staffing in the English department." Ronnie is, in fact, a medievalist who works in queer studies, not a compositionist. The other members are elected by the faculty to represent their divisions or colleges. A more complete "cast of characters" from both schools is included in Appendix A, but when I observed three meetings in the 2016-2017 school year, the committee was made up of the following members:

Table 5.2: Writing Committee Members at Oak, Fall 2016

Pseudonym	Role on Committee	Discipline
Kristen	Chair	History
Ronnie	Ex-officio	English
Amelia	Science Representative	Chemistry
Brad	Fine Arts Representative	Art History
Nina	Interdisciplinary Representative	Environmental Studies
Shirong	Humanities Representative	History

Meanwhile, Barbara, the director of the writing center, was a part of the task force that created the initial writing program but has since felt excluded. She is active in the discipline and professional organizations of composition and has experience coordinating a writing across the curriculum program at a previous institution. And yet, she "tried in five different ways to be on the committee." She worried that those appointed to the committee may "know nothing about writing." This sentiment is in direct contrast to the rhetoric of the AAC&U, which sees writing as a skill that employers and faculty of all fields can agree on. Although the committee at Oak worked to revise the rubric for local purposes, they fell in line with the value of reaching consensus about writing across disciplines. In fact, consensus among the committee members is not seen as enough, and Kristen seeks more feedback from those in other disciplines through the 2017 assessment workshop and the 2018 scoring processes.

Making a Rubric from Goals

The writing program at Oak has four overarching goals. Under each of these goals, there are three-to-four specific bullet points. The four goals were directly listed on the rubric used for assessment in the program and became the four dimensions for scoring. The rubric has one page for each dimension with the full goals listed at the top, including the bullet points, and then a chart describing the levels of performance in that dimension from weak through mature. The complete rubric can be found in Appendix D.

The initial task force that created the writing program went through a lengthy process of creating these goals, and it was important to the committee that the goals directly inform their assessment process. The goals are, as Kristen stated on multiple occasions, the one thing that cannot be changed by the committee. Although other language of the performance descriptors on the rubric shifted between 2016-2018, the goals and bullet points remained at the top of each page. The language of the assessment dimensions did shift slightly, but the

four assessment areas continue to match the four overarching writing program goals. In addition, as the committee ran into difficulty aligning the goals with the assessment process, they left notes to clarify the way the goals interact with the rubric. On the final 2018 rubric, argument is the only area to not contain a clarifying note.

When the writing program at Oak was first established, the task force sought common goals to unify the program. For Kristen, the goals are "basically the only thing that holds the whole program together." The initial writing task force spent a year reading materials, examining other programs and coming up with the goals for the writing program. They sought feedback from everyone they could. After this involved process, the goals of the new program went through faculty governance for approval. Kristen is not eager to repeat this process, and this constrains the language the writing committee feels like they can use on the rubric. When concerns about not being able to assess areas on the rubric come up at the writing committee meeting in Fall 2016, Kristen noted that changing the language of the goals would involve a lot of "faculty meetings." The committee agreed that more meetings should definitely be avoided. She then let subsequent committees know that the language of the goals was static and could not be adapted.

One dimension of the rubric that the 2016 writing committee struggled with was originally titled "research and sources." The committee questioned whether "evidence" and "research" are the same or whether some disciplines use evidence that isn't necessarily research. However, the goals of the program repeat the term research, specifying that students should "use research tools fluently," and "evaluate the credibility of potential research sources." Kristen felt that these particular bullet points in writing program goals "actually hamstring us a little bit." She felt that the language implies students finding their own research, but some of the papers produced in the program are based on sources the professor assigns. She noted that those sources, too, should be evaluated critically. In addition, she explained that the syllabi for first-year writing courses often "talk about evidence in some way, they just don't necessarily talk about traditional research." While the committee doesn't change the bullet points, they do change the overall title of the rubric dimension from "research and sources" to simply "evidence." In addition, they directly addressed the issue in a note underneath the program goals on the rubric:

> Note: Not all writing assignments require students to gather textual sources through traditional library research. We have framed this guiding language to try to accommodate a broad spectrum of assignments that require students to incorporate

> some form of evidence, while acknowledging that "evidence" may take various forms (artistic works, quantitative data, interview transcripts, primary literature, etc.) in different disciplines and genres.

In so doing, they address the issue of confusion during assessment; however, the goals that specify research are still what students see on syllabi.

Another area that the committee struggled with were any goals that related to the writing process. Kristen recalled that process was important to the faculty when the goals were initially composed. For committee member Brad, process is key to writing pedagogy: it is "the living core of what we do in evaluation, in pedagogy, and in the program." The writing program goals at Oak stress the writing process in two separate places, under the dimension called "Audience & Community" and the one called "Process & Style." Here, the goals of the program directly call for peer review in addition to pre-writing and self-reflection. However, these are difficult to assess programmatically, particularly when using only one artifact and not a portfolio. Both the committee revising the rubric and the committees using the rubric thus struggled with the fit between the rubric and the process-oriented writing program goals.

Under the goal about audience, one bullet point specified that students "evaluate and critique other people's writing and respond to critiques of their own writing." Kristen recalled that when the initial task force composed this goal, they were thinking that students "should be able to do peer review." However, following the assessment procedure that Kristen is familiar with from her AAC&U training, she developed an assessment of *individual* artifacts across the curriculum without any contextual documents. This procedure makes assessing the writing process an impossible ask. Peer review is not something the committee can assess. So, they shift the meaning of this goal away from peer critique to mean evaluating and critiquing source material in their writing. Similarly, another bullet point under the audience goal specified that students should "see their own writing from the viewpoint of others." Again, this potentially signals the need for faculty to incorporate a peer review process in their classrooms. Yet, in the assessment, Kristen asks the group to consider this goal as the writer being aware of "the viewpoint of readers." As with the "evidence" dimension, this difficulty in aligning the goals of the program with the assessment rubric is accounted for through adding a note under the goals on the rubric. This note acknowledges the difficulty and asks scorers to take into account factors "like internal consistency and students' self-awareness." However, unlike the evidence dimension, Kristen does not seem to want to actually change the goals. She still wants faculty to incorporate peer review into their classrooms; she just does not see a way to assess it programmatically.

Finally, the dimension of "process & style" represents a tension between the need for students to engage in the writing process with wanting to include a dimension on the rubric about style, grammar, and mechanics. Ben, who led the creation of the goals, said that he hoped the category didn't seem like a "catch-all" for what wasn't captured under goals one through three. Kristen also commented that "those two things got shoved together because we wanted the process idea to be in the goals." The original goal reads: "Students should be able to understand writing as a process and to apply conventions of style and grammar." Under this, the first bullet directly mentions the process of "pre-writing, revising, drafting, and responding to feedback," while the other two focus on "control over style" and prose that is "organized, clear, and concise." An assumption built into this dimension on the rubric is that if a student engages in the writing process their style, grammar, and mechanics will improve, and that assumption is expressed by multiple faculty members. Ben noted that there is an "interplay" between process and style and that through the writing process students come "to appreciate that style." Jon explained that "if it's clean, then that suggested to me that they've been over it a few times."

However, not all assessors accept this connection between process and style as readily. In particular, it is two international faculty who question this connection. Marisella, who teaches Spanish and was involved in the 2018 assessment, recognized that strong style may not signal a robust writing process. She stated, "hopefully the polishedness of the final product indicates that there was sufficient rounds of [revision], but it might not because it could be this is just a really strong writer who doesn't need to do a lot of drafting." Shirong, from the 2016 committee, grew up in Singapore speaking both English and Chinese. He worried about international students struggling with the "process and style" portion of the rubric and noted that his colleagues may not be familiar with the way their other languages affect English language learners (ELL) as writers. He noted that when looking at writing from Chinese-speaking students he was able to see why sentence structures were different than expected based on his knowledge of the language, and thus understand the content of the paper. However, he found that non-Chinese speaking faculty felt the sentence structure interfered with meaning. While White, English-speaking faculty members assume that revision will be evident in the final paper, Shirong acknowledged that stylistic conventions have a cultural component that doesn't necessarily disappear with revision. In addition, he puts the responsibility for recognizing this on the faculty assessor, not the student, calling for additional training for faculty on how different linguistic backgrounds affect writing.

Just as the genre of the rubric erases the faculty authors, the writer's identity and the reader/assessor's identity is almost always absent from the actual assess-

ment process. The AAC&U *does* care about the background of the writer, an issue I will return to in Chapter 7. In *On Solid Ground*, McConnell and Rhodes (2017) advocated for sampling artifacts so that racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic status is not erased and for disaggregating student data by race to look for areas of inequity. However, contextual issues, including the identity and background of the student writer, are not included as a part of the scoring process—either by the AAC&U or by Oak. Student identity is not accounted for in the dimension of "style" on the rubric, nor is the ability of the reader to understand that style. Rather the identity of those who interact with the rubric is seen as outside the context of rubric-creation or the initial assessment process.

Kristen continually reminded her scorers that the *context* for scoring is the writing program goals and the rubric itself. They should not try to figure out what level or course the project comes from. Unsaid is that they should also not try to figure out the race or linguistic background of the student. As the committee revised the 2016 rubric, the word "consistency" became a surrogate for the idea of context. For example, scorers may not know what the assignment prompt was or who the paper is written for, but they see a consistent level of jargon as an indication that the writer is aware of audience. Similarly, using sources of a consistent kind in a consistent manner signals that the writer is aware what type of research is being asked of them. The note included under the "process & style" dimension of the Oak rubric acknowledges that the raters do not have access to evidence of the writing process explicitly mentioned in the first goal but encourages raters to "*take factors like internal consistency into account when assessing the first bullet point.*"

Although consistency is a key word that repeated throughout the meetings I observed and the interviews I conducted, "internal" is also important here. It articulates a formalist view of writing. This view perpetuates a myth that factors such as linguistic background, race, gender, and other identity categories are *external* to the writing process, when we know that writing and identity are, in fact, deeply connected. The original VALUE Written Communication rubric (2009) defined "context" by a multitude of factors including the audience, the writer, the intended distribution of the text, and the social/political factors influencing the text. The scholars in writing studies who authored the rubric knew these factors to be inseparable from writing, yet the actual process of assessment makes every attempt to separate them. In 2016, Kristen hoped to collect more contextual information, particularly the assignment prompt. But by the time she trained scorers in Summer 2018, she stressed: "You score what you have in front of you, and you don't think about…the only context that matters is the context of the rubric." Kristen does not even attempt to list the things "you don't think about" here, although it is at this point in the training that Marisella asks about the inclusion of non-En-

glish papers in the assessment. Clearly, Marisella is thinking about it. And clearly, Kristen is, too, because she thinks about the ways English-speaking faculty would be unable to read non-English papers and therefore does not include any. These identity factors *are* considered, but their consideration is erased, silenced, by both the text of the rubric itself and the process of assessment.

INSTITUTIONAL ACTION

The erasure of these "external" considerations is something that Kristen and the writing committee enact, but it is also simply how boss texts are designed to function. Boss texts "render the messiness of daily work and experience institutionally actionable" (Peacock, 2017, p. 100). Assessment work is messy, even more so when writing is involved. While enacting the Oak writing program goals related to process in the classroom is a matter of adding peer review or pre-writing exercises, assessing those goals across the program is difficult to implement, particularly with one artifact and a rubric. The guiding language of the original VALUE Written Communication rubric signals that it is meant to be used to score writing portfolios that include contextual documents. Yet, when Ben and Kristen train with the AAC&U, they are presented with solo artifacts removed not only from the classroom context but also from the institutional context. The scorers do not know what level the student is, what course they are taking, what the assignment is, or even what type of institution the artifact comes from. When Kristen implemented the assessment at Oak, she collected 60 artifacts from first-year students, and 60 from seniors to be scored on the same rubric by raters who do not know which artifacts come from which classes or levels. The AAC&U training served as the starting point for building this process of assessment at Oak and is seen by both Ben and Kristen as a practical way to begin. There are good reasons why they draw on this, not the least of which is the funding available for the program in doing so. Kristen's ability to test the rubric comes from leftover AAC&U funding provided by Associate Provost Philip, which she can take advantage of only because she ties her local process to the national AAC&U process.

At this point, some compositionists might want to jump in and ask Kristen: why not use portfolios? As a researcher, I wondered this, and in fact, I mentioned the idea to multiple participants. Yet, from an institutional ethnography perspective, the goal of the research is to discover how local practice interacts with ruling relations, not to impose our own expertise on the participants, as we are not experts in their everyday work life (Rankin, 2017a). Rather than conclude that portfolios would "fix" the issues with assessment faced by Kristen and the team, it is important to examine their own perceptions of using them and the constraints they faced.

While my interview participants agreed that portfolios would be a way to capture the process goals—perhaps the only way—no one questioned the assessment plan in committee meetings. Kristen sees portfolios as a potential longer-term goal, as something on her "dream list." However, she doesn't seem to think it should be the first thing the writing program tries. Implementing a portfolio requires institutional support that goes beyond an agreement that portfolios are good practice. Philip was concerned with software that made portfolios difficult to implement beyond the department or course level. He noted that the institution had looked into special portfolio software, but then determined that their learning management system was already suited to portfolio development. The idea stalled, though, when the institution switched to a new learning management system. In addition to the need for technological support for portfolios, the implementation of a writing portfolio seems beyond the expertise of the writing committee. Barbara noted that other small liberal arts colleges use portfolio assessment productively in their writing programs and that she feels it would have been the best option to assess the program at Oak. Kristen, too, admired these other writing programs, particularly the well-known program run by Carol Rutz at Carlton College. Yet, she seems to see implementing a similar program as beyond her abilities. "Their system seems so great to me," she said, "but it also seems like so much work to get that up and running." As I will explore more in Chapter 6, the lack of disciplinary expertise in writing weighs on Kristen and affects what she sees as feasible when creating the assessment at Oak.

Using a rubric based on the writing program goals to score individual artifacts is seen as actionable by the writing committee. It may be difficult at times, but it seems like a doable assessment process. However, in actually implementing the process over the course of the two years I studied Oak, the purpose of the assessment shifted. As stated in 2016, the task of the writing committee is to assess the new writing program. And so, the committee labors to reconcile the use of a rubric with the goals of the writing program, adding notes to clarify goals for scorers and shifting how goals like "process" are defined. However, by 2018, Kristen recognized that this method does not actually capture the impact of the writing program directly. While Kristen can collect first-year artifacts directly from composition courses, the other writing courses are spread across the curriculum, and so it is impossible to collect them from a course that only has seniors. Therefore, she collected any senior artifacts she can get, not necessarily ones from writing program courses. She also realized she cannot rule out the possibility that senior artifacts score better because of factors other than the direct influence of the writing program. Thus, when introducing the assessment process to the 2018 scorers, she says with a bit of a chuckle: "This is not actually an assessment of the writing program; it's an assessment of student writing

at Oak under the writing program." This shift also came about because Philip and others in the administration decided to stop using the VALUE rubrics for general education assessment. Kristen explained that Philip then made it clear to her that "the writing committee is now responsible for assessing writing at Oak." The writing program goals, then, become a stand-in for *all* writing done at Oak, not just within writing program courses. In 2018, Kristen compiled a report on the first assessment, and that report is included in Oak's accreditation file. The goals and the rubric are texts that make the messy work of teaching writing actionable, assessable, reportable.

ST. RITA'S GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE & THE PRIMACY OF ENGLISH

At St. Rita's a writing rubric is used to evaluate first-year writing, as well as later general education courses, and to create writing goals for general education. (The rubric can be found in Appendix E.) Unlike Oak, the writing rubric is used to directly assess individual students rather than writing across the university as a whole. In terms of first-year writing, at the end of each semester English faculty use St. Rita's writing rubric to score portfolios from first-year writing classes to determine if students pass of fail. In addition, they score sophomore and junior portfolios from across campus—which consist of one timed essay and a cover letter. The purpose of this system is to pass (or hold back) students but also to show how students are progressing through the general education curriculum. Thus, the rubric that is used in this context is tied to both first-year writing and the general education curriculum as a whole. When the general education committee looked to revise their curriculum and their goals based on the VALUE rubrics, they turned to the rubric used by English faculty to score these portfolios. While Oak followed the basic AAC&U process for modification and worked hard to reach consensus among faculty from different disciplines, the faculty at St. Rita's defaulted to what is done within English and first-year writing. This is significant because unlike the other VALUE rubrics the general education committee referenced, the Written Communication rubric had already been significantly modified. To further understand this process, I observed a general education committee meeting and interviewed both English faculty who participated in scoring the portfolios and members of the general education committee.

When I observed the general education committee in Fall 2016, they were not composing a rubric or even considering revising it. Rather they were using the rubric to create new general education outcomes. As described in Chapter 4, this rubric was used to score timed essays, which are referred to as "signature assignments," collected in the first-year writing course as well as at later points

in the general education curriculum. The rubric shows that by the completion of general education, writing should fall in the "3 Sufficient" performance descriptor. The process of aligning the general education goals with this rubric is interesting simply because it reverses the more common logic that rubrics are created to assess outcomes rather than outcomes being created to fit rubrics. As shown in Chapter 4, however, St. Rita's sees the rubrics as a national source for legitimacy, something they need to align their curriculum with to be taken seriously. Therefore, the discussion of the rubric dimensions was related to whether or not those dimensions should be used as general education goals.

When I attended the committee meeting, there were six proposed outcomes for written communication within general education and five dimensions of the rubric used at St. Rita's. In general, these mapped onto one another. The one exception was the addition of a general education goal about following "expectations appropriate to a specific discipline," which appears to make a nod to the VALUE Written Communication rubric dimension of "genre and disciplinary conventions." Although my participants did not directly address this point, it also seems that this addition makes sense when looking at multiple courses in general education rather than just first-year writing courses. The other goals clearly aligned with the rubric used to score the "signature assignments" collected at multiple points throughout the general education curriculum at St. Rita's (see Appendix E). The first written communication outcome for general education states that the writer will respond to the prompt, matching the "responding to assignments" dimension of the rubric. There are also outcomes that address the dimensions of "structure and coherence" and "evidence and analysis." Finally, there are two goals for sentence-level issues. One goal specifies that "the work includes some variety of sentence types," and the other that "language generally conveys meaning… although writing may include some errors of grammar or mechanics." Again, these match the two separate dimensions on the writing rubric.

Lucinda, a former English faculty member now in administration, noted to me that she did not support these two separate dimensions for style and mechanics but was "out-voted" when the writing rubric was created. In her role on the general education committee, she tentatively brings back up the issue of combining the two rubric categories, at least when it comes to the general education goals. This particular moment in my observation is telling of how the general education committee took English courses as the default standard for their general education goals on writing. In Chapter 6 I return to this moment to explore the relationship between the overall general education process and individual classroom practice, but here I focus on how it signals the role of English as an authority on writing within general education. When Lucinda raised her concern, the question for the general education committee became whether or not these sentence-level issues

are a concern for the general education curriculum as a whole or are the specific purview of first-year writing courses. Dwayne asked: "If they're using the same type of sentence, a simple sentence, over and over and over again, is it a problem in our general education?" He pointed out that the specificity of the goal for sentence types is not in keeping with the generality seen in the VALUE rubrics. At this point in the meeting, Lucinda took the initiative to comb through documents on her laptop to find the exact course outcomes from the composition sequence.[6] My assumption, listening to the concerns brought up by the committee, was that if those goals were listed as first-year composition course goals, then the committee would conclude that they did not also need to be specified in the general education goals. However, the opposite happened.

Lucinda eventually found the outcomes and read several relevant ones out loud to the committee: These outcomes stated that students will write with a variety of sentence types, correct grammar, complete sentences, and active verbs. Dwayne then scoffed at the goals, called them "aspirational" and not a good representation of where students actually are in first-year classes. Lucinda backed away from her request to scratch the sentence variety goal from general education and instead said, "wouldn't it be great if they're reinforced in other general education courses… where they could get to mastery at the end." The committee agreed and Jeremy, as chair, declared that they would keep the sentence variety goal for general education. We see here that the goals of English then become the goals of general education. Rather than actually consider if features like using "active voice" are disciplinary specific, the committee assumes that what English is teaching is what everyone should teach when it comes to writing.

In part, this synecdochical relationship between English and the rest of the university when it comes to writing is not unique to St. Rita's. As we saw at Oak, the writing committee was tasked with assessing writing for all of the university, not just for their program. However, St. Rita's does not have a writing committee, a writing program, or even have an English department. Rather, the Humanities department oversees three programs, including English. Yet, Patrice, a social scientist, noted that English has the most faculty members on campus and that they "call the shots." Noting that several English faculty have moved up in administration, such as Lucinda, Patrice stated: "We're in a period now where English rules." Patrice objected to the "supremacy of English" on campus and yet she frequently calls on her English colleagues when she teaches writing, asking them for the most up to date rubrics and inquiring about what *they* want her to do in her classes.

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6   Although several people present taught the course, none seemed to know what the goals were without searching for that information.

The "Ogre" of English

While Patrice may see the English faculty as unified ruling front, the tensions among English faculty are high. In particular, Gerald, usually referred to as Dr. Z by his colleagues at St. Rita's, was the humanities chair at the beginning of my study. Dr. Z is a self-proclaimed "ogre and bloviating authoritarian" who exerts his control not only over students but over his colleagues. Through direct stories and indirect references, the English faculty seem to agree that Dr. Z is the reason for at least some of the major differences between the rubric used at St. Rita's and the original VALUE rubric. In particular, Dr. Z was adamant about the two dimensions for "prose, style and syntax" as well as one for "spelling, word-choice, grammar, and punctuation." Lucinda is not alone in questioning the need for these two separate rubric dimensions. In fact, Dr. Z appears to be of the minority opinion, yet the other faculty let him have his way. For example, Heather said she was a "fan" of the original VALUE Written Communication rubric "because the sentence stuff is smushed together." Yet, she was part-time and not consulted when the current writing rubric for St. Rita's was created. She is concerned that students "don't understand enough about the difference between prose stye and punctu-ation" to have to separate categories on the rubric be helpful to them. Since the students are directly scored using the rubric at St. Rita's there is the added element of creating them in a way the students will understand. Dwayne is also concerned about the way the two dimensions affect students. He explained that when he studied the first-year writing portfolio scores, he found that students who failed in one of these categories almost always failed in the other. He is concerned that students are held back in progressing through their degree by surface-level errors. But that is exactly the result Dr. Z wants. He complained that the VALUE rubric is flawed because students could "score really low at the sentence level and still pass," and "that's where all our students are fumbling the ball all the time." Dr. Z firmly believes that students need a foundation in grammar and sentence structure before progressing in writing, and he sees the rubric as a way of enforcing this kind of gatekeeping at the first-year level. While I explore his view in more depth in Chapter 7, particularly in relation to racial and institutional power, the key point here is that the way the rubric is adapted has much to do with the faculty dynamics at play on the committees doing the work.

Despite Dwayne's hope to "move closer to the VALUE rubric" and others appreciation for the national rubric, the conversation about writing and general education I observed stalled any changes to the way writing is taught or assessed at St. Rita's. At the time of this writing in 2021—three years after closing my data collection—the rubric on the St. Rita's website for scoring portfolios in general education is the same rubric I saw in 2016. While Oak faculty spent

years tweaking and testing their rubric before using it, in one brief conversation, St. Rita's agreed to simply move forward as they had been doing. And regardless of large differences in their rubric and the Written Communication VALUE rubric, they framed what they were doing as using a modified VALUE rubric. Even Dr. Z agreed that this connection brought with it a sense of legitimacy for the assessment work done at St. Rita's, yet he prevents any meaningful use of the VALUE Written Communication rubric to proceed.

INSTITUTIONAL INACTION

Examining the challenges at St. Rita's can give us a different perspective on what is happening when faculty work to "adapt" the VALUE rubric and why that process does not always end in a new rubric or assessment process. In addition to the social conflicts and disciplinary dominance of English at St. Rita's, there are practical reasons for why the process did not go any further. St. Rita's is incredibly small, with a student population under 1,000, including both under-graduate and graduate programs. The AAC&U and higher education, in general, is not often aware of institutional circumstances like the ones these faculty engaged with on a daily basis. This difference is enacted in concrete ways such as the funding sources and faculty labor available for assessment work. Kristen held the 2017 summer assessment workshop in order to get more feedback on the rubric from faculty across the curriculum. She was able to do so, and pay faculty participants, because Philip had leftover money from the AAC&U grant that needed to be used. In contrast, faculty at St. Rita's are always hurting for funds. Dwayne explained to me that he disliked that St. Rita's writing portfolio was only a timed essay and a cover letter. However, the English faculty read all the portfolios in one marathon six-hour session, and neither the funds nor the time were available for them to do more. Despite Patrice complaining that English is the largest discipline on campus, there are, in fact, only four full-time English faculty members to do this work.

In addition, sampling student work for assessment rather than scoring every student essay is never considered at St. Rita's. Oak is small, but still more than twice as big as St. Rita's with an undergraduate population of about 2,000. When working with the AAC&U, Philip found that they did not have realistic expectations for the amount of work produced at a small college like Oak. He noted that the AAC&U seemed to send the same instructions to everyone, asking for 300 senior artifacts. For Philip, that is "60 percent of [the] senior class," and so he negotiates with the VALUE staff who ask him to determine what a reasonable number of artifacts is for a school his size. At St. Rita's, it is difficult to even know how many seniors there are. Nearly half of their small undergraduate

population attends part-time, and many drop out before they reach their fourth year. Traditional class standing seems antithetical to real conditions at St. Rita's. However, with a total undergraduate population around 500-600, it is safe to say that 300 senior artifacts would be significantly more than the total number of seniors. This is yet another challenge for St. Rita's when attempting to fit in with national "best" practice. It is not only a matter of underprepared students who don't come to college ready to meet the first benchmark on the rubric or a matter of needing to adapt rubric language. The "universal" process designed by the AAC&U does not fit the institutional size of St. Rita's.

While no one expects consensus-building to be an easy process, proponents of it also do not always anticipate the emotional labor involved when interacting with colleagues such as Dr. Z. When Crystal Broch Colombini and Maureen McBride (2012) explained that "storming" is a natural part of the norming process, they did not anticipate the literal storming out of the room calling colleagues "ignoramuses" that Dr. Z reportedly did in a later general education meeting. Rather, the example they give of these periods of dissent is a reader objecting to how assessment artifacts were gathered (Broch Colombini & McBride, 2012). Unfortunately, Dr. Z's outbursts are not unique in academic life. Bethany Davila and Cristyn Elder (2019) conducted a survey of bullying in WPA workplaces. They classified 41 percent of their responses as examples of verbal abuse where colleagues yelled or swore at others in anger. These unhealthy dynamics directly affect the environment in which faculty work together to create and adapt rubrics. Rubric adaptation, when done by committee, relies on a certain level of collegiality and commitment that is difficult to achieve at St. Rita's. Perhaps more common than bullying, faculty bring their own agendas to the table that cannot be fully separated from their own career aspirations. John Trimbur (1989) noted that it is naive not to recognize the way knowledge production is motivated by individual career moves not simply consensus of a group of experts. Dwayne and Heather rely on a working relationship with Dr. Z as their department chair and must weigh their own careers alongside what they think is best practice in assessment. Under these conditions, it is no wonder that the faculty default to existing practice rather than fight to modify it.

CONCLUSION

While the AAC&U recognizes that their rubrics can, and often should, be modified for local practice, they advocate for a universal process in which faculty on a campus reach consensus on a modified rubric (Levi & Stevens, 2010). They also view the rubric modification process as one of *translation*: "the VALUE rubrics can and should be *translated* [emphasis added] into the language of individual

campuses, disciplines, and even courses" (Rhodes, 2010, p. 21). The mission of the AAC&U in creating the VALUE rubrics was to "establish that rubrics can provide the assurance that regardless of where they teach—type of institution, part of the country, or mix of programs—faculty are indeed talking about the same outcomes and sharing the same expectations for learning" (Rhodes, 2010, p. 1). By assuming that their process can work anywhere, that there is a "level playing field" in which institutions engage with outcomes and assessment and arrive at the *same place*, the AAC&U interpolates universities and their faculty as decontextualized neoliberal subjects. Institutional ethnography returns these subjects and their discourse to their context. It "rediscover(s) discourse as an actual happening" (Smith, 2014, p. 227). After reading this chapter, it should be clear that those at Oak and those at St. Rita's, while both stating they use modified VALUE Written Communication rubrics, do *not* share the same expectations for learning, nor do they operate on a level playing field.

It could be argued that neither institution fully follows the practices laid out by the AAC&U. At Oak, the faculty clearly draw on the AAC&U's overall assessment process that Kristen and Ben learned in their AAC&U training. They work with faculty to norm; they revise the rubric repeatedly; they test it, and they reach what might even be considered a type of consensus. However, the rubric is ultimately meant to follow the goals of the writing program, not the dimensions of the original VALUE rubric. Those goals, particularly when it comes to process, are poorly captured in the genre of the rubric. The opposite happens at St. Rita's, where none of this process is present and yet the original AAC&U VALUE rubrics appear in their written materials, like the faculty handbook. Excepting the written communication outcomes, which are affected strongly by the faculty dynamics at St. Rita's, the general education outcomes replicated the dimensions of the VALUE rubrics. Yet, faculty agree those rubrics are not designed for the population of students that attends St. Rita's. Both schools interact with the VALUE Written Communication rubric as they work to define outcomes and rubrics, but neither fully implement what the AAC&U potentially had in mind when they advocated for rubric adaptation. Nor do they fully lean into their particular, local, and embodied institutional and programmatic contexts.

While so much is different about these two intuitions, I would argue that the very process of using a rubric for writing assessment links them together. In particular, rubric-based assessment leads faculty at both schools toward a common perception (or misperception) of writing. The genre of the rubric and the perception of the VALUE rubrics as exemplars of the rubric genre reinforces an assumption that writing is linear skill-based learning. It is telling that one of the most common modifications nationally to the VALUE rubrics is reversing

the order of the performance descriptors. In particular, this change is rarely discussed or debated, but simply assumed. Progression is inherent in the form of the rubric, and so it makes sense to users to start at the beginning, the lowest level and work toward the higher end. When I asked participants about this change, they hadn't really considered it, noting that the lower to higher order seemed natural. Perhaps one reason why so many faculty want to change the order of the VALUE rubrics to have the weakest level on the left is that rubrics position the instructor to read with a deficit-based lens, for where the text does *not* line up with the rubric rather than for textual possibility (Wilson 2006). For Dr. Z, this order is natural not only from the point of view of skill progress but from a cultural perspective. "One thing I remember was that it made absolutely no sense," he told me referring to the order of performance levels in the original VALUE rubric, "as if you're reading Chinese!" Individuals like Dr. Z come to texts with their own cultural and ideological backgrounds that affect their reading, yet genres encourage some readings over others. A rubric is not recognizable as a rubric without performance levels, and so it impossible to read a rubric outside the ideological frame of pedagogical progress.

We also see this frame enacted when the Oak committee struggles to fit their writing process goals into a rubric. These goals signal a different type of progression—one of labor rather than skill. Whether or not the writer engages in a writing process, whether they pre-write, or respond to feedback, is never entirely discernible from one static artifact. And yet, the committee at Oak, unable to break from the frame that all the writing program goals must be measured by the rubric, must redefine process in terms that can be seen in the final product. They must believe that "internal consistency" signals process and awareness of audience in order to continue with their work and meet their charge of measuring outcomes on a rubric. Here, the genre constrains what is possible in terms of how the committee can interpret and operationalize the program's goals.

The final product of the modified rubric erases the tension between individuals and the social conditions that influence their work. For Amy Devitt (2004), genres are "a nexus between an individual's actions and a socially defined context" (p. 31). Delving into the tensions, constraints, and choices of those at Oak and St. Rita's challenges the notion that modifying a rubric is ever only a matter of local translation. Furthermore, the assumption that calibrating scorers is a means of consensus-making does not account for the many local and personal dynamics that come into play when designing and using rubrics. The AAC&U sees themselves as guiding this process of consensus-building and thus furthering democratic aims, but as shown in the example from St. Rita's, that process may be anything other than democratic.