THE BRAID OF WRITING ASSESSMENT, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF OPPORTUNITY: EIGHTEEN ASSERTIONS ON WRITING ASSESSMENT WITH COMMENTARY

Proposed by the following writing assessment researchers: William P. Banks, Michael Sterling Burns, Nicole I. Caswell, Randall Cream, Timothy R. Dougherty, Norbert Elliot, Mathew Gomes, J. W. Hammond, Keith L. Harms, Asao B. Inoue, Josh Lederman, Sean Molloy, Casie Moreland, Karen S. Nulton, Irvin Peckham, Mya Poe, Kelly J. Sassi, Christie Toth, and Nicole Warwick.

The present volume celebrates an important milestone in the history of Writing Studies: a unified call to action. In the field of writing assessment, the time has come to end the disciplinary isolation of writing assessment. In ending the isolation of writing assessment as mere technique and bureaucratic action, we end the isolation that has denied student agency over their educative processes in written language development.

In what has become a nightmare of unequal power relations, standing with our students is restorative. To secure this restoration and place students at the center of teaching and assessing writing, we turn to a new conception of writing assessment—a conceptualization that advances opportunity for every student.

As we noted in the introduction, authors for *Writing Assessment, Social Justice, and the Advancement of Opportunity* were invited to deliberate on a single question regarding the relationship of writing assessment to opportunity: *How can we ensure that writing assessment leads to the advancement of opportunity?*

In their answers, our colleagues addressed this question in terms of theorization, research methods, policy implications, and future directions for research.

What becomes clear in their contributions is that a body of knowledge now exists connecting the achievement of social justice through opportunities created by writing assessment. Concepts, activities, and beliefs include the following:

- Historical analysis of purportedly meritocratic systems associated with student advancement can be used to reveal structures of power that result in both group and individual disenfranchisement.
- Theory-building can exist to locate the achievement of justice and the advancement of opportunity at the conceptual center of writing instruction and writing assessment.
- Wide ranges of research methods can be used to ensure that unjust systems are identified, displaced, and replaced with opportunities to learn.
- Construct-informed outcomes can be used to displace soulless bureaucratization and foreground authentic student experience.
- Using evidence of fairness, validity, and reliability, classroom research can be justified to stand the center of intellectual inquiry in writing assessment scholarship.
- Rather than a bureaucratic answer to accountability, institutional research can be viewed as a way for colleagues to collaborate in multidisciplinary inquiry intended to create opportunity structures.
- Purchased and locally developed assessments can both be held to the same principled methods under which justice and opportunity are advanced.
- Policy can be developed with the deliberate and articulated aim of advancing justice and securing the achievement of individual opportunity.
- Rather than continue present efforts in the justification of summative testing, next generation programs of research can be imagined with the explicit intention of matching the educational experience to the individual student through formative assessment.

Based on our colleagues' responses, we derived 18 assertions for the future of socially just writing assessment. The assertions include directives on history, theory, methodology, outcomes, classroom and writing center research, institutional research, purchased tests, policies, and next generation research. We advance these assertions for the consideration of those involved in the development of written language practices: advisory boards, administration, teachers, parents, professional organizations, students, and the public. Each assertion is based on a single principle: Justice and opportunity are foundational requirements of writing assessment.

EIGHTEEN ASSERTIONS ON WRITING ASSESSMENT

ON HISTORY

1. **Histories of writing assessment are invaluable in the analysis of practices viewed as deterministically objective; therefore, these histories have**

profound impact on contemporary methods, policies, and consequences.

Writing assessment is embedded in material practice, and so are principles used to conduct assessment. With attention to contextualization, histories of writing assessment bring to light empirical practices that are themselves value laden and reveal the need for socially just educative processes.

2. **Social justice historiography reveals normative fixations and yields reflexive engagement.**

Historical analysis of educational communities and their assessment aims allow us to examine opportunities and inequalities. Defined as analytic methods dedicated to the examination of valued laden structures, social justice historiography extends critical reflection on the presence, assumptions, and characteristics of writing assessment practices.

On Theory

3. **Theories of writing assessment are invaluable in the formation of ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives that have profound impact on method, policy, and consequences.**

Writing assessment remains under-theorized and, as such, often follows theories that may not align with humanistic values or human rights. Writing assessment theories are needed that advance dual aims of justice and opportunity.

4. **New theories of writing assessment are needed that hold the achievement of justice and the advancement of opportunity as equal aims of assessment.**

These new theories will be useful as they help communities explore evidential categories; provide overarching referential frames; offer systems orientations; provide unifying functions; account for stakeholder perspectives; offer value for a range of assessment contexts; and hold assessment users to actionable ethical principles.

On Methodology

5. **Analytic techniques are best understood and used when they are linked to clearly articulated, ethical assessment questions.**

Aligning research techniques to aims allows for the ethical and appropriate selection of methodologies—including, but not limited to, archival re-

search, case studies, classical test theory, focus groups, ethnography, interviews, item response theory, historiography, narrative analysis, and surveys. —needed to investigate the intricacies involved in the socially just assessment of writing.

6. **Writing assessment researchers should be able to demonstrate proficiency in a range of methods.**

   While it is foolish to claim that writing assessment practitioners must have proficiency in quantitative and qualitative techniques as prerequisite to research engagement, it is equally foolish to believe that arguments can be made to administrators and policymakers without a basic knowledge of a range of methods and techniques. Important for the advancement of opportunity are methodologies that invite decolonial, anti-racist, feminist, and queer perspectives. Additionally, new research developments in corpus analytics, educational measurement, and psychometric theory offer important potential for answering research queries regarding social justice and writing assessment.

On Outcomes

7. **To advance justice and opportunity, the articulation of writing outcomes should be based on robust writing construct models that are informed by current sociocognitive and sociocultural research.**

   Cognitive, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and neurological domains of writing should be used to articulate construct models before outcomes are developed. With such models, the sociocognitive and sociocultural variables of writing will be understood as related to an expansive understanding construct representation of writing. Such an approach that ensures that we do not return to overly contracted views of writing that have resulted in unjust outcomes for too many students.

8. **Perspectives drawn from a variety of educational community members are required to develop writing outcomes.**

   Community involvement should elicit inclusive outcomes that prevent emergence of a dominant norm against which deficits are registered. The development of inclusive outcomes serves as a way to disrupt structural violence and foster socially just writing assessment practices that advance opportunity for all.

On Classroom and Writing Center Research

9. Direct work with students is the first step in writing assessment.

With direct observation of student work and student participation, we reach a deeper understanding of writing ability, including the ways that students' experiences shape their relation to writing. There is great value in context specific research undertaken in order to generate insight that benefits both teachers and students.

10. Classroom research is best accompanied by inferences that allow others to apply findings across settings.

A variety of reporting techniques—including institutional profile, sampling plan design, student characteristics, curricular details, methods and procedures, and study limits—allows writing case studies to have broad implications. Rejecting value dualism, writing assessment practitioners should develop techniques to identify resonances between case study and large-scale research. By valuing classroom research on writing assessment, we open additional avenues to the identification and creation of opportunity structures.

On Institutional Research

11. When institutional research on student writing is conducted, collection of information related to age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, linguistic identity, race, veteran status, and sexuality should be justified with an understanding of current ethical standards and institutional contexts for the gathering and securing of such information.

In collecting information on age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, linguistic identity, race, veteran status, and sexuality, we should seek Internal Review Board approval in order to avoid aporetic risk associated with flagging groups and individuals. While sub-group disaggregation is an important part of the justification of score use, the collection of such information should never become the default method of information gathering. Additionally, we challenge any superficial frameworks that avoid sustained conversations about the relationship between identity categories and hierarchical social structures. The collection and reporting of demographic data always has implications for social justice.

12. **Because all inferences about student academic ability can have profound consequences for the purposes of social justice, distinctions between high stakes and low stakes should not be accompanied by different standards for inferences about writing ability.**

    Too often the distinction between high-stakes and low-stakes assessment inadvertently leads to the assumption that inferior measurement is acceptable for low-stakes assessments. All forms of writing assessment must maintain equal integrity, and inferences drawn about student ability must be based on evidence derived from high quality assessments.

On Purchased Assessments

13. **Purchased assessments—those assessments developed by testing companies—hold the potential to provide valuable information about students, but their use should never constrain the interrogation of social justice queries in local contexts.**

    Assessment standardization can be a way to obtain fair, valid, and reliable evidence of student ability. As is the case with all writing assessment, benefits and costs of selecting a purchased product for an identified aim must be clearly identified in advance of assessment use, align with local goals, and allow for the transparent reporting of data from purchased test results.

14. **Unless the vendor provides evidence of fairness, validity, and reliability, purchased assessments should not be used to make decisions for or draw inferences about students.**

    Whether based on classical test theory or item response theory models, reporting requirements must be presented by the assessment developer before purchased tests are used; as well, assessments must not be used, without validation, for purposes other than that for which they have been developed. At a minimum, developers must provide information including descriptive and inferential evidence regarding impact on student sub-groups, a defined construct model, and topic and reader reliability correlations.

On Policies

15. **Institutional policies regarding writing assessment are best developed from clear pedagogical values and include details about their aims, design, proposed uses, and potential consequences.**

    Institutional policies must specify forcefully and precisely the principles of

action for all forms of writing assessment used at a specific institutional site. These principles must include communication of the evidence identified in Assertions 13 and 14 before assessment use. Institutional assessment policy must include resources dedicated to faculty development in assessment theory, methods, and uses, adhere to current standards for test taker rights and responsibilities, and assure cultural responsivity associated with justice and opportunity.

16. **Organizational policies are best developed using professional standards and empirical evidence.**

Both professional consensus and peer-reviewed empirical information are needed to create informed policies that can advance justice and opportunity in powerful and fluid ways. Policy statements should also be understood as historically situated documents that may not include, at the time they are drafted, the insights of shifting demographic groups. To that end, professional organizations should attend to the regular revision of professional standards to create space for others to join the discussion.

On Next Generation Research

17. **Efforts should be made to eliminate high-stakes tests of writing for purely summative purposes.**

Because of the complexities of the writing construct, only instructors observing students and collecting information about their abilities are in a position to make summative judgments on student work. Once authority is returned to classroom instructors, the reductive equation between assessment and testing may be eliminated and attention will be given to the value of formative evaluation informed by the experiences of diverse student populations. Without the meaningful involvement of teachers in writing assessment, the identification of opportunity structures will be ignored.

18. **Efforts should be made to strengthen writing assessment for formative purposes in order to develop innovative approaches to assessment informed by social justice perspectives.**

As high quality formative assessments are developed and integrated into instructional practices, new programs of research will begin in which actionable information related to justice is provided to students. This process will, in turn, support writing improvement across the entire educational spectrum. Programmatic in nature, new research programs will be devel-

oped to address principles of justice required to advance opportunity in an increasingly diverse U.S. educational environment.

COMMENTARY ON THE EIGHTEEN ASSERTIONS

In a closing gesture, our colleagues read *Writing Assessment, Social Justice, and the Advancement of Opportunity* in its entirety and commented on how the 18 assertions are woven throughout their own work in relation to the work of the other contributors. Reflections by Mya, Asao, and Norbert are provided in italics after each commentary. These reflections are accompanied by cross-references to the eighteen assertions.

ASSESSING SOCIAL JUSTICE ASSESSMENT

J. W. Hammond

Open a social justice tome by John Rawls (1999) or Iris Marion Young (2011), and you will find the words "test," "assessment," and "evaluation" scattered throughout. Fundamentally, social justice theories are theories of assessment. Theories of social justice advance *justice constructs*, and they specify procedures for assessing past, present, or future conditions in terms of those constructs. While this collection showcases several social justice-oriented theories, exchanges between social justice and writing assessment remain largely unidirectional, with justice-oriented theories informing writing assessment theory, history, and methodology. What can writing assessment say about—or to—social justice?

Justice constructs and logics require regular interrogation and refinement. Writing assessment history demonstrates this need: The many forms of colonialist violence have historically been authorized under the banner of "social justice" (Chapter 3). Through the classroom, justice abstractions assume material reality and force—their subtle assumptions concretized and limitations made legible. Writing assessment scholarship is well-poised to complicate these assumptions and move us beyond these limitations. Consider: Rawls' justice theory—which partly informs my work (Chapter 1)—assumes the existence of "natural assets and abilities" to be distributed, such as "intelligence, strength, and the like" (as cited in Poe & Inoue, 2016, p. 120). By showing "there is no IQ before IQ tests" (Inoue, 2015, p. 26), writing assessment scholarship problematizes the idea that "intelligence" is a natural asset/ability, enabling more critical and productive engagement with Rawls. To take the full measure of injustice, both branches of assessment—writing assessment and social justice—must more reciprocally and recursively redefine each other.

In terms of agency, social justice work entails methodological (re)appraisal and (re)calibration on (at least) two levels: the assumptions and impacts of our assessment methods, and our methods for researching and reporting those assumptions and impacts. I am heartened by the insistence throughout this collection that our methods must reflect our commitments to justice. This insistence extends to validation work: Collection contributors (re)define validity and validation relative to social justice aims (Chapter 4, Chapter 7, and Chapter 11)—an important methodological predicate to collecting and interpreting validity evidence.

Moving forward, we will need to continue interrogating where and how our research methods comport with, or depart from, our social justice commitments. This work is especially important where our most promising social justice methodologies, such as disparate impact analysis, are concerned. Reliant on the collection and comparison of subgroup data, disparate impact analysis invites complementary investigation of how relevant subgroup classifications are defined and made (and by whom), as well as careful consideration of how these classifications intersectionally overlap and interanimate (Chapter 11; Poe & Cogan, 2016, §4.0).

While this volume discusses policies and standards (hereafter, "policies") intended to coordinate disciplinary/professional communities (e.g., the 2014 *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* authored by the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education), its most striking engagements are with policies implemented at classroom, program, and institution levels. For instance, collection contributors make clear that placement policies are vitally important sites of social justice inquiry (Chapter 4 and Chapter 6). This collection reminds us that policies are developed and enacted at multiple levels; even well-known, large-scale policy documents take on different meanings and effects when introduced into different education ecologies. Our social justice policy work, therefore, must critically engage with questions of policy interpretation, adoption, adaptation, or rejection by particular institutional actors.

Policies regarding information access also warrant sustained attention. Casie Moreland (Chapter 5) suggests transparency is a justice issue; similarly, it is worth critically considering whether and how our scholarship on writing assessment—even when justice-oriented—is inaccessible to stakeholders unable to reach beyond the paywalls cordoning off our writings. Open-access publishing (e.g., WAC Clearinghouse; *Journal of Writing Assessment*) provides one possibility among many for publicizing our work, but the question remains worth asking: Where our organizations and journals are concerned, what policies toward access do we embrace, and how do these policies affect who is able to engage with and respond to our work?

In terms of future research weaving writing assessment, social justice, and advancement of opportunity, Mya Poe and Asao B. Inoue (2016) observe that, "Many of the issues that create unfairness and unequal opportunities are not completely writing assessment issues. . . . If writing assessment as social justice is to be a reality, it must be more than a project about how to judge students' writing, more than just about *our* classrooms and programs" (p. 125, emphasis in original). Maintaining the spirit of this claim, we might instead say that, to date, we have defined "writing assessment issues" too narrowly: Social justice assessment work requires expanding the boundaries of what we consider assessment ecologies and what we count as writing assessment issues.

Boundary resetting of this kind is already underway in this collection, with chapters recommending that our social justice assessment work encompass both classroom and institution level efforts (Chapter 8), and articulating classroom or program level (in)justice to broader social ecologies and histories (Chapter 3 and Chapter 5). The future of writing assessment research should continue in this direction: by extending greater focus to how writing is assessed outside of formal education spaces; by examining how extra-educational policies affect, and are affected by, the assessment of writing in formal education spaces; and by directing attention to how social subgroups, language use, education, and writing are represented in popular and political cultures. All are writing assessment issues: Our assessments inform, and are informed by, the broader ecologies in which they emerge.

> *In asking "What can writing assessment say about—or to—social justice?" Hammond shifts the focus from applying social justice theory to writing assessment to using writing assessment to enrich social justice theory. His challenge reminds us that justice itself is in need of repeated re-interrogation and that through next-generation research the construct of justice itself might be expanded. Moving to methodological considerations in expanding justice and writing assessment, Hammond points to consequence and transformation—what impacts are our assessment having and how can we resist reductionism in reporting our findings? To answer those questions through next generation research, Hammonds encourages us to look beyond academic contexts in which writing assessment occurs to public spaces where evaluation is taken up. More importantly, he encourages us to look at the connection between public and academic spaces. As he states, the future of writing assessment should include "examining how extra-educational policies affect, and are affected by, the assessment of writing in*

formal education spaces; and by directing attention to how social subgroups, language use, education, and writing are represented in popular and political cultures."

Assertions drawn from Hammond's contribution:

- ***History: Assertion 1**. Histories of writing assessment are invaluable in the analysis of practices viewed as deterministically objective; therefore, these histories have profound impact on contemporary methods, policies, and consequences.*
- ***Theory: Assertion 4**. New theories of writing assessment are needed that hold the achievement of justice and the advancement of opportunity as equal aims of assessment.*
- ***Methodology: Assertion 5.** Analytic techniques are best understood and used when they are linked to clearly articulated, ethical assessment questions.*
- ***Next generation research**: Assertion 18. Efforts should be made to strengthen writing assessment for formative purposes in order to develop innovative approaches to assessment informed by social justice perspectives.*

RESISTING MYOPIA

Sean Molloy

I find myself often tempted to avert my eyes from the complex realities, painful choices, and daunting struggles that constrain the lives of many of my students in this deeply unjust world. I also resist examining my own interests, motives and biases—as well as those of the well-meaning but often unjust systems in which I work. Myopia is always more comforting and convenient. It makes me more collegial and less angry; it urges me to mind my own business; it might help me get tenure or promotion.

But one of the reasons that I deeply admire the founders of the SEEK desegregation and social justice program at City College in the 1960s is that they had the commitment, courage, and clarity to openly and directly challenge and empower themselves, their colleagues and their systems to resist myopic misconceptions about students, teachers, their college systems, and the unjust world all around them. By extension, what excites me most about this collection is how the theories, stories, and actual practices we share here combine to collectively

challenge and empower us all to resist our myopias by consciously centering our thinking, advocacy, practices, and research on the complex and robust goal of social justice. Among the many useful theories here for me, Kelly J. Sassi (Chapter 10) synthesizes the ideas of several theorists, especially Christine Sleeter (2014), to draw a detailed definition of culturally relevant pedagogy as a framework for social justice teaching. In addition, Josh Lederman and Nicole Warwick (Chapter 7) propose a powerful redefinition of the consequential harms caused by assessment systems as forms of "structural violence," which they argue deserve more central consideration within validity models.

The varying methods here enable us to tell stories that shed light from different angles. J. W. Hammond (Chapter 1) and Keith L. Harms (Chapter 3) use century-old articles and reports to trace the failure of sincere and well-meaning American educators to overcome their shared "progressive racism." These myopias led educators to embrace deeply harmful monolingual and error-centric writing pedagogies and systems. Hammond and Harms both argue (as I do in Chapter 2) for the value of historical work within writing assessment research as these past successes and failures uncover the troubled roots of our own, often similar, challenges today. In Chapter 5, Casie Moreland tells a different kind of story as she recounts the challenges she faced as an outside researcher seeking to analyze a large public Arizona community college system's dual enrollment program. Moreland's frustrating and fruitless efforts serve as a reminder that sometimes only inside researchers (especially WPAs and WCDs) may be able to force unjust practices into plain view by assembling and reporting clear evidence. But Sassi also shares her story as an outside researcher/teacher who was invited into Standing Rock Reservation to facilitate the systemic change sought by a group of college teachers who wanted to see their students and their teaching more clearly than COMPASS® test scores would allow.

Academic myopias can be deeply entrenched and persistent. In Christie Toth's thorough study of the development of Directed Self-Placement (DSP) theory and practices at two-year colleges in Chapter 4 (Royer & Gilles, 2003), she observes that DSP has been successfully adopted at several colleges in ways that have improved student success rates and empowered student agency (Chapter 4). Yet, Toth also notes that up to 99% of two-year colleges have failed to implement DSP. In close conversation with both Harms and Toth, Gomes maps and critiques a writing placement system used by a doctoral university to place students into different tracks of FYW courses based on their SAT multiple-choice question test scores—a system which he finds unfairly targets international, multilingual students (Chapter 6).

Again and again, I find that the most powerful tool for dispelling my myopias are conversations with students. I hope that we will find ways to include

students' voices more often in future assessment models, policy debates and research. Nicole I. Caswell and William P. Banks (Chapter 11) observe that, despite past calls for research that focuses on student voices, "we still have a limited knowledge of how students experience classroom and programmatic assessment." They share the key insights they gained in focus groups with five LGBTQ students at East Carolina University. Karen S. Nulton and Irvin Peckham (Chapter 9) describe their impressive writing program shift at Drexel University toward assessing both labor and students' affect/attitudes, all in order to prioritize "the pleasure of writing" as a core goal. But I am equally impressed that Nulton and Peckham have centered their programmatic assessment on a series of student surveys that they used to create an ongoing conversation among students, teachers and administrators about the effectiveness of writing instruction. In a similar vein, Michael Sterling Burns, Randall Cream, and Timothy R. Dougherty warn that excluding "students as meaningful actors in the assessment of their own learning, . . . unintentionally [creates] mechanisms of passivity and disengagement" (Chapter 8).

I agree with my colleagues that it is essential to engage with and hear students' voices within our teaching and assessment work so that we can see more clearly how to reshape our systems, theories, arguments and practices to better serve students and to advance social justice.

> *Molloy uses the metaphor of myopia—nearsightedness—as a counterpoint to social justice's expansive potential. Although it is often comforting as an educator to divert our gaze from oppression, history provides a lesson in the importance of confronting pain. Through historiography, such as Molloy's research on the origins of the SEEK program, we can "uncover the troubled roots of our own, often similar, challenges today" and resist the myopia that results in harmful error-centric and monolingual practices. On a personal note, Molloy says that one way educators can resist myopia is through student voices; by listening to students, "we can see more clearly how to reshape our systems, theories, arguments and practices to better serve students and to advance social justice."*

Assertions drawn from Molloy's contribution:

- ***History: Assertion 2.*** *Social justice historiography reveals normative fixations and yields reflexive engagement.*
- ***Classroom and writing cetner research: Assertion 9.*** *Direct work with students is the first step in writing assessment.*

- ***Next generation research***: ***Assertion 18***. *Efforts should be made to strengthen writing assessment for formative purposes in order to develop innovative approaches to assessment informed by social justice perspectives.*

Border Dwelling, Assessment, and Language Policy

Keith L. Harms

During the research for my chapter, I started to wonder about the ubiquity of the "border" metaphor in postcolonial scholarship. Specifically, I wondered about the applicability of the metaphor to those postcolonial spaces like the Philippines whose borders are oceanic, whose hybrid spaces are centralized major cities. I wonder if the ubiquity of the metaphor speaks to a limited imagination about where we look for postcolonial spaces. I do not know that it does, but I do wonder. When I think about this metaphor relative to this collection, I think of Ellen Cushman's (2016) "border dwelling," which appears in Gomes' Chapter 6 as a reminder of the violent colonial history of the land on which our colleges and universities stand. Given the legacy of overseas U.S. colonialism and role of both composition and writing assessment in that legacy, it is appropriate that Gomes further uses this metaphor to raise questions about the assumptions that we bring to assessing the writing of international students, especially with regard to language. Control of language and space are always key to the maintenance of colonial hegemony, and writing assessment functions as a technology for the control of both.

As the contributions by Gomes, Christie Toth (Chapter 4) and Casie Moreland (Chapter 5) illustrate, assessment determines who enters the spaces of our classrooms, under what circumstances, and in what capacity they can participate. Assessment regulates the participation itself by reifying the value systems that delegitimize literacy practices arbitrarily deemed problematic. As Josh Lederman and Nicole Warwick remind us in Chapter 7, it also regulates the conditions under which students leave those spaces. Within assessment contexts, language is the semiotic resource that writing assessment restricts in order to control access to these spaces. If border dwelling helps us to value those marginal uses of language that assessment delegitimizes, we have to pay more direct attention to language. In doing so, we have to follow Paul Kei Matsuda's (2014) call to learn more about language difference by looking "both inside and outside the field" of Writing Studies (p. 483). Note the wording: both inside and outside. My understanding of border dwelling is that we situate ourselves in a space that honors both simultaneously.

We should think about border dwelling methodologically, as well. This collection makes praise-worthy use of methods familiar to Writing Studies such as archival research, grounded theory, and critique, among others. Because so many of these chapters are interested in telling the stories of people in specific locations, I read this work as extending Chris Gallagher's (2011) reframing of assessment as relations between actors in locations. Notably, Gomes in Chapter 6, as well as Michael Sterling Burns, Randall Cream, and Timothy R. Dougherty in Chapter 8, look outside our disciplinary boundaries to find less familiar methods for answering questions about the relationship between writing assessment and racial and colonial justice. Looking forward, we should extend our boundaries. If we want to take language seriously, and if we take efforts to decolonize assessment as an important contribution of social justice research, perhaps this new direction might mean looking to methods from language policy, applied linguistics, and sociolinguistics. Many in these fields have already produced research on the problematics of monolingual writing assessments. We would do well to look to them for guidance while maintaining our drive for more socially just assessments. Meanwhile, we should keep in mind Cushman's guidance to "delink" research from a history of imperialism by rethinking "research as story-telling, teaching as relationships and English as Englishes" (2016, para. 4).

In fact, a CCCC language policy that appears in this collection has already done just that. The resolution Students' Right to their Own Language (1974) drew heavily on linguistic research and the current version includes an annotated bibliography added in 2006 guiding us toward much of this research. The annotated bibliography can serve as one useful starting point for us, I think, but it is just that: a starting point. We can also look to the CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing (2009) for guidance. Although the statement relies heavily on Writing Assessment: A Position Statement (2014) when it addresses assessment directly, our community can serve as a place to begin thinking about our positionality as writing assessment researchers and practitioners. Statements such as Students' Right to their Own Language and the Statement on Second Language Writing have the power of a professional organization, a way of sanctioning border dwelling. As is the case with all policies and position statements authored by committees and meant to reach as broad an audience as possible, such statements should serve as starting points.

Whatever my reservations about the universal applicability of the border metaphor to all postcolonial spaces, I nonetheless think that Cushman's border dwelling should serve as a basis for continued attempts to decolonize assessment. By dwelling in the borders, we should additionally take care to look at our own practices, lest we find ourselves repeating patterns of thought similar to those of the progressive racists J. W. Hammond discusses in Chapter 1. Border dwelling

needs to be a conscious act, one that includes constant interrogation of our own practices. For example, I think my own institutional colleagues Dwight Atkinson and Christine Tardy, along with their co-authors (2015), might take issue with my own casual mention of translingualism despite the fact that the educational setting I researched was, in fact, an L2 (second language writing) setting. Is my uncritical mention similar to uncritical progressive era acceptance of a colonialist ideal of "progress?" I don't know yet, but it is worth asking. As I continue attempts to situate myself in the borders of language and writing assessment, it is a question I will carry with me.

> *In his forum contribution and chapter, Harms interrogates the limitations of the postcolonial theory of "borders." He argues that postcolonial spaces such as the Philippines, "whose borders are oceanic, whose hybrid spaces are centralized major cities," challenge border theories. Instead, Harms encourages a more expansive search for postcolonial spaces; his historiographical work on early twentieth century educational policy—and the implication of assessment in that policy work—in the Philippines illustrate show such work might be done. Harms says that "by dwelling in the borders, we [can] take care to look at our own practices, lest we find ourselves repeating patterns of thought similar to those of the progressive racists." Border dwelling, thus, is an orientation toward research that relies on interdisciplinary theories and methods for the purposes of socially just next generation research.*

> *Assertions drawn from Harms' contribution:*

> - *__History: Assertion 1.__ Histories of writing assessment are invaluable in the analysis of practices viewed as deterministically objective; therefore, these histories have profound impact on contemporary methods, policies, and consequences.*
> - *__History: Assertion 2.__ Social justice historiography reveals normative fixations and yields reflexive engagement.*
> - *__Methodology: Assertion 6__. Writing assessment researchers should be able to demonstrate proficiency in a range of methods.*
> - *__Policy: Assertion 15.__ Institutional policies regarding writing assessment are best developed from clear pedagogical value and include details about their aims, design, proposed uses, and potential consequences.*

Toward Writing Assessment that Accounts for (and to) Community Colleges

Christie Toth

The chapters in this volume draw on theoretical perspectives from multiple disciplines: theories of justice from political philosophy; critical race theory originating in legal studies; critical and culturally relevant/sustaining pedagogies; postcolonial, decolonial, and queer theory; and the recent turn toward fairness and social justice in writing assessment. Each of these bodies of theory offers insight into issues of equity in writing assessment and its possibilities for enacting social change. Taken together, these chapters confirm that the field has moved beyond narrow conceptions of validity—a term that itself has been retheorized many times over—in its efforts to account for the social consequences of writing assessment (Poe & Inoue, 2016).

These chapters also signal our field's receptivity to critical examinations of writing assessment. Perhaps because of our roots in the humanities, we have long embraced a healthy skepticism about the provenance and applications of educational measurement and suspicions about the interests it serves (Yancey, 1999). Several chapters in this volume, such as those by J. W. Hammond (Chapter 1), Keith L. Harms (Chapter 3), Mathew Gomes (Chapter 6), and Josh Lederman and Nicole Warwick (Chapter 7), demonstrate the enduring importance of ideological critiques of writing assessment, past and present. However, I am also heartened that many chapters—such as those by Kelly J. Sassi (Chapter 10), Karen S. Nulton and Irvin Peckham (Chapter 9), Nicole I. Caswell and William P. Banks (Chapter 11)—draw on a range of theoretical perspectives to imagine writing assessments that actively further social justice goals. Because writing assessment shapes (and, potentially, reshapes) institutional structures (Inoue, 2015), it offers promising possibilities for translating critical theories into concrete social change. Speaking from my own scholarly and political commitments, I believe our efforts to theorize and enact writing assessment for social justice must account for—and be accountable to—the distinctive institutional contexts of open-admissions community colleges.

The chapters in this volume demonstrate that conversations about writing assessment and social justice can and should be informed by a diverse range of methodological approaches. Gomes, Lederman, and Warwick, with Caswell and Banks, offer valuable explorations of how writing assessment might benefit from engagement with additional critical theories (see also Alexander, 2016; Cushman, 2016; Inoue, 2009b; Inoue & Poe, 2012). Hammond, Harms, and

Sean Molloy turn such critical lenses toward the archive: Their historical/historiographical investigations show us the perils and possibilities of where we have been, informing our imaginings of more socially just assessment futures (see also Elliot, 2005; Yancey, 1999). Likewise, the studies presented by Casie Moreland; Nulton and Peckham; Sassi; and Burns, Cream, and Dougherty illustrate how empirical methods can provide an evidentiary basis for pursuing more socially just writing courses, programs, and campuses (see also Inoue, 2009a; Poe et al., 2014).

Particularly promising, in my view, are methodological approaches such as those articulated by Sassi—as well as by Nulton and Peckham, Caswell and Banks, and Burns, Cream, and Dougherty—all of whom embrace an ethic of dialogue and reciprocity in assessment. Such methods create new opportunities for us to assess writing with our students, with non-tenure-track colleagues, and with faculty across institution types and sectors. As a university-based scholar, I strive to collaborate with two-year college faculty and students as co-researchers, and I know how easy it is to misstep or fall short in these efforts, thereby undermining the very social justice goals we aim to advance. As the program of research described in this volume continues, I hope the field will continue to develop collaborative methodologies—both for conducting local assessments and for producing writing assessment scholarship—that challenge the potentially unjust power dynamics of conventional research.

Several of the chapters in this collection have implications for writing assessment policy that advances social justice. Caswell and Banks, for example, make a compelling argument for implementing data collection policies regarding students' LGBTQ identities in order to better understand how assessment practices impact their learning. Gomes' discussion of linguistic imperialism in writing placement suggests that the discipline might articulate policies to guide more just placement for international students. Likewise, the challenges Moreland encountered while attempting to conduct a disparate impact analysis of dual enrollment eligibility testing demonstrates the need for state and/or federal policies requiring that such data be made public. Taken together, these studies suggest that we must work to develop theoretically coherent assessment policies at institutional, disciplinary, and governmental levels.

However, in community college contexts, Writing Studies scholarship often has little direct impact on the policies that shape writing assessment. The current placement reform movement, for example, is being driven primarily by higher education research that does not always share our field's understanding of the complex relationships between language ideology, literacy assessment, and structures of social inequality. The Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) has attempted to influence these policies through its re-

cent "White Paper on Writing Placement Reform," which asserts that all such reforms should be: "grounded in disciplinary knowledge," "developed by local faculty who are supported professionally," "sensitive to effects on diverse student populations," "assessed and validated locally," and "integrated into campus-wide efforts to improve student success" (Klausman et al., 2016, pp. 150-151). Moving from the rhetoric of position statements to on–the–ground change requires political capital and professional status. University-based writing assessment scholars might consider how we can be allies to two-year college colleagues, both locally and nationally, in their efforts to implement more socially just assessment policies.

Two-year colleges have long been underrepresented in writing assessment research (see also Hassel & Giordano, 2013; Morris, Greve, Knowles, & Huot, 2015). This oversight is a loss for our field's knowledge-making: Molloy's chapter demonstrates that open admissions institutions have much to teach the field about writing assessment. On the other hand, community colleges' relative invisibility in our scholarship does a profound disservice to the diverse students these institutions serve. As Moreland's chapter shows, we often know little about how community college writing assessment may be reproducing structures of social inequality (see also Naynaha, 2016), or, for that matter, how assessment practices at four-year institutions may differentially impact transfer students (Alexander, 2016; Gere et al., 2017). Informed by the array of critical perspectives in this volume, there is a pressing need for additional research that supports writing assessment as social justice in community colleges.

Nevertheless, it is not enough to simply shift the gaze of disciplinary knowledge-making to these settings. If we are to produce scholarship that is relevant and actionable for two-year college colleagues, we must attend to their distinctive rhetorical contexts (Toth & Sullivan, 2016). Some community college faculty have little background in writing assessment research, and, on first encounter, the specialized discourses of this subfield can be daunting (Klausman et al., 2016). Further, community college faculty often have limited professional authority over assessment at their institutions, and Writing Studies scholarship sometimes has little persuasive power with colleagues and administrators (Toth, Griffiths, & Thirolf, 2013; Toth & Sullivan, 2016). If future writing assessment scholarship is to have a meaningful impact at community colleges, we must strive to make it accessible to two-year college colleagues and engage the higher education research driving reform movements. Such efforts are, I argue, essential to writing assessment as social justice: Failing to account for these institutional contexts in our research is failing to be accountable to the racially, ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse students who attend community colleges.

Toth's work speaks back to a number of the ways our assumptions about writing assessment research has not accounted for community college perspectives. In resisting the top-down flow of research and looking to collaborative, accessible approaches to assessment, Toth looks for assessment methods that have a local social justice impact. Toth also observes how the link between practice and policy is often broken at community colleges because of conflicting epistemological stances between higher education researchers and writing researchers at community colleges. She urges university-based researchers to become "allies to two-year college colleagues, both locally and nationally, in their efforts to implement more socially just assessment policies;" otherwise, we risk "undermining the very social justice goals we aim to advance."

Assertions drawn from Toth's contribution:

- ***Methodology: Assertion 5.*** *Analytic techniques are best understood and used when they are linked to clearly articulated, ethical assessment questions.*
- ***Institutional research: Assertion 11.*** *When institutional research on student writing is conducted, collection of information related to age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, linguistic identity, race, veteran status, and sexuality should be justified with an understanding of current, ethical standards and institutional contexts for the gathering and securing of such information.*
- ***Policy: Assertion 15.*** *Institutional policies regarding writing assessment are best developed from clear pedagogical value and include details about their aims, design, proposed uses, and potential consequences.*
- ***Next generation research: Assertion 18.*** *Efforts should be made to strengthen writing assessment for formative purposes in order to develop innovative approaches to assessment informed by social justice perspectives.*

REORIENTING WRITING ASSESSMENT AND RESEARCH AS SOCIAL JUSTICE

Casie Moreland

In Chapter 1 of this collection, J. W. Hammond explains that to conduct a social justice historiography, the methods must be "calibrated to identifying justice or

injustice." The chosen methods used for any investigation are based on theories, which almost always necessitate calibration. The theories used in this collection are used to evaluate the social justice aspects of multiple facets of assessment. Throughout the collection, it is apparent that many of the theories used, such as Delgado and Stefancic's critical race theory (2001), Carolyn Miller's genre theory (1984), Samuel Messick's (1989) and Michael T. Kane's (2013) validity theory, and others required a type of calibration.

Calibration is especially necessary when seeking to understand the social justice of an assessment practice. The reason for this, I believe, is apparent in each chapter as the authors (including myself) looked locally and globally at how assessment practices impact individuals—actual living beings that are impacted in very realistic ways by assessment practices. In Chapter 11, Nicole I. Caswell and William P. Banks discuss at length the importance of building around theory, letting lived experience, rather than theory lead their work. Social justice work requires a flexibility in theory and methods that accounts for each unique individual influenced by an assessment practice. This collection has a variety of examples of how theories can be calibrated to account for how assessment practices are influencing unique individuals in a variety of settings and on various local and global scales.

Just as the theories used in this collection required calibration, so too did the research methods. In this collection, contributors use a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methods that include, but are not limited to, data collection, interviews, surveys, archival research, and historiography. In many chapters in the collection, authors express how their approaches were dependent on their research site, and in many instances the methods/models/designs for their focused research changed throughout the process based on the environments and/or situations. In Chapter 9, Karen S. Nulton and Irvin Peckham express how their "research design is far from polished" as they explain: "We are learning, much as one writes, as we go along." Just as there is not one assessment practice that is *always* socially just, there is not one research methodology that is best suited for determining how assessment genres are socially just. This collection offers examples of unique approaches to research methods for determining the social justice of different genres of assessment practices.

The policies that influence assessment are reflective of the evolution and current state of assessment. Multiple chapters in this collection offer examples of how policies are constantly in need of development, especially when policy is needed to assure socially just practices—and even when previous developments have been beneficial in advancing ideas associated with assessment. The addition of fairness to the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and Na-

tional Council on Measurement in Education, 2014) is an example of a how an advancement can take place. That advancement may influence policy, but the development still requires more inquiry as is detailed by Sean Molloy, Chapter 3 (see also Elliot, 2015; Kelly-Riley, Elliot, & Rudniy, 2017).

In multiple chapters within this collection, the authors show how the fairness of a policy and subsequent assessment practice is inconclusive without visible data. As I explain in my Chapter 5, without access regarding the placement practices that determine which students place into dual enrollment writing courses, the policies for enrollment are suspect. In Chapter 4 of this collection, Christie Toth explains how there is not clear data that supports Directed Self-Placement (DSP) policies (Royer & Gilles, 2003). In Chapter 6, Mathew Gomes describes how there was no immediate data to support the placement of international students in writing courses. And in Chapter 11, Nicole I. Caswell and William P. Banks narrate how policies at their institution did not allow the collection of demographic data related to gender and sexual identity to understand how and if assessment projects "attend to LGBTQ writers." For a policy to be considered socially just and fair, as suggested by the 2014 *Standards*, there must be a level of accountability on behalf of program directors and the institution to keep a variety of disaggregated data that visibly supports policies in place (or that develop as a result of research in the future).

As the chapters in this collection have shown, there are a variety of ways that the ways student writing is assessed in multiple arenas requires individual inquiry in conjunction to understanding the larger implications of these assessment genres. Future research will require inquiry and investigation in local and more broadly defined settings. Looking specifically at local situations is helpful, but this restricted gaze may not work to produce the same outcomes in multiple different locales. Similarly, looking at detached institutions' assessment practices can only advance social justice in as far as the institution's reach.

Future social justice research therefore requires a look at local assessment practices in the contexts in which they reside—from all perspectives. The research should move programs and institutions to account for the fairness of an assessment practice prior to the implementation of a said practice. The fairness and justice of any practice should be a foundational requirement of any assessment practice that is used in writing programs, classrooms, and beyond.

> Moreland writes that "Social justice work requires a flexibility in theory and methods that accounts for each unique individual influenced by an assessment practice." As a result, researchers working from a social justice perspective need to be familiar with a range of methods so as to account for local contexts. Moreland also points to

*policy, reminding us that theory and method need action. She puts
institutional policy in relation to writing assessment research, argu-
ing that program directors and institutions must be held account-
able in supporting policies that resonate within particular contexts
and in the careful reporting of data by subgroup.*

Assertions drawn from Morelands' contribution:

- ***Methodology: Assertion 5:*** *Analytic techniques are best un-
  derstood and used when they are linked to clearly articulated,
  ethical assessment questions.*
- ***Methodology: Assertion 6****. Writing assessment research-
  ers should be able to demonstrate proficiency in a range of
  methods.*
- ***Institutional research: Assertion 11****. When institutional
  research on student writing is conducted, collection of infor-
  mation related to age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, lin-
  guistic identity, race, veteran status, and sexuality should be
  justified with an understanding of current, ethical standards
  for the gathering and securing of such information.*
- ***Institutional research****: **Assertion 12.** Because all infer-
  ences about student academic ability can have profound
  consequences for the purposes of social justice, distinctions be-
  tween high stakes and low stakes should not be accompanied
  by different standards for inferences about writing ability.*

QUESTIONS TOWARD INTERSECTIONAL INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE AND CHANGE

Mathew Gomes

The volume includes a wide range of theoretical influences, including critical
race theory, queer theory, decolonial and postcolonial theory, and validity the-
ory. A reading of the volume as a whole suggests that many authors, includ-
ing myself, believe that injustice plays out along intersecting axes of structural
oppression. Simultaneously, these axes prove fruitful for mounting productive
projects, such as the assignment Michael Sterling Burns, Randall Cream, and
Timothy R. Dougherty describe (Chapter 8). One theme that stands out to me
is the importance of both documenting and intervening in particularized expres-
sions of oppression, as well as recognizing the potentiality for both intersectional

oppressions and opportunities. This echoes the call both Poe and Cogan (2016) and Elliot (2016) have issued for attention to intersectionality in disparate impact analyses and examinations of fairness. To that end, there appear to be opportunities to develop theories of socially just writing assessment with further attention to issues raised in disability studies. To what extent are we measuring the fairness of our writing constructs for neuro-diverse student populations? As Elliot (2016) suggests, this may be especially important given documented associations of poverty with health conditions affecting cognitive abilities (Hotez et al., 2014). Along the same lines, are programmatic consequences equitable and just for students with varying physical abilities?

Authors' contributions to this volume include an impressive array of methods for conducting primary research, including archival methods (Hammond, Chapter 1; Molloy, Chapter 2; Harms, Chapter 3), interviews and focus groups (Toth, Chapter 4; Caswell & Banks, Chapter 11), theory building (Gomes, Chapter 6; Lederman & Warwick, Chapter 7), surveys (Gomes, Chapter 6; Nulton & Peckham, Chapter 9); lesson study (Burns, Cream, & Dougherty, Chapter 8), and narrative methods (Moreland, Chapter 5). All of these methods are appropriate forms of evidence for capturing the broad ranges of effects a writing program might have upon differently situated peoples and environments.

As I read other contributors' chapters, however, I began to wonder if our work might be more impactful if more of us conscientiously adopted replicable, aggregable, and data-driven (RAD) approaches to social justice work. RAD approaches, which are defined as "inquiry that is explicitly enough systematized in sampling, execution, and analysis to be replicated; exactly enough circumscribed to be extended; and factually enough supported to be verified" (Haswell, 2005, p. 201).

There is, nevertheless, much agreement in this volume. Many, including myself, have grounded research on the premise that injustice is systemic; therefore, we might be able to examine our diverse institutional settings and anticipate finding evidence of injustice, as well as individuals working to ameliorate those injustices. Casie Moreland's Chapter 5 identifies two other perspectives. First, there appears to be growing consensus around the concept that disparate impact analysis can—as Mya Poe and John Aloysius Cogan Jr. (2016) claim—prove helpful for examining a range of educational injustices in U.S. post-secondary education. Second, as Elliot (2016) has argued, data disaggregation helps illuminate our differing landscapes of social (in)equity. Given our mobilization around common commitments, and a growing acceptance of several methodological principles, I believe it is worth considering that RAD's emphasis on replicability (especially) might allow us to better document the persistence of systemic injustice, and then build a robust repertoire of methods with empirically demonstrable capability to ameliorate problems of justice.

Authors in this volume have invoked several explicit disciplinary policies. Many of these deal with advocacy for linguistically inclusive and responsive environments for writing instruction: National Language Policy (College Composition and Communication, 2015); Students' Right to Their Own Language (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2014); and Statement on Second Language Writing (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2009). In most cases, authors mobilize these policy statements as evidence of disciplinary interest in social justice, or to highlight elements of best practices in the field currently.

However, it is worth further investigating how national policy statements highlight institutional responsibilities for writing assessment, as well as for producing the kinds of fair, just, and ethical learning opportunities many authors in this volume would like to see. For example, the first principle articulated in the CCCC Writing Assessment: A Position Statement (2014) holds that "Writing assessment is useful primarily as a means of improving teaching and learning." We might ask how well such a statement facilitates the kinds of justice projects described in this volume. Or, does this statement subtly encourage us to focus on demonstrating evidence of improved teaching and learning, and thus primarily on the evaluation of teachers and learners?

Many in this volume underscore the importance of holding institutions responsible for producing good outcomes for teachers and learners. Throughout this collection, there are direct and indirect varieties of institutional critique (Porter, Sullivan, Blythe, Grabill, & Miles, 2000). Burns, Cream, and Dougherty explicitly align with such methodologies; and Moreland highlights the responsibility for programs and for maintaining transparent, disaggregated data. Additionally, Poe and Cogan (2016) have articulated a "burden-shifting" approach to writing assessment which usefully highlights institutional responsibility for producing fairness; and Elliot's (2016) articulation of *fairness* as institutionally structured calls attention to the need for sites of instruction to define the role of justice in assessments. While an orientation toward "teaching and learning" might tend to concentrate attention on teachers and learners, an orientation toward institutional production of learning opportunities is also needed. While a full review of policies is beyond the scope of my contribution, it is worth investigating the extent to which current assessment policies concentrate on methodological techniques in terms of their consequences for the total operation and ecological impact of a writing program, as well as on individual stakeholders.

> *Gomes begins by postulating the ways that writing assessment theory can draw on insights from disability studies to make writing assessment fairer: "Are programmatic consequences equitable*

and just for students with varying physical abilities?" In looking beyond typical models of writing development, Gomes is leveraging a social justice perspective to expand study design. But he does not stop with theory. Like Moreland, Gomes is interested in the ways that writing assessment researchers can draw on an array of methodologies for the purposes of social justice research. Rather than rejecting replicable, aggregable, and data-driven research (RAD), Gomes ponders whether RAD research "might allow us to better document the persistence of systemic injustice, and then build a robust repertoire of methods with empirically demonstrable capability to ameliorate problems of justice." In the end, he calls for "an orientation toward institutional production of learning opportunities," he points to the importance of institutional responsibility in advancing aims of fairness. Without institutional change, resonating from theory to method to policy, colonial perspectives are likely left intact.

Assertions drawn from Gomes' contribution:

- ***Theory: Assertion 3**. Theories of writing assessment are invaluable in the formation of ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives that have profound impact on method, policy, and consequences.*
- ***Methodology: Assertion 5:** Analytic techniques are best understood and used when they are linked to clearly articulated, ethical assessment questions.*
- ***Methodology: Assertion 6**. Writing assessment researchers should be able to demonstrate proficiency in a range of methods.*
- ***Policy**: Assertion 16. Organizational policies are best developed using professional standards and empirical evidence*

TOWARD JUSTICE AND OPPORTUNITY

Josh Lederman and Nicole Warwick

The chapters in this volume have done important work with critical theories such as post-decolonial theory, queer theory, and critical race theory. Each of these traditions complicates the notion of the white, male, straight, subject as the pillar of normativity and as the yardstick against which all others should be compared for the purposes of assessment. The tradition of assessing students and

their writing outside of cultural-historical contexts has been deeply problematized of late, and these chapters carry on that tradition. The chapters here both look at how writing assessment may impact issues of justice and opportunity for students of color, LGBTQ students, and students from indigenous populations, but their authors also help reveal how problematic the concept of assessment can be when we allow tacit assumptions of normativity—which nearly always equal what Inoue (2015) calls white racial habitus—to frame our methodologies. Disability studies could make an interesting and important contribution to this conversation, as could other critical theories such as certain feminist, posthuman, and indigenous methodological perspectives.

Methodologically, with the exception of Casie Moreland's and Mathew Gomes' use of disparate impact analysis in Chapters 5 and 6, the chapters in this volume tend to use qualitative approaches or mixed method approaches to exploring the connections between writing assessment, social justice, and the advancement of opportunity. While disparate impact analysis does seem to be a vital ingredient for such work, qualitative empirical work and critical, theoretical work also seem essential. The quantitative validity evidence gathered by testing organizations to justify the use of their purchased products is clearly insufficient for matters of justice and opportunity, as evidenced by the persistent differential opportunities afforded to marginalized social groups as the result of such test use. Validity evidence related to fairness, however, as we sought to argue in Chapter 7, cannot be identified where such differential opportunities result from a testing program. Thus, methodologies that seek to ferret out what we call the violence of assessment—qualitative, ethnographic, case study, longitudinal, multi-method—are critical for the validation of any assessment that seeks to disrupt social injustice and work toward the advancement of opportunity. In addition, a number of the chapters also used historiography as their methodology, which is vital because, over time, approaches and viewpoints can become naturalized. Providing historical analysis to document how approaches, viewpoints, and perspectives originate can be an important tool for disruption and change.

The policy implications of this volume can be seen throughout. Keith L. Harms (Chapter 3) speaks in depth about English Only policy instituted by the U.S. colonial administration in the Philippines, and we also see mention of various resolutions and position statements by our professional organizations, such as Students' Right to their Own Language (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2006), the Conference on College Composition and Communication the Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers (2009) and The National Language Policy (2015). These various policies have polar objectives—with the English Only policy being one of linguistic and cultural assimilation and the statements of our professional organization seeking to

undo that legacy. In Chapter 10, Kelly J. Sassi also mentioned the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Common Core State Standards (2011), and the National Council of Teachers of English, Council of Writing Program Administrators, and National Writing Project Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing (2011), which mark opposite ends of the spectrum of constraint and diversity in language use. The larger question is whether policy is the place to foster social justice and advance opportunity. To be sure, policies that make these matters impossible (e.g., segregation) need to be removed before these struggles can even begin.

But how often do policies fostering diversity effectively lead to justice and opportunity? Considering the theme of peering into the darker corners where the flashlight of mainstream normativity—the majoritarian narratives noted by J. W. Hammond in Chapter 1—we may conclude that existing policies do not shine. The notion of policy itself may be too geared toward the center. The Students' Right to their Own Language resolution is nearly half a century old. Yet how many students use whatever may constitute their own languages without suffering punishment as a result of writing assessment? Perhaps instead of policy, the move toward justice and opportunity will happen as mindsets change, something that we hope the program of research presented in the current collection will help achieve.

Looking forward, as Christie Toth notes in Chapter 4, Directed Self Placement needs a great deal more research in terms of its impact on various social groups. In terms of face validity, it seems to be an agent for empowering student writers, imbuing them with agency to make their own best decision about course placement. But as others have mentioned (e.g., Perry, 2008; Schendel & O'Neill, 1999), there is the danger that this agency may rest less with student writers and more with their history of previous assessments—that are themselves products of constrained societal expectation of linguistic and cultural assimilation. Ellen Schendel and Peggy O'Neill (1999) refer to this as the Foucauldian *gaze* of the institution—an instance of constraint, both present and invisible, enacted in order to prevent the advancement of opportunity for all. Research programs dedicated to such advancement will need to employ methodologies that take the problem of that gaze as their fundamental assumption and use critical (queer, feminist, postcolonial) methodologies to advance justice and structure opportunity. We fight an invisible foe in this battle; there are no laws enforcing inequality of opportunity, no mission statements that state the goal for reinscribing social injustice. Future research will need to begin with the question of why these problems still exist then, where the mechanisms lie that facilitate them, and which common assumptions help the smooth operation of this machinery—all work of contextualization to be done before we can move on to questions of whether an assessment is ready to produce evidence of its validity and reliability.

At the 2017 Conference on College Composition and Communication, the division of Writing Program Administrators-Graduate Organization held a session called Think Tank for Racial and Social Justice in the Writing Program, with the goal of developing action items to help achieve racial and social justice (Kareem & Macklin, 2017). We discussed one of the barriers to social justice activism, which seems to be that people see social justice research and work as optional—one more theory to choose from among a growing list. But even this view is born of privilege that allows people to see work that is critical and essential as merely one more option from a list. In the vein of Michael Sterling Burns, Randall Cream, and Timothy R. Dougherty's research in Chapter 8 in which they explore how teachers can move students from awareness to activism—and since assessment is often a major component of the work WPAs engage in—we feel it is important to consider how we might move administrators and faculty to social justice activism.

> In their forum contribution and chapter, Lederman and Warwick point to the historical violence of assessment—for example, in testing organizations limited quantitative claims regarding questions of fairness. To make writing assessment less violent, Lederman and Warwick seek expansive methodologies, including case studies, qualitative research, and longitudinal studies, in addition to current argument-based methods. They postulate that an expansive view of methodology, and of social justice work itself, might entice more researchers to take up the advancement of opportunity and ultimately the advancement of more socially just forms of writing assessment.

> *Assertions drawn from Lederman and Warwick's contribution:*

- ***History: Assertion 1.*** *Histories of writing assessment are invaluable in the analysis of practices viewed as deterministically objective; therefore, these histories have profound impact on contemporary methods, policies, and consequences.*
- ***Methodology: Assertion 6.*** *Writing assessment researchers should be able to demonstrate proficiency in a range of methods.*
- ***Classroom research: Assertion 10.*** *Classroom research is best accompanied by inferences that allow others to apply findings across settings.*
- ***Purchased assessments: Assertion 14***. *Unless the vendor provides evidence of fairness, validity, and reliability, purchased assessments should not be used to make decisions for or draw inferences about students.*

VALIDATION FOR RHETORICAL SOVEREIGNTY: INVOLVING STUDENTS AS AGENTS AGAINST LINGUISTIC IMPERIALISM

Michael Sterling Burns, Randall Cream, and Timothy R. Dougherty

It has truly been an honor to contribute our collective voice to the important research in this collection. As we look toward the future of writing assessment, we trust that this volume will help to propel what Christie Toth calls "validation for social justice" in Chapter 4 from the periphery to the center of best assessment practices in higher education—and beyond to other areas where language uses are constrained by assessment practices.

To realize that vision, we would do well to listen closely to the theoretical frameworks introduced in this volume. While our chapter focuses on extending the critique of institutional white habitus begun in earlier work being called "fourth wave" (Behm & Miller, 2012; Inoue, 2015), we were struck by the depth of theoretical vision exhibited across this volume. On the one hand, scholars like Keith L. Harms (Chapter 3) and Mathew Gomes (Chapter 6) examine both historical and contemporary sites to center our attention on the linguistic imperialism that often accompanies institutional assessment work, whether that work exists in the overt colonial context of the U.S. presence in the Philippines or in the often-covert colonial context at work in institutions of higher education. In each site, there is an institutional mandate for monolingualism that positions certain students and rhetorical performances as deviant and sub-standard until they are scrubbed clean. These cases drive home Josh Lederman and Nicole Warwick's point in Chapter 7 that assessment is often an act of violence—an act that too often reinforces structural violence.

To combat such linguistic imperialism and structural violence, we would do well to attend to some of the other frameworks employed throughout this volume, such as Kelly J. Sassi's introduction of Scott Lyons' concept of rhetorical sovereignty in Chapter 10. While Sassi appropriately applies the concept to the assessment context of a tribal college, rhetorical sovereignty might be extended to other sites of higher education. How, for instance, might applying the framework of rhetorical sovereignty to assessment of all undergraduate students reinvigorate our field's commitment to Students' Right to Their Own Language (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2006)? In offering this application, we want to reiterate that Lyons' concept is based in a nation-people's sense of sovereignty as radical relationship to the land. Any application of this concept must be careful to center that understanding amidst the settler colonial conditions of the U.S. nation-state. As well, this concept

might be a useful start in delinking from what Malea Powell (2012, via Walter Mignolo) has called the colonial matrix of power in Writing Studies.

To accomplish such delinking, though, requires careful methodological approaches. We need solid historical models drawn from archival methods such as the one offered by Sean Molloy's excavation of CUNY's still innovative SEEK program in Chapter 2. And we need to critique our field's own history through careful archival excavations such as J. W. Hammond's examination of early *English Journal* articles in Chapter 1. Beyond the archives, we see a need for mixed-methods validation of local assessments through racial validity and disparate impact analyses constructs (see also Moreland in Chapter 5) that Toth says comprise a project of validation for social justice in Chapter 4. And we must be cognizant of the embodied affects and effects of learning and assessment, particularly for students who feel marginalized or othered by their institutions (Caswell and Banks, Chapter 11). To that end, we would add that both Huey T. Chen's model of integral validity in our chapter and Michael T. Kane's (2013) argument-based approach to validity in Chapter 7 noted by Lederman and Warwick are promising avenues for deepening validity as a construct for socially just assessment. In our research, we are convinced that students need to be added deeply as stakeholders and co-participants in an assessment's design and construction for the vision of socially just assessment to be realized.

The findings in this volume also have deep implications for policy. For instance, Toth's chapter shows how Directed Self-Placement (Royer & Gilles, 2003) seems to be working quite well at the community college level, often in conjunction with Accelerated Learning Programs (ALP, Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009). Since these programs are designed to reduce the "cooling off" effect that often keeps students most on the margins from finishing their degrees, our professional organizations might do well to create a policy that spells out the pedagogical and social justice rationale for converting all developmental courses that do not provide college credit to models like ALP that allow students to immediately begin accruing credits toward graduation. What might other professional policy documents look like that incorporate the innovative pedagogical approaches in SEEK (Molloy, Chapter 2)—approaches rooted in the knowledge that our first task as writing teachers is getting students to love writing as Karen S. Nulton and Irvin Peckham observe in Chapter 9 rather than perform to a monolingual standard?

As a result of this volume, we envision the blooming of writing program assessment technologies that are rooted in validation for social justice. We envision a day where no program is stumped, much like some of Toth's respondents were, when asked about how their placement, classroom, or program assess-

ments are affecting different student demographics along racial, gender, class, and LGBTQA trajectories (Caswell & Banks, Chapter 11). We envision an assessment landscape where such disparate impact analysis becomes standard in institutions of higher learning and, particularly, in writing programs. And, perhaps most importantly, we envision an assessment landscape that deeply involves students as stakeholders in assessment design, that includes them as co-constituents of assessment revision, and that positions them as writers whose work matters beyond the classroom's walls.

It is time to get fired up!

> *Drawing on the theory of fourth generation assessment, Burns, Cream, and Dougherty illustrate the way that theoretical orientations to writing assessment can be imported from other scholarly areas and be expanded once applied in writing assessment research on outcomes. Their approach to research also illustrates the value of bringing students as stakeholders to assessment research: ". . . we are convinced that students need to be added deeply as stakeholders and co-participants in an assessment's design and construction for the vision of socially just assessment to be realized." Through such more inclusive, expansive approaches to assessment, Burns, Cream, and Dougherty ultimately envision the "blooming of writing program assessment technologies that are rooted in validation for social justice." We hope they are right.*

> *Assertions drawn from Burns, Cream and Doughtery's contribution:*

> - ***Outcomes: Assertion 7****. To advance justice and opportunity, the articulation of writing outcomes should be based on robust writing construct models that are informed by current sociocognitive and sociocultural research.*
> - ***Outcomes: Assertion 8****. Perspectives drawn from a variety of educational community members are required to develop writing outcomes.*
> - ***Classroom and writing center research: Assertion 9****. Direct work with students is the first step in writing assessment.*
> - ***Next generation research: Assertion 17.*** *Efforts should be made to eliminate high-stakes tests of writing for purely summative purposes.*

Reflections on Theory and Practice

Karen S. Nulton and Irvin Peckham

Although we have not linked our project explicitly to Paulo Freire (2004) and Ivan Illich (1972), their theories of education frame the way in which we have structured our writing program, assessment protocol, and research project. Freire and Illich argued forcefully for practices giving voice to those who have been marginalized. We have designed our program and assessment to prioritize students' voices. Freire, in particular, insisted on listening carefully to students and teaching from within their lived experiences. Illich critiqued schools as an industry more interested in self-perpetuation than improving the lives of the underprivileged.

We have also worked from a long line of educators who have argued for engaged learning and the consequence of listening to students' voices; John Dewey (1970), James Britton and colleagues (1975), James Moffett (1994), Peter Elbow (1998), Mike Rose (2014), John Tagg (2003), Robert Fried (2005), and L. Dee Fink (2013) have been especially important. Norbert Elliot's extensive work in assessment theory, and in particular, his latest research linking social justice to assessment practices (2016), has influenced our way of putting our program and assessment in direct dialogue with each other. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and Freire have heavily influenced our understanding of social stratification practices.

In this volume, we see a healthy mix of qualitative, quantitative, and archival research. Some researchers lean toward statistical models and others toward various versions of ethnographic research. Rather than privilege any method, we think researchers should work from their question outward, developing a method that will move toward answers. (We seriously doubt that any question of value is ever fully answered.) In the field of Writing Studies, perhaps more so than in other fields, the researcher should be aware of an array of research methods and knowing, like a good carpenter, which tool or array of tools are best for the job. We acknowledge the importance of work by psychometricians such as Lee J. Cronbach (1989), Samuel J. Messick (1989), Robert J. Mislevy (2007), and Michael T. Kane (2013), even while we agree with scholars in this collection (such as Michael Sterling Burns, Randall Cream and Timothy R. Dougherty, as well as Josh Lederman and Nicole Warwick) that we should be wary of letting research methods lead assessment's aim. Assessment is vital to Writing Studies; we need to understand the niche assessment plays in writing program ecologies as consequences ripple among students, teachers, and administrators. With our colleagues, we take fairness seriously; consequently, we advocate for assessments that foster rather than rank order student learning and that promote positive

attitudes toward writing.

Assessing, like writing, can help us to understand what we mean. Position papers and statements from the National Council of Teachers of English, the Conference of College Composition and Communication, and the Council of Writing Program Administrators offer extensive polices that deal with social justice, including position papers affirming Ebonics (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2016); a statement on Language Power and Activism requiring "respect for diversity, equity, social justice, and intellectual and pedagogical freedom," (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2016); a statement on "Racism and (g)WPA" (Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2015), and others noted in this forum. These are important statements expressing the writing community's commitment to social justice.

When we juxtapose these statements with standard "performance" assessments that rank student writing based in part on standardized linguistic conventions—supported by the 2014 CWPA Outcomes Statement (Dryer et al., 2014)—we recognize an inherent tension between ideals and pragmatics. We exist, as writing teachers, with the uneasy knowledge that we have been trained in—that we perform within—linguistic and rhetorical conventions that can be unjust to expect from students. We suggest that policies advocating for intrapersonal and interpersonal domains—and adding domains where necessary, such as improving attitude toward writing to the CWPA Outcomes Statement—can shift this tension by contextualizing social justice issues within the larger ecology of students' educational experiences.

In terms of research stemming from our own work, we would like to see research that further investigates the kinds of writing instruction that instills negative attitudes toward writing in students and how these attitudes are complicated by socioeconomic status, ethnicity, first language, and gender. Several research projects seem obvious: In grades K-12, track changes in attitudes toward writing by socioeconomic status disaggregated by zip codes (Lederman and Warwick, Chapter 7). We could use Jean Anyon's (1980) research as a model to investigate the school writing experiences and their relationships to attitudes toward writing; track the correlation, year by year and by zip code, between the changes in attitudes toward writing, success in school, and admission into postsecondary institutions, which could also be ranked by zip codes (the zip codes of student populations). This research could document college experiences (disaggregated by zip codes) and post-collegiate life possibilities (available professions, salary, social status, labor autonomy). While this model focuses on socioeconomic status, data could be further disaggregating by gender, race, first language, and ethnicity.

For further broad programs of research, we particularly urge research exam-

ining the unacknowledged ways in which the educational industry promotes social reproduction, privileging the few at the expense of the many. It might be useful for scholars interested in assessment to become familiar with classification theory, which links language use, genre theory, and stratification theory. One could do worse than reading George Lakoff's *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (1990) and work outward from there.

> *Champions of student-centered learning, Nulton and Peckham redesigned their writing program curriculum and assessment to focus on student perspectives. Their work and their collection forum remind us that domain models of "good writing" are often rather narrow, resulting in unjust outcomes. As a result, Nulton and Peckham encourage us to develop more ambitious construct models of writing that include interpersonal and intrapersonal domains. Finally, they challenge us to design ambitious longitudinal models that track student attitudes toward writing over time and how those attitudes are complicated by socioeconomic status, ethnicity, language, and gender.*

> *Assertions drawn from Nulton and Peckham's contribution:*

> - *Outcomes: Assertion 7. To advance justice and opportunity, the articulation of writing outcomes should be based on robust writing construct models that are informed by current sociocognitive and sociocultural research.*
> - *Outcomes: Assertion 8. Perspectives drawn from a variety of educational community members are required to develop writing outcomes.*
> - *Classroom and writing center research: Assertion 9. Direct work with students is the first step in writing assessment.*
> - *Next generation research: Assertion 18. Efforts should be made to strengthen writing assessment for formative purposes in order to develop innovative approaches to assessment informed by social justice perspectives.*

DISMANTLING THE SOUND-PROOF WALLS THAT ARE BARRIERS TO A JUST FUTURE IN WRITING ASSESSMENT

Kelly J. Sassi

When we think about achievement of social justice and the advancement of opportunity, it becomes apparent that those of us working in the field of rhetoric

and composition and those of us working in K-12 education and in American Indian rhetorics would benefit from working together, and this is especially apparent in terms of theoretical approaches, which often grow in the petri dish of one disciplinary area without affecting other disciplines.

We see evidence of interdisciplinary work in this collection that is productive in advancing social justice. For example, Karen S. Nulton and Irvin Peckham's conceptualization of the portfolio assessment in Chapter 9 and Michael Sterling Burns, Randall Cream, and Timothy R. Dougherty's lesson study presented in Chapter 8 provide opportunities for teachers to assess what has and has not worked in the classroom, just as SEEK teachers were expected to do, as Sean Molloy observes in Chapter 2. That is, these strategies put the focus on student learning rather than teacher planning, echoing the emphasis on student-centered instruction in education.

Similarly, when we are discussing the impact of colonization on writing assessment in the United States, it is important to be familiar not only with the forces of colonization (Harms, Chapter 3), but also the forces of survival and resistance, or survivance (Vizenor, 1994; Powell, 2006) in the vibrant American Indian rhetorical tradition that predates Columbus and continues to the present day. We can look to, or rather listen—using rhetorical listening as theorized by Malea Powell (2002) and Krista Ratcliffe (2005)—to this tradition for guidance in theorizing socially just forms of writing assessment. Just as queering writing assessment makes sexuality visible as a concern in writing assessment and opens up space for bodies marginalized by our culture, so indigenizing writing assessment could make audible American Indian and Alaska Native voices that have been speaking clearly—but not heard by all—since before first contact with Europeans on this continent.

Knowledge of quantitative methods is crucial when working for social justice in the field of writing assessment, especially in cases where large testing companies have not been entirely transparent with their data, as we saw in chapters by Christie Toth and Casie Moreland. But that knowledge is not enough. Even when the quantitative data suggest remediation is needed, other research has shown that is not necessarily a true or complete picture. Historical knowledge is also of critical importance—as the success of SEEK students in Molloy's chapter demonstrate and, in my chapter, as the writing improvement of Sitting Bull College students show as those scores contradicted the monotone picture painted by their COMPASS scores.

Authors in this collection have used a wide variety of methodological tools—among them historiography, archival, case studies, interviews, textual analysis, ethnography, surveys, and focus groups. Remembering Audre Lorde's (2007) admonition that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house,"

we are in danger of rebuilding the same house if we use these tools without a simultaneous interrogation of the theoretical frameworks that might come with the methodological tools (p. 110). Just as Sandy Grande (2004) noted that culturally responsive pedagogies may retain the deep structures of western thought, so may our methodological tools. Scholars like Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) and her work on decolonizing methodologies may help us do social justice work in writing assessment. Regardless, intensive and self-reflexive attention to theoretical frameworks, as we see especially in Chapters 7 and 11 with violence and queering writing assessment, are important for change.

Policies created by national professional organizations, such as the 1972 resolution, "Students' Rights to Their Own Language" (adopted by Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1974 and reaffirmed in 2014) and Modern Language Association's "Statement on Native American Languages in the College and University Curriculum" (2005) are important for working toward social justice. At North Dakota State University, we used the MLA resolution to support our case in hiring a Dakota language professor. Hiring a Dakota language professor created a more positive climate for Dakota (and other Native and indigenous) students. It also provided me with the opportunity to study Dakota language, which then helped me to recognize Dakota sentence structure in the English writing of students at Sitting Bull College. Instead of seeing these students' "nonstandard" English as incorrect, I saw instances of correct Dakota structure in their English writing. This realization shaped my approach to the research project at Standing Rock. In Chapter 6, Gomes prods my thinking further when he asks why we cannot "promote linguistic diversity as an asset." This small, personal story illustrates how the resolutions of professional organizations can influence other institutions and people.

It is important that such policies are in place, but it is not enough. When we look at the institutional practices examined in some of the chapters, we begin to see a picture of practice lagging behind policy. It is what people do with a policy that really makes the difference in moving toward social justice. Even when writing instructors and administrators are positively disposed toward the policies in place, they may not be sure about what kinds of teaching and assessing practices will support the policy. This is where strategies such as lesson study described by Burns, Cream, and Dougherty in Chapter 8 may be useful because it provides space for groups of teachers to think through the effect on students of classroom interventions to address race and privilege. At every stage, from the formation of policies to their implementation, it is important that diverse stakeholders are involved. Our professional organizations have become better at nominating diverse leaders, but not so successful at electing them. Furthermore, given the power of unjust practices, movement in the direction of social justice is going

to require a significant effort. Anti-racist pedagogy is a necessity in making that effort.

Directions for research should extend further back and also further forward. Building on J. W. Hammond's excellent work in Chapter 1, social justice historiography of writing assessment should reach further back to the kind of assimilationist practices that pre-date those practiced on immigrants. We should include the study of boarding schools, because assimilationist and even genocidal policies, echoing Captain Richard H. Pratt's 1892 call to "Kill the Indian, Save the Man," reverberate to the present day through intergenerational trauma. At the present writing, the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition is petitioning the U.S. government to tell the truth about the injustices suffered by boarding school students. Canada is ahead of the US in documenting and making reparations to First Nations people subjected to abuses in residential schools.

In terms of future domain models of writing and its assessment, Karen S. Nulton and Irvin Peckham found a high percentage of incoming students held negative attitudes toward writing. We see this also with Native American schools, where some students describe writing as actually "painful" (Sassi & Lajimodiere, 2016), which is not surprising, given the violent history of American Indian and Alaska Native education in our country. We should also look to extensions of John Rawls' (2001) theory of structural justice theory to the consequences of our assessment choices. Promising here is a turn to rhetorics of truth and reconciliation (Beitler, 2013) as well as further work with decolonization, as convincingly argued in Chapter 7.

> *Sassi's work is a model of teacher development that attends to the historical legacies, cultural values, and institutional contexts in which teachers work. Her decolonial approach to teacher development did not start with wholesale rejection of purchased tests. Instead, Sassi listened to her teachers' desire to know more how their students were performing on purchased tests. In doing so, she helped her teachers become agents of change at their tribal college and develop alternative methods of assessment that were better attuned to hearing the students they served. Sassi, ultimately, encourages us to "extend further back and also further forward" in our research on writing assessment, documenting the historical legacies of unjust assessment in tribal colleges and the ongoing work of decolonialization. In the end, Sassi eloquently writes:*

>> *Just as queering writing assessment makes sexuality visible as a concern in writing assessment and opens up*

space for bodies marginalized by our culture, so indig-enizing writing assessment could make audible American Indian and Alaska Native voices that have been speaking clearly—but not heard by all—since before first contact with Europeans on this continent.

Assertions drawn from Sassi's contribution:

- ***History: Assertion 1.*** *Histories of writing assessment are invaluable in the analysis of practices viewed as deterministically objective; therefore, these histories have profound impact on contemporary methods, policies, and consequences.*
- ***Theory: Assertion 3****. Theories of writing assessment are invaluable in the formation of ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives that have profound impact on method, policy, and consequences.*
- ***Purchased assessments: Assertion 13.*** *Purchased assessments—those assessments developed by testing companies—hold the potential to provide valuable information about students, but their use should never constrain the interrogation of social justice queries in local contexts.*
- ***Purchased assessments****: Assertion 14. Unless the vendor provides evidence of fairness, validity, and reliability, purchased assessments should not be used to make decisions for or draw inferences about students*
- ***Next-generation research: Assertion 17.*** *Efforts should be made to eliminate high-stakes tests of writing for purely summative purposes.*

FOLLOWING UNMARKED LINES: THE ACTIVIST WORK OF WRITING ASSESSMENT

Nicole I. Caswell and William P. Banks

As we reflect on the chapters included in this collection, we are heartened by our colleagues' commitments to designing and implementing writing assessments that challenge the dominant discourses and practices that have plagued our history. We have each approached the goal of social justice in our assessments through different theoretical frames, but our goal has been consistent: how might we create assessments that provide equal opportunity for all students

to learn? The various theories referenced across the collection have allowed authors to consider factions in writing assessment and to identify moments when the consequences of writing assessment have not outweighed the benefits. As we continue to commit ourselves to equal opportunity for all students, we must engage theories that allow us to understand the ways that inequality in education function across intersectional lines of power and identity.

While one strength of writing assessment research is its commitment to multidisciplinary research methods borrowed from the fields of psychometrics, rhetoric, education, and literacy studies, we must remain outward looking as we think about the wide-ranging sites of assessment, from the individual teacher-student relationship to classroom to program to institution to state to national. In this collection alone we are exposed to a range of methods (such as archival, survey, interview, statistical analysis, focus group) working to advance a social justice agenda at multiple assessment sites. Each method focuses our attention on the complex and competing values and dispositions inherent in thinking about writing assessment as social justice.

Assessments designed for social justice will need to consider methods that place student and teacher voices at the center of data collection, and, as important, will need to provide critical validity arguments which foreground justice-based reason for interpreting that data. While historical methods have provided the foundation for understanding the consequences of our assessments on students, we need additional research using qualitative methods to develop a deeper contextual understanding of the kinds of consequences our assessments currently have (or might have) on students. We cannot assume that just because our theories have become more intersectional that our practices have necessarily embodied those changes. The chapters in this collection provide us with the kinds of qualitative methods necessary to develop student-focused assessments. As we strive to design more socially just assessments, we argue for mixed-methods approaches that provide space for teacher and student voices and experiences with writing and assessment alongside empirical validity and reliability evidence.

As we read the chapters in this collection, we were drawn to the ways researchers used policy statements to guide and challenge teachers' understandings of writing and assessing writing. Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve the Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools (2007), Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing (National Council of Teachers of English, Council of Writing Program Administrators, and National Writing Project, 2011), WPA Outcomes for First-Year Composition (Version 3.0) (Dryer et al., 2014)—these policy statements reflect current pedagogical values of teaching and learning, and forward important goals that shape the writing construct across contexts. These statements can serve as jumping off points for revising

curricula and assessment practices. By engaging with teachers, students, administrators, and community members around these statements, we can cultivate conversations around local contexts and values instead of simple wholesale adoption. Policy statements can serve as motivators for local change when educators collaboratively work together to articulate their values. Although policy statements can make complex issues into overly reductive statements, they also provide the space for challenging dominant norms. As we continue to develop theories and assessment designs around social justice, we are excited about the possibility of a policy statement that can serve as an authority for why others should engage in this kind of work.

At the same time, since policy statements can also become fixed documents that require significant labor to revise, we advocate for methodologies that see these texts as adaptable, living documents. Despite the fact that policy statements can provide useful frameworks, if we seek to ensure that our assessment projects engage social justice, we need to be consciously aware of the ways in which social justice is a fundamentally intersectional project. To that end, those of us in assessment need to be aware of who is and is not in the room when we're discussing, drafting, and revising policy, and we need to think carefully about how we create space for others to join the discussion. Locally, our writing center has begun the process of drafting a social justice statement, an idea that grew out of conversations the writing consultants were already having about the sort of writing center they wanted to work in and the ways they wanted the campus community to view that space. Our consultants have been responsible for articulating our shared writing center values because they are the ones working with writers across campus. While it is not always easy to sit back and watch as this process evolves, we believe teachers, students, and parents—those stakeholders closest to the assessment—should be given a space to design any kind of policy or statement. Our consultants have also demonstrated that they recognize there are voices still absent in these conversations and they have led the way in inviting different campus groups to be part of this conversation, to speak to them about issues or problems, as well as to consider drafts of our documents in order to show us where these texts may misunderstand some of the most vulnerable populations on our campus, or be less welcoming and inclusive than we would like. In this way, our center becomes a space on campus where we can work together to (re)mark the lines around our assessments, to make visible practices that are often unacknowledged or hidden, and to work together to shape a more ethical, socially just set of assessment practices.

> For Caswell and Banks, social justice is a fundamentally inter-
> sectional project. Their assessment work in the writing center

*demonstrates that social justice-oriented assessment work can orig-
inate from locations other than first year writing programs. Their
chapter and forum contribution bring home the importance of
taking an intersectional approach to assessment to make visible
the ways that inequality functions along multiple axes of power
and identity in higher education. As they convincingly argue, we
cannot assume that existing practices and polices reflect theoret-
ical advances, even when they purport a social justice aim. For
these reasons, both methodology and policy need to be revisited
frequently with attention to whose voices are being heard: "those
of us in assessment need to be aware of who is and is not in the
room when we're discussing, drafting, and revising policy, and we
need to think carefully about how we create space for others to
join the discussion."*

Assertions drawn from Caswell and Bank's contribution:

- ***Theory: Assertion 3***. *Theories of writing assessment are
  invaluable in the formation of ontological, epistemological,
  and axiological perspectives that have profound impact on
  method, policy, and consequences.*
- ***Classroom and writing center research: Assertion 9.*** *Di-
  rect work with students is the first step in writing assessment.*
- ***Institutional research: Assertion 11***. *When institutional
  research on student writing is conducted, collection of infor-
  mation related to age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, lin-
  guistic identity, race, veteran status, and sexuality should be
  justified and done with an understanding of current, ethical
  standards for the gathering and securing of such information.*

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