A Mixed-Methods Study of Basic Writing Teachers' Engagement with Socially Just Writing Assessment

Item Type	Dissertation (Open Access)
Authors	Stetson, Sarah M.
DOI	10.7275/54803
Download date	2026-04-23 01:05:54
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/54803

A Mixed-Methods Study of Basic Writing Teachers' Engagement with Socially Just Writing Assessment

A Dissertation Presented

by

SARAH M. STETSON

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2024

English

© Copyright by Sarah M. Stetson 2024

All Rights Reserved

A Mixed-Methods Study of Basic Writing Teachers' Engagement
with Socially Just Writing Assessment

A Dissertation Presented

by

SARAH M. STETSON

Approved as to style and content by:

____
Haivan Hoang, Chair

____
Rebecca Lorimer Leonard, Member

____
Elizabeth Williams, Member

____
Daniel Sack, Graduate Program Director
Department of English

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project only exists with the mentorship, encouragement, community, and friendship of others. All the folks below appear somehow in my writing and research – and all of it is better because of you.

Thank you first to my dissertation committee members, Haivan Hoang, Liz Williams, and Rebecca Lorimer Leonard. Haivan, you challenged me to read with patience and to meet the many moments of revision with steadiness. Thank you for our conversations on teaching and so much else, your incredibly careful feedback, and your belief that I could tackle this project. Thank you, too, for your kindness as I navigated loss – the empathy and understanding you showed me helped me keep going when I wasn't sure that I could. Rebecca, thank you for guiding and encouraging interdisciplinary thinking, reading, and writing. I hold dear our early discussions of literacies which were formative both to this project and to others I hope to pursue in the future. Liz, your mentorship shapes not just this project, which I couldn't have accomplished without studying under your expertise, but my sense of self as a researcher in higher education – and truly, my sense of self as someone who has struggled to gain confidence and articulate what I'm about. I feel as though we're always in conversation even if we haven't seen each other in a while, and for this I am so grateful. Thank you also to Anne Herrington for your support and feedback throughout this project.

This project includes the voices of nearly 200 basic writing teachers who responded to my survey. Thank you to each of you who dedicated your precious time and energy to participate in a stranger's study – an act of true generosity. A special thank you to my interview participants who shared so much of their experience with, knowledge of, and thinking on the

teaching of writing with me. I am honored and humbled to work with your narratives and hopeful for all of the change you are making. Though this project focuses on teachers, its reason for being is students. Thank you to the students I have worked with over the years at Queens College and Queensborough Community College, CUNY, and UMass Amherst. There are many ways that writing teachers learn what it means to enact student-centered pedagogy and to work toward justice, but it is certainly true for me that I learned the most from my students.

Thank you to Mazen Naous, Sally Pirie, and Benita Barnes for inviting me into your classes and cultivating spaces for interdisciplinary thinking. Thank you to the faculty who supported me as a writer and teacher before I knew that composition and literacy studies was a field and before I could ever imagine writing a dissertation: Kimiko Hahn, Roger Sederat, and Nicole Cooley. A special thank you to Amy Wan for letting me into your composition studies course after I shared my social security number with you over the phone, us never having met, and to Nicole Cooley, who recommended me for my first teaching position after CUNYFirst overenrolled a section of 200W. (Two truly relevant tales of labyrinthine college bureaucracy.) To Nancy Agabian, thank you for being the best early teaching mentor I could have. You modeled what a collaborative and creative classroom can look like and took extra time to help me gain confidence as a young writing teacher.

In the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment at UMass Amherst, I was incredibly lucky to find a space where I could immerse myself in so many of the questions, problems, and approaches related to higher education that inform this dissertation – and to find people who loved talking about higher ed, did not mind re-teaching me math, and had wonderful senses of humor. Thank you to Alicia Remaly, Martha Stassen, Liz Williams (again), and Rebecca Petitti.

Becca, thank you for our talks on teaching writing, WPA work and “alternative” career paths, and the laughter we shared. At OAPA I found myself on a team that I was proud to be a part of.

Both the English Department and the Graduate School at UMass Amherst provided me with funding that allowed me to devote more time and resources to my dissertation, and the Writing Program provided professional development opportunities that informed my research questions and drive to pursue inquiry into the basic writing course and writing assessment. Thank you to Anne Bello and Peggy Woods for your thoughtful mentorship, and to Wanda Bak, Becky Bladja, and Nancy Caldwell for your support with all logistical tasks. Thank you, too, to the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity and the Office of Institutional Research at Brown University for being so supportive as I finished this project.

Thank you to my colleagues and friends in the UMass Amherst English Department for your collaboration, co-working, and conversation. I am grateful especially for the community I found in our graduate student union, GEO UAW 2322. I would not have been able to complete this dissertation in good health, good company, or relative job security without my union. I hope that, in some way, this project contributes to conversations around labor organizing in higher education and in the writing classroom specifically. Thank you especially to GEO’s abolition committee. I deeply appreciate our camaraderie, work, and conversations.

The community and all-around cozy environments at Amherst Coffee, Bolt Coffee, and Davoll’s General Store sustained me throughout this project. Thank you for creating anchoring spaces. Thank you, too, to all the musicians and comedians that kept me afloat for the last many years. You demonstrate the urgency of creative work and give me joy and hope in the

creative process. Thank you especially to Frances Quinlan and Hop Along for writing songs about conversation, silence, and family that sound different each time I listen.

To my friends for whom I have a profound and wild, joyful gratitude. You always trusted I would finish this project, but would also still love me if I didn't. Thank you to Tyler Rivenbark, Tiffany Rachelle Stewart, Rachel Playe, Peter Salomone, Robyn Fukumoto, Natalie Adler, Emily Palten, and Sarah Faude. Cecilia Turner, it doesn't matter where we're talking, it's always the best and funniest conversation. I cherish all of our adventures. Kate Litterer, you lead by example and anyone fortunate enough to call you a friend will know you are both a coach and a cheerleader. Thank you for your fierce care and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to share my abiding love and appreciation for my grandparents, Pasqualine Tarvano Mazun, Henryk Mazun, Karin Sandberg Stetson, and Kenneth Stetson, and my parents, Claudia Mazun Stetson and David Stetson. Your constant love has buoyed me, and our lively conversations through the decades have helped me attune my thinking and work toward finding my voice.

Joel, your love, friendship, and partnership has seen me through the moments – the joyful, the sorrowful, and the proud. I couldn't find a way to say it better than Mike Schur and Alan Yang, so to quote season five, episode 14 of *Parks and Recreation*, "The things that you have done for me to help me, support me, surprise me, to make me happy, go above and beyond what any person deserves." Thank you for your generosity, for making me laugh, for reading so many drafts of so many dissertation materials, and for understanding me.

ABSTRACT

A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF BASIC WRITING TEACHERS' ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIALLY JUST WRITING ASSESSMENT

MAY 2024

SARAH MAZUN STETSON, B.A., NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

M.F.A., QUEENS COLLEGE, CUNY

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Haivan V. Hoang

Using a mixed-methods approach, this dissertation aims to bridge capacious theories of social justice with basic writing teachers' on-the-ground experiences imagining and enacting socially just writing assessment. Composition and Literacy Studies scholars have argued that traditional writing assessment is often an antagonistic process for racially and linguistically minoritized student-writers whose linguistic and discursive practices may be implicitly or explicitly devalued in the basic writing classroom, a space that reflects the raced and classed ways student writing has historically been read by persons in power. To better understand ways of resisting iterations of white language supremacy in the basic writing classroom, my study asks how basic writing teachers who self-identify as valuing social justice frameworks define socially just writing assessment, how they practice these assessment strategies, and the supports and obstacles they navigate when enacting their assessment praxis. I use a random stratified sample to survey basic writing teachers across public degree-granting institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Very High Research Institutions, Regional

Comprehensive Institutions, and Community Colleges, in 11 northeast and midatlantic states and the District of Columbia (response rate: n=190, approximately 16%). I also conduct interviews with seven survey participants to gain nuanced insight into their successes and struggles with non-traditional writing assessment. To my data analysis I bring a critical attention to teachers' labor conditions and an understanding that formal educational spaces in the US typically perpetuate white settler logics that prioritize discipline and surveillance. My data show that a variety of definitions of, terminologies around, and approaches to socially just writing assessment are present among participants; relatedly, participants express a range of orientations toward approaching linguistic and discursive difference in ways that do not harm students. This study demonstrates that participants' racial identity and adjunct status, the credit status of their courses, and the degree of access to community-building and support for social justice approaches to the writing classroom, affect the ways participants relate to, practice, and see the urgency of non-traditional writing assessment in the basic writing classroom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iv

ABSTRACT viii

LIST OF TABLES xiii

LIST OF FIGURES xv

CHAPTER

1. SOCIAL JUSTICE IN WRITING ASSESSMENT AND THE BASIC WRITING COURSE: AN INTRODUCTION 1

Land acknowledgment 1
Introduction 1
What is “social justice,” and why socially just writing assessment? 9
Social justice perspectives on validity and fairness 21
Inequity and writing placement assessment 27
Inequity and basic writing classrooms 35
Classroom assessment and social justice 43

2. METHODS 49

Defining scope and terms 49
Reflection on researcher positionality 56
Sampling plan 60
Response rates and representativeness 65
Survey design and administration 70
Interview and mixed methods approach 78
Data analysis 82

3. DEVELOPING AND DEFINING SOCIAL JUSTICE APPROACHES TO WRITING ASSESSMENT .. 92

Developing practice 97
Definitions and terms 109
Grappling with terms: Intersections of uncertainty and ambivalence 116
Who is the practice for? Language, race, and “nonstandard” writing 122
Criticism, skepticism, and “buzzwords” 129
Too specific/Too broad 132

Patronizing 135
Open disdain 137

Cautious engagement 141

4. BASIC WRITING TEACHERS' EVERYDAY ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND DECISIONS 149

A reminder on participants' avoidance of the specifics of grading 151
Focusing feedback 152
Incorporating student feedback into assessment practice 160
Success with socially just approaches to writing assessment: Contexts, interventions, outcomes 165
Contexts and outcomes 166
Interventions 168

Assigning a final grade 187

5. NAVIGATING CHALLENGES TO SOCIALLY JUST ASSESSMENT 197

Departmental and institutional support for social justice pedagogies and assessment practices 202
Narratives of struggle 212
Teachers' linguistic ideologies 214
Students' non-academic circumstances 220
Teacher knowledge and comfort 225
Colleagues and support 228
Teacher overwork and burnout 236
Departmental, institutional, and/or state-level limitations 241

6: FIGHTING FORGETFULNESS AND ATTENDING TO ACTION: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK 248

Review of the project and research questions 248
Implications for action 251
Implications for future research and work 262

APPENDICES

A. SURVEY INVITATION (TEACHERS) 267
B. SURVEY INVITATION (HEADS/CHAIRS).......... 269
C. SURVEY INSTRUMENT 271
D. INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM 290
E. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.......... 295
F. LIST OF INSTITUTIONS IN SAMPLE FRAME BY STATE AND INSTITUTION TYPE 298
G. RESPONDENTS BY RANK, RACE, INSTITUTION TYPE, AND COURSE CREDIT STATUS 309

BIBLIOGRAPHY 310

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1. Survey Response Rate 67

2. Sample Frame by Institution Type 68

3. Number of Heads/Chairs Identified for Recruitment 68

4. Survey Responses by Institution Type 69

5. Participants by Institution Type, State, and Region 97

6. Terms Participants Prefer when Engaging Social Justice Approaches to Writing Assessment 120

7. Participants' Struggles with "Non-standard" Writing 123

8. Participants' Definitions of "Socially Just Assessment" and Perceptions of Students 127

9. Participants' Use of Terms Related to "Socially Just Assessment" 146

10. What Participants Focus on When Giving Students Feedback on Their Writing 155

11. Participants' Comments Coded as Grammar, Punctuation, Mechanics, and Sentence Structure by Credit Bearing/Non-Credit Bearing Course Status 159

12. Participants' Characterizations of Challenging Assessment Situations 167

13. Participants' Characterizations of the Grading Tools They Use and Why 194

14. Community College Participants' Characterization of Departmental Support for Socially Just Writing Assessment and Pedagogies by Race 209

15. Participants' Characterization of Departmental Support for Socially Just Writing Assessment by Adjunct Status 211

16. Participants' Knowledge and Comfort Around Engaging Socially Just Writing Assessment 226

17. Participants' Sense of Community Around Socially Just Writing Assessment................ 230

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

1. Photograph of Hostos Community College, CUNY, March 48

2. Items Most Impactful in Development of Participants' Current Understanding of Assessment Organized by "Very Impactful" 100

3. Items Most Impactful in Development of Participants' Current Understanding of Assessment Organized by "Not Impactful" 102

4. Impact of Interactions with Students on Participants' Current Understanding of Assessment by Institution Type 104

5. Impact of Explicit Feedback from Students on Participants' Current Understanding of Assessment by Institution Type 104

6. What Participants Focus on When Giving Students Feedback on Their Writing by Institution Type 156

7. Frequency and Nature of Participants' Reflection on Their Assessment Practices.......... 162

8. Participants' Sense of Their Students' Reactions to Their Assessment Practices 164

9. Participants' Indications of Flexible Assessment Practices... 173

10. Number of Grading Categories Participants' Indicated Engaging 187

11. Frequency with which Participants Indicated Engaging Specific Grading Practices....... 188

12. Participants' Characterization of Departmental Support for Socially Just Writing Assessment 203

13. Participants' Characterization of Institutional Support for Socially Just Writing Assessment 204

14. Participants' Characterization of Departmental Support for Socially Just Writing

Assessment by Race 207

15. Participants' Characterization of Departmental Support for Socially Just Writing

Assessment by Institution Type 208

16. Participants' Sense of Community Around Engaging Socially Just

Assessment by Race 235

17. Photograph of UMass Amherst Students Demonstrating 252

18. Screenshot of LaGuardia Community College, CUNY, Website Text 255

CHAPTER 1

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN WRITING ASSESSMENT AND THE BASIC WRITING COURSE: AN INTRODUCTION

Land acknowledgement

I researched and wrote this dissertation on the unceded homelands of the Pocumtuc Nation and Norrwutuck community and on the unceded homelands of the Narragansett Nation. The University of Massachusetts Amherst is a "land grant" institution which means that "as part of the Morrill Land Grant Act, portions of land from 82 Native Nations west of the Mississippi were sold to provide the resources to found and build" the university (University of Massachusetts Amherst). With respect and understanding that a land acknowledgement is only a small step in identifying the ongoing impacts of settler-colonialism and naming a future of decolonization and Native sovereignty, I include this statement as, in the words of endawnis spears, a "countermeasur[e] to erasure" and to provide a reframing of "colonially imposed geo-political boundaries" (spears).

Introduction

This dissertation seeks to understand how basic or developmental writing teachers define, practice, and negotiate support for socially just writing assessment praxis in their courses.[1] Though the public-facing narratives of colleges and universities – articulated through

[1] Throughout my study, I will use the terms "basic" and "developmental" writing interchangeably unless a particular context calls for a particular term. While some survey participants associated "basic writing" exclusively with non-credit bearing courses, others did not. "Basic writing" still seems to be, in many teacher-scholar communities, a way to signify a subfield of research and teaching (e.g., the Council on Basic Writing, *Journal of Basic Writing*, etc.) that encompasses any developmental writing course whatever the structure or model may be. My survey did include a question asking participants to indicate whether the course they teach is credit bearing; approximately 32% of participants indicated their course is non-credit bearing.

marketing materials, websites, campus tours, social media, communications from campus leadership, and so on – may argue otherwise, many scholar-teacher-activists recognize the University as an unjust, inequitable space, particularly for students of color, Black and Indigenous students, and working-class students (e.g., Arruzza et al.; Grande; Kelley; Tuck and Yang; Walcott), and those whose everyday ways of speaking, listening, reading, writing, and being refuse to conform to white middle-class norms (e.g., Lamos; Shor; Soliday; Villanueva).[2] Therefore, I frame my inquiry into writing teachers' work, and contextualize my analysis, through a critical consideration of the University, leaving space to consider the joyful, generative connections that may be fostered within it, along with the undoubted harm it perpetuates. The developmental writing course is a particularly urgent site to attend to when considering the differences in impact of various writing assessment practices and policies on students of color, Black and Indigenous students, working-class students, and linguistically diverse students.

Developmental writing teachers are faced with making similar writing assessment decisions as first-year writing teachers; however, I believe the impact of these decisions is intensified in the developmental writing classroom. At its foundation, the history of the developmental writing course reflects the raced and classed ways student writing has historically been read by persons in power. Typically, students do not enroll in the course voluntarily but are either required or strongly encouraged to take the course through a

[2] I will mainly be referring to the ways unjust learning conditions impact teachers and undergraduate students. However, all members of the University community, including staff and graduate students, are affected by and must navigate these conditions. Conditions are particularly dire for lower paid and/or hourly staff. In my broader thinking, then, the work of organizing for justice in the University includes all community members, including those who may not have direct experience working in the classroom.

placement assessment process. How is student writing read in this placement assessment moment? The specifics depend on the process, be it a university's use of a vended exam such as ACCUPLACER (Elliot et al.), machine scoring technologies (Herrington and Stanley), decontextualized timed writing samples (Poe, *Race*), Directed Self Placement (Ketai; Saenkhum), and so on. Whatever the method, it is widely recognized that in large scale placement assessment, the distance from "proficient" or "competent" writing is typically measured by students' ability to reproduce the features of a US standard English language and discourse. This "standard" is known in several different ways, including, Standard Edited American English, Standard American English, Standard White English, and, as April Baker-Bell has given us, White Mainstream English (WME) (Baker-Bell, "Linguistic Justice" 0:13:00-0:13:07). Many scholars have now told us that this English language variety (like all language varieties) is not neutral, ahistorical, or apolitical. It is, in fact, "the language of conquest and domination," (Baker-Bell, "Linguistic Justice" 0:13:00-0:13:07), or, a "cultural emblem" of "white middle-class norms" (Flores and Rosa 152, 151).[3] Therefore, it is not a surprise that students who experience oppression through this language (for example, Black and Indigenous students, students of color, working-class students, international students), might be differently impacted by a writing placement exam asking them to reproduce the features of this language variety.

Following this, if one accepts that the University is a settler colonial institution, and that white language supremacy (Inoue, "How Do We") iterates through writing placement and

[3] Baker-Bell is drawing on bell hooks' characterization of language from her work *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*.

writing classroom assessment ecologies, then it becomes difficult or even impossible to agree with scholars such as David Bartholomae who at one point argued that placement in developmental courses is "arbitrary" (Bartholomae 19). It is, actually, nothing close to that. It is a form of tracking, wherein preparedness for college writing is equated with proficiency in a single, white middle-class way of writing, making arguments, and composing sentences.

Upon entering the course, students have in many cases already been told through biased placement exams, and through years of punitive standardized testing and grading in formal schooling, that they are "unprepared," "not ready," and/or "not proficient" writers. The cumulative negative effects of deficit-based literacy education are not confined to the English or writing classroom, or to students' engagement with English or writing assignments. Rather, deficit-based literacy education affects how students see themselves in a variety of contexts as writers, readers, listeners, and speakers. It affects students' sense of self as learners, knowledge makers, and members of an academic community (e.g., Herrington and Curtis; Horner and Lu).

Over the years, scholars in the discipline, often writing in community and solidarity with one another, have put forth arguments that counter dead-end deficit-based pedagogies with innovative and nuanced resource-based approaches to teaching and learning. These approaches center students’ lived experiences, bring attention to linguistic and discursive diversity, call on teachers to bring joy into the classroom, and show teachers concrete ways of redressing the harms that traditional writing pedagogies cause. Examples include the now foundational Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) movement, scholarship on translingualism and language diversity (e.g., Canagarajah; Horner et al.; Smitherman and Villanueva), scholarship on the relationship between language, literacies, race, and racialization

(e.g., Condon and Young; Hoang; Prendergast), and scholarship on Black Linguistic Justice (Baker-Bell, *Linguistic*), all of which demand writing teachers recognize linguistic and discursive diversity as a resource to be honored and valued in the classroom. Scholars have specifically shown how formal literacy education, which includes assessment and evaluation processes, has been and continues to be a site and instrument of colonization, white supremacy, and imperialism for racially and linguistically minoritized student-writers (e.g., Lyiscott). For example, Sina Saeedi and Elaine Richardson show how code-switching or code-meshing pedagogies function to uphold white logics by telling students, particularly Black and African American students who language through African American Vernacular English (AAVE), that there are spaces where it is "inappropriate" to be themselves (148).

In her research on writing, race, and Asian American activism, Haivan Hoang tells us "who can speak and write as an American" (16) is a question that can only be answered by examining the imperialist histories of US language, literacy, and education policies, which at most every turn work to exclude and racialize the "nonwhite speaker-writer, whether African American, Asian American, Latino American, or Native American" (33). Rather than questioning their implicit (or explicit) English-only policies, where "English" means "white middle-class English," schools and lawmakers typically adopt a deficit and white language supremacist-centered scarcity mindset where, Hoang argues, the language and literacy education of nonwhite, non-middle-class students is seen as "compensatory" and requiring of white folks to "sacrific[e] resources" they believe are for their engagement exclusively (44).[4] Finally, in her

[4] Later in this chapter I will discuss more thoroughly how writing and literacy scholars have shown the ways education is imagined and structured as "white property" in the US.

chapter "Race, Class(es), Gender, and Age," Elaine Richardson reminds us through her analysis and summary of the results of a 1996-1998 survey of secondary and postsecondary English teachers conducted by CCCC with NCTE, that "our theories and practices must keep pace with the diversity in our classrooms, with research, and with social change" (63).

Despite this rich research and advocacy, and the critical anti-racist interventions into writing pedagogy that many scholars have made, monolingual ideologies and the developmental writing course continue to persist, and they do so quite tangibly through the everyday formative and summative assessment praxes – commenting, conferencing, grading, and more – that shape how students see and develop their writing, reading, listening, and speaking practices. How has the field been "keeping pace," then, and how has it continued to reproduce the inequities it has attempted to address through decades of research?

I focus my inquiry into the ways writing teachers understand and address the harms caused by classroom assessment, where writing teachers make everyday choices to resist or reinforce white language supremacy through their assessment praxis.[5] While the phrase "white language supremacy" points us directly to language, scholars in our field tell us that it encompasses much more, including "orientation" to the world, ways of approaching and making arguments, and ways of relating to others (CCCC Statement). What is privileged, then, is

[5] The CCCC Statement on White Language Supremacy (WLS) defines WLS in the following way: "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" (CCCC Statement).

not “language” only in its most narrow definition but also ideology and ways of composing our thoughts, arguments, and identities on the page. How do basic writing teachers who self-identify as committed to social justice in assessment, then, act against this? What practices do they enact? How do they navigate departmental and institutional constraints? I build my study around the following research questions:

- How do developmental writing teachers across the US, in both two and four year public institutions, define socially just writing assessment?
- How are these teachers enacting socially just writing assessment in their classrooms; what practices do they engage in or not, and why?
- What resources do these teachers have/consider when enacting socially just writing assessment, and what obstacles do these teachers face?

When I say classroom assessment, I mean the four main acts of judging that Inoue cites from Stephen Tchudi: “response,” “assessment,” “evaluation,” and “grading” (Tchudi qtd. in Inoue, *Antiracist* 15). In my survey, I do not define "assessment," but I do directly invite participants to reflect on a range of formative and summative practices, including giving and gathering feedback, grading, late work policies, revise and resubmit policies, and more. A discussion of how participants took up "assessment" will come in following chapters, as will a breakdown of my survey design and administration process.

When I say "developmental writing," I mean a writing course that is required, or strongly encouraged to be taken, in addition to a "first-year writing" course. This course can take many forms, but its distinguishing factor is that it is additional (as in, an additional stand-alone course or additional time tacked onto) and typically offers preparation for or additional support in first-

year writing. It may or may not be credit-bearing, but as stated above, students typically enroll in the course after the determination that they "need" "extra" preparation.[6] As will be discussed, “basic writing” is a course with contemporary roots in the CUNY Open Admissions Era and the scholarship of Mina Shaughnessy, and enrollment in its more punitive versions (i.e., non-credit bearing) is known to be a negative indicator of students’ persistence through two and four year institutions (Bailey et al.; Perin and Holschuh).

Considerable scholarship has been published in the last ten years on socially just writing assessment. “Social justice,” too, is a broad term that is taken up in a variety of scholarly and professional fields. What I propose to contribute to the conversation about socially just writing assessment in colleges and universities is 1) a specific focus on developmental writing, 2) a specific focus on teachers’ everyday assessment activities, 3) an understanding of the relationship between recent scholarly inquiry and everyday teacher practice, and 4) an understanding of the contours of socially just writing assessment, both its definitions and its practices, across geographic regions in the US.

Through surveys of and interviews with basic writing teachers, I use both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate these definitional contours. Gathering quantitative and qualitative data on who is doing what practices, where, and why, builds on important scholarship such as Genevieve García de Müeller and Iris Ruiz’s “Race, Silence, and Writing Program Administration: A Qualitative Study of US College Writing Programs.” Here, García de Müeller and Ruiz analyze survey data by key demographics to show inequity not only in

[6] The distinction between credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing is important in many material ways including but not limited to students’ time and persistence to degree. Study participants were able to indicate whether the course they teach is credit bearing or not, and my analysis includes this variable.

students' experiences of writing assessment but in who is taking up the work of socially just assessment. For example, García de Müeller and Ruiz's data show us that teachers of color are more likely to take up the work than white teachers. A focus on the classroom follows Stephanie West-Puckett's argument that administrative conference tables and placement exam reading rooms are not the only sites where teacher-scholars are making significant decisions around writing assessment. Rather, West-Puckett argues, the classroom is a "primary" assessment space in which "students and teachers can and do actively negotiate writing assessment discourses, histories, values, and their own biases" (128). My inquiry will ideally lead to a richer understanding of how current developmental writing teachers are defining and practicing socially just assessment in their everyday classroom practices, and, importantly, of differences across institution type, university affiliation, and teacher identity. A rich understanding of these points can perhaps inform writing program policies, though I am more hopeful that my work, when translated to a more accessible format (e.g., conference presentation or workshop) might inform organizing efforts among teachers who are working toward changing their institution's unjust grading and assessment policies.

What is "social justice," and why socially just writing assessment?

My study of how socially just writing assessment does and does not happen in the developmental writing course begins with an understanding that the University as an institution invests in and upholds structures that exclude and harm racially and linguistically minoritized students. I then ask how individual writing teachers work to resist this harm through their assessment praxis. It is difficult to do this work from within an unjust institution, as many composition and writing studies scholars have shown (e.g., García de Müeller and Ruiz;

Perryman-Clark). In *A Third University is Possible*, educator-activist la paperson describes how the University acts as both the "mechanism" and "motives" of colonization (5). Formal schooling, paperson says, enacts racist, anti-Black, and anti-Indigenous policies not by mistake but because it was built to function this way through the accumulation of land and capital, and through relationship-building with the military and the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC). Consider my graduate studies institution, the University of Massachusetts Amherst's, budget priorities. Thirty-six percent ($6,861,675) of the institution's fiscal year 2020 Student Affairs budget is allocated to the campus police department, while less than half that dollar amount ($3,353,504) is allocated to "Wellness," an umbrella under which several vital campus resources fall: Disability Services, University Health Services, Campus Recreation, and the Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (Cousins et al.). This, and other intellectual and financial investments (e.g., the University's partnership with Raytheon, or its relationship with Turnitin) continue to exacerbate unjust learning conditions for nonwhite and non-middle-class students.[7]

In this way, the University is not distantly tied to or affiliated with oppressive whiteness. It *does* settler colonialism, continues to exist on and profit off unceded Indigenous lands, and is structured through and perpetuates white and western logics. This distinction, articulated for us by scholars such as la paperson, is crucial, as it does not forgive the University or cast it as a passive actor. The University itself enacts and reproduces harms both historical and present, and to un-settle or redress these harms, the University must take accountability and act toward justice.

[7] Turnitin is an automated software designed to check for plagiarism; in higher education, it is typically used by instructors to determine the originality of student writing.

As individual teachers, our classroom teaching and assessment practices are inseparable from this history and context. I see social justice theories, particularly those informed by anti-racist approaches, as ways into recognizing the University context as oppressive, and of providing strategies for acting on and organizing around racial and linguistic discrimination in writing assessment. If we believe the classroom and University are spaces through which, as paperson argues, "whiteness emerges," and if we want to interrupt and undo this emergence, then as composition and literacy studies scholars we should be concerned with how our assessment praxes may be upholding white settler logics (10). While I do not mean to suggest that just or equitable writing assessment will somehow "fix" the University (it will not), I believe it is an important intervention into student-writers' everyday learning conditions.

The beginnings of my understanding of socially just assessment are through Mya Poe, Asao Inoue, and Norbert Elliot's work in their edited collection, *Writing Assessment, Social Justice, and the Advancement of Opportunity*. Here, they and their colleagues introduce a research program that pursues the following argument: “Writing assessment best serves students when justice is taken as the ultimate aim; once adopted that aim advances assessment as a principled way to create individual opportunity through identification of opportunity structures” (Poe et al. 5). The scholarship in this collection grows from the editors’ earlier works (Elliot’s “A Theory of Ethics...,” Inoue’s “Grading Contracts: Assessing Their Effectiveness...,” and Poe, Elliot, Cogan Jr., and Nurudeen Jr.’s “Civil Rights and Writing Assessment...”) as well as the work of scholars (e.g., Behm and Miller; Cushman; Green Jr.; Ketai; Kynard; Perryman-Clark) who argue that writing programs, writing teachers, and higher education institutions either implicitly or explicitly forward writing assessment practices that center white, middle-class

linguistic and discursive norms, which then affects the material, emotional, spiritual, and academic experiences of students of color, Black students, Indigenous students, working-class students, and others. Asao Inoue, for example, argues that normative assessments, like the institutions within which they are practiced, represent "a White racial *habitus*, steeped in white language bias" (Inoue, "How" 11). In his book, *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies,* Inoue defines "race" and "racial habitus" in the following way:

> ...One way one might think of race as a set of structuring structures, some marked on the body, some in language practices, some in the ways we interact or work, write, and read, some in the way we behave or dress, some in the processes and differential opportunities we have to live where we do (or get to live where we can), or where we hang out, work, go to school, etc. Thus, racial habitus places an emphasis on the continual (re)construction of race as structures, as sets of dispositions that are discursive, material, and performative in nature. (43)

Writing assessment ecologies tend to maintain a white racial habitus – ways of doing, thinking, and being whiteness – because these assessments, as Inoue says, "come from our society, our academic disciplines, and educational institutions, which have been organized to keep whites and whiteness dominant" (*Antiracist* 54). To push against this white racial habitus, teachers must first acknowledge it, and then actively work against it. This is what my study explores: How teachers acknowledge and actively fight against the structures that subordinate their students who are "less attached" to the discourse of power (Watson and Shapiro).

A social justice lens, as described by Poe et al., should guide the development and administration of both classroom and large-scale writing assessment methods, and should

examine not just discrete moments or artifacts of assessment (e.g., the instrument, the event, the rubric) but the entire assessment technology (*Writing Assessment* 4).[8] Drawing on social justice theory, especially the work of Iris Marion Young, and on critical race, queer, decolonial, and translingual theories, socially just assessment scholarship seeks to expose how traditional assessment philosophies and practices "rationaliz[e] colonial injustices…[and] caus[e] harm to some students on campus" (Gomes 203). Interventions into this injustice may look like measuring the disparate impact of standardized, large scale, and high stakes writing assessments (Poe et al. "The Legal"), or using qualitative methods such as interview, validity argument, and focus group (West-Puckett) to interrogate assessments' effects in smaller, local spaces such as writing programs, writing centers, and writing classrooms. It might also include contributing historiographic scholarship (Hammond) that allows contemporary composition and writing assessment scholars, and their colleagues across the curriculum, to better understand how racist, classist, monolinguist, and xenophobic values have become normalized in many everyday assessment theories and practices.

I am particularly interested in where social justice or related approaches meet or break with teachers' everyday practices. In other words, even if teachers invite students' diverse discursive and linguistic into the classroom as scholarship has argued they should (e.g., Herrington and Curtis; Mutnick; Sternglass), teachers' assessment practices, even with the best

---

[8] In *Race and Writing Assessment*, Inoue and Poe define "assessment technology" as "the entire system, environment, and even agents that make up what most call a writing assessment," wherein "system" refers to the assessment process from start to finish (identifying philosophy, applying philosophy through design, implementing assessment, evaluating assessment artifacts, negotiating budget, corresponding with institutional stakeholders, etc.) (3). In my dissertation project, I will use this term except when writing about one specific "part" of this technology.

intentions, may not necessarily recognize or value these resources. Instead, as Inoue powerfully argues in his 2019 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Keynote, "How Do We Language So People Stop Killing Each Other, or What Do We Do About White Language Supremacy?", students' rich discursive philosophies and practices often end up becoming "useless coins in the bustling market of [teachers'] classrooms" as teachers continue to informally "include" students in their pedagogies while more formally excluding them through feedback and grading practices that, to continue the metaphor, accept only one type of currency ("How" 23). My study asks how teachers resist this slip or breakdown between their pedagogy, or teaching philosophy, and how they practice formative and summative assessments.

Carmen Kynard specifically addresses the ways anti-Blackness asserts itself through standard writing assessment. In her 2008 article, "Writing while Black: The Colour Line, Black Discourses, and Assessment in the Institutionalization of Writing Instruction," Kynard addresses the dismissal of Black discursive traditions in a college composition course, and, more broadly, the negative consequences of writing assessment on working-class students and students of color. Here, she argues that revising "pedagogies, research-based writing instructional methods, effective writing program administration, or professional policy/position statement-making" is not enough to shift the "ideological issue[s] endemic" to composition studies, to the university, and to US educational practice (Kynard 11). Kynard insists that to construct an assessment process that is more just, the discipline must "imagine an altogether new goal and vision" – one, for example, that is focused on "un-knowing" what instructors and institutions

have been taught to think and feel about the histories, experiences, and discursive practices of student-writers who are not white or middle class (22).

Writing directly about writing teachers' and Writing Program Administrators' (WPA) experiences with social and racial justice work in writing programs, Staci M. Perryman-Clark reflects on how teachers’ racial and linguistic identities affect both their assessment of student writing and their interactions with fellow WPAs. Specifically, she critiques the resistance she met as a multilingual woman WPA of color from monolingual white teachers and graduate students as she and her department launched an intensive composition section meant to give a second opportunity to students about to fail their current composition course. Perryman-Clark narrates the reluctance of teachers to refer students to the section despite their failing or near-failing grades. Concurrently, she tells us, some teachers over-referred English Language Learners (ELL) students, seeing the program as a “way to relieve them of the burden of having to provide additional support for second language writers” (209). Writing on the “great risks” that doing social justice work poses for the careers of WPAs of color, Perryman-Clark highlights the urgency with which all members of an English or Writing Program, not just a select few, must approach questions of opportunity and equity (209). Many of the basic writing teachers I surveyed and interview are, I believe, doing this complicated, frustrating, and labor-intensive work of recognizing the ways their assessment practices might be reinforcing or reproducing white language supremacy. Some recognize that they cannot rely on their university or department to be leaders in the turn toward socially just writing assessment. Rather, they are forming their own collaborative networks, what Robin D.G. Kelley terms "alternative academic spaces," to nurture, design, test, and talk through their assessment work (Kelley). Scholars such

as Inoue, Kynard, and Perryman-Clark lead my thinking on how socially just writing assessment does or does not work in practice. They show the exigence of a focus on assessment, and bring important critiques to the field, while maintaining that more just learning environments are possible when we radically reconsider how we engage and assess our students' literacies.

However, my enthusiasm for the energy that "social justice" as an approach or framework brings to writing assessment specifically and the University more generally is tempered with caution. The summer 2020 uprisings against police and anti-black violence following the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer brought incredible organizing and movement building toward racial justice, led mainly by women of color, to the forefront. However, the uprisings also brought quite a bit of “shallow participation” (Tuck 11) and co-opting of the language and work of social movements. Many individuals and institutions scrambled to adopt initiatives named as "social justice," "diversity," "equity," and "inclusion" with no real intention of unsettling the ways "whiteness emerges" from their behavior, politics, and structures. Abolitionist educator, writer, and activist Bettina Love commented on this frenzied co-optation after reading an unnamed article that stated "81% of educators consider themselves anti-racist": "These terms and ideas mean nothing," Love tweets, "Just know that I am very aware of the watering down and the whitening of #Abolitionistteaching" (@BLoveSoulPower). As many of us who are working in education and toward abolitionist ideologies would likely agree, the idea that 81% of educators are “anti-racist” is nearly laughable. Schools and educators may have learned new words, but have they changed their actions? Similarly, comedian Yassir Lester critiqued the outsized, nervous reactions of companies and corporations wringing their hands about bottom lines by tweeting a joke about

Jersey Mike's renaming a grinder to honor the Black Lives Matter movement. Of course, the popular sandwich chain had not actually done this. However, as the tweet went viral, it became clear that many were not sure whether it was a joke. Lester responded, "How bad off are we that we though[t] a corporation would rename a sandwich, offensively, as a statement of solidarity?...[Corporations] promised money to 'the community' yet we have no idea where any of it is going" (Thompson).

I share a feeling of what Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang term "warm ambivalence" toward social justice, knowing it is a term so broadly used it can become meaningless (3). Tuck and Yang ask those of us working toward justice in the University to attune ourselves to recognizing haphazard, disingenuous, and/or directionless engagements with "social justice." They write that they are "agnostic about the institutionalization of social justice education" that has happened as universities have adopted the term to revise their brand but not their structures, practices, policies, or financial relationships (5). This is what Enzo Rossi and Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò call "wokewashing," or a "focus on visible diversity as a broadly aesthetic quality" (Rossi and Táíwò). While they do not doubt that organizations should work to include non-white folks in their structures, they challenge the idea that inclusion or representation alone works to fundamentally change the white supremacist logics of an organization's structure.

Rinaldo Walcott similarly critiques the hope that inclusion in a racist and anti-Black structure will lead to liberatory futures:

> [D]iversity, equity, anti-racism, and social justice as terms no longer make sense to me as avenues for Black liberation or any kind of liberation for that matter. Such terms obscure the varied and multiple conditions that have come to frame our livability in

> profoundly different ways. But importantly, such terms seem to suggest that justice can be had in a structure and system that is only possible as long as injustice is present, given that it is founded in injustice. (94)

Walcott is not writing about the first-year or basic writing classroom. Still, his critique is immensely relevant to my thinking about how justice is limited in spaces that are not built for it, and what that means to me as someone who wants to study and teach writing and literacies, and to join conversations about radical assessment work. Walcott challenges us to "imagine" (98) something that is not the current university structure, something that puts forth an altogether different reality of being, learning, and liberatory doing. I am not sure if Walcott would think undoing traditional assessment, even in radical ways, is enough. This is a thought I am sitting with as I work on my dissertation and, importantly, as a writing teacher and higher education professional myself.

In their edited collection, Poe, Inoue, and Elliot articulate an understanding of social justice as a productively "expansive" approach – one that allows writing teachers to think about and address broad and intersecting inequities (*Writing Assessment* 14). In writing this, they say provocatively that they intend to "move beyond anti-racist approaches" (*Writing Assessment* 14). While we can be sure that Poe and Inoue in particular have published foundational, distinctive scholarship on racial inequity in writing assessment, they raise the question of how race and racism may be elided in less careful scholarship that claims to address social justice. I am wondering if the field is ready to "move beyond" anti-racist approaches when it still has quite a bit of work to do in terms of redressing the historical and ongoing harms that the

writing course has brought to Black and Indigenous students and students of color – and when the University itself, as discussed above, is entrenched in its settler colonial agenda.

Bringing this critique to bear, Genevieve García de Müeller and Iris Ruiz build a compelling examination of composition studies' tendency to metaphorize race, racism, and racialized phenomena (21). García de Müeller and Ruiz draw on Jennifer Clary-Lemon's discourse analysis of post-1990 journal articles in *College Composition and Communication* (*CCC*) and *College English* (*CE*) to argue that scholars often use "vague" terms such as "social justice," "diversity," and "inclusion" when "alluding to racialized phenomena," thereby avoiding robust conversation on college writing pedagogies' and assessments' historic dismissal of the discourses and experiences of Black and Indigenous students and students of color (21). The failure to precisely name these phenomena results in what García de Müeller and Ruiz call a "lo[ss of] definition" in interventions that might otherwise lead to more equitable educational conditions for Black and Indigenous students and students of color (21). This "metonymic slide" shows, García de Müeller and Ruiz tell us, a persistent discomfort in composition studies scholarship with direct discussions about race (20).

García de Müeller and Ruiz show us that there remains a hesitancy in composition studies to identify how everyday pedagogy and assessment practices may harm Black and Indigenous students and students of color. Similarly, Catherine Prendergast's work looks at the way race in composition studies tends to be "subsumed" into "the trope of the generalized, marginalized 'other'" (36). When this happens, terms such as "culture" or "cultural differences" serve as more opaque ways for scholars to describe what is more precisely "race" or "racial difference" (Prendergast 48). Citing and building on the work of Prendergast, Steve Lamos, and

others, García de Müeller and Ruiz's data, drawn from a survey of WPAs working in the US, show that these cumulative actions of avoidance or resistance in scholarly work trickles down, unsurprisingly, into administrative and classroom work, and to students' experiences in the writing classroom. At the center of García de Müeller and Ruiz's work is their contention that it is impossible to intervene in racist writing pedagogies and assessments if those attempting to intervene are not willing to directly address race in their thinking (e.g., working with critical race, social justice, or anti-racist pedagogy theories), practice (e.g., disaggregating data by race/ethnicity, using qualitative methods to interrogate unequal effects, practicing teacher self-reflection), or theoretical framework (e.g., adopting an anti-racist or social justice framework).

Ultimately, in my own research, I tentatively understand socially just assessment as an anti-racist project. I understand *anti-racist project* through Michael Omi and Howard Winant's definition, which describes such projects as "those that undo or resist structures of domination based on racial significations and identities" (129). Anti-racist projects would likely be part of a social justice agenda, though movements fighting for radical change "often address issues that are not explicitly framed in racial terms: rape crisis centers, battered women's shelters, tenant's rights groups, access to quality education, immigrant's rights…" but disproportionately affect Black and Indigenous folks, folks of color, and working-class folks (Omi and Winant 261). I am aware that capacious views of social justice, wherein the term lives too firmly in the theoretical, can be difficult to operationalize as the material conditions and concerns of the diverse populations addressed are not always shared. This is one of the goals of my project – to ask how teachers are operationalizing their commitments to social justice in writing assessment. In the next sections, I will discuss social justice perspectives on validity and fairness, writing

placement assessment, and the basic writing course. It is my hope that this discussion will provide context for the urgency of studying the basic writing classroom, and better elucidate how conversations about basic writing are always linked to conversations about assessment.

Social justice perspectives on validity and fairness

A major way writing assessment scholars have defined fairness is through validity arguments. This is particularly true of standardized large-scale assessments (Moss), though some scholars have also written about validity in classroom assessment (West-Puckett). Validity arguments are related to socially just assessment in that they have, especially since the 1960s, looked to identify and ameliorate the unequal and unintended social consequences of assessment. To have a rich understanding of what just or equitable writing assessment may mean now, it is important to have a sense of the history of writing assessment scholarship, particularly its attachment to positivism and empiricism, and its relationship with educational measurement scholarship. Currently, writing assessment scholars continue to re-conceptualize validity to further their research in socially just writing assessment (Cushman).

Briefly, validity refers to whether an assessment measures what it proposes to measure, and its related concept, reliability, refers to whether the assessment instrument can be reproduced with similar results among different populations (e.g., students of different gender, racial, and/or class identities). Roger Cherry and Paul Meyer describe the theoretical constructs as follows: “In order for a test to be a valid measure of a trait such as writing ability, it must be both reliable and valid: It must yield consistent results, and it must actually measure writing ability” (30). In composition studies we are particularly interested in the question of whether, or how, an assessment measures writing facility and growth because the answer depends on

what we believe “able” or “good” writing is, which in turn has implications for writing curriculum, learning outcomes, and Writing Program priorities (O’Neill et al. 2).

Michael Williamson traces the definition of validity to Edward Cureton’s 1951 interpretation, published in the first edition of the now foundational *Educational Measurement*: “‘The essential question of test validity is how well a test does the job it is employed to do. The same test may be used for several different purposes, and its validity may be high for one, moderate for another, and low for a third’” (Cureton qtd. in Williamson 438). Similarly, Pamela Moss tells us that as early as the 1960s, Samuel Messick was publishing “pioneering” work that “expanded the definition of validity to include consideration of social consequences” (84).[9] In his 1980 article, “Test Validity and the Ethics of Assessment,” Messick argues, “Justification of test use by an appeal to empirical validity is not enough; the potential social consequences of the testing should also be appraised, not only in terms of what it might entail directly as costs and benefits but also in terms of what it makes more likely as possible side effects” (1012).

In a helpful review of literature, Williamson goes on to describe two distinct interpretations of validity: conceptual inquiry or argument (most closely associated with researchers in the humanities) and statistical procedure or measurement (most closely associated with researchers in the social sciences). The former is most applicable to our field and can certainly be applied to the sort of inquiry we might do in our own classrooms over the course of a few semesters to reflect on our own practices – indeed, some of my study's

[9] Messick is a psychologist employed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), not a composition and literacy studies researcher or teacher. This is yet another distinction composition studies scholars must navigate: testing or assessment expert “versus” composition and literacy studies expert. This tension often affects the decisions Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) and writing instructors make (Estrem et al.; Gallagher; Mutnick).

participants describe doing this sort of work. We might think, too, of the ways we inquire into the design of our rubrics, and the decisions we make as we implement them (i.e., how do we decide what our course objectives are, and whether a student has met them).

The distinctions between validity as concept and as procedure, and between an empiricism that is purely quantitative and one that includes the qualitative, are important as they foreground the exigency of work such as Poe et al.'s (2014) and Elliot's (2016). These scholars draw on social justice theories (conceptual framework), to inform quantitative inquiry such as disaggregation of data by race (mathematical procedure), to determine a test's validity or fairness. Stephanie West-Puckett brings another approach to the conversation with her use of Jeff Perry's Critical Validity Inquiry (CVI) to assess the equity of her classroom writing assessment practice. West-Puckett describes CVI as an argument-based approach to validity which draws on depth hermeneutics as used in critical discourse analysis to "remi[x] the discourses of educational measurement with our critical understandings of how power operates" (134).[10] That is, the "C" in CVI signals the application of a critical theoretical frame, such as Marxist feminist, decolonial, or critical race theories, to an interpretation of the consequences of a particular assessment technology. To "trace out ways particular groups have been systematically disadvantaged by institutions of power," CVI calls for multiple interpretations of assessment conditions and results, perhaps through more than one theoretical lens (West-Puckett 135).

[10] West-Puckett defines depth hermeneutics as "the practice of using multiple lenses to vision and revision evidence derived from assessment instruments in order to interpret their impact" (134).

Research programs anchored in validity inquiry have, then, a crucial history in writing assessment scholarship as teachers-scholars seek to learn more about how traditional standard assessment practices unequally affect Black and Indigenous students and students of color. Roberta Camp's 1993 synthesis of these concerns is worth quoting at length:

> The investigation of validity is seen as including far more than traditional content validity studies, which were essentially examinations of the coverage of the subject represented by the test's content, and also as more than the comparison of performances within and across tests.... Our concerns about the possible deleterious effects of conventional writing assessment formats on students outside the mainstream of academic culture no longer appear peripheral; they are central to validity…. (116)

While fairness might be the cornerstone of validity, scholars have concluded that there is no one way to define "fair." In fact, writing assessment scholars continue to debate fairness as a concept. Norbert Elliot makes a major contribution to this discussion. In the *Journal of Writing Assessment* (*JWA*) special issue on ethics, Elliot proposes that fairness is "the identification of opportunity structures created through maximum construct representation," wherein "construct" is the range of activities and environments one might engage in when writing, for example, "composing environments (digital, print, and blurred), integrative language arts frameworks (writing, reading, speaking, and visualization), and rhetorical conceptualizations (discursive and nondiscursive practices)" (Elliot). Therefore, with "maximum construct representation," an assessment represents, or measures, the maximum amount of these activities or environments, ensuring a capacious understanding of writing, and a diverse range of opportunities to succeed. Elliot goes on to write, "Constraint of the writing construct is to be

tolerated only to the extent to which benefits are realized for the least advantaged" (Elliot). In identifying the "least advantaged," Elliot departs from John Rawls, whose work influences his, to say there "must not be fixed categories for the least advantaged lest agency be denied" (Elliot). (Rawls believed, Elliot tells us, that class identity was ultimately what determined one's opportunities to succeed.) Rather, Elliot calls for the disaggregation of scores by "sex assignment at birth, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), special programs enrollment ... and health perceptions," explaining how students who identify in any of the above ways experience disparate impact discrimination through assessments that fail to consider robust opportunities for success (Elliot).

Elliot's theory echoes what much of the scholarship discussed here has argued: "Social forces destroy opportunity structures," or, put another way, destroy access to resources, to public and private spaces, to safety and support, and to equitable learning conditions (Elliot). Validity, according to Elliot, should not then determine fairness; rather, ensuring an assessment's fairness first should be foremost to determining its validity. In my own thinking, I have trouble with how "being fair" or "fairness" appears often as a word used to critique policies, practices, and pedagogies created to support those who have been historically underrepresented and marginalized in traditional educational settings in the US. "It wouldn't be fair" seems to be a common argument among those writing teachers who refuse to enact non-traditional or socially just assessment strategies – e.g., "it wouldn't be fair" to let students revise and resubmit an assignment, to provide adjusted timelines for an assignment, to allow for late work, to grade holistically, to not penalize students for "errors," etc. "Fairness," then, can be exacted as a way to evade tough conversations about how Black and Indigenous

students, students of color, working class students, disabled students, and others, continue to experience colleges and universities differently than their white, middle class, able-bodied peers – as in, "it wouldn't be fair" to provide different support to these students (echoing arguments on education as white property). Perhaps the most obvious and timely example of this is the name of the conservative group that brought (and won) the 2023 lawsuit against the use of race-conscious admissions in colleges and universities in the US: Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) (Totenberg). In other words, I hold the same ambivalence about "fairness" as I do "social justice," while recognizing that it is a crucial concept used by some writing assessment scholars, particularly those engaging in quantitative studies, to understand differential impact.

As a classroom teacher committed to dismantling structures, policies, and procedures that uphold white supremacy, I can lose interest in discussing what "validity" means or does not mean – ultimately, I am confident that it is one of those structures through which harm iterates and I am not sure why we need to work with or through the term so painstakingly. Ellen Cushman perhaps shows us why by presenting us with the question of whether or not validity should be recognized at all. Beginning from the position that traditional notions of validity inherently disadvantage those who are not white, middle class, standard English speakers, Cushman advocates a theory and practice of validity in which validity is not "the baseline against which all Others are tested and their knowledges and languages are deemed deficit to," but rather a measure that "identif[ies] understandings in and on the terms of the people who experience them" (Cushman). Explaining the significance of this redefinition, Mathew Gomes observes that, by applying Cushman's decolonial framework to one's program or classroom

assessment practices, one may find that “normalized and validated academic processes wind up rationalizing colonial injustices, thus causing harm to some students on campus” (203). Thus, Cushman draws our attention to the need to devote assessment resources to “better understand[ing] the knowledges and means of expression of the least advantaged” (Cushman).

What might a rubric that "dwells in the borders," as Cushman writes, look like (Cushman)? How are developmental writing teachers resisting white Eurocentric models of assessment? Again, it is likely not typical for teachers to engage "validity inquiry" in their everyday assessment praxis. However, teachers are engaging in their own definitional work with terms such as "fairness," and reflecting on the learning objectives, outcomes, or goals of their course.

Inequity and writing placement assessment

Crucial to redressing the inequities experienced by racially and linguistically minoritized student-writers is examining the ways writing placement assessment reproduces monolingual ideologies. As a field, composition studies long ago recognized the unequal effects of large-scale writing assessment such as placement assessment on students of diverse social groups, specifically students of color. The 1995 NCTE/CCCC position statement reads, “standardized tests, usually developed by large testing organizations, tend to be for accountability purposes, and when used to make statements about student learning, misrepresent disproportionately the skills and abilities of students of color” (“Writing Assessment” 433). The statement goes on: “This imbalance tends to decrease when tests are directly related to specific contexts and purposes, in contrast to tests that purport to differentiate between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ writing in a general sense” (“Writing Assessment” 433). High stakes standardized tests (e.g., the SAT or

mandated state-specific tests) are not the same as postsecondary writing placement exams. However, I believe the NCTE/CCCC position statement lends important insight into the effects of writing placement assessment since those assessments are, generally, large-scale (i.e., administered to hundreds or thousands of student-writers at a time), scored by a single standard, often scored by a machine, often decontextualized and timed, and, depending on the exam, may have been developed by a "large testing organization" such as ACCUPLACER. Also, some colleges and universities use SAT or ACT scores to place students into writing courses, though this likely has changed as more schools are continuing to adopt test optional policies (Elias). What is particularly striking to me is that 25 years after this position statement, large-scale exams, vended tests developed outside institutions such as ACCUPLACER, and single timed writing samples are still used to place students. In this section, I will discuss a more nuanced example of placement, Directed Self Placement (DSP), as more writing teachers and WPAs advocate for its implementation.

DSP, first developed by Daniel Royer and Roger Gilles, is a reaction to teachers', students', and administrators' "frustration" with the placement assessment method at their institution – particularly with the institution's use of timed writing and ACT scores ("An Attitude" 59). DSP presents a student-centered approach to placement assessment in which students work with trained advisors to decide which first-year writing course to take. Advisors work with a series of questions that guide students' decisions (e.g., "In high school, I wrote several essays per year") ("An Attitude" 56). For Royer and Gilles, with DSP, students *in general* have more agency to determine their educational experiences. In their analyses, Royer and Gilles do not consider that "agency" is not experienced equally across race, gender, class, and

other social identities. In fact, in an edited collection introducing studies on DSP, just one of the 11 chapters includes an analysis of differences among social groups.

Nearly 20 years later, Tanita Saenkhum takes up Royer and Gilles' call with a particular interest in the role of DSP in the placement of multilingual writers in her book, *Decisions, Agency, and Advising: Key Issues in the Placement of Multilingual Writers into First-Year Composition Courses*. Invested in respecting and building students' agency, and understanding that students who identify as ELL, multilingual, and/or international are often evaluated in formal educational spaces through a deficit model, Saenkhum argues that the ideal placement assessment technology is that in which: students have as much information as possible about an institution's available writing courses, there are several available writing courses, and students are able to negotiate their placement by means of self-evaluation and reflective conversations with advisors. Saenkhum focuses her inquiry on a specific population of students which she defines as any domestic or international student who is a "non-native English speaker." She does so with the knowledge that DSP will work differently for these students than for those who identify as monolingual speakers of an English language variety. Multilingual and ELL students are often treated as "other" in educational spaces such as the college composition classroom which, as Paul Kei Matsuda argues, assumes a "homogeneity" among students' discursive practices (Matsuda). Matsuda explains that "the dominant discourse of U.S. college composition not only has accepted English Only as an ideal but it already assumes the state of English-only, in which students are native English speakers by default" (637). Matsuda wrote this in 2006, nearly 20 years ago, and scholar-activists in our field are still having to contend with those who do not see or believe that the English or writing classroom is an exclusionary

place for multilingual writers and writers of color – in other words, those who do not see or wish to see the linkages between white supremacist logics, standard language, and formal schooling.

While Saenkhum does not focus on students' racial or ethnic identities, we understand from other studies that the already intricate assessment experiences of Saenkhum's participants become even more complex when students' linguistic and discursive practices are racialized. As Saenkhum shows, placement exams that do not consider the rhetorical and social contexts within which multilingual and ELL students compose are likely to place students in "lower" courses which are not always credit bearing and usually required in addition to another composition course. Saenkhum tells us not only that DSP can be a more equitable placement technology, but that the *most* just iterations of DSP acknowledge the unique contributions of ELL and multilingual students, and work with students to talk about the various outcomes of their placement in particular courses.

Complementing Saenkhum's revision of traditional DSP processes, Rachel Lewis Ketai puts a clear point on it when she asks: "Does DSP help … address inequities in composition course placement or simply rearrang[e] them" (142)? Ketai tells us that DSP relies in part on a color-blind definition of "readiness for college," which, like "preparedness," is a term that is defined more by institutions' economic and social policies (Soliday) than by knowledge of what makes successful writing (145). What is "readiness"? What is "preparedness"? We have seen that these terms are not neutral – there are many ways to get ready and be prepared, but writing assessments, perhaps including DSP, typically measure just one. Ketai tells us that DSP can be particularly dangerous because it implies that students who struggle to complete

composition courses, or place themselves into a lower-level course, do so because they do not work hard enough or are not "good" enough writers (146-150). In reality, Ketai says, students' struggles are inextricably tied to the "discriminatory social system that defines and distributes literacy unequally across racial, socioeconomic, and educational lines" (147-148). To improve DSP guiding questions/statements, Ketai says, one might provide more context. For example, rather than the statement "In high school, I did not do much writing," Ketai suggests the revision, "My high school did not frequently assign writing that: required me to analyze complex texts; used quotes from multiple sources; was 5 pages or longer" (153). This accounts for structural differences among schools and school systems, as well as differences in writing assignments and genres, without assigning a value judgment to the student or their ability or desire to write.

Ketai's analysis provides a framework for understanding why it is crucial to consider students' diverse identities and material conditions when evaluating the efficacy of a particular placement assessment method. This is what Marilyn Sternglass found, and urged the field to consider, more than 20 years ago in her foundational study of basic writers, *Time to Know Them.* Here, in a now well-cited passage, Sternglass denounced placement exams altogether, believing instead that teachers should carefully consider students' writing in the first week or two of class to then determine the kind(s) of instruction students' need (298). Sternglass argued that "the effects of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and ideology cannot be ignored in a complete examination of the literacy development of students" (9). This "complete examination" includes students' often antagonistic experiences with placement exams. As the field recognizes in its scholarship, though still struggles to enact in practice, "placement testing—even locally

developed models—may be poorly designed for culturally and linguistically diverse, first-generation students" (Poe et al., "An Admitted" 2). While my dissertation project focuses on classroom assessment, this dissonance between what we know is right as scholars, and what we decide to or are able to enact as practitioners, is at the heart of my inquiry. Therefore, to conclude this section, I will examine a study which powerfully brings together expertise in writing assessment, legal studies, and statistics to put forth a validity argument that is also a practical recommendation for universities that administer large-scale placement assessment.

In their article, "The Legal and the Local: Using Disparate Impact Analysis to Understand the Consequences of Writing Assessment," Poe, Elliot, John Aloysius Cogan Jr., and Tito G. Nurudeen Jr. present the results of an investigation into engaging the legal concept of disparate impact. They do so by following a process set forth by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the US Department of Education to validate one university's placement assessment practice. Poe et al. define disparate impact discrimination as "the unintended racial differences in outcomes resulting from facially neutral policies or practices that on the surface seem neutral" ("The Legal" 593). Different from disparate treatment, which "requires direct evidence of discriminatory *intent*" (my emphasis), disparate impact is concerned with discriminatory *consequences*: the consequences, for example, of a test which "appears neutral" but has discriminatory effects across a diverse group of test takers ("The Legal" 593). Poe is interested in outlining and arguing for disparate impact as a validation tool because she believes it will be particularly useful for writing programs engaged in self-study of their assessment practices. While there are limitations on the legal actions that can be taken against unintentional (as opposed to intentional) discrimination, the Department of Education's OCR is able to "address

disparate impact discrimination through its own investigations and administrative proceedings" ("The Legal" 596). The steps of the university's self-study, which is also a validation tool for the university's placement exam, are as followed, and as outlined in OCR investigations:

> Step 1: Do the assessment policies or practices result in an adverse impact on students of a particular race as compared with students of other races?
>
> Step 2: Are the assessment policies or practices necessary to meet an important educational goal?
>
> Step 3: Even in situations where a college or university can demonstrate that the assessment policies or practices are necessary to meet an important educational goal, are there comparably effective alternative policies or practices available that would meet the school's stated educational goal with less of a burden or adverse impact on the disproportionately affected racial group. (Poe et al., "The Legal" 599)?

Poe et al. advocate using either a test of statistical significance or a "four-fifths" analysis to determine if a particular group of students places into basic writing at a higher rate than other groups. Both processes take a quantitative approach to determining disparate impact: they each measure whether differences among groups are random or if they represent a pattern. Ideally, identifying such a pattern – and responding to the following two steps with empirical evidence – will help WPAs design a more equitable placement exam.

The possibilities of disparate impact analysis as a validation tool are vast, as one can engage this analysis for any group of students that might be unfairly impacted by an assessment practice. It is an analysis that is able to address a range of inequities, as long as one is able to disaggregate assessment scores by those relevant variables (e.g., race, gender, first-

generation status, Pell grant status). It is exciting, too, for its rigorously interdisciplinary approach to validity inquiry, wherein Poe et al. make a powerful mixed-methods argument for the unintended discrimination that leads to labeling students of color and working-class students as “unprepared” or “not yet ready” to be college writers (“The Legal”). However, it is important to acknowledge how intimately this process is tied to the settler-state's definitions of law, order, and justice. Similar to the concern I share with Walcott, paperson, Tuck, and others around the limited possibilities for bringing about justice in a fundamentally unjust University, I am concerned that leaning on a US government entity for guidance toward justice will not lead to just outcomes. As I have and will continue to discuss in future sections and chapters, this is where abolitionist writers, teachers, and scholars are able to guide us toward a thinking that is beyond the structures already in existence (e.g., the University, the US legal system) toward something different – for example, what paperson calls “a third university” (paperson).

Notably, in future work, Poe further interrogates the dependence of placement exam practices on a prepared/unprepared binary, issuing a call to institutions to see “an admitted student is a qualified student” (Poe et al., “An Admitted”). Disavowing placement exams altogether, Poe and her colleagues propose a “roadmap” to placement at two-year institutions which begins with a collaboration between admissions, enrollment, and advising to place students into college-credit courses based on “existing information” such as high school grades, SAT/ACT scores, writing samples, and information about students’ language use (“An Admitted” 3). Forgoing exams and non-credit bearing courses, this collaborative placement effort is followed up by rapid assessment to validate placement decisions (“An Admitted” 7). As the landscape and financial constraints of public colleges and universities, particularly community

colleges, change, it will be important to attend to how the developmental writing course is treated, and the ways writing placement exams evolve.

Inequity and basic writing classrooms

I approach my project with some skepticism about the basic or developmental writing course. If there is a problem with US colleges and universities generally measuring "preparedness" for "college" writing against white middle class linguistic and discursive practice, then it follows that there is a problem with the course(s) that are created to "serve" students who are by this measure "underprepared." All students are developing writers. So, who places into basic or developmental writing courses – what sets their writing apart from the writing of their peers who are "college level" writers? In this section, I will discuss (in)equity in the basic writing classroom, turning from the assessment processes that sort students to the more intimate and sustained spaces where students will be asked, paradoxically, to succeed in a subject they have been told is not yet for them, is new to them, or will be hard for them – and, the stakes are high, as failure risks loss of time or credits, and jeopardizes students' likelihood of persisting through college. This section focuses mainly on literacy studies scholarship that speaks to the ways so-called basic writers have been understood and assessed.

During the City University of New York's (CUNY) landmark Open Admissions (OA) policy, Mina Shaughnessy was teaching at City College of New York (CCNY), one of CUNY's senior campuses, and termed her writing courses "basic writing," a term that persists today, along with terms such as "remedial" and "developmental" (Soliday 63).[11] Shaughnessy's scholarship is now widely critiqued as apolitical and ahistorical, espousing what Min-Zhan Lu terms a "politics

[11] Instituted in 1969, stating anyone with a New York City high school diploma could enroll in any CUNY campus.

of linguistic innocence" (Lu 27). Through this lens, language is a "neutral vehicle of communication" to be mastered through repetition and assimilation (Lu 27). This stands in contrast with what scholars such as Haivan Hoang, Jamila Lyiscott, April Baker-Bell, Ellen Cushman, and others have said, which is that language is "twin skin" to identity, as Gloria Anzaldúa writes (59). Shaughnessy's view that students need to replace their home discourses with an academic discourse in order to be successful is problematic because it assumes there are places where, as Saeedi and Ricahrdson put it, it is not "appropriate" to be yourself – places, in this case the University, where you risk alienation and failure if you do not assimilate (Saeedi and Richardson 148).

Equally as important are the consequences of believing that replacing a "non-standard" linguistic or discursive practice with one that is "standard" will lead to success in the job force or society more broadly. Many arguments that reify the developmental writing course and/or pedagogies that advocate code-switching/meshing or reinforce standard English rely on this belief. Missy Watson calls it the "perpetual 'but'" wherein writing teachers feel forced – by pressure from colleagues and imagined or real readers such as potential employers or graduate school admissions committees – to reinforce the power and practice of Standard English (Watson "Engaging"). I agree with some of what Watson writes; for example, there are of course colleagues who take punitive approaches to teaching writing, and I understand the impulse to protect students from this punishment, particularly as it has such negative effects on students' wellbeing and academic success. I also acknowledge that I grew up with access to white middle class English as the language my parents spoke, and so my positionality is fraught when it comes to understanding the experiences of those who do not share that access.

However, I am more convinced by April Baker-Bell's argument that even standard English will not save students, particularly Black students subjected to anti-Blackness in their everyday experiences. In her book, *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy*, Baker-Bell writes powerfully on this. I quote Baker-Bell here at length:

> ... [C]ode-switching or White Mainstream English did not protect Michael Brown who said, "I don't have a gun! Stop shooting!" before he was gunned down by police officer Darren Wilson. I think about Eric Garner who repeated the words "I cannot breathe" 11 times before he died after he was put in a chokehold by New York police officer Daniel Pantaleo. The students' thinking about Trayvon Martin also reminds me of Renisha McBride who communicated in White Mainstream English when she said "I just need to go home" to Theodore Wafer before he shot and killed her when she knocked on his door for help after getting into a car accident. I think about John Crawford who said "It is not real!" to police officers about an unpackaged BB/pellet air rifle he picked up and was holding in a Walmart store before police officers shot and killed him. I also think about Atatiana Jefferson, Aiyana Stanley-Jones, Tamir Rice, and countless other Black children and adults who were victims of racial violence before they could utter a word. These instances are clear reminders that code-switching into White Mainstream English will not save Black people and cannot solve racial or linguistic injustice, and we cannot pretend that it will. (*Linguistic* 31)

Teachers selling the promise of success or survival, Baker-Bell tells us, are not thinking about what Black students lose in the process of accepting that their linguistic and discursive identities are not as good as the "white status quo" (*Linguistic* 30). They are also not thinking

about the realities of anti-Black violence. Speaking “standard” English will not address these violences and, in fact, mandating that students replicate this English only *perpetuates* these violences. Citing Flores and Rosa, Baker-Bell writes that teachers must be “honest” that “even if Black students choose to project a white middle class identity through language, it is nearly impossible for them to separate their language from their racial positioning in society” (*Linguistic* 31). When the stakes are so high, it is difficult to understand how teachers can make the choice, over and over again, to prioritize an unimaginative and socially constructed view of appropriateness over the lives of their students.

In the late 1970s, normative composition studies scholarship framed work like Shaughnessy’s (an early iteration of the “perpetual ‘but’” way of thinking) as advocating for students’ just access to learning at the postsecondary level. One could argue that her approach to classroom assessment brought more attention to low stakes, formative evaluation, and to the fact that “not all students improve in ways that translate so easily into numbers” (Shaughnessy 280). Her argument that all students are educable needed, unfortunately, to be heard by many of her colleagues who disparaged "open admissions students." Her writing and teaching were seen at the time as championing nontraditional college students’ right to learn.

However, misinformation circulates throughout Shaughnessy’s book. For example, Shaughnessy describes her work with basic writers as “frontier” mapping, though more recent scholarship shows that basic writers were not new to the US academy even in the 1970s (*Errors* 4). Mary Soliday tells us, for instance, that at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, most four-year higher education institutions offered preparatory coursework and schools, the latter of which were often housed in the same building as the university (31).

“Conditioning,” or time to make up previously failed coursework, was also an option at many institutions including those considered “elite” (Soliday 32). Kelly Ritter shows us, too, that remedial coursework existed not just at public universities but at Harvard and Yale in the 1920s, about 40 years prior to Shaughnessy’s teaching experiences at CCNY.

Though untrue, Shaughnessy’s “wild west” narrative persisted throughout the 20th century (Horner and Lu 17). Because basic writing programs, beginning in the late 1960s, served not only middle class white (mostly male) students at elite institutions but also "the poor and the folks of color ... in Harlem" at CCNY (Villanueva 98), arguments against these programs necessarily reflect ideas about who should have access to a college education (e.g., Lamos). In Shaughnessy’s time and beyond, terms such as “needy” become conflated with students’ racial and class identities, and with a vision of remediation as reflective of ill-educated youth and public universities’ perceived decline (Soliday 117). These visions of “remedial” college students as new and as needy are pervasive even beyond the academy, according to Mike Rose. In *Lives on the Boundary*, he describes the “fears of growing illiteracy and cultural demise” that marked the “back-to-basics” movement in English education (5). This movement sounds the “we’ve gone soft” on standards alarm, writes Rose; what US English and writing classrooms need, according to these alarmists, is “drills on parts of speech, grammar, rules of punctuation, spelling, usage” (5).

These deficit views of linguistic and discursive practice intersect, as Lamos and Prendergast tell us, with an understanding of education as white property. Lamos draws on critical race theory, particularly Cheryl Harris’ work, to examine education as a “white

property," or, an exclusive right of white folks that they can govern "as they see fit" (27, 28).[12] Insisting that race and racial identity are "key component(s)" of basic writing scholarship, Lamos seeks to show the ways US higher education has been a racist racial project. The broadening of educational access through the furthering of developmental coursework such as basic writing is an extension of white property and therefore a threat to its exclusivity (Lamos 30).

Before it sounds like I am suggesting that removing basic writing will somehow be a magic fix that addresses linguistic, discursive, and racial discrimination, and anti-Blackness, in writing education and assessment, I agree with Lamos that discourses on the mainstreaming of basic writers are often "deracialized" (Lamos 22). Bringing critical race theory to Bartholomae's "Tidy House" (where Bartholomae writes, "basic writing programs have become expressions of our desire to produce basic writers") (8) and to Ira Shor's work, Lamos shows how mainstreaming arguments "suggest that basic writing *creates* inequality through its practices; thus by removing BW ... [they] insist that inequality is removed along with it" (38). As such, Lamos' major concern is that the students who would have placed into basic writing will enroll in a traditional writing course "without recognizing the ways in which that mainstream can serve to protect white property interests" (38). The way I understand Lamos' argument is that the mainstream itself – its writing classroom pedagogies and curriculum, its teacher training,

[12] Lamos (via Bell) argues that white property is not "something unilaterally available to whites or unilaterally unavailable to people of color" (31). In my understanding, which draws on scholarship from Inoue, Flores and Rosa, and Saeedi and Richardson, whiteness as embodied and operationalized in Standardized English is about "white ways of being (ontologies) and white systems of meaning-making (epistemologies)" associated first and foremost, but not singularly, with whiteness as a racial construct (Saeedi and Richardson 148). For example, working-class or poor white students, multiracial students, and multilingual or ELL students who may or may identify as white, may each have differing levels of access to white property.

and its grading methods and structures – must be destabilized and then radically rebuilt to address iterations of white language supremacy. In its preservation and enforcement of monolingual ideologies, the mainstream college writing course is racialized whether or not we have basic writing courses (Lamos 38). In this way, the history of the contemporary basic writing course is overtly political and necessarily yoked to social justice through discussions of college access and equity, racial and linguistic diversity, and the valuing of diverse discursive practices. And, as I have argued above, assessment is an integral way in which the ideologies present in these discussions are operationalized.

Scholars such as Marilyn Sternglass, and Anne Herrington and Marcia Curtis, offer crucial analyses of students' writing, their relationships with teachers and the university, and writing teachers' classroom practices and responsibilities to students. In their longitudinal study following four students through their college careers, Herrington and Curtis present a complex picture of basic writing students; specifically, they destabilize the basic/non-basic binary that many scholars cling to (e.g., Bartholomae and Petrosky; Mutnick). Herrington and Curtis focus on student writers as people striving to construct a legible sense of self through writing. The student-writers they study see composing as a "self-constituting" and "relational" act (5). Though this is a claim they apply to all college writers, basic writers, they say, face particular obstacles: they might struggle to locate and write to an audience, they might lack confidence, they might resist getting to know and being known by others, they might *in*sist on exploring the self through a confessional writing style at odds with more distant academic genres, and they might occupy an ideological position not typically valued in the academy. To negotiate these obstacles, basic writers must locate a "sponsoring discourse community" that sustains a

connection between their personal and academic experiences and investments (Herrington and Curtis 371). Even students who might "resist being known" need mentorship from teachers they respect or with whom, Herrington and Curtis argue, they can "share authority" (368). From their study, we might understand that just assessment is holistic and is an opportunity to build mentoring relationships between student and teacher. Assessment can be a conversation – in the margins or in person – that provides mentorship that fosters student confidence and a greater understanding of students' writerly and academic identities.

Sternglass, like Herrington and Curtis, presents us with a slow, careful analysis of not only the work student writers do, but the ways they do that work, and how teachers support (or hinder) that work. Explicitly acknowledging the economic and social struggles that many basic writers face, Sternglass draws on David Lavin et al.'s study of "dropouts" and "persisters" to contextualize her longitudinal study of CCNY students (xii-xiii). Through her study, she shows how essential knowing students' histories, experiences, and material conditions is to making any kind of robust claim about their development as writers. She also finds that writing development is not linear and will occur throughout college, not just in the composition course (Sternglass 141), that students write to learn in part by drawing on their discursive resources (289), that instructor empathy matters (195), and that "constructive criticism" is crucial to writing development (293). Whereas Patricia Bizzell and David Bartholomae (in his early work) ask students to leave their worldviews somewhere else, Sternglass proposes that the conflict that occurs as a result of students confronting and questioning their own perspectives is a key component of the learning process (xv).

Classroom assessment and social justice

Often with traditional assessment practices, student-writers find out that while their teachers may espouse anti-racist, translingual, or socially just theories in their syllabi or lectures, when it comes down to assigning a grade, students' "rich" literate practices “ain’t worth shit,” as Inoue puts it (“How” 23). In their formative and summative assessments of students’ work, to resist this breakdown between theory and practice, what standards do teachers who engage socially just assessment practices enforce? How do instructors work within institutions that value standardized, punitive grading systems to enact just assessment practices? To conclude this chapter, I will look at scholarship that forwards practical methods of just classroom assessment. This scholarship does not apply only to the basic writing classroom. However, as argued above, it is more urgent in that space because punitive placement models and the idea that developmental coursework remediates "diverse" Englishes (and therefore identities) have linked the basic writing course with the project of requiring the white middle class standardization of diverse students’ linguistic and discursive practices (Saeedi and Richardson).

One key aspect of socially just classroom assessment is that teachers abandon grading by a single standard. This standard is often applied via a rubric, designed either by an individual instructor or by a WPA for use across all classrooms in a program, in which the instructor describes what “excellent,” “good,” “fair,” and so on mean for a particular assignment or set of assignments. Rubrics, both traditional and those enacted by machine scorers, are the subject of critique for scholars such as Anne Herrington and Sarah Stanley, and Bob Broad, who argue against the analog and digital systems designed to search for, score, prioritize, and value certain

linguistic and rhetorical features over others in a generalized manner. Herrington and Stanley show that one automated assessment tool, Criterion, is error-focused and programmed only to recognize one variety of English (48-49). Importantly, Herrington and Stanley argue that this monolingual ideology is not unique to Criterion or other digital automated rubrics. Even our "handmade" and human-controlled rubrics tend to often "oversimplify and standardize writing" in the name of a usually ill-defined notion of "fairness," or worse, in the name of "convenien[ce] and efficien[cy]" (Herrington and Stanley 64).

Bob Broad echoes this suspicion of static rubrics, asking us to pay as much attention to what rubrics include as to what they leave out, citing the ways rubrics typically fail to address the nuances of students' rhetorical moves (2). Broad proposes a new essay evaluation tool, Dynamic Criterion Mapping (DCM), as an alternative to the typical rubric. DCM uses qualitative analysis of instructor feedback and student writing to assess the writing features that emerge as most valued by that instructor (e.g., grammar, description). As such, Broad's approach turns away from rubrics' overly-general and authoritarian stance and toward Brian Huot's five principles of writing assessment, which state that sound practice is: "site based," "locally controlled," "context-sensitive," "rhetorically based," and "accessible" (Huot qtd. in Broad 13).

In their critiques, Broad, and Herrington and Stanley, echo one of Pat Belanoff's four "myths of writing assessment": "it's possible to have an absolute standard and apply it uniformly" (55). Describing this belief as the "strongest myth of all" (55) and the "most harmful" (60), Belanoff makes a "radical" suggestion to departments to collaboratively discuss and evaluate student writing portfolios to determine their passing or failing the course (64). Belanoff's method combines student self-assessment (students will write a reflection letter in

which they explore their processes, strengths and weaknesses, and an “estimat[e]” of whether or not they should pass), teacher collaboration, and portfolio methods, and is meant to both foster equitable evaluation and to sustain ongoing department conversations about the connection between classroom work and the more private work of grading (64).

Perhaps one of the most important contributions thus far in negotiating just classroom assessment is the grading contract. As Inoue describes, “the focus on quantity of work over quality of work to determine grades is a hallmark of most grading contract systems” (“Grading Contracts” 81). In his work on Fresno State’s use of grading contracts in their First Year Writing program, Inoue finds that satisfaction with grading contracts varies by students’ racial identity. Specifically, he shows that “grading contracts like the ones used at Fresno State ... tend to be more effective for students who are predisposed to seeing – or can be convinced to view – grades as unhelpful, destructive, or harmful to their learning. At Fresno State, these students tend to be of color, have other languages spoken in their homes, and come from homes with parents who have not gone to college” (93). Inoue’s study, particularly his analysis of open-ended survey data, reveals that white participants expressed, when compared with participants who identified as African American or Asian Pacific Islander (API), a “deep attachment to traditional grading systems” (92).

Grading contracts offer an alternative to these traditional systems. In a collaborative panel discussion presented at the 2021 CCCC, contract grading scholar Virginia Schwarz describes contract grading as an "assessment genre" – it is not one tool or technology, but rather a set of practices wherein assignments are graded pass/no pass, there is leniency with deadlines and late work, and the more labor students do, the higher grade they will earn

(Schwarz et al.). Typically, too, with contract grading there is no grading of individual projects, but rather quite a bit of formative feedback (Schwarz et al.). With contract grading, fellow panelist Jessica Johnson explains that completion looks "really different from assignment to assignment and class to class" (Schwarz et al.). In other words, teachers who engage contract grading in their classrooms typically take an expansive view of the components of a "passing" or "complete" assignment, adjusting their view depending on students' writing and learning goals and, echoing Sternglass, students' material realities (e.g., personal circumstances outside the classroom). As one might imagine, this approach can be quite time consuming for instructors. It also requires that teachers practice empathy. The approach has been critiqued by scholars such as Sherri Craig, who writes about the inequitable ways Black teachers experience the risks associated with implementing assessment practices perceived as non-traditional or radical, and Ellen Carillo, who critiques contract grading from a disability studies lens.

In many ways, my study is driven by my impatience at the pace of change in individual, program-wide, and institution-wide writing assessment praxis. I think of Missy Watson and Rachael Shapiro's argument that it is not enough to hope that writing education will slowly, over decades, become more just as more individual teachers leave behind their tacit English-only policies and their beliefs that home or community discourses are valuable but inappropriate for traditional educational settings (Watson and Shapiro). What the field is moving toward then, and part of what I am asking about is, how writing and English teachers already practicing socially just assessment can organize their colleagues and then advocate *as a collective*, from the ground up, for explicitly anti-racist and just assessment praxis on a department and institutional level. In my second chapter, I describe my research methods and

the analytical choices I made when constructing and making meaning of my project. My third chapter explores how basic writing teachers define their assessment practice, who and what they believe their practice addresses, and their critiques of social justice frameworks as they are invoked in the writing classroom. In my fourth chapter, I share teachers' on-the-ground assessment practices – how study participants described their work and what they actually do in the classroom. I distinguish between proactive and reactive practice, and individual versus structural, interventions.

My fifth chapter looks at the limitations posed to basic writing teachers in their implementation of more just assessment practices, and builds, ultimately, to my argument in my conclusion, which is interested in the potential for collective action within the University. paperson argues that within the University "assemblage" a decolonial university already exists. Through my study of teachers who have self-identified as committed to socially just assessment, I hope to learn about the "s/cyborg" forces that can work, even from within or as part of the University, to create a liberatory institution (paperson). And so to conclude this chapter I ask you to keep in mind this image of organizing and protest. Here, students, staff, and faculty have joined together to resist the intersections of austerity, structural racism, and increasing militarization and privatization, that led to denied funding for educational space at Hostos Community College in New York City. This image, from the CUNY Digital History Archive, shows protesters demanding their educational space and also, righteously, making other demands such as a childcare center. Showing up for each other, *all* members of the college community across roles – faculty, staff, teacher – are taking a risk, demonstrating care, and

demanding a different kind of university. It seems that to make deep structural and far-reaching change in assessment ideologies we will need to begin making demands together.

Figure 1: Photograph of Hostos Community College, CUNY, March. Description: A black and white photograph of hundreds of folks marching down a long city block. "...A student, faculty and staff march down Lexington Avenue crossing 103 towards Gracie Mansion to raise awareness about Hostos Community College's need for funding to complete renovations at 500 Grand Concourse. In addition to signs about the building, one, in Spanish, calls for a child care center as well" ("March").

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

Through my study I gather rich data on the lived experiences of developmental writing teachers, particularly their experiences implementing, talking about, experimenting with, and advocating for socially just assessment practices in their classrooms. My hope is that my project complements research on large scale college writing assessment (e.g., placement exams), the assessment practices of one or a small group of college writing teachers, and theoretical approaches to socially just writing assessment. It works toward this by centering the voices and experiences of a diverse sample of developmental writing teachers across region and institution type to better understand the broader contours of their "views, feelings, intentions, and actions" related to their socially just writing assessment practices (Charmaz 23). To restate, the research questions that guide my project are: 1) How do basic writing teachers in both two and four-year public higher education institutions define socially just writing assessment?, 2) How do basic writing teachers enact or practice socially just writing assessment in their classrooms?, and 3) What resources and supports do basic writing teachers benefit from or advocate for; what limitations do they negotiate?

To answer these questions, I designed a study that aspires toward rigorous survey research methods and mixed methods design and analysis. In this chapter, I will describe my project's scope and terms, study design, and analysis process.

Defining scope and terms

From the outset, I was interested in studying the experiences of writing teachers at public colleges and universities. My commitment is guided by my own teaching and learning

experiences: I have exclusively taught at public higher education institutions, beginning in 2011 and onward to 2022, and have pursued my graduate education at public institutions. I believe in the mission of public education – meaning, I believe education is for all and should be affordable and accessible for all – however opaque, confused, co-opted, or contradictory that mission may often be. I believe the students who suffer the most from the continued underfunding of public higher education are those who are already vulnerable. Pushing back against this category of what Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls "organized abandonment" is a critical aspect of the work toward justice in public higher education ("Ruth"). In a 2020 interview with *The Intercept*, Wilson Gilmore says this about "organized abandonment":

> In the United States, where organized abandonment has happened throughout the country, in urban and rural contexts, for more than 40 years, we see that as people have lost the ability to keep their individual selves, their households, and their communities together with adequate income, clean water, reasonable air, reliable shelter, and transportation and communication infrastructure, as those things have gone away, what's risen up in the crevices of this cracked foundation of security has been policing and prison. ("Ruth")

As an abolitionist educator-researcher, to bring it back to my introductory chapter, I see how policing and carceral logics have "risen up" in my own institutional context in obvious ways (the bloating of armed policing budgets and underfunding of classrooms, wellness, health initiatives, etc.) and in more subtle ways (the use of Turnitin, the installation of surveillance cameras in dining halls, and the investment in corporations that produce military weapons). This is relevant to developmental writing teachers interested in enacting socially just writing

assessment praxis because these teachers must focus on what they are fighting against (all the above), while holding a vision of what sustains them, what is possible, and what they might imagine an abolitionist university to look like. As June Jordan writes, "I Must Become a Menace to My Enemies" – you cannot resist injustices if you have not identified what exactly it is you are resisting ("I Must" 14). It is important to recognize, then, the ways we might be enacting carceral logics in our writing classrooms, perhaps unknowingly, because these are the logics that are reproduced in higher education institutions. As teachers become more anxious about their job security and wages because of austerity measures, and Black, Indigenous, and students, staff, and faculty of color become more vulnerable on campuses as funding lessens and policing takes greater hold, we must organize *against* this abandonment and keep constantly vigilant of the ways the University will, in its current neoliberal state, do everything it can to sustain white logics. How can developmental writing teachers at public institutions disrupt and come together?

I focus on public institutions, too, because while basic writing courses certainly exist at private institutions, the majority of students taking "remedial" coursework (80%) begin their education at public two-year or public four-year institutions (Chen and Simone 7).[13] Public two- and four-year institutions are also particularly affected by the austerity measures (e.g., defunding, budget cuts) that influence if, how, and what kinds of developmental coursework colleges and universities offer, the mechanism by which students place into these courses, and how students are assessed in these courses.

[13] The study I cite here uses the term "remedial," which it defines as "courses described with terms like developmental, remedial, precollegiate, and basic skills" (8).

My study also employed geographic parameters. Originally, I set out to do a national survey, but was wisely advised by mentors that this was too much for a single person to take on. To this end, I limited the study to the geographic regions that the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) College Navigator terms "Northeast" and "Mideast" (more commonly referred to as the Mid Atlantic). This includes 11 states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania) and the District of Columbia. In a following section I will discuss my sampling plan.

The three major terms that anchor the scope of my study are "basic writing," "writing assessment," and "social justice." In my survey, I define "basic writing" as follows: "'Basic Writing' (or, 'developmental,' 'remedial' writing) is defined as a composition course that precedes or coincides with your institution's 'college level' writing course, and that students may or may not be required or encouraged to take before moving on to your institution's 'college writing' course." I provided this definition on the survey's introduction screen rather than in the email invitation as I strove to keep the invitation as brief as possible. Out of the approximately 1,085 basic writing teachers that the survey invitation was sent to, 10 teachers wrote back to ask for clarification about what "basic writing" meant in the context of my study and/or to ask for my feedback on whether their course(s) fit within the study's scope. Engaging in those email conversations was informative – what I learned from those who reached out allowed me to further clarify my language around "basic" and "developmental" coursework (see introductory chapter).

Within my study, I defined "writing assessment" in the following way: "In this survey, 'assessment' is broadly interpreted as any judging or evaluating of student writing that you do in your basic writing course." As I am interested in the entire assessment "ecology," I wanted survey participants to feel free to discuss or consider any number of assessment activities in their responses, including processes of giving formative and summative feedback, conferencing, assigning a grade on a single paper, assigning a final course grade, etc. (Inoue, *Antiracist*). Where I was interested in learning about a specific aspect of developmental writing teachers' classroom-level writing assessment praxis, I asked (see survey instrument in Appendix C). In chapter three, I will discuss the ways that participants choose to take up questions of assessment by focusing on what I see as related, but distinct, aspects of teaching praxis (e.g., in-class activities, syllabus design, reading assignments).

The third major term that anchors my study is "social justice." I have my own understanding of "social justice" in general and more specifically in the context of writing assessment in higher education: I see social justice as the abolition of policing and all iterations of the prison and military industrial complexes, and then the building and nourishing of communities where all individuals' basic needs are met and all individuals have the opportunity to live freely and with joy. Social justice is reparations, decolonization, clean water, healing and healthcare, access to healthy foods, safe housing, quality public education; it is transformative, community-centered, anti-capitalist, and anti-ableist. Social justice, as Dean Spade says, "doesn't trickle down so we should center the experiences of the most vulnerable first": therefore, efforts toward social justice, in my understanding, should center the work of those that normative structures and systems have harmed ("Trickle-Up"). In the context of the

University, social justice means all of these things and it means dismantling the neoliberal university to build a “third” university, as la paperson writes – one that actively supports the learning and liberation of all students (paperson). And in the writing classroom, social justice means recognizing and redressing the ways that one’s pedagogy and assessment praxis reproduce the harms that the broader University enacts toward individuals who have been historically marginalized in formal educational spaces in the US. It means paying attention to the ways that one’s assumptions about what makes “good writing” and “clear language” may emerge, intentionally or not, from an ontology that privileges white middle class ways of knowing, doing, and being. It then requires us, crucially, to move from recognition to action. To me, more just writing assessment necessitates course policy-level flexibility including flexible deadlines, the ability to revise and resubmit assignments, an openness to feedback from students and a willingness to revise assignments or readings based on that feedback, an understanding that there are multiple ways of learning, and that socially just assessment approaches intersect with abolitionist, feminist, and disability justice approaches to education. At its center, socially just assessment requires writing teachers to unlearn the disciplinary aspects of teaching – to replace the impulse to discipline and doubt students with the practice of trusting and collaborating with students.

I did not share my understanding of social justice with study participants. An aim of my study was to see how participants defined "socially just writing assessment" or "socially just approaches to writing assessment" themselves. Instead, I strove to get at the contours of how basic writing teachers defined this term for themselves, in their everyday teaching and assessing choices, and within the limitations of their departments, institutions, and state. The

survey invitation guided potential participants toward a general understanding of the term through the following parenthetical: "With my survey, I hope to reach basic writing (e.g., developmental writing) teachers at public community colleges, HBCUs, regional/state comprehensive institutions, and flagship institutions in US New England and mideast states to learn more about how basic writing teachers imagine and do s*ocially just assessment (e.g., antiracist, decolonial, critical, equity oriented assessment*)" (emphasis added). Some participants shared that they were confused about or did not know the meaning of "socially just assessment." Rather than seeing this as a failure of my survey invitation and/or instrument, I consider in following chapters what it means that teachers are not familiar with the term (and that, despite their unfamiliarity, they choose to participate in the study).

The study is of current or recent basic writing teachers who are already engaged in or curious about socially just approaches to writing assessment. Limiting the study to "current or recent" teachers was in part a strategy to reduce response error in my survey. The longer a teacher has been out of the basic writing classroom, the more challenging it will be for them to recall their experiences, which means their responses may not be accurate. The decision was also tied to my research questions as, again, I was interested in understanding what is happening *currently* in the landscape of assessment in basic writing classrooms. Similarly, limiting the study to teachers who are already engaged in or curious about socially just approaches to assessment reflects my research questions. My project begins from the understanding that traditional writing assessment practice is unjust and interventions rooted in social justice frameworks (however one defines those) are necessary to redress that injustice. I

am not interested in debating this. This has been amply and deftly proved by scholars before me. Instead, I wanted to get at the "however" in "however one defines those."

In addition to communicating study eligibility in the survey invitation, I also included three screener questions in the survey instrument itself (see Appendix C). If a participant indicated that they were not currently and had never taught basic writing, they were directed to a message at the end of the survey re-stating the parameters of the study, saying they were not eligible based on those parameters, and thanking them for their interest. The same is true for potential participants who indicated that social justice-informed approaches to writing assessment are "not important" to them.

Seventy four percent of survey participants indicated having taught 10 or more sections of basic writing in their teaching career, which means my participants bring rich experience and perspective to the study. The majority (55%) of participants were teaching just one section of basic writing at the time they took the survey, and 30% were teaching two sections.[14] Approximately two thirds (67%) of participants indicated that taking a social justice-informed approach to their assessment practice is "very important" to them; the remainder (33%) indicated these approaches are "somewhat" important.

Reflection on researcher positionality

I approach this project with humility and the knowledge that I have been – and perhaps even continue to be, as the processes of recognizing and acting against one's privileges are

[14] If given the opportunity to revise the survey instrument and expand the study, I would include a question asking participants how many sections they are teaching in total during the relevant semester. In their responses to other survey items, many participants indicated teaching several sections of English and/or Writing courses each semester. The screener question should not be used to draw conclusions on participants' work-related capacities or time-constraints because it unfortunately does not capture accurate data on their full course load.

iterative – the sort of normative, status-quo-upholding writing teacher that I critique. When Asao Inoue, in his 2019 CCCC keynote address, spoke the following, it got me:

> Good work, done by conscientious White people, can still kill people of color by codifying White language supremacy. (“How” 21)

I am a white cisgender woman who grew up middle class and with relatively clear access to “standard” Englishes. I am a writing teacher and higher education researcher who began teaching poetry, essay writing, and composition in 2011 at the City University of New York. Especially early on in my teaching career, I did not have a full, complex understanding of the ways I as a white woman benefitted from whiteness *unintentionally* – it is not enough to trust my “intentions” or “good work.” Going back to my time as a K-12 student, a formative example of this, and something I think about often as a higher education worker in a time of turmoil over race-conscious admissions, is a time in my sophomore year math class when I overheard the early morning musings of a white woman who I identified as more privileged than me. What I felt was that her family had had much more money than mine, for more years, and had personal connections at an Ivy League school – this made our experiences of the world, to my mind at the time, completely different.

What this classmate said to her friend (another white woman), speaking of her sibling’s recent rejection from a different Ivy League school, was “My father said she was probably rejected because someone with the same qualifications applied but they weren’t white or something.” This I overheard as a 14-year-old (I am now in my mid 30s), by chance, and the person who said it had no idea I was listening. How many times had she said it before? In the moment, I knew it was wrong, racist. However, the complexity of the statement, that it was

actually her father who had spoken these words, the ways I might have productively confronted her or interrupted her thinking, and that the distance between my silent and uninformed "good intentions" and her bad actions, both of us white women, was not as far as I thought it was – this would take years for me to reckon with and untangle.

As a young white woman, I was grappling with what Christina Sharpe calls "losing your kin," the processes through which white people "rend the fabric of the kinship narrative" ("Lose Your Kin"). "Kin," as Sharpe defines it, means "all of those *recognized* by the self – in some fundamental, indelible way – as being like the self," and the "rending" looks like refusal: a refusal of the comfort and contentedness afforded to white people, and a willingness to be "on the outside," to challenge family, friend, and all kin in a way that risks the disruption of those relationships ("Lose Your Kin"). At that moment in my math class, I had not yet "recognized" this woman in myself – in other words, I did not understand the ways my whiteness related to hers despite our class differences, and that in my decision to stay silent, I was reinforcing that relationship and allowing racism and racialized perceptions of the colleges admissions process to iterate uninterrupted.

I had much to learn about privilege, white complicity and white complacency, and the ways white people allow whiteness to "emerge" when they do not interrupt it (paperson). That the young woman's father had thought what he thought, said it out loud, and *taught it* to his young daughter is perhaps the most unnerving part of this memory and illustrates the exigency and challenge of Sharpe's directive to "lose our kin." Now, throughout my work on this project and as a teacher and researcher, I have been in this process of unlearning how I was taught to be in the world as a white person and as a cisgender woman (mainly: go along, get along).

Sharpe's call frames my work in this dissertation and animates my understanding that part of the project of organizing for socially just writing assessment within composition and literacy studies is having conversations with white teachers about solidarity, or, challenging the "kinship narrative" into which white individuals are socialized ("Lose Your Kin").

Briefly, I also approach this dissertation having experienced high highs, and low lows, as a student-writer. I found affirmation in the writing portions of standardized tests, in my third and ninth grade teachers who took time to encourage my creative writing despite being overburdened public school teachers, and in my elementary school librarian who encouraged my reading and provided a comfortable space for me to talk about books. I also received feedback from teachers – not necessarily writing or English teachers – about not following directions, talking too much, and needing too much reassurance. Variations on these comments followed me throughout my K-12 journey until I was able to disappear into the literal back of the classroom at a very large university. I would remain in the back for all four years, quietly earning a B+/A- grade average with my chaotic white knuckle studying, attending office hours just a handful of times, only when required, and always wracked with nerves. If I were a betting woman, I would wager that I raised my hand in class a total of 10-15 times in four years, and that over half of those times were in creative writing classes – spaces that mostly seemed to accept me and my thinking. Still, I received uneven feedback on my writing, particularly my "academic" writing, that left me unsure of myself. In at least two classes, teachers told me my writing was unclear, too winding, hard to follow; then, as I worked to improve, those same faculty members (both white cisgender men) wrote comments to me suggesting they thought I might have plagiarized. "So good it couldn't possibly be your work" was the message. Upon

graduation, as my friends cheerfully collected their letters of recommendation for graduate school or jobs, I wondered who would even write mine.

My journey through formal K-12 and undergraduate schooling was complicated by my struggles with mental health, self-esteem, and misogyny. I rarely if ever acknowledged these struggles with friends, so while I am grateful to have had a support system, my lack of self-reflection and my inability to be vulnerable left me at times in avoidant apathy or hopelessness about school and what direction my life might take. My lived experiences as a student wholly inform my teaching, the ways I interact with students, the ways I structure my courses and the assignments I design. They also inform the questions I ask as a researcher. Though this dissertation focuses on basic writing teachers, its reason for being is students: my hope is for their affirmation, sense of belonging, and success.

Sampling plan

My study employs a stratified random sampling strategy. Survey researcher Floyd Fowler explains, when a researcher knows at least some characteristics of their study population before they design their sampling plan, and when they determine those characteristics to be integral to their study, the researcher may choose to "stratify" their sample by those characteristics in order to "produc[e] a sample that is more likely to look like the total population than the simple random sample" (19). We know that there are many factors that may influence or affect developmental writing teachers' experiences, including teachers' identity (e.g., gender, race) and their institutional context (e.g., institution type, location). While teachers' personal identity characteristics cannot be determined ahead of time (no list or database of these characteristics exists), institution type is both important and easily

determined. Therefore, the frame is stratified by institution type. There are four strata: Very High Research Institutions (VHR), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Regional Comprehensive Institutions (RC), and Two-Year Institutions or Community Colleges (CC). All institutions in the frame are public degree-granting institutions.

In identifying institution type as a relevant way to stratify the sample frame, I aspire to add to conversations held by scholars such as David Green Jr., Annie Del Principe, and others, on how the contours of writing assessment in HBCUs, or in two-year colleges and universities, are institution and context specific. The strata are not monoliths; for example, not all HBCUs or VHRs are the same. However, on the whole, the institutions within each strata share a mission, a certain level of access to funding and other resources, and a particular student and teacher population. Because of this, it is crucial to understand how the landscape of imagining, practicing, and negotiating socially just approaches to writing assessment may differ across institution type, as this will help us better address the specific struggles, and replicate the specific successes, that basic writing teachers are experiencing in their institutions. Ideally, the stratified sample allows us to gather a more representative sample and to more accurately generalize results and recommendations across institution type. Future studies that include a larger number of institutions may elect to further stratify by location (e.g., urban or rural) or state, or to include more institutions and therefore more strata such as Tribal College (zero Tribal Colleges are in the study's geographic region). A future study may also consider using Minority Serving Institution (MSI) as a strata. According to the Office of Inclusive Excellence at University of California Irvine, MSIs include Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI), Alaska Native Serving Institutions or Native Hawaiian Serving

Institutions (ANNH), HBCUs, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNTI), Predominantly Black Institutions (PBI), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU) (“MSI Directory”). MSIs are institutions in which the population(s) named as being served (e.g., “Alaska Natives” or “Asian Americans”) comprise a certain percentage of the overall undergraduate student population (e.g., 10%, 20%, or more) (“What are MSIs?”). Some of the institutions included in my sample frame, and some included in my data, are MSIs (including the HBCUs); however, I did not include a separate MSI strata, which an expansion of the study may want to consider doing.

To build my sample frame, I used the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to compile a comprehensive list of all degree-granting two- and four-year public institutions located in the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) regions "New England" (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT) and "Mid East" (DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA), the latter of which is more commonly recognized as "Mid Atlantic." I chose these regions because I have lived, taught, and/or been educated in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York, and therefore am familiar with the higher educational contexts of those states and, in a very general sense, the regions. In a future study, I would recommend a national survey conducted by multiple researchers who are familiar with the remaining US regions.

When conducting my search in IPEDS, I delimited by the four strata that make up my sample: public HBCU, public two-year, public four-year excluding Very High Research institutions, and public four-year Very High Research (perhaps more commonly known as "Research 1's" or "R 1's") institutions. Table 2 shows the initial totals of institutions by strata. Within the largest strata, RC and CC, I pulled a random sample of 50% of the institutions.

However, for the smaller two strata (VHR and HBCU), I included all institutions in the sample frame. I took this varied approach because I wanted to maximize the possibility of receiving responses from teachers at VHRs and HBCUs, knowing that pulling a random sample of 50% of HBCUs, for example, would mean including just four HBCUs in my sample frame, compared with over 70 RCs and CCs.

A more precise and ideal sampling plan would include having access to an accurate and up-to-date list of developmental writing instructors at all institutions in my sample. Such a list does not exist. Ideally, a researcher would be able to contact every English department in the sample frame, request a current and accurate list of developmental writing instructors at that institution, and receive that list in a timely manner; however, as one person conducting dissertation research, I did not have the capacity to do this level of work. It is also quite possible that 1) at least some institutions would not release such a list to someone outside the institution, 2) reaching out to an English Department representative (e.g., Chair, Director, Office Manager) may give the impression, upon sending the survey institution and explaining how I identified individuals' names and contact information, that the survey was somehow sponsored by the department. Not knowing the climate of any particular department, it is likely advantageous to engage in recruitment strategies that minimize that impression. Therefore, my sampling plan included only institution type and, from there, I used publicly accessible website data to identify as best I could the names of developmental writing instructors. After identifying which schools were in my sample, for each school, I proceeded with the following process:

1) Search school websites for publicly accessible course schedule (i.e., searchable schedule for current and recent semesters, the kind students might use to register for courses);

a. If course schedule publicly available, search in English and/or Writing Program to find list of developmental/basic writing courses and corresponding instructors (most reliable method);
b. If course schedule not publicly available, locate English and/or Writing Program page within school website. Locate faculty names and email addresses; use website headers, faculty titles, faculty bios, and any other available information to determine the courses they teach;
c. If it is still unclear whether the school offers basic/developmental writing courses and/or who the instructors of these courses may be, send a modified email invitation to English/Writing Program Chair or Department Head asking for their help distributing the survey to their faculty (see Appendix B).

2) Enter instructor names and email addresses into Excel spreadsheet.
3) Send personalized email invitation to all instructors asking for their participation in the study.

I drafted two initial email invitations, one personalized for individual instructors (see Appendix A) and one for heads/chairs, as well as reminder emails. Rather than sending an open invitation to participate in the survey via a professional listserv (e.g., Writing Studies) or social media, I choose to send the survey directly to individuals for a variety of reasons: 1) By sending unique survey links, I was able to program Qualtrics to enable only those who received the invitation to take the survey, and to take it only once, thus taking a step to safeguard the integrity of the data; in addition, this allowed me to include metadata such as institution type and state rather than asking participants to provide this information; 2) I was able to

personalize invitations with respondents' first names and explain why they were selected, hopefully increasing response rates; 3) An email sent directly to respondents with a tailored subject line is less likely to get lost in inboxes than a post on a listserv; and 4) I strove to obtain a representative sample of basic writing teachers across the northeast and mideast US. This would only happen if I first identified specific institutions, and then specific teachers to the best of my knowledge and capacity. Focusing only on instructors who happen to subscribe to professional listservs is a fraught approach, particularly as we know that one of the major listservs in our field, Writing Studies, was called out for its racist and misogynist posts, leading to its tenuous reimagining and an exodus of subscribers. Relying on social media posting similarly narrows the potential for a range of participants before even beginning, as there are likely many writing instructors (including myself) who are not active in a professional capacity on Twitter, Instagram, and other social media sites.

Response rates and representativeness

In total, I sent a personalized survey invitation to 1085 individual instructors across the four strata of institutions, including 132 department heads/chairs that I intended to recruit via an open link. I sent this open link to heads/chairs in the hope that they might distribute the survey to basic writing instructors in their department or program. In these cases, there was either no publicly accessible information about their instructors, or it seemed that the information available was incomplete. Many institutions only include their full-time faculty on websites, excluding what is often a large number of adjunct instructors and/or graduate student instructors. In some cases, I sent both personalized emails and an email to the head/chair. For example, I may have sent personalized invitations to three instructors, but felt

that the information available to me with regard to that school was partial, and so also emailed the department head/chair.

Because my study includes an open link and the denominator cannot be completely accurate, I can only calculate an estimated response rate. Calculating an overall response rate is also difficult because of an error I made in sending the invitations. As explained above, I intended to send an open link to department heads/chairs and, eventually, I did. However, in my initial invitation, I mistakenly sent personalized links to heads/chairs. This was an unfortunate mistake both in terms of encouraging participation (sending a personalized link meant that only one person could complete the survey, and I had intended for the head/chair to circulate the survey widely) and in terms of calculating response rate. Upon realizing my error one week later, I resent a corrected link to instructors. At that time, I had already received 12 recorded responses, and also likely lost several potential participants who tried to click the link, were presented with a "survey completed" message, and did not try again.

In all, after cleaning the data (which, for this study, entailed deleting cases where less than one content question was answered and removing those responses deemed ineligible by the screener questions), my survey received 190 responses. To calculate an estimated response rate, I worked only with the 1085 unique invitations sent and the responses to those invitations (n=171). I eliminated the failed invitations (n=26) and used 1059 as a denominator when calculating an estimated response rate (16%). See Table 1, below.

Number of unique invitations sent	1085
Number of invitations failed/bounced	26 (2%)
Number of individuals who indicated they do not teach basic writing	30 (2%)
Number of cases where screener questions determined individual ineligible	30 (2%)
Number of open link responses	19
Number of survey responses (not including open link)	171
Estimated response rate	16%

Table 1: Survey Response Rate

It is not possible to calculate representativeness for this study because I do not have an accurate list of the target population. In other words, I am not sure how many developmental writing instructors were, as of spring 2021, employed and teaching at each of the four institution types included in my study. These numbers are constantly shifting and public records such as institutional websites are not necessarily accurate. However, calculating representativeness by institution type is possible. See Table 4 below. All numbers included below represent the total numbers determined after cleaning the IPEDS data. If one were to replicate my search in the IPEDS College Navigator they may find that the numbers do not match exactly. For example, there are 15 VHRs in the geographic area delimiting my study; however, only 14 of those institutions offer developmental writing coursework.

	Number of Institutions in Sample Frame	Institution Type Percent of Total	Number of Institutions in Sample	Percent of Institutions in Sample	Number of Unique Institutions Represented in Responses (including 19 open link responses)	Percent of Unique Institutions in Responses
HBCU	8	2%	8	5%	6	8%
CC	158	48%	78	45%	44	57%
RC	151	46%	74	42%	19	25%
VHR	14	4%	14	8%	8	10%
Total	331	100%	174	100%	77	100%

Table 2: Sample Frame by Institution Type

	Number of heads/chairs identified for sending modified invitation
HBCU	8
CC	52
RC	58
VHR	14

Table 3: Number of Heads/Chairs Identified for Recruitment

	Number of Unique Invitations Sent	Percent of Total Invitations Sent	Number of Responses*	Percent of Responses
HBCU	136	13%	14	8%
CC	574	53%	97	52%
RC	164	15%	33	18%
VHR	211	19%	42	22%
Total	1085	100%	186**	100%

Table 4: Survey Responses by Institution Type
*This includes the open link responses where, because participants included their email address, I was able to discern their institutional affiliation
**There were four responses with missing institutional data

I should note that the survey was in the field from March-June 2021, a time when all educators were overwhelmed by the many professional and personal demands of remote teaching and teaching during a time of COVID-19. This context certainly affected the survey climate and, given this, a response rate of approximately 16% is relatively robust. In the following section, I will describe strategies I used to increase response rate. Again, I am not able to calculate an exact response rate because my study included both unique and open links. If I were to speak of representativeness in terms of comparing the number of individual, unique invitations sent by institution type with the number of individual responses by institution type, my data are relatively representative, with responses from HBCUs slightly underrepresented (-5%). In future studies, it would be important to intentionally recruit participants from HBCUs. For example, one might socialize the study at HBCUs prior to sending the invitations through the use of pre-notices or word-of-mouth outreach, send tailored invitations to basic writing teachers at HBCUs

explaining the study's commitment to hearing from basic writing teachers at HBCUs, and expand the study to include HBCUs outside of the geographic range.

Survey design and administration

Why engage in survey research? What can relatively "simple" and "short" survey responses tell us about basic writing teachers' complex teaching and assessing experiences? All research methods have limitations, and I struggled for months to settle on a practice that felt rigorous, ethical, and doable, and that would get at what I strove to contribute to conversations in socially just writing assessment in higher education spaces.

Much of the reading I have done on research methods and methodologies has been on case study, ethnography, and archival research. For example, works that influenced my early thinking on methods, and that I continue to draw on even if their force is not apparent in my work, are Alexandra Hidalgo's "Family Archives and the Rhetoric of Loss" and Jody Shipka's "To Preserve, Digitize, and Project: On the Process of Composing Other People's Lives." These are deeply personal and creative studies that show us new ways of looking at the self, at living, and at the possibilities of research. They are situated in the micro: in a family, in someone's basement or yard sale, in specific objects and bound experiences. They are textured and immensely reflective. By nature, surveys are not that: They are blunt instruments. Responses are constrained to bubbles, boxes, or perhaps a brief paragraph, and I will never meet or follow up with most of the participants in my study. With any ambiguity in their open-ended responses, rather than close reading or working through and to meaning via grounded theory, I must leave it alone so as not to assign meaning where I do not know it.

How did I end up here? In one way, it was an ethical choice. I did not feel ready to enter someone's classroom or workspace and take on the ethical implications of potentially disrupting or distracting learning processes without adding to or complementing those processes in any immediate sense. I did not want to enter a classroom transactionally knowing that my future dissertation would be of no use to those students whose education I might be negatively affecting in real time. The survey felt unimposing – a relatively minor intrusion into folks' email inboxes.

My decision to conduct a survey was equally driven by my desire to, simply put, hear from as many developmental writing teachers, from as many institutions, states, and backgrounds, as possible – to step out of the "echo chamber" that one can get stuck in when focusing only on their immediate context. It was important to me that I not (re)produce research and ways of thinking that are overly rooted in the experiences of teachers at a VHR. In addition, with a large sample of instructors, I would theoretically be able to gather enough data to better understand differences in experience among teachers' gender and racial identities, and well as their geographic location and institutional affiliation. Therefore, I began to develop a survey. While the study could not evoke the nuance of a case study or ethnography, it could render insights on a large, diverse community of basic writing teachers.

I designed the survey instrument as a web survey using Qualtrics. There are several advantages to conducting a web survey (as opposed to a paper or telephone survey). As Floyd Fowler describes, web surveys are low cost and can make data collection quicker and easier (73). For example, in a web survey, as soon as a respondent completes their survey and clicks "submit," their response is recorded in the survey platform and available to view. In addition,

by using a web platform such as Qualtrics, I had the ability to export data to a variety of programs including Excel and SPSS and to upload a data file of sample members' already known demographic variables (e.g., institution name, location, and type) which was then automatically linked to their survey responses when downloaded. (Linking already known demographic information to survey invitations is also helpful for participants, as they do not need to enter that information themselves.) Large numbers of responses (e.g., 1,000s) can be stored securely in the cloud and then downloaded within moments. Perhaps most importantly, I was able to easily personalize email invitations with potential participants' first names, an important step toward working to increase response rates.

Web surveys, like all self-administered surveys, are self-paced and therefore allow for "thoughtful answers, checking records, or consulting with others" (Fowler 73). Questions on a self-administered survey can be longer and/or more complex than those asked via interviewer because participants can take their time answering without feeling the pressure of the interviewer waiting on them, and because they will not have to recall from memory the question wording or response categories (Fowler 72). Finally, the collection of sensitive data is "likely more valid" in self-administered surveys (Fowler 73). This survey topic is not particularly sensitive. However, as scholars have argued, socially just assessment work can be treacherous, especially for teachers of color (Perryman Clark, García de Müeller and Ruiz) and all teachers who hold identities, knowledges, and experiences that have historically been marginalized in formal educational settings in the US. It is very possible that those practicing socially just assessment in their classroom are doing so against the explicit or implicit assessment policies of their department or institution. Therefore, a confidential, self-administered survey provides

greater privacy than would an in-person or phone survey. While a paper survey would also provide self-pacing and the ability to ask lengthy and/or complex questions, its arrival in teachers' office mailboxes would likely be visible to department staff, supervisors, and colleagues, who may wonder or ask what it is, whether the teacher plans to participate, what their responses are, etc. Department mail boxes were also likely much less accessible to teachers when my survey launched in March 2021 when many, if not most, were teaching remotely.

As most teachers now are required to conduct at least some of their work (e.g., correspondence with students, colleagues, or supervisors, grading, use of Learning Management System, etc.) online via computing devices, they will likely have regular access to Wi-Fi and their email, whether it be in their office on campus, at their home, or on their cell phones. However, as teachers likely receive dozens of emails a day, the survey invitation may go unnoticed – or worse, it may be seen as an "annoying intrusio[n] into their lives" (Dillman 19). These sentiments are likely reflected in my response rate, which fell below my goal of 20%.

While my mode of contact for the survey was email, I followed Dillman's guidelines for best survey research practice and endeavored toward a multiple contact approach. Multiple contacts with slightly varied messages are important to obtaining a robust response rate (Dillman 331). While Dillman recommends waiting until the survey is in the field to determine exactly how many reminders to send and when, I was working within the limits of IRB and so planned ahead to send three reminders. For the personalized invitations, Qualtrics only sends reminders to those who have not submitted their survey responses in order to limit "intrusion." The invitation and reminders were crafted according to Dillman's guidelines. Drawing on social

exchange theories, Dillman advises that to increase benefits of participation, the survey invitation should specify how results will be used, ask for help, note sponsorship by a known organization, indicate that opportunities to respond will be limited, note potential benefits, and include a cash or material incentive (28-31). In my invitation, I include brief information about the survey's IRB approval, note my affiliation with UMass Amherst's Composition and Rhetoric Program, and name my committee members. I was not able to offer material incentives but recommend that a future study, if possible, include those. I also suggest that a future study include multiple modes of contact (e.g., sending a reminder postcard to potential participants).

I designed the survey instrument to be approximately 15 minutes in length. It includes five screener questions, 48 content questions (this number accounts for individual items within matrices), and four demographic questions. I piloted the survey with members of my committee as well as with five colleagues who had taught basic writing at my institution within the last three years. These individuals gave me feedback on the length of the survey, question wording, and other high-level design concerns, while I worked with my committee member who is a survey research expert to fine-tune the instrument. To answer my research questions, I asked both closed and open-ended survey questions. In addition to being rooted in my research questions and my literature review, my question design (for both the survey and the interview protocol, as I will discuss later in this chapter) is informed by my (at that time) eight years of experience teaching essay writing, creative writing, composition and poetry at three public higher education institutions in the northeast (one VHR, one CC, and one RC). My thinking, teaching, research, and political commitments are fundamentally influenced by my experience working with hundreds of students across institution and state, and the rich conversations I

have had with colleagues and mentors occupying various institutional roles from Writing Program Administrator (WPA), to adjunct lecturer, to tenured professor, to staff. My survey question design is also informed by two different survey instruments: The National Census of Writing (NCW) and an IRB-approved survey on contract grading conducted by Virginia Schwarz, then a PhD candidate at the University of Madison Wisconsin. In survey research, it is common practice to draw on, when possible, instruments similar to that which you hope to design in order to assess what and how questions have been asked.

According to its website, the NCW "seeks to provide a data-based landscape of writing instruction at two- and four-year public and not-for-profit institutions of higher education in the United States" (NCW). The website continues, "Despite numerous calls for empirical data to ground the design and administration of writing programs and writing centers, this is the first comprehensive study of its kind…" (NCW). The NCW survey items, which reflect data collected between 2013 and 2014, cover a broad range of topics including sites of writing, first-year writing/English composition, identifying and supporting diversely-prepared students, writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing beyond the first year, writing centers, administrative structures, the undergraduate and graduate writing major (for four year institutions only), and demographics (NCW). The NCW is an exciting resource – although its questions differ substantially from those I asked, it demonstrates the exigence of this study, and provided some insight into the variables I included in my study design. I encountered an invitation to participate in Schwarz's survey on contract grading by chance, via Twitter, in fall 2019. This survey is focused on a specific grading strategy though the study appears to have similar ideological roots to my own (i.e., striving for more just assessment praxis) (Schwarz,

(De)Norming). As with the NCW survey, the study was a point of inspiration and encouragement in terms of where mine might fit in the scholarly conversation around college writing assessment.

My survey instrument includes seven open-ended questions which, to some experts, may be too many: Both Dillman and Fowler advise against including multiple descriptive open-ended questions. Dillman argues that these questions may require “a great deal of effort” to complete, which means respondents may need the sort of extra motivation that you cannot provide in a self-administered survey (131). Respondents may be tempted to provide brief or simple responses, or to skip the question altogether (Dillman 131). However, using my pilot feedback, I determined that my survey’s target population – folks who have chosen to teach and study writing as their careers – are likely more inclined than most to compose robust responses to open-ended questions without much external motivation. This determination proved correct as almost every individual who completed the survey also responded to the open-ended questions.

Designing the survey in Qualtrics, I attended to visual design best practices as described by Dillman (225-227). Dillman outlines 22 “general guidelines” pertaining to the presentation of open- and closed-ended questions and the layout of screens. Rather than discussing here my approach to each of the 22 points, I will briefly highlight some major design choices. First, it is important that participants are able to access the survey via a medium most comfortable to them. Qualtrics is screen reader accessible, and I also provided an option for participants to respond to the survey via phone (i.e., my reading the questions aloud over the phone). The survey is optimized for both smartphone and laptop, desktop, and other personal computing

devices. Second, I designed the survey to present just one question per screen, and did not overload question matrices (e.g., I limited matrices to under eight individual items), to decrease cognitive burden on survey participants. Participants were able to go back through the survey using the "back" button in the case they wanted to revise a previous response, and I included a final screen that warns of the survey's conclusion so that respondents did not accidentally submit before they were ready. I also included transition screens to show respondents where they are in the survey and what questions to expect next. For example, one transition screen read: "The next set of questions asks about your specific assessment practices." In this way, I strove to maximize the control participants would have over pacing and crafting their responses. Finally, I created a header that displays the project name, my institutional affiliation, and a background image representative of my institution (again, to build trust).

The survey was in the field from March-June 2021. To encourage participation, I sent three reminder emails throughout the field period. In crafting those reminders (along with the invitation), I relied on Dillman's guidance that the researcher must establish trust in order to maximize respondents' inclination to participate (37). This is an especially key point for web surveys because, as Dillman argues, "we live in a technological environment in which it often pays to be skeptical and suspicious" (37). Therefore, I took the measures already described above (e.g., highlight my affiliation with a known university and graduate program, include IRB approval note, explain why respondents were selected and the purpose of the research). I also welcomed respondents to ask questions, provided a phone number where they could reach me, and assured the confidentiality of their data.

Interview and mixed methods approach

I designed my dissertation project to be a mixed methods study, meaning I collected both quantitative and qualitative data to answer my research questions. Kathy Charmaz describes mixed methods as "typically combin[ing] qualitative and quantitative approaches including their respective perspectives, analyses, and forms of inference to gain breadth and depth of understanding and to corroborate the findings of each method" (323). Charmaz goes on to explain that what counts as mixed methods is "often unclear" – is a study that collects both quantitative and qualitative data, or that collects multiple modes of qualitative data, truly mixed methods if the analysis does not integrate the multiple modes (323)? I will describe more on this from the perspective of my data analysis process in the following section. In this section, I will offer an explanation for the role interview data plays in the design of my study.

As described above, my survey instrument included both fixed-choice and open-ended questions, and therefore, collected both quantitative and qualitative data to answer my research questions. As Dillman writes, "the value of open-ended items is that they capture respondents' thoughts without influencing or constraining them with closed-ended response options" (132). This was crucial to answering my research questions. If at the heart of my study is the drive to know how developmental writing teachers are, in real time and in their everyday practice, thinking about social justice in relation to assessment, I needed to allow them to share in their own words. To expand this study in the future, I may be able to use my findings to develop closed-ended response categories; in the present, I felt it was necessary and important to collect teachers' rich descriptions of their philosophy and practice.

Collecting quantitative data was also important to me. In non-humanities fields, researchers are not often called upon to explain why they chose to collect quantitative data: it is often simply assumed that one will. As Charmaz explains, tensions between qualitative and quantitative approaches were particularly salient in the 1960s in US sociological research (5). Qualitative methods were thought of as “opaque” (5) and quantitative research “reigned over departments, journal editorial boards, and funding agencies” (6). In some ways this attitude persists today and we can see it in the defunding of humanities and some social science research, along with the seemingly universal preoccupation with “having the data,” “knowing the data,” “telling stories with the data,” “visualizing the data,” “driving decisions with the data,” etc. – where “data” nearly always means quantitative data. I do not see a mixed-methods approach as capitulating to the notion that one cannot make a persuasive argument and significant contribution with “only” qualitative data. Instead, I see it as including the strengths of both methods, where each complements the other and makes analysis richer. George Kamberelis and Greg Dimitriadis provide some context for drawing on descriptive statistical methods in “qualitative” scholarship, writing “qualitative researchers often quantify social action as part of their interpretive work” (22). In an expansion or revision of this study, I might strive to more completely interweave the quantitative and qualitative aspects of my data so the narrative feels more cohesive rather than conversational (i.e., rather than the quantitative and qualitative data talking with one another, they instead come together to make a single declaration).

I planned to conduct between eight to 10 interviews for my study and ultimately conducted seven. Charmaz writes that “The question of how many interviews a researcher

should conduct pervades qualitative research" (105). In designing my study, I felt that the survey instrument would be the major source of data collection and was not sure exactly how the interview data would fit in to analysis; in some ways, I imagined the interviews as a "safeguard" against a very low response rate and/or insufficient data. During data analysis, it became clear that with the survey and interviews I had an unwieldy amount of data for a dissertation project – a project meant to be contained and, at least in theory, completed in a reasonable timeframe. Were I to expand the study, I may choose to conduct more interviews and/or incorporate the interview data more robustly into my dissertation data chapters. Ultimately, I decided on between eight and 10 interviews based on guidance from my dissertation committee, all experts in qualitative and/or quantitative research methods.

Through these interviews, I was able to gain a more nuanced understanding of participants' affective experiences with socially just classroom assessment, particularly as they navigate bureaucratic limitations or hindrances to their practices. To prepare for the interviews, I developed a semi-structured protocol which I shared with interview participants prior to our meeting so they could familiarize themselves with the questions (see Appendix E). Unlike conducting data collection via a survey instrument, with interviews, I was able to pause, allow for my own and the participants' thinking, and most importantly, to follow up with probing or clarifying questions. In her extensive study of research on writing in religious contexts, Catherine Pavia suggests (and practices) what she calls a "feminist research methodology." This research, she writes, emphasizes researcher reflexivity, attention to positionality, "transparent" scholarship that is explicit about its methods, and "honoring the voices and views of all participants through collaboration" (Pavia 353). Following this, Pavia argues that the

importance of speaking with participants and centering their voices cannot be overestimated, particularly when the research topic is, as socially just assessment is, contested, fraught, or sensitive. Depending on the participants' survey responses, I used particular follow-up questions and allowed for some flexibility in the structure. Therefore, the protocol is a jumping off point, but does not include all possible questions. In general, I asked questions that allowed participants to further describe the stories they tell in their survey responses.

Interviewees were recruited via the survey instrument. Toward the conclusion of the survey, participants were asked: "Are you willing to participate in a follow-up interview to discuss your experiences with socially just assessment? The Zoom interview would be scheduled at your convenience over the next month or two, and would last approximately 45-60 minutes." In my interview invitation, I offered a range of dates and times for participation and explained that the interviews would be held over Zoom; all interviews were conducted in June and July 2021. Eighty-six survey participants volunteered to participate in an interview. From these 86 cases, I compiled a representative group in terms of racial identity, gender identity, position/rank, institution type, region, and degree held. Further, I reviewed open-ended responses to identify those that spoke to themes I knew I was interested in and had observed in the survey data such as labor issues, a focus on students' material conditions, questions about language ideology and politics, and a clear sense either of their assessment philosophy or the questions and reservations they held about their philosophy. I sent 16 invitations overall and heard back from seven individuals who were willing to move forward with the interview process. Of the seven individuals, four identify as women, two as men, and one did not share their gender identity; one teaches at a VHR, four at CCs, and two at RCs; one

individual identifies as Black or African American, one as Black or African American and Native American or Indigenous, one as Latine/x and white, one as Asian or Asian American and white, one as white, one as Asian or Asian American, and one did not share their racial identity. The group of interviewees includes teachers from both the northeast and mideast regions, and includes one adjunct and six full-time employees in various positions including Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, full-time lecturer, and WPA with teaching load.

Data analysis

My data analysis process was iterative and encompassed both qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative analysis was descriptive: I moved through the survey item by item to run frequencies and crosstabs by significant variables. Many scholars have shown us the ways that quantitative research and data has erased and/or harmed populations that have historically been marginalized in the US (e.g., Garcia et al., Lopez et al., Teranishi et al., Zuberi). Violence in the name of "research," "study," and "knowledge" has been enacted in monumentally horrific ways (e.g., the Tuskegee Study) and in more subtle ways such as "outsiders" dropping into communities to "collect" and professionally benefit from the knowledge, experiences, and labor of marginalized communities without giving back to those communities in any material way (e.g., Alice Goffman's much maligned ethnographic study, *On the Run*).[15]

There is also much research and scholarly writing that tells the stories of marginalized communities in ways that decenter imperialist white narratives, makes powerful arguments for

[15] For an incredible and instructive critique of Goffman's work, I suggest Christina Sharpe's piece, "Black Life, Annotated," published in *The New Inquiry* in 2014.

structures, policies, and procedures that address the injustices that impact these communities, and radically reclaims Eurocentric deficit-orientated narratives of non-white and non-middle-class communities. One of the most powerful examples of this with respect to quantitative or empirical data is W.E.B. Du Bois' work presented at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris, France. In their book, *W.E.B. Du Bois' Data Portraits Visualizing Black America: The Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, Whitney Battle-Baptiste and Britt Rusert curate Du Bois' infographics, describing their history and their impact on the understanding of Black history in the US, the field of sociology, meaning-making about Black life and Black resistance, and data visualization. Du Bois' work used US Census data, US Bureau of Labor data, and other governmental data, as well as data collected by researchers at Atlanta University, to create, with a team of Atlanta University sociology scholars, "graphs, charts, maps, and tables" that chronicled African American life in the US (Battle-Baptiste and Rusert 9). Battle-Baptiste and Rusert explain how Du Bois' "investment in a truly public sociology" (13) is reflected in his research process wherein the individuals represented in the data were also researchers for the study, and the "viewers of the infographics and black study participants in the US South come into view as legitimate co-producers of sociological knowledge" (15). Du Bois' work centers the experiences and histories of Black folks in the US and the research contributions of Black scholars. It is a stunning example of how meaning making, even through quantitative data, is informed by one's identity, history, and experiences, and how one can work with data collected through and by white supremacist structures to reclaim and retell the "story" of that data. In this way, as Battle-Baptiste and Rusert write, "data might be reimagined as a form of accountability and even protest" (22).

In the context of higher education, Nancy López et al. give an introduction to "QuantCrit," an "emerging field" that seeks to apply critical race frameworks to the field of statistics and statistical analyses (185). My quantitative analysis is entirely descriptive; I do not conduct inferential analyses and, therefore, much of López et al.'s discussion of statistical modeling does not relate directly to my processes in this dissertation project. However, the framework of their argument, perhaps represented in the "powerful question" they pose, "Data for whom and for what?" certainly inspires my approach to quantitative (and qualitative) data collection (López et al. 185). López et al. demand a rigorous self-reflexivity and a methodological intentionality toward liberatory futures. Similarly, Garcia et al. helpfully outline five "guiding tenets" of the QuantCrit approach to research as delineated by Gillborn et al.:

> (1) The centrality of racism as a complex and deeply rooted aspect of society that is not readily amenable to quantification;
>
> (2) The acknowledgment that numbers are not neutral and they should be interrogated for their role in promoting deficit analyses that serve white racial interests;
>
> (3) The reality that categories are neither 'natural' nor given and so the units and forms of analysis must be critically evaluated;
>
> (4) The recognition that voice and insight are vital: data cannot 'speak for itself ' and critical analyses should be informed by the experiential knowledge of marginalized groups;

(5) The understanding that statistical analyses have no inherent value but they can play a role in struggles for social justice. (151)[16]

These tenets found my approach to analysis, particularly the understanding that numbers and categories are not neutral, and that pervasive structural racism contextualizes all the data I collected, both quantitative and qualitative. Perhaps the most outstanding area of opportunity for this research project lies in #4, above – as my study centers teachers, I did not survey or interview students on their perceptions of how their writing is assessed. As one person conducting dissertation research, I did not have the capacity for a project of this scope. However, an expansion of this study would likely want to consider surveying both teachers and students.

To analyze my quantitative data, I ran frequencies and crosstabs for each survey item. Through my own teaching experience and scholarship in the field, I identified three main variables to run items by: Race, Institution Type, and Rank. As I will discuss in later chapters, there were not enough participants to disaggregate the data by the five racial identity categories provided in my demographic question, "which best described your racial identity?" Therefore, I created a binary "BIPOC/not BIPOC" variable. This is not an ideal approach to attending to the nuanced experiences of basic writing teachers across racial identity. Any time a researcher assigns a new value to (i.e., recodes) information that survey participants have provided, they run the risk of assigning the wrong meaning. In this case, participants self-identified their race; then, I created a new racial identity variable where I included all

[16] Garcia et al. are writing in reference to the special issue of *Race Ethnicity and Education* in which their article appears. They cite Gillborn et al. who are also published in this issue. See bibliography for Gillborn et al. citation.

participants who identified as Black or African American, Latine/x, Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander, and Native American or Indigenous as “BIPOC.” Participants who identified as white (and only as white) were coded as “not BIPOC”; participants who selected “white” and another racial identity were coded as “BIPOC.” BIPOC is a capacious category that problematically assumes a certain level of similarity among all individuals who identify as “non-white.” Using this binary variable does not allow for analysis by individual racial identity, and therefore runs the risk of flattening differences between, for example, how Black basic writing teachers navigate socially just writing assessment and how Latine/x basic writing teachers do the same.

It is not lost on me that, in a project that strives to attend to, among other points, the racial harms caused by traditional writing assessment strategies, it is particularly egregious to have to work with this recoded variable where nuance is collapsed and, worse, I may have misidentified individuals. Using such as binary variable because it is easier or quicker than performing analysis by individual racial identities would be irresponsible and unethical – a decision rooted in racialized efficiency discourse. I made the decision to create this binary variable because the only other option would be to not conduct any analysis of potential difference among racial identity. Weighing these options, the latter seemed much more careless than the former. In an expansion of the study, it would be imperative to intentionally recruit Black and Indigenous teachers and teachers of color, particularly since we know the field of composition and literacy studies is predominantly white. Another revision might be to add a demographic question on racial identity that asks participants if they identify as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color (or, if you anticipate a relatively small number of responses,

one might ask *only* this racial identity question). In this way, the researcher would not have to worry that they are assigning an incorrect racial identity to an individual in the recoding process.

The number of responses also necessitated my creating a binary “Adjunct/Not Adjunct” variable for rank. This process similarly obscures important material differences in the experiences of all who are “not adjunct,” which includes Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, Professors, Writing Program Administrators (WPAs), Full-Time Instructors or Lecturers, and Graduate Student Instructors. For example, we know that a tenured full professor’s ways of moving, doing, and being perceived in the University are quite distinct in some ways from those of WPAs or individuals with “Instructor” titles.

To analyze my qualitative data, I took a descriptive approach that I might characterize as a mix of “inductive” and “In Vivo” (Saldaña 91). I also engaged “process coding,” or the coding of all participants’ open-ended responses as gerunds (Saldaña 96), and “simultaneous coding,” or giving the same unit of data multiple codes (Sandaña 80). As a graduate student scholar-in-training, I was trained in grounded theory methods (particularly in their applications to interview data), and as an applied researcher, I was trained in inductive analysis (particularly in its application to qualitative survey data).[17] Neither approach seemed quite right for my dissertation research and I grappled with how to make accurate and rigorous meaning of my qualitative survey data. Ultimately, I tried to strike a balance, knowing both the limits of

---

[17] In general, I do not think it is helpful to make these kinds of absolute distinctions. Of course, scholarship can be applied. Here, I mean to make the distinction between being trained to create theoretical contributions that might be published in an academic journal, and being trained to create much more truncated “reports” or “briefs” that, instead of being published, would be presented to a University leader to inform a timely decision. The audience and genre of each research occasion are quite different.

qualitative survey data and that the goal was not to create theory but to examine and extend existing arguments around socially just writing assessment. In analyzing the open-ended survey data, I conducted several rounds of coding, feeling my way through various methods and coding strategies until I felt I understood the breadth and depth of the responses and what meaning I could make from them. As Charmaz describes, “Coding means naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data” (111). I am trained in grounded theory and so began by borrowing the strategies of this method. For example, during open coding, I “code[d] with words that reflect action” (e.g., gerunds) in order to avoid coding for “types of people” and, importantly, to keep the analysis as close to the data as possible (116). In this round of coding, analysis happened at the sentence level, or even at the level of phrase, as the goal was to open up or “explod[e]” my data as much as possible (Galman 22). I coded the survey data in SPSS and Excel, and also experimented with Nvivo for some survey items. These initial and recursive rounds of open coding allowed me to familiarize myself with the data on a granular level. However, as stated above, open-ended survey data is generally not robust enough to approach through a grounded theory methodology, and my research questions were not fit for this approach. They were, from the start, designed to yield a broad, practical, and material understanding of basic writing teachers’ lived experiences teaching in this current moment. While certainly these data can be used to inform *both* theory and practice (and perhaps to bridge the two), they are not meant to contribute an innovative or singularly unique theory of socially just writing assessment.

In future chapters, I describe my coding processes for individual open-ended questions (the process details are not necessarily the same from question to question). Overall, across all

questions, after a first round of coding I was left with far too many, and too diverse in terms of type (e.g., attitude, behavior, ideology, action) codes. It was difficult for me to discern how I might make sense of these codes, paying particular attention to the tendency to overstep in my assignment of meaning. One example is in an early code I explored that I called “distancing.” The code came from an early analysis that showed several teachers engaging, in their open-ended responses, what I recognized as a deferral of blame, abdication of responsibility, or “distancing” of themselves from the grading process. My analysis showed variations of related phrases and sentiments such as, “once a student submitted a major writing assignment and it was a non-pass...” and “I recently met with a student who received a low grade on a writing assignment due to misunderstanding a reading that accompanied the assignment.” As these teachers have written it – the paper “was” a non-pass, the student “received” a grade because of their own misunderstanding rather than the teacher’s perception or criticism of their work – it seemed to me that these teachers were positioning the grades as coming from nowhere, having the ability to assign themselves, or having definitions or criteria that they could not change. The teachers themselves, their actions and role in the grading process, are conspicuously absent from these responses: It is as though they have no control over how they assign grades. A paper simply “is” an A, or a C, or an F.

However, early in my coding process as I composed memos, I concluded that this is not a sound or fair assessment of these data. My close-reading approach was not appropriate for the type of data I was working with – it seemed like a bad faith “leap” rather than a rigorously informed finding – and so I left that theme or finding alone along with several others that I determined were more a result of my creative interpretations than what teachers truly meant

to convey in these responses.[18] In my second and third rounds of coding, then, I strove to inhabit a space between the literal/descriptive (e.g., coding nouns, actions, or processes such as "rubric," "conferencing," etc.) and the abstract/interpretive (e.g., "distancing") by coding for values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors I noticed clearly reflected in participants responses (e.g., "language ideology," "race and language") (Saldaña 15). These codes were informed by my initial open coding rounds. For example, I had not expected so many participants to share their struggles around, and orientations toward, what they identified as "non-standard" language and writing. However, I learned through open coding that these ideas appeared frequently, and so I knew to attend to these themes as I continued analysis. As is true throughout this project, my interpretive lens is informed by the social justice theories that I describe in my first chapter and earlier in this chapter.

My analytic processes were messy and not quite like other projects I completed before – not as multi-layered or creative as grounded theory, and not as deductive or applied as the projects I worked on as a research associate. This applies to my interview analysis, as well. Here, I coded at the sentence or multi-sentence level for my research questions broadly: How are participants talking about 1) their struggles or hurdles, 2) their supports, 3) their definition of socially just assessment, 4) their "why" or "aha!" moment (how they came to socially just assessment), 5) their practice (e.g., strategies, activities, grading processes), and 6) their context. My chapters do not include as much of the interview analysis as I initially anticipated

[18] I still believe that basic and college writing teachers (and perhaps teachers in general) tend not to see the level of power they exercise in the classroom. While this is a complicated issue because teachers certainly are overburdened and disrespected – the profession is inarguably devalued and teachers are so often not included in major decision-making about their courses – they do also exercise a great deal of power within their classrooms in relation to their students. One way this power is exercised is through the grading process. When teachers recognize what agency they do have, and join together, we can build momentum toward grading for justice.

they would. As I wrote memos and began initial analysis of the survey data, I realized how "heavy" the study already felt and so the interview data is eclipsed by the qualitative and quantitative survey data. In an expansion of this study, I would strive to more thoroughly incorporate analysis of the seven interviews. However, it is important to note that the interview analysis did not necessarily result in any findings or observations outside of those that the survey analysis garnered. In other words, my interview analysis did not show me anything "new" that I had not seen in the survey analysis apart from, perhaps, insight into teachers' "why" – why they turned to socially just assessment and/or began to question traditional assessment methods. In future chapters I will show examples of these "why's"; in the next chapter, I will discuss teachers' social just assessment philosophies and definitions, and their relationship with the term and concept of "socially just assessment."

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPING AND DEFINING SOCIAL JUSTICE APPROACHES TO WRITING ASSESSMENT

An initial impulse of my dissertation project was to crowdsource possibilities of what social justice in assessment can be in the context of the basic or developmental writing course. As I have written elsewhere in this project, when these writing courses do not give students credit toward degree and/or are required in addition to another mandatory writing course, they typically serve a gatekeeping function despite best intentions on the part of program administrators or teachers. Furthermore, even when basic writing courses are more equitably structured (e.g., studio models, co-requisite models), placement in the course can negatively affect students' sense of self as writers and learners in higher education. This is, traditionally, a course that proposes to remediate students' linguistic and discursive practices when those practices are perceived by writing teachers and administrators as not up to academic English standards. But we know from years of research in composition studies, literacy studies, education, and linguistics that what US formal educational institutions typically call "standard academic English" is a white middle-class English (e.g., Baker-Bell, Flores and Rosa, Horner and Lu, Lyiscott, Matsuda). By design, then, the students who are placed or who place themselves into basic writing courses are often students of color, working class students, and international students – those who have lesser access to and/or a more complicated relationship with white middle-class English. According to research by the American Council on Education (ACE), whereas 40% of white women and 34% of white male students took developmental courses in any subject through 2016-2017, 48% of Black women and 50% of Black male students, and 50% of Hispanic or Latina women and 49% of Hispanic or Latino male students were enrolled in

those same courses (ACE). ACE defines as “remedial or developmental courses” as those "designed to strengthen students’ skills in key subjects such as reading, writing, and math so they can be successful in college-level courses" (ACE).[19]

When placement into basic writing courses negatively affects students' retention, persistence (Bailey et al.; Perin and Holschuh), writing development, and sense of self as learners and knowledge-makers, this is an equity problem. And, in fact, it has been identified as such over and over again throughout the years (e.g., Lamos, Shor, Sternglass, Villanueva). Recently, scholars came together in a special issue of the *Journal of Writing Assessment* to present a "roadmap for writing placement in the two-year college" based on the belief that "an admitted student is a qualified student" (Poe et al., “An Admitted”). Such efforts work to address the inequity that many have observed and described in college writing courses in general and developmental writing courses in particular. My work proposes to make an intervention on the classroom level to complement movements around writing placement equity.

As basic writing teachers, writing program administrators, institutional leaders, and higher education policy makers all weigh in to varying degrees on student writing assessment – with students, and the folks with the most lived experience teaching and working with students, often sidelined – how are basic writing teachers *right now* working within their local contexts to design and implement more equitable assessment for their students? In this chapter, we will gain insight into how the teachers who participated in my study developed or came to their assessment praxis, how they define their assessment praxis, the terms they use

[19] It does not appear that ACE makes distinctions between courses that are credit bearing and those that are not.

to think and talk about their praxis, who they believe the praxis is for, and their criticisms of "socially just assessment" as a term and, in some cases, as a concept.

Those of us working in movements for justice know that change is won in collaboration with others through collective sharing, listening, and organizing. As abolitionist organizer Mariame Kaba says, "Everything worthwhile is done with other people" (Kaba). I endeavor through my research questions to learn from current basic/developmental writing teachers about what they are doing, where they are struggling, and where they are finding hope in their efforts to redress the harm that traditional assessment causes their students. In doing so, I wanted to learn how these teachers see their practice and then share this with the field, thinking through how this knowledge might inform scholarship, training, professional developmental, policy revisions, and broader structural changes related to writing assessment in higher education. I am grateful to the teachers who took the time and energy to participate in my study, and I think of this work as collaborative, if in a modest way. In chapter five, I will discuss a vision for a more organized, deeply collaborative approach to change how we assess writing in colleges and universities.

Here, I offer a few introductory notes to guide my analysis and readers' understanding of it throughout this chapter and those that follow. First, one of the most fascinating, and admittedly frustrating, aspects of my data is that it is not always focused on assessment. Rather, participants' responses to questions, even those that pointedly ask about assessment, are sometimes about pedagogy more broadly: Assignment development, lesson plans, classroom activities, approaches to classroom community and discussion, and general teaching philosophies. I was concerned that this makes my data less substantial, or me less able to

answer my research questions. However, I came to see this as a genuinely compelling phenomenon: Why, when asked "what does 'socially just assessment' mean to you?" did some teachers write not about grading, evaluating, or giving feedback, but instead about general pedagogical approaches?

To me, the two are not interchangeable, and any evaluation practice including formative evaluation is distinct in at least some ways from the work of designing a syllabus, deciding on readings, and planning and implementing a lesson plan. As I have said elsewhere in this dissertation, one reason why conversations about assessment keep me up at night is that, actually, it seems quite difficult for many teachers (sometimes including myself) to carry over their critical, just, or anti-racist *teaching* practice to their *assessment* practice. As I will discuss in chapters four and five, this can sometimes be due to institutional limitations rather than teachers' personal or political orientations or lack of imagination around writing assessment. However, at the same time, some of the participants in my study shared that they find it near impossible to separate their thoughts on assessment from their thoughts on "teaching" more broadly. As one teacher writes,

> I don't know if I can separate socially just 'assessment' from a socially just classroom and approach overall. A socially just approach overall includes creating a safe and equitable classroom environment, understanding and valuing student backgrounds, providing contextually appropriate material, and creating contextually appropriate assignments/assessments. (White adjunct, Very High Research)

Another teacher shares,

> I don't know that I would separate my assessment philosophy from my overall teaching philosophy but words that describe my approach I believe are social justice, equity minded, anti-racist, culturally sustaining and student centered…. (White non-adjunct, Community College)

Ultimately, I decided not to remove from my data set responses that appeared to address teaching overall. As I did not ask participants to define "assessment," and the study was quite clearly focused on assessment, I proceeded with the understanding that whatever participants chose to share was meaningful to them in terms of assessment.

I was adamant about designing a study that utilized random sampling techniques to recruit participants from a broad range of institutions and geographical areas. In the second chapter, I detail the methods I engaged to design a stratified random sampling process, including the flaws of this process. I feel it is overall a strength of this study, and so in this chapter and in those that follow, when discussing participants' responses, I include participants' institutional category, racial identity, and rank/role. Generally, I do this only for lengthy quotations (i.e., block quotes or quotes I have chosen to set apart) as these typically are robust enough, or significant enough, that it feels important to note these demographic data – the meaning one can make from reading these responses is enriched through knowledge of their institutional location, racial identity, and rank. I exercise discretion in terms of how many of these categories I provide, prioritizing anonymity. The breakdown of number of participants by institution type, state, and region is as follows. See chapter two for more detail about my selection and sampling processes.

Type	CT	MA	ME	NH	RI	VT	DE	MD	NJ	NY	PA	DC	Total
CC	10	16	1	-	1	1	-	14	2	40	7	3	97*
RC	-	4	3	-	-	-	3	-	5	12	5	-	33*
HBCU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	2	3	14
VHR	13	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	2	6	0	42

Table 5: Participants by Institution Type, State, and Region
* Accounts for those cases where the exact institution is unknown.

Developing practice

In my survey, one of the first questions I asked participants is: "Indicate how impactful the following resources, activities, and/or experiences have been to you personally in developing your current understanding of what socially just assessment in your basic writing course looks like." Through this question, I was hoping to get at a sense of how participants came to their praxis.

In her article, "Writing While Black: The Colour Line, Black Discourses and Assessment in the Institutionalization of Writing Instruction," Carmen Kynard demands a kind of change to postsecondary writing instruction beyond the usual calls to revise what she calls the "pragmatic issue[s]" such as “progressive pedagogies, research-based writing instructional methods, effective writing program administration, or professional policy/position statement-making” (11). These issues, she argues, are reflective of a "specific social order that the disciplines maintain" through making incremental, surface-level changes to these issues rather than digging deep into major systemic overhauls (11). In Chapter Five, I will further discuss insights into how our discipline maintains white supremacist logics, drawing on the work of Alexis Pauline Gumbs and Yanira Rodríguez.

Kynard insists that without addressing this social order and the "ideological issue[s] endemic" to it, additive revisions will only do so much to address linguistic injustice, anti-Blackness, racism, and classism in the composition classroom and the University more broadly (11). Kynard calls us to "imagine an altogether new goal and vision" (22). Those of us who have served on committees related to writing curriculum, writing teacher education, and kindred topics can likely understand Kynard's argument by recalling all the times that we wondered how much we could push and what we had the ability to revise, only to be told "not much," and to then be left frustrated and tired. Perhaps after much discussion and navigation of bureaucracies, we came up with a professional development event that left us wanting for a much more direct intervention into the racist and classist harms that language and literacy instruction can enact.

The "deep change" that Kynard wants is not, as she puts it, a change rooted in what instructors and WPAs "do *not* know" (22). It is not only a matter of not knowing. It is more chillingly what they *do* know – which is, as Kynard describes it, a discipline and classroom approach that has "required these students' denigration as part of its everyday functioning" (22). Kynard says that the changes will ultimately be led by student protesters, "alongside the radical teachers, secondary and post-secondary, who will have their backs" (23). As I will argue throughout this dissertation, organizing and protest, and solidarity among students, faculty, and staff, is absolutely necessary for winning any kind of transformative change in the university. I agree with Kynard's argument that these changes should and will be more focused on larger university structural issues such as "curriculum and extracurricular activities, hiring practices, faculty salaries, and the intellectual/political energy" on campus (23). Basic writing

teachers intent on making policy-level interventions into inequitable and unjust writing assessment praxis will not be able to accomplish this work alone – as at least one of my interviewees acknowledged. However, it is still important to know what individual basic writing teachers are already doing, and what they are struggling with, as a “temperature check” into the conditions in which teachers are pushing back and beginning to organize.

In asking participants about the resources, activities, and experiences (what I will call “resources/ experiences”) that have been most impactful to their assessment praxis, I strove to learn a bit about how participants came to critically reflect on traditional assessment – to push through, for example, an institutional environment that, in order to persist, typically resists any movement toward deep change (e.g., Bose, Kannan et al). Where did participants begin the process of developing their definitions of socially just assessment? What led them to push back in a current higher educational context that rewards faculty and students who keep their heads down and don't get too political (or only do so "politely" and on university leadership’s terms)?

Participants indicated that the most impactful experience was, by far, their interactions with their students. Eighty-three percent of participants said that their interactions with students were "very impactful" to their development of their current understanding of assessment in their classrooms. The second most impactful experience was engagement with their students' feedback on assessment, which 51% of participants said was "very impactful." Figure 2 shows the full breakdown of the level of impact participants indicated each resource, activity, and/or experience had on their assessment practice. The figure excludes those who said they did not engage with that resource, and is arranged by the percentage of participants who said a resource was "very impactful." The resources least likely to be described as "very

impactful" are teacher training offered by participants' departments or institutions, conversations with friends and/or family, and undergraduate or graduate coursework. For each of these resources/experiences, 20% or more of participants indicated they were "not impactful," and less than 40% indicated they were "very impactful."

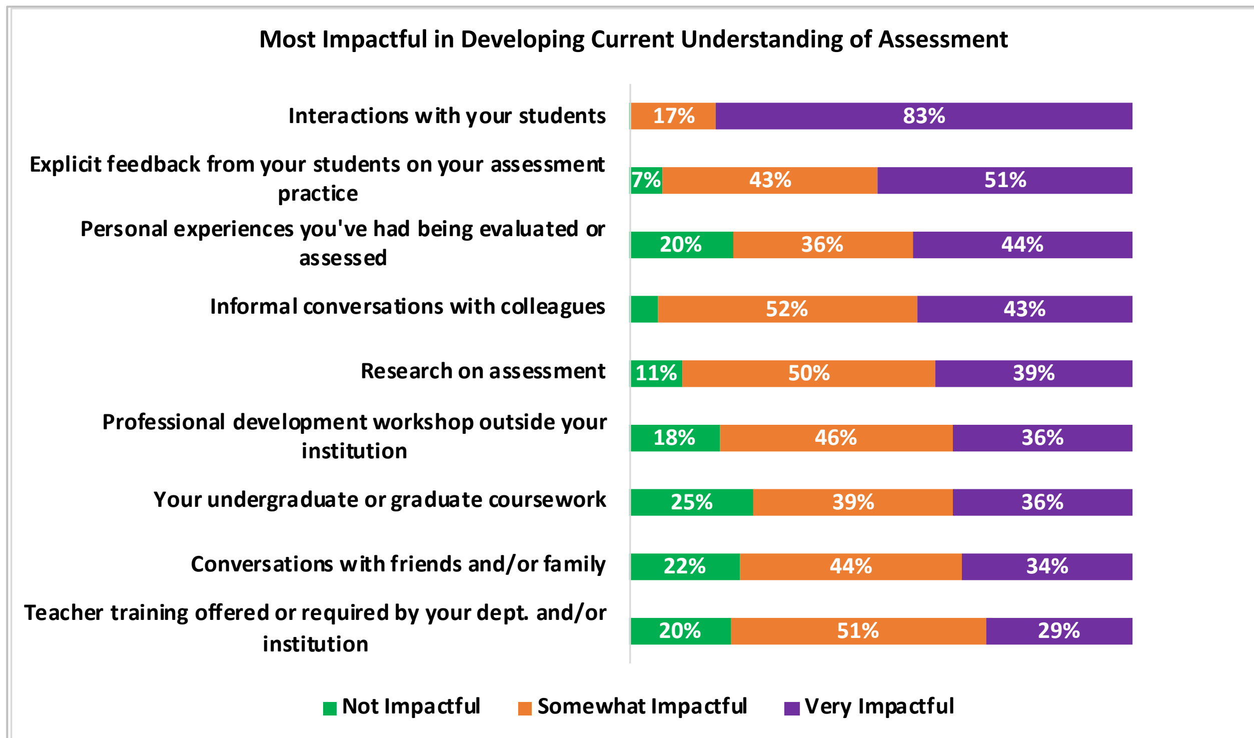

Figure 2: Items Most Impactful in Development of Participants' Current Understanding of Assessment Organized by "Very Impactful"

Figure 3, below, shows each resource/experience by "not impactful" in descending order. This figure in conversation with Figure 2 shows the complicated role that "personal experiences you've had being evaluated or assessed" may play in teachers' development of their assessment practice. Here, while 20% of participants say this experience is "not impactful" 40% say it is "very impactful." This resource/experience seemed to elicit a more divergent reaction from participants than others where, generally, higher percentages of "not impactful" are associated with lower percentages of "very impactful." For example, each of the bottom

three resources/experiences in Figure 2 has a 20% or more "not impactful" rating, and the only other resource/experience with this rating is "personal experiences you've had being evaluated or assessed," which is in the top three *most* impactful.

When looking more closely at participants' responses to the "personal experiences being assessed" question, there are stark differences in participants' responses in terms of their racial identities. Specifically, there is a 24 percentage point difference between the percent of white participants who indicated their personal experiences being assessed were "very impactful" (36%) and the percent of BIPOC participants who indicated the same (60%). Interestingly, there is no significant difference between the percentage of BIPOC participants who indicated personal experiences being assessed were “not impactful” to the development of their assessment praxis (16%) and white participants who indicated the same (18%). Aside from the top two resources/experiences (interactions with and explicit feedback from students), personal experiences being assessed was the resource/experience that BIPOC participants indicated was most impactful. For white participants, the third most highly rated resource/experience was informal conversations with colleagues. For both BIPOC and white basic writing teachers, teacher training and professional development workshops outside your institutions were in the bottom three least likely to be described as "very impactful" to participants' development of their socially just assessment practice. Coursework and research on assessment play a middling role for both BIPOC and white teachers.

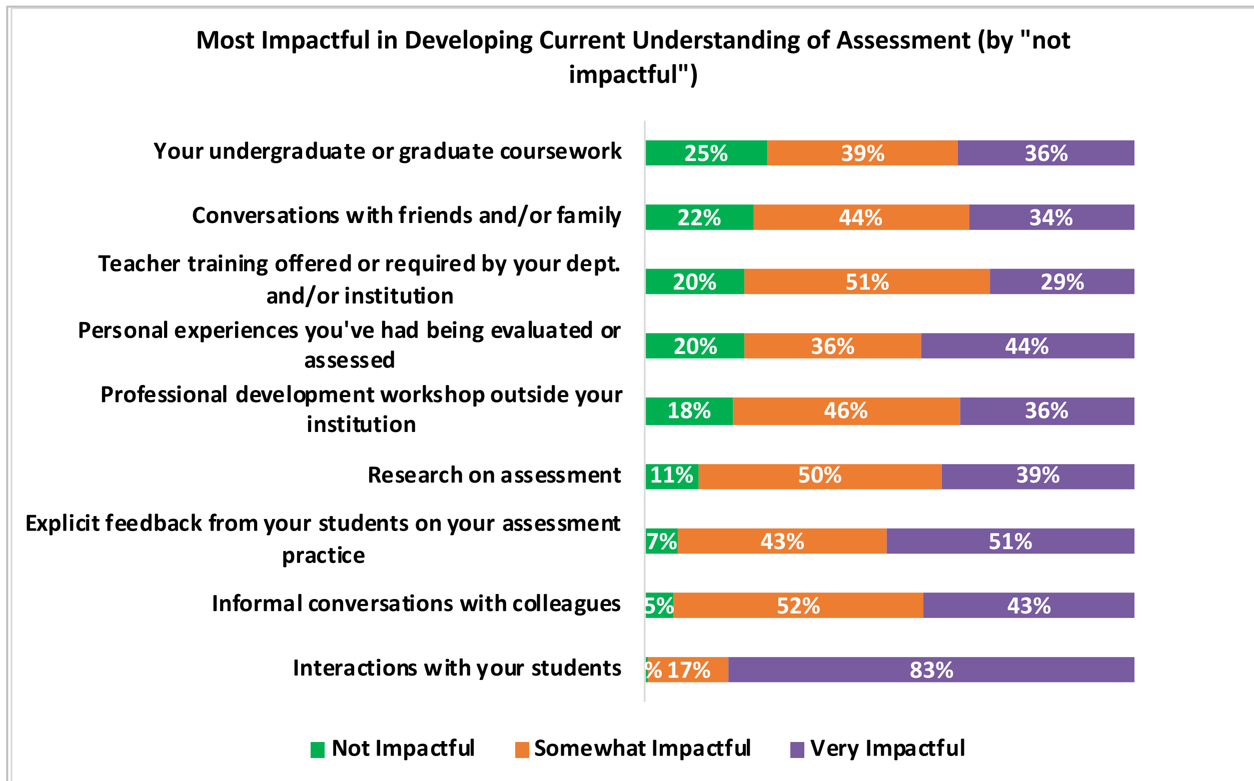

Figure 3: Items Most Impactful in Development of Participants' Current Understanding of Assessment Organized by "Not Impactful"

Participants tell us that their time with their students – either their everyday interactions with students, or their engagement with students' feedback on their assessment practice – is the most significant factor in how they came to their current assessment approach. This relates to how teachers define their practice – which I will discuss in a following section – in terms of getting to know students, building relationships with students, individualizing how they assess students, and taking into account students' unique educational histories, identities, and current material circumstances. It makes sense that teachers who value an individualized and student-centered approach to assessment would value so highly their engagement with students. In general, in this question, participants seem to reflect Kynard's view that resources such as professional development, training, and even coursework are meaningful (36% of

participants indicated that professional development was "very impactful," for example) but nowhere near as informative or compelling as on the ground time spent with students.

This may let administrators know where to direct energies in their efforts to overhaul their assessment approaches, and it may indicate that further research on socially just assessment must center student voices. It may also mean that adding another required or strongly encouraged professional development or training may not be the most strategic use of already overworked teachers' time. Instead, resources may be put into avenues that allow teachers to spend more time with, and to reflect more intentionally on, students and their perspective. Again, this change would need to happen on the higher, policy level – teachers cannot simply free up time in their calendars. They would need fewer or different administrative or service requirements, fewer or different research requirements, smaller teaching loads, funds to mentor students, incentives to keep a reflective teaching journal, greater emphasis on teaching in tenure review, etc. All changes that teachers cannot make individually and would likely need to advocate for as a collective.

The percentage of participants who indicate that their time with students and students' feedback on their assessment praxis is "very impactful" does not vary much across institution type, though it is worth noting that instructors at Very High Research institutions were significantly less likely than Community College instructors to say interactions with students were "very impactful." This may reflect the commitments, and the distribution of responsibilities, that instructors at Very High Research institutions typically hold. For example, teachers at teaching-intensive institutions such as community colleges likely hold responsibilities that are mainly student-facing, and would have more time for interacting with

students than those at institutions where responsibilities are distributed in other ways (e.g., research, administration). At the same time, it is worth noting that instructors at VHR institutions are slightly more likely than CC instructors to indicate that explicit feedback from students is “very impactful” to the development of their socially just assessment practice. Figure 4 and Figure 5 show levels of impact broken down by institution type.[20]

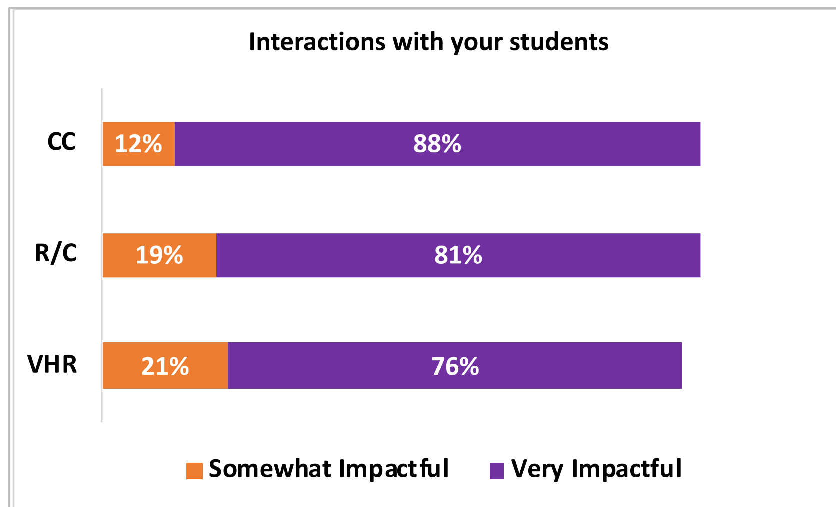

Figure 4: Impact of Interactions with Students on Participants’ Current Understanding of Assessment by Institution Type

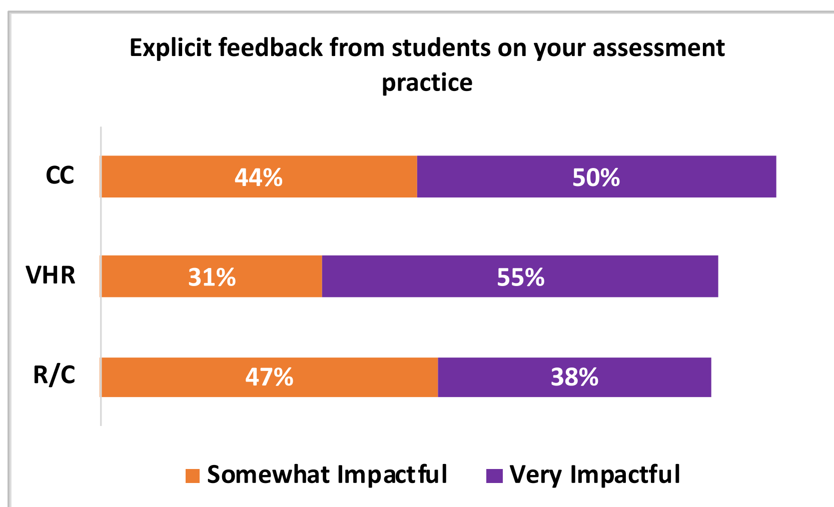

Figure 5: Impact of Explicit Feedback from Students on Participants’ Current Understanding of Assessment by Institution Type

[20] The n for HBCUs is unfortunately too small to include in comparison (<10).

In general, when looking at the percent of participants who rated any resource/ experience either "very" or "somewhat" impactful by gender, there were only small differences with the exception of two items: Women were more likely than men to say that professional development events were very or somewhat impactful (W=72%; M=54%), and men were more likely than women to say that undergraduate or graduate coursework on assessment was very or somewhat impactful (W=67%; M=82%). When looking at the same ratings ("very" or "somewhat" impactful together – not isolating for "very" impactful) by race, differences are also slight except in three categories: Explicit feedback from students on assessment (BIPOC=100%; White=89%), conversations with friends/family (BIPOC=92%; White=72%), and professional development events (BIPOC=88%; White=64%).

In interviews, some participants described a specific catalyzing moment that shifted, or helped articulate, their socially just perspective on writing assessment. For instance, one participant who took part in an interview, Bob, shared a glimpse into his time as a graduate student grading papers under a faculty supervisor.[21] Bob identifies as white and Latine/x and is an instructor at a community college. He shares details about his experiences when he was a Teaching Assistant (TA) assessing papers for the first time and struggling to come to any grade-based conclusions:

> I think the first time I knew that I needed to assess differently was in grad school actually when I was grading the first set of papers... I had to grade some literature papers as a TA. It was old school elite college kind of thing. The prompt was two

[21] Pseudonyms are used throughout the dissertation for all interview participants. Because I tend to cite these participants throughout the dissertation, and because I met and spoke with these participants, I chose to refer to them by name (i.e. pseudonym) both for continuity and to honor our conversation.

> sentences basically and we'd read a novel, and go ahead, write. And so then when I sat down to grade it, I was like, 'Oh yeah, this is a good paper.' Is it an A paper? Is it a B paper? I have no idea. So I had to go and sit down with the professor... She was like, 'Well, I mean, you know, don't you? Does it feel like an A? Does it feel like a B?' I was like, 'Uh... they all feel like A's then.' She's like, 'Yeah, that's fine. They can all be A's if you think they're all A's, but are they going to be A's all semester? Which students need to work more?' *So it ended up being this thing where it was a puzzle and we were trying to figure out what message needed to be sent to each student with what grade, and it just didn't feel like that was the best way to do things*. (Bob, emphasis added)

For Bob, the opaque "puzzle" of grading – where the only requirement is "feel"ing your way to the letter grade – was not something he wanted to participate in. Though he had little experience grading, he recognized that the process laid out by his faculty supervisor was arbitrary and likely unjust. The combination of the traditional letter grading system, and, perhaps even more importantly, the processes used to arrive at the letter grade (i.e., a single teacher's feelings), did not "do students justice," to use a phrase he invokes at a different point in our interview.

Two other participants share that it is not just one moment, but an accumulation of their own experiences as women of color in academia that informs their choices to explore more just writing assessment practices for their students. One participant, Nancy, identifies as an Asian American woman, and is an instructor at a HBCU.[22] Her institution serves mainly students of color, and Nancy describes her students as "cosmopolitan," "working-class and

[22] "Nancy" is a pseudonym.

middle-class" and "looking to get an affordable college education while expanding the boundaries of what they have conventionally learned in the K through 12 curriculum, wherever they are coming from."

Nancy shares that her work to disrupt "European male, white writers" at "the center of the curriculum and the teaching modules" is a crucial part of her pedagogy. This grew from her experiences as a graduate student and, now, a faculty member navigating conservative colleagues. Nancy explains,

> For me, inclusivity would mean, again, decentering what I have learned and how I have learned what I have learned. I am coming from a background where European male, white writers were the center of the curriculum and the teaching modules that I was most familiar with. I could rattle out "Daffodils" by William Wordsworth without knowing what they meant and how they look like, because daffodils did not grow in [country name], where I had gotten my elementary and early college education in. In grad school when I had immigrated, I did not quite realize what "antebellum" meant, because I was primarily in a majority serving institution that of course did not have teachers who would refer [ ] you to generational traumas, that is connected with that history, who would connect you to the understanding of what reparations meant.... (Nancy)

Nancy shares how her own education was built on and perpetuated white logics from her elementary to postsecondary education, across continents and subject matter. This was an alienating experience for her, and one that she actively interrupts with her own students. Later in the interview Nancy says explicitly, "I got very little support as an international student in a

primarily white institution. I want to break that chain. I want to break that chain," repeating her final sentence for emphasis.

In an interview, Diane, a developmental writing teacher who identifies as a Black woman and is an instructor at a Very High Research institution, also shared insight into how her personal experiences affected her pedagogical choices in the developmental writing classroom.[23] Diane invokes Carmen Kynard and her use of the phrase "hush harbors" to describe areas of sanctuary and solidarity for Black faculty, saying,

> Oh, man. I'm so thankful for my professor at [school] who really saw something in me and my writing... She really encouraged me to trust in and believe in my teacher voice... I have other people that I have sought out at this school who are great, who are absolutely great... Carmen Kynard calls them "hush harbors," and as a person of color I need a hush harbor, because my experience as a person of color is invariably different from a person who's not. I have found people who I trust.... (Diane)

These are mentors who, for example, have introduced Diane to some of the scholars whom she names as informing her teaching and assessing work, such as Carmen Kynard, Jamila Lyiscott, and April Baker-Bell. Reading these scholars' work and synthesizing their arguments with her own experiences led Diane to think about how she can create similar conversations, and introduce similar ideas, in her developmental writing classrooms: "I started figuring out, how can I give this experience to my students, who can begin looking at language and identity and how one's language situates them within society." This results in Diane working to design her own assignments and assessment practices from within what she described as a fairly strict,

[23] "Diane" is a pseudonym.

standardized, and conservative department. Chapter Five will discuss more of the hurdles and limitations that developmental writing teachers face when attempting to enact non-traditional assessment praxis. The following section will discuss how teachers define their philosophy or approach to socially just assessment – how they see it, imagine it, and/or understand it.

Definitions and terms

In my survey instrument I included a question that asked participants to share their approach to socially just assessment: "In your own words, how would you describe your approach to socially just assessment in your basic writing course? In other words, what does "socially just assessment" mean to you as you practice it in your basic writing course?" One hundred fifty-eight individuals responded to this question. Participants' definitions of their writing assessment praxis tend to describe how they approach and respond to, in their feedback, grading, and relationship-building, 1) perceived difference in their writing classrooms, and 2) perceived injustices in the assessment process. Participants discuss, for example, students' differing levels of previous academic preparation, different levels of facility with academic English, different racial and class identities, different economic circumstances, different family care situations, different levels of access to technology, and different experiences in the K-12 education system. Similarly, participants define their approach as growth or success oriented – as centering students and "meeting them where they are at." Definitions, then, were generally articulated in terms of what teachers feel needs to be addressed or redressed.

Overall, many of the teachers in my study defined their approach in terms of an awareness of the perceived differences listed above, sharing that their assessment practice

hinges upon an attention to these differences. In their definitions, teachers frequently used phrases such as "meet students where they're at," "take into account," “keep in mind,” "take into consideration," "understand," "regardless of," “be aware” or have “awareness,” and "level the playing field" to describe how they believe their assessment practice is different from “traditional” assessment practice. For example, one developmental writing teacher describes their approach as follows:

> I tend to conceptualize my approach to assessment in terms of supporting the growth of my students (though my understanding of what this means is significantly informed by a social justice framework). One way of characterizing what this means is would be to say that it involves approaching assessment in terms of door-opening instead of gate-keeping. An important part of that is practicing unconditional acceptance of where my students are at now.... (Adjunct, Community College, racial identity not provided)

This teacher’s description of how they define their assessment practice implies that a different kind of assessment – perhaps a standard or traditional kind of assessment – *is* “gate-keeping” and *does not* accept “unconditionally” how students enter the writing classroom. Similarly, another instructor writes,

> ... [F]or me it means a deemphasis on Standard Written ("Standard White") English as the only acceptable form of communication in student writing and opportunities for inclusion by making sure every assignment considers multiple measures of student growth in the classroom. (White non-adjunct, Community College)

Echoing what Nancy shared in her interview, as summarized above, this instructor defines their assessment practice in terms of “deemphasizing” whiteness. They also, similar to

many others, take student “growth” as central to their definition. Some participants write more pointedly about student identity, for example, "Socially just assessment means taking into consideration students' intersectional identities and creating opportunities for them to succeed in a variety of low-stakes and high-stakes assignments,” or, "I take into account all aspects of my students to ensure inclusion," and "In general it’s important to me to take into account my students’ backgrounds and linguistic identities when evaluating their writing." The first participant goes on to share, "It means focusing on … achieving learning outcomes where everyone succeeds. It also means that I have to recognize some of my own unconscious social biases." For this participant, like others, designing socially just assessment is a multi-pronged endeavor which includes getting to know students and their lived experiences, designing student-centered and success-oriented learning outcomes, and identifying and reflecting on their own biases. Overall, the participants quoted above write to an awareness of the ways other approaches to assessment are not growth-oriented, act as a gate-keeping mechanism, do not affirm students’ identities, experiences, and knowledges, center whiteness and white English, and are not inclusive. They define their practice in opposition to this, describing their approaches as redressing these more exclusionary, discouraging, and inequitable approaches.

Sometimes, teachers shared details on what, exactly, they believe they need to cultivate an awareness around. And, sometimes, these definitions may reflect approaches that are potentially deficit-minded. For example, one participant writes

> My approach foregrounds and addresses awareness of cultural differences and impact of uneven preparedness related to economic and social inequality of access to educational resources and experiences. It is nonjudgmental and emphasizes respectful

> feedback and attention to specific skills and strategies for improving performance on the well-defined tasks of the course. (White non-adjunct, Regional Comprehensive)

In their response, this teacher shares that they define their practice as one that is "aware" of “differences” in both culture and "preparedness." This instructor acknowledges the structures that contribute to differential access to educational opportunities while also framing their response in terms of “uneven preparedness.”

Sometimes, the thing that teachers express “taking into account” is difference (or perceived difference) in student identity and what many teachers simply referred to as "circumstances" or "backgrounds." For example, one participant writes, "Through surveys and questionnaires at the beginning of the semester, I try to understand the circumstances and challenges faced by students…" while another shares,

> Much of [socially just assessment practice] involves self-reflection and checking for implicit biases, while weighing student work against one another to assure that the grade is based as much on the work itself rather than outside factors. In the classroom specifically, it is tailoring materials to a wider variety of backgrounds and life experiences, not shying away from difficult conversations, and attempting to give everyone the opportunity to give their own assessment. (White adjunct, Regional Comprehensive)

Here, the teacher refers to "outside factors," "backgrounds," and "life experiences" to indicate perceived difference between students' lived experiences and the material conditions they navigate – and, crucially for this project, how they see these perceived differences affecting how they assess students’ writing and success in their course.

For participants who foreground student growth and success, in their definitions, success might look like increased confidence, improved ability to engage in the writing process, greater facility with writing prose, increased engagement in the course or at school in general, and more. (A closer look at how participants see success in their writing assessment praxis is spotlighted below.) Teachers are looking to build assessment practices that address social, economic, and educational inequities by supporting, not gatekeeping, students. At the same time that teachers may be articulating a resistance to assessment as gatekeeping, they may be reinforcing a reliance on the concept of "preparedness." For example, one participant writes,

> ... [I] want my developmental course to open the path, not function as another gate-keeping obstacle. That means students need to get through, and hopefully with a grade that cushions their GPA, but they also need to be prepared for all that follows. I want to boost their confidence and sense of belonging, but only partially through my belief in them – and much more so because of their displayed competence. If they are academically underprepared, that means their FYW course has to function as double of what it has to do for the college-level course. I cannot inflate their grade or their confidence/ self-awareness simply because our society has failed them before our encounter. But I also will not punish them for where they are at when they enter. So, I (I guess we would say "formatively") assess in ways that let students know where they are meeting and not meeting my expectations, and as long as they engage, they get "credit" for that. (White adjunct, Community College)

In their response, this teacher shows that they believe the classroom is not a neutral space, or a space that all students move into and through with the same level of ease. Others in

composition and literacy studies such as Julie Jung in her article “Systems Rhetoric: A Dynamic Coupling of Explanation and Description" and Vani Kannan, Ben Kuebrich, and Yanira Rodríguez in their article "Unmasking the Corporate-Military Infrastructure: Four Theses," turn to Sara Ahmed's analysis in her foundational work, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, to describe the halting, and the heaviness, of navigating institutional life as a racially and/or economically marginalized individual. Many of the participants in my study demonstrate a recognition that their students navigate the physical classroom space, and the work of their courses, differently.

Many participants, in their definitions, were taking up Sternglass' now decades-old call to get to know students. What we have seen since *A Time to Know Them* was published, however, is that simply getting to know students – learning about their circumstances, for example – does not necessarily have positive implications for a more just kind of assessment. To once again evoke Kynard, sometimes it’s not that teachers need to know more, it’s that they need to un-know much of what they take as truth. Additionally, getting to know students is tricky business that often asks students to be vulnerable with teachers in an already uneven power dynamic. The problem is that the relationships are not always authentic. I am reminded of a passage in Deborah Mutnick's classic text on the basic writing course, *Writing in an Alien World: Basic Writing and the Struggle for Equality in Higher Education.* Mutnick interviews eight students about their time in a large, urban university as they work their way through basic writing coursework (xxi). One student, Mutnick writes, disappears from her study under troublesome circumstances: “I never saw or heard from Ethel again. All I have are her papers, her interview transcript, responses to her writing from several teachers, my memories of our

brief encounters, the image of her apartment building baking in the hot sun, and my questions about her evasiveness her acute shyness, and her retreat from me and the university" (107). This is, plainly, not a "typical," healthy relationship. If your friend or loved one (not research participant, student etc.) suddenly stopped communicating with you during a time of trouble for them, you likely would not be satisfied with radio silence.

This is not a critique of Mutnick – she of course does not claim to be "friends" with her participants. It is, though, an example of how difficult it is to build actual community and solidarity in the classroom between teachers and students. It brings to question the meaning of responsibility in our relationships with others – what do we owe folks, how do we build ethical relationships with others, and how can we walk alongside our students and their struggles rather than extract or infantilize? By contrast, some participants wrote explicitly about critiquing "academic" discourse and refusing standards:

> It means constantly reflecting on the way in which the standards measure proximity to whiteness and therefore white supremacy instead of writing acuity and progress in thought development. It means finding ways to allow students to maintain their voice in academic settings while still helping them to learn standard English/English grammar. It also means adjusting my rubrics and assignments to acknowledge this shift.
> (BIPOC non-adjunct, Community College)

> I view "socially just assessment" as strategies that evade the hierarchical logic undergirding 'traditional' grading metrics. By now it is well documented that techniques like grading scales overwhelming reward students with access to more resources due to

> accidents of birth, and thus replicate class, race, and gender inequalities. Therefore, "socially just assessment" is partially a set of strategies reacting against this historic systematized inequality; but it must also be driven by a politics toward a world that guarantees universal human dignity. Here, I think that means helping people fulfill their desires rather than making them prove their worth. (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

Grappling with terms: Intersections of uncertainty and ambivalence

In their chapter – which I cite in my introduction and which heavily influences the way I approach my project – Tuck and Yang write on the messy process of sorting out and through terminology. Meaning and practice, and how we associate them with various terminologies, are highly contextually dependent. How we came to a term, how our communities engage a particular term, the studies we have done, the mentors, family, and friends we talk with, and our political commitments all influence the meaning we find in terms as diffuse as "social justice," "equity," "access," anti-racism," and others. As Tuck and Yang say, this is not necessarily a bad thing: "complete clarity and consistency," they say, is "boring" (2). They suggest adopting a position informed by what I would describe as trust and shared values: "Sometimes, it is good just to say, 'I feel what you are trying to say with those words and it does not matter that I use those words with a different meaning'" (Tuck and Yang 2). Also important here is their argument that over-defining can have a destabilizing effect not just on the term but on the movement it is associated with. Tuck and Yang write,

> In prior writings, we have looked closely at terms, wondering what others mean by them, what we mean by them, and the work those terms can and cannot do … We are

> trying very hard to not make this our thing, that we take a word that means a great deal to conversations in the field of education that have otherwise been shut down, and then write into it so heavily that the term dematerializes. While this type of analysis has its uses, we are trying to avoid dematerializing the term 'justice,' for now. We do not want to turn justice into a fugitive subject which cannot be known and fully described. It is not mysterious. (Tuck and Yang 2)

I am quite sensitive to this impulse and take my direction from Tuck, Yang, and others who have written on the slipperiness of these terms which are all, at the same time, rooted and imagined, current and aspirational, possible and beyond possibility. "It is not mysterious" is a powerful refrain. As teachers committed to working toward – not just thinking about – socially just and abolitionist futures in higher education, we must take care to remind ourselves that others will try to stymie or confuse our work by claiming it is too theoretical, too abstract, not grounded. My study shows that the work basic writing teachers are doing is actually quite grounded – they literally detail what they do, where their time and energy goes, the changes they have made to their assessment praxes. In line with this attention to practice and application, then, many participants expressed an ambivalence to terminology.

One of the first questions on the survey was: "You have identified through the previous questions as a basic writing teacher whose classroom assessment practices are influenced by a social justice framework. But, this does not mean all who participate prefer the term 'socially just' or 'social justice' when describing their assessment philosophy and practice.
What term(s) do you prefer to use, and why?" Ninety-four percent (n=179) of participants responded to this question. Participants wrote an average of 39 words for this response. Many

of the responses were "straight-forward" in that a participant simply wrote, for example, "I use the term 'social justice.'" This was by design – since I saw the development of the survey and its sampling process as somewhat of a pilot of, perhaps, a more major undertaking in the future, I designed the question to guide participants to writing as much, or as little, as they liked. In future iterations of the survey, I do not believe I would ask participants about terminology because, overall, participants seemed the least engaged with this open-ended question.

When coding this question in a first closely descriptive round, there were 556 total codes including several duplicates. The purpose of this round of coding was to stay as close to the data as possible, and so the proliferation of codes reflects my initial recording of, for example, both "equity" and "equitable" as separate codes. To organize my analysis, I then sorted the codes alphabetically and decided to combine those that were closely related (e.g., equity/equitable, antiracist/antiracism). After this process there were 218 codes. These codes represent various levels of interpretation. Some mark the keywords participants used (e.g., “celebrate,” “underprepared”), others are more interpretive (e.g., “content over form”), and others reflect the exact words that participants used (e.g., "equity," "inclusive"). At times, participants' responses to this open-ended question blended into their responses to the following question, which asks participants to provide a definition of their assessment philosophy. For this reason, I choose to analyze and report on these responses together.

The data on how participants engage with terminology around social justice and writing assessment show a rich range of perspectives. On one end of the continuum, there are participants who are openly resistant to the term and its associated practices, as will be discussed in a following section:

> Writing has nothing to do with social justice. (Adjunct, Community College, Racial identity not provided)

On the other end of the continuum there are participants calling for decolonial work in basic writing:

> Inclusive or de-colonized. My course texts, assessments, and feedback de-center white, deficit model, colonized approaches, and instead, focus on cultural relevance to my students' lives experiences, and caters to students' strengths and acquired English skill sets. (White adjunct, Community College)

Of the 179 teachers who responded to this question, approximately 40% wrote that they accepted and/or use the term social justice when thinking or talking through their assessment practices. I write “and/or” because many participants simply wrote the words “social justice,” making it difficult to know if they were enthusiastic about the term or simply accepted it as one among many given the dearth of a more appealing discourse.

Several participants wrote that they preferred, or used together with social justice, the term “equity.” For example, Table 6 below represents a range of six responses that name the term “equity.” In this range we see preferences, tendencies, and ambivalences toward the process of articulating a preferred terminology. We also see across all responses a broad focus on how participants associate the terms with their practice or student outcomes. Some participants give an indication of how they see students, and who they believe social justice is for – a discussion I will have later. For instance, as I wrote above, participants see students as having “barriers” or unequal opportunities and imagine their assessment practices as a response to this (e.g., to “equaliz[e] playing fields”). The participant response appears on the

left, and on the right is a brief schema showing how each response relates to students (if applicable) and to “social justice."

Participant Response	Summary of Response
“I tend to use 'equity-based'. I do respond to 'socially just', though, because in some ways it gets at why equity is important to me – I want students who have barriers to be able to succeed as much as possible.”	SJ and equity get at similar outcomes for students; students have barriers.
“I prefer ‘equitable’ because it is about equalizing opportunities, equalizing playing fields, and equalizing content and assessment.”	SJ and equity emphasize different outcomes for students; students have unequal opportunities.
“The term used most frequently where I teach is equity. And equity is used in referring not just to social justice, but to all relevant factors impacting our students.”	SJ is more limiting and/or restrictive in its scope; students have “factors” impacting them.
“I use the term equitable often as a stand in for socially just.”	SJ and equity are interchangeable in meaning.
“I prefer the term ‘equity’ as it, in my understanding, indicates the possibility of equality for everyone in the classroom.”	SJ and equity emphasize different outcomes for students; students do not have equality in the classroom.
“As a community college professor, I find that social class and dimensions of identity difference are ever-present in the classroom. Social justice and equity are commons terms I use in my courses as a means of opening up conversations about challenges often faced by first-generation, first-time college students of all ages.”	SJ and equity are used together and/or interchangeably; students experience challenges.

Table 6: Terms Participants Prefer when Engaging Social Justice Approaches to Writing Assessment

Approximately 10% of participants wrote that they are unsure of what "socially just assessment" means, do not have a preference for terms, and/or are guided much more by their

"desires" in terms of practice than by the particularities of a terminology. For example, one participant writes,

> I have not thought about applying a single term to my practice. I am guided by a desire to create assessment practices that enable all students to engage as fully as possible with the course material and to have the opportunity to succeed in the course, with the understanding that 'success' means something different to each student. Maybe the terms I'd use are equity and accessibility? (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

This searching – phrases such as "maybe I'd use this?" – is present throughout several of the responses to this question as participants, in general, seek to complicate a single term and to let their practice guide them to the language they engage around non-traditional assessment. As another participant writes, "I don't put a label on the assessments. Sometimes these labels are pretentious - or at least thrown around to sound a particular way" (White non-adjunct, Community College). This participant and others seem to be bringing up the ways "social justice" can begin to sound like jargon, and this will be discussed in a later section on critiques.

Relatedly, some teachers simply were not interested in, as I say above, parsing terms – this is not an exercise relevant to their practice. As one participant, Nancy, said in her interview, "My definitions are shifting and expanding. I don't have a fixed vocab or glossary in which I'd try to contain [my practices]." Others wrote that they "do not have a preference," "do not have a name for it," or are "not really sure what [I] mean by 'socially just assessment practices.'" Another participant writes, "I am not sure that I have any particular terms. I try to adjust for prior exposure and preparation when I set my expectation for students." One participant writes that they prefer to engage with the terms that their students use: "I'm not sure what I prefer,

students often have their own terms, words like – oppression, rights, equality, prejudice, woke and many others come up." This participant is one of a few who indicate that they tailor their language – the ways they frame their approach to the writing classroom and/or the content of their course – based on their students' perceived attitudes toward and/or experiences with social justice-related readings and work. For example, as we will see in an upcoming section, one teacher shares that, because many of their students identify as "conservative," he is quite careful when crafting his discussions around sociopolitical issues. Whether this is a "stealth" way to raise students' political consciousness, or it only furthers the elision of race and inequity as García de Müeller and Ruiz (through Prendergast and others) argue, we cannot discern from the survey data.

As a field, there are several terms that are used throughout our scholarship to describe both teaching and assessment practices that push against "traditional" pedagogies. Many of these came up in participants' responses to varying degrees. Aside from "social justice," which is a term many participants (approximately half) unsurprisingly indicated they engaged with, approximately 16% of participants indicated they use or prefer to engage with "equity" or "equity-oriented" frameworks. Approximately 8% of participants indicated using or preferring "inclusive" as a term to guide their assessment. Others (fewer than 8%) indicated using or preferring "access-oriented," "culturally responsive" or "culturally sustaining," "decolonial" or "anti-colonial," and "anti-racist."

Who is the practice for? Language, race, and "nonstandard" writing

As I will discuss in my following chapters, in my analysis of participants' narratives of their struggles to implement socially just assessment in their classrooms, I found that one of the

most prevalent and fraught questions for participants is how to justly assess writing they perceive to be “non-standard.” I put quotation marks around this label for two reasons: 1) We know that what is and is not “standard” is socially constructed, context-dependent, perpetually shifting, and reflective of persistent linguistic colonization. The responses below, each from a different participant, gesture toward “non-standard” language with descriptions of “diction,” “error,” “slang,” “translation,” comprehensibility, “grammar,” “non-native English,” and “overcoming” “issues”:

“There are times in which I may not understand the diction used and I have to redirect students to use more ‘academic’ language and less slang.”
“... A student was clearly using translation software. The translation software made his sentences quite strange, for example, in an essay about feminism, he wrote of ‘larvae women’ who ‘dine at a banquet.’ He also mentioned something about ‘the Jews’ – but I’m pretty sure this was just a bad translation that caused some weird outcomes. I found that some of my practices prioritizing argumentation over grammar fell apart in the face of truly incomprehensible writing….”
“Some writing is ongoing error that detains the reader at the point of assessing knowledge. Here, resorting to self-guided grammar quizzes and other aides, like read alouds, can help students show their verbal s[k]ill.”
“With some non-native English speakers, I have been able to identify areas that definitely need improvement, but for various reasons have been unable to build a relationship with the student to a point where I could effectively explain that there was an issue, what the issue is, and how we can work collaboratively to overcome it.”
“I struggle trying to decipher whether or not a student's poor writing skills is a lack of effort on their part or a true struggle with various aspects of writing that are a result of cultural-social differences.”
“I do not use the term socially just assessment. I have never heard of it. What I do is support my students, most of whom are first-generation students from low SES backgrounds, during their first year in college. The majority of my students are under-prepared academically and need academic support, but they also need assistance with navigating the landscape of higher ed…." (from “definitions” question)

Table 7: Participants’ Struggles with “Non-standard” Writing

In the sixth response above, the teacher positions First Generation Low Income (FGLI) students as beginning their writing courses as “under-prepared academically.” At the same time, this instructor acknowledges that getting into and persisting through college to the two- or four-year degree is more difficult for first-generation and low income students.

In their definitions of their socially just assessment practices, 44 of the 158 responses (28%) mentioned students' linguistic and/or racial identities when describing their definition of socially just assessment. I discuss participants' responses around linguistic and racial identities together here for two reasons. First, some participants linked these identities together explicitly (e.g., "Socially just assessment means disrupting hegemonic notions of quality that are grounded in Eurocentric discursive norms and striving to prioritize communicative success and intellectual contribution over conformity to dominant linguistic practices or genre"), or implicitly with coded terms such as "diverse" (e.g., "My students come from diverse background and language proficiency, so I try to include comments and suggestions that are specific to a particular student's situation when possible"). Second, I approach this project from the position that: 1) language politics and racial politics are relational, 2) the ways this relationality plays out in the English/Writing classroom affects student-writers, and 3) the consequences of this playing out are typically harmful for Black students, Indigenous students, and students of color.

That almost one third of participants focused on language and race in their definitions is also reflected in participants' narratives of struggle, where they often identify perceived linguistic difference, sometimes complicated by perceived racial difference, as a site of tension

when it comes to their socially just assessment praxis.[24] In their definitions, participants see students' non-white, non-middle-class, and non-US identities as, typically, marginalized through traditional assessment praxis. Again, this is a reason why participants feel they need to "take into account" or "consider" their students' individual identities and differences – because traditional assessment does not do this. In general, the teachers in my study express privileging individual student growth over standardization and place the impetus for change on structures of assessment and the teachers who build/(re)enforce those structures rather than individual students. However, this is not a wholly consistent sentiment and I will discuss the nuances of teachers' attitudes toward language and perceived linguistic difference.

Participants do not always mention language and race explicitly, but instead gesture toward linguistic and racial identity more obliquely. Several (approximately 15%) mentioned student "background," "culture," or "circumstances" more broadly, for example. In the fifth response above in Table 7, the participant writes of "socio-cultural differences" that may or may not include students' racial identities. As I have written, many responses begin with a phrase such as "take into account," "consider," or "understand," or were qualified with a phrase such as "regardless of" or "no matter." What follows then – the matter that is being taken into account or regarded – is teachers' perception of their students' identities. In other words, the teachers in my study see their practice in part as mitigating the negative effects of traditional

[24] In contrast, for example, a very small number of participants mentioned disability (n=<5), gender (n=<10), or sexual identities (n=<5). I share this not to leap to the assumption that these identities are not relevant to teachers' work, and certainly not to say that queer disability justice (see the work of Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha) is not linked to abolitionist struggles, and therefore to the potential for an abolitionist/decolonial university (see the work of la paperson), and therefore to socially just/abolitionist grading. Rather, I share this to show how deeply language and race are at the forefront of this group of developmental writing teachers' work.

assessment on students who are positioned as “different” in formal educational spaces in the US.

We do know that teachers’ praxis, in some way, addresses or claims to address those students who are non-white, non-middle class, who are English Language Learners, who are struggling with food or housing security, who balance wage work, caregiving, and other responsibilities with school, and more. This particularly comes up in the open-ended data where participants describe their successes and struggles with implementing socially just writing assessment. In the success question, for example, as I coded the data, within the code “perceiving students” I identified 13 subcodes, which were caregiving, class/finances, ill-prepared/underprepared, international, multi-background/identity, multilingual/non-native/ELL, nonstandard writing, race BIPOC, race white, rural, urban, wary-worried/insecure, weak writing. In various places throughout this dissertation, I further discuss my analyses of how participants characterize the students they work with. Focusing here on participants’ definitions of their socially just assessment practice, Table 8 below shows a sample of how teachers’ definitions are linked to their perception of the students they work with:

"Taking into consideration the backgrounds and beliefs of students, and their special situations."
“In general it’s important to me to take into account my students’ backgrounds and linguistic identities when evaluating their writing. I was influenced by the work of Mina Shaughnessy and others treating usage patterns as keys for individualized instruction. As someone who studies usage from a linguistics point of view, I’m always working to de-stigmatize non-standard dialects, explain code-switching, etc. To help students understand these stigmas I also make readings and discussion about class and race discrimination central to my courses.”
“Assessing student work with consideration of race/class/gender issues that may impact the presentation of their work.”
"Socially just assessment involves me in recognizing the structural and institutional barriers that may have prevented certain marginalized groups of students from succeeding academically. It involves me in thinking about ways that I can adjust my assessment practices to disrupt these larger scale inequities. For this reason, it doesn't mean that I treat and assess/evaluate all students' writing in the same way (although I think that some instructors may have this understanding)."
"It means upholding certain standards while also considering students' individual needs, histories, experiences, and goals."
“To me, ‘socially just assessment’ means taking into account various historical and political narratives as they might impact student writing practices or assumptions. A socially just approach to pedagogy also acknowledges that no writer or writing style is "neutral," that a universal style does not exist and that the perpetuation of this fallacy can cause harm to the psychology of students, as well as to the diversity and progress of writing itself as a dynamic medium.”
“It means constantly reflecting on the way in which the standards measure proximity to whiteness and therefore white supremacy instead of writing acuity and progress in thought development. It means finding ways to allow students to maintain their voice in academic settings while still helping them to learn standard English/English grammar. It also means adjusting my rubrics and assignments to acknowledge this shift.”
“I would describe "socially just assessment" one in which I have an awareness of the student's socioeconomic and ethnic/racial background and how that might impact their writing. This also means that I know and am able to connect students with resources (both writing resources and other campus resources) that might address any academic or personal issues they may be experiencing.”
“Giving fair and equal treatment to all students regardless of orientation, race, religion, or ability.”

Table 8: Participants’ Definitions of “Socially Just Assessment” and Perceptions of Students

In the fourth example above, we see this developmental writing teacher naming who they feel their socially just assessment practice is for. This teacher points to "barriers" and makes sure to say that the barrier is not the students themselves but the structure. Other definitions, including #6 and #7, center the structures and histories that need to be critiqued.

For those teachers who frame their approach to assessment in terms of the structural (e.g., situating SWE as a political project, as not neutral, speaking of grammar in terms of "occupation and colonialism"), there is a sense that they understand assessment in relation to the University itself.[25] That is, they understand assessment policies and practices – and writing assessment in particular – as one of several iterations of exclusionary policies and practices constructed by the University. If we picture the University as a s/cyborg, as la paperson encourages us to, then assessment is a mechanical appendage grinding and waving out from the center, like one in a tangle of seaweed strands, its movement dependent on the waves or "wake" of the white supremacist institution (Sharpe, *In the Wake*). What does it mean to be teaching "in the wake," as Christina Sharpe says (*In the Wake*)?

In the fifth definition in Table 8, one can sense a familiar tension that many developmental writing teachers indicated struggling with, which is the task (real or perceived) of "upholding standards." Again, we are back at the "perpetual 'but'" that Watson articulates. The hesitancy to let go of the idea that one and only one English language variety is "standard" – and that this standard, as one teacher says, must be "upheld" – might look like fear or apprehension. It might look like so-called good-intentioned worry about the biases students

[25] I remind readers that this description of participants' responses does not intend to imply that those participants who did not explicitly name the structural factors impacting writing assessment do not have an understanding of these factors.

might encounter in classrooms, internships, jobs, or other settings where teachers feel the "standards" are required. Or it might look like wishful thinking, like stalling, like waiting for something to happen before teachers are allowed to stop "upholding" these standards.

Criticism, skepticism, and "buzzwords"

Some participants complicated both the term and concept of socially just assessment, expressing a range of orientations, from warmly skeptical to outright disdainful. In this section, I will explore the main categories of these complicated feelings. While in an earlier section, "Grappling with Terms," I gave readers a sense of the language that developmental writing teachers prefer to use when describing their non-traditional assessment practice, this section explicitly reviews participants complications of "social justice."

All participants self-selected into my study as 1) basic or developmental writing teachers who 2) consider social justice important to their assessment praxis. I excluded from my study those who do not hold social justice frameworks important to their writing assessment praxes because this study is focused on learning from the teachers who are already doing or thinking about this work, and then synthesizing and sharing the range of experiences, innovations, successes, and struggles that these teachers share in their responses. It is a study that values collaboratively-generated knowledge and which begins from the position that we should approach our pedagogies through a social justice or related lens. In other words, it is not a question of "if" we should do this, but of "how," "when," "where," etc. I am not interested in debating whether we should redress the multiple harms done by traditional assessment – we should. And I am certainly not interested in debating whether traditional assessment practices have harmed working class students, Black and Indigenous students, students of color, and

others who are not white or middle class – they have and do. We know by now as teacher-scholars that we need to push back against traditional writing assessment practices, and that much of the strategies and theories that help us do this work from anti-racist, socially just, de-colonial, and/or related frameworks.

Therefore, I designed my survey to include two screener questions, one to determine if the teachers selected through my random stratified sample had ever taught basic writing (though I attempted to invite only basic writing teachers, because I was working off of publicly available information on college websites or course schedules, I knew I would make mistakes), and one to determine teachers' orientation toward social justice and assessment. This second question asked, "How important is it to you to take a social justice-informed approach to your assessment practices in your basic writing course?" Participants could indicate one of three responses: "very important," "somewhat important," or "not important." Those who indicated "not important" were led to the end of the survey where the following message appeared:

> Because this study is of basic writing teachers' experiences practicing socially just assessment, and you indicated that a social justice framework is not important to your teaching, you are not eligible to participate in the survey. Thank you for your interest. If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Stetson at sstetson@umass.edu.

It was possible for potential participants who clicked "not important" to close their survey screen without clicking "exit," and to then click on their survey link again and choose "somewhat" or "very" in order to have the chance to take the survey. However, it appears that almost all participants selected their response in earnest as their responses to the following questions were rich and complete. It is also highly unlikely that busy writing teachers trying to

teach during a pandemic would take time out of their day to answer the survey insincerely or out of malice. There appears to be just one participant who actively re-responded to the screener question to share their criticisms of social justice frameworks, of the study, and of me. Beyond this one anomalous response (where the teacher explicitly wrote that they had initially chosen "not important" and then re-selected upon learning of the eligibility requirements), of those writing teachers who were eligible to participate, 33% said social justice frameworks were "somewhat" important to their assessment praxes, and 67% said they were "very" important.

Though they self-selected into the study as valuing social justice approaches to teaching and assessing writing, approximately 20% of participants questioned and/or complicated these approaches. The contours of the responses that express ambivalence (e.g., said they had no preference or were unsure) are discussed earlier in the terms section. In this section, I review responses to the terms and/or definitions questions that express a more pointed position.

In some ways, what I find in the data echoes García de Müeller and Ruiz's, and Tuck and Yang's, critical analysis of what a term such as "social justice" can give us. Scholarship like this provides a critique of disciplinary fields – of composition and rhetoric's and education's patterns of co-opting the term, or using it to gloss over what are more precisely matters of racial justice, anti-Blackness, xenophobia, or other harms situated in particular communities. What the following responses provide is, more narrowly, an analysis of “social justice” in relation to writing pedagogy and writing assessment practice. As current or recent basic writing teachers, these participants have something to say about the ways the term, and/or concept, is

taken up, what actual interventions in the classroom could look like, and its potential as a framework to address their concerns about their students' learning.

Approximately 8% of participants shared sentiments that I identify as critical. These sentiments range in level of engagement with and investment in social justice frameworks, but almost all are what I would call "good faith" critiques, meaning that participants are genuinely engaging with the survey questions and grappling with the ideas the questions bring up. The responses that identified critiques of the term can be further distinguished by the following sub-categories of sentiment: feeling that social justice approaches are too broad, too specific, and/or are patronizing to students. There are also a handful (<5) of criticisms openly disdainful toward social justice aims.

Too specific/too broad

I discuss these categories in this order so the contradictions among perceptions stand out – while some basic writing teachers feel social justice approaches take too broad or opaque of a position, others feel that these same approaches are too specific and not accessible to diverse student populations. For example, we can consider this response:

> I don't use any specific terms at all. “Social justice” has taken on some negative connotations recently, and I probably wouldn't mention it at all. I prefer an overall idea of "fair" and "open-minded" as well as, from my perspective, simply being aware. (White adjunct, Regional Comprehensive)

This teacher veers away from engaging with the language of social justice approaches and instead brings in the language/concepts of fairness and open-mindedness. While some teacher-scholars argue that "justice" and "fairness" are actually quite different from – and

perhaps even in opposition to – social justice, this teacher sees them as related, but more generally applicable to the classroom. Others criticized the term for not being specific enough:

> I don't use the … term social justice too much, if at all, but rather refer to issues that fall under that umbrella. In my classes students study/read and then write about: Equality, Racial Equality, Gender, Privilege, Access (to health care, education, employment, housing), Mental Health, Crime/Prison Reform. These terms are easier to use because they are focused on singular issues that we will read about, discuss, research and then write about. (White adjunct, Community College)

This participant engages with social justice frameworks, but prefers to do so through approaches they feel are more direct or precise. For this teacher, "social justice" is an "umbrella" term, one that does not get at what the participant calls "singular issues." Another participant agrees, writing,

> I generally prefer the terms “equity,” “anti-colonial,” and “anti-racist” because to me these are more specific to the issues at stake. I think “social justice” tends to get generalized and loses some texture. The issues for me are much more about the legacy of colonialism and racist structures that underpin higher education and English studies, and I believe it is important to not obscure these things. (Very High Research, racial identity and rank/role not provided)

Another participant writes,

> This is a super good question. I actually rarely use, or explicitly use, the term “social justice” and/or “socially just.” While I do use the terms “social action” and/or “social change” in my scholarly/professional writing, I also rarely if ever use it within the writing

> classroom/toward students. I prefer to use the terms “critical” (i.e. critical literacy, critical reflection, critical analysis); “aware/ness”; or more specific forms of “justice” (i.e. racial justice, linguistic justice, or, “justice for [X community of people]”). To me, those terms are more specific and accurate forms of “justice,” and speak to the community and/or person you are trying to reach. They may resonate more. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable using the term “social justice,” because it is quite general. (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

In general, though a few participants felt "social justice" was too narrowly focused, many of the criticisms argued the opposite – that the term is too broad to be useful. I tend to agree with this argument – it is part of what led to my research questions and the arc of my dissertation study. Such critiques are in line not only with those that I have already mentioned (i.e., Tuck and Yang, García de Müeller and Ruiz) but also what I see as a general positive movement toward gently holding each other accountable for what we mean when we say, for example, that we engage with "social justice aims," or related strategies in our classrooms. Such actions to hold ourselves accountable in terms of how our pedagogies align with our teaching philosophies and how we articulate these philosophies help us as teachers, I believe, to strengthen our practices and to look outward from our own classrooms to what our colleagues are doing – and to learn from them. In turn, they help us more directly address the harms that our students may be experiencing in our classrooms as a result of our teaching and/or assessment praxes.

Patronizing

There were not many participants who voiced this criticism. However, I include them as one of the several nuances of the criticisms articulated, particularly as it brings depth to the discussion of who social justice approaches "are for." Participants who shared views in this category expressed a concern that pedagogies or assessment practices that attend to discourses around or actions related to social justice miss the point — such approaches, participants believe, center white students and focus on what students of color and/or working class students already know. As this participant shares,

> While I do use the term “social justice,” I also use the framework of “sociocultural.” By telling students that the course considers the sociocultural aspects that inform and affect education, it communicates two ideas to students: First, it stops framing them as in need of social justice. FGLI students know they come to college disadvantaged and don't always need or want to be reminded of that. The term “social justice” only continues to remind them they are non-normative. Second, it starts giving students the ability to view things through an unbiased lens required for academic research. Since they are more affected than their white peers by social justice issues, it often means that they don't always have the proper distance required to consider the history or contexts that created the world they inhabit. (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

This participant sees social justice pedagogies as positioning students who they describe as "FGLI" (first-generation low income) as "non-normative" and "in need of social justice." It is not clear whether this developmental writing teacher is resistant to the rhetorical use of social

justice as term, or to social justice pedagogies and approaches in education. Though they are responding to a question about terms, there may be slippage between these two points.

Another participant seems to declare recent conversations around social justice – the approach or orientation, not the term – a scourge on the composition and rhetoric community. They write,

> One of the weirdest recent trends is the suggestion that writing classrooms are a site of unique, horrific trauma. This mindset requires the erasure of *decades* of work from dozens if not hundreds of scholars concerned with social justice in writing assessment, the bulk of whom are non-male and non-white. No one who went through genuine writing assessment training since, oh, about 1980 or so would not be mindful of social justice components of assessment. Just about every aspect of sound writing assessment incorporates them to some degree ... I do not submit my students to struggle sessions. I do not regard professions of guilt or discomfort as some kind of profound window into God's truth. I do not tokenize my non-white students, and while I do strive to take their lived experience into account, I do not regard any person's identity positioning as a validation mechanism. (White non-adjunct, HBCU)

This teacher appears to be associating "recent trends" in social justice pedagogies in the writing classroom with "professions of guilt or discomfort as some kind of profound window into God's truth," "token[izing] non-white students" and exaggerating the writing classroom as a "site of unique, horrific trauma." In other words, I see this response as a critique of social justice as a concept, and a refusal to engage with the possibility that white linguistic and discursive supremacies continue to iterate in writing classrooms and the University more broadly. While

this teacher appears to be familiar with earlier anti-racist work in writing studies, they seem to feel that we no longer need to engage this scholarship and/or that current scholarship in social justice writing pedagogies/assessment processes takes earlier claims too far. It would be fascinating to conduct a broader, national study to learn more about the orientations of writing teachers who believe, as I understand this teacher to, that we are “beyond” race, or “beyond” class.

Open Disdain

As I wrote above, because of my decision to include screener questions, and likely because of the general good will of fellow writing teachers, there were very few responses (under five) that seemed obviously hostile or taunting. I could interpret these responses as "bad data.” The participants did not respond truthfully to the screener questions and therefore I might delete these cases from the data file – a decision often made in the data cleaning process. However, one of my interests in survey research is the potential to reach a large and, ideally, representative population of basic writing teachers. By using stratified random sampling, I was able to reach a range of participants across several states and institutions, rather than focusing my study on all instructors or a sample of instructors from a single institution, or those instructors who happen to subscribe to and follow professional listservs (which we know is a fraught topic particularly in our field, given the much-needed pushback against and subsequent reimagining of the WPA listserv). And, to take a snowball sampling approach, I would be limited to beginning with the basic writing teachers I already know from my current and two former institutions (all in "liberal" Northeast locations, two of which are four-year institutions, two of which are in the same large urban area).

It is not surprising that there would be teachers in my large random sample who would oppose socially just approaches to the teaching and assessing of writing, reject the premise of my dissertation study, and be compelled to re-respond to questions to tell me so. I decided to leave these voices in my analysis. While I do not wish to amplify or make more of the sometimes upsetting responses, I also do not want to pretend they did not happen because this is not true to my data, to the conversations in our field, or to broader US discourse on matters of social justice. These voices, which I will categorize as harmful, are part of our field: they teach students, determine students' grades, influence departmental conversations, curricula, and syllabi. We know as composition and literacy studies scholars that there is much resistance to the work of redressing racial and linguistic discrimination in college writing assessment. And we know as individuals in the world that many ignore, avoid, deny, or do not recognize that oppressive violent structures exist and persist in harming working people, Black and Indigenous people, people of color, and many others.

It is especially important to mark these more negative sentiments now, in this time, during the swell of interest in justice, equity, and inclusion across many sectors, including higher education (see chapter one). Since I began writing my dissertation chapters in earnest in fall 2021, we have seen both a surge of interest in learning about racial and economic injustice, and now, an unsettling backlash against "DEI" work and workers.[26] In more "liberal" institutions, it might be easy, particularly for white and middle class writing teachers, to grow comfortable and assume we are all in agreement that writing pedagogies and writing assessment praxes need a major overhaul. However, as some know, these folks are already

---

[26] See, for example, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*'s "Race on Campus" or "Race in Admissions" newsletters.

there, chipping away at progress toward more just writing education in whatever ways they can (i.e., leaving hateful notes in surveys).

The expressions of disdain center in disagreements about the place of social justice aims or interventions in basic writing curricula. These teachers disagreed that there is or should be a relationship between the teaching of basic writing, writing as social action, and/or pedagogies rooted in struggles for justice. For example, one participant simply writes,

> Writing has nothing to do with social justice. (BIPOC, Community College, rank/role not provided)

Another goes on to share more, describing in some detail how social justice aims do not belong in the basic writing classroom:

> I teach writing and critical thinking. My job is to help students understand argument, research, reading, and writing techniques. My job is not to teach people to be social justice warriors or to shove politics down students' throats. There is A LOT of research that shows the focus on SJ issues is hurting the quality of writing across the US. (Community College, racial identity and rank/role not provided)

This teacher, who stated in her response to a different question that she disagreed with the premise of my study, did not value social justice aims, but wanted to share her thoughts and experiences via my study, seems to feel that "issues" of social justice are harmful to students. They even affect the "quality of writing across the US." For this instructor, teaching "argument, research, reading, and writing" is a task distinct from, and at odds with, students' political education. However, their discussion departs from more familiar questions about the role of political education in composition classes that are raised in scholarship such as Patricia

Bizzell's "Composition Studies Saves the World!" (Bizzell). It is closer in fact to rhetoric like Governor Ron DeSantis' claim that there is a conspiratorial scheme at work to indoctrinate students into "woke" politics. (If not evident here, this teacher goes on to write, "fuck you," and "Liberal elitists like yourself have no clue."). Drawing on tropes like "social justice warrior" and "liberal elitist" to disparage social justice approaches to education, this teacher shares that they are extremely resistant to considering or enacting an assessment praxis that addresses the structural inequities affecting students who have historically been marginalized in traditional US higher education settings for their racial, class, and/or linguistic identities. In later chapters, we will hear from teachers who address their experiences attempting to work with, protect themselves from, and organize colleagues who hold these views.

A third participant shares a related belief that social justice pedagogies have negatively impacted both the field and the writing classroom:

> Social justice is a rather nebulous term. While my course design and assessment practices have always been designed to promote equity, recent trends in Rhetoric and Composition scholarship have preached a vision of social justice that results in bizarre, unworkable pedagogy that is much more concerned with assuaging the guilt of instructors than in providing worthwhile guidance and instruction to students. Simply put, the field is in a very sad state right now. (White non-adjunct, HBCU)

This teacher begins by sharing a sentiment more prevalent in my data, and in fact, one that guides my research questions (i.e., questions that consider how we can work with and through the opacity of the term). Then, they move to name social justice aims as manifesting in "bizarre" and "unworkable" pedagogies that are more focused on teacher "guilt" than students'

learning and development – reminding us of the earlier response where a participant mentions "professions of guilt and discomfort."

If I had the opportunity to follow up with this instructor in an interview, this certainly would be a point I would ask them to tease out. In what ways do social justice aims harm students, or fail to support "guidance" and "instruction"? And how, for this participant, is a socially just assessment praxis different from a praxis that is "designed to promote equity"? If "social justice" is an activating term for some teachers – one that denotes the "sad state" of the field or out-of-touch "liberal elites" – is this because they are invested in perpetuating white supremacist, nationalist, and settler logics, and therefore must be organized around? Or, is there potential to organize with?

Cautious engagement

The responses I identify in this category challenge us as writing teachers to consider the limits of social justice aims in the writing classroom. One type of skepticism that surfaces in the data is what can be described as a caution around how they name and enact social justice aims in their classrooms. Several participants remark that they must "couc[h]" their terms for "conservative" or "certain" students:

> ... [S]ometimes I avoid [the term] because it seems like it might be too much of a buzz phrase with potential to antagonize some students whom I hope to (and can usually) reach via other means. Other ways of couching what we will be reading and writing about include, "critical thinking about important social issues" or "fairness and equity" or "race-related issues," "what it means to be an American." It's tricky, though, because

> many students absolutely want to write and talk very specifically about “social justice” in a very positive, engaged way. (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

In this participant’s response, it is clear that they support and attempt to engage social justice approaches to teaching and assessing writing. Their complications are squarely related to terminology, and they share the rhetorical moves they make in an attempt to reach students who may otherwise be resistant to conversations around and projects of “social justice.” They write that “social justice” has become so much of a “buzzword” that they feel they must tread lightly around the phrase so as not to push away students who may be otherwise open to consciousness-raising discussions around the relationship between writing and social justice. This phrase they use, “it’s tricky,” is the refrain for several teachers who expressed grappling with how to introduce conversations around social justice in their writing classrooms. For example, other teachers write,

> I am comfortable with the term social justice; however, in the classroom I often call them issues because of the conservative nature of our county. I get better responses using issues as the term. (White non-adjunct, Community College)

> I recognize "social justice" as an expedient term denoting shifting but recognizable coalitions of political actors, and that the term helps shift focus away from America's traditional overemphasis on the individual. For this reason, I view the term as one of several useful tools and I consider it part of my work to use these tools strategically. Reactionary forces may have conditioned certain students to become defensive whenever the term "social justice" is invoked, but I see social justice as coterminus with

> simple "justice," or "civic responsibility," etc., and I am fine shifting to those terms as adventitious [sic]. That said, I default to "social justice" to make my solidarity with the aforesaid coalitions recognizable to allies. (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

> I have always used "critical thinking" to mean "socially just thinking" I suppose because social justice is synonymous with activism, and many students do not consider themselves to be activist types. I work at a small college in a region where many students are conservatives/anti-liberal, so they balk at the mention of social justice movements like 'Black Lives Matter.' Although I personally strongly support such social justice movements, I try to approach these topics with caution so as not to alienate many of my students. Thus, as a composition teacher, I encourage 'critical thinking skills' in order to make students try to see topics from different points of view and to question power structures. (White non-adjunct, Regional Comprehensive)

I state this at the top of this chapter but it may be worth repeating here: These responses are not necessarily about *writing assessment* specifically. Though it is difficult to tell from the short survey responses, it seems that several teachers are focused on a discussion of classroom strategies, lesson plans, and pedagogy more generally. This occurs throughout the data, and becomes too difficult to parse – though it sometimes seems obvious that participants are talking about how they conduct their classroom, I cannot "get in their heads" to understand if and how this relates to their assessment practice, and so I assume, because of the parameters of the survey, that it does relate, and I include those responses in my analysis. It is perhaps easiest to see how teaching and assessing relate in the final comment above ("I have always

used...”). Here, in the conclusion to their response, the teacher says they “encourage ‘critical thinking skills’” in their students which, one can I believe safely assume, means they are assessing their students on their “critical thinking” in some way. However, we cannot know *how* this teacher assesses this skill exactly, but for their indication later in the survey that they work with both a rubric designed by their department and with portfolio assessment. For a detailed breakdown of the grading tools participants indicated engaging, see chapter four.

Other teachers write about couching their terms not only for students but also in anticipation of pushback from their colleagues. One teacher writes,

> I would prefer socially just or simply equitable. I have no problems with socially just or social justice but feel it's easier to avoid social justice to avoid pushback from more conservative instructors who dislike the term even while misrepresenting what it means. (White non-adjunct, Community College)

This exact phenomenon is perhaps embodied by the earlier responses I discussed that rail against “social justice warriors” and the “sad state” of the field. Again, though I did not design my study to include these voices, they are persistent: This handful of instructors crept into the survey, just as they creep into department meetings where teachers must be creative and flexible in how they advocate for socially just assessment praxes in order to “avoid pushback” from their “conservative” colleagues. Here, it is important to remind ourselves of Ruiz and García de Müeller’s work, foundational to my study, that so clearly recognizes the unequal toll this work takes on faculty of color, Black faculty, and Indigenous faculty – both in terms of the professional risks associated with pushing back, and materially, that Black, Indigenous, and

faculty of color are typically asked more often than white faculty to take on the work of revising curricula and assessments to redress racial and linguistic inequities.

Most of the responses in this category are focused on how others – mostly students but in some instances instructors – will react to or take up concepts of social justice. These teachers' aim is to lead students to think and write critically through a lens of social justice; they know this is a complicated task when students are immersed in discourse that "weaponize[s]," as one participant writes, the term, and therefore they have to get creative:

> I prefer equitable because it speaks to my philosophy. “Social justice” has been weaponized by a certain political persuasion. (White non-adjunct, Community College)

What is revealed here is that these teachers are focused on the students, and sometimes fellow teachers, they have identified as resistant or prone to resistance. They recognize that enacting social justice pedagogies is a rhetorical challenge and are grappling with how to reach students and colleagues. For example, yet another teacher shares,

> I typically don't use the term ‘social justice’ at all: the phrase has accrued negative connotations, especially from various social media platforms, and it's far from essential anyway. Rather than work under an umbr[ella] term that's really not that useful to begin with, we address the issues directly, by name/topic, depending on the subject at hand. (White non-adjunct, Community College)

In this way, these teachers show that one of their biggest priorities is engaging students and teachers in political education. They are willing to get creative and adapt a flexible discourse that prioritizes reaching all students, even those who may be alienated by the term “social justice” specifically, because as at least one teacher shares, they “hope to (and can

usually) reach" these students. One could also interpret some of these responses as potentially reflecting internal or external pressures to maintain "civility," "neutrality," or "politeness" in the classroom. For example,

"I use the term social justice, but I also design assignments that ask students to think about how social change happens. I like to be more neutral about what the goals of that social change might be so they can examine the process."
"Inclusive and non-discriminatory. Justice is a very subjective and loaded term."
"Civic engagement – My goal is to help all my students develop their personal voices so that they can take part of our civic conversation. I teach predominately caucasian students, and using the 'social justice' term is off-putting to them."
"I don't shy away from the term 'socially just.' However I recognize that it complex term that has different meanings for different people and may be less user friendly to students. I think that terms like 'fair' or 'equitable' could substitute as qualifiers for assessment. I also think about adjectives like 'developmental,' 'flexible,' or 'gentle' as characterizing my assessment practices. With developmental, I mean that formative assessment should inform the student in future writing. With terms like flexible and gentle, I'm thinking about my grading practices. Especially in the pandemic, I want to give students some opportunity to improve their grade if they are unsatisfied with it."
"... equity-minded (this one is for myself, b/c it somehow helps me balance ways that I think I am to balance teaching that is both sensitive/responsive to the context of injustice/inequalities and that also somewhat 'tables' that context so that I can offer a sense of 'equal' treatment/rigor ... I like the word 'equity' because I use it to remind me of and to help me navigate the gray area between 'equal' and 'fair'...."

Table 9: Participants' Use of Terms Related to "Socially Just Assessment"

These responses seem at times at odds with a socially just assessment praxis. For example, one teacher aspires to "be neutral" while another wants to "table" the discussion of social justice in their classroom. As discussed earlier, Catherine Prendergast, and Ruiz and García de Müeller, show us how this slippage may result in the "watering down" Bettina Love identifies in her tweet. However, for these participants, this may be the only way they feel they can approach more equitable pedagogies and assessment practices.

By contrast, some teachers write much more directly toward social justice aims. For example, the participant who writes "I name it" (interview participant Diane) goes on to share,

> I name it. It is social justice, and I teach from a social justice framework. From the beginning of class I make it clear that if one person is marginalized, all of us are marginalized. It is important to me to lay the foundation of radical questioning and inclusivity in my classroom. It is essential to my teaching practice. (Diane)

The pattern of responses expressing caution around the term or the concept of "social justice" in the writing classroom is deeply situated in our current political and social context. I launched my study in March 2021, almost exactly one year into the COVID-19 crisis and nine months after the summer 2020 uprisings against anti-Black violence sparked by the murder of George Floyd by a member of the Minneapolis Police Department. Conversations around police and prison abolition, defunding the police, racism, anti-Blackness and anti-Black violence, houselessness, joblessness, lack of healthcare, financial insecurity, and food insecurity became, varying degrees, "mainstream." Many began to hear and internalize what Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls the "organized abandonment" that we are living through ("Ruth"). Many began sincere journeys of political education and became more active in their communities. However, there were also many who, as Bettina Love hints in her tweet, simply began using new words in a performative way. In education, individual teachers and broader administrations scurried to adopt the language of radical social movements, many led by Black women, in an effort to reflect a commitment they had not yet internalized and may never be able to realize. As I ask in chapter one after la paperson, how can a land grant institution that is located on and profits off of unceded land ever be just?

In early spring 2023, we saw the rollout of "anti-DEI" legislation in 31 states ("DEI Legislation Tracker"). In summer 2023, we saw the Supreme Court of the United States voice down race conscious admissions in higher education. I do not believe that developmental writing teachers will be able to achieve meaningful change by prioritizing "politeness" or "neutrality." I also do not believe that developmental writing teachers can continue to learn about and enact anti-racist, socially just, and/or anti-oppressive pedagogies while allowing their assessment praxes to stagnate. As one interviewee, Bob, shares, aligning one's pedagogy with their assessment praxis is imperative: Why "disregard your thought process and try to fall back into this objective grader persona," he says? In the following chapters, we will look at the concrete strategies that some teachers use to enact a socially just assessment praxis, as well as the limitation they face in doing so.

CHAPTER 4

BASIC WRITING TEACHERS' EVERYDAY ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND DECISIONS

This study set out to learn more about how current basic writing teachers are committed to developing and sustaining assessment praxes that decenter the long-held belief, situated in formal educational spaces and perpetuated by white supremacist logics, that the only way to successfully communicate in the US is to engage a white, middle-class discourse, language, and ideology. In schools, English and writing teachers have reinforced this monolingual ideology for centuries, across continents (Jimenez), in schoolyards (Anzaldúa), in college composition classrooms (Matsuda), in boards of education (Hoang), and on standardized tests (Herrington and Stanley, Poe). In chapter three, we see Rudy Salas, Sr. reflect on this mindset, pointing to the ways formal schooling in the US devalued his history, knowledge, and culture.

This ideology has also been reinforced in popular culture through books and movies that portray white (often women) teachers as "saviors" of "hopeless" working class students and students of color who would not know how to read, write, learn, or think without the "generous" "help" of these teachers. For instance, this is the formula of the blockbuster 1995 movie, *Dangerous Minds*. The film stars Michelle Pfeifer who plays the marine-turned-teacher who wrote the memoir upon which the movie is based. For those who are apt to question the outsized funding of copaganda in the entertainment industry and the ways the classroom and the carceral state are intimately related, the film had a 23-million-dollar budget, did 179 million in the box office, and featured what would become the number one best-selling single of 1995, "Gangsta's Paradise," for which Coolio won a Grammy. As Gloria Ladson-Billings writes about

this book, valorizations of white teachers' "missionary-like zeal" to "reach" students reveal a grave misunderstanding of the role of a teacher, what makes good teaching, what learning looks like, and what is owed to our students ("Teaching" 255). Such narratives also misunderstand the harms that teachers bring to students when they insist that students' knowledges, histories, languages, discourses, and identities need remediation ("Teaching" 255).

Scholar-teacher-activist Jamila Lyiscott tells us that English and writing pedagogies have historically been a tool of colonization as students are required to "check … other languages at the door" or risk a range of consequences (Lyiscott). Lyiscott writes of the contemporary classroom and school, referencing the corporal punishment Ngugi Wa Thiong'o describes in *Decolonising the Mind*,

> ... [St]udents are not physically beaten for speaking in the language of their communities, and no, they are not forced to wear physical signs, but the work of silencing, shaming, and severing the linguistic and cultural practices of the home in effort to have students adopt "Standard American English" (SAE), purported to be the "language of power," is the work of K-12 classrooms. (Lyiscott)

In the context of basic and college writing, as has been discussed, the consequences students may face for not adopting and engaging "SAE" may include placement in a developmental or remedial course, a lower grade on an assignment or in a course, and/or failure of an assignment or course. In the basic writing course, language and writing that does not conform to the "norms" may lead to a student needing to repeat the course, holding them back from attaining the credits they need to move on to college writing and to graduate.

Given the historical relationship between English and writing teachers' practices, and colonialism and white saviorism, how do current basic writing teachers adapt and adjust their practices to align more closely with socially just approaches to writing assessment? In this chapter, I discuss my analysis of the grading and evaluation strategies basic writing teachers shared were a part of their socially just assessment praxis. In order to better understand the ways that current basic writing teachers are practicing self-identified socially just assessment, we need to know more about the prevalence of specific types of grading processes/tools among this group of teachers (e.g., rubric, grading contract, etc.), what basic writing teachers focus on when giving writing feedback, how they incorporate student feedback into their strategy, and the interventions into challenging assessment-related moments with students that they identify as successful. This will allow those of us working in socially just assessment, and who may be involved in organizing to build momentum toward a new order of grading within our departments, institutions, or professional organizations, to design a nuanced approach to this work. It may also give us practical suggestions for how to approach socially just writing assessment in our own classrooms. The chapter includes an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data that describes how teachers are (or are not) living their claimed values through their assessment praxes.

A reminder on participants' avoidance of the specifics of grading

As I have written previously, throughout the data it can at times be difficult to disentangle where participants are referencing assessment praxis from their references to broader pedagogical concerns. One way of thinking about this blurring is that participants are telling us that much of their socially just assessment work happens around the actual grading

process. For some, this is a necessity brought on by departmental, institutional, or state limitations, as will be discussed in chapter five. For example, some departments mandate the use of outside portfolio review or a specific rubric. Where teachers have agency, then, is in all that goes on around these final grading requirements: in-class activities, syllabus design, readings, etc. The discussions of grading practice in this project, then, are reflective of and situated in what participants share and does not force interpretation or exclude responses that appear to me as a researcher to not directly reference assessment in a singular way.

Focusing feedback

In my study, part of setting out to learn about basic writing teachers' lived experiences with grading and evaluation was asking what aspects of students' writing teachers are actively devoting their energies to developing when giving feedback. Therefore, the survey included the question: "Considering the goals of your course, what three aspects of your students' development as writers do you focus on most when giving feedback?" The question included a note instructing participants that the order in which they listed aspects did not matter (i.e., they did not need to "rank" them in order or significance).

One hundred sixty-two participants (85%) responded to this open-ended question. All but one of the respondents shared three aspects. What participants wrote ranged from one-word responses (e.g., "revising," "thesis") to full sentences. To give an idea of the length of responses, participants wrote an average of four words per aspect. The brief nature of participants' responses was encouraged by my question design. I provided short, narrow boxes for participants, encouraging a "list-like" approach to answering. The question is a "temperature check" of what this sample of basic writing teachers, who self-identify as valuing

social justice approaches to assessment, prioritize when giving feedback. It allows us to learn about what these teachers want their students to leave their classes with, and what they see as the most urgent parts of student-writers' development.[27] Understanding this provides an angle into the intersections and contradictions between basic writing teachers' stated philosophy and their practices. This may provide a more responsive and dynamic recognition of the fits and starts of socially just writing assessment. For example, how do we proceed with the knowledge that many of the participants in my study indicated valuing grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and sentence structure? Perhaps one takeaway is that, again, there is no one grading tool (even contract grading) that will support writing teachers' unlearning of harmful ideologies around writing development, linguistic and discursive different, and what makes good writing. The grading tool will not help the University unlearn, either. This work requires slow, intentional, organized, and imaginative change.

Table 10 shows the top six most common aspects of students' writing that teachers indicated valuing, and examples of responses for each. Note that I coded these responses in several rounds, and in several different ways. The table represents what I feel is the clearest interpretation of participants' voices. Analyzing this question proved deceptively complicated. I had an uneasy feeling about my interpretive process because these terms are so slippery. We as a field do not necessarily have a shared meaning of what "critical thinking" means, for instance, and so short of a participant writing exactly "critical thinking" (which, thankfully, several did), I was imposing my own frameworks onto what are very short responses.

[27] Of course, as we know from our personal experiences as teachers – and from these data – often what teachers want students to leave their classes with is informed or even mandated by policies outside of their control.

Additionally, since we do not have this shared meaning, we cannot be sure that one person's interpretation of what constitutes critical thinking matches another's. Studies that engage qualitative data collection, including those that engage ethnography, case study, survey, and more, are susceptible to analytical processes that foreground white "Euro-Western ways of knowing the world" – a risk that is also present in quantitative data analysis (Viruru and Rios 1146).

Using my 10 years of teaching experience, and my reading of scholarly studies of writing and the teaching of writing, Table 10 represents my understanding of participants' responses to this question.

Code	Percent	Examples
Clarity	31%	• "Clarity of thought" • “The clarity of the presentation” • “Flow and Readability” • “Clear communication”
Grammar, punctuation, mechanics, & sentence	31%	• "Grammar/Ease of narrative" • “Sentence structure” • “Use of SAE” • “Fundamentals of Grammar/Usage, etc.”
Engaging sources	31%	• "Ability to use evidence in accurate, relevant, clear, and ethical ways" • “Bring in a variety of reading/writing texts” • “Research / use of sources” • “support for claims”
Critical thinking & personal engagement	35%	• "Ability to engage critically with themselves and with the text" • “Ideas (Meaning-making and critical thought)” • “thinking critically about important issues that are of interest to the students” • “their ability to think and write (and read) in detailed ways about the writing they both consume and produce”
Structure & organization	36%	• "Content (elements of an essay, organization, modes of development)" • “Structure of the essay” • “organization of ideas” • “Structured presentation of ideas”
Argument/Thesis (Rhetorical Moves)	44%	• "Communication of intent" • “The framing of the argument / stance they take.” • “The explication of a clear and meaningful main idea or thesis” • “That students know how to write a clear argument/thesis that they can support with evidence”

Table 10: What Participants Focus on When Giving Students Feedback on Their Writing

When looking at these top six aspects across institution type and credit-bearing status, I was, again, cautious to assert claims that one type of institution values certain aspects of student

writing over another in any singular, definitive way.[28] Instead, I frame the discussion below as one of language. In other words, for example, it is not that community college and regional comprehensive instructors do not value critical thinking – that would be a bizarre claim – but that that phrase may not circulate in those spaces with the same frequency or in those same terms. It may also be that those who are using department-mandated rubrics and thus required to focus on certain aspects of writing development were more likely to use the language of those rubrics, even if it is not quite how they would identify their values in their own words. When looking at differences among institution type, there is great variation among all types for three of the six categories: Clarity, Critical Thinking, and Grammar, Punctuation, Mechanics, and Sentence Structure (GPMS). See Figure 7 below.

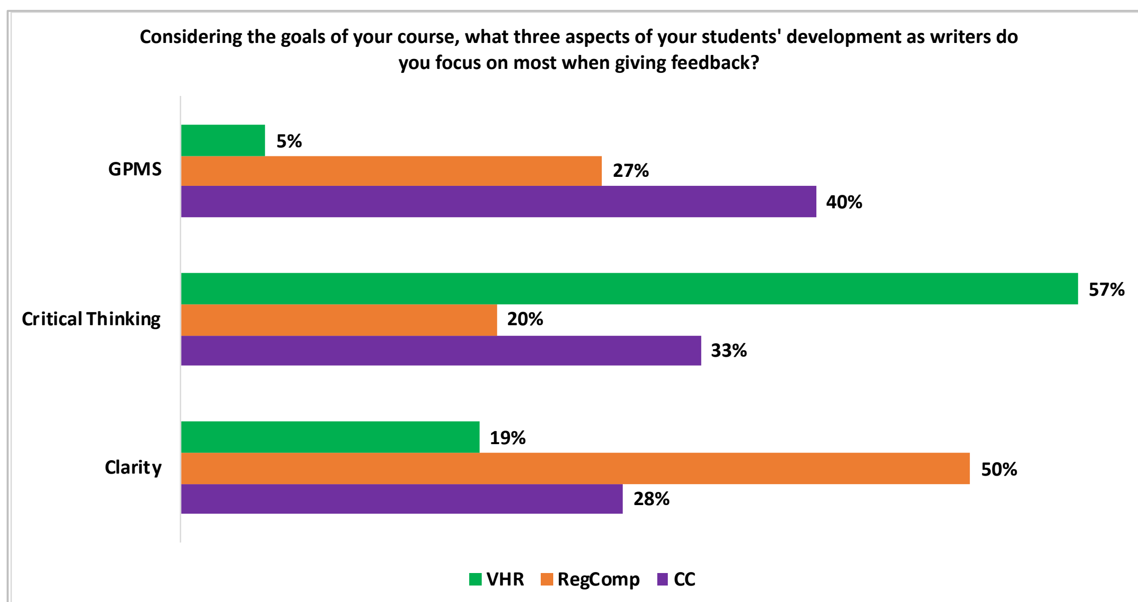

Figure 6: What Participants Focus on When Giving Students Feedback on Their Writing by Institution Type

One could argue that the data represented above show that, for example, developmental writing teachers at community colleges care much more about GPMS than

[28] For this question, these to me are the most salient variables.

instructors at VHRs or Regional Comprehensive institutions. However, I am wary of making this claim. I have taught writing at a range of institutions; I spent a little over four years teaching at a regional comprehensive institution, one semester teaching at a community college, and approximately seven years teaching at a very high research institution. Anecdotally, I heard many more colleagues talking about, worrying about, and indeed complaining about matters around students' grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and sentence structure at that VHR than at the RC. Whether or not the teachers affiliated with the VHRs *believe* themselves to focus on GPMS – whether or not they hear what they are saying – is different, and this disconnect is perhaps represented in my data. Perhaps instructors at VHRs do not include GPMS in their rubrics formally but continue to intentionally or unintentionally consider it within another category such as "clarity," "style" or "organization." In a revision or expansion of this study, a more precise question wording may be preferable. For example, one might craft two questions – one focused on the aspects teachers focus on when giving students feedback on their writing, and another focused on what teachers value the most in students' writing development (the single question, as it is now, assumes a sort of agreement between the two). One might also add a fixed-choice follow-up question asking participants to share why they focus on these aspects when giving feedback, where the response categories may include: because my department and/or university explicitly demands this focus, my department and/or university implicitly demands this focus, these are the aspects I have observed students struggling with, these are the aspects of writing development I most value, etc.

Within these top six aspects of students' writing, there is very little difference in response among those participants who teach credit bearing courses and those who teach non-

credit bearing courses except in the category of GPMS, where 41% of those who teach non-credit bearing courses indicated GPMS as one of the top three aspects of students' writing that they focus on when giving feedback, compared with 24% of those who teach credit bearing courses (17 percentage point difference). Again, as we might expect, the vast majority (84%) of participants who teach non-credit courses teach at community colleges; data are fairly representative in terms of racial identity and adjunct status. What these data may tell us, then, is that the discourse of "grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and sentence structure" is especially prevalent in non-credit courses and at community colleges. One interpretive possibility is that community college students who are required to take non-credit writing courses are still being immersed in a "skills and drills" environment. Another interpretive possibility is that issues around grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and sentence structure are more likely to be marked among students enrolled at community colleges and/or non-credit bearing courses than students enrolled at Very High Research institutions. Relatedly, these teachers may feel a pressure to instill in students the perceived cultural capital that standard grammar and mechanics, in their eyes, affords. It is perhaps in the locations that often enroll students who are most marginalized in formal educational spaces in the US where teachers, I would argue counterintuitively, double down on grammar-related aspects of writing, guided by the belief that matters such as "good sentence structure" and "proper mechanics" will help students avoid racialization and marginalization in higher educational spaces (e.g., Baker-Bell, Flores and Rosa).

Non-credit bearing courses then, mainly located at CC's, come with particular concerns for social justice informed writing assessment in the basic writing course. The following list

illustrates the range of ways that the responses coded as "GPMS" engage this theme, along with a note on whether the participant who indicated this teaches a developmental course that is credit bearing or not. While more teachers of non-credit bearing courses focus on GPMS than teachers of credit bearing courses, there is not much difference in the ways the two populations of teachers conceptualize or describe their focus.

Credit Bearing	**Non-Credit Bearing**	**Unknown**
• Basic Grammar • Sentence structure • Grammar/punctuation/format • Fundamentals of Grammar/Usage, etc. • Grammatical structure and usage conventions • Clarity (including correct grammar) • Grammar/mechanics • Writing sentences with clear intent • Using grammar to communicate and enhance ideas • Lower order concerns, such as grammar • Language precision • Grammatically correct writing • Social and historical context of language conventions • Presentation (grammar, spelling, formatting) • Grammar mastery • Conventions • Format • Grammar • Writing conventions • Sentences that make sense • Grammar • Grammar and sentence structure	• Writing techniques and conventions • Poiting [sic] out patterns of error in producing academic writing that needs to be improved • Mastery of English skills • Grammar/sentence structure • Presentation of ideas (grammar and organization) • Gradual mastery of the basic conventions of writing correct English • That grammar, sentence structure, and other elements of standard English are used. • Sentence building skills • Grammar • Sentence structure • Grammar/punctuation • Understood Rhetorical and Grammar rules and variants for positive competitive results in traditional settings • Grammar / Ease of narrative • Correct grammar	• Grammar • Mechanics • Development of a sense of the possibilities of the sentence itself • Sentence and paragraph structure; format • Sentence structure • Punctuation and spelling • Mechanics • Use of SAE • Basic grammar • Writing process

• Readability/grammar • Basic grammar	• Clarity of wording and organization (whether in SAE or not) • Grammar • Grammar • Use of language • Freedom from egregious grammar errors • Is the writing organized and mostly free of distracting mechanical errors? • Usage (appropriate forms to convey the message)	

Table 11: Participants' Comments Coded as Grammar, Punctuation, Mechanics, and Sentence Structure by Credit Bearing/Non-Credit Bearing Course Status

One contribution of these data is that they provide insights from a representative sample of developmental writing teachers, or a sample that strives to be representative, on how these material conditions might differ. And, compellingly, we must then ask if the difference is present mainly in discourse, in a negotiation of material conditions, or in ideology or values around what students (or, certain students) "need" to learn to be "good" writers. Teachers who encounter this study may be able to use these finding to ask themselves if and/or how GPMS is part of their teaching practice or approach to writing assessment, and why.

Incorporating student feedback into assessment practice

In my study, I also wanted to learn about the types of self-assessment, or critical reflection, developmental writing teachers are incorporating into their writing assessment praxis. One of the beliefs at the foundation of this project is that grading students' writing is a disheartening, demoralizing process for many writing teachers. We as teachers do not simply dislike grading because it is time consuming; many if not most aspects of teaching are that,

including lesson planning, syllabi designing, building relationships with students, and more. It is that these latter processes are typically generative and even joyful: they are where we often see our "why" as teachers. In contrast, grading is punishing and often at odds with our values and even our training. As one participant shares in response to a question about a time they struggled to implement a socially just assessment praxis, "All the time! I mean, I think grading in general violates a huge tenet of socially just teaching. Ranking student work on a spectrum of 0-100 is just such an absurd task, and one that I find impossible, not least of all for the ways that grading is subject to horrible biases of teachers - myself included! I always feel like I'm doing something wrong when I enter the final grades" (White non-adjunct, Very High Research).

Both gathering student feedback on and reflecting on one's own socially just writing assessment praxis is a crucial part of building a sustainable and adaptable writing assessment praxis. Here, writing teachers struggling with the above can take a moment to reflect or self-assess, and to gather data, or evidence, that will inform concrete ways of improving their practice as opposed to getting stuck in an all too familiar space of complacency or languishing. The data below show the tendencies or habits of participants around gathering feedback from themselves or students and making changes to their developmental writing classroom assessment practice based on what they learn.

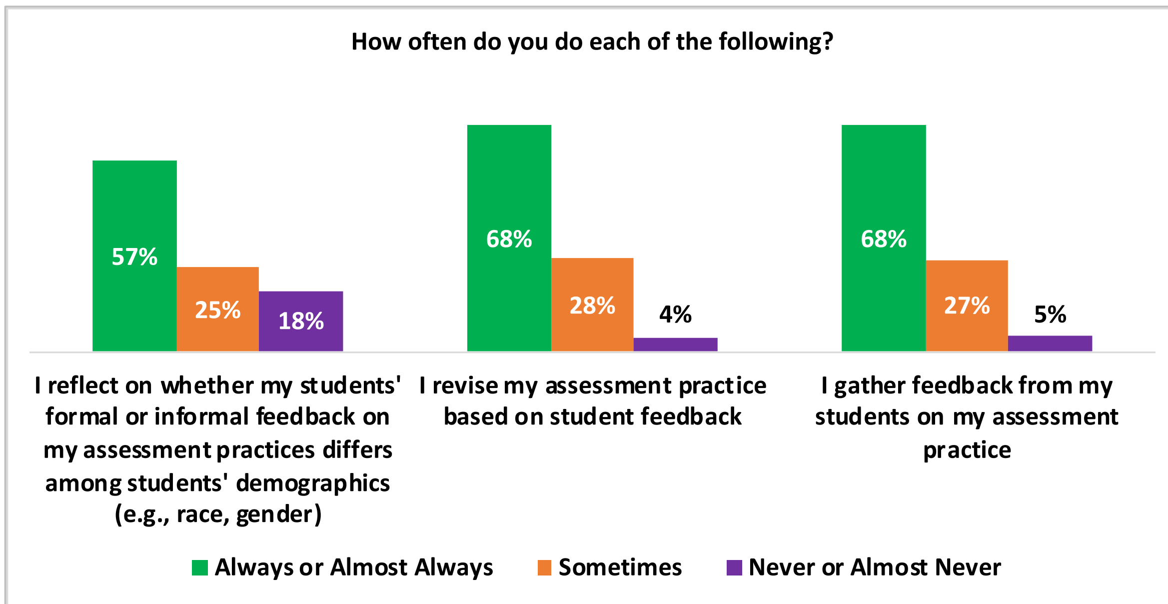

Figure 7: Frequency and Nature of Participants' Reflection on Their Assessment Practices

The same percentage of participants who indicated that they always or almost always gather feedback from their students on their assessment practice (68%) also indicated that they revise their practice based on that feedback. Very few participants (5%) indicated never or almost never gathering student feedback on their assessment practice. However, when asked if they reflect on whether their students' formal or informal feedback differs among students' demographics (e.g., race, gender), the responses are significantly different. Here, we see 18% of participants indicating they never or almost never consider potential differences in how feedback may differ among students' identities. This finding is disappointing: It shows that a significant percentage of participants in my study, current basic writing teachers, are not intentionally engaging the possibility that their practice may be affecting their students differently. This is a significant finding in terms of determining what may be obstacles to broader basic writing teacher engagement in and mobilization toward socially just assessment.

While there are no significant differences in responses to these three questions among adjuncts and non-adjuncts, there are some differences among racial identity and institution type. BIPOC developmental writing teachers were 11 percentage points more likely than non-BIPOC teachers to indicate they always or almost always consider their students' social identities (e.g., race, gender) when reviewing and implementing their students' feedback. The difference is even more stark when including "sometimes" category: then, 96% of BIPOC instructors compared with 80% of non-BIPOC instructors disaggregated feedback in either formal or informal ways. Again, as we have seen throughout this project and in the work of Staci Perryman-Clark, Genevieve García de Müeller and Iris Ruiz and others, teachers of color are taking up the work of supporting students of diverse identities more often than white teachers.

For each of the three questions above regarding student feedback, developmental writing teachers affiliated with Very High Research institutions were more likely than teachers at regional comprehensive institutions to indicate they always or almost always engage in the outlined practices. They were also more likely than community college instructors to indicate the same, except with regard to reflecting on whether students' assessment feedback may differ based on students' identities. Here, approximately 58-59% of both community college instructors and VHR instructors indicated agreeing that they engage in this reflective practice as compared with 48% of regional comprehensive instructors.

After gathering this feedback – and reflecting on and perhaps implementing changes based on it – do developmental writing teachers feel that they have a "good sense" of students' reactions to how they are assessed? Eighty-four percent of teachers strongly agreed or agreed

that they do indeed have a good sense. These data provide a noteworthy complement to the above data, where we see just 68% of instructors indicating they actually collect student feedback. It prompts the question: For those who do not explicitly ask students for their reflections on their writing assessment praxis, how are they determining students' perceptions of or experiences with the praxis? How is their sense informed? This project is anchored both in the belief that assessment should be student-centered, and that praxis should be evidence-informed. Perhaps these data speak to the need to build more sustainable ways of supporting developmental writing teachers in systematically gathering feedback from their students on their writing assessment processes. It might be that teachers are so overworked, and/or so alienated from the grading process, that they will not or cannot devote time and energy to gathering student feedback. How can writing programs help make this process more streamlined, incentivized, and sustainable for teachers? In general, the data discussed in this section show room for improvement and education around the importance of incorporating student feedback into one's writing assessment praxis.

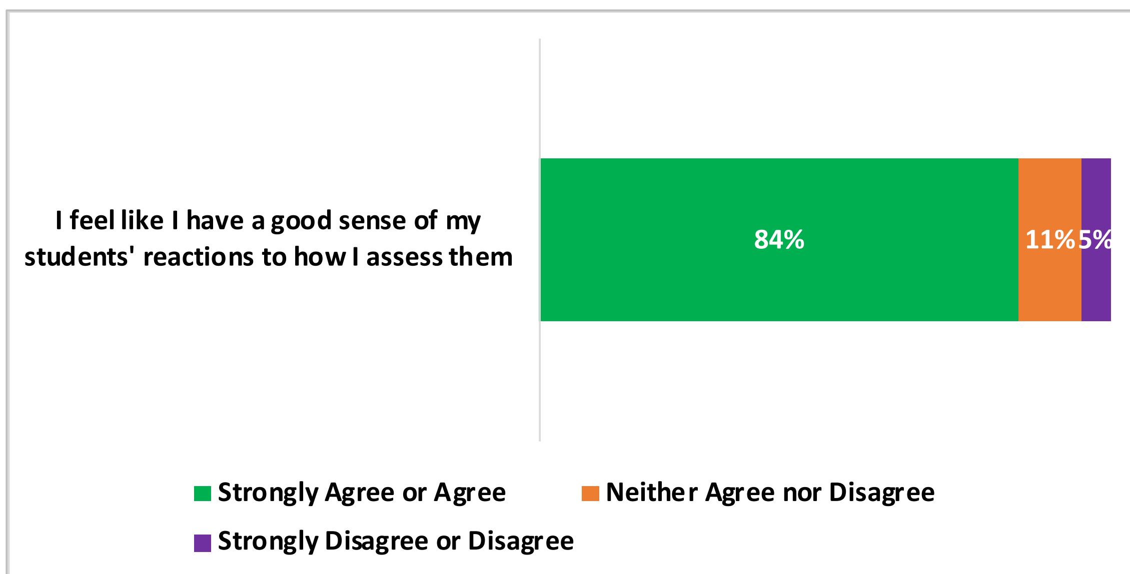

Figure 8: Participants' Sense of Their Students' Reactions to Their Assessment Practices

Success with socially just approaches to writing assessment: Contexts, interventions, outcomes

I asked two open-ended questions directly related to the nuance of practice: one asked participants to "please describe a time when, while assessing a student's writing in a basic writing course, you felt you had some success in enacting your socially just assessment practice" and another asked the inverse, or, to share a time when they struggled to enact their practice. This section offers an analysis that breaks down basic writing teachers' success narratives into context, intervention and outcome. Throughout this project, I reference and analyze responses to both of these questions; it was difficult to contain analysis of each individual open-ended question to its own discussion as the content of both the responses and my subsequent analyses often overlap and inform one another. Here, I focus on a particular round of coding I conducted on the question related to success.

One hundred forty (74%) participants responded to what I will call "the success question." Reflecting the makeup of the survey respondents more generally, the majority of those who responded (50%) teach in community colleges. Twenty-five percent of the respondents teach at VHRs, 16% teach at RCs, and 9% at HBCUs. Nineteen percent of question respondents are BIPOC, 32% are adjuncts, and 30% teach a course that is non-credit bearing.
I carried out several rounds of coding of this question. In an early round of coding, I focused on describing and quantifying the practices that developmental writing teachers indicated led to success. This represents an attempt to glean practical, concrete findings from participants' responses. The narratives provide rich insight into not only how developmental writing teachers define success (a more abstract or "meta" level), but also how they *do* success (a more

grounded or practical level). Ultimately, my dissertation is focused on praxis, so this project aspires to get at both levels and to frame the data on these levels, as well.

I organized one round of analysis of participants' success narratives around three sub-research questions. First, what is the context teachers are identifying? What, exactly, is requiring the teacher's intervention? Second, what intervention did they take? How did they address this "problem"? And third, what was the impact/outcome? What did success look like? In memoing and throughout analysis, it became clear that the most salient findings were related to interventions. I devote the most energy there to discussing interventions after briefly describing contexts and outcomes.

Contexts and outcomes

There are 140 responses to the success question, and 123 responses for which I was able to identify a "context" that teachers felt they needed to intervene in. In their writing on socially just assessment, teachers often describe something that requires intervention – an injustice, inequity, or struggle (whether perceived or actual) that cannot be addressed through "traditional" means. This is the impetus for them to engage one or more socially just assessment strategies, or, what I am coding here as "context." To be clear, this does not necessarily mean that teachers' non-traditional assessment practices are contained to these moments of struggle; rather, teachers are describing a moment when their justice-oriented approach to writing assessment proved particularly successful in terms of supporting their students.

Teachers identify a range of contexts, or perceived challenges, that precede or prompt their self-described justice-oriented intervention. As has been discussed throughout the

dissertation, many teachers identify challenges related to what they term "ELL students," "international students," "multilingual" students, and students whose writing has "errors." Teachers also (and sometimes simultaneously) describe successfully navigating students' perceived or actual material conditions (e.g., economic, mental health); students' worries about or reluctancy with writing (e.g., lacking confidence, negative self-talk, negative past academic experiences); students who are falling behind, and/or students who are disengaged. See, for instance, how participants contextualize the situations that precede their successful intervention:

"The student had previously had terrible experiences in writing classes and thought he was bad at it"
"I had four students out of eighteen students who were also failing their class. By week four, there was a pattern of absenteeism emerging"
"I worked with a student who was an immigrant and I gave her a chance to redo the final exam"
"Many of the students are initially wary/resistant/reluctant/don't think of themselves as good writers"
"Students who struggled with English"
"... A student who had several psychological problems"
"Students come into my classroom telling me they have failed all previous writing and English courses and that they hate writing classes"
"... International students who are second language learners"
"Student who had weak writing skills"

Table 12: Participants' Characterizations of Challenging Assessment Situations

These themes also come up frequently in the survey item where teachers are asked to describe a time when they struggled to implement socially just assessment praxes; what I name "struggles" there (and "context" here) are thoroughly discussed in chapter five. Here, I will forward the argument that one major finding of my dissertation work is that some of the basic writing teachers who participated in my study – who, in other words, identified as valuing

socially just approaches to assessment – may, in these narratives, cast social justice in the writing classroom as a way of addressing individual students' perceived "disadvantages."

Turning to outcomes, major themes in what success looks like include students passing, catching up, or staying in the course; becoming engaged and/or "active learners"; earning higher grades; gaining confidence, working through negative self-talk about their learning and/or writing, and/or becoming an "advocate" for themselves; improving writing; engaging in new ideas and/or critical conversations; and improving student-teacher relationship. Because the stories teachers shared are typically about single students, the outcome or impact is also typically about single students, though some teachers did share interventions that were more about the whole class, which we will see in a moment.

Interventions

One of the major themes that I coded as I looked to identify patterns in successful interventions is flexibility and individualized student support. The survey also included several fixed-choice questions related to flexibility. In this section, I focus on flexibility and individualized support while also including a brief discussion of other interventions that participants shared.

The survey asked in a multiple choice select all question, "which of the following do you do in your basic writing course?" The five response categories were:

- Offer flexible deadlines for low stakes assignments
- Offer flexible deadlines for major assignments
- Allow students to revise and resubmit assignments
- Offer students a number of different ways to successfully complete an assignment

- Meet with students as needed to design individualized plans for completing the course successfully

One hundred sixty-six (87%) participants responded to this question. To design this question, I identified five aspects of "flexibility," or five different ways a basic writing teacher might enact a flexible orientation toward classroom writing assessment. Building into one's classroom some level of flexibility in deadlines, ways of completing an assignment, opportunities for revision, and more, has become a relatively common practice for teachers who are hoping to develop an equitable and inclusive classroom in general (not just in developmental or college writing programs). Some schools, such as Yale University, provide easily accessible campus-wide guidance on how to work more flexibility into one's course structure; Yale specifically promotes "flexible structures in course design" and designates this approach "fundamental" to students' success (“Flexible”). On their Center for Teaching and Learning website, some of the practices Yale lists under "flexible structures" include "keep deadlines but build in flexibility," "encourage attendance but allow for absences," and "give time to build community and acknowledge the current moment" in order to "better understand what students are experiencing and how to adapt your class to the current moment" (“Flexible”). A nuanced discussion of the histories and applications of flexible course design in writing classrooms, including their connection with a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, is outside the scope of this project. However, it is important to note that varieties of flexibility can inform accessibility for students with a range of material circumstances and lived experiences not typically considered in normative formal educational spaces in the US. This might include students working more than 10 hours a week, students with caregiving responsibilities, neurodivergent and/or disabled students, students

experiencing food or housing insecurity, and more – broadly speaking, students whose relationship to time, physicality, and energy is considered “outside the norm” in formal educational spaces in the US. A more accessible classroom – one that is structured to ensure all students equal opportunities for success for all students – is one that "build[s] in opportunities for student choice: e.g., flexible or self-paced deadlines for assignments ... multiple options for topics or modalities for assignments, optional opportunities for instructor or peer feedback on drafts" (Stapleton-Corcoran).

This does not mean that flexibility in the college classroom, including the writing classroom, is without controversy. One 2023 *Inside Higher Ed* article titled, "'Procrastination-Friendly' Academe Needs More Deadlines," claims that "cognitive psychology research suggests that students fare better academically and personally under numerous short-term deadlines" (D'Agostino). Similarly, Yale's Center for Teaching and Learning is clear to highlight that "too much flexibility can be detrimental to learning, particularly when it gets to the point that the course no longer feels structured” (Sathy and Hogan, 2019)" (“Flexible”). This argument suggests students can feel at sea in the classroom, struggling to find internal motivation to complete low or high stakes assignments. Below, I will further discuss how this sentiment presents in my data.

In composition studies specifically, we do not agree on what constitutes flexibility, what level(s) of flexibility (if any) are beneficial to students, or how flexibility affects teachers’ workload in terms of grading and evaluation. Scholarly conversations on social justice in basic and college writing assessment have generally left disability and neurodivergence, two identities and experiences often linked to the exigency of a flexible classroom, unattended to.

Ellen Carilllo gives us a corrective to this along with a helpful example of how the field has grappled with "flexibility." In her 2021 book, *The Hidden Inequities in Labor-Based Contract Grading*, Carillo applies a disability studies lens to Asao Inoue's presentation of labor-based contract grading as a more equitable alternative to traditional single-standard grading. Here, Carillo shows that while many forms of contract grading are often described as more flexible than other forms of grading, Carillo notes that they may simply "substitute one static standard for another" (56). For Carillo, labor itself is an inflexible category, and she suggests "engagement" as a "more flexible" alternative that addresses the needs of neurodivergent and disabled learners (56). Kathleen Kryger in her dissertation, *Challenging Neuronormativity: A Disability Studies Framework for Communal Justice in Writing Assessment*, says of flexibility in the writing classroom that it is "more than benevolent extensions of empathy or Universal Design for Learning (UDL), it's about being responsive to diverse modes of teaching, learning, and being. It's about deeply trusting students and building structures that trust them, too" (26).[29] I agree, and I understand flexibility and access to be related, and that building flexibility into course design is an integral part of a social justice oriented writing assessment that is responsive to all students.

How developmental writing teachers choose or do not choose to adopt a flexible orientation to classroom writing assessment is variable – some teachers may feel strongly that it is crucial to offer flexible assignment deadlines as a matter of classroom policy; others will offer this only on a case-by-case basis. Some will not offer this at all. This survey question aims

[29] Inoue recently published a revision to his earlier work on labor-based grading in conversation with scholarship by Kathleen Kryger, Griffin X. Zimmerman, and Ellen C. Carillo in his book, *Cripping Labor-Based Grading for More Equity in Literacy Courses.*

to capture the nuance of flexibility on two levels: the action itself, and the application of the action. For example, does a developmental writing teacher allow students to revise and resubmit assignments and, if so, do they do so in their course policy or on occasion? If the teacher does not allow students to revise and resubmit assignments, have they considered doing it, or are they fully set against it (i.e., "I do not do this")?

As I will discuss in an upcoming section, the decision to offer flexibility as a matter of course policy versus a matter of individual consultation can come with significant consequences for students and, in some ways, for teachers. These data do not allow us to see how these consequences are experienced by study participants or their students; however, they allow us to see whether basic writing teachers tend to design flexibility into their courses or to offer it on an ad hoc basis. These data also show five commonly adopted practices in flexibility and the level at which basic writing teachers engage them. Figure 10 below shows the five practices arranged in descending order from mostly likely to least likely to indicate making the practice a part of one's course policy.

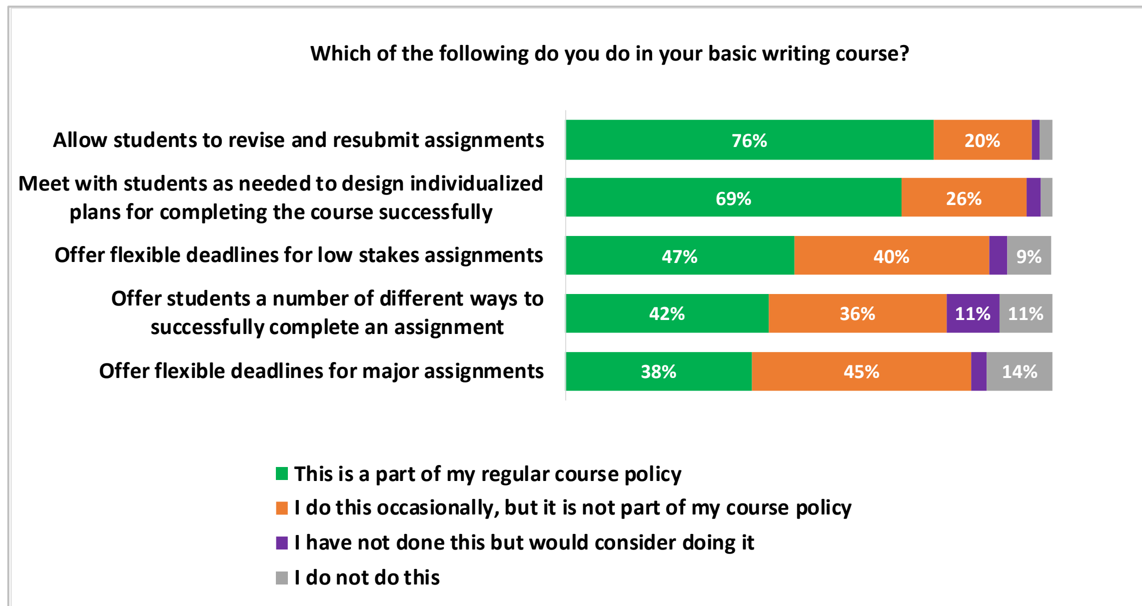

Figure 9: Participants' Indications of Flexible Assessment Practices

The following discussion and analysis by race, institution type, and rank (adjunct/non-adjunct) will focus on the responses that indicated "this is a part of my regular course policy." When a practice is a part of one's course policy, it rearranges responsibility such that the student is not required to share their circumstances with the teacher to be granted flexibility – there is no need for a student to perform a certain kind of humility, or to embody the "correct" sort of vulnerability, required when asking for an extension or a related adjustment to the assignment. Creating a course that honors flexible deadlines as a matter of policy is a way of cultivating a classroom assessment environment founded in collectivity rather than individual responsibility and discipline. Kryger writes of trust and disclosure in those moments of negotiating extensions or other sorts of flexibility, saying, "disclosures are made necessary by a widespread mistrust of students as well as the habit of policing students' actions, behaviors, and use of time. Students don't succeed if they don't play by these rules" (103). As an example, early on in my teaching, a student who had missed the previous class nervously walked up to me and handed me a paper

as the class concluded. I looked at it, then back at her, as she explained that it was a note from a funeral home stating that her uncle's services had occurred on the day of the class meeting she missed. In this profoundly unsettling moment, what I felt most acutely besides sympathy for her loss was shame that I had somehow, unintentionally, created a classroom environment where she felt it necessary to present me with a death record. I had much to learn about why and how to cultivate a writing classroom founded in community building and mutual trust. I was reactive rather than proactive and prioritized "business as usual" in the classroom (strict deadlines, strict attendance policy, etc.) rather than explicitly fostering a classroom space that is more about solidarity than charity, to borrow language from movements organizing for mutual aid.[30] In this vein, basic writing teachers would do well to interrogate why they might be hesitant to incorporate iterations of trust into their classroom assessment policies.

Allowing students to revise and resubmit assignments, and meeting with students to design an individualized plan for completing the course successfully, were by far the most commonly engaged course policy-level practices among this group of developmental writing teachers. Moreover, nearly all participants regularly allow students, either via course policy or on an ad hoc basis, to revise and resubmit (96%), and meet with students to design individual completion plans (95%). The practice that participants were least likely to indicate doing at all, on any level, is offering students a number of different ways to successfully complete an assignment (22% of participants indicated that they do not do this, or that they have not done this but would consider doing it). Fourteen percent of participants indicated that they do not offer and have not considered offering flexible deadlines for major assignments, and just 38%

[30] See, for example, Dean Spade's work, *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During this Crisis (and the Next)*.

of teachers indicated making flexible deadlines for major assignments part of their regular course policy.

To make more critical meaning from these data, as I have throughout this project, I looked at potential differences in responses among three variables: racial identity (binary BIPOC/not BIPOC), institution type (CC, RC, HBCU, and VHR), and rank (binary adjunct/not adjunct). In terms of racial identity, there was one area of flexibility where, for course policy-level responses, there was a more than 10 percentage point difference between BIPOC participants and participants who are not BIPOC: Whereas 40% of participants who did not identify as BIPOC indicated offering students a number of different ways to successfully complete an assignment as part of their course policy, 64% of participants who identified as BIPOC indicated the same (a 24 percentage point difference). When taking both positive response categories together (both "this is part of my course policy" and "I do this occasionally"), this aspect of classroom flexibility remains the only one where we find a significant difference among racial identity.

Looking at these data by institution type, excluding HBCUs for which the cell sizes continue to be too small, there are two aspects for which we see significant differences; those differences are between VHRs and the remaining two institution types (CCs and RCs). One aspect is "allow[ing] students to revise and resubmit assignments" (VHR=60% part of course policy; CC=82% part of course policy and RC=80% part of course policy). The second aspect is "meet[ing] with students as needed to design individualized plans for completing the course successfully" (VHR=60%; CC=73% and RC=70%). For both aspects, there is at minimum a 10 percentage point difference seen between Very High Research institutions, and Community

Colleges and Regional Comprehensive institutions. One could suggest that this may be attributable to the more student-centered nature of community colleges and regional comprehensive institutions, where teaching performance may count more significantly toward tenure, and other aspects of teachers' labor, such as research, may be less demanding. As such, teachers may have more time or inclination to focus on their students and student-writing. However, the matter of time in flexibility is a complicated question. Some might say that assessment-related practices such as flexible deadlines and individualized assignment modifications require a great deal more time than uniform deadlines and assignments. I am not convinced that it is a matter of “more” time; rather, if a teacher is letting go of their inclination to discipline, and/or rethinking their perspectives on how learning happens, I believe such practices shift where and how time is spent rather than add time. This is particularly true of flexible deadlines, and perhaps less true of practices such as revise/resubmit. To cite Kryger again, she writes,

> I often hear this argument against socially just practices: they take too much time...For all overworked and underpaid educators, time is an incredibly precious commodity, and I don’t doubt anyone who says they don’t have any time to spare (29)...But I do try to encourage them to consider the consequences of not making any changes, and to consider what values their current configurations are validating. I ask myself: Am I tacitly implying to my students that they should be as franticly busy as I am? Do my assessments prioritize efficiency and productivity, rather than reflection and deep learning? (30)

Participants who identified as adjuncts were significantly less likely than those who did not identify as adjuncts to make flexible deadlines a part of their course policy. Forty-one percent of adjuncts compared with 51% of non-adjuncts offered flexible deadlines for low stakes assignments in their course policies, and 29% of adjuncts compared with 44% of non-adjuncts offered flexible deadlines for major assignments in their course policies. It may be that adjuncts' precarity informs their hesitancy to engage in a sometimes-controversial practice and, more pointedly, to codify that practice through their course policies. When you are uncertain on a semester-to-semester basis whether you will be employed, you are apt to minimize risk as much as possible and to experiment with more "non-traditional" practices in a clandestine or "off the books" way. Also, if time is a concern for my participants (and in some ways it is, as will be discussed in the following chapter), it is likely that adjunct experience more overwork than non-adjuncts (again, as will be discussed in the following chapter).

In response to a survey question asking participants to describe a time when they had success implementing their socially just assessment praxis, many teachers mentioned experiencing success through engagement with flexible and individualized approaches to teaching. For example, participants mentioned strategies such as conferencing, one-on-one conversations with students, creating individualized plans with students, and reaching out to build sustained dialogue with students about their writing. In the open-ended data, “flexibility” according to my study participants mainly encompassed adaptability around deadlines, grading, and late work, and overlapped in some cases with references to individualized support (e.g., changing an assignment guideline in response to a student’s need). Consider these characterizations of success via flexibility and/or individualized support:

Since the lockdown in March 2020, I let go of a lot of my preconceived ideas of what success in the course looked like. One of the first ideas to go was deadlines. I still have them, but I am much more active in contacting students to discuss where they are in the course and then coming up with a plan that works for them. Honestly, I don't see a lot of difference in terms of passing rates, but the students seem more engaged with the course. Whether that's due to them just being used to going to school online, or because of these practices remains to be seen. (White non-adjunct, Community College)

I didn't know a student was struggling with the course due to the effects of quarantine on the student's mental health. The flexibility I offered the class as a whole in submitting assignments had a positive overall effect on the student and enabled the student to remain in the course. I didn't know about any of this until the student told me after the course ended. (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

We worked on some goals individually so that she could continue to develop as a writer. I met with her every week throughout the course because much of what we discussed in class was, in her words, ‘over my head.’ I assessed her work through the lens of our individual work together. (White non-adjunct, Community College)

I recently had a student fall behind quite a bit due to a mental health emergency. I worked with the student to develop a new, personalized plan practice and build their skills. They will be continuing the course into the summer to make sure they can not

> only pass the class but pass with confidence in their skills and without creating additional stress in an already difficult time. (BIPOC adjunct, Very High Research)

> ... I had students who didn't have computers at home and only had internet access through their phones, often with limited access or minutes ... I changed the assignment entirely. Instead of writing a traditional research paper, I had them create a multi-media presentation. Yes, it still took time and could be frustrating to do on a phone, but the methods they could incorporate were up to them. I did still get some traditional papers from some students, but I also got a variety of videos, photo collages, etc. that allowed the students to demonstrate their understanding of the assignment and present their topic of choice while utilizing the presentation methods they were most comfortable using. (White adjunct, Community College)

> Every time that I have allowed students flexible deadlines has been rewarding in terms of social justice. Students have responded well to the absence of pressure and the flexibility to hand assignments in at their own pace. (BIPOC non-adjunct, Community College)

I ran crosstabs on these codes/themes to determine potential differences among institution type, credit or non-credit bearing, race, and adjunct status. There are no significant differences in the frequency with which teachers mention their success with these strategies. This is a compelling finding: While the quantitative questions on flexibility showed some level of variability in results within institution type, rank, and racial identity, there is little variability

when it comes to how teachers experience success with flexibility and individualized approaches. In other words, the *frequency* with which participants engage flexibility and/or individualized approaches to their classroom assessment methods varies, but there are not major differences in terms of institution type, rank, or racial identity when it comes to those who cite these methods as successful. Again, in a follow-up to this study, it would be important to talk with students about how they define and feel success in the basic writing classroom. For now, with the data we have which focuses on teachers, we know that this sample of teachers, in general, has seen their own efforts to be flexible and relate to students one-on-one lead to student success.

Approximately two thirds of participants who referenced flexibility in the context of successfully engaging socially just assessment in the basic writing classroom wrote on ad hoc enactments of flexibility, leaving about one third of participants writing on course policy-level flexibility. Above we can see examples of these successes. One teacher writes, for instance, "[t]he flexibility I offered the class as a whole in submitting assignments had a positive overall effect on the student and enabled the student to remain in the course." Here, the teacher notes that they did not know this student was struggling with her mental health until after the conclusion of the semester when they found out that the course-wide flexible deadline policy benefitted this student. This teacher illustrates the risk of offering only ad hoc flexibility, where teachers rely on students to disclose aspects of their personal life before potentially responding with flexibility.

To be clear, not all teachers cited flexibility (including flexibility around individualized approaches to working with students) as a successful strategy or a strategy that they prefer to

engage. Rather, some teachers shared that they are "torn" about the efficacy of flexibility in the basic writing classroom. These teachers may share some of the concerns expressed on Yale's Poorvu Center website or in higher education-related periodicals ("Flexible"). For instance, in response to the survey item asking participants to describe a time when they struggled to implement socially just assessment, one teacher writes,

> I'm actually really torn about deadlines/due dates, particularly now in the pandemic, with the fear that being flexible is setting some students up for less success. I don't have any penalties for late work right now, and haven't since the move to entirely distance learning. Students are grateful for the flexibility, but I'm afraid that it might be too unstructured, and students are miscalculating whether they'll be able to catch up later. I'm trying to offer structured plans for students who are behind to get caught up, but only a small percentage of my composition students are sticking with the intended schedule, so I'm worried about the majority of them being able to successfully complete the courses. (White non-adjunct, Community College)

I point to this nuance for two reasons: 1) to be true to the data by drafting an analysis that encompasses the range of feelings that participants express around flexibility (I do not wish to put forth the inaccurate argument that all participants agreed that flexibility is essential and uncomplicated), and 2) to briefly explore the perception that students might be negatively affected by flexibility. Struggles, successes, and general contemplations around flexibility came up quite frequently across the data. When participants wrote of it in a more uncertain (or outright critical) way, their responses appeared to gather around two major (non-time-related) concerns. One is that too much flexibility can lead to students who rely on structure falling

through the cracks, and another is that "in the real world," people are not granted flexibility. One interview participant, Sophia, lays out this familiar "real world" argument and her response to it:

> I have other faculty who are like, it's just an issue. "Life comes with penalties. You have to pay when you pay your bill late. They'll repossess your car." I'm like, "Yeah, but they don't repossess your car and they don't evict you from your apartment." It takes like six months for these things to happen. It's not that the day your credit card bill is late, you pay 10% more and the second day your credit card bill is late, you pay another 10% more.... So that kind of policy as a policy really bothers me, because I have had friends and I've had students who've had all myriad of things happen. Family members die, become homeless. I've had students become homeless. I had a student whose entire apartment building burnt down in the middle of the semester. She got an A for the semester. Other professors would use that as an excuse to say, "There are no excuses... obviously I'm an excellent professor because my student was able to pass even with all that hardship." I'm like, [skeptical, tongue-in-cheek tone] "Yeah, I don't know that that's true...." (White non-adjunct, Community College)[31]

Here, this basic writing teacher deftly outlines how what I will call "the real world" argument relies on an imagined and contained real world – one that begins after and never coincides with time in college, and one that is unilaterally focused on absolute deadlines. However, "college" and "the real world" are not separate entities. Higher education institutions and classrooms exist in the world and students' "real world" lives very much do not stop where

[31] "Sophia" is a pseudonym.

school starts (e.g., as this teacher illustrates, you can be a houseless student, a grieving student, etc.). Colleges and Universities are institutions in the real world just as, to draw on the participant's thinking above, banks and other financial institutions are. What is reflected in the "real world" argument, then, is the impulse to reproduce the harms that structure *other* institutions – to punish, to prioritize profit over people, to refuse understanding. Why would Colleges and Universities ever want to replicate that model? And more pointedly, why would a writing class be a place to teach students a lesson about what happens if they are late on their credit card bill? (And, as the basic writing teacher above explains, an incorrectly rendered lesson at that?) This impulse speaks both to the difficulties of relating to one another under capitalism and the histories of discipline within composition studies – both of which I will discuss in the following chapter. Crucially, this participant shows how some basic writing teachers understand one goal of the writing classroom to be to prepare students for a fear- and disciplined-based type of responsibility; and, they show that these teachers misunderstand how students are already navigating pressure, consequence, and loss, as we all are. If a writing teacher's main role is to facilitate rich and successful education around composing processes, then their actions should be aligned with this goal rather than with the goals of other institutions (again, for example, banks).

Participants also shared hesitancies related to students feeling less supported by flexible deadlines. For example, the participant above who shared they are "torn" on flexibility because of "the fear that being flexible is setting some students up for less success.... Students are grateful for the flexibility, but I'm afraid that it might be too unstructured, and students are miscalculating whether they'll be able to catch up later." Since we do not learn, process, and

experience time in the exact same way, it does make sense that flexible deadlines may not be ideal for each individual student. It also makes sense, then, that absolute deadlines will not be ideal for each individual student

Other successful interventions that teachers articulated include revision or reframing of assignments; culturally relevant assignment, reading, and course design; incorporating options into assignments (e.g., options for completing via written text or audio, options for topic choice); cultivating personal connections with students; adopting a growth or asset-based mindset/un-learning the deficit mindset; de-emphasizing grammar and focusing on content; emphasizing writing as a creative and/or social act; un-learning what “typical” essays and “successful” learning look like; learning more about assessment; connecting students with on-campus resources; advocating for students; and incorporating student collaboration into assessment design (e.g., self-assessment, collaborative rubrics).

Some of these interventions are well known and well respected. Culturally relevant pedagogy, for example, is a foundational approach to justice or equity-oriented teaching forwarded by Gloria Ladson-Billings and expanded on by scholars such as Django Paris. Many of the interventions listed above may be considered part of culturally relevant strategies (e.g., relationship-building with students, adopting an asset-based approach, advocating for students). Others, particularly those related to “options” and “multiple approaches,” echo still aspects of flexibility, the compliments and controversies of which I have discussed. Some speak to facets of professional development and political education around assessment, learning, and language difference. What is perhaps both surprising and yet to be considered are the interventions related to student collaboration on assessment. In my anecdotal experience, I

have not, and I have not spoken personally with many teachers who have, formally invited students to collaborate on determining rubric criteria or assessment method in real time (rather than asking for feedback after the fact in an end of year evaluation, perhaps). However, participants mentioned these practices with some frequency. See, for example, these basic writing teachers' responses,

> ... I feel like anytime a student is involved with designing a grading rubric, or when a student has had significant time in class to interact and understand the rubric and how it works to evaluate the skills demonstrated by a student, then they are participating in socially just assessment practices.... They also get to use assessment to self-evaluate what they know and where they need to grow (improve). I also think having students "grade" themselves using the rubric is helpful because they learn that a grade is not an arbitrary grade.... (White non-adjunct, Community College)
>
> Self assessments also asked students to identify some of their own goals, which I incorporated into their assessment as a way of giving them greater agency in their learning. (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

Student collaboration on assessment also came up in interviews, where Bob shared:

> ... [I]n terms of collaborative grading ... the syllabus idea actually came from a colleague in Math. He made the pitch to the entire faculty in one of his professional development presentations that if we wanted to truly draw students into the class and if we really wanted to be equitable and if we knew that we put together a good set of assessments that really would get at student learning and knowledge and skills, then we should feel

> comfortable and we should challenge ourselves to open up the breakdown on the first day or the second day and tell students we're going to have some points for discussion. We're going to have, in his case, math, some projects, we're going to have some problem sets and we're going to have some exams. And it's up to you to decide which should be weighted most heavily.... If you're talking about justice in assessment, then I think giving students space to talk about the assessments so that it's something that they're participating in and not something that's being done to them is valuable. (Bob)

Bob went on to explain the ways that students participated in this process. There is sometimes "some pushback" from students, he says, but ultimately he described an engaged and enthusiastic collaboration among students and between student and teacher:

> One class a couple years ago, students really emphasized discussion to the point where they wanted it to be like 40% of their grade. And so we talked about the criteria and I said, "Well discussion and attendance would kind of go hand in hand, so you know that means you have to be here regularly. I can't grade a discussion if you're not here for two weeks." They tossed the idea around, and they're like, "Yeah, absolutely. We all agree. We prefer to learn," I think there was one person dissenting but, "We'd rather learn through communication. It's an English fundamentals class. We're supposed to be learning grammar and communicative skills, so we want it to be communicative." (Bob)

Bob describes an assessment approach that is founded in collaboration and open dialogue. For me as a writing teacher, this provides much needed perspective on assessment design, which I typically see as the responsibility of the teacher. It can be difficult to give up this control; however, the environment this teacher describes appears much more closely aligned with one

built on trust and community. Engaging in collaborative assessment design may also be a way to work toward genuine solidarity between teacher and student in the writing classroom – a necessary condition, I believe, for making substantive changes to the structures of writing assessment across institution and field.

Assigning a final grade

Participants were asked in the survey, "Which of the following do you use to determine a student's final grade on a major writing assignment?" The question included eight response categories and asked participants to select all that apply; one of the eight categories was "other," and for this response, participants were able to describe the grading tool they use that they felt was not already represented on the list.

One hundred sixty-five participants (89%) responded to this question. Most participants selected between one and three individual grading categories/methods. Figure 11 below shows the percentage of participants who selected one, two, three, four, five, six, or seven grading categories/methods (zero participants selected eight).

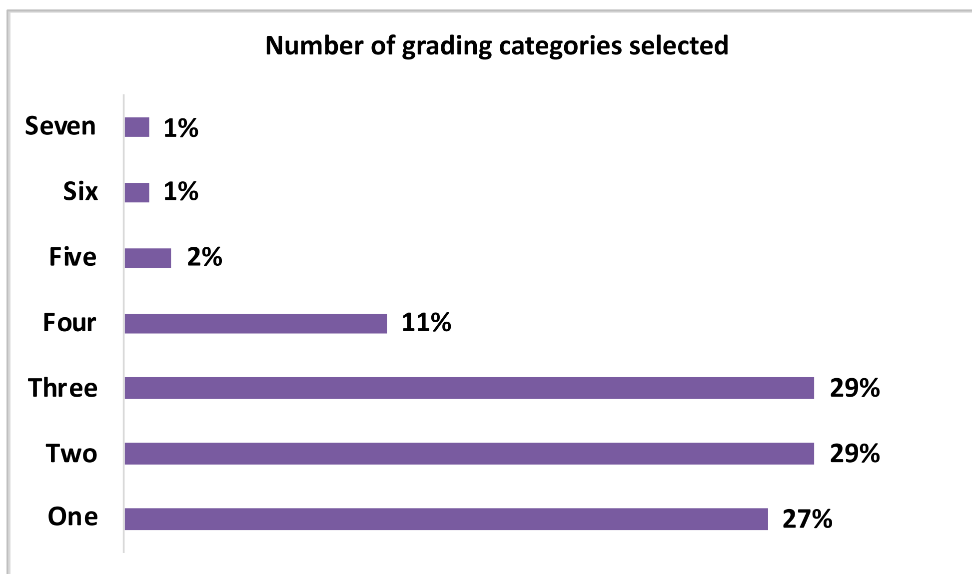

Figure 10: Number of Grading Categories Participants' Indicated Engaging

The top four most frequently used grading methods are rubrics designed by the individual instructor (64%), portfolio assessment of individual assignments (38%), portfolio assessment of multiple assignments (38%), and rubrics designed by the instructor's department or institution (36%).

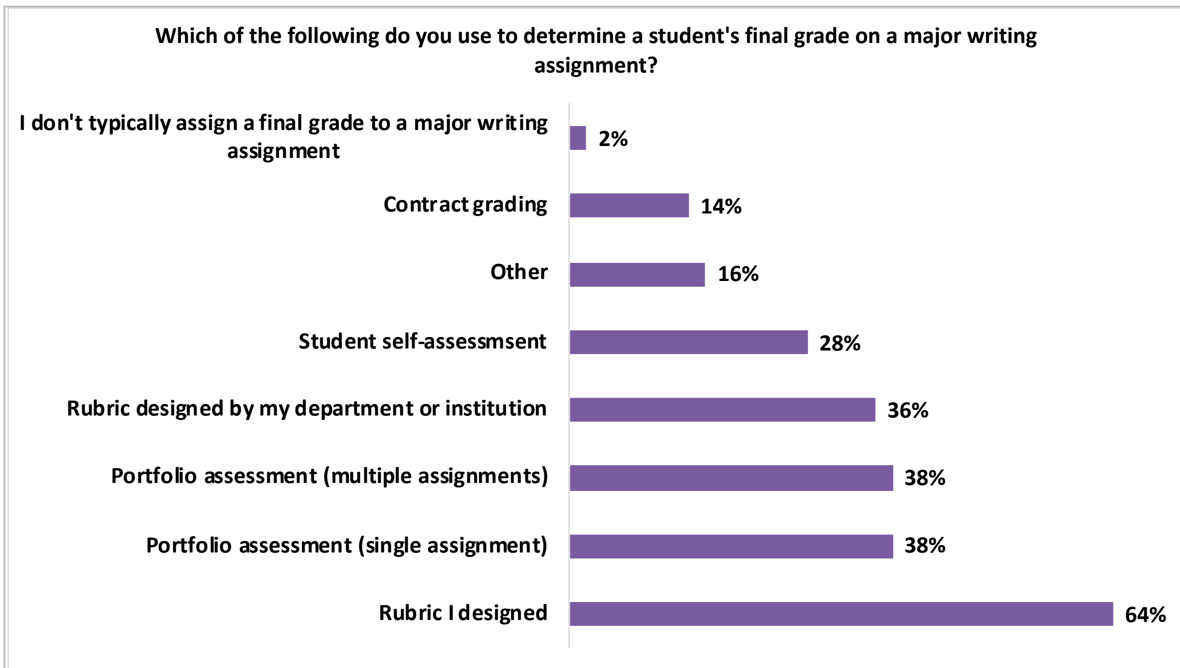

Figure 11: Frequency with which Participants Indicated Engaging Specific Grading Practices

There is variation among institution type in terms of which grading method is the most frequently engaged. For participants teaching at community colleges and regional comprehensive institutions, the most frequently selected grading method was "Rubric I designed" (CC = 80%; RC = 57%). For participants teaching at a very high research institution, the most popular was "Portfolio assessment (single assignment)" (54%). Unfortunately, as is true when analyzing most quantitative questions across these data, the number of HBCU-affiliated participants was too small to include in demographic breakdowns. Again, this speaks to the need for intentional and focused recruitment of HBCU-affiliated participants, particularly when designing a sample frame limited by a geographical region where there are not many

HBCUs. Overall, my data show that over half of basic writing instructors who participated in my study use rubrics (64%) and many (36%) use rubrics designed by their department. In chapter five, I will discuss the layers and reach of structural restrictions put on basic writing classroom writing assessment and how these restrictions affect basic writing teachers' agency in assessment. Participants teaching at community colleges were less likely than those teaching at VHRs or Regional Comprehensives to indicate using a rubric designed by their department or program (CC=25%, RegComp=40%, VHR=43%).

Just 14% of participants indicated using contract grading in the process of assigning a final grade. Conversations around contract grading tend to dominate discussions of socially just and/or anti-racist assessment in our field, particularly as a practical, concrete way of addressing the harm that traditional grading causes (e.g., Inoue, "Labor-Based"; Schwarz et al.). As such, I take a moment here to discuss this grading strategy in some detail. As I mentioned in chapter one, contract grading has been forwarded as the latest and most effective intervention into traditional grading practices. Anecdotally, as a graduate student and teacher in a VHR, contract grading appears to have become in some ways metonymic of socially just assessment more broadly. In other words, it seems to be the default choice of those who are interested in exploring non-traditional grading strategies. Sherri Craig voices a similar observation when she writes in her statement on anti-racist classroom practices, "Your Contract Grading Ain't It," that one of the typical ways English and Writing programs "responded to calls for anti-racist action" in 2020 was to call for "contract grading trainings" (145). Craig goes on to argue that simply switching out one grading method for another (i.e., the current method in a given department for contract grading) is, at best, a surface level move toward equity that misunderstands the

fundamental truth that, as she writes, the University does not "car[e] for [BIPOC students'] lives and their experiences" (146). Structural change requires rethinking and rebuilding all elements of a program, department, and University – it requires the acknowledgement that the University is a place from which whiteness emerges, to cite la paperson once more. Therefore, Craig writes, the actual *practice* of implementing contract grading, the labor it requires on the part of faculty and the paradigm shift it requires on the part of students who have spent the past 12+ years participating in traditional evaluation environments, is untenable as an anti-racist intervention. As Craig says, there is no way to "prove" in the current University structure that you are "committed to equality in my classroom while existing in a program that still performed annual assessments, course and instructor evaluations, adjunct labor, and tenure and promotion protocols (all of which are arguably also rooted in white supremacy)" (146).

Craig provides us with a crucial complication of the conversations around any grading tool, be it contract grading, portfolio assessment, or otherwise: What makes any one grading tool anti-racist? Rachel Ketai asks a similar question with relation to Directed Self Placement (DSP) when she proposes that, without explicit anti-racist interventions, DSP will likely reproduce the same harms as many other large scale placement mechanisms (Ketai 142). For the purposes of this chapter, Craig's argument and her and Ketai's provocative questions serve as a helpful framing of the discussion around basic writing teacher's evaluation practices and particularly the processes they engage when assigning a final grade. The intersection between Craig's observations and the finding in my data that just 14% (n=23) of participants indicated using contract grading is already curious. The frequency of engaging with contract grading was much higher at VHRs (24%) than at any other institution (between 7% and 12%). There is also

an approximate 10 percentage point difference between the prevalence of contract grading in credit bearing courses (17%) and non-credit bearing courses (7%). There is very little difference in the popularity of contract grading among adjuncts and non-adjuncts and BIPOC instructors and non-BIPOC instructors, though this certainly does not mean that the distribution and experience of labor is not felt differently, and more arduously, by adjuncts and BIPOC instructors than it is felt by their peers. Though my data represent just one study that is restricted to public institutions in a particular geographic area, these findings contribute to the contract grading discourse, particularly as it pertains to the basic writing course, to illuminate the point that the use of this method is still rather limited, is more prevalent in very high research institutions, and is very rarely used by participants in non-credit bearing courses. At the same time, my data show that the practice certainly is not universally located in VHRs. For example, one interview participant, Donna[32], a non-adjunct who teaches at a regional comprehensive institution, shares the following about her experiences (re)negotiating late work "cut-offs" and final grades with students (both typical aspects of contract grading approaches):

> ... [A]t the end of the semester, when it comes for grading, I sit down with my students and say, "This is where we started and this is the semester we lived through. Does that still seem like it accurately projects onto your experience?" Nobody saw COVID coming in Spring 2020; let's not make four late assignments the cutoff for A, let's see what superior work sounds like from your perspective. And then in my classes, I tell every student before the grades get posted, "When I count up, this is what the counting says. Does that seem to you to be an accurate representation of your work in this course?"

[32] "Donna" is a pseudonym.

> And if they say yes, then that's what we use. And if they say no, then we talk about why not? And what else we might do to account for that so that, one, nobody is ever surprised by the grade on their transcript, which I think is fully unethical, and two, that the grade represents an agreement of the valuing of the work that they did and not some authoritative imposition of values that are not jointly held, which is really important to me.... The renegotiation, in light of our shared experience, happens as a class, and then the individual conversation's about, "In light of that renegotiation, here's what your grade looks like" happens one-on-one. (Donna)

What these data reinforce, then, is the understanding that socially just assessment interventions cannot be a "one size fits all" approach; it is perhaps, as I will argue further in this dissertation, as much or more a matter of political education and organizing among teachers as it is a matter of which exact grading tool we will use. The data also show, as we can see in the interview excerpt above, the tremendous amount of labor that some basic writing teachers enact in order to assess their students' writing more equitably. How might the structure of basic writing courses need to change to better accommodate the level of labor socially just assessment can require? And, more pointedly, how can the institution better support basic writing teachers who are hoping to engage these practices but do not have the capacity?

Participants were also given a follow-up question about their final grading method. This question was open ended and asked teachers to "please briefly describe the tool(s) or practice(s) you indicated using in the previous question (i.e., if you selected "contract grading," what are the major tenets of that grading process as you practice it)." In my analysis of this question, I conducted multiple rounds of coding. Earlier rounds were descriptive and In Vivo,

and later rounds focused on sub-research questions (Saldaña). When doing later rounds of coding, I focused on what participants said about the method they indicated using in the previous question. In other words, if participants began describing another method, I didn't capture that in my coding (unless they also indicated using that tool, and then their response would be coded as such, but under the corresponding grading category). When coding these responses, I kept my practice-related research question in mind, and also used two sub-questions as a guide: 1) What does the tool look like to the participant? How does it happen? (e.g., how does self-assessment happen and what does it look like?), and 2) Are there any indications of "why" – why a particular tool? Table 13 below contains phrases that are often the actual codes (which are often verbatim/In Vivo codes directly from participants).

Because of the nature of survey research, participants' responses are brief and so qualitative analysis quickly reaches a ceiling where the researcher realizes they are making interpretive leaps that are too far from the responses themselves. Presenting analysis by grading tool/method helps keep discussion close to participants' voices and protects from my own potential to "over read" teachers' responses.

Category/Method	What does it look like/how does it happen	Why this tool?
Rubric I Designed (n=106)	Holistic; growth-oriented; sometimes flexible; scaffolded; identify areas of focus; higher and lower order concerns; linked to student learning objectives; collaborative (incorporate students' contributions into rubric); clear; specific; points-oriented; often foreground written feedback; adaptable to assignment specifics	Clarity; transparency in grading process; clear identification of and alignment with course objectives and grading criteria; supports communication with students on what is valued; tracks student progress; reinforces objectives; "a familiar checklist"; **rubric as communication tool**
Portfolio (Single Assignment) (n=63)	Multiple drafts; holistic; process-oriented; peer response; reflection letter/memos/writer's statement; sometimes uses rubric; sometimes scored by outside faculty/committee; focuses on individualized growth; scaffolded; lots of feedback	Encourages student self-reflection; attention to process; "training wheels"; growth-oriented; many opportunities for feedback; **portfolio assessment as process and growth, high levels of teacher involvement**
Portfolio (Multiple Assignment) (n=63)*	Multiple drafts; holistic; process-oriented; peer response; reflection letter/memos/writer's statement; sometimes uses rubric; sometimes scored by outside faculty/committee; focuses on individualized growth; scaffolded; lots of feedback	Encourages student self-reflection; attention to process; "training wheels"; growth-oriented; many opportunities for feedback; **portfolio assessment as process and growth, high levels of teacher involvement**
Department Rubric (n=59)	Holistic; points-based; can be negotiated, growth-oriented; revisions; measures skills; measures practices; benchmark; department-designed; modeling; feedback-oriented	Mandated; transparency in grading process; students understand expectations; clear teaching and assessing goals; need to teach to specific goals (e.g., state-wide goals); grounded criteria; **rubric as communication tool and mandate**

Category/Method	What does it look like/how does it happen	Why this tool?
Self Assessment (n=47)	Reflection; process letters; students describe growth and areas of improvement; student collaboration on determining grade and assignment; uses rubric; journals; reflection with peers; foregrounds reflection, reflecting on areas of strength and growth/weaknesses	Promote mastery; overcome stigma around formal education; talk with purpose and authority about writing; develop confidence to improve; develop thoughtfulness; teacher uses as a guide; **self assessment as self development as writer/learner**
Grading Contract (n=23)	Focus on higher order issues; Peter Elbow; uses rubrics; start with B; no grade on drafts; no strict deadlines; labor based; students collaborate on assignment design; individualized; ad hoc/case by case; emphasize development	Address social inequity; inequities and struggles of COVID-19; generosity; cultivates safety, confidence, and comfort; developed after moving away from other grading methods (journey); helps students who are falling behind; demystifies grading; less stressful for students; **grading contract as equitable alternative, tool for redressing harm**
I Don't Assign a Final Grade on Individual Assignments (n=4)	n/a	n/a
Other (n=26)**	Ungrading (reflection, conference, students earn a 1 or a 0)	n/a

Table 13: Participants' Characterizations of the Grading Tools they Use and Why

*When someone marked both single and multiple portfolio grading, it was hard to know which they described in their response. For those that overlapped, I coded to the best of my ability.

**Nearly all of the participants who marked "other" also marked one or more of the categories listed above and then described those categories (i.e., they did not describe a grading strategy not included in the fixed response categories).

What the participants in my survey show us, too, is that there are "main" or "anchor" assessment methods, versus methods that are complementary. For example, though 28% (n=47) of participants indicated using self-assessment to determine a final grade on a major

writing assignment, zero of these teachers use *only* self-assessment. Thus, in terms of considering "what does assessment look like and how does it happen?" self-assessment, for example, looks like a complement to other forms of assessment. This is true, too, of contract grading, where just one individual of those who indicated using contract grading indicated using contracting grading alone. By contrast, 38% of those who indicated using a rubric designed by their department or institution indicated using this rubric alone; the same is true for those who indicated using a rubric they designed (38% indicated this is the only one of the seven tools/processes they use).

In participants' descriptions of their grading strategies, particularly what we can know of the "why" that drives them, one can see some familiar tendencies or orientations. For example, on the whole, participants who indicated using rubrics described them as clear, transparent, and grounded. For these participants, the rubric seems to serve as a communication tool or bridge between teachers and students – a way, in other words, to hold both teachers and students accountable for learning objectives. Those who wrote on rubrics tended to write on criteria, outcomes, and points, and often used words such as "transparency" or "clear." By contrast, those who wrote on portfolio grading (both single and multiple assignment) tended to mention student growth, the importance of the writing process (drafting, revising, incorporating teacher and student feedback), and self-reflection. Those who wrote on contract grading described their process as one that addresses inequities in grading and feelings of discomfort and insecurity in students; contract grading was couched as an alternative to traditional grading that supports students who may be struggling and "demystifies" the grading

process. Those who wrote on self-assessment also seemed interested in this strategy as one that boosts students' awareness of self-as-writer, confidence, and reflective capacity.

One way to understand the usefulness of these findings is to consider this a heuristic articulated by basic writing teachers that can be used for decision-making around grading strategies (either by individual teachers or WPAs). A focus on the "why" as shown in Table 13 may be instructive in terms of understanding how basic writing teachers committed to socially just writing assessment move among grading tools, engaging certain approaches for certain reasons and in certain moments. The ability to see this heuristic – to consider the "why" that animates particular assessment strategies – may prompt reflection among basic writing teachers in terms of exploration of tools that they may not have used before but which, when consulting the "why," may align with their writing assessment values. For example, are there ways of engaging contract grading that also support the clarity and communication that participants say rubrics provide? Is there a way to foreground in other grading tools the attention to process that portfolios center? Better understanding the values held by current basic writing teachers around certain grading tools will help us as we work with a range of teachers to build capacity around more just writing assessment practices.

CHAPTER 5

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES TO SOCIALLY JUST ASSESSMENT

"The university itself is contributing to socially unjust assessment" (White adjunct, Regional Comprehensive)

This final chapter brings together the voices of participants as they share their struggles implementing socially just writing assessment practices in their basic writing classrooms. The chapter focuses especially on the departmental, institutional, or other structural barriers to implementation, leading to the argument that composition and literacy studies must become more organized, and less focused on individualized and reactive approaches to writing assessment, if we wish to make large scale, systemic, and sustainable changes to the ways that our students learn and practice composing. As Missy Watson and Rachael Shapiro note in their article, "Clarifying the Multiple Dimensions of Monolingualism: Keeping Our Sights on Language Politics," it is not enough to wait and hope for slow change in composition and literacy studies ideologies and practices, to remain satisfied with incremental or piecemeal gains (Watson and Shapiro). It is not enough because current ideologies and practices related to the assessment of writing hold myriad consequences for students who have historically been marginalized in formal educational spaces in the US. As I have stated previously, current ideologies and practices espousing monolingualism, neoliberalism, forced paternalism, and white saviorism can negatively affect students' sense of themselves as writers, learners, thinkers, and contributors to academic conversations. These ideologies and practices can lead to students' negative self-thoughts which can then affect how they learn, the careers they pursue, the classes they take, the time it takes them to earn their degree, and whether they earn their

degree at all. Concretely, the ideologies and practices that inform the existence of the basic writing course affect students' acceptance into and persistence through college.

When considering interventions into basic writing teachers' assessment praxis, we can situate our thinking around an attention to what may be preventing teachers from fully imagining and accessing a more critical, radical version of socially just assessment. This is the work of this chapter. As Carmen Kynard tells us, “more trainings” is the typical (and tired) answer (11). Institutions love to meet burned out, underpaid workers with more one-off tasks to complete, as though an hour-long webinar or workshop will chip away at the ingrained ideologies and structures that are often what hold teachers back from shifting their socially, historically, and politically situated views on education, evaluation, "preparedness," and what it means to "write well.” In this final chapter, we will see where developmental writing teachers are struggling to enact socially just assessment in a fundamentally unjust institution. I aim to answer my third research question which asks, What supports do participants have or advocate for, and what limitations or obstacles do they navigate, as they enact socially just assessment praxes? We will look at their perceptions of the community they feel in their departments in relation to socially just writing assessment, and of their institutional or departmental supports. We will also see the limitations they experience and where developmental writing teachers may be reproducing the harms they purport to work against.

This chapter is framed by an explicit critique of the composition course, offered by poet and scholar Alexis Pauline Gumbs, which informs my approach to data analysis and interpretation. In her chapter, "Nobody Mean More: Black Feminist Pedagogy and Solidarity," Alexis Pauline Gumbs offers abolitionist critiques of the composition course and pedagogies.

Gumbs centers her chapter on June Jordan and Audre Lorde's teaching at the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY), respectively. Gumbs calls on us to see the expansion of the public university system (in this case, CUNY) as a strategy for "institutionally manag[ing]" Black and Indigenous students and students of color (241). Gumbs outlines the parallel histories of the expansion of the New York City Police force and the expansion of CUNY's student population through Open Admissions (245). At John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where Lorde teaches, Gumbs tells us many of Lorde's students are training to be police officers and her task as a composition teacher is not to teach students critical thinking but to teach the "skills and drills" curriculum that characterize Open Admissions classrooms (245). This emphasis on "the mechanics of writing" is, of course, evidenced by Mina Shaugnessy's work, discussed in chapter one (245). Gumbs, I believe, understands the composition course of that era as a racial project that aims to teach students that certain individuals, communities, and ways of speaking are "deviant" (248). Gumbs' chapter helps frame the work of the composition class and, especially, the basic writing class, as related to disciplining. The disciplining work of the course, then, makes it difficult for individual teachers to resist the harms caused by the writing assessment practices traditionally affected in the course.

Gumbs then asks through a reading of Lorde and Jordan's creative works what it means to relate to one another through a "possibility of solidarity" (239). Relation under capitalism, Gumbs tells us, is distressed, indiscernible. Gumbs draws on Sylvia Wynter, writing "Capitalism, [Wynter] points out, only allows for things to relate to things, for objectified people to relate to objects that mean power (like machines and guns and other technologies). The capacity of

relation is stolen in the context of capitalism, creating the exemplary condition: a prison, a reservation, perpetual entrapment" (240). We can see an iteration of this in the contemporary composition course and its relation to machine assessment technologies such as ACCUPLACER and Turnitin which work to standardize and surveil student composition, and in the relationship between the course and institutional needs. The latter – the relationship between basic writing and institutional needs – was deftly laid out by Mary Soliday in her book, *The Politics of Remediation: Institutional and Students Needs in Higher Education*, where she shows us the histories of how "preparedness" in writing is utterly dependent on the institutional needs of the moment. As one participant shares,

> Because the university has sought to reduce costs, especially during the pandemic, the class size caps have been removed and the needs of [multilingual students in need of writing support] have not been addressed. Some of these students are studying remotely from their homes and also caring for siblings, elders, or working part-time themselves. While my department itself recognizes these issues in our meetings and conversations, and the university will pay lip service to these needs (by allowing teachers to offer Incompletes or permitting students to change a grade to P/No Credit at the end of the semester), nothing is being done proactively to help these students succeed before they are at a point where they need to take a NC for a course or drop out. If departments are required to reduce the number of sections and increase class sizes by the administration, then the university itself is contributing to socially unjust assessment. What is happening is that students are withdrawing or dropping out because they don't have the tools to succeed. (White adjunct, Regional Comprehensive)

Here, we can see University budgetary needs superseding the quality and condition of students' education, exemplifying relation under capitalism, where the will of the University to be a space of learning is eclipsed by a drive for efficiency (e.g., ACCUPLACER) and economic gain. In the next sections, we will look at teachers' perceptions of their departmental and university climate with regard to social justice frameworks, and teachers' sense of the obstacles they are navigating when it comes to enacting socially just writing assessment in their courses.

Departmental and institutional support for social justice pedagogies and assessment practices

My survey instrument included seven fixed choice (i.e. quantitative) questions about the level of departmental and college/university support for socially just pedagogies generally and socially just writing assessment approaches specifically. These questions sought to address, in very broad terms, the "climate" of participants' departments and institutions toward social justice frameworks in the basic writing classroom: Are the institutions perceived to be, in word, mission, or action, hospitable to recognizing the need for more just learning environments, and/or more just writing assessment? In this discussion I will address the results of five of the seven questions, as the remaining two render rather repetitive results (i.e., the questions asked were essentially inverses of two of the five I will discuss). In later sections, I will more fully take on nuanced narrative data that show participants' experiences of both personal and institutional limitations to their practice, including overwork and burnout, harmful racial and linguistic ideologies, policy and structure-level limitations, and student disengagement.

It is important to note that data collection for this study took place from March-July 2021 and this chapter is being written across 2023 and early 2024. Much has changed in the landscape of higher education with regard to attitudes toward, education around, and

awareness of racism, anti-racism, and what I will broadly call "justice work" in the University. We have seen the US Supreme Court overturn race-conscious admissions in higher education, large scale book banning efforts in schools and libraries, state-level mandates to close down diversity, equity and inclusion offices, tragically misguided take downs of critical race theory, and more. Targeted attacks on "DEI" and "CRT," and ensuing cuts in funding and bans of curricula and books, have so far been felt most acutely in states such as Texas and Florida which are outside of the geographic area of my study. However, the effects of these attacks are felt nationally, particularly in public institutions, where teachers and administrators are navigating increasingly tense educational environments. It would be fascinating to conduct a follow-up survey with participants to see how their responses to these questions might have changed, if at all.

Between 157 and 161 (82%-85%) participants responded to the five questions. The graphs below show full responses.

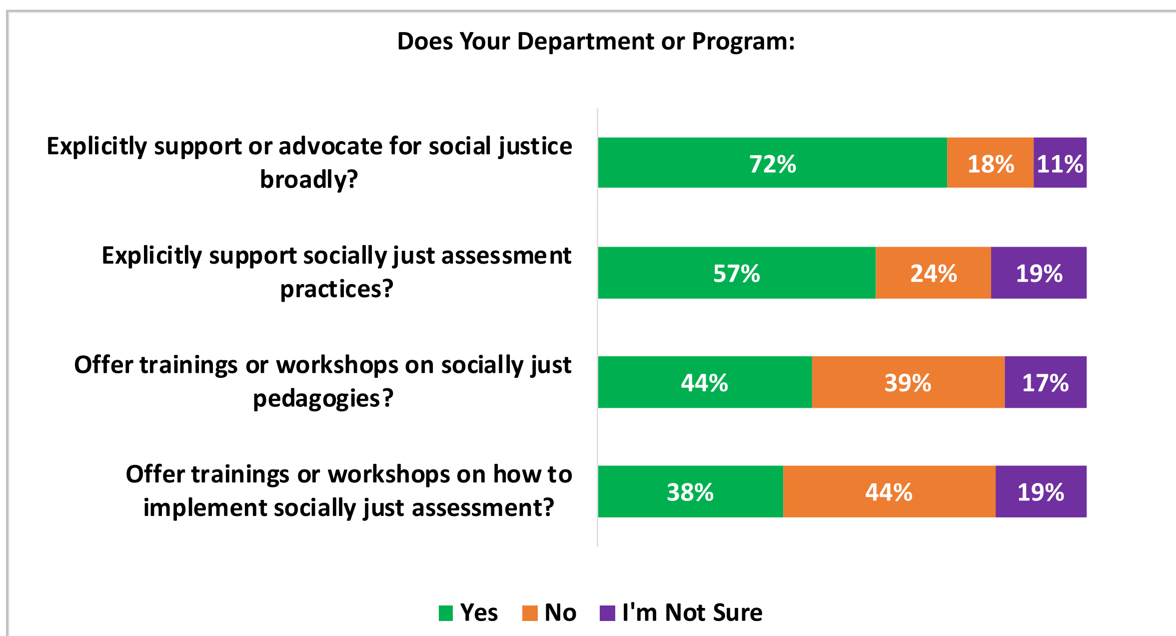

Figure 12: Participants' Characterization of Departmental Support for Socially Just Writing Assessment

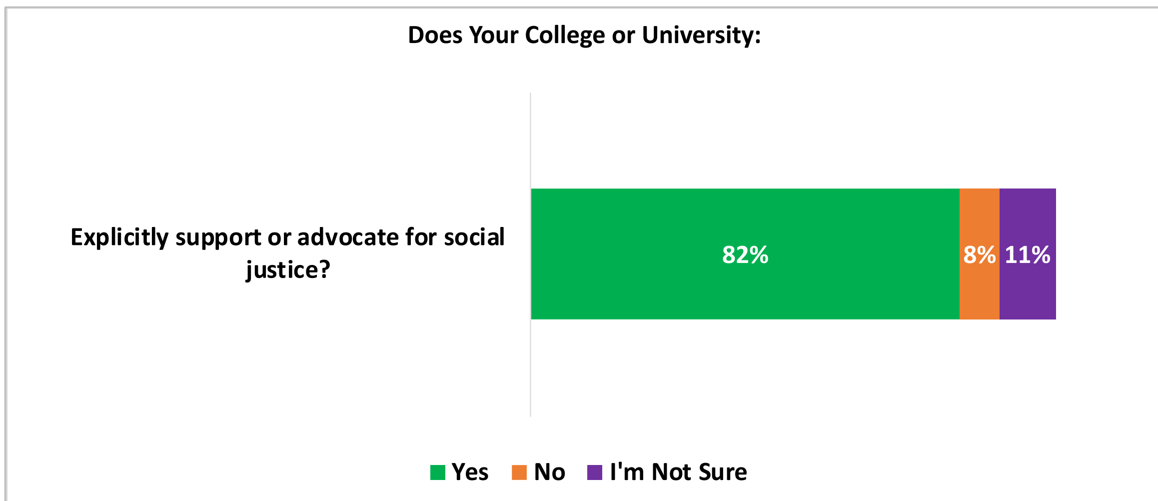

Figure 13: Participants' Characterization of Institutional Support for Socially Just Writing Assessment

In the Figure 13 above, it is fascinating to see reflected in a large, random sample of basic writing teachers what many who teach writing in colleges and universities have critiqued: the University's broad or distant support of social justice aims, but weak attention to the sorts of material resources or direct actions (e.g., training) that might help teachers in actually implementing these aims. As stated above, trainings and workshops alone will not necessarily mobilize basic writing teachers to adopt or more clearly implement socially just approaches to assessment. However, for an institution or department to espouse the values of "social justice" without hosting any conversations around, resources for, or education toward what "social justice" might mean in practice belies an empty gesture. One participant writes with frustration to this phenomenon. When asked in the survey to define their approach to socially just assessment, this teacher writes,

> I just do what I'm told. I am told to implement anti-racist pedagogy, which is fine, and in principle something I support, but I have no idea what this actually means in practice,

> since no one has really told me what anti-racist pedagogy entails. I have also received no training on what this is or how to impalement [sic] it. (Non-adjunct, Very High Research, racial identity not provided)

In response to a later question, the participant goes to on write,

> The Department gives us evaluation criteria. I use them because I have to. I don't really know what they mean, and neither do the students. (Non-adjunct, Very High Research, racial identity not provided)

What we see above in the quantitative data shown in Figure 13 and Figure 14 is the sense from basic writing teachers that institutions, and/or English or Writing department/programs, may be "supporting" or "advocating" distantly, perhaps in name, mission statement, rubric, syllabus statement, etc., but not necessarily in practice. The tendency on the part of institutions and departments may explained as "wokewashing," a concept discussed in chapter one through Enzo Rossi and Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò's 2020 article, "What's New About Woke Racial Capitalism (and What Isn't)." To restate, Rossi and Táíwò give us a framework for understanding the meaning and consequences of the ways that entities (corporations, institutions, organizations) "focus on diversity as a broadly aesthetic quality" via actions that perform the "look" of anti-racism while obscuring any real possibilities for the material, substantive redressing of harm (1). One example Rossi and Táíwò give is "the Washington DC’s mayor’s decision to paint 'Black Lives Matter' on the plaza in front of the White House, where law enforcement continued to brutalize protestors against racist police violence only to receive a multimillion-dollar budget increase from City Hall shortly afterwards" (1). This "aesthetic of the ruling class" is rendered by an organization, in this case the capital city's government, to give the appearance of something

while actually doing nothing (Rossi and Táíwò 1). This is perhaps contributing to the frustration expressed by the instructor above: The English or Writing Department has mandated a "pedagogy" and "evaluation criteria" without providing the tools and resources instructors need to understand how to enact the pedagogy and criteria effectively. As such, many basic writing teachers are perhaps doing what they can, but it is likely not enough to address the harms that the pedagogy and evaluation criteria claim to address. There is perhaps, for some teachers, a breakdown between intent and action that is driven not necessarily by personal inaction but by structural limitations; for instance, teachers both are not versed in the "why" or "how" of non-traditional assessment, and in the absence of department-sponsored educational events, are too overworked to seek out their own educational opportunities, and/or do not have access to funding that would allow them to attend conferences where they may learn more about socially just assessment.

When looking at these five questions to discern potential differences among institution type, instructor rank, and instructor race, there are indeed some significant and crucial differences. First, when looking at institution type (including HBCUs where the cell size allows), there is little difference among participants at community colleges, HBCUs, Regional Comprehensive institutions, and Very High Research institutions in terms of their agreement that their college or university supports or advocates for social justice: for each institution type, between 80% and 86% of participants indicated "yes," their college or university does espouse this support. There is also little difference among adjuncts and non-adjuncts and BIPOC and not BIPOC participants in terms of participants' perceptions of their institution's support of "social justice" (approximately 6 percentage points in each case).

However, differences are substantial in some cases when looking at the same question in terms of department ("does your department or program explicitly support or advocate for social justice broadly" and "does your department or program explicitly support socially just assessment practices"). See Figure 15 and Figure 16 below. There is little difference between the experiences of adjuncts and non-adjuncts with regard to these questions, and so that variable is not included in the figures below.

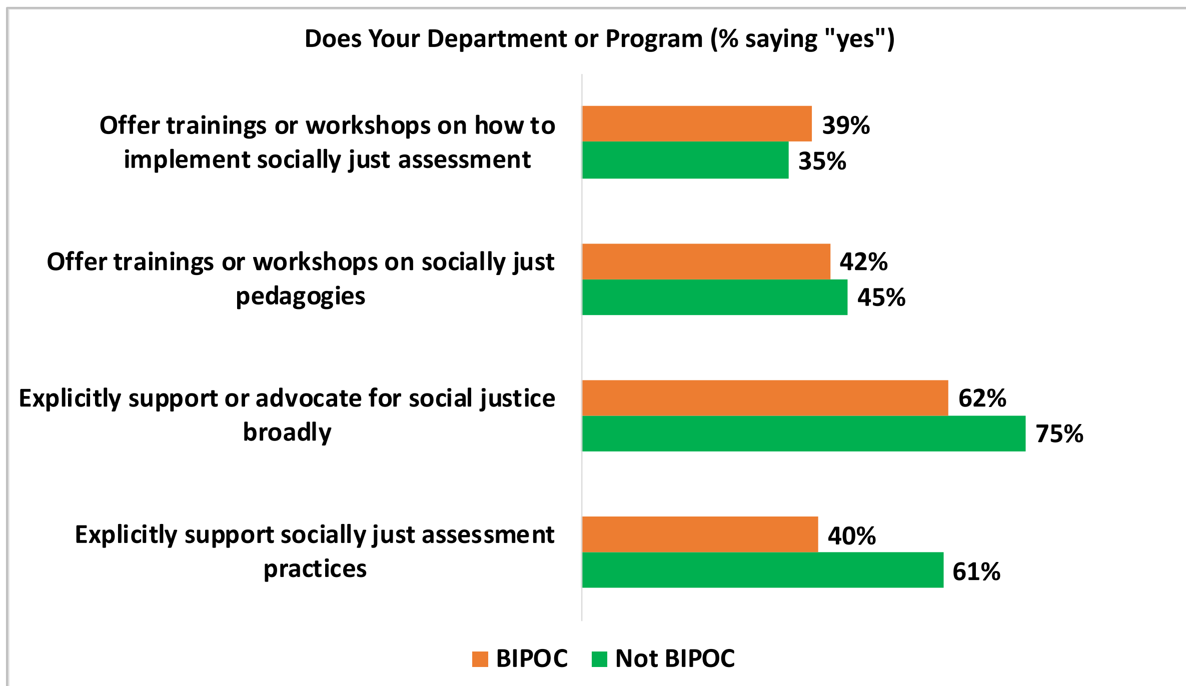

Figure 14: Participants' Characterization of Departmental Support for Socially Just Writing Assessment by Race

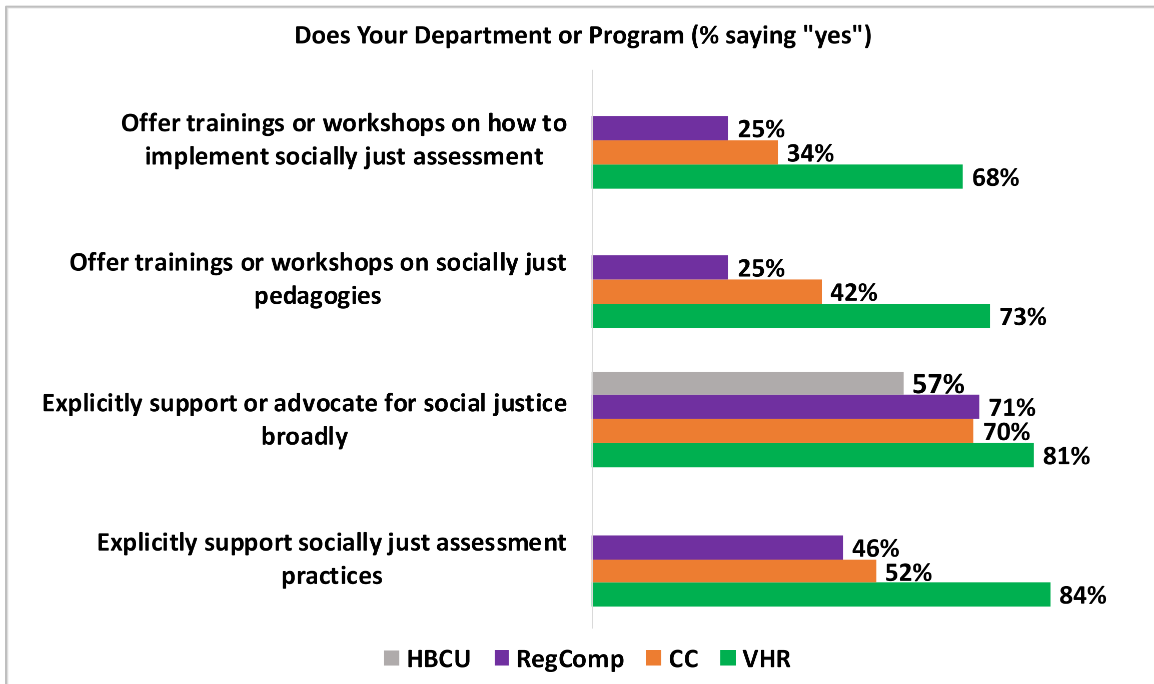

Figure 15: Participants' Characterization of Departmental Support for Socially Just Writing Assessment by Institution Type

When looking at the experiences of BIPOC basic writing teachers via Figure 15, these data reflect what many of the teacher-scholars I cite throughout my dissertation project have shown us: how differently the writing classroom is experienced not just by students of color but also by teachers of color, particularly in relation to social justice frameworks. There is, unsurprisingly, little difference among racial identity groups in terms of perception of the amount of trainings or workshops offered on socially just assessment and pedagogy. Trainings and workshops, typically occurring during a particular time and in a particular space, are quantifiable, observable happenings. However, BIPOC basic writing teachers were over 10 percentage points less likely than their peers to indicate that their department or program explicitly supports or advocates for social justice broadly or socially just assessment practices specifically. For example, 61% of non-BIPOC participants shared that their department explicitly

supports socially just assessment practices, while just 40% of BIPOC participants indicate the same. This nearly 20 percentage point difference does not appear to be due to the concentration of non-BIPOC or BIPOC participants in any one institution type, though it is difficult to know since the cell sizes for BIPOC participants are below five within VHRs and Regional Comprehensives, and for non-BIPOC participants the cell size is below five within HBCUs. However, the percentage of BIPOC and non-BIPOC participants who indicated teaching in a community college is nearly equal (50% of BIPOC participants, and 52% of non-BIPOC participants). The differences between BIPOC and non-BIPOC basic writing teachers' perceptions of departmental or program support for socially just pedagogies and assessment practices remain similar when looking specifically at the responses of teachers at community colleges.

		Non-BIPOC		**BIPOC**	
		n	**%**	**n**	**%**
Does your department or program explicitly support socially just assessment practices?	**Yes**	36	56%	5	39%
	No	14	22%	6	46%
	I'm not sure	14	22%	*	*
Does your department or program explicitly support or advocate for social justice broadly?	**Yes**	47	75%	7	54%
	No	9	14%	5	39%
	I'm not sure	7	11%	*	*

Table 14: Community College Participants' Characterization of Departmental Support for Socially Just Writing Assessment and Pedagogies by Race
*Cell size <5

In their survey-based study of faculty, race, and Writing Program Administration (WPA) work, Genevieve García de Müeller and Iris Ruiz analyzed the responses of 59 participants who

they recruited through email invitations posted to various composition and rhetoric-related listservs (24). The participants included full, associate, and assistant professors, as well as lecturers, adjuncts, graduate student instructors, and Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) (24). As is discussed earlier in this project, García de Müeller and Ruiz find that faculty of color tend to take on a greater amount of the labor associated with socially just pedagogies and assessment and to feel isolated and "silenced" in doing so. They also find that, in general, the faculty of color who participated in their survey were less likely to indicate that their "institution, writing program, and personal strategies were very or extremely effective in addressing issues of race and ethnicity" in terms of pedagogy, assessment, faculty, and student support (25). These findings closely complement what I find with regard to basic writing teachers' sense of departmental or program support of socially just pedagogies and assessment. That these findings echo each other, despite the fact that my study was conducted five years later, used an entirely different recruitment style, and had over three times as many respondents, speaks to the pervasiveness of racialized labor in the writing program.

Adjuncts and non-adjuncts are similarly represented at Regional Comprehensive institutions (18% of adjuncts and 16% of non-adjuncts teach at Regional Comprehensives), while a greater percentage of adjuncts (58%) than non-adjuncts (48%) teach at Community Colleges. Inversely, 18% of adjuncts compared with 27% of non-adjuncts teach at Very High Research institutions.[33] Across all five questions related to institutional or department-level support for social justice, socially just assessment, and socially just pedagogies, there is little difference among adjuncts and non-adjuncts in terms of the "yes" rating. However, there are

[33] The cell size for adjuncts within HBCUs is too small to compare.

stark differences among adjuncts and non-adjuncts when considering the "I'm not sure" response category. In other words, a greater percentage of adjuncts, compared to non-adjuncts, shared that they are not sure whether their department supports socially just assessment or pedagogy or offer workshops or trainings on those topics.

		Non-Adjunct		**Adjunct**	
Does your department or program offer trainings or workshops on how to implement socially just assessment?		**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
	Yes	41	38%	20	39%
	No	56	51%	14	27%
	I'm not sure	12	11%	18	35%
Does your department or program explicitly support socially just assessment practices?	**Yes**	60	56%	31	60%
	No	32	30%	6	12%
	I'm not sure	16	15%	15	29%
Does your department or program offer trainings or workshops on socially just pedagogies?	**Yes**	49	45%	21	41%
	No	50	46%	13	26%
	I'm not sure	10	9%	17	33%
Does your department or program explicitly support or advocate for social justice broadly?	**Yes**	75	69%	39	77%
	No	24	22%	*	*
	I'm not sure	9	8%	8	16%
Does your college or university explicitly support or advocate for social justice?	**Yes**	87	81%	43	84%
	No	10	9%	*	*
	I'm not sure	11	10%	6	12%

Table 15: Participants' Characterization of Departmental Support for Socially Just Writing Assessment by Adjunct Status
*Cell size <5

This is not the case when looking at teachers' racial identity, where there were only very slight differences among BIPOC individuals and their peers in terms of indicating uncertainty. In

general, among institution types, participants at very high research institutions tended to indicate a lesser degree of uncertainty than their peers at community colleges and regional comprehensive institutions (about a seven percentage point difference).[34] This uncertainty may be due to adjuncts' relative unfamiliarity with the institution(s) where they teach as compared to their peers. As will be further discussed below, because of the terms of their employment – typically by the semester and conceived of as "gig work" – adjuncts are generally not invited into the departmental community in the same ways or with the same robustness as are their full-time peers, and may be less interested in or able to join that community as they likely have one or more additional jobs that require their time. Thus, the greater rate of uncertain responses from adjuncts may be due to, for example, being left off of a departmental listserv where information is shared, not checking the listserv with the same regularity as full-time staff, missing a poster advertisement of a workshop because they do not spend much time on campus because they do not have a permanent office, and/or being unable to attend a workshop because they need to go to their next job. In the next section, we will look closely at both qualitative and quantitative data to tease apart the ways that basic writing teachers navigate struggles with enacting socially just assessment in their classrooms.

Narratives of struggle

Recording struggle can be arduous but it can also be what fortifies us for future action. Recounting where we have failed, faltered, and maybe even lost hope resists the kinds of toxic positivity narratives (Whitney Goodman) that trick us into thinking that issues that are "widely" and "deeply felt," as *Labor Notes* puts it, are individually experienced and a result of our own

[34] Cell sizes for HBCUs were too small to include in comparison.

personal shortcomings (“Exercise”). This narrative is often particularly wielded at women and others working in traditionally gendered (and therefore brutally devalued) fields like education and nursing: It is not that we are understaffed, it is that we do not work hard enough, or, it is vulgar to ask for a dignified wage because we should not be doing this labor for money but instead out of the goodness of our hearts. Refusing to go along and, instead, recognizing our struggles in the company of others helps us grow power, build momentum, and directly address the obstacles we navigate. This action reminds one of June Jordan’s poem, "What Would I Do White?," where she suggests that forgetfulness is endemic to whiteness – that it is a privilege to forget, that it is harmful to forget, and that forgetfulness and "doing nothing" are kindred actions in maintaining white ways of doing, thinking, and being (“What” 96). Jordan writes, "What would I do white? / …I would forget” (“What” 96).

In discussing basic writing teachers' experiences of struggle, there is a sense of carrying forward: We share and understand each others' labor, especially that which is done under pressure or imperfectly, so that we can learn from and hold each other up. In this section, I will forward and discuss analyses of the narratives of struggle that basic writing teachers from Maine to Maryland shared with me. One hundred thirty four (a robust 71%) participants responded to the question, "Please describe a time when, while assessing a student's writing in a basic writing course, you struggled to enact your socially just assessment practice." I also include in this discussion an analysis of relevant quantitative data and responses from the survey's final open-ended question, "Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with socially just assessment in your basic writing course?" As is true for all open-ended questions, I conducted several rounds of open and then thematic inductive, descriptive

coding. To my coding, I brought what I would call a critical, justice-oriented lens – that which has framed the entirety of my dissertation project, analysis, and understanding of the University and the basic writing classroom.

Teachers' linguistic ideologies

To restate, the participants in my study self-identified as valuing social justice approaches to assessment in their writing classrooms. One major finding of my study overall is that, among this group of basic writing teachers, what it looks like to value social justice-informed assessment strategies varies greatly from teacher to teacher. This, of course, makes it difficult to move the needle at a structural level toward more socially just assessment praxes. As a scholarly field, and as a community of college and basic writing teachers, we have no official or unofficial agreed upon definition of "socially just assessment" or "non-traditional assessment" and, indeed, some who participated in my study had never heard of the former term. Diane Kelly-Riley and Carl Whithaus write in their introduction to the *Journal of Writing Assessment* special issue on "A Theory of Ethics For Writing Assessment" that, though discussions of fairness and of "concerns about the effects of tests [on test takers]" are no longer new in writing assessment scholarship, unlike other fields such as medicine, educational measurement and writing assessment are not "governed by a well-established code of ethics" (1). While their argument and language are situated differently than my own – they attend more to large scale assessment and work with an "ethics" rather than social justice framework – they highlight a similar gap or shared problem. That is, there is a dissonance of thinking around socially just assessment both within the scholarly and teaching communities and among these two communities. As basic writing teachers approach their work from varying degrees of

job security, divergent and overloaded responsibilities (i.e., "teaching intensive" versus "research intensive"), and identities, I have found that there is not necessarily a shared discourse across institution type or job type around social justice approaches to writing assessment. Some who participated in my survey voiced that the field's vision of social justice is "bizarre" and are presumably content with the way things are, or are listless and wanting to "go back to the old days." Other participants expressed wanting to radically rethink writing assessment through frameworks such as decolonialism and approaches such as ungrading. In this way, when a professional organization such as CCCC's endorses a statement on Black linguistic justice, for example, it is unclear how such a top-down statement affects individual basic writing teachers who may not be in close contact with or even familiar with CCCC, and may not have heard of the statement.

Throughout the dissertation, I discussed teachers' articulations of potential monolinguistic ideologies. In this section, I return to this question with a focus on how teachers identified students' linguistic difference as a site of struggle for their implementation of socially just assessment. In this section, on one level, I am reporting out on my analysis through which I found that a common struggle articulated by study participants was working with students' "non-standard" language and writing. In other words, when asked about a time they struggled to implement socially just assessment in their basic writing classrooms, one type of struggle teachers shared was students' perceived linguistic differences. On a second level, I am sharing here my argument that identifying struggle in students' perceived "lack" may be a result of deficit-thinking – and this in itself presents a challenge for all of us who work toward socially just assessment in the writing classroom.

Approximately 30 participants (16%) identified students' perceived linguistic and/or discursive difference or lack of facility with "standard" American English as a site of struggle in the implementation of their socially just writing assessment praxes. Students' perceived "non-standard" writing posed a problem in terms of how to understand and evaluate it, whether to penalize it, etc. Consider the following sentiment:

> Sometimes I struggle when I have a student whose writing in English is difficult to understand. I try to work with the student individually or connect them to an expert on campus. I feel badly when I have to take points off for editing, especially when I know the thinking and growth are there. Usually, I will work with a student on the graded assignment and then we will practice together and the student will have the chance to resubmit an edited essay to earn a higher grade. (White non-adjunct, Community College)

Aspects of this narrative are likely familiar to many basic and college writing teachers: You identify that a student is having difficulty in your course – or perhaps the student approaches you to share that they are encountering frustrations or moments or confusion when working on an assignment or participating in an in-class activity. You then respond with one or more supports, perhaps including putting the student in touch with relevant campus resources (e.g., an "expert on campus" such as the writing center). You may have a revise and resubmit policy that allows students to both practice their composing process and to receive a better grade – as we learned in chapter four, about 76% percent of the teachers who participated in this study indicated that "revise and resubmit" is a regular part of their course.

When a teacher refers a student to, or encourages them to contact, an on-campus expert like the writing center, the dynamics of this exchange can be complicated. The teacher must work to contextualize the referral not as punitive but as supportive. Collaborating with other offices on campus, particularly when the resource that office provides is outside of a typical writing teacher's expertise (e.g., psychological services or financial aid), is an extremely powerful strategy for supporting students' success and distributing the labor such that the teacher does not feel responsible for every aspect of a student's academic or personal life.

At the same time, the teacher also writes, "a student whose writing in English is difficult to understand" and "I feel badly when I have to take points off for editing, especially when I know the thinking and growth are there." It is possible that this description, and the pressure to take points off, is related to an internalization of monolinguistic ideology, whether it is coming from the teacher or the institution. Paul Kei Matsuda’s writing on the "myth of linguistic homogeneity" may be helpful here in understanding the broader conversation around why teachers might feel this pressure. As I wrote in the introductory chapter to this project, Matsuda, drawing on the scholarship of Bruce Horner and John Trimbur, argues that “the dominant discourse of U.S. college composition not only has accepted English Only as an ideal but it already assumes the state of English-only, in which students are native English speakers by default” (637). Matsuda writes,

> Language issues are also inextricably tied to the goal of college composition, which is to help students become “better writers.” Although definitions of what constitutes a better writer may vary, implicit in most teachers' definitions of “writing well” is the ability to produce English that is unmarked in the eyes of teachers who are custodians of

> privileged varieties of English or, in more socially situated pedagogies, of an audience of native English speakers who would judge the writer's credibility or even intelligence on the basis of grammaticality. (640)

What Matsuda identifies as a problem is both this myth and the consequences of it – that writing teachers are not prepared to address linguistic difference, or are only prepared to address it at the shallow level of grammar drills and "taking points off," because it is assumed that students should come prepared to reproduce written academic English. Consider these teachers' descriptions of what they struggle with when implementing socially just assessment. You might pay particular attention to the ways participants mention their students' linguistic and discursive practices and identities, relating them at times to socially situated concepts such as error, clarity, and correctness.

> I have struggled when assessing second language learners in writing at the college level. In one instance, I knew a student had used a computer translation program for probably an entire 5-page essay, but when I talked to that student, they denied this practice. I learned later that using translation services is valued by some students not because it saves them time or effort, but because they want to turn in a paper that sounds like "good" English, or because they are concerned about their ideas and arguments getting lost on me. (White adjunct, Very High Research)

> I always have a difficult time assessing the wor[k] of English language learners. In some ways, I cannot help but reward some students for prior knowledge in this respect. (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

I struggle to enact my practices when there is a lack of understanding in the basic structure of English sentences, which means in most cases I am not sure of what they are trying to communicate. If I don't understand what they are trying to communicate, I don't feel as though I can use positive feedback to help them strengthen their skills. I begin to focus on grammar vs content, which is not my normal practice. (Non-adjunct, Community College, racial identity not provided.)

Sometimes the papers are just unintelligible because of the language and syntax. I struggle with how to approach these students without making them come off as totally hopeless. I don't want to just rewrite the paper for them and it is a struggle to walk them through the problems. (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

I know that what is considered "correct" or "formal" academic writing is based on a colonialist and classist standard, which excludes linguistic structures such as AAVE, Caribbean English, Scots English, etc. At the same time, I also know that students will often be required to use "formal" (white, upper-class standard English) language, and so they do need to know how to write in that mode. It feels wrong to correct students' grammar if they're writing in, for example, Guyanese English, but I also feel that part of my job is to teach them standard academic writing. I try to compromise by acknowledging that our concepts of "proper" grammar are problematic in class, while still teaching them the current standard grammar. (White adjunct, Community College)

Matsuda writes that the basic or remedial writing course served in many ways to "keep language differences from entering the composition course" – the course where difference was not supposed to present itself (648). As that myth of linguistic homogeneity persists, then, basic writing teachers are often explicitly tasked with remediating linguistic and discursive difference, something I will discuss in an upcoming section. As more students of color, international students, working class students, and linguistically and discursively diverse students entered the University, rather than "reform[ing] composition pedagogy" (including the basic writing course pedagogy), higher education institutions doubled down on "efforts to contain language differences" (642). Matsuda's work helps us understand why basic writing teachers may continue to hold these views of their students' "non-standard" writing practices; meanwhile, scholars I have cited earlier such as April Baker-Bell, Haivan Hoang, and others, add to this conversation by closely considering the ways perceived racial difference manifest in teachers' considerations of students and their writing (i.e., whether or not a student is "prepared" or "successful"). It also helps us understand the "perpetual 'but'" associated with being unable to bridge theory or ideology with practice with regard to social justice approaches to writing assessment (Watson and Shapiro). In the next section, I will further examine teachers' perceptions of their students' lives as "challenging" or "lacking."

Students' non-academic circumstances

In chapter three, I wrote on how some participants characterize their socially just assessment practice as a response to students' perceived racial, linguistic, or class difference. An extension of this discussion can be found in the previous section and in this section, where I discuss the ways that some basic writing teachers situate their struggles implementing socially

just writing assessment in these perceived divergences from the "normative" college student. In writing about the obstacles they encounter when working toward non-traditional assessment, some participants focused on describing students' material circumstances and/or students' lack of engagement. On interpretive possibility is that this reflects teachers' ideological assumptions about students' lives and, importantly, how students learn and succeed in college. Some participants perceive some of their students as unprepared, overburdened, disengaged, flakey, and/or, as Deborah Mutnick put it nearly 30 years ago, grasping at entrance into the "alien world" of the University (Mutnick). For example, teachers shared the following. You might pay particular attention to the text I have bolded, which shows how participants, in these specific responses, are writing about a student or type of student.

> Because much of my practice relies on student participation to help me understand their needs and context, **I have occasionally struggled with students who are less communicative.** Without their input, I had a much harder time evaluating them in a way I would consider fair and appropriate, and at times I felt forced to fall back on assumptions about their situation, goals, and capabilities simply because I had no other information to guide me. (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

> I have had **students who fail to complete any assignment, who do not come to class, or the few times they do come they are obviously stoned, and then they have a host of excuses** as to why they can't complete the work. I taught in an urban high school for years and fully understand how we often train **students to become addicted to helplessness and to rely on excuses rather than effort.** When the students in our class

bring that **excuse-driven mindset to class**, I just can't accommodate. I urge them to withdraw officially and protect their GPA, but I will not hesitate to assign a failing grade for the semester. (Adjunct, HBCU, racial identity not provided).

It is very difficult with **students who fail to follow basic directions and want to do things their way and never seek assistance from myself or the writing center on campus. They are basically following the same habits** as they did in high school [which] lead to them not being successful. (BIPOC non-adjunct, Community College)

During the pandemic this has been more difficult. I have **students from very tough backgrounds** who are having to be caregivers while full-time students, live at home with 7+ people, etc. A student recently was missing a lot of class because of going to and from NYC to care for family and was **not producing college-level work**. It was very difficult to **account for his personal challenges and remain fair to the other students** (all of whom were also FGLI) who were keeping up with the course and also **had issues at home.** (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

Stagnant in-class dialogue, apathy, or low interest in assignments, lack of baseline preparedness or maturity, students' personal distress, and overwhelming social pressures. (Adjunct, Community College, racial identity not provided)

I had a student who **was talented, and wrote well when he handed in work. He spent much of his time in class with his head on his desk, and often did not have any work done.** When we spoke, he was always apologetic, and wanted to know how to make up the work. I met with him, and walked him down to OSDDS **(he had ADHD),** and did my best to keep checking in with him. But he told me he just didn't want to be in college.... This was not a barrier I ultimately was able to deal with. (White non-adjunct, Community College).

I had a student for 2 semesters in a row (she repeated the class). She is a **woman of color, works 30+ hours per week, and because of the pandemic was "on call" a great deal to help her mother care for a severely disabled sibling. She was under a great deal of stress trying to meet all of her obligations. She was quite dedicated to the idea of completing her education, but the stress level and time management issues where constantly causing her problems**. I tried (in both semesters) to work with her to set up her own individual schedule of submitting assignments, even exempting her from some low-stakes assignments, to help relieve some of her stress. **Both times we tried, she was just not able to manage all of the demands on her time and failed the course.** (Non-adjunct, Community College, racial identity not provided)

As much as I would like to afford all students the opportunities and support, when they do not show interest and efforts in the process, **it is often difficult to empathize with them.** (BIPOC non-adjunct, Community College)

In some ways, these narratives align with what we know about formal educational spaces in the US: They are not structured to support the successes of all students, including those still considered "non-normative" (e.g., students who are caregivers, first generation, low income, working more than 10 hours a week, disabled, students of color, etc.). They also align with what many of us know as teachers, which is that it is challenging to know how to best support students who present as disengaged, unfocused, or overwhelmed. It can be profoundly affecting for teachers to try time and again to reach out to students who have disappeared from class only to receive no response. And, as I consider in chapter three, reading these responses through the lens of this project and the specific survey item they correlate with raises questions about how some study participants relate to students.

García de Müeller and Ruiz articulate a finding from their study that is extremely helpful in contextualizing the way in which I believe each of these responses relate to one another. They write specifically on how composition teachers perceive students of color and most of the responses above are not referencing students' racial identity. However, I believe their analysis adds to our understanding of how the participants quoted above may perceive students they mark as "different" in a variety of ways. García de Müeller and Ruiz write, referencing one of their participant's survey response:

> ... [I]t seems the respondent is indexing POC students as overburdened with complex lives outside of the classroom in comparison to their white counterparts. POC lives are seen as a deficit and a threat to their education whereas white student lives promote academic success…. Rather than making programmatic shifts that allow for complexity,

> POC students are failed and punished for this while white students are rewarded for their standardness. (33)

Crucially here, for our purposes, García de Müeller and Ruiz say that in this case, the "personal context of the student" is *“one reason why" a participant describes a race-based assessment strategy as not effective* (33, emphasis added). I forward the possibility that this is also what is happening in some of the responses included above. Again, we cannot read brief and relatively decontextualized survey data too closely. However, we also must include in this discussion the tendency that García de Müeller and Ruiz note. To be clear, I do not claim that all the responses included above express the same sentiment. Some responses seem to use belittling language toward students (they are "helpless," "stoned,” "apath[etic]"). Others, however, genuinely acknowledge without belittling language students' real experiences, for example, with disability and caregiving. To say that these teachers imagine their students in the same way would be an unfair and inaccurate interpretation of these data.

Teacher knowledge and comfort

The group of survey items I discuss in this section are related to basic writing teachers’ perceptions of their knowledge and comfort around enacting non-traditional assessment strategies in their classrooms. Each of the six items are statements framed in the negative (e.g., "I am anxious," "I am concerned," "I am not sure") on which I ask participants to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. To design the content of these questions – to determine which of the many potential concerns and uncertainties around socially just assessment I would seek to collect data on – I worked with my dissertation chair who is an expert in writing and the teaching of writing, drew on scholarly studies of social justice pedagogy and assessment in the

writing classroom that identify potential obstacles, and drew on my over 10 years of experience teaching writing and talking with fellow writing teachers about our classrooms. Table 16 below shows the six items and a breakdown of overall results arranged by level of agreement from highest level to lowest level.

	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree
I don't yet know all I need to know in order to more effectively practice socially just assessment.	6%	10%	84%
I am not sure how to design socially just assessment that is responsive to all students.	27%	17%	56%
I have some knowledge of what socially just assessment can be, but I am not sure how to put this knowledge into practice.	37%	18%	45%
I am concerned about how students might respond to "non-traditional" assessment methods.	39%	26%	35%
I am concerned that methods associated with socially just assessment (e.g., grading contracts, flexible rubrics) are not as rigorous as other "traditional" methods.	53%	20%	27%
I am anxious about the conversations that socially just assessment practices might demand (e.g., I am uncomfortable with, or unsure of, talking about race, class, ability).	60%	15%	25%

Table 16: Participants' Knowledge and Comfort Around Engaging Socially Just Writing Assessment

Overall, the participants in my study indicated they were most concerned about not knowing all they need to know to practice socially just writing assessment. This is a complex finding because it may seem to suggest the need for more professional development and educational events. However, as I have discussed throughout the dissertation, such programming can serve as an institutional misdirect to draw attention away from the University's refusal to attend to substantive structural changes. By integrating workshops and

lectures into their offerings, the University pays "lip service," as one participant puts it, to calls for equity-driven reforms without addressing the harmful structures and systems that continue to disadvantage students who have historically been marginalized in formal US educational spaces. The addition of workshops, lectures, etc., also work to take responsibility off the institution and place it on instructors, already overburdened, to redress structural harms through their own (and only through their own) individual education. At the same time, my data show that basic writing teachers desire further knowledge. And I do believe my data show that some degree of political education around the harms of traditional writing assessment practices is necessary. The challenge then, perhaps, is figuring out how to demand everything.

Participants indicate that, overall, they are minimally concerned (appx. 25% agree) about socially just assessment lacking rigor, and about discomfort around facilitating the conversations that socially just assessment might demand. That participants indicate having relative confidence in the efficacy of socially just assessment, and in their own ability to facilitate difficult conversations on identity in the classroom, means to me that the drive or motivation to move away from non-traditional assessment is there among participants. What comes next, then, is building the motivation into action, which in part requires that we address the obstacles described in this section.

When looking at results by institution type, racial identity, and adjunct status, I find a range of differences. Among adjuncts and their peers, differences are slight with the exception of one item, "I am not sure how to design socially just assessment that is responsive to all students," where adjuncts indicate more disagreement with the statement than their peers. Perhaps most interesting is that participants working at community colleges and participants

who identify as BIPOC were, with the exception of the "rigorous" and "responsive" statements, more likely to indicate disagreeing with these statements. In other words, they indicate feeling more certain, less unsure, less anxious, etc., than their peers. A practical offering of these data is that we can identify where strong leadership may be located (i.e., within community colleges and among BIPOC identifying teachers). This is not to reinforce the narrative that BIPOC teachers should alone be responsible for the work of social justice in the writing classroom (more on this below). It is also not to put more labor on the community college instructors who are generally the most overworked and underpaid of those of us teaching in higher education. It is simply to say that we know where we might look for leadership when contemplating where to begin with our socially just assessment work. It is particularly easy for those associated with very high research institutions to become caught in an echo chamber centering the work of others at VHRs, for example; and, I think many teachers have the experience of repeatedly turning to the same peer institutions or colleagues for guidance.

Colleagues and support

This discussion of collegial support – or lack of such support – focuses on both the quantitative and qualitative data related to the ways and degrees to which basic writing teachers feel they are in community with others as they seek to enact socially just assessment.

The quantitative data overall, before disaggregation by relevant variables, tell a fairly optimistic story about the sense of community that study participants feel with regard to advocating for and implementing socially just assessment in their departments. This is particularly true when it comes to participants indicating that they feel a sense of conversational camaraderie with their colleagues: Over 80% indicate they are able to chat with

others about writing assessment, racism, and white language supremacy, and the possibility of grading without a single standard. That so many participants indicated agreeing that they are able to engage in these types of conversations is surprising, but encouraging. (Though again, the story changes when data is disaggregated, as we will see.) It is surprising both because the general climate in higher education does not seem particularly open to dialogue around making structural changes informed by anti-racist or equity-oriented frameworks, and because it seemed that some participants in my study had not themselves considered the relationship between writing assessment, racism, and white language supremacy.

In terms of the labor of socially just writing assessment – of doing "the formal work" of implementing it and thinking about how it applies *specifically* to the basic writing classroom – over 20% of participants overall agree they feel alone in this work. And, nearly 30% of participants indicated agreeing that "much of the formal work (e.g., professional development, curriculum development) of developing socially just assessment in the basic writing course falls on" them. Table 17 shows the five relevant questions and overall results, where the two ends of the scale are combined (i.e., "somewhat agree" and "strongly agree" are combined in "agree," and "somewhat disagree" and "strongly disagree" are combined in "disagree").

	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree
I have folks in my dept. who I can talk with about the relationship between writing assessment and racism	86%	7%	7%
I have folks in my dept. who I can talk with about the relationship between writing assessment and white language supremacy	83%	9%	9%
I have folks in my dept. who I can talk with about strategies for grading without a single standard	81%	9%	9%
Much of the formal work (e.g., professional development, curriculum development) of developing socially just assessment in the basic writing course falls on me	29%	26%	46%
I am one of the only people in my dept. who is thinking about how to do socially just assessment in the basic writing course	21%	11%	69%

Table 17: Participants' Sense of Community Around Socially Just Writing Assessment

The interpretation of these results shifts when accounting for basic writing teachers' self-identified racial identity, their institution type, and their position as either adjunct or non-adjunct. When looking at the three questions related to conversation and camaraderie ("I feel like I have folks in my department…"), between 95%-97% of participants at Very High Research institutions indicated agreeing. However, between 82%-86% of participants at Regional Comprehensive Institutions, 64%-86% of participants at HBCUs, and 75%-82% of participants at Community Colleges said the same. This is an approximate 10 percentage point difference, at least, among how VHR participants and their peers characterize their experiences. Nearly 100% of basic writing teachers at VHRs indicate experiencing a high level of engagement with, or conversation and camaraderie around, the relationship between writing assessment, racism, white supremacy, and non-traditional grading. One interpretation of this finding is that at Very

High Research institutions, there is relatively more time and space for these discussions.[35] For example, as discussed earlier in this chapter, whereas between 25% and 42% of participants at community colleges and regional comprehensive institutions indicated that their department or program offers training or workshops on socially just pedagogies and/or assessment, between 68% and 73% of instructors at very high research institutions indicated the same. It may be that at Very High Research institutions, which typically enjoy more resources than other public institutions, there is more time dedicated to these conversations, and it is in these dedicated spaces that conversations around socially just writing assessment are happening. It may also be that the very act of offering time and space (via trainings and workshops) gives implicit or explicit permission to basic writing teachers to have these conversations on their own. That is, basic writing teachers may feel more comfortable sharing, or even encouraged to share, their views with one another, to ask colleagues for feedback on a non-traditional assessment strategy, to build knowledge with colleagues about race, language, and assessment, and more. However, institution types are not a monolith, and even participants at VHRs reported on acrimonious relationships with colleagues:

> I get subtle pressure from other teachers that I am coddling students and not preparing them for the real world and I'm making it difficult for those who do grade along more traditional lines and grade harder than I do. (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

[35] I do not intend to pit writing teachers from different institutions against each other by claiming that some have total privilege and others have none. This type of discourse and tactic only works to break up the potential for solidarity and organizing among writing teachers collectively. I use the term "relatively" with precision to indicate the material benefits of teaching at VHRs, but not to suggest that the experience of these teachers is somehow immune from the cascading consequences of austerity-driven higher education policies.

Another interpretation of this finding is that conversations about socially just writing assessment, race and racism, and white language supremacy are happening at Community Colleges, HBCUs, and Regional Comprehensive institutions at a similar rate to Very High Research institutions, but the conversations are not framed in the terms I laid out in the survey instrument. Though I strove to compose survey items that would be interpreted in the same way by a range of basic writing instructors, the language of the items is inevitably informed by the research I have read and classes I have taken as a student at a Very High Research institution. It may be, then, that the question wording is more familiar to basic writing teachers at Very High Research institutions. For example, perhaps at Community Colleges, HBCUs, and/or Regional Comprehensive institutions, instructors are using terms/concepts such as "standard edited English," or "mainstream English," to signal the relationship between language, race, and writing, but are not using the specific term "white language supremacy."

When looking at the labor questions ("I feel like I am one of the only people in my department who is thinking about how to do socially just assessment in the basic writing course" and "I feel like much of the formal work [e.g., professional development, curriculum development] of developing socially just assessment in the basic writing course falls on me") by institution type, the same difference between participants at Very High Research institutions and their peers carries over.[36] Participants at Community colleges and Regional Comprehensive institutions feel more alone both in their thinking about socially just assessment in the basic writing course and in the labor they are doing to develop socially just assessment in the basic writing classroom. The same is true for BIPOC individuals where, nearly consistently, fewer

[36] For HBCUs for these two questions, the cell size was not big enough to include in analysis.

BIPOC basic writing teachers indicated agreeing that they have colleagues who they can talk with about writing assessment, race, racism, and white language supremacy, and that they are not burdened with the labor of actually implementing socially just assessment structures. There is little difference among BIPOC-identifying basic writing teachers and white writing teachers in terms of feeling like they can talk with folks in their department about grading without a single standard. However, for all other quantitative questions about conversation and labor, there is at least a ten percentage point difference between how BIPOC teachers responded and how white teachers responded. That BIPOC basic writing teachers are more likely to indicate that they feel they are laboring alone, and are unsure of the solidity of their departmental community with regard to socially just assessment, is echoed in scholarship by Staci Perryman-Clark, Sherri Craig, and García de Müeller and Ruiz. The differences seen here are also complemented and complicated by those discussed in the previous section: non-BIPOC participants' relative trepidation, uncertainty, and anxiety around implementing socially just assessment practices in relation to their BIPOC peers. Again, my analysis showed that BIPOC teachers were, in general, less likely than their peers to agree that they are anxious about having conversations on socially just assessment or concerned about how students will respond to "non-traditional" assessment, that they do not know what they need to know to practice socially just assessment, and that they are unsure how to design assessment strategies that are responsive to all students. In other words, in general, the BIPOC participants in my study indicated a lesser degree of what I might call internal struggles around enacting socially just assessment (e.g., anxiety, insecurity, uncertainty) and a greater degree of isolation in terms of community and labor.

Part of the task of organizing among writing teachers, including white writing teachers is to, then, support all teachers in understanding that inequity in writing assessment is a shared problem rather than a problem for particular folks (e.g. BIPOC teachers, multilingual teachers, etc.) to solve on their own. Nancy, a woman of color and an interview participant whose thoughts are included throughout the dissertation, shares that her colleagues' sense of education is "rooted in an age old ... monocultural route which centers on whiteness." Opening a dialogue with these colleagues on social justice or equity-orientated approaches to writing pedagogy and assessment, she says, is "taxing … emotionally very exhausting … like another full-time job." Bob, who identifies as White and Latinx and is another interview participant quoted throughout this project, shared that in order to implement more "radical" assessment strategies such as ungrading,

> I would need to put in a ton of work and constantly figure out how to protect myself from my dean and chair. Not that they'd be gunning for me, but they expect very legalistic official administrative policies. And so if I deviate from them, I can, but I need to document all deviations. It just becomes a point where it's sort of death by paper cuts at that point. (Bob)

I hold space for an intersectional understanding of identity wherein, certainly, not all white-identifying teachers are similarly situated or privileged. At the same time, I also recognize the profound ways in which racial identity frames one's lived experience in the US broadly and in US higher educational spaces specifically. How can white teachers support, and be an ally or co-conspirator to, teachers like Nancy and Bob who describe the taxing work of addressing the

actions and ideologies held by colleagues who are resistant to exploring non-traditional assessment?

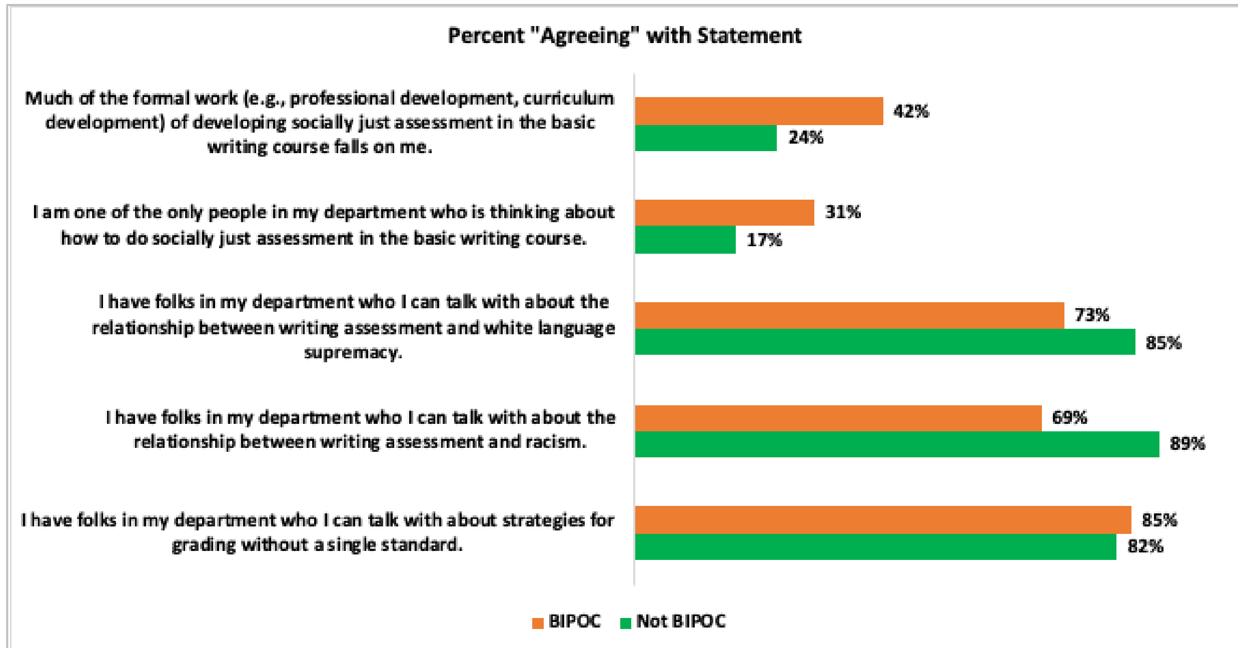

Figure 16: Participants' Sense of Community Around Engaging Socially Just Assessment by Race

When looking at these five questions in terms of rank/position (adjunct or non-adjunct), there are significant differences only for two items, both related to conversation and camaraderie. A smaller percentage of adjuncts (greater than 10 percentage point difference) agree that they have folks in their department who they can talk with about the relationship between writing assessment and racism, and the relationship between writing assessment and white language supremacy. It is unclear why this may be, but I offer that adjuncts' relative alienation from the department culture may be related to this finding. As will be shown in the discussion of overwork and burnout, participants voiced their concerns about adjunct labor supporting composition departments while being fundamentally disregarded and undercompensated. It may be that, in addition to being "exhausted," or *because* of being exhausted, adjuncts are less

likely to be involved in the community of a department. This makes sense: adjuncts often teach at multiple institutions, and/or are spread thin by the amount of sections they teach, and are often excluded from official department decision-making. Anecdotally, in the four years that I adjuncted, I also held multiple part-time jobs and, at one point, taught at two different institutions which were about an hour commute between each other and both about 90 minutes one way from my home. Unfortunately, and self-consciously, community-building and conversation were not tenable priorities for me. The kinds of sustained collegial relationships I enjoyed later as a PhD student and graduate student instructor were simply not available to me as an adjunct.

Overwork and burnout

For most of us who have taught – especially those of us who have taught required writing or other general education courses at underfunded public institutions and/or who have worked as contingent faculty – it will come as no surprise that many basic writing teachers who participated in my study shared that they struggle with overwork, burnout, and the related consequences on their mental health. Sometimes teachers clarified in their responses that the work of doing and advocating for socially just assessment is particularly burdensome; that is, that this work adds to an already felt fatigue. Some also wrote that imagining and implementing socially just assessment in the basic writing course is especially fraught as budget cuts and restructuring prioritize profit over student learning and instructor wellbeing (something that will be brought to bear in more detail in a following section). Here, to focus the discussion on the theme of overwork, one participant shares, "I have struggled with offering more flexibility in deadlines – I can offer them, and do, but I find it can, at times, make my own

workload unsustainable. Indeed, there are several practices around assessment that I think are socially just for students but need broad institutional support to be fair to workers (FT/PT faculty, staff)" (BIPOC non-adjunct, Community College). Another participant writes,

> … [T]reating people humanely (ie, in a socially just way) DOES take more time than treating them inhumanely. Consequently, even at institutions that explicitly support social justice issues (like mine), the assigned teaching loads and compensation rates for those loads tacitly undermine the actual practicing of socially just assessment. If someone can't pay their bills AND be socially just, social justice is a much, much tougher sell. (Still possible, but the divide between explicit support and institutional structures is - at least here - substantial.) (Non-adjunct, Regional Comprehensive, racial identity not provided)

Some participants offer an explicit critique of the ways composition programs and Universities have benefitted from contingent labor at the expense of those faculty who typically have no job security, no health insurance, and no retirement or other benefits often offered to full-time employees (e.g., childcare support or subsidy, paid time off, sabbatical, sick leave, vacation leave, transportation subsidy, etc.). Contingent faculty are often not able to vote on official department matters and therefore have little influence on or involvement in the vision of the department. As such, and as discussed earlier, the position of the adjunct is by definition precarious and their relationship with their employer is necessarily contentious. One basic writing teacher working as an adjunct writes,

> ... [A]djunct labor sustains every Composition Program I have ever known. The fact that contingent workers are often called upon to carry out/attend to higher ed mandates/

> initiatives---whether they be in the area of student retention or raising awareness about justice issues---does not sit well with me ... I am over-worked, but I love what I do. What I do resist, is sometimes being made to feel---often by professional organizations---that I am not doing enough to correct the wrongs of the Academe…. (Adjunct, Regional Comprehensive, racial identity not provided)

This participant suggests that they, as an adjunct laborer, do not necessarily feel a part of the "professional organizations" or the "Academe" (written with a capital "A") that are generally sustained by full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty who participate in, lead, and grow these organizations or entities. The alienation of contingent faculty has been widely written about both from the perspective of those working in composition studies (e.g., Seth Kahn, William B. Lalicker, and Amy Lynch-Biniek) and those working in the University in general (e.g., Ramamurthy). And, as we have seen above, the adjuncts who participated in this study indicated an uncertainty around their institutional and department-level orientations toward socially just assessment and pedagogies that suggests a disengagement with, alienation from, and/or fatigue around the department and/or university as an entity that disciplines them. An education labor rallying cry goes, "Our working conditions are our students' learning conditions," and this is shown here through participants' reflections on the ways the contingency of their employment and subsequent financial and physical precarity strains their ability to access, learn about, and enact socially just assessment. As another participant offers their perspective on the particularly “untenable” position of the adjunct worker, writing,

> Anyone who teaches more than a few sections of writing--and has more than one prep--will likely observe that holistic portfolio grading and open deadlines are not sustainable.

> Yes, I have tried both approaches, but placing the onus for the resulting extra labor on adjunct labor is untenable. (Adjunct, Regional Comprehensive, racial identity not provided)

Nancy, who is not an adjunct, also writes on overwork, describing its consequences in the following way: "I think it was a burnout for me ... I wasn't able to think. I wasn't able to do anything. It is taxing on the teacher." Sophia, a white non-adjunct teaching at a community college and who participated in an interview, spoke to the experiences of all faculty and how their many responsibilities may, in her view, prevent them from attending social justice-focused professional developmental events:

> So I don't see them showing up at any of those professional development opportunities. For some of them, I would say it's because they have all kinds of other additional responsibilities. They're working on stuff for the BOR to shift the college to [a new program] and running a department. Other people have responsibilities to committees and things on campus, but some of them are just trying to keep their heads above water in a pandemic with their own kids at home and trying to score their papers, right? (Sophia)

As we learned from participants' success narratives, relationship-building with students is a major part of how teachers in my study approach their practice. But this, too, can “take a toll" on basic writing teachers' capacity to enact socially just assessment in their classrooms. Interview participant Nancy says, speaking of her conversations with students, "[t]hese stories, these experiences, stay with you, they haunt you … There are weeks like that, when I think that there is hardly any sunlight … Students are telling you about how they cannot come back

because they have lost their scholarships…. And I'm pushing them to grad school and I'm like, 'You can't leave!' So those days get me."

Participants' thoughts on overwork and burnout are, to some extent, echoed in the quantitative data. The majority of participants (65%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "Implementing socially just assessment practices will take too much time." This still leaves 35% of respondents indicating that they agree, or neither agree nor disagree, that these practices can be an additional burden on their time.[37] Some participants, in the qualitative data, speak to how it is not that the practices themselves are more time consuming, but that the structures and systems around them are not built to accommodate them. For example, two participants share,

> I think [I struggled to implement socially just assessment] when I was overwhelmed with committee work, trying to get published and prepare for promotion... all the parts of the job that have little to do with the work of the classroom. (White non-adjunct, Community College)

> These issues [around basic writing and socially just assessment] are overwhelming, and there is little support from the University community beyond lip-service. We can have all the seminars, guest speakers, and workshops that we like, but in my experience, these are superficial discussions that rarely produce anything other than cosmetic changes. (White non-adjunct, Regional Comprehensive)

[37] There is little difference between institution type, racial identity, state/region, or adjunct status: across these groups, approximately 60-65% of participants indicated disagreeing that socially just assessment practices "take too much time."

These data show that many participants are perhaps overworked and burning out, but they remain clear on that the reason for this is not "personal" but structural, speaking to an opportunity for building power among basic writing teachers.

Department, institutional, and/or state-level limitations

Building on this idea, what cuts across all themes presented in this analysis are the structural limitations that basic writing teachers encounter as they assess their students' writing. These limitations are networked with overwork, burnout, linguistic ideologies, relationships with colleagues, and perceptions of students' lived experience. As we have considered above, for example, overwork and burnout are not personal problems but rather a result of many factors including the terms of basic writing teachers' employment, the number of courses and/or students assigned to a single teacher, and the institution's refusal to support socially just assessment beyond "lip service." Relatedly, the University's withholding of resources around socially just assessment, including the time, space, and incentive for professional development, and the intentional planning toward initiatives that undercut the support provided to basic writing students, affect individual basic writing teachers' capacity for political education in the dangers of monolinguistic ideologies and deficit mindsets. In this section, we will learn about participants' responses related explicitly to the department, institutional and/or state-level limitations they identify as sites of struggle in implementing their socially just assessment practice. How exactly are basic writing teachers feeling limited or bound by departmental, institutional, or state policy?

Participants describe experiencing what I have identified as both department/ institutional-level and state-level actions and/or policies that restrict the choices available to

them in terms of evaluating student writing. Department/institutional-level restrictions around evaluating writing include mandatory rubrics (or other related evaluation criteria) and mandatory Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) as well as mandatory writing placement exams. The first two means of control or standardization work to confine teachers to a particular way of evaluating a piece of student writing. As we saw in the introductory chapter, rubrics (and all evaluation criteria) are not "neutral" – they are constructed through and perpetuate particular values that then frame teachers' approach to what, how, and why they are evaluating. Several teachers shared their reflections on how they are accountable to particular evaluation criteria. In most cases, teachers appear to be sharing their experience critically; that is, they do not necessarily agree with the ways they are required to evaluate student writing. For this section, I include responses to open-ended questions across the survey as I have identified this code, which I called "bound by department or university," as a crucial area to focus on when considering ways to make large scale change in writing assessment attitudes and practices in the University. Each of these responses speaks to department and/or institution level restrictions around teachers' individual assessment choices:

> We have a program-wide portfolio assessment rubric that was designed by teachers of the course and is regularly revised by teachers of the course. … If our institution allowed us to offer qualitative remarks instead of quantitative letter grades, we'd take it! (White non-adjunct, Regional Comprehensive)

> In the classroom I use various ways to assess my teaching. I do polls though Zoom and PollEverywhere. After I give feedback, I give students a poll to determine the

effectiveness of my commenting. Also, I invite students to discuss their concerns with me during office hour. However, for formal assessment, I must use the monolingual rubric designed exclusively by heteronormative mainstream literature majors. (BIPOC non-adjunct, Very High Research)

The Department gives us evaluation criteria. I use them because I have to. I don't really know what they mean, and neither do the students. (Non-adjunct, Very High Research, racial identity not provided)

My rubric is proscribed by the SLOs of my department. (Adjunct, Regional Comprehensive, racial identity not provided)

There is a heavy emphasis on grammar mastery. Grammar is problematic because it often privileges the dominant culture's approach to communication as “correct.” This remains a struggle. (BIPOC non-adjunct, HBCU)

My department and my school feel very differently about [socially just assessment work]. My department is very supportive of these pedagogies and extends the philosophy and application to a variety of demographics. However, my school at large is resistant for a variety of reasons. Also, while my department cares a great deal about this issue, we have two problems with implementing these strategies. First, we are a very small department and struggle to spare time to attend conferences and trainings

> because of this. Second, we all contribute in one or two meaningful ways, but many are resistant to learning techniques outside of what they already do. I'm not sure why (this explains my answer that I often feel these duties fall to me--I'm often the only person attending conferences and learning / adopting new techniques). (BIPOC non-adjunct, Community College)

> There is a well-meaning push for socially just pedagogy led by folks without pedagogy expertise and a very traditional leader of our basic writing program. It has resulted in a curriculum that seems to me to be even less just. It is definitely more restrictive of instructor flexibility. (BIPOC adjunct, Very High Research)

> The rubric is created by the comp committee and measures assignment success in terms of SAE, organization, and development. (Non-adjunct, HBCU, racial identity not provided)

> When I taught [course name #1] last year, there weren't enough ESL/International students who needed [course name #2], so they were put in my [course name #1] class. (White non-adjunct, Very High Research)

These participants articulate a variety of restrictions, including restrictions on evaluation criteria, assessment tool, placement exam, and student learning objectives, as well as limitations related to institutional and/or departmental leadership's philosophy around socially just assessment, and decision-making that prioritizes institutional need over student success

(i.e., canceling one course and overenrolling another). Participants also write on state-level mandates that suppress teachers' individual agency over their writing evaluation strategies. For example, participants share,

> My institution is required to adhere to a state-wide C-standard. I've used that standard to identify specific writing criteria that I am required to address, and I've weighted the rubric so that the majority of the points that students can earn are related to content and organization (60 points) and 40 points are spread between "style and expressions" and "grammar, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics" (which I am forced to assess). (White non-adjunct, Community College)

> Our department is aligned with the University of [state] school system. We have specific rubrics that assure that all our students are completing and meeting the state requirements for a developmental writing course. (White adjunct, HBCU)

> ... [B]asic Writing is being entirely phased out at my large state university--the flagship and the satellite campuses…. The standard course in Expository Writing (the typical 'freshman writing' course) will absorb all developmental writing students…. Campuses had begun to build work-around courses (such as required first-year experience courses) to accommodate the remaining need for basic writing instruction, but with the pandemic, our primary assessment tool the SAT … is no longer available, nullifying that option. Socially just assessment is, of course, part of Expository Writing and all literature courses on my small campus, due to our small group of conscientious instructors, but

> the careful attention to developmental writing is being eroded system-wide--a social injustice of a different type but on an unprecedented scale. (White non-adjunct, Regional Comprehensive)

Taking all of these responses together, we see courses disappear, criteria mandated without explanation, teachers alienated from their work and beholden (somehow, unbelievable) to state-level bureaucrats, and clashes between departmental and institutional philosophies. If the institutions that foster these outcomes, and within which our composition programs and courses are situated, are entities "from which whiteness emerges" (paperson 10), then we as writing teachers and teachers working toward justice must be aware of the relationship between these departmental, institutional, and state-level limitations, whiteness, and strategic “forgetfulness,” to again draw on Jordan’s use of the term (“What” 96). The University's forgetfulness, and the forgetfulness of state-level higher education decision-makers, is intentional and often violent, and its harm via the University can be witnessed in countless ways. For example, as I write, Universities are arresting, censoring, and firing students and employees, individuals and groups, that speak out against the genocide in Gaza and the West Bank. Its harm can also be witnessed through the University's strategic inertia, or, the way the University wields its bureaucratic labyrinth to stall, to steal time, to withhold, to confuse, and to contort. As Jordan writes in the same poem, "What would I do white? …I would do nothing. / That would be enough" (“What” 96). Jordan could easily be describing the institutional decision-making in which doing nothing, and saying it is enough, is often the standard way of operating. As we can see from the participants highlighted in this final section, we cannot trust the University to act toward any kind of justice without agitation. This section brings us to the

conclusion chapter, where we will consider what it means for writing teachers to organize against these structural barriers.

CHAPTER 6

FIGHTING FORGETFULNESS AND ATTENDING TO ACTION: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Review of the project and research questions

This dissertation project is centered in an abiding trust for students and a profound mistrust of the University as an institution. Between students and the institution, negotiating the institutional networks of often competing values, policies, and practices, are the basic writing teachers who I am grateful gave their time and energy, especially during an unsettling time of pandemic-related remote teaching, to participate in my study. These teachers negotiate their own values and beliefs around writing and the teaching of writing in relation to charges from their department, which may or may not be complicated or complemented by charges from their institution or state, and around overwork, undercompensation, and an operating system that rewards polite, incrementalist attitudes toward progress. Because educators are so undervalued in the US, it is easy to lose sight of the power and centrality of classroom teachers and how their everyday decision-making, informed by teacher experience, philosophy, and training, affect students' success as learners and creators of knowledge.

I believe that teachers' everyday praxis – the decisions they make, the ways they relate to students, how they think successful writing and learning looks and happens – matters. It matters for students' learning and success, for students' sense of self, and in the context of this project, for students' development as writers, readers, listeners, and speakers. Writing teachers' decision-making is already urgent, as I have reviewed throughout this project. Students' linguistic and discursive practices are "twin" to their identity, as Gloria Anzaldúa writes (Anzaldúa), and the writing and English classroom have long been sites and even tools of

colonization, as Jamila Lysicott teaches us (Lysicott). The college and basic writing classrooms are spaces where students who have historically been marginalized in formal educational settings are further sorted, tracked, and disciplined toward assimilation to what April Baker-Bell calls White Mainstream English (Baker-Bell, "Linguistic Justice").

Decision-making is heightened, more liable to intentionally or unintentionally cause harm, in the basic writing course. I have reviewed the potential consequences of developmental or remedial course placement, and they are also expertly outlined in Poe et al.'s article, cited earlier in my project, "The Legal and the Local: Using Disparate Impact Analysis to Understand the Consequences of Writing Assessment" (589). In a more recent article published in a 2022 issue of *Journal of Basic Writing*, Sean Malloy and Alexis Bennett synthesize Carmen Kynard's and Annie Mendenhall's incisive critiques of remediation in college writing. Both Kynard and Mendenhall, writing about a decade apart, argue that integration was "reframed" as remediation in the 1960s and 1970s; this was a conservative project that "rationalized the 'admissions and enrollment schemes' which have been 'always used to keep students of color out of white colleges' by casting those students as 'outside the bounds of school culture' either to be excluded or 'paternistically saved'" (Malloy and Bennett 6-7; Kynard qtd. in Malloy and Bennett 6). Malloy and Bennett via Kynard and Mendenhall lucidly explain how the integration as remediation narrative represents a "conservative backlash" to students of color enrolling in historically white universities (7). Ultimately, Malloy and Bennett tell us that Mendenhall sees remedial placement politics as "'rooted in anti-Black linguistic racism,'" an argument with which I agree (Mendenhall qtd. in Malloy and Bennett 7). The course also forwards a white middle class monolingual ideology that can harm multilingual students, students of color, working class

students, and others who have uneven access to the "standard" language and discourse typically demanded in a basic writing course. Whether and how basic writing teachers resist the assimilationist and disciplinary logics of the course, working against the cumulative effects of white language supremacy and the pervasive iterations of education as white property (Harris), is a guiding question of this dissertation.

To restate, my research questions are:

- How do developmental writing teachers across the US, in both two- and four-year public institutions, define socially just writing assessment?
- How are these teachers enacting socially just writing assessment in their classrooms; what practices do they engage in or not, and why?
- What resources do these teachers have/consider when enacting socially just writing assessment, and what obstacles do these teachers face?

I sought to respond to these questions by collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from a representative sample of basic writing instructors across a limited geographic area. Animating these questions is an attention to the breakdown between theory/scholarship and practice, and to the ideological and practical orientations of current basic writing teachers who self-identify as valuing socially just approaches to writing assessment. The scholarly conversations on socially just writing assessment are extremely valuable and robust. At the same time, they generally represent the work of a relatively small number of teacher-scholars, and/or, the work is often located at four-year institutions and rarely focused specifically on basic writing. My dissertation seeks to add to the conversation on socially just writing assessment through an attention to its application in basic writing courses. It seeks, too, to ground conversations on

writing assessment and social justice – a capacious and contested term – in the everyday practices, attitudes, and beliefs of current basic writing teachers. Ultimately, I see much of this study as a large-scale and detailed "temperature check" of how basic writing teachers who are already open to social justice approaches to assessment are feeling about their work.

Implications for action

An important part of building power toward more just writing assessment is understanding the context within which one labors. Much of my lens is focused on a critical consideration of the University and a belief that teachers of University writing courses must align themselves with each other and with students – not with the Institution and its senior administrators – to push for changes to writing assessment policies and practices within their institutions. As I have discussed throughout the dissertation, I understand the University as an inequitable space that functions through white settler logics. In chapter five, I drew on Alexis Pauline Gumbs' writing on the composition course's histories of discipline and surveillance – and subsequent ways toward alternative relationships under capitalism. Gumbs cites Sylvia Wynter's argument that capitalism "only allows for things to relate to things, for objectified people to relate to objects that mean power" (240). However, Gumbs believes in the "possibility of solidarity" within the University (Gumbs 239), as does la paperson, whose work compels us to use the bits and bobs of the university "s/cyborg" to undo its settler machinations and build something new (paperson). In this way, socially just writing assessment is about more than "recognizing differences." It is about advocating for a specific politic, a specific vision of justice, and being willing to do so in the face of uncomfortable and tense interactions with the institutions within which we operate.

In student movements now, we can see this sort of work – a deep resistance to the distorted relations under capitalism – as students rally against companies such as Raytheon, Textron, and Colt. These are companies that manufacture machines, technologies, and/or weapons that aid war, and many colleges and universities are invested in or otherwise associated with them. As students across the country call for higher education institutions to divest from these companies and to defund campus police, particularly in this moment of mass killing in Gaza and the West Bank, we witness students righteously relating to each other. Take, for example, Kalina Kornacki's photograph published in the Massachusetts Daily Collegian, UMass Amherst's newspaper, on December 13, 2023 (Joyce and Lee). Two students stand together near the University of Massachusetts Amherst's police station, holding a sign that reads "Our liberation is bound together" (Joyce and Lee).

Figure 17: Photograph of UMass Amherst Students Demonstrating. Description: Two students at UMass Amherst stand outside on a sunny day, facing each other in conversation, and holding the same sign. The sign is made of brown cardboard and reads: "Our liberation is bound together" in brown and red letters. Photograph by Kalina Kornacki.

In response, colleges and universities insist on the relationships they have cultivated under capitalism which value money and object over human life. This is how we get ACCUPLACER as a placement mechanism, overenrolled or canceled writing courses, and the ballooning of contingent and non-tenure track lines for composition courses – because the institution prioritizes saving money and time as opposed to quality writing education. Students' refusal to accept this is, as I read it, an example of an alternative relationship under capitalism which Gumbs through/with Wynter imagines as "a relationship with others that is not about negating the other to produce a human self but rather about the human poetry of creating and describing possible collective relationships to the environment" (241). The students set an urgent example for University staff and faculty who sometimes, perhaps exhausted by cumulative institutional harms, wary or forgetful of their own power, and/or distracted by institutional-bureaucratic requirements, misremember their potential as advocates or agitators.

I found in my analyses a range of possible approaches to writing assessment, including:

- Treating students "fairly" "regardless" of "background;" students are "underprepared;" students are "slacking;" students are responsible for their "problems";
- "Meeting students where they are at"; responding to students' "lived experiences"; students are differently prepared;[38]
- Teaching histories of grammar as "a product of occupation and colonialism," taking on structural critiques of SAE and the composition course;

[38] In both of these first two bullet points, I see these actions as "liberal" types of approaches. Here, I am thinking of Brenna Bhandar and Rafeef Ziadah's description of "liberal multiculturalism" as that which "reifie[s] static notions of culture and promote[s] diversity at the expense of social justice and economic equality" (19). For our context, we might think of this genre of "liberal" as attending to students' "diverse backgrounds" without problematizing SAE or pushing to re-envision the structures that keep us coming back to traditional writing assessment methods.

- Calling for an overhaul of the composition course; building inter-departmental relationships with teachers practicing non-traditional assessment; advocating for non-traditional assessment within department/to department head.

Though the difference between these approaches and their related ideologies are not insignificant, I am persuaded by my data that nearly all of the participants in my study understand that something is not working with traditional writing assessment – and/or with the basic writing course – and some change needs to happen.

Generally, it is difficult to discern from my survey data whether and/or how certain responses engage in deficit thinking. However, given its centrality to conversations around basic writing, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the persistence of deficit thinking. This phrase has come up frequently in my dissertation. Earlier in my drafting process, in a meeting with an individual familiar with anti-racist approaches to higher education, that individual referred to my research as "obvious." This suggested to me that this person believed we are "beyond" these discussions – that writing teachers and teachers in general know the importance of asset-based approaches to education, have learned about and internalized those approaches, and are currently practicing them. Were that the truth, that would be excellent. However, as teacher-scholars who day in and day out try to change the educational system to subvert white supremacist logics know, this is not the reality we live in. During my time writing this dissertation, I was made aware of just one of the latest daily reminders of how far from the truth this thinking is via a tweet from a faculty member at LaGuardia Community College (LCC),

CUNY in Queens, New York (@bdholms).[39] A faculty member shared the following screenshot of text that appeared on LCC's website:

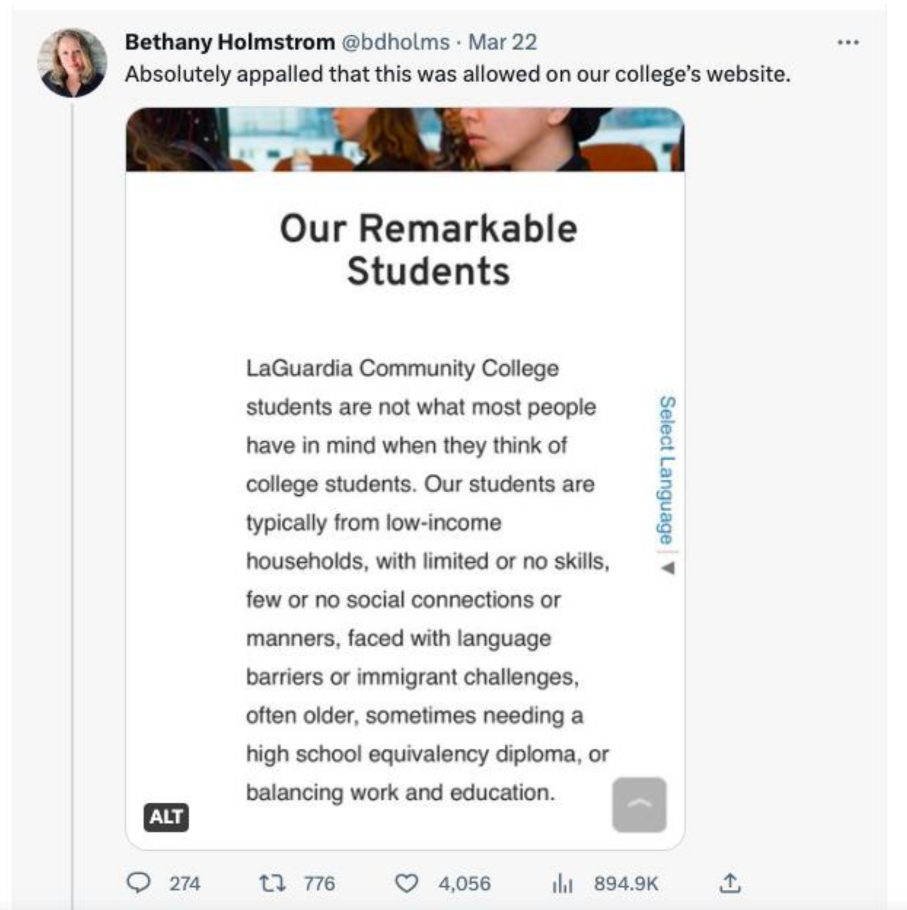

Figure 18: Screenshot of LaGuardia Community College, CUNY, website text.

Eventually, LaGuardia Community College President, Kenneth Adams, and Executive Director of the LaGuardia Foundation, Jay Golan, issued an apology on the school's blog, calling the content "inappropriate and offensive" and writing that "page was written in 2018 by outside fundraising consultants who are no longer affiliated with the college" (Adams and

[39] The tweet has since been deleted by the user. In my bibliography, I have cited it to the best of my ability using MLA guidelines.

Golan). The page was taken down, but all of us who learned about its existence will likely not forget it.

An entire monograph could be written about this situation and the subsequent response. Scholars such as Victor Villanueva, Steve Lamos, Bruce Horner, Min-Zhan Lu, Mary Soliday, and others have given us amazing critical histories of CUNY in particular and its students specifically. I bring the tweet of the website's "erroneous" introduction text into this dissertation's discussion to underscore as loudly as I can that this discourse in higher education is alive and well (whether written by "consultants" or not). If anything is "obvious," it is the racist, classist, and xenophobic ideologies that undergird the text. Somebody wrote this text, somebody read it, and somebody decided to publish it on an institutional website: at least one person had to say "yes" to this text which really can only politely be called "deficit minded." This is the state of being and thinking that writing teachers must contend with in their classrooms. And, yes, it is also the being and thinking that writing teachers can reproduce in their classrooms when they are not aware of the ways English and writing classrooms have historically been tools of colonization.

Crucially, developmental writing teachers' agency around their individual and collective responses are also decidedly not "obvious" – as we have seen, there are many ways in which white supremacist thinking presents itself quietly in our everyday choices around evaluating our students' writing. As teachers, we need to be constantly vigilant that we are taking care not to reproduce those ways of thinking.

As study participants describe assessing writing and/or language they perceive to be "non-standard," their stories reflect a range of linguistic and discursive ideologies, political

orientations toward higher education language policies, and perceptions of students' racial identities and national identities. This is one of the most urgent issues in our field now – see, for example, "This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!" a statement co-authored by several leading scholars and endorsed and released by NCTE/CCCC (Baker-Bell et al.). Much scholarship has been published on teaching and assessing "non-standard" Englishes. The research includes (but is not limited to) work on Black Language and Black Linguistic Justice (e.g., Alim and Smitherman, Baker-Bell, Green Jr.), translingual approaches to teaching and assessing writing (e.g., Canagarajah, Gilyard, Lee), and approaches to assessing multilingual/second language students (e.g., Matsuda et al., Saenkhum). The data I collected through my dissertation project is in conversation with this research.

I would also like to take a moment to address the ways that basic writing scholarship has tended to render so-called "basic writers." My reflection on and analysis of teachers' responses in terms of how they characterize students and who socially just assessment is for is informed by scholarship in basic writing that critiques what Jacqueline Jones Royster and Rebecca Greenberg Taylor call a history of "objectifying" basic writers (217). In their article, "Constructing Teacher Identity in the Basic Writing Classroom," Royster and Greenberg Taylor argue that basic writers' identities are overly focused on in scholarship such that teacher-scholars end up "claiming all of the power that comes with the act of naming itself" (217). Royster and Greenberg Taylor emphasize that identity matters are not just "students' problems" – teachers, too, must inquire into their positionality and critique their sources of knowledge about basic writers (214). Deborah Mutnick points also to the not-so-subtly raced and classed tendency of some basic writing scholarship to focus on images of urban decay and

students' “desperately bleak” lives (24).[40] Mary Soliday, too, comments on trends of "antiurban imagery" in basic writing scholarship, a pattern that I would argue continues today, though perhaps less frequently (137). Scholars, perhaps in an effort to recognize the inequities of students’ material conditions, unintentionally reproduce trauma narratives of their students by leaning in so starkly to real or perceived deficits. As a writing teacher who taught for over 10 years at public institutions, I felt that deep rage – at the lack of funding, resources, and classroom space, at the inequities of the K-16 education system, at the economic and racial violence that led students to struggle in my classes. However, I agree with Royster and Greenberg Taylor that an attention to students’ lived experiences is different from a fetishization of student loss and trauma, the latter of which is "unifocal" in that it does not include a consideration of teacher identity and instead puts undue attention – but not necessarily nuanced or caring interpretation – on students' identities (27). Royster and Greenberg Taylor write, "Discounting the teacher as an (27) active agent in the classroom wrongly positions students as subjectable primarily to disembodied systems and overly constrained by outcomes rather than converging processes" (28). As I interpret this, the problem is that students have no agency when they are rendered only by the teacher, and when the teacher does not reflect on their own histories and experiences. Teachers would do well to interrogate what they notice, and why, when they are getting to know their students.

Rudy Salas, Sr., in an interview by Anna Deavere Smith that became part of her play, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, says it plainly. Below is an excerpt from the interview as Deavere

[40] Soliday makes a similar point about the “antiurban imagery” that runs through certain scholars’ (Soliday names Beth Counihan, Adrienne Rich, and James Traub) work on higher education and remediation (137).

Smith wrote it, to be performed as a monologue, with notations on Salas' body language and pacing. This monologue appears first in the publication of the play:

> So I grew up with all this rich stuff at home, / *(Three quick hits on the table and a double sweep)* / and then at school, / first grade, they started telling me / I was inferior / because I was a Mexican, / and that's where / *(He hits the table several times, taps, twenty-three taps until / line 'the enemy' and then on 'nice white teachers' his hand / sweeps the table)* / I realized I had an enemy / and that enemy was those nice white teachers. (2)

There is a difference between understanding your students and actively working to make radical change around the inequities that affect them, and seeing your students as lacking, poor, "inferior," without resource, and without power. There is, in other words, a difference between naming the students themselves as what needs remediation, and naming the structures and policies that uphold white middle class norms in formal educational spaces as in need of remediation.

In order to make sustained change in the ways that individual teachers and the field conceive of "good" and "prepared" composing – in order to untangle the relationship between "good writing" and a middle-class, white discourse, and to stop disciplining, as Gumbs says, students in and through white mainstream English (Baker-Bell, "Dismantling") – we need to reject the normative ways of relating to one another under capitalism. We must also know what our values are and defend them against the "value capture" that Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò warns us of in his article, "Identity Politics and Elite Capture" (Táíwò). "Value capture" is a term used by C. Thi Nguyen, Táíwò tells us, and describes it as "a process by which we begin with rich and

subtle values, encounter simplified versions of them in social life, and then revise our values in the direction of simplicity" (Táíwò). Importantly for our context, Nguyen through Táíwò tells us that our understanding of our values can be forced "over time" "toward the elite's simpler direction" (Táíwò). Again, this is how we end up with "nice" and incremental "changes." This is the one-off professional development workshop offered at a time that many instructors cannot make, the institutional mission statement that has the word "diversity" in it, etc. This is how we "perpetual 'but'" our way to making excuses for ourselves or our colleagues as to why they have not yet begun genuinely "un-knowing," as Kynard says, the principles of our pedagogy. Because the values of those in power (in our case, senior administrators of a university, for example) typically do not "overlap" with "the total set of people affected by the decisions they make" (in our case, teachers and students), it is teachers and students who end up compromising, losing, and/or incurring harms (Táíwò).

Identifying our values around writing assessment specifically will help us avoid the "value capture" that Nguyen with/through Táíwò warns us of. Teacher-scholars such as Deborah Mutnick, Heidi Estrem, and Chris Gallagher show us the different ways that scholarly expertise in writing and the teaching of writing is "simplified" (or outright dismissed) by institutional decision makers when it comes to large-scale college or university wide decisions about how grading and evaluation must take place in writing placement assessment and/or assessment within a required writing course. I suggest that this simplification and dismissal might be resisted through coalition-building among writing teachers, and teachers across the disciplines, toward more just writing assessment, with an attention to our varied institutional conditions and access to resources. I forward this based on my finding that there appear to be

two major points of negotiation around engagement with socially just writing assessment in the basic writing classroom: institutional and ideological. Asao Inoue states in his 2019 CCCC's keynote address, "We must stop saying that we have to teach this dominant English because it's what students need to succeed tomorrow. They only need it because we keep teaching it" (19)! My dissertation research contributes a response to the question, "*Why* do we – especially those of us who identify as valuing social justice approaches to the writing classroom – keep teaching it?" My data show that in terms of institutional or structural constraints, alternatives to assessment that center carceral, monolingual, and mono-discursive logics feel less available to basic writing teachers on contingent contracts, who are teaching many courses, who are required by their department or institution to use assessment strategies they identify as antithetical to socially just approaches to writing assessment, and who are teaching in departments where colleagues are resistant to these strategies. Ideologically, even within this group of basic writing teachers who self-identify as valuing social justice approaches in their classrooms, teachers struggle to unlearn the linguistic and discursive ideologies that have historically privileged white and middle-class students. They also struggle with adopting assessment practices, particularly at the classroom-level rather than the individual student level, that depart from traditional understandings of how learning happens (e.g., flexible deadlines). Those of us who study writing and the teaching of writing, and those of us who teach writing, would benefit from a new understanding, perhaps, of how we can come together to both reconsider what we value when we assess writing and to reassert our expertise and power in determining what equitable assessment looks like and what our student-writers deserve.

Implications for future research and work

In some ways, I consider this project a robust pilot study. It is a "temperature check," as I have said, of how current basic writing teachers who self-identify as valuing social justice approaches to writing assessment actually define social justice with regard to assessment, how they practice it, and where they struggle and feel supported in their practice of it. What is holding us back from rethinking how we perceive successful student writing? And, what is holding us back from rethinking other questions around assessment that do not necessarily have to do with our perceptions of writing, such as deadlines, flexible assignment guidelines, what "engagement" in a course looks like, and more?

Future research might attend more carefully to the meso. In this project, my analyses and thinking are with teachers in classrooms, and with large-scale paradigms like capitalism and white supremacy. My analyses and thinking might be extended, for example, with further work toward what "organizing" might actually look like for basic and college writing teachers. My suggestion for practical intervention – to organize both around political education regarding linguistic and discursive ideologies and around the labor conditions that prevent us as writing teachers from feeling that socially just assessment methods are acceptable – is quite broad. A future study might specifically recruit basic writing teachers who are already actively organizing within their departments for department-level changes in how students are assessed.

In general, this project's scope is wide. This was intentional. However, what I found in the data was nearly two separate (but of course related) conversations around assessment, each of which requires its own particular interventions. There is the conversation about the assessment of student writing – the written assignments students produce while enrolled in

participants' basic writing courses. This encompasses teachers' perceptions of language and discourse, what makes "successful" writing, what a "good" argument is, and all the data I collected related to what basic writing teachers value when they assess writing (critical thinking, grammar, use of evidence, etc.). Then, there is the question of how teachers structure their assessment approach more generally, which encompasses data around flexibility in deadlines and assignments, and open-ended data that show how teachers are thinking of what "good" *learning* looks like (e.g., responses related to student engagement, how they present themselves in class, when they turn in work, whether they participate, etc.). In this way, I believe that bringing a greater scholarly and practical attention to disability and neurodivergence is a deeply important step. I am not alone in thinking this: Inoue recently (about two months ago at the time of writing) wrote in response to those working at the intersection of disability studies and socially just writing assessment (e.g., Kryger and Carillo) in his book, *Cripping Labor-Based Grading for More Equity in Literacy Courses.* "Time" is deeply felt in my data – it takes up a fair amount of space. Participants wrote on not having enough time for their work (and the resulting exhaustion and burnout) and on time as a barrier to enacting socially just assessment. They also expressed what I would characterize as an anxiety on what "correct" time looks like – students should spend a certain amount of time working on a particular assignment, for example, and lateness will not be tolerated or will only be tolerated on an emergency basis. Time is an important concept in disability justice, and I join Kryger and others who argue that a greater attention to the intersections of socially just writing assessment, linguistic justice, and disability justice would likely yield rich insights.

The integral role and distinct missions of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are not accounted for in my data and perhaps not in my critical lens, either. The scholar-teachers I think alongside, as I have written, see formal higher educational institutions in the US as oppressive spaces that center white, middle class, settler logics. Unfortunately, my project does not account for nuance in this argument in relation to colleges and universities that are *not* historically white institutions. In HBCUs, for example, what does socially just writing assessment look like in a space where Blackness is centered? Though my sample frame included all eight public HBCUs in the study's geographic area, there were not enough participants from HBCUs to meaningfully analyze potential differences in how socially just writing assessment is defined, practiced, and negotiated. Future work would be enriched by drawing on HBCU-centered research on writing assessment such as David F. Green Jr.'s, and thinking alongside this research to better understand how ideology and institution work to support or harm basic writing teachers' implementation of socially just writing assessment. Thus, if one were to extend this study, the two major growth areas I identity are related to a greater attention to disability justice frameworks, and to data collection and analysis work that better accounts for the particular experiences of basic writing teachers at HBCUs.

A final hope for future work in socially just writing assessment in all college and university writing courses, be they "basic" or "college" level, is to continue our work cultivating a sustained, joyful, and critical solidarity among ourselves and teachers and between teachers, staff, and students. Much of my analytical lens is informed by my sense that faculty have both lost a sense of their power and the power of coalition-building. In her article, "Pedagogies of Refusal: What it Means to (Un)teach a Student Like Me," Yanira Rodríguez writes that the

"avoidance of struggle" can "devolv[e] into fatalism or detached optimism" (11). It is so easy for faculty to avoid struggle because we are rewarded for doing so. And so Rodríguez says it takes, among other things, the "collectiviz[ing] [of] risk" in order to make the struggle involved in solidarity and coalition-building possible (9). Bob describes this sort of foundational, community-building, and praxis-shifting work:

> My initial response to, say, to getting rid of late policies long term or moving to an ungrading approach was to worry about the volume of labor and then of course as an educator I immediately thought “Well, if it’s best for the students, just deal with it.” So it was important in the Twitter community that other people, other faculty, were like, “Yeah absolutely. I did it, and I can't sustain it from a labor perspective, and it’s not fair for me to need to work for 60 hours a week for students to have a more equitable environment. So until we can push back on the labor situation for us this isn’t something that, you know, I’m gonna choose to do.” ... It seems like from what I’ve seen ... working to do more collaborative grading ... if you really do get enough faculty on board then it happens because for the most part here we do have enough power if we have the majority of faculty behind something, we can push up and we can make changes happen. So then I think the challenge becomes getting more faculty and for that matter, you know, more chairs, more deans, on board with something like ungrading or with pushing back on assessment policies generally. [Pause] So it’s something [sighs] – you know that’s – that’s my plan [laughs]! And I think my colleagues’ plan also. There’s a couple folks in my department who I’ve worked with a lot of the collaborative grading stuff on. So I think we’re drifting toward ungrading practices. And once we’ve done that,

> that's half the department (we're a very small department). So then we just need to get one more person on board and then [pause] we can push along to other departments. (Bob)

This basic writing teacher is bringing together the interests I discuss in my project – socially just writing assessment, labor, and faculty organizing, presenting an incredibly lucid example of what these kinds of conversations and practices look like. As he says, "we do have enough power" and, movingly, "that's my plan!" Future approaches to answering my research questions, particularly my third research question (negotiating supports of and resistance to socially just writing assessment), may center relationship building, political education, and organizing practices. Whether this creates or necessitates new or more academic scholarship, I am not sure. What I hope and suggest it creates is power and capacity among faculty to identify and address the harms of the University, the ways the University intentionally exhausts its educators, and the ways it marginalizes Black and Indigenous students, students of color, working class students, international students, and others. Basic writing teachers (and all faculty) must resist both the understandable "fatalism" that emerges when courses are cut, department chairs are resistant, and institutions insist on using ACCUPLACER. And, perhaps more unsettling and difficult to resist is the "detached optimism" that seems so monstrous particularly in this social and political moment. This dissertation joins others in inviting those who have never been or are no longer convinced by additive, incrementalist, and/or quiet revisions to the ways student-writing and student being are assessed in the writing classroom to talk about how we can come together to create robust and large-scale action toward justice-centered writing assessment.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY INVITATION (TEACHERS)

March 9, 2021

Dear Professor ${m://LastName},

I am writing to invite you to participate in an online survey that is part of my dissertation study of how basic writing teachers define, practice, and seek support for their socially just assessment strategies. I am a PhD Candidate in the Composition and Rhetoric program at UMass Amherst where I am advised by Profs. Haivan Hoang (chair), Anne Herrington, Rebecca Lorimer Leonard, and Elizabeth Williams.

With my survey, I hope to reach basic writing (e.g., developmental writing) teachers at public community colleges, HBCUs, regional/state comprehensive institutions, and flagship institutions in US New England and mideast states to learn more about how basic writing teachers imagine and do socially just assessment (e.g., antiracist, decolonial, critical, equity oriented assessment). I selected your institution through a random stratified sample, and I then identified you as an English/composition teacher using information available on your institution's website. I hope if you are a basic writing teacher you will participate in the survey.

It will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the survey. Your participation is voluntary, and you may skip any question you prefer not to answer. Your responses will be confidential, and all analyses will be reported such that no individual can be identified.

To participate in the survey, click the link below:

${l://SurveyLink?d=Click%20Here%20to%20Enter%20the%20Survey}

If you are interrupted and need to close your browser, you may click on your survey link again and pick up where you left off. If you prefer to participate in the survey via telephone, please email me. At the end of the survey, you will be invited (but may not be selected) to participate in a voluntary 45-60 minute Zoom interview, which will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

My study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at UMass Amherst # 00003909. Please contact me with any questions you may have about the survey or the study more broadly. I can be reached at sstetson@umass.edu, or by phone at +1 (860) 478-5527.

Thank you for reading this and for considering participating in my study.

Sincerely,

Sarah M. Stetson
MFA, Creative Writing, Queens College, CUNY
PhD Candidate, Composition and Rhetoric, UMass Amherst

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INVITATION (HEADS/CHAIRS)

March 15, 2021

Dear Professors,

I am writing to ask for your help with my dissertation project, which is a study of how basic writing teachers define, practice, and seek support for their socially just assessment strategies. I am a PhD Candidate in the Composition and Rhetoric program at UMass Amherst where I am advised by Profs. Haivan Hoang (chair), Anne Herrington, Rebecca Lorimer Leonard, and Elizabeth Williams.

With my survey I hope to reach basic writing (e.g., developmental writing) teachers at public community colleges, HBCUs, regional/state comprehensive institutions, and flagship institutions in the US New England and mideast states to learn more about how basic writing teachers imagine and do socially just assessment (i.e., antiracist, decolonial, critical, equity oriented assessment). I selected your institution through a random stratified sample, and I then identified you as an English, Liberal Arts, and/or First Year Writing department head using information available on your institution's website.

The names of individual basic writing instructors are not available on your public website. Might you be willing to help by forwarding the survey to your institution's current and recent (within the past three years) basic writing teachers? The survey invitation, including the survey link, are copied below. I would be greatly appreciative if you would send the invitation to your colleagues who teach basic writing. And, if you teach basic writing, I hope you will consider participating yourself. You can click on the link below, as well.

It will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the survey. At the end, participants are invited (but may not be selected) to participate in a 45-60 minute Zoom interview which will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

Please contact me with any questions you may have about the survey or the study more broadly. I can be reached at sstetson@umass.edu, or by phone at +1 (860) 478-5527. This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Massachusetts Amherst Institutional Review Board # 00003909.

Thank you for reading this and for considering assisting me in my outreach to basic writing instructors.

Sincerely,

Sarah M. Stetson
MFA Creative Writing, Queens College, CUNY
PhD Candidate, Composition and Rhetoric, UMass Amherst

APPENDIX C

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

TEACHERS Basic Writing Teachers and Socially Just Assessment - FINAL

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1
In this survey, "assessment" is broadly interpreted as any judging or evaluating of student writing that you do in your basic writing course. "Basic Writing" (or, "developmental," "remedial" writing) is defined as a composition course that precedes or coincides with your institution's "college level" writing course, and that students may or may not be required or encouraged to take before moving on to your institution's "college writing" course. I hope all who identify as working from social justice or related approaches in their basic writing assessment praxis will participate in the survey.

The survey has been optimized for PCs, but can also be taken on smartphones and tablets. If you prefer to participate in the survey via telephone, you may contact me at sstetson@umass.edu, or +1 (860) 478-5527, to set up a time to take the survey.

Please read the following consent form. If you agree to consent, please click "I agree." You may then begin the survey.

Q2 Online Survey Consent Form
You are being invited to participate in a dissertation research study titled A Mixed-Methods Study of Basic Writing Teachers' Attitudes and Practices Toward Socially Just Assessment in their Classrooms. This study is being done by Sarah M. Stetson from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Your institution was selected as part of a random, stratified sample and you were identified to participate because your institution's website lists you as a teacher of English/composition.

Why are we doing this research study?
This project seeks to survey basic writing teachers at both two and four year public colleges and universities in New England and the Mideast US to learn more about the ways basic writing teachers define, practice, and seek support for socially just classroom assessment.

Who can participate in this research study?
Current or recent (in the past three years) basic writing teachers who identify as someone for whom social justice is a major consideration in their classroom assessment practices.

What will I be asked to do and how much time will it take?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to: Sign this consent form by clicking the button below. Complete a 15-20 minute online survey. In the survey, you will be asked questions about your basic writing classroom assessment practices. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. Will being in this research study help me in any way? You may not directly benefit from this research; however, we hope that your participation in the study may provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your approaches to assessment.

What are my risks of being in this research study?
I believe there are minimal risks associated with this study; however, it is possible that participants may feel uncomfortable, burdened by, or upset by questions that cause them to reflect on their own experiences with classroom assessment. A risk of breach of confidentiality always exists and I have taken steps to minimize this risk as outlined in a section below.

How will my personal information be protected?
To the best of my ability your survey responses will remain confidential. I will minimize any risks by deleting the data file from the survey platform (Qualtrics) once the survey is closed. The data file will be downloaded and stored in the University's secure, password-protected cloud server. Names and survey responses will be delinked; a file linking names and survey responses will be stored securely in the University's password-protected cloud server. Excerpts from survey responses may appear in publications (e.g., conference presentations, articles) addressed to education and writing scholars. When publishing findings, I will anonymize institutional names and names of programs, departments, or offices (e.g., "an instructor at an urban two-year college in Southern New England" rather than "an instructor at Capital Community College in Hartford, CT"). I will never link survey responses to respondents' names. Only Sarah M. Stetson and the research team will have access to the data.

Will I be given any money or other compensation for being in this research study?
You will not be given any money or other compensation for your participation in this study.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?
You do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to participate in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

Who can I talk to if I have questions?
If you have questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact me: Sarah M. Stetson, sstetson@umass.edu, +1 (860) 478-5527. You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Professor Haivan Hoang, hhoang@umass.edu. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the University of Massachusetts Amherst Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) at (413) 545-3428 or humansubjects@ora.umass.edu.

By clicking “I agree” below you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, have read this

consent form and agree to participate in this research study. You are free to skip any question that you choose. You may wish to print a copy of this form for your records.
I Agree
I Do Not Agree

Skip To: End of Survey If Online Survey Consent Form You are being invited to participate in a dissertation research study... = I Do Not Agree

Q3
The following questions ask for information to determine whether or not you are eligible to participate in the survey.

Are you currently teaching a section of basic writing?
Yes
No

Display This Question:
If The following questions ask for information to determine whether or not you are eligible to parti... = No

Q4 Have you taught basic writing in the past, either at your current institution or another institution?
Yes
No

Skip To: Q34 If Have you taught basic writing in the past, either at your current institution or another institut... = No
Skip To: Q6 If Have you taught basic writing in the past, either at your current institution or another institut... = Yes

Q5 How many sections of basic writing are you currently teaching?
One section
Two sections
Three sections
Four or more sections

Q6 Approximately how many sections of basic writing have you taught in the course of your teaching career?
1-4 sections
5-9 sections
10 or more sections

Q7

How important is it to you to take a social justice-informed approach to your assessment practices in your basic writing course?

Very important

Somewhat important

Not important

Skip To: Q35 If How important is it to you to take a social justice-informed approach to your assessment practice... = Not important

Q8

The next set of questions asks you about how you arrived at, and how you would characterize, your socially just assessment practices.

You have identified through the previous questions as a basic writing teacher whose classroom assessment practices are influenced by a social justice framework. But, this does not mean all who participate prefer the term "socially just" or "social justice" when describing their assessment philosophy and practice.

What term(s) do you prefer to use, and why?

____

____

____

____

____

Q9

Please indicate how impactful the following resources, activities, and/or experiences have been to you personally in developing your current understanding of what socially just assessment in your basic writing course looks like.

	Very Impactful	Somewhat Impactful	Not Impactful	I have not engaged with this resource, activity, or experience
Interactions with your students				
Explicit feedback from your students on your assessment practice				
Informal conversations with colleagues (e.g., on social media, in your office)				
Teacher training offered or required by your department and/or institution				
Your undergraduate or graduate coursework				
Research on assessment (e.g., peer reviewed papers, blog posts, podcasts)				
Personal experiences you've had being evaluated or assessed				
Conversations with friends and/or family				
Professional development workshop outside your institution (e.g., webinar or workshop offered by NCTE)				

Q10 In your own words, how would you describe your approach to socially just assessment in your basic writing course? In other words, what does "socially just assessment" mean to you as you practice it in your basic writing course?

(Please refrain from writing about specific strategies here, as you will have a chance to elaborate on strategies in future questions.)
____
____
____
____
____

Q11
The next set of questions asks about your specific assessment practices.

Considering the goals of your course, what three aspects of your students' development as writers do you focus on most when giving feedback?

(Note that the order in which you describe aspects will not imply "ranking" of aspects.)
One ____
Two ____
Three ____

Q12 Which of the following do you use to determine a student's final grade on a major writing assignment?

(Select all that apply.)
Student self-assessment
Contract grading
Rubric designed by my department or institution
Rubric I designed
Portfolio assessment (single assignment, multiple drafts read holistically and assigned a single grade)
Portfolio assessment (multiple assignments, multiple drafts read holistically and assigned a single grade)
I don't typically assign a final grade to major writing assignments
Other (please describe) ____

Q13 Please briefly describe the tool(s) or practice(s) you indicated using in the previous question (i.e., if you selected "contract grading," what are the major tenets of that grading process as you practice it).
____
____
____
____
____

Q14 Which of the following do you do in your basic writing course?

	This is a part of my regular course policy	I do this occasionally, but it is not part of my course policy	I have not done this but would consider doing it	I do not do this
Offer flexible deadlines for low stakes assignments				
Offer flexible deadlines for major assignments				
Allow students to revise and resubmit assignments				
Offer students a number of different ways to successfully complete an assignment				
Meet with students as needed to design individualized plans for completing the course successfully				

Q15
Please describe a time when, while assessing a student's writing in a basic writing course, you felt you had some success in enacting your socially just assessment practice.

____
____
____
____
____

Q16 Now, please describe a time when, while assessing a student's writing in a basic writing course, you struggled to enact your socially just assessment practice.

____
____
____
____
____

Q17
How often do you do each of the following?

	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never
I gather feedback from my students on my assessment practice					
I reflect on whether my students' formal or informal feedback on my assessment practices differs among students' demographics (e.g., race, gender)					
I revise my assessment practice based on student feedback					

Q18 I feel like I have a good sense of my students' reactions to how I assess them.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Q19
The next set of questions asks you to describe your experiences negotiating support when developing and practicing socially just assessment.

	Yes	No	I'm not sure
Does your department or program offer trainings or workshops on how to implement socially just assessment?			
Does your department or program explicitly support socially just assessment practices?			
Does your department or program offer trainings or workshops on socially just pedagogies?			
Does your department or program explicitly support or advocate for social justice broadly?			
Does your college or university explicitly support or advocate for social justice?			

Q20 Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

(Screen One)

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel like I have folks in my department who I can talk with about strategies for grading without a single standard.					
I feel like I have folks in my department who I can talk with about the relationship between writing assessment and racism.					
I feel like I have folks in my department who I can talk with about the relationship between writing assessment and white language supremacy.					
I feel like I am one of the only people in my department who is thinking about how to do socially just assessment in the basic writing course.					
I feel like much of the formal work (e.g., professional development, curriculum development) of					

developing socially just assessment in the basic writing course falls on me.	

Q21 Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

(Screen Two)

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I don't yet know all I need to know in order to more effectively practice socially just assessment.					
I am anxious about the conversations that socially just assessment practices might demand (e.g., I am uncomfortable with, or unsure of, talking about race, class, ability).					
I am concerned about how students might respond to "non-traditional" assessment methods.					
I am not sure how to design socially just assessment that is responsive to all students.					

I have some knowledge of what socially just assessment can be, but I am not sure how to put this knowledge into practice.	

Q22 Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

(Screen Three)

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am concerned that methods associated with socially just assessment (e.g., grading contracts, flexible rubrics) are not as rigorous as other "traditional" methods.					
Implementing socially just assessment practices will take too much time.					
My department explicitly requires its teachers to adhere to an assessment practice that is not socially just.					
My department implicitly discourages socially just assessment practices.					

Q23 At your institution, what method is used to determine students' placement or enrollment in basic writing?

(If your institution has changed its policy due to disruptions caused by COVID-19, please indicate the method used prior to the disruption.)

Automated/machine assessment (e.g. ACCUPLACER)
High school GPA
Standardized test score (e.g., ACT, SAT)
Exam developed by my institution
Directed Self-Placement
Multiple measures (e.g., considering high school GPA with writing sample and other materials)
I am not sure
Other (please describe) ____

Q24 What is the title of your basic writing course?
____

Q25 Is the basic writing course you teach credit-bearing?
Yes
No

Q26 The final set of questions asks you for some demographic information about yourself and your teaching career.

What is your position within your institution?

(If you teach at more than one institution, and your position varies, select all that apply.)

Graduate student instructor
Adjunct instructor/lecturer
Full-time instructor/lecturer
Assistant Professor
Associate Professor
Professor
WPA Position (please describe) ____

Q27 What graduate degrees do you currently hold?

(Select all that apply)

M.A. in English or Composition and Rhetoric
M.F.A. in Creative Writing
M.A.T.
M.Ed.
Ed.D.
Ph.D. in English or Composition and Rhetoric
Another degree (please describe)
____

Q28 Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with socially just assessment in your basic writing course?

____
____
____
____
____

Q29 To help me with my record keeping, please enter your work email address below.

____

Q30 Which best describes your gender identity?

Trans Woman
Trans Man
Cis Woman
Cis Man
Nonbinary
Gender Nonconforming
Genderqueer
Another gender identity (please describe)
____

Q31 Which best describes your racial identity?

(Select all that apply)

Black or African American
Latina/o/x
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander
Native American, Indigenous
White
Another racial identity (please describe)
____

Q32 Are you willing to participate in a follow-up interview to discuss your experiences with socially just assessment? The Zoom interview would be scheduled at your convenience over the next month or two, and would last approximately 45-60 minutes.

Yes, I'm willing
No, I'm not willing

Display This Question:
If Are you willing to participate in a follow-up interview to discuss your experiences with socially... = Yes, I'm willing

Q33 Please enter the best email address at which to contact you to schedule the interview.

____

Display This Question:
If Have you taught basic writing in the past, either at your current institution or another institut... = No

Q34 Because this study is of basic writing teachers' experiences practicing socially just assessment, and you indicated you have not taught basic writing, you are not eligible to participate in the survey. Thank you for your interest. If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Stetson at sstetson@umass.edu.

Display This Question:
If How important is it to you to take a social justice-informed approach to your assessment practice... = Not important

Q35 Because this study is of basic writing teachers' experiences practicing socially just assessment, and you indicated that a social justice framework is not important to your teaching, you are not eligible to participate in the survey. Thank you for your interest. If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Stetson at sstetson@umass.edu.

End of Block: Default Question Block

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Researcher(s): Sarah M. Stetson, PhD Candidate, Department of English Haivan V. Hoang, Associate Professor, Department of English

Study Title: *A Mixed-Methods Study of Basic Writing Teachers' Attitudes and Practices Toward Socially Just Assessment in their Classrooms*

1. WHAT IS THIS FORM?

This form is called a Consent Form. It will give you information about the study so you can make an informed decision about participation in this research. We encourage you to take some time to think this over and ask questions now and at any other time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will be given a copy for your records.

2. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY THAT I SHOULD BE AWARE OF?

My study, "A Mixed-Methods Study of Basic Writing Teachers' Attitudes and Practices Toward Socially Just Assessment in their Classrooms," explores how basic writing teachers define, practice, and negotiate support of their socially just assessment practices. The study aims to include teachers who have taught basic writing within the past three years at a public two or four year college or university in the New England or the US Mideast states.

Participants will participate in a 45-60 minute interview conducted on Zoom. Prior to the interview, they will be asked to share relevant teaching materials via the University's secure cloud server. Participants may still participate in the interviews even if they decline to share relevant teaching materials.

As the principal investigator of this study, I am a PhD candidate in the English department at UMass Amherst. This study is part of my dissertation project, which is chaired by Professor Haivan V. Hoang. Your participation is this study is entirely voluntary.

3. WHY ARE WE DOING THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the ways basic writing teachers at two and four year public institutions in New England and the Mideast US define, practice, and seek support for, socially just assessment.

4. WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

Everyone who participated in the first phase of the study, the survey, was invited to indicate whether they would be interested in participating in an interview.

5. WHERE WILL THIS RESEARCH STUDY TAKE PLACE AND HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?

Interviews will be conducted one-on-one, remotely, in a password protected Zoom meeting room. Approximately 10 people will be interviewed.

6. WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO AND HOW MUCH TIME WILL IT TAKE?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to:

- Sign this consent form.
- Share one or two relevant teaching documents.
- Participate in a 45-60 minute interview. In the interview, you will be asked to elaborate on your survey responses and, if you shared relevant materials, to discuss how the materials relate to your socially just assessment practices.

7. WILL BEING IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY HELP ME IN ANY WAY?

You may not directly benefit from this research; however, your participation in the study may provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your approaches to assessment.

8. WHAT ARE MY RISKS OF BEING IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

There are minimal risks associated with this research study. It is possible that participants may feel uncomfortable, burdened by, or upset by questions that cause them to reflect on their own experiences with classroom assessment -- either assessing others, or being assessed themselves. However, you can decide what you would like to share or not share during the interview.

A risk of breach of confidentiality always exists and we have taken the steps to minimize this risk as outlined in a section below.

9. HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?

Your privacy and confidentiality is important to me. The following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of your study records.

Research data will be labeled with a code without identifiers participants' proper names. A key that links names and codes will be maintained in a secure password-protected location separate from the data. Any hard copies of documents (e.g., teaching materials that are shared electronically, but which I print out for analysis) will be stored securely in a private file cabinet,

separately from interview audio recordings and transcripts. Only Sarah M. Stetson and the research team will have access to this data.

All participant teaching materials, interview audio recording, and interview transcript files will be kept in a password-protected account via the University's secure cloud server to prevent access by unauthorized users.
Interview audio-recordings and transcripts will be deleted ten years after the study culminates in the successful defense of the dissertation project. If participants withdraw from the study prior to the successful dissertation defense, then audio recordings and transcripts will be deleted immediately upon their request. Teaching materials will be kept in Sarah M. Stetson's UMass secure cloud server account or, if hard copy, in a personal file cabinet.

Interviews will be conducted and recorded in password-protected Zoom videoconferences. Only the audio will be recorded. After interviews are completed, audio recordings will be stored as detailed above. I plan to transcribe audio recordings myself. However, if I get funding to transcribe audio recordings, I will send audio files to a commercial service, Rev.com, which promises the following about security and confidentiality: "Rev has a strict customer confidentiality policy. Your files are private and protected from unauthorized access. All of our professionals have signed NDAs and strict confidentiality agreements. Rev professionals only complete work on our secure platform. We encrypt all data - both in transit and where it is stored on our protected AWS servers. Your files are securely stored and transmitted using TLS 1.2 encryption, bank-level security. To deconstruct this jargon, it would take a supercomputer 13.75 billion years to break this encryption and compromise our security. If you'd ever like us to permanently delete your files, just contact us." Once transcription has been completed, I will request that Rev.com delete all files.

When publishing research findings, I will use pseudonyms for all interview participants, and will generalize about the participants' institutional context (e.g., "a teacher at an urban community college in a small New England city" rather than "a teacher at Capital Community College in Hartford, CT"). In an effort to protect confidentiality in presentations and publications, I will anonymize comments when information is not relevant to the analysis (e.g., "a graduate student teacher " rather than "a white graduate student teacher with 4 years of basic writing teaching experience"). The number of states (11, plus the District of Columbia) and institutions (over 100) involved in the study offers some anonymity.

Please be advised that although I will use pseudonyms for participants and take every precaution to maintain confidentiality, the nature of contextualizing qualitative data prevents me from absolutely guaranteeing confidentiality. Readers may speculate about the identities of research participants based on contextual information provided. The primary audience for such publications will include writing teachers and researchers within writing and higher education studies.

10. WILL I BE GIVEN ANY MONEY OR OTHER COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

No, there is no compensation for being in this research study.

11. WHO CAN I TALK TO IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

I will be happy to answer any question you have about this study. You may contact the researcher, Sarah M. Stetson, at sstetson@umass.edu or +1 (860) 478-5527. You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Professor Haivan Hoang, hhoang@umass.edu.

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the University of Massachusetts Amherst Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) at (413) 545-3428 or humansubjects@ora.umass.edu.

12. WHAT HAPPENS IF I SAY YES, BUT I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?

You do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to participate in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

13. SUBJECT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT

When signing this form I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this study. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I use. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I have been informed that I can withdraw at any time.

I understand the teaching materials I shared and my interview transcripts will be analyzed and may be quoted in publications resulting from this study, including conference presentations. Below, I have specified my preferences for use of audio recordings of my interviews.

Conference Presentations

______I agree that segments of the recordings made of my participation in this research may be used for conference presentations.
______I do not want segments of the recordings made of my participation in this research to be used for conference presentations.

A copy of this signed Informed Consent Form has been given to me.

________________________ ____________________ __________

Participant Signature: Print Name: Date:

By signing below I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

_______________________________ _________________________ _____________

Signature of Person Print Name: Date: Obtaining Consent

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Sarah M. Stetson, Protocol #2077
Graduate Student, Department of English
Dissertation project: A Mixed-Methods Study of Basic Writing Teachers' Engagement with Socially Just Classroom Assessment

Interview Protocol (45-60 minutes)
Thank you for participating in the survey, and for taking the time to participate in this interview. As you know, this study is of basic writing teachers in two and four year public universities, and their socially just classroom assessment practices. In my dissertation project, I work from Poe et al.'s definition of "social justice" or "socially just," which takes justice as the ultimate aim of writing assessment, and seeks to expand "opportunity structures" for all students. However, I acknowledge that "social justice" is an imperfect and capacious term, and that some participants might identify their teaching and assessment practices more closely as critical, antiracist, equity-oriented, access-oriented, etc. In this interview, I will ask you to share more about the terms you use and the practices you do.

Defining terms
1. In the survey, you responded [answer] to the following question: "Everyone participating in this survey identified as a basic writing teacher whose classroom assessment practices are influenced by a social justice framework. But, this does not mean that all who participate prefer the term "socially just" or "social justice" when describing their assessment philosophy and practice.

a) Can you tell me more about your response here?
b) Can you describe your associations with [term]?
c) Can you share why you feel "social justice" or "socially just" [is limiting, is descriptive, is
d) a useful term -- depending on survey response]?
e) [Specific probes depending on survey responses]

Detailing classroom practices
2. In your survey response, you described a moment in which you felt particularly successful in enacting socially just assessment in your classroom. Can you elaborate on this moment?

a. Tell me a little about the course structure and content. What was the size of the course?
b. What is your sense of the demographics of the class (e.g., race, international student status, first generation college student status, linguistic identity, nationality)?

c. How do students place into the course?
d. What assignment or activity was this moment related to?
e. Is there a rubric or grading criteria for this assignment or activity?
f. How do you think students received this moment of assessment, and how do you know?

3. In your survey response, you described a moment in which you struggled to enact socially just assessment in your classroom. Can you elaborate on this moment?

4. After indicating you were interested in participating in this interview, you shared with me [material type -- assignment sheet, rubric, etc.]. Can you share:

a. Why did you pick this [material]? Is there a significant memory or moment attached to it?
b. Can you talk about the social justice lens with which you approached this [material]? How does the [material] relate to your socially just practices?
c. How and when did you develop [the material]?
d. Did students see [the material]? How did they respond to it?
e. What are the strengths of [the material] in terms of your approach to social justice in assessment?
f. What kinds of revisions would you make to [the material] in terms of your approach to social justice in assessment?
g. [Specific follow-ups based on materials they share]

5. Can you talk about how you perceive your students' reactions to your assessment practices?

a. If you talk with your students about your socially just approach, how do they react?
b. Have you tried to validate any of your approaches to "assess the assessment" so to speak? If so, what have you found?
c. How have conversations with students influenced your practice?

Finding support and negotiating resistance

6. If you could (or have) talked with your supervisor(s) about socially just assessment in writing classrooms, what would be (or were) the most important ideas to communicate?

7. What kinds of supports have been most helpful to you as you've developed your assessment approaches?

8. What do you feel like the climate toward socially just classroom assessment is in your department? Are conversations on the topic active, or are discussions more limited, or even resisted? Why do you think they are active, limited, or resisted?

9. In your survey response, you indicated that you share your approaches to socially just assessment with [answer]. Can you talk more about how you found this community? Why are you comfortable talking with these folks as opposed to others?

Personal development and growth toward socially just assessment

10. What do you feel like you haven't figured out about your own socially just classroom assessment practices?

11. What are the big difficulties you face in designing or enacting these practices?

APPENDIX F

LIST OF INSTITUTIONS IN SAMPLE FRAME BY STATE AND INSTITUTION TYPE

HBCU	**State**
University of the District of Columbia	DC
Delaware State University	DE
Bowie State University	MD
Coppin State University	MD
Morgan State University	MD
University of Maryland Eastern Shore	MD
Cheyney University of Pennsylvania	PA
Lincoln University	PA

Very High Research	**State**
University of Connecticut	CT
University of Delaware	DE
University of Massachusetts-Amherst	MA
University of Maryland-College Park	MD
University of New Hampshire-Main Campus	NH
New Jersey Institute of Technology	NJ
Rutgers University-New Brunswick	NJ
Binghamton University	NY
Stony Brook University	NY
SUNY at Albany	NY
University at Buffalo	NY
The Pennsylvania State University	PA
Temple University	PA
University of Pittsburgh-Pittsburgh Campus	PA

Community College	**State**
Asnuntuck Community College	CT
Capital Community College	CT
Gateway Community College	CT
Housatonic Community College	CT
Manchester Community College	CT
Middlesex Community College	CT
Naugatuck Valley Community College	CT
Northwestern Connecticut Community College	CT
Norwalk Community College	CT
Quinebaug Valley Community College	CT
Three Rivers Community College	CT
Tunxis Community College	CT
University of the District of Columbia Community College* *I learned from participants that this institution is also considered an HBCU. However, in quantitative analysis, it is included as a community college.	DC
Berkshire Community College	MA
Bristol Community College	MA
Bunker Hill Community College	MA
Cape Cod Community College	MA
Greenfield Community College	MA
Holyoke Community College	MA
Massachusetts Bay Community College	MA
Massasoit Community College	MA
Middlesex Community College	MA
Mount Wachusett Community College	MA
North Shore Community College	MA
Northern Essex Community College	MA
Quincy College	MA
Quinsigamond Community College	MA
Roxbury Community College	MA
Springfield Technical Community College	MA
Allegany College of Maryland	MD
Anne Arundel Community College	MD
Baltimore City Community College	MD
Carroll Community College	MD
Cecil College	MD
Cecil College - Elkton Station	MD

Community College (Continued)	**State**
Chesapeake College	MD
College of Southern Maryland	MD
Community College of Baltimore County	MD
Frederick Community College	MD
Garrett College	MD
Hagerstown Community College	MD
Harford Community College	MD
Howard Community College	MD
Montgomery College	MD
Prince George's Community College	MD
Wor-Wic Community College	MD
Central Maine Community College	ME
Eastern Maine Community College	ME
Kennebec Valley Community College	ME
Northern Maine Community College	ME
Southern Maine Community College	ME
Washington County Community College	ME
York County Community College	ME
Great Bay Community College	NH
Lakes Region Community College	NH
Manchester Community College	NH
Nashua Community College	NH
NHTI-Concord's Community College	NH
River Valley Community College	NH
White Mountains Community College	NH
Atlantic Cape Community College	NJ
Bergen Community College	NJ
Brookdale Community College	NJ
Camden County College	NJ
County College of Morris	NJ
Cumberland County College	NJ
Essex County College	NJ
Hudson County Community College	NJ
Mercer County Community College	NJ
Middlesex County College	NJ
Ocean County College	NJ
Passaic County Community College	NJ
Raritan Valley Community College	NJ
Rowan College at Burlington County	NJ

Community College (Continued)	State
Rowan College of South Jersey Gloucester Campus	NJ
Salem Community College	NJ
Sussex County Community College	NJ
Union County College	NJ
Warren County Community College	NJ
Cayuga County Community College	NY
Clinton Community College	NY
Columbia-Greene Community College	NY
CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College	NY
CUNY Bronx Community College	NY
CUNY Hostos Community College	NY
CUNY Kingsborough Community College	NY
CUNY LaGuardia Community College	NY
CUNY Queensborough Community College	NY
CUNY Stella and Charles Guttman Community College	NY
Dutchess Community College	NY
Erie Community College	NY
Finger Lakes Community College	NY
Fulton-Montgomery Community College	NY
Genesee Community College	NY
Herkimer County Community College	NY
Hudson Valley Community College	NY
Jamestown Community College	NY
Jefferson Community College	NY
Mohawk Valley Community College	NY
Monroe Community College	NY
Nassau Community College	NY
Niagara County Community College	NY
North Country Community College	NY
Onondaga Community College	NY
Orange County Community College	NY
Rockland Community College	NY
Schenectady County Community College	NY
Suffolk County Community College	NY
Sullivan County Community College	NY
SUNY Adirondack	NY
SUNY Broome Community College	NY
SUNY Corning Community College	NY
SUNY Westchester Community College	NY

Community College (Continued)	**State**
Tompkins Cortland Community College	NY
Ulster County Community College	NY
Western Suffolk BOCES	NY
Bucks County Community College	PA
Bucks County Community College-Lower Bucks Campus	PA
Bucks County Community College-Upper Bucks Campus	PA
Butler County Community College	PA
Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology	PA
Community College of Allegheny County	PA
Community College of Beaver County	PA
Community College of Philadelphia	PA
Delaware County Community College	PA
Harrisburg Area Community College	PA
Harrisburg Area Community College-Gettysburg	PA
Harrisburg Area Community College-Lancaster	PA
Harrisburg Area Community College-Lebanon	PA
Harrisburg Area Community College-York	PA
Lancaster County Career and Technology Center	PA
Lehigh Carbon Community College	PA
Luzerne County Community College	PA
Montgomery County Community College	PA
Northampton County Area Community College	PA
Northampton County Area Community College-Monroe	PA
Pennsylvania Highlands Community College	PA
Reading Area Community College	PA
Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology	PA
University of Pittsburgh-Titusville	PA
Westmoreland County Community College	PA
Community College of Rhode Island - Lincoln	RI
Community College of Rhode Island - Providence	RI
Community College of Rhode Island - Westerly	RI
Community College of Rhode Island - Newport	RI
Community College of Rhode Island - Warwick	RI
Community College of Vermont - Bennington	VT
Community College of Vermont - Brattleboro	VT
Community College of Vermont - Middlebury	VT
Community College of Vermont - Morrisville	VT
Community College of Vermont - Newport	VT
Community College of Vermont - Rutland	VT

Community College (Continued)	State
Community College of Vermont - Springfield	VT
Community College of Vermont - St. Albans	VT
Community College of Vermont - St. Johnsbury	VT
Community College of Vermont - Upper Valley	VT
Community College of Vermont - Winooski	VT
Community College of Vermont - Montpelier	VT

Regional Comprehensive	State
Central Connecticut State University	CT
Charter Oak State College	CT
Eastern Connecticut State University	CT
Southern Connecticut State University	CT
United States Coast Guard Academy	CT
Western Connecticut State University	CT
University of Connecticut - Hartford	CT
University of Connecticut - Waterbury	CT
University of Connecticut - Stamford	CT
University of Connecticut - Avery Point	CT
University of the District of Columbia-David A Clarke School of Law	DC
Delaware Technical Community College-Terry	DE
Delaware Technical Community College-Georgetown	DE
Delaware Technical Community College-Stanton	DE
Delaware Technical Community College-Wilmington	DE
Bridgewater State University	MA
Fitchburg State University	MA
Framingham State University	MA
Massachusetts College of Art and Design	MA
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts	MA
Massachusetts Maritime Academy	MA
Salem State University	MA
University of Massachusetts Medical School Worcester	MA
University of Massachusetts-Boston	MA
University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth	MA
University of Massachusetts-Lowell	MA
Westfield State University	MA
Worcester State University	MA
Frostburg State University	MD
Salisbury University	MD
St. Mary's College of Maryland	MD
Towson University	MD
United States Naval Academy	MD
University of Baltimore	MD
University of Maryland Global Campus	MD
University of Maryland, Baltimore	MD
University of Maryland-Baltimore County	MD

Regional Comprehensive (Continued)	State
Maine Maritime Academy	ME
University of Maine	ME
University of Maine at Augusta	ME
University of Maine at Farmington	ME
University of Maine at Fort Kent	ME
University of Maine at Machias	ME
University of Maine at Presque Isle	ME
University of Southern Maine	ME
Granite State College	NH
Keene State College	NH
Plymouth State University	NH
University of New Hampshire at Manchester	NH
University of New Hampshire-Franklin Pierce School of Law	NH
Kean University	NJ
Montclair State University	NJ
New Jersey City University	NJ
Ramapo College of New Jersey	NJ
Rowan University	NJ
Rutgers University-Camden	NJ
Rutgers University-Newark	NJ
Stockton University	NJ
The College of New Jersey	NJ
Thomas Edison State University	NJ
William Paterson University of New Jersey	NJ
CUNY Medgar Evers College	NY
Fashion Institute of Technology	NY
SUNY College of Technology at Alfred	NY
SUNY College of Technology at Delhi	NY
SUNY Morrisville	NY
College of Staten Island CUNY	NY
CUNY Bernard M Baruch College	NY
CUNY Brooklyn College	NY
CUNY City College	NY
CUNY Hunter College	NY
CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice	NY
CUNY Lehman College	NY
CUNY New York City College of Technology	NY
CUNY Queens College	NY

Regional Comprehensive (Continued)	State
CUNY School of Law	NY
CUNY York College	NY
Farmingdale State College	NY
State University of New York at New Paltz	NY
SUNY at Fredonia	NY
SUNY at Purchase College	NY
SUNY Brockport	NY
SUNY Buffalo State	NY
SUNY College at Geneseo	NY
SUNY College at Old Westbury	NY
SUNY College at Oswego	NY
SUNY College at Plattsburgh	NY
SUNY College at Potsdam	NY
SUNY College of Agriculture and Technology at Cobleskill	NY
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry	NY
SUNY College of Optometry	NY
SUNY College of Technology at Canton	NY
SUNY Cortland	NY
SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University	NY
SUNY Empire State College	NY
SUNY Maritime College	NY
SUNY Oneonta	NY
SUNY Polytechnic Institute	NY
United States Merchant Marine Academy	NY
United States Military Academy	NY
Upstate Medical University	NY
Pennsylvania College of Technology	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State DuBois	PA
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania	PA
California University of Pennsylvania	PA
Clarion University of Pennsylvania	PA
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania	PA
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	PA
Indiana University of Pennsylvania-Main Campus	PA
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania	PA
Lock Haven University	PA
Mansfield University of Pennsylvania	PA
Millersville University of Pennsylvania	PA

Regional Comprehensive (Continued)	State
Pennsylvania State University-College of Medicine	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Dickinson Law	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Abington	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Altoona	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Beaver	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Berks	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Brandywine	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Erie-Behrend College	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Fayette- Eberly	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Great Valley	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Greater Allegheny	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Harrisburg	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Hazleton	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Lehigh Valley	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Mont Alto	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State New Kensington	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Schuylkill	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Scranton	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Shenango	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State Wilkes-Barre	PA
Pennsylvania State University-Penn State York	PA
Pennsylvania State University-World Campus	PA
Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania	PA
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania	PA
Temple - Harrisburg	PA
Temple - City Center	PA
Temple - Ambler	PA
University of Pittsburgh-Bradford	PA
University of Pittsburgh-Greensburg	PA
University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown	PA
West Chester University of Pennsylvania	PA
Rhode Island College	RI
University of Rhode Island - Kingston (Main)	RI
University of Rhode Island - Providence	RI
Vermont Technical College	VT
Castleton University	VT
Northern Vermont University	VT
University of Vermont	VT

APPENDIX G

Respondents by Rank, Race, Institution Type, and Course Credit Status

Respondent	Percent
Adjunct	30%
Non-adjunct (includes graduate student instructors)	61%
Rank not provided	9%
BIPOC	14%
Non-BIPOC/White	65%
Race not provided	22%
Community College	51%
Very High Research	22%
HBCU	7%
Regional Comprehensive	17%
Institution type missing	2%
Credit-Bearing	57%
Non-credit bearing	27%
Credit status not provided	16%

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Kenneth and Jay Golan. “Message from the President: An Apology.” *LaGuardia Community College Updates from the President*, 23 Mar. 2023. https://www.laguardia.edu/blog/updates-from-the-president/message-from-the-president-apology/. Accessed 21 Feb. 2024.

Ahmed, Sara. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Duke UP, 2012.

Alim, Samy H. and Geneva Smitherman. *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language, and Race in the U.S.* Oxford UP, 2012.

American Council on Education (ACE). “Enrollment in Developmental Courses, by Gender.” *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education,* www.equityinhighered.org/indicators/secondary-school-completion/enrollment-in-developmental-courses-by-gender/. Accessed 21 Oct. 2023.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 4th ed., Aunt Lute Books, 1998.

Arruzza, Cinzia, Tithi Bhattacharya, Kathleen Brown, Henry Drobbin, and Nancy Welch. “The Neoliberal University: How to Defend Education, Programs, and Jobs," uploaded by Haymarket Books, 23 Nov. 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=73y_TVExf_g.

Baca, Isabel, Qwo-Li Driskill, David F. Green, Asao Inoue, Austin Jackson, Kim B. Lovejoy, Rashidah Muhammad, Elaine Richardson, Geneva Smitherman, Denise Troutman, Bonnie Williams, and Ana Celia Zentella. “CCCC Statement on White Language Supremacy.” *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, June 2021, www.cccc.ncte.org/cccc/white-language-supremacy. Accessed 19 Feb. 2024.

Bailey, Thomas, Dong Wook Jeong, and Sung-Woo Cho. “Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges.” *Economics of Education Review*, vol. 29, 2010, pp. 255-270. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1016/j.econedurev.2009.09.002. Accessed 12 Apr. 2020.

Baker-Bell, April. “Dismantling Anti-Black Linguistic Racism in English Language Arts Classrooms: Toward an Anti-Racist Black Language Pedagogy.” *Theory Into Practice*, vol. 59, no. 1, 2019, pp. 8-21.

Baker-Bell, April. "Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy." *California State University ERWC Online Community*, 16 Mar. 2021, writing.csusuccess.org/webinars. Video.

Baker-Bell, April. *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy.* Routledge, 2020.

Baker-Bell, April, Bonnie J. Williams-Farrier, Davena Jackson, Lamar Johnson, Carmen Kynard, and Teaira McMurtry. "This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice," *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, July 2020, cccc.ncte.org/cccc/demand-for-black-linguistic-justice. Accessed 25 July, 2022.

Bartholomae, David. "The Tidy House: Basic Writing in the American Curriculum." *Journal of Basic Writing,* vol. 12, no. 1, 1993, pp. 4-21.

Bartholomae, David and Anthony Petrosky. *Facts, Artifacts and Counterfacts: Theory and Method for a Reading and Writing Course*. Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc. 1986.

Battle-Baptiste, Whitney and Britt Rusert, eds. *W.E.B. Du Bois' Data Portraits Visualizing Black America: The Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*. Princeton Architectural Press, 2018.

@bdholms. "Absolutely appalled that this was allowed on our college's website." *X.* 22 Mar., 2023.

Behm, Nicholas and Keith D. Miller. "Challenging the Frameworks of Color-Blind Racism: Why We Need a Fourth Wave of Writing Assessment Scholarship." *Race and Writing Assessment*, edited by Isao B. Inoue and Mya Poe, Peter Lang, 2012, pp. 127-138.

Belanoff, Pat. "The Myths of Assessment." *Journal of Basic Writing*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1991, pp. 54-66, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43443558. Accessed 24 Aug. 2019.

Bhandar, Brenna and Rafeef Ziadah, Editors. *Revolutionary Feminisms.* Verso, 2020.

Bizzell, Patricia. "Composition Studies Saves the World!" *College English*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2009, pp. 174-187. *JSTOR,* https://www.jstor.org/stable/25653016. Accessed 21 Oct. 2023.

@BLoveSoulPower. “Just read an article that 81% of educators consider themselves anti-racist. I am so done. These terms and ideas mean nothing. Just know that I am very aware of the watering down and the whitening of #Abolitionistteaching. This is why we created @ATN_1863 to show how it’s done.” *X*, 6 Oct. 2020, 2:41pm., twitter.com/BLoveSoulPower/status/1313549954208628738

Bose, Purnima. "Faculty Activism and the Corporatization of the University." *American Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 4, 2012, pp. 815-818. *Project MUSE*, doi: 10.1353/aq.2012.0058. Accessed 4 Feb. 2021.

Brah, Avtar. “Diaspora/Migration/Empire.” *Revolutionary Feminisms*, edited by Brenna Bhandar and Rafeef Ziadah, Verso, 2020, pp. 33-53.

Broad, Bob. “To Tell the Truth: Beyond Rubrics.” *What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing*. Utah State UP, 2003, pp. 1-15, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46nxvm.7. Accessed 24 Aug. 2019.

Camp, Roberta. “Changing the Model for the Direct Assessment of Writing,” *Assessing Writing: A Critical Sourcebook*, edited by Brian Huot and Peggy O’Neill, Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2009, pp. 102-130.

Canagarajah, Suresh. “Codemeshing in Academic Writing: Identifying Teachable Strategies of Translanguaging.” *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 95, no. 3, 2011, pp. 401-417.

Carillo, Ellen C. *The Hidden Inequities in Labor-Based Contract Grading.* Utah State UP, 2021.

Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. 2nd ed, Sage Publications, 2014.

Chen, Xianglei and Sean Simone. *Remedial Coursetaking at U.S. Public 2- and 4-Year Institutions: Scope, Experiences, and Outcomes*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2016. Accessed 19 Apr. 2020. https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/.

Cherry, Roger D. and Paul R. Meyer. “Reliability Issues in Holistic Assessment.” Assessing Writing: A Critical Sourcebook, edited by Brian Huot and Peggy O’Neill, Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2009, pp. 29-56.

Condon, Frankie and Vershawn Ashanti Young, eds. *Performing Antiracist Pedagogy in Rhetoric, Writing, and Communication*. UP of Colorado, 2017.

Cousins, Elsa, Sean Gordon, and Ty Smart. “Supporting Racial Justice at UMass: Report for Graduate Student Senate and GEO.” Graduate Student Senate Meeting, 29 June 2020, University of Massachusetts Amherst. Presentation.

Craig, Sherri. "Your Contract Grading Ain't It," *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2021, pp. 145-146. wpacouncil.org/aws/CWPA/pt/sp/journal-archives. Accessed 3 Jan. 2024.

Cushman, Ellen. “Decolonizing Validity.” *The Journal of Writing Assessment*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2016, journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=92. Accessed 24 Aug. 2019.

D'Agostino, Susan. "‘Procrastination-Friendly’ Academe Needs More Deadlines." *Inside Higher Ed*, 9 Feb. 2023, www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/02/10/should-professors-eliminate-deadlines. Accessed 24 Jul 2023.

“DEI Legislation Tracker.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, www.chronicle.com/article/here-are-the-states-where-lawmakers-are-seeking-to-ban-colleges-dei-efforts. Accessed 21 Oct. 2023.

Del Principe, Annie. "Time as a 'Built-In Headwind': The Disparate Impact of Portfolio Cross-assessment on Black TYC students." *Journal of Writing Assessment*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2023, pp. 1-20. *eScholarship*, escholarship.org/uc/item/8c91s9dt. Accessed 7 Jan. 2024.

Dillman, Don A., Jolene D. Smyth, and Leah Melani Christian. Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys, 4th Ed., Wiley, 2014.

Elias, Jacquelyn. "Test-Optional Policies Now Dominate Higher Ed." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 16 Nov. 2022, www.chronicle.com/article/test-optional-policies-now-dominate-higher-ed. Accessed 3 Sept., 2023.

Elliot, Norbert. “A Theory of Ethics for Writing Assessment.” *Journal of Writing Assessment*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2016, journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=98. Accessed 24 Aug. 2019.

Elliot, N., Deess, P., Rudniy, A., & Joshi, K. “Placement of Students into First-Year Writing Courses.” *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2012, pp. 285-313. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41583597. Accessed 24 Aug. 2019.

Estrem, Heidi, Dawn Shepherd, Lloyd Duman. “Relentless engagement with state educational policy reform: Collaborating to change the writing placement conversation.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2015, pp. 88-128, *Gale Academic Onefile*, link-gale-com.silk.library.umass.edu/apps/doc/A443131620/AONE?u=mlin_w_umassamh&sid=AONE&xid=3df64ddf. Accessed 24 Aug. 2019.

“Exercise: Evaluate an Organizing Issue.” *Secrets of a Successful Organizer Handouts, Labor Notes.* www.labornotes.org/sites/default/files/25PracticeTheOrganizingConversation.pdf. Accessed 19 Feb. 2024.

"Flexible Structures in Course Design." *Yale University Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning*, www.poorvucenter.yale.edu/strategic-resources-digital-publications/managing-classroom/flexible-structures-course-design. Accessed 5 Jan. 2024.

Flores, Nelson and Jonathan Rosa. “Undoing Appropriateness: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Language Diversity in Education.” *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 85, no. 2, 2015, pp. 149-301. *ProQuest*, silk.library.umass.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.silk.library.umass.edu/docview/1691427563?accountid=14572. Accessed 10 Jul. 2019.

Fowler, Floyd J., *Survey Research Methods*, Sage, 2014.

Freire, Paolo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Bloomsbury, 2016.

Gallagher, Chris. “Being There: (Re)Making the Assessment Site.” College Composition and Communication, vol. 62, no. 3, 2011, pp. 450-476, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/27917908. Accessed 24 Aug. 2019.

Galman, Sally. *The Good, the Bad, and the Data: Shane the Lone Ethnographer’s Basic Guide to Qualitative Data Analysis*, Routledge, 2016.

Garcia, Nichole M., Nancy López, and Verónica N. Vélez. "QuantCrit: Rectifying Quantitative Methods through Critical Race Theory." *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2018, pp. 149-157. doi: 10.1080/13613324.2017.1377675.

García de Müeller, Genevieve and Iris Ruiz. “Race, Silence, and Writing Program Administration: A Qualitative Study of US College Writing Programs,” *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2017, pp. 19-39. *EBSCOhost*,

search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsmzh&AN=2018287056&site=eds-live&scope=site. Accessed 12 Jan. 2020.

Gillborn, David, Paul Warmington, and Sean Demack. "QuantCrit: Education, Policy, 'Big Data' and Principles for a Critical Race Theory of Statistics." *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol 21, no. 2, pp. 158-179, DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2017.1377417. Accessed 21 Feb. 2024.

Gilyard, Keith. "The Rhetoric of Translingualism." *College English*, vol 78, no 3, Jan 2016, pp. 284-289. JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44075119. Accessed 18 July 2022.

Goffman, Alice. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. The U of Chicago P, 2014.

Gomes, Mathew. "Writing Assessment and Responsibility for Colonialism." *Writing Assessment, Social Justice, and the Advancement of Opportunity*, edited by Mya Poe, Asao B. Inoue, and Norbert Elliot, UP of Colorado, 2018, pp. 201-225.

Goodman, Whitney. *Toxic Positivity: Keeping It Real in a World Obsessed with Being Happy*. Penguin, 2022.

Grande, Sandy. "Refusing the University." *Toward What Justice? Describing Dreams of Justice in Education,* edited by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, Routledge, 2018, pp. 47-65.

Green, Jr., David F. "Expanding the Dialogue on Writing Assessment at HBCUs: Foundational Assessment Concepts and Legacies of Historically Black Colleges and Universities." *College English*, vol. 79, no. 2, 2016, pp. 152-173.

Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. "Nobody Mean More: Black Feminist Pedagogy and Solidarity." *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent,* edited by Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira, U of Minnesota P, 2014, pp. 237-260.

Hammond, J.W. "Toward a Social Justice Historiography for Writing Assessment." *Writing Assessment, Social Justice, and the Advancement of Opportunity*, edited by Mya Poe, Asao B. Inoue, and Norbert Elliot, UP of Colorado, 2018, pp. 41-70.

Herrington, Anne and Marcia Curtis. *Persons in Process: Four Stories of Writing and Personal Development in College*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2000.

Herrington, Anne and Sarah Stanley. “Criterion: Promoting the Standard.” *Race and Writing Assessment*, edited by Asao B. Inoue and Mya Poe, Peter Lang, 2012, pp. 47-61.

Hidalgo, Alexandra. "Family Archives and the Rhetoric of Loss." *Provocations: Reconstructing the Archive*, edited by Patrick W. Berry, Gail E. Hawisher, and Cynthia L. Selfe, Computers and Composition Digital Press, 2016, n.p.
ccdigitalpress.org/book/reconstructingthearchive/hidalgo.html

Hoang, Haivan. *Writing Against Racial Injury: The Politics of Asian American Student Rhetoric.* U of Pittsburgh P, 2015.

Hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom.* Routledge, 1994.

Horner, Bruce and Min-Zhan Lu. *Representing the Other: Basic Writers and the Teaching of Basic Writing.* National Council of Teachers of English, 1999.

Horner, Bruce, Min-Zhan Lu, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and John Trimbur. “Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach.” *College English*, vol. 73, no. 3, 2011, pp. 303-321. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25790477. Accessed 10 Jul. 2019.

Inoue, Asao B. *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future.* Parlor Press, 2015.

Inoue, Asao B. *Cripping Labor-Based Grading for More Equity in Literacy Courses.* UP of Colorado, 2023.

Inoue, Asao B. “Grading Contracts: Assessing Their Effectiveness on Different Racial Formations.” *Race and Writing Assessmen*t, edited by Isao B. Inoue and Mya Poe, Peter Lang, 2012, pp. 79-98.

Inoue, Asao B. “How Do We Language So People Stop Killing Each Other, Or What Do We Do About White Language Supremacy?” Conference on College Composition and Communication, 14 Mar. 2019, Pittsburgh, PA. http://tinyurl.com/y374x2r6. Accessed 17 Feb. 2020.

Inoue, Asao B. *Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom.* 2nd ed*,* UP of Colorado, 2022.

“Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).” *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES),* nces.ed.gov/ipeds/. Accessed 19 Feb. 2024.

Jimenez, Florianne. *Echoing + Resistant Imagining: Filipino Student Writing Under American Colonial Rule.* 2021. University of Massachusetts Amherst, PhD dissertation.

Jordan, June. "I Must Become a Menace to My Enemies." *The Essential June Jordan*, edited by Jan Heller Levi and Christoph Keller, Copper Canyon Press, 2021, pp. 14.

Jordan, June. "What Would I Do White?" *The Essential June Jordan*, edited by Jan Heller Levi and Christoph Keller, Copper Canyon Press, 2021, pp. 96.

Joyce, Abby and Grace Lee. "Students hold protest condemning police activity on campus," *Massachusetts Daily Collegian* [Amherst, MA], 13 Dec. 2023, dailycollegian.com/2023/12/students-hold-protest-condemning-police-activity-on-campus/#. Accessed 16 Dec. 2023.

Jung, Julie. "Systems Rhetoric: A Dynamic Coupling of Explanation and Description." *Enculturation*, 7 April, 2014, www.enculturation.net/systems-rhetoric. Accessed 2 Aug. 2022.

Kaba, Mariame. "Mariame Kaba: Everything Worthwhile is Done with Other People." Interview by Eve L. Ewing. *Adi Magazine*, Fall 2019, adimagazine.com/articles/mariame-kaba-everything-worthwhile-is-done-with-other-people/.

Kahn, Seth, William B. Lalicker, and Amy Lynch-Biniek, eds. *Contingency, Exploitation, and Solidarity: Labor and Action in English Composition*. UP of Colorado, 2017.

Kamberelis, George and Greg Dimitriadis. *Qualitative Inquiry: Approaches to Language and Literacy Research.* Teachers College Press, 2005.

Kannan, Vani, Ben Kuebrich, and Yanira Rodríguez. “Unmasking Corporate-Military Infrastructure: Four Theses.” *Community Literacy Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1, Fall 2016, pp. 76-93. *FIU Digital Commons*, doi:10.25148/clj.11.1.009251. Accessed 26 July 2022.

Kelley, Robin D.G., Jordie Davies and Neomi Rao. "On Abolition and Labor.” Against Cops and Bosses: An Abolition and Labor Workshop, GSU Mutual Aid Committee and Care Not Cops (CNC), 10 Apr. 2021, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL. Lecture.

Kelly-Riley, Diane and Carl Whithaus. "Introduction to a Special Issue on a Theory of Ethics for Writing Assessment." *Journal of Writing Assessment*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2016, n.p. journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=99. Accessed 6 Sept. 2019.

Ketai, Rachel Lewis. "Race, Remediation, and Readiness: Reassessing the 'Self' in Directed Self-Placement." *Race and Writing Assessment*, edited by Asao B. Inoue and Mya Poe, Peter Lang, 2012, pp. 141-154.

Kryger, Kathleen. *Challenging Neuronormativity: A Disability Studies Framework for Communal Justice in Writing Assessment.* 2023. The University of Arizona, PhD dissertation.

Kynard, Carmen. "Writing While Black: The Colour Line, Black Discourses and Assessment in the Institutionalization of Writing Instruction." *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2008, pp. 4-34. *ERIC*, eric-ed-gov.silk.library.umass.edu/?id=EJ832206. Accessed 24 Aug. 2019.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Asking a Different Question.* Teachers College Press, 2021.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. "Teaching in Dangerous Times: Culturally Relevant Approaches to Teacher Assessment." *Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 67, no. 3, 1998, pp. 255-267. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2668194.

Lamos, Steve. "Basic Writing, CUNY, and 'Mainstreaming': (De) Racialization Reconsidered." *Journal of Basic Writing*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2000, pp. 22-43. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43741063. Accessed 10 Jul. 2019.

Lee, Jerry Won. "Beyond Translingual Writing." *College English*, vol. 79, no. 2, 2016, pp. 174-195. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44805916. Accessed 12 July 2021.

López, Nancy, Christopher Erwin, Melissa Binder, and Mario Javier Chavez. "Making the Invisible Visible: Advancing Quantitative Methods in Higher Education Using Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality." *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 21, no 2, 2018, pp. 180-207. doi: 10.1080/13613324.2017.1375185.

Lu, Min-Zhan. "Redefining the Legacy of Mina Shaughnessy: A Critique of the Politics of Linguistic Innocence." *Journal of Basic Writing*, vol. 10, no., 1, 1991, pp. 26-40. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/43443556. Accessed 10 Jul. 2019.

Lyiscott, Jamila. "Your Pedagogy Might be More Aligned with Colonialism than You Realize." *Medium*, 31 May 2017, medium.com/@heinemann/your-pedagogy-might-be-more-aligned-with-colonialism-than-you-realize-1ae7ac6459ff. Accessed 23 Sept. 2022.

Malloy, Sean and Alexis Bennett. "Basic Writing and Resisting White Innocence." *Journal of Basic Writing*, vol. 41, no. 1-2, 2022, pp. 5-39.

“March to Gracie Mansion.” *CUNY Digital History Archive,* cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/6222. Accessed 7 Apr. 2021.

Matsuda, Paul Kei. “The Myth of Linguistic Homogeneity in US College Composition.” *College English*, vol. 68, no. 6, 2006, pp. 637-651. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25472180. Accessed 10 July 2019.

Matsuda, Paul Kei, Tanita Saenkhum, and Steven Accardi. "Writing Teachers’ Perceptions of the Presence and Needs of Second Language Writers: An Institutional Case Study." *Journal of Second Language Writing*, vol. 22, 2013, pp. 68-86. *Elsevier*: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2012.10.001. Accessed 2 Aug. 2022.

Messick, Samuel. “Test Validity and the Ethics of Assessment.” *American Psychologist*, vol. 35, no. 11, 1980, pp. 1012-1027. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1037/0003-066X.35.11.1012. Accessed 17 Feb. 2020.

Moss, Pamela A. “Can There Be Validity Without Reliability?” *Assessing Writing: A Critical Sourcebook*, edited by Brian Huot and Peggy O’Neill, Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2009, pp. 81-96.

"MSI Directory." *UCI Office of Inclusive Excellence*, www.inclusion.uci.edu/core-programs/minority-thriving-campus/msi-directory/. Accessed 10 Jan. 2024.

Mutnick, Deborah. “Confessions of an Assessment Fellow.” *Composition in the Age of Austerity*, edited by Nancy Welch and Tony Scott, Utah State University Press, 2016, pp. 35-50.

Mutnick, Deborah. *Writing in an Alien World: Basic Writing and the Struggle for Equality in Higher Education*. Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1996.

“National Census of Writing (NCW).” *National Census of Writing (NCW),* writingcensus.ucsd.edu/. Accessed 7 Jan. 2024.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States*. Routledge, 2015.

O'Neill, Peggy, Cindy Moore, and Brian Huot. *Guide to College Writing Assessment*. UP of Colorado, 2009

paperson, la. *A Third University is Possible*. U of Minnesota P, 2017.

Paris, Django. *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World.* Teachers College Press, 2017.

Pavia, Catherine. "Taking Up Faith: Methods for Studying Writing in Religious Contexts." *Written Communication*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2015, pp. 336-367. Sage Pub: DOI: 10.1177/0741088315601645. Accessed 14 May 2020.

Perin, Dolores and Jodi Patrick Holschuh. "Teaching Academically Underprepared Postsecondary Students." *Review of Research in Education*, vol. 43, 2019, pp. 363-393. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1217152&site=eds-live&scope=site. Accessed 12 Apr. 2020.

Perryman-Clark, Staci M. "Who We Are(n't) Assessing: Racializing Language and Writing Assessment in Writing Program Administration." *College English*, vol. 79, no. 2, 2016, pp. 206-211. *ProQuest*, silk.library.umass.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.silk.library.umass.edu/docview/1833264046?accountid=14572. Accessed 24 Aug. 2019.

Piepzna-Samarasinha, Leah Lakshmi. *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice.* Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018.

Poe, Mya. *Race, Representation, and Writing Assessment: Racial Stereotypes and the Construction of Identity in Writing Assessments*. 2006, University of Massachusetts Amherst, PhD dissertation, scholarworks-umass-edu.silk.library.umass.edu/dissertations/AAI3206201/. Accessed 24 Aug. 2019.

Poe, Mya, Asao B. Inoue, and Norbert Elliot, editors. *Writing Assessment, Social Justice, and the Advancement of Opportunity*. UP of Colorado, 2018.

Poe, Mya, Jessica Nastal, and Norbert Elliot. "An Admitted Student is a Qualified Student: A Roadmap for Writing Placement in the Two-Year College." *Journal of Writing Assessment*, vol.

12, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1-8. *eScholarship*, escholarship.org/uc/item/31c793kf. Accessed 21 Oct. 2023.

Poe, Mya, Norbert Elliot, John Aloysius Cogan Jr. and Tito G. Nurudeen Jr. "The Legal and the Local: Using Disparate Impact Analysis to Understand the Consequences of Writing Assessment." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 65, no. 4, 2014, pp. 588-611. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43490874. Accessed 26 Jan. 2020.

Prendergast, Catherine. "Race: The Absent Presence in Composition Studies." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 50, no.1, 1998, pp. 36-53. *JSTOR,* www.jstor.org/stable/358351. Accessed 11 Jan. 2020.

Ramamurthy, Rithika. "The Replacements." *The Baffler*, Jan. 5, 2022. thebaffler.com/latest/the-replacements-ramamurthy. Accessed 20 Jan .2024.

Richardson, Elaine. "Race, Class(es), Gender, and Age: The Making of Knowledge about Language Diversity." *Language Diversity in the Classroom: From Intention to Practice*, edited by Geneva Smitherman and Victor Villanueva, Southern Illinois UP, 2003, pp. 40-66.

Ritter, Kelly. *Before Shaughnessy: Basic Writing at Yale and Harvard: 1920-1960.* Southern Illinois University Press, 2009.

Rodríguez, Yanira. "Pedagogies of Refusal: What it Means to (Un)teach a Student Like Me." *Radical Teacher,* vol. 115, 2019, radicalteacher.library.pitt.edu/ojs/radicalteacher/article/view/672.

Rose, Mike. *Lives on the Boundary: A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America's Educationally Underprepared.* Penguin, 1989.

Rossi, Enzo and Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò. "What's New About Woke Racial Capitalism (and What Isn't): Wokewashing and the Limits of Representation." *Spectre Journal*, 18 Dec. 2020, spectrejournal.com/whats-new-about-woke-racial-capitalism-and-what-isnt/. Accessed 2 Apr. 2021.

Royer, Daniel and Roger Gilles. "Directed Self-Placement: An Attitude of Orientation." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 50, no. 1, 1998, pp. 54-70.

Royster, Jacqueline Jones and Rebecca Greenberg Taylor. “Constructing Teacher Identity in the Basic Writing Classroom.” *Journal of Basic Writing*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1997, pp. 27-49. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43444023. Accessed 10 Jul. 2019.

"Ruth Wilson Gilmore Makes the Case for Abolition." *Intercepted Podcast* from The Intercept, 10 June 2020, https://theintercept.com/2020/06/10/ruth-wilson-gilmore-makes-the-case-for-abolition/. Accessed 4 Sept. 2023.

Saeedi, Sina and Elaine Richardson. “A Black Lives Matter and Critical Race Theory-Informed Critique of Code-Switching Pedagogy.” *Race, Justice, and Activism in Literacy Instruction*, edited by Valerie Kinloch, Tanja Burkhard, and Carlotta Penn, Teachers College Press, 2020, pp. 147-161.

Saenkhum, Tanita. *Decisions, Agency, and Advising: Key Issues in the Placement of Multilingual Writers into First-Year Composition Courses.* Utah State UP, 2016.

Saldaña, Johnny. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. 2nd ed., Sage, 2013.

Sathy, Viji and Kelly A. Hogan. "How to Make Your Teaching More Inclusive." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2019, www.chronicle.com/article/how-to-make-your-teaching-more-inclusive/. Accessed 30 Jan. 2024.

Schwarz, Virginia M. *(De)Norming Classroom Merit: Grading Contracts as an Assessment Genre.* 2020. The University of Wisconsin-Madison, PhD dissertation.

Schwarz, Virginia, Allison Gross, Nick Fox, Blake Hausman, and Jessica Johnson. “The Struggles of Bringing Inoue's Labor-Based Grading Contracts to Community Colleges.” *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, 10 April 2021. Presentation.

Sharpe, Christina. “Black Life, Annotated.” *The New Inquiry,* 8 Aug. 2014, https://thenewinquiry/black-life-annotated/. Accessed 18 Feb. 2024.

Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being.* Duke UP, 2016.

Sharpe, Christina. "Lose Your Kin." *The New Inquiry*, 16 Nov., 2016, thenewinquiry.com/lose-your-kin/. Accessed 7 Jan. 2024.

Shaughnessy, Mina. *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*. Oxford UP, 1979.

Shipka, Jody. "To Preserve, Digitize, and Project: On the Process of Composing Other People's Lives." *Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture*, 10 Oct. 2012, https://www.enculturation.net/preserve-digitize-project.

Shor, Ira. "Our Apartheid: Writing Instruction and Inequality." *Journal of Basic Writing.* vol. 16, no. 1, 1997, pp. 91-104. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43444027. Accessed 10 Jul. 2019.

Smith, Anna Deavere. *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*. Anchor, 1994.

Smitherman, Geneva and Victor Villanueva, editors., *Language Diversity in the Classroom: From Intention to Practice.* Southern Illinois UP, 2003.

Soliday, Mary. *The Politics of Remediation: Institutional and Student Needs in Higher Education.* U of Pittsburgh P, 2002.

Spade, Dean. *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During this Crisis (and the Next)*. Verso, 2020.

Spade, Dean. "Trickle-Up Social Justice." *YouTube*, uploaded by Barnard Center for Research on Women, 7 May 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?v=0i1fREeZXPI.

spears, endawnis. Interview by the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities. *Federation of State Humanities Councils,* 31 July 2020, www.statehumanities.org/interview-with-endawnis-spears-on-land-acknowledgment-native-communities-and-the-role-of-the-humanities-today/. Accessed 5 Jan. 2024.

Stapleton-Corcoran, Erin. "Universal Design for Learning (UDL)." *University of Illinois Chicago Center for the Advancement of Teaching Excellence*, 12 Feb. 2022, www.teaching.uic.edu/resources/teaching-guides/inclusive-equity-minded-teaching-practices/universal-design-for-learning-udl/. Accessed 24 Jul. 2023.

Sternglass, Marilyn. *Time to Know Them: A Longitudinal Study of Writing and Learning at the College Level.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997.

Táíwò, Olúfẹ́mi O. "Identity Politics and Elite Capture." *Boston Review*, 7 May 2020, www.bostonreview.net/articles/olufemi-o-taiwo-identity-politics-and-elite-capture/. Accessed 18 Feb. 2024.

Teranishi, Robert T., Bach Mai Dolly Nguyen, Cynthia M. Alcantar, & Edward R. Curammeng, Eds. *Measuring Race: Why Disaggregating Data Matters for Addressing Educational Inequality*. Teachers College Press, 2020.

Thompson, Brian. "Jersey Mike's Subs Becomes Subject of Black Lives Matter Joke Meme." *NBC New York*, 2 July 2020, www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/jersey-mikes-subs-becomes-subject-of-black-lives-matter-joke-meme/2496142/. Accessed 3 Sept. 2023.

Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Introduction: Born Under the Rising Sign of Social Justice." *Toward What Justice? Describing Diverse Dreams of Justice in Education*, edited by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, Routledge, 2018, pp. 1-17.

Totenberg, Nina. "Supreme Court Guts Affirmative Action, Effectively Ending Race-Conscious Admissions." *NPR*, June 29, 2023. https://www.npr.org/2023/06/29/1181138066/affirmative-action-supreme-court-decision. Accessed 19 Feb. 2024.

"UMass Land Acknowledgement." *University of Massachusetts Amherst Office of Equity and Inclusion,* 2023, www.umass.edu/diversity/umass-land-acknowledgement. Accessed 4 Jan. 2024.

Villanueva, Victor. "Subversive Complicity and Basic Writing Across the Curriculum." *Journal of Basic Writing*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2013, pp. 97-110. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43443934. Accessed 10 Jul. 2019.

Viruru, Radhika and Ambyr Rios. "Needed Methodological Emancipation: Qualitative Coding and the Institutionalization of the Master's Voice." *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 27, no. 10, 2021, pp. 1146-1158.

Walcott, Rinaldo. "Against Social Justice and the Limits of Diversity, Or Black People and Freedom." *Toward What Justice? Describing Diverse Dreams of Justice in Education*, edited by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, Routledge, 2018, pp. 85-99.

Watson, Missy. "Engaging (the Politics of) Language Difference in the Writing Classroom: A Multipronged Translingual Approach." *Plurilingual Pedagogies for Multilingual Writing Classrooms*, Routledge, 2021, pp. 58-74.

Watson, Missy and Rachael Shapiro. “Clarifying the Multiple Dimensions of Monolingualism: Keeping Our Sights on Language Politics.” *Composition Forum*, vol. 38, 2018, compositionforum.com/issue/38/monolingualism.php. Accessed 13 Jul. 2019.

West-Puckett, Stephanie. “Making Classroom Writing Assessment More Visible, Equitable, and Portable through Digital Badging.” *College English*, vol. 79, no. 2, 2016, pp. 127–151. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2017870248&site=eds-live&scope=site. Accessed 12 Jan. 2020.

"What are MSIs?" *Rutgers Graduate School of Education Center for MSIs,* www.cmsi.gse.rutgers.edu/content/what-are-msis. Accessed Jan. 10, 2024.

Williamson, Michael M. “Validity of Automated Scoring: Prologue for a Continuing Discussion of Machine Scoring Student Writing.” *Assessing Writing: A Critical Sourcebook*, edited by Brian Huot and Peggy O’Neill, Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2009, pp. 435-455.

“Writing Assessment: A Position Statement.” CCCC Committee on Assessment. *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 46, No. 3, 1995. Pp. 430-437, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/358714. Accessed 24 Aug. 2019.

Zuberi, Tukufu. *Thicker than Blood: How Racial Statistics Lie.* U of Minnesota P, 2003.