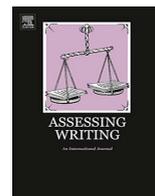


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## Making our invisible racial agendas visible: Race talk in *Assessing Writing*, 1994–2018



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### ABSTRACT

“Writing” is far from the only construct relevant to writing assessment research. The construct “race” is arguably crucial for the field’s considerations of human diversity, difference, and inequity. To examine how race has been constructed within the field, this paper provides a content analysis of explicit race talk in *Assessing Writing* (1994–2018). Drawing on insights from critical race and Whiteness theories, this study examined a corpus of 304 articles and found 68 containing explicit talk of race, which were characterized by four trends: scholars discuss race in the contexts of examinee/examiner perceptions and preferences; patterns in assessment performance; and the textual content of students’ writings or assessment documents; but most commonly, they engage with race in more marginal or circumstantial ways, referencing race without analysis (e.g., in literature reviews, calls for future research). Additionally, “race,” “ethnicity,” and “racism” seemingly have never been explicitly defined within the journal, potentially contributing to denotative uncertainty and confusion. These findings suggest that future research could benefit by more consistently clarifying its race constructs; disaggregating data with an attention to racial fairness; deepening historical and theoretical engagements with race; diversifying the voices and interpretations that circulate in the field; and turning toward intersectional justice.

### 1. Introduction

We should state overtly where we are coming from and why we select the issues we do, we should make our *invisible agendas visible*, and we should consider how those in different places might view our data, theories, or findings. (White, 1994, p. 25, *emphasis mine*)

The year 1994 witnessed the publication of a now-infamous bestseller about race and mental measurement: Herrnstein and Murray’s *The Bell Curve*, which used test data to advance the claim that racial subgroups differed in average intelligence. Viewed by many as emblematic of a new wave of testing-based scientific racism (e.g., Darby & Rury, 2018, p. 83; Kendi, 2019, p. 103; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 30), *The Bell Curve* framed assessment as a way to investigate and judge the quality and qualities of entire subgroups. As chance would have it, the journal *Assessing Writing* (ASW) was launched that same year, with White (1994) discussing—in its first article—an alternative approach to researching the relationship of race to assessment: Such work would entail questioning how to “overturn” past exclusions and “open opportunity,” to actively “draw upon and value the rich experiences of nontraditional students,” and to investigate and minimize “the various biases” enacted by assessment genres and “privileged” practitioners (p. 24). “What do students, minorities, and other marginalized groups want from writing assessment?” he asked, identifying this question as one the field of writing assessment—and by implication ASW—would need to grapple with, moving

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forward (p. 22; see also White, 2019). How has it done so?

To begin answering this question, I conducted a content analysis of ASW articles published between 1994 and 2018, examining explicit talk of race and ethnicity—that is, explicit “race talk” (Pollock, 2004). An investigation of this kind is important because, as a leading journal for writing assessment scholarship with an international readership, ASW plays a significant global role in shaping agendas in the field and in helping to shape what “race” means within it. Though writing assessment scholars understandably focus their critical attentions on defining and exploring the construct of “writing,” *race* is another construct implicated in assessment practice and research, important for investigations of difference, diversity, and inequity in assessment. Explicit engagement with the race construct situates writing assessment scholarship within broader, ongoing conversations about identity and social (in)justice, empowering us to clarify the broader social meanings, stakes, and relevance of our work.

Within the field of writing assessment, our choice of terms, concepts, and classifications plays a crucial “framing” role (Adler-Kassner & O’Neill, 2010; Poe, 2013), guiding our analytic attention to some datasets, questions, and interpretations, while directing us away from others. Crucially, though, when talking about and researching race, writing assessment scholars are not always guided by the same beliefs, assumptions, and aims. For this reason, understanding how ASW has sponsored scholarly engagement with race requires understanding two things, each of which helps to make the field’s invisible racial agendas visible:

- *When we talk about race, what do we say?* (i.e., How has “race” been discussed and positioned relative to writing assessment?)
- *When we talk about race, what do we mean?* (i.e., How has “race” been defined?)

In reckoning with the state of race talk in writing assessment scholarship, we are invited to more explicitly, sensitively, and meaningfully take up questions about race—and take on and challenge racism. To this end, the sections to follow review theoretical work on race and racism (§2), and provide the methods (§3) and findings (§4) for my study, with a focus on race talk trends (§4.1) and complexities (§4.2). I conclude with a general discussion and recommendations for the field (§5). This much is worth stating at the outset: Race is one important construct for considering diversity, equity, and inclusion in writing assessment, but is far from the only such construct. The ethical future of writing assessment research will be shaped, in no small measure, by the constructs the field centers moving forward.

## 2. Literature review: Coming to terms with race talk

Writing assessment today inherits long histories from English language education and testing in which written performance was often read as a proxy for identity, ability, and worth (Elliot, 2005; Hammond, 2018; Harms, 2018; Inoue, 2015, 2019). In turn, assessments of *written* composition have affected *social* composition—shaping access, opportunity, and attainment. As Perryman-Clark (2016) puts it, race matters to writing assessment because appraisals of writing “are rooted in racial and linguistic identity” and “assessment creates or denies opportunity structures” (p. 206), distributing opportunities inequitably in the past and continuing to do so in the present. Explicitly naming and discussing race and racism may equip us to recognize and analyze their participation in the work of writing assessment, and position us to respond in ways that resist—rather than reproduce—injustices (see Behm & Miller, 2012; also Kitts, 2018).

Conversely, failure to explicitly talk about race can ramify into a failure to talk explicitly about racial injustice: “The refusal of race destigmatizes the impacts and consequences of certain laws, acts, practices, and institutions ... so that we cannot name them for what they are” (Heng, 2018, p. 4). My content analysis centers on *explicit* race talk in writing assessment for this reason, considering the field’s (often invisible) racial agendas and examining the approaches ASW scholars have taken to make visible the roles race plays in writing assessment ecologies—approaches Inoue (2012) has called “racial methodologies.” Providing a vocabulary for my study to follow, this literature review defines “race” and “racism” (§2.1), as well as “Whiteness” and “White supremacy” (§2.2), before proceeding to discuss the roles played by racial “fairness” and “opportunity to learn” within writing assessment scholarship’s recent social justice turn (§2.3).

### 2.1. Constructing “race” and “racism”

Rhetorical attention to race talk in writing assessment is important, because the meanings of race are partially contingent on the ways we discursively construct it. *Race* is a context-contingent social construction, naming “a structural relationship for the articulation and management of human differences, rather than a substantive content” (Heng, 2018, p.19, emphasis in original). Put differently, race is “a dynamic of power” (Gillborn, Warmington, & Demack, 2018, p. 170), meaning that “[r]acial identity is about shared social status, not shared individual characteristics” such as phenotype or genotype (Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008, p. 7). Variable in its shape and scope, race can be constructed in ways that *racialize*—that is, treat as racial content—not just the physical body, but also (or instead) the linguistic body and other non-somatic sites, including culture, migrant status, religion, and national origin (see, e.g., Dirlik, 2008; Gates, 1985; Goldberg, 1993; Heng, 2018; Villanueva, 2011).

Critical race theorists such as Lawrence, Matsuda, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993) caution that racial injustice is not reducible to “a series of randomly occurring, intentional, and individualized acts” (p. 6). While it manifests in and inspires individual acts of bigotry, *racism* is better defined as a system that reifies and manages differences in ways that hierarchically oppress some and privilege others. In other words, racism is a constellation of policies that promote racial exclusions and inequalities, as well as ideas that make these exclusions and inequalities seem natural, even desirable (Kendi, 2019; see also, e.g., Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008; Goldberg, 1993; Goldberg, 2009a; Mills, 1997). Through their actions and relationships, people participate in and maintain racist inequalities, and institutional structures themselves (including education structures) can embody dominant racial perspectives and perpetuate oppression (see, e.g., Gillborn et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005). Where writing

assessment is concerned, “racism is not about prejudice, personal biases, or intent. ... It is about understanding how unequal or unfair outcomes may be structured into our assessment technologies and the interpretations that we make from their outcomes” (Inoue & Poe, 2012, p. 6).

One effect of the race construct’s variability is that racism, while often fueled by fantasies of essential biological difference, can also target the groups it oppresses (or privileges) on other, non-biological grounds—such as language (see, e.g., Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Poe, 2013; Villanueva, 2006, 2011). Indeed, it arguably makes more sense to talk of heterogenous “racisms” than a unitary “racism,” insofar as racist hierarchies and violences are a global phenomenon, manifesting in different ways depending (in part) on the preferences, prejudices, and race constructs operant in a particular historical period or national context (see, e.g., Dirlík, 2008; Goldberg, 1993, 2009a, 2009b; Heng, 2018; also Kubota & Lin, 2006, 478-480). Writing of the globalization of racism in modernity, Dirlík (2008) contends that

Racism may be endemic in Euro-American conceptualizations of the world, but ... has been internalized in the worldviews of populations around the world; we would be hard put to argue now that Chinese or Indians are less racist than white Europeans or Americans or that racism is less prevalent in Africa, Latin America, and Asia than it is in Europe or North America. ... [R]acism itself ... assumes different attributes under different circumstances. Its manifestations are, therefore, concretely situational. (pp. 1375-1376)

Racism(s) may be global, but what counts as socially significant racial or ethnic difference varies from context to context (and even from commentator to commentator within a context). Writing of “the overt and covert racisms” that circulate in and around the teaching of English to speakers of other languages, Kubota and Lin (2006) note that “racism is not restricted to inferiorization of people of color in the White dominant society but is observed in, for instance, Japanese discrimination against non-White people including other Asians” (p. 488). For writing assessment scholars to reckon with the local realities of racist social stratifications around the globe, it is necessary for them to reckon also with the locally relevant race constructs implicated in those stratifications.

## 2.2. The haunting reach of “Whiteness” and “White supremacy”

While respecting the context-contingent complexities of racism, some scholars (e.g., Leonardo, 2002; Mills, 1997) suggest that at least one configuration of racist thinking and stratification has achieved a kind of global reach: *White supremacy*, the systematic and hierarchical privileging of Whiteness, which may be an invisible passenger accompanying “the global spread of English and English language teaching” (Kubota & Lin, 2006, p. 483). As critical race and Whiteness studies scholars such as Bonilla-Silva and Zuberi (2008), Leonardo (2002), and Chambers (1996) use the term, *Whiteness* is a social effect, not an inherent biological property: It corresponds to the set of characteristics, practices, and “dispositions ... associated with the white body” (Inoue, 2015, p. 10; see Behm & Miller, 2012; Inoue, 2019)—a set regularly endorsed by social institutions (including education institutions) as neutral, normal, and desirable. Under White supremacy, putatively White bodies and behaviors are positioned as “unmarked” standards that putatively non-White bodies and behaviors are assessed unfavorably against—“marked, and made inferior” (Kubota & Lin, 2006, p. 483; see also Chambers, 1996; Davila, 2012; Inoue, 2015; Kitts, 2018; Lippi-Green, 2012). While the privileges of Whiteness accrue to White bodies, White supremacy permits a diversity of participants and propagandists, provided they “identif[y] with the oppressor and oppressive ideology,” Morales (2015) teaches: “Everyone is capable of being racist whatever their color and condition. Only some of us are liable to racist attack” (p. 87). A “haunting” presence (Kennedy, Middleton, & Ratcliffe, 2017), Whiteness often fades into background norms and assessment expectations, its trace legible in assumptions that the cultural default of the writing classroom is White. Consider, for instance, the ways scholars discuss “Black” or “African American Vernacular” English, while almost never naming a corresponding “White English”; White English, it seems, is presumed and understood to be “Standard” English (see Behm & Miller, 2012).

(Standard) English is now recognized as a global language of commerce and “intellectual exchange,” command of which is believed to “unlock the door of educational opportunity” (Hamp-Lyons, 2014, p. 355)—a door sometimes guarded by US-originated mass market tests of writing that have, in their global prominence, “shaped ... [nonnative English-speaking] countries’ perceptions and expectations ... of what ‘good writing’ is” (p. 357). Troublingly, however, the path to English’s global door-unlocking status has been paved by colonialism (Harms, 2018) and “progressive racism,” which prescribes English language education as a means of disciplining and improving non-White (or insufficiently White) racial bodies (Hammond, 2018, pp. 51-55). In this paternalistic spirit, English language writing instruction has historically been imagined as a means to screen or Americanize immigrants to the US (Hammond, 2018; see also Serviss, 2012) and as a way for US and European colonialists “to ‘civilize’ supposedly savage nations” and territories—including India, Hong Kong, and the Philippines (Harms, 2018, p. 110). Indeed, as a powerful settler colonial technology, language education participated in what a recent Canadian National Inquiry identifies as “cultural genocide” against Indigenous peoples: Compulsory “Indian Residential Schooling” practices that mandated the use of English (and/or French) over indigenous languages were “designed to oppress and eliminate Indigenous Peoples through their assimilation” (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019, p. 408). Though these histories of writing instruction and assessment are ones the field seldom acknowledges in print, they testify to the fact that the past of English language writing assessment has dovetailed uncomfortably with those of colonialism and White supremacy—converging to compose a system Inoue (2019) calls “white language supremacy.”

As I have noted elsewhere (Hammond, 2018, p. 49), I myself am implicated in Whiteness: I write these words aware that at virtually every stage of my own formal education, Whiteness has helped to compose my own perceived successes in writing. As a White, cisgender, straight, middle-class, American man—raised to speak so-called “Standard” American English as my home dialect—I inherit and inhabit intersectional privileges, not least of which is that I have generally been extended the presumption of linguistic competence and correctness. Making my privilege “visible” in this way (Wildman & Davis, 1995), I seek to underscore that my background and experiences necessarily haunt and color (that is, Whiten) my work. Writing assessment, after all, is an “embodied” activity (Inoue,

2015), meaning that the bodies and backgrounds of examiners, examinees, writing program administrators, researchers, and research participants (among others) may complexly shape the ways they engage with writing assessment (see, e.g., Ball, 1997; Davila, 2012; Inoue, 2015, 2019; Perryman-Clark, 2016). As antiracist assessment scholars and critical race educators have recommended, experience-inflected narratives can provide powerful resources for drawing attention to structural injustices and the ways they shape lived experience (see, e.g., Inoue, 2019; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005). So can other explicitly race-conscious methodologies for assessment research, like those now being promoted as part of the field's social justice turn (see §2.3). For the field of writing assessment to address its haunting racial hierarchies, it must first acknowledge their ghostly presence.

### 2.3. Antiracist approaches to “fairness” and “opportunity to learn”

If writing assessment has historically participated in racism and White supremacy, scholars are increasingly attempting to construct antiracist alternatives for writing assessment's future (e.g., Inoue, 2015, 2019; Poe et al., 2018). Much of the recent social justice turn in writing assessment has focused on consequential “fairness” and the equitable distribution of educational opportunities—or “opportunity to learn” as it is sometimes called—attending particularly to questions of racial fairness in assessment (see, e.g., Elliot, 2016; Elliot et al., 2016; Poe & Cogan, 2016; Poe, Elliot, Cogan, & Nurudeen, 2014; Poe et al., 2018; Slomp, 2016). A fair assessment of writing is one that creates “opportunity structures” for the “least advantaged,” Elliot (2016) theorizes: “Constraint of the writing construct is to be tolerated only to the extent to which benefits are realized for the least advantaged” (§3.0). Fairness in writing assessment thus depends on the consequences of assessment, some of which can be identified through the racial methodology of score disaggregation: comparing scores between subgroups in order “to assess the degree to which selected [writing] tasks marginalize populations of interest on social, cultural or racial grounds” (Slomp, 2016, §6.6; see also Elliot et al., 2016).

Seeking to “make the invisible visible through critical inquiry” (López, Erwin, Binder, & Chavez, 2018, p. 186), the emerging literature on educational “QuantCrit” (i.e., critical race theories of statistics) has drawn attention to the ways quantitative data in education (including assessment data) can be interpreted through a tacitly racist prism: “Where ‘race’ is associated with an unequal outcome it is likely to indicate the operation of racism but mainstream interpretations may erroneously impute ‘race’ as a cause in its own right as if the minoritized group is inherently deficient somehow” (Gillborn et al., 2018, p. 171). In the service of antiracism and opportunity to learn, scholars participating in writing assessment's social justice turn take the identification of racially unequal score distributions as an invitation to investigate the structural sources of those distributions (see, e.g., Elliot, 2016; Elliot et al., 2016; Poe & Cogan, 2016; Slomp, 2016), including underlying biases in assessment design (e.g., a punitively narrow writing construct), scoring practices (e.g., raters' racialized language prejudices), and also broader institutional and contextual injustices (e.g., a hostile campus/testing environment, unequal access to high-quality instruction or test preparation, etc.).

Leaving race unexamined and undiscussed in writing assessment research risks foreclosing valuable opportunities for identifying, analyzing, and contesting racial inequity. What's more, Bonilla-Silva (2017) warns of “racism without racists,” with actors participating in, perpetuating, and benefitting from White supremacy, all while claiming not to see race (i.e., to be racially “color-blind”). Pollock (2004) describes a related danger in the form of “being actively *colormute*”: deleting or omitting “race labels” from reports and records (p. 2, emphasis in original), and more generally “refus[ing] to talk in racial terms” (p. 3, emphasis in original; see also Villanueva, 2006, p. 7). In cases where assessment data can draw attention to racially disparate impacts or show that examiner subgroups enact racist prejudices when scoring writing, the decision not to disaggregate and report data on race could be thought of as a kind of colormuteness.

Of course, data disaggregation can be fraught with complexities and challenges. In some cases, local or national policy may complicate or prohibit data collection on race (Bautier & Donahue, 2012; Pollock, 2004), and as we will find, some ASW articles provide methodological rationales for not collecting or analyzing racial demographic data (e.g., Anson & Anson, 2017; Johnson & VanBrackle, 2012). Moreover, disaggregation can also be wielded to reinforce the idea that racial inequalities are innate, as Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) *The Bell Curve* demonstrates. Like race itself, racial data disaggregation is supplied with ethical meaning by the ways we construct and position it—supplied ethical meaning, that is, by race talk. It is to a consideration of such talk in ASW that we turn to next.

### 3. Methodology

Past attempts to systematically examine race talk in educational assessment and writing studies have taken the forms of content analyses (see Neuendorf, 2017) of one or more sets of disciplinary writing (e.g., journals, books), with scholars logging, quantifying, and interpreting the incidence or absence of thematically-relevant terms (e.g., “race,” “racial”) (e.g., Anson, 2012; Clary-Lemon, 2009; Center, 2007; Poe, 2009). These content analyses vary in degree of methodological formality and focus, but are unified in their agreement that there is considerable critical potential in “[m]aking race visible in scholarly writing” (Center, 2007, p. 36; see also Clary-Lemon, 2009, p. W13). Existing analyses of disciplinary race talk have tended to suggest that this potential has not consistently been realized in research. Anson (2012), for instance, surveyed the writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) literature for research related to racial and ethnic diversity (pp. 16-20). Locating a “puzzling” absence of such research, he charged that this “lack of attention, so conspicuous once we recognize it, has been itself nearly invisible, like a black-hole sun whose powerful gravitational force draws back in its own light” (p. 17). Examining race talk in the international literature on educational assessment, Poe (2009) found that the terms for conducting race talk were highly variable and underdefined, and that performance gaps between student groups were often reported without a contextualizing discussion of “how those differences in test scores arise and linking them to specific interventions, government policies, and social structures” (p. 376).

Proceeding in an “interpretative” manner (Poe & Elliot, 2019), my content analysis inherits the insights of these earlier studies but departs from them in a significant way. Seeking to understand where and how “race” is identified, constructed, and positioned within

writing assessment, my focus is narrowly on *explicit* race talk—that is, uses of the words “race” and “ethnicity,” and their variants and derivations—rather than talk that more generally “encode[s] race” under cover of alternative terms (Clary-Lemon, 2009, p. W14). To get a more systematic sense of explicit race talk in writing assessment scholarship, I conducted a content analysis of all articles published in *ASW* during the period 1994 to 2018 ( $n = 304$ ), a number that departs from other content analyses in this Special Issue (e.g., Poe & Elliot, 2019; Zheng & Yu, 2019) due to the way I have constructed “articles” to include research articles, as well as all ancillary discussion, forum, commentary, and Tools & Tech Forum “technology review” articles. Excluded in this analysis were bibliographies, reviews, editorials (and Tools & Tech editorials), and other front and back matter. *ASW* articles were accessed through ScienceDirect.

To identify articles with explicit race talk, I searched articles for the words “race,” “racial,” “racist,” “racism,” “ethnic,” and “ethnicity,” logging instances of these terms and their variants and derivations (e.g., “racialize”) by article, and excluding instances wherein “race” did not mean human subgroup classification (e.g., “Race to the Top” policy, “the human race,” etc.). My analysis also treated “ethnographic makeup,” when used as a synonym for ethnic/demographic makeup, as explicit race talk (e.g., Inoue, 2004, p. 213). Talk of *ethnicity*—typically taken to denote “a common culture ... or a common descent” (Inoue & Poe, 2012, p. 5)—is counted in this content analysis as a way of explicitly talking about race, in part because race and ethnicity are sometimes treated as synonyms or bundled together (e.g., “race/ethnicity”), and each can serve as “registers of racism” (Poe, 2009, p. 382). Even so, I approach the idea that these two registers of race talk are interchangeable with critical caution (see §4.2.1 below; also Inoue and Poe, 2012, pp. 4-5). Not included in these counts were instances of explicit race talk appearing in an article’s title, abstract, author bio, works cited, or in the titles of referenced texts only—or in appendices not textually incorporated into article PDFs, appearing only as a hyperlink. Reserving my primary analysis for articles that contain explicit talk of “race” and/or “ethnicity” as such (§4.1), articles featuring other potentially racialized terms (e.g., “national” or “cultural background,” “minority,” “diversity,” etc.) and subgroups (see §4.2.2 for list) were only included in the initial findings counts and analyses below when they *also* included at least one explicit reference to “race” or “ethnicity.” I discuss *ASW* texts that may contain implicit race talk later in this article (§4.2.3), exploring some of the questions they raise.

Although the country associated with the institutional affiliation for each article’s author(s) provides only partial insights into the national contexts that shape race talk within that article, I documented these data to give an imperfect indication of the (inter) national shape of explicit race talk within *ASW* (see Appendix A under “Institutional Affiliation Countries”). Articles containing explicit race talk were coded for where and how this talk appeared, and for whether and how explicit race terms were defined. I also identified whether explicit race talk was substantial or circumstantial (i.e., non-substantial) within an article, treating each kind of substantial engagement as a different kind of race talk and treating circumstantial race talk as its own category. For this analysis, “substantial” meant that in empirical studies, race (and/or ethnicity) explicitly figured in study findings *and* analyses. Race talk was considered substantial in other kinds of articles (e.g., historical, theoretical) if race explicitly figured as central to the article’s core questions and concerns. As an imperfect quantitative threshold for non-empirical articles, texts were required to contain at least three instances of explicit race talk (excluding instances in introductory and concluding sections) in order to be considered for “substantial” classification. These (arguably low) requirements for consideration as “substantial” are intended to aid this article in capturing, as best as possible, the full range of articles that make race explicitly visible in their analyses. When discussing the race-related terminology featured in specific articles, I adopt the spelling and capitalization conventions that those articles use.

## 4. Findings: Race talk trends in *ASW*

### 4.1. Overview

In the past quarter century, nearly a quarter of the 304 articles published in *ASW* ( $n = 68$ ) have included at least one explicit reference to race and/or ethnicity (see Table 1; Appendix A). Put another way, over three-quarters of the articles published in the journal (78%) contain no direct references to race and/or ethnicity, testifying that race has not always been a central focus within the journal. Only 19 of the 68 articles (28%) include what we could call “substantial talk” of race (i.e., some form of substantial analysis or sustained discussion related to race and/or ethnicity). Of course, it is possible that talk of race proceeds in the journal covertly, implicit in some articles wherein it is not identified explicitly (see §4.2.3), and the fact that many *ASW* articles do not contain race talk should not be taken to indicate that they fail to engage in insightful, socially conscious research of other kinds.

Suggestively, the 2002 relaunch of *ASW* as an international journal coincides with a brief but noticeable drop-off in the percentage of articles containing explicit race talk. Indeed, 31% of the articles published between 1994 and 2000 contained some form of explicit race talk, dropping to 20% between 2002 and 2018 (see Table 2). These shifts may suggest that while US-based researchers and perspectives have continued to predominate within the journal (see Poe & Elliot, 2019; Zheng & Yu, 2019), the broadening of *ASW*’s international base of researchers during this second period may have also broadened the journal’s context-specific vocabularies for talking about subgroup diversity, with at least some of these vocabularies deemphasizing “race” as an explicit variable. More research is necessary to examine where and how alternative vocabularies (e.g., those centering “nationality,” “culture,” “diversity,” etc.) are used to encode talk of race; due to its methodological focus on explicit or overt talk of race, this content analysis can only provide some tentative moves in the direction of a broader analysis of implicit or covert race talk (see §4.2.3).

Along these lines, it is notable that the period between 2002 and 2018 witnessed the publication of a larger number of explicit race talk articles penned by one or more authors with an institutional affiliation outside of the US (see Table 3). Between 1994 and 2000, these non-US affiliations included only South Africa and the United Kingdom (UK); this list expanded noticeably between 2002 and 2018, with the appearance of explicit race talk articles written by authors with institutional affiliations in Australia, Canada, Egypt, Israel, Iran, Japan, New Zealand, the United Arab Emirates, and the UK, in addition to the US (see Appendix A). While none of

**Table 1**

Numbers and percentages of articles in the journal *Assessing Writing* (ASW) that contain explicit race talk from 1994 to 2018, with columns disaggregated for numbers and percentages of four race talk trends: perception talk, performance talk, content talk, and circumstantial talk. “—” denotes a year during which no articles were published. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.

	Total Articles		Total Race Talk		Perception Talk Only		Performance Talk Only		Content Talk Only		Circumstantial Talk Only	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1994	10		5	50	1	10	0	0	0	0	4	40
1995	8		1	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	13
1996	6		3	50	0	0	0	0	1	17	2	33
1997	8		3	38	1	13	1	13	0	0	1	13
1998	11		2	18	1	9	0	0	0	0	1	9
1999	7		2	29	1	14	0	0	0	0	1	14
2000	8		2	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	25
2001	—		—		—		—		—		—	
2002	8		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2003	3		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2004	10		2	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	20
2005	10		1	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	10
2006	11		2	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	18
2007	13		2	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	15
2008	13		3	23	1	8	0	0	0	0	2	15
2009	12		3	25	0	0	0	0	1	8	2	17
2010	11		4	36	0	0	1	9	0	0	3	27
2011	15		4	27	0	0	3	20	0	0	1	7
2012	16		6	38	1	6	0	0	0	0	5	31
2013	17		4	24	0	0	2	12	0	0	2	12
2014	24		4	17	1	4	0	0	1	4	2	8
2015	16		2	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	13
2016	16		4	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	25
2017	28		7	25	0	0	2	7	0	0	5	18
2018	23		2	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	9
ALL	304		68	22	7	2	9	3	3	1	49	16

Note: Percentages for each row are taken relative to the number in the “Total Articles” column for that period.

**Table 2**

Numbers and percentages of articles in the journal *Assessing Writing* (ASW) that contain explicit race talk from 1994 to 2000 and 2002 to 2018, with columns disaggregated for numbers and percentages of four race talk trends: perception talk, performance talk, content talk, and circumstantial talk. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.

	Total Articles		Total Race Talk		Perception Talk Only		Performance Talk Only		Content Talk Only		Circumstantial Talk Only	
	#	% ALL	#	% RT	#	% RT	#	% RT	#	% RT	#	% RT
1994-2000	58		18	31	4	22	1	6	1	6	12	67
2002-2018	246		50	20	3	6	8	16	2	4	37	74
ALL	304		68	22	7	10	9	13	3	4	49	72

Note: “% All” indicates a percentage taken relative to the total number of articles published in ASW ( $n = 304$ ), and “% RT” indicates a percentage taken relative only to the total number of race talk articles published during each period: 18 (for “1994–2000”), 50 (for “2002–2018”), and 68 (for “ALL”).

the explicit race talk articles that ASW published between 1994 and 2000 were authored by researcher teams with institutional affiliations in multiple countries, 12% of the explicit race talk articles published between 2002 and 2018 were authored by internationally affiliated teams of this kind.

Even so, 16 (84%) of the substantial talk articles in ASW were written by authors with US-based institutional affiliations only (see Table 4); by contrast, only 3 (16%) substantial talk articles can boast an author with an institutional affiliation based outside of the US (i.e., in Canada, South Africa, and the UK). Taken together, these patterns indicate that the conversation about race and racism in ASW is growing more nationally diverse, but also that this conversation remains substantially dominated by American voices. There seems to be considerable opportunity for ASW—in light of its international scope and reach—to help diversify and deepen the field’s substantive engagements with explicit race talk in years to come, with researchers from around the world examining the local meanings race and racism have within their writing assessment contexts.

When coding ASW articles for race talk, I identified four trends, the first three of which substantially engage with race in some way:

**Table 3**

Numbers and percentages of articles in the journal *Assessing Writing* (ASW) that contain explicit race talk from 1994 to 2000, 2002 to 2018, and 1994 to 2018, with rows disaggregated by the countries associated with the institutional affiliations of article authors. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.

	1994–2000 ( <i>n</i> = 18)		2002–2018 ( <i>n</i> = 50)		1994–2018 ( <i>n</i> = 68)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Canada	0	0	3	6	3	4
Iran	0	0	1	2	1	1
Israel	0	0	1	2	1	1
South Africa	1	6	0	0	1	1
United Arab Emirates	0	0	1	2	1	1
United Kingdom	1	6	3	6	4	6
United States	16	89	35	70	51	75
Two or More Countries or Regions	0	0	6	12	6	9

*Note:* All percentages are taken relative to the number of articles listed above their respective columns: 18 (for “1994–2000”), 50 (for “2002–2018”), and 68 (for “1994–2018”). “Two or More Countries/Regions” included researcher teams with affiliations in Egypt and the US (*n* = 1), New Zealand and the US (*n* = 1), New Zealand and Australia (*n* = 1), Iran and the US (*n* = 1), Israel and the US (*n* = 1), and Japan and the UK (*n* = 1).

**Table 4**

Numbers and percentages of articles in the journal *Assessing Writing* (ASW) that contain substantial race talk and circumstantial race talk from 1994 to 2018, with rows disaggregated by the countries associated with the institutional affiliations of article authors. Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.

	Substantial Talk Only ( <i>n</i> = 19)		Circumstantial Talk Only ( <i>n</i> = 49)	
	#	%	#	%
Canada	1	5	2	4
Iran	0	0	1	2
Israel	0	0	1	2
South Africa	1	5	0	0
United Arab Emirates	0	0	1	2
United Kingdom	1	5	3	6
United States	16	84	35	71
Two or More Countries or Regions	0	0	6	12

*Note:* All percentages are taken relative to the number of articles listed above their respective columns: 19 (for “Substantial Talk Only”) and 49 (for “Circumstantial Talk Only”). “Two or More Countries/Regions” included researcher teams with affiliations in Egypt and the US (*n* = 1), New Zealand and the US (*n* = 1), New Zealand and Australia (*n* = 1), Iran and the US (*n* = 1), Israel and the US (*n* = 1), and Japan and the UK (*n* = 1).

- 1 Researchers have studied how race participates in the perceptions, preferences, and beliefs of assessment actors (e.g., examiners and examinees); this trend is one I call “perception talk” (§4.1.1).
- 2 In analyses of students’ writing scores, race has been a variable analyzed for subgroup inequalities (or inequities) in performance: “performance talk” (§4.1.2).
- 3 In some articles, explicit race talk has been registered and analyzed as “content talk” (§4.1.3), appearing as textual features of testing materials (e.g., prompts), student texts, and instructors’ written feedback.
- 4 Finally, most of the explicit race talk that appears in ASW has been “circumstantial talk” (§4.1.4): references to race that position it as being in some way relevant to the context for or circumstances of a paper, but not as being central to that study’s analysis or argument.

Each of these trends is discussed below, along with illustrative examples; then, complementing and complicating these trends, I explore questions raised by explicit race talk in the journal (§4.2). Where “substantial talk” articles contained more than one form of substantial race talk (i.e., perception, performance, or content talk), they have been classified by the primary race talk trend they take part in.

#### 4.1.1. Perception talk

White’s (1994) inaugural ASW article notes that “racial ... minorities” may distrust assessments, thinking of them as instruments of injustice and oppression (p. 23). He also warns that some theorists may believe that the act of reading (and thereby assessment) is too context-dependent—“situated ... in time, gender, class, race, dialect, and so on”—to submit to statistical analysis and generalization (p. 18, emphasis mine). In doing so, he underscores how race can shape the ways assessments are socially constructed and encountered, implicated in examinee and examiner perceptions, beliefs, perspectives, and preferences—what I call “perception talk” (*n* = 7).

Following White’s inaugural discussion of assessment perceptions, the next perception talk text in ASW was Ball’s (1997) US-based article on teacher perceptions of student writing, which sought to “revitalize the dialogue on culture as a critical component” of writing assessment (p. 171). Contrasting how European-American and African-American teachers rated the writings of 5/6th grade

European-American, African-American, and Hispanic-American students, Ball found that while African-American participants gave lower ratings to all student subgroups, European-American teachers tended to assign scores that were “noticeably” more stratified by students’ “ethnic backgrounds,” ranking European-American writers considerably higher than their African-American and Hispanic-American peers (p. 178). Follow-up interviews with the African-American teachers revealed some of their underlying assumptions about writing instruction and assessment, including their concerns that assessment can be culturally biased, superficially error-fixed, and punitive (pp. 183–194). In light of these findings, Ball calls for greater ethnic diversity in conversations about writing assessment: “we must learn how to better privilege the voices and interpretations from teachers most knowledgeable about the *cultural* context of students’ assessment. Unless we accomplish this task, writing achievement for underachieving students will, quite likely, continue to decline” (p. 193, emphasis in original).

Setting out to examine “how different kinds of features (or ‘errors’) influence writing assessors” (p. 36), [Johnson and VanBrackle \(2012\)](#) similarly US-based study of rater perceptions and biases presented raters of the University System of Georgia’s Regent’s Writing Exam with three artificially modified essays to score: one with dialectical features of African American English (AAE), another with errors believed typical of English Second Language (ESL) writing, and a third with errors believed typical of Standard American English (SAE) writing (pp. 40–44, 49–53). Their findings “clearly indicate[d] a bias” (p. 46) against writings that include African American English (AAE) features: Raters interpret these features as errors and penalize them more severely than other *actual* errors—a pattern that perhaps accounts for the racial gap in performance on the Regent’s Writing Exam (pp. 46–47). Unlike [Ball’s \(1997\)](#) study, however, [Johnson and VanBrackle \(2012\)](#) did not collect or analyze data concerning the examiners’ racial and/or ethnic backgrounds, believing “it too intrusive to contact raters afterwards and collect any data since they did not know some of their ratings were part of a study” (p. 44). As a result, their article does not explore whether or how examiners’ backgrounds may have shaped their discriminatory linguistic perceptions.

Examinee perceptions and preferences have also been explored in the pages of *ASW*. [He and Shi \(2008\)](#), for instance, conducted an interview-based study of ESL student perceptions of examinations associated with entrance into Western Canadian universities. Introducing their study, He and Shi note that one such examination, the English Language Proficiency Index (LPI) test, is designed with an “attention ... to avoiding racial, ethnic, and gender biases,” but that “since the test is also for local students, some essay topics are related to Canadian culture which, as we illustrate later, might put the international students from certain ethnic backgrounds at a disadvantage” (p. 131). Illustrating this ethnic disadvantage, He and Shi report that study participants—all of whom had either a Taiwanese or Mainland Chinese “background” (p. 135)—tended to “perceiv[e] some of the LPI essay prompts as unfair and culturally biased” (p. 141), rewarding or punishing students on the basis of their familiarity with Canadian politics and culture. This problem was one “compounded by the [LPI’s] requirement of using simple and error-free expressions,” with *simplicity* seeming to require mastery of English idioms as a way of “mask[ing] nonnative-speaker status” (p. 140). If the perceptions of this study’s participants are any indication, the LPI may have imposed discriminatory barriers to opportunity to learn. For the study’s participants, failure to pass this test threatened their ability “to continue university studies” (p. 138).

Considered as a whole, perception talk in *ASW* has helped to deepen the literature on race’s roles in the social construction of error and writing quality (see, e.g., [Matarese & Anson, 2010](#)), and in students’ experiences and preferences within an assessment ecology (see, e.g., [Inoue, 2015](#)), while leaving related questions of structural racism less explicitly articulated or well-developed. Notably, [Johnson and VanBrackle’s \(2012\)](#) article is one of only three in *ASW*’s first 25 years to explicitly reference racism, but seemingly narrows this term’s meanings to include only personal bigotry, rather than structural injustice—something I discuss at greater length below (§4.2.4 below). Promisingly, in providing accounts of cultural biases encoded in test requirements ([He & Shi, 2008](#)) and exploring how examiners’ cultural backgrounds may contribute to ethnically differential outcomes for student writers ([Ball, 1997](#)), existing perception talk articles set the stage for future perception talk research to more explicitly examine writing assessment’s connections to structural racism and Whiteness (see, e.g., [Davila, 2012](#)).

#### 4.1.2. Performance talk

[Poe \(2009\)](#) has described “comparative studies” that consider race-related score differences as participating in an ambivalent “‘gap’ discourse,” which can frame White students as “the baseline from which all other groups are compared” (p. 374). Yet while they can reify racial stereotypes regarding ability, comparative studies can also highlight the need for structural reforms, helping to expand educational opportunity (pp. 374–375). Navigating this intellectually and ethically complex terrain, several *ASW* articles engage in racial “performance talk” ( $n = 9$ ), disaggregating data by racial subgroup to examine whether and how scores are unequally distributed, or else integrating race into a statistical model to identify whether and how racial subgroup membership correlates with performance. All but one of the articles in this trend were published after *ASW*’s 2002 relaunch, which may signal a small but growing interest in performance talk in the field—an interest that, if developed further, might draw much-needed attention to where and how writing assessment shapes opportunity to learn.

For instance, [Shay’s \(1997\)](#) South African study of portfolio assessment and program evaluation took place in the shadow of “South Africa’s gradual transition from apartheid to democracy,” which, Shay tells us, “resulted in a steady increase in black enrollment over the years—black students will soon be a majority at the University of Cape Town (UCT),” a “historically white” institution (p. 30). Of the initial goals of “Academic Development” (AD) work in “South Africa’s historically white universities,” Shay writes,

The aim was to “assimilate” a small number of black students who, due to the legacy of apartheid education, were underprepared for the demands of tertiary education. Not only had their schooling failed to provide them with the necessary academic foundations, but they confronted the reality of English as the exclusive medium of instruction. In addition, many of them experienced tremendous cultural disorientation in what was then an overwhelmingly white, western, middle-class, urban environment. (p. 30)

In response to demographic shifts in UCT's enrollment during the post-Apartheid period, AD's responsibilities intensified, expanding to include partnerships with university departments to develop educational "environments ... more sensitive to the needs of a diverse student population" (p. 30). Against this backdrop, writing portfolio scores in Shay's study were disaggregated by "educationally advantaged" (EA) and "educationally disadvantaged" (ED) subgroups. These classifications were disclosed by the researcher to be racially coded: "The term 'educationally disadvantaged' usually refers to African and Coloured students," the majority of whom "are speakers of English as an additional language" and attended "racially divided, highly under-resourced" schools prior to UCT; by contrast, "educationally advantaged" is a proxy for "white students with either English or Afrikaans as a home language from what were relatively very well-resourced and privileged schools" (p. 49). Finding that the ED subgroup's writings received lower scores than the EA subgroup, the UCT department used portfolio assessment to reconsider and reform their existing curriculum, judging that it failed to meet the "learning needs of students represented by the ED group" (p. 46). Assessment, in this way, becomes an important program evaluation tool, calibrated to "become part of learning and not be misused to exclude people or groups from educational opportunity" (White, 1994, p. 24).

Investigating the (potentially racialized) effects of assessment administration mode (i.e., paper or computer), Chen, White, McCloskey, Soroui, and Chun (2011) disaggregated the results of a US National Assessment of Adult Literacy's (NAAL's) Functional Writing Assessment field test by White, Black, and Hispanic demographic subgroups, excluding data from "Asian/Pacific Islanders, American Indian, Alaska Native, and adults identified as multiple races ... due to small individual and combined sample sizes" (p. 61). Although all racial subgroups performed better on paper than on computer test administrations, race/ethnicity was "found to interact significantly with administration mode" for 2 of the 3 writing tasks studied (p. 68), with Black writers scoring significantly lower than White participants on computer administrations (pp. 61–62). Without speculating about why only two tasks displayed this interaction, the researchers considered the general differential performance "not surprising," insofar as US Census data suggest that "Blacks ... generally have less experience using computers compared to Whites" (p. 68). Chen et al. do not dwell on this point, but such racialized "digital divides" are not natural or accidental societal features, but instead are artifacts of structural racism and the material constraints it imposes on technological access (see Banks, 2006).

Additionally, computer-related ASW performance talk is not limited to Chen et al.'s (2011) work on administration mode: Much of the racial performance talk in ASW has taken the form of articles published in the last decade that examine the (potential) differential impacts of automated writing assessment ( $n = 4$ ). Of these, Klobucar, Elliot, Deess, Rudiny, and Joshi's (2013) study is notably explicit in its insistence on the ethical importance of "disaggregation of information in the service of fair test use" (p. 81), writing that in a "global environment of demographic change, information on student writing performance—disaggregated by gender and race/ethnicity for each writing assessment measure used within an institution—should be taken as a reporting standard" (p. 80). Klobucar et al. (2013) emblemize the (sometimes implicit) aim that unifies much of ASW's performance talk: expanding opportunity to learn, perhaps particularly for the "least advantaged," by attending to the differential impacts of assessment (see Elliot, 2016).

While making this important move in the direction of examining fairness in assessment, performance talk in ASW has less fully explored the sources for racially differential score distributions—including by considering how structural racism may contribute to the performance gaps observed. To give one example, Shay's (1997) performance talk text begins the work of antiracist data analysis by identifying South Africa's history of state-mandated segregation as a potential source for performance differences between the (racially coded) "educationally disadvantaged" students and their "educationally advantaged" peers. Extending and deepening this study's antiracist performance talk might require questioning what roles UCT's "haunting whiteness" (Kennedy et al., 2017) plays in shaping writing expectations and aims for the school's "very diverse student population" (Shay, 1997, p. 30). Shay (1997) notes, for instance, that among UCT lecturers, "the most common interpretation" (p. 45) for differential performance between student groups "is that the ED's relatively weak reports are a result of poor language skills" (p. 44). However, as perception talk articles in ASW suggest (see §4.1.1), examiner perceptions of "poor language skills" can be inflected with racial biases. To richly contextualize performance talk, it may be necessary to bring it into conversation with perception talk and content talk.

#### 4.1.3. Content talk

The year before ASW's launch, Rothgery (1993) encouraged writing educators to ask: How should instructors respond to a paper with overtly racist content, such as "Skinhead-oriented papers arguing the supremacy of the White race" (p. 244)? This line of inquiry points to the *textual content* of student writing as another location for race talk. While no ASW article discusses the kind of overtly racist textual content Rothgery (1993) references, some articles (all of them US-based) contain what I call racial "content talk" ( $n = 3$ ), discussing the textual presence of race talk (or racialized content) in student writing, instructors' written responses, or assessment documents, such as prompts. Examples of content talk in writing assessment scholarship might take the form of content analyses of race talk (such as this article), or could look like text- and artifact-based historical analyses of the racist assumptions and aims in journal articles (e.g., Hammond, 2018) or testing documents (e.g., Harms, 2018)—to cite examples published outside of ASW. Appearing less commonly than perception or performance talk, content talk in ASW also tended to be less analytically central to the articles containing it, often no longer than a few sentences within a larger qualitative analysis.

Containing some clear elements of perception talk, Paley's (1996) consideration of the college application essay is the only ASW text to engage in anything like sustained content talk, triangulating the wordings of admissions essay prompts (pp. 87–88) and the texts of ("white" and "racially mixed") students' essays with ("white") admissions officers' responses to them (pp. 90, 101). Notably, two student essays contained content concerning their respective authors' opposition to some form of racism: anti-black bullying in one white student's essay (p. 97) and American settler colonialism (i.e., "robbing the Native Americans of land that only they had the right to, and then tr[ying] to wipe out their civilization") in a second text "written by a student with a racially mixed background" (p. 101)—though this second student text does not reference race, racism, or settler colonialism by name (see also §4.2.4 below). What

Paley found is that “[d]espite all the encouragement of applicants to tell about themselves” in college essays (p. 97), such content can be met with indifference or hostility. Responding to the first student’s essay, college admissions officers seemed largely fixated on questions of mechanical correctness over content; at least two of them even characterized the article’s content as a “litany” or “not original” (p. 97). Paley further questions whether the (decolonial-related) content of the second student’s essay could have been met with examiner resistance “had the student not qualified his criticism” (p. 101).

Anthony’s (2009) later study included talk of students’ reflective timed-essay responses about “transformative learning experiences” they associated with computer use: one quoted student (whose race is not disclosed) thought these experiences included “challeng[ing] my views on race and diversity” (p. 198). When Anthony first engages with the race-related content of this student’s reflection, it is with an attention to “veracity” (p. 200), noting that “the cynical among us may detect a whiff of schmutz,” with the student’s diversity-related reflection potentially providing readers/examiners “what s/he thinks we want to hear” (p. 201). And focused on the documents used to conduct assessment, Toth and Aull’s (2014) textual analysis of directed self-placement (DSP) questionnaires asks whether some ostensibly race-neutral DSP questions might be subtly racialized, or at least be experienced by students as such. Specifically, the researchers “wonder how students interpret questions about *qualities/demographics of high school*” (p. 11, emphasis in original), adding that they “worry that in some settings students might feel ‘profiled’ by these kinds of questions, particularly as they map onto class- and race-related social geographies” (p. 12). Together, these three instances of content talk gesture to the promising potential that textual analyses of testing-related documents and student compositions themselves have for understanding how writing assessment relies on and reinforces race constructs. Intriguingly, in two of the three content talk articles, we find examples of how antiracist or pro-diversity content in student writing can be met with a degree of suspicion (Anthony, 2009) or dismissal (Paley, 1996), raising questions about the ways that race talk in student writing may be received and responded to by examiners—questions that require the kind of integrated, ecological attention to content talk *and* perception talk that Paley’s (1996) article begins to provide.

#### 4.1.4. Circumstantial talk

The overwhelming majority of race talk featured in ASW has been “circumstantial talk” ( $n = 49$ ), my term for when race is explicitly referenced in the course of sketching the circumstances for (or context of) an article’s examination of writing assessment (e.g., as demographic data, in a literature review, as a study limitation, in a call for future research, as a variable or study finding mentioned only in passing, etc.), while at the same time, these racial references are not accompanied by substantial engagement (e.g., in the form of analysis, discussion, or interpretation central to the article). In some cases, circumstantial race talk may even take the form of contextualizing asides or incidental details, seemingly marginal to its article’s core focus. Circumstantial talk was the predominant form of race talk during ASW’s first phase—67% of all race talk articles from 1994 through 2000—and remained predominant after its relaunch, even increasing in its share of the journal during its second phase: 74% of all race talk articles from 2002 through 2018 participate in this trend.

Circumstantial talk can be found not only in empirical studies, but also in history- and theory-centric articles that reference race as a contextualizing element within a broader historical context. In this way, while no history-centric ASW article explicitly centers on race or ethnicity, Serviss’s (2012) examination of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century literacy testing in New York engages with questions of nationality, immigration, and Nativism, and mentions “ethnicity” within this context (p. 211). Williamson’s (1994) historical treatment of efficiency culture in US writing assessment briefly alludes to the rise of (White) private schooling in response to “the integration of African Americans and other people of color into the public schools” in the 1950s (p. 153); looking forward, Williamson expresses optimism “that the growing recognition of the ethnic diversity of American culture now occurring will help to foreground the fact that American culture involves a variety of literacies” (p. 170).

That an article engages in circumstantial race talk does not necessarily mean it is flawed in some way. There are many important topics and demographic constructs other than race for writing assessment scholars to focus on, and for that matter, scholars engaged in circumstantial talk within the pages of ASW (e.g., Anson & Anson, 2017) might be making more substantial contributions to race-related research elsewhere (e.g., Anson, 2012; Matarese & Anson, 2010). Instead, this circumstantial talk trend is important to note because it suggests that the field’s engagements with race remain largely tentative and inchoate, in need of further developments that move conversations often occurring at the fringes of ASW to the foreground of that journal. Helpfully, instances of circumstantial talk often include, or take the form of, calls for future scholarship more directly attentive to race and/or ethnicity—calls that could point a way forward for ASW’s next 25 years. For instance, in their US corpus-based study of peer and instructor response, Anson and Anson (2017) engage in circumstantial talk when acknowledging and explaining race’s absence in their study, while also explicitly affirming the value of considering it in future work. Relatedly, Gebril’s (2010) analysis of L2 exam tasks administered to Egyptian University students engages in explicit race talk only when noting that the study’s participants were “a homogenous group of students who come from the same ethnic and linguistic background” (p. 103). Yet Gebril also directs future scholars to the potential benefits of a comparative follow-up study: “Future research needs to focus on the effect of using raters from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds” (p. 114). Whether calls like these will be answered is a question that future researchers will decide.

#### 4.2. The meanings of “race,” “ethnicity,” and “racism” in ASW

Despite ASW’s long traditions of race talk, “race,” “ethnicity” and “racism” seem never to have been explicitly defined within the pages of the journal. Instead, the meanings of these highly contested terms are sketched only by insinuation. ASW is not alone in this regard. Poe (2009) has noted a similar absence in the talk of race in educational assessment research, generally: “Key terms like ‘race,’ ‘ethnicity,’ and even ‘minority’ are often not defined in the research literature. It is clear, however, that these terms are being used differently by researchers” (p. 376). To the extent writing assessment scholars intend for insights from their work to inform future

practice, policy, or research relating to race, this lack of denotative clarity introduces potentially significant problems, making findings and claims relating to race difficult to interpret or evaluate, and introducing the potential that scholars and stakeholders may talk past one another—using the same terms to mean different things or different terms to mean the same thing. Inconsistency on this front may impose a barrier to addressing racial injustice: “Writing assessment as a field has yet to address explicitly and consistently ‘race’ as a theoretical concept..., thus the field has not addressed racism as potentially structural and status quo” (Inoue, 2012, p. 127). We get a sense for the current state of terminological complexity (and perhaps confusion) in the field when we consider how “race” and “ethnicity” are positioned relative to one another, sometimes as interchangeable terms (§4.2.1); how racial subgroups have been specified within ASW (§4.2.2); how race might remain an “absent presence” (Prendergast, 1998), implied without being explicitly or meaningfully discussed in the journal (§4.2.3); and finally, how ASW articles talk about racial (in)justice, fairness, and racism (§4.2.4).

#### 4.2.1. The interchangeability of “race” and “ethnicity”

Because neither “race” nor “ethnicity” is explicitly defined within ASW, it is unclear where and how these terms are treated as interchangeable (or not). The relationship between these terms is important to clarify, because talk of ethnicity seems sometimes to be treated as an “appealing” stand-in for talk of race (Clary-Lemon, 2009, p. W4; Poe, 2009, p. 373), attractive for its perceived distance from explicit talk of racial inequalities and racism (see also Clary-Lemon, 2009; Inoue & Poe, 2012, pp. 4-5; Poe, 2009, pp. 372-374; Villanueva, 2006, 2011). Several articles conjoin or conflate race and ethnicity (i.e., as “race and ethnicity” or “race/ethnicity”), without specifying whether they are imagined as distinct but aggregated constructs or two names for the same construct (e.g., Chen, White, McCloskey, Soroui, & Chun, 2011; Klobucar et al., 2013). In other articles, researchers seem to frame “ethnicity” in terms of culture, as Williamson (1994) does when discussing “the ethnic diversity of American culture” alongside the increasing “complexity” and “variety of literacies” that constitute “American culture”—never using the word “race” (p. 170). Alternatively, in some articles, the intended framing of ethnicity is murkier and the term may do little more than encode biological race. Consider Witte, Flach, Greenwood, and Wilson (1995), when they list “gender, ethnic, and cultural differences” as three forms of student heterogeneity (p. 40)—apparently distinguishing ethnic differences from cultural differences in a way that might position ethnic differences as a placeholder for biological differences.

It seems that in at least some cases, ASW researchers may identify racist phenomena while relying on a conceptual vocabulary that cannot readily describe them as such—a potential challenge even when the term “ethnicity” is centered in the absence of “race” (see §4.2.4). One instructive example is provided in Ball’s (1997) perception talk article (§4.1.1), which has often been cited as investigating race or racial background (e.g., Inoue, 2012, p. 126; Perryman-Clark, 2016, p. 210), even though the text itself never once mentions the words “race” or “racial.” We may agree with Inoue (2012) that this study “demonstrates racist outcomes in assessment” (p. 126), with European-American examiners heaping hierarchical privileges on European-American writings, but it is important to remember that Ball’s (1997) article itself discusses assessment inequalities in terms of differences in cultural context and familiarity, not emphasizing the ways that the European-American assessment practices it documents may reinforce an ongoing history of White supremacy.

#### 4.2.2. Specifying racial subgroups

Further complicating matters, specific racial classifications used in writing assessment research are historically- and socially-contingent—changing over time and shaped by institutional preferences, researcher preoccupations, and national/legal contexts (see, e.g., Bautier & Donahue, 2012; Poe, 2009; Poe & Cogan, 2016). A kaleidoscopic assortment of identities and backgrounds are explicitly identified within ASW as “racial” and/or “ethnic,” a partial list of which includes the following:

*African, African American, American Indian, Asian, Asian American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Bangladeshi, Black, Black African, Black Caribbean, Black or African American, Caucasian, Chinese, Coloured, European American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Hispanic American, Hispanic or Latino, Hispanic/Latino, Indian, Mainland Chinese, Mexican American, Middle Eastern, Minority, Mixed Race, Multi-Ethnic, Multi-Racial, Native American, Native American/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, Non-White, Northern European, Other, Other [non-Mexican] Hispanic, Pakistani, Taiwanese, Two or More Races, White, and White (non-Hispanic).*

Some of these classifications seem to overlap, perhaps subtly departing from one another in their assumptions and ideological implications, or just as subtly in their local inclusion/exclusion criteria at the point of classification. Such a wide variety is, perhaps, to be expected: Racial classification constructs are politically and ethically significant, shaping who is counted (or not) and how, with classification conventions conforming to local exigences, standards, and histories—among other things. In Poe’s (2009) words, “Who we choose to count and how we choose to count them is not inevitable but is itself a social construction. The meanings assigned to the results of such research figure in the structuring of societies and the institutions within societies” (p. 377). As one way to manage this complexity (fraught as it is with “agendas for the collection of such data”), Poe (2009) recommends that “[w]henver a racial construct is used, it is important that researchers explain *why* such a construct was used (available census data, etc.)” (p. 376, emphasis in original).

This recommendation is one that vanishingly few ASW articles follow. Some studies note where and/or how racial demographic data were collected (e.g., Behizadeh & Engelhard, 2014), yet these methodological notes are infrequent and seldom accompanied by explicit construct definition. Curiously, the most detailed rationales for racial data collection often come from researchers explaining their choice *not* to collect race-related data (e.g., Anson & Anson, 2017; Johnson & VanBrackle, 2012). In ASW, the most detailed account of the local meaning and relevance of a particular racial subgroup is provided by Shay (1997), who notes that in the South African context, “The term ‘black’ has been used traditionally to refer to all who were to a greater or lesser extent discriminated

against by apartheid legislation, that is, in this case, African, Coloured (people of mixed race) and Indian students” (p. 49)—though even here, Shay does not further explain the constructs (e.g., “Indian”) used to supply “black” with local meaning. Where subgroup classifications are concerned, the first 25 years’ worth of race talk in ASW lacks a clear and coherent structure for reporting why and how subgroup classifications were chosen, and how participants came to be classified relative to them. For demographic data and racially disaggregated scores to have full meaning, both need to be richly contextualized alongside these *additional* forms of race classification data.

#### 4.2.3. Absent presences in ASW

Up to this point, we have been discussing explicit or overt race talk, setting aside questions about the presence of implicit or covert race talk. Prendergast (1998) originally discussed this second kind of talk as rendering race an “absent presence” of sorts, haunting disciplinary talk of other things, “subsumed into the powerful tropes of ‘basic writer,’ ‘stranger’ to the academy, or the trope of the generalized, marginalized ‘other’” (p. 36). Indirect race talk proceeds under metaphorical cover (Clary-Lemon, 2009), such that “[t]he word ‘race’ drops out and other words get used: ethnicity, identity, culture” (Villanueva, 2006, p. 6). To the extent race is left an absent presence in writing assessment scholarship, this research is distanced from the critical vocabulary needed to identify racism in its structural form (see Inoue, 2012). “As race disappears from the socioconceptual landscape, then, racisms ... are pushed further and further out of sight, out of existence, unmentionable because the terms by which to recognize and reference them fade from view and memory,” Goldberg (2009a) warns (pp. 1713–1714).

There are a seemingly indefinite number of ways race might be “submerged and hidden,” covertly signifying “without identification” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9)—perhaps encoded through terms related to religion, color, civilization, development, achievement, geography, nationality, language, genotype, ability, giftedness, and at-risk status (see also Clary-Lemon, 2009). A comprehensive accounting of covert race talk within ASW may be impossible, but we begin to take its measure when we consider articles that explicitly gesture to the ways race might be submerged in and hidden by alternative vocabularies. Shay (1997), for instance, shows us how the vocabulary of “advantage” (e.g., the “educationally advantaged”) can become a proxy for race (p. 49; see §4.1.1). Indeed, while my quantitative findings above (§4.1) excluded articles without explicit references to “race” or “ethnicity,” some ASW articles reference what are apparently racial subgroups, yet do so without any direct mention of “race” or “ethnicity.” For example, when searching for a subset of the classifications listed in §4.2.2 above (“Caucasian,” “White,” “Black,” and racial subgroups containing the word “American”) along with the words “Indigenous” and “of color” (when those words denote human subgroups), we find that a handful of articles ( $n = 13$ ; see Appendix B) reference one or more of these subgroups without any mention of “race” or “ethnicity” as such (4% of the total articles in ASW’s first quarter century). With few exceptions (e.g., Hamp-Lyons, 2002), these references appear in the context of reporting demographic subgroup data; none of these articles disaggregates performance data by these (potentially racialized) subgroups.

There is benefit to “explicitly and consistently” discussing “race” and “racism” (Inoue, 2012, p. 127; see also Center, 2007; Clary-Lemon, 2009; Inoue & Poe, 2012; Kitts, 2018; Poe, 2009): These terms help writing assessment scholars to talk about the relationship of group difference to social position and power. Even so, engaging in implicit race talk does not in itself mean that an article has nothing important to say about race—or, for that matter, that it has no important insights on other topics. And in the case of any article in ASW, there may be principled bases—or legal reasons (see Bautier & Donahue, 2012)—for focusing on constructs such as “nationality” or “culture” instead of race. Just as there is a need for researchers to clarify what they mean by “race” within an article, there is also a need for them to clarify what they mean by *other* identity-related constructs, explaining why they were chosen, what their local/contextual relevance is, and how they are imagined as distinct from race and ethnicity, if at all.

#### 4.2.4. Racial justice and injustice talk

Kendi (2019) tells us that “the only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it—and then dismantle it” (p. 9). Explicit race talk may help create the conditions for talking directly and meaningfully about structural racism, but the past 25 years of writing assessment scholarship in ASW reveals this to be a promise not yet delivered on. When articles reference racial “bias” or “discrimination,” these terms seem to describe individual characteristics and actions, rather than something structural. While more general references to “equity” and “fairness” can be found throughout ASW’s first quarter century (see Poe & Elliot, 2019), sometimes referencing race/ethnicity as part of this more general project (see, e.g., Klobucar et al., 2013), no articles in ASW’s first quarter century directly reference “racial justice,” “racial injustice,” “Whiteness,” or “White supremacy”—though “Nativism” is discussed in one history-focused ASW article (Serviss, 2012). Explicit references to racism are almost entirely absent from the pages of ASW, with only three articles using variants of the words “racist” or “racism” even once—none directly defining that term, and all tending to associate racism with bigotry and prejudice, rather than structural injustice.

Racism is first explicitly referenced when Paley (1996) discusses an application essay about a white “student’s willingness to fight racism in elementary school” (p. 97). Racism, here, is associated with the anti-black prejudices of an individual (apparently white) racist bully. And as Paley reports, the admissions officers’ responses to the essay variously disregard or demean its content (§4.1.3). A few years later, Richardson’s (2000) circumstantial talk article quoted a basic writing teacher’s margin note, which asked a student writer to consider how “[t]he image of the black mother as beast of burden often differs little from such *racist images* as Aunt Jemima and Nell Carter in ‘Gimme a Break’” (p. 130, emphasis mine). Pop cultural stereotypes are the only index of racism gestured to in this quote. Crucially, this article does not engage in content talk by unpacking the racial substance of this margin note. Its only other explicit reference to race comes when Richardson mentions the teacher’s pedagogical interest in “inequities of race” (p. 130).

Following this piece, explicit references to racism appear for the next time in Johnson and VanBrackle’s (2012) perception talk study, which identifies a clear pattern of linguistic discrimination against writings with AAE features (see §4.1.1). While this pattern

could be considered facially racist in a *structural* sense, Johnson and VanBrackle (2012) appear reluctant to identify these discriminatory practices as expressions of racism. Instead, they list several alternative interpretations for these practices, including the possibility that raters equate AAE with error out of linguistic ignorance (“not necessarily overt racism”), or that raters punish students to prevent them from using AAE, before this dialect harms students’ employment prospects—a racial paternalism that Johnson and VanBrackle think of as “[a] more positive pedagogical interpretation” for the discrimination they document (p. 46). What unifies the interpretations on offer is their tacit definition of racism as personal racial prejudice, perhaps narrowing this definition further to include only “overt” instances of conscious, active discrimination.

Moving forward, there is ample critical room for the field to more substantially, explicitly, and regularly talk about racism as it relates to writing assessment. The decision to *identify* and *define* racism has ethical and epistemological implications, bounding the territory of inequalities that are counted as injustices and assigning (or absolving away) responsibility for them. For this reason, it is important—at a minimum—that researchers make clear what they mean by “racism,” because by itself, “the word ‘racism’ is too simplistic, too general, and too easy. You can use the word and *not say that much*, unless the term is explained or clarified” (davenport, [sic], 2015, p. 81).

## 5. Discussion and concluding recommendations: Toward antiracist talk in writing assessment research

The content analysis provided in this article is but one way to make the field’s past invisible *racial* agendas visible. Other content analyses of race talk are possible—including by more fully examining implicit race talk in addition to explicit race talk (see, e.g., Clary-Lemon, 2009), or by considering texts published outside of *ASW*. Even so, this study supports us in beginning to answer the two questions about race talk that motivated this study.

- *Question 1: How have ASW articles positioned and discussed “race” relative to writing assessment?*

Synthesizing the first 25 years of explicit race talk in *ASW*, we find that race is complexly implicated in writing assessment research and complexly imbricated in the writing assessment ecologies that this research focuses on. *ASW* articles contain racial methodologies that variously support talk of race’s participation in assessment-related perceptions, performances, and content. That said, the roles played by race in the journal have often been more circumstantial than substantial, and even comparatively substantial engagements with race have tended to stop short of explicitly engaging with questions of racial (in)justice. Often, these articles attend to perceptions without explicitly examining prejudices; they talk of performance inequalities without explicit attention to structural inequities; and they note content without an explicit critique of racist context. Additionally, while some articles contain elements of multiple forms of race talk (e.g., Paley, 1996), there is room for research to more fully synthesize these multiple forms of race talk (perception, performance, *and* content) to provide a richer, more ecological account of race and racism in writing assessment.

- *Question 2: When ASW articles engage in race talk, what do they mean by “race”?*

Strikingly, no article in *ASW*’s first quarter century explicitly defines “race,” “ethnicity,” or “racism,” making it difficult to determine what underlying assumptions about race are at work when writing assessment scholars reference it. Closely examining race talk in *ASW* to get a sense of the latent race constructs at work in the journal, this much becomes clear: Writing assessment researchers do not consistently bring the same meanings to their commentary on race and writing assessment.

In these ways, *ASW*’s first 25 years testify to efforts and struggles within the field of writing assessment to engage in race talk that is *explicit, substantial, and attentive to structural racial (in)justice*. These three features of what we could call *antiracist race talk* are important, for in the absence of any of them, research on race can easily reinforce racism rather than interrupt it. There is not space in this article to comprehensively explore what this kind of talk might entail, but as a starting place, building on insights and omissions from *ASW*’s first 25 years, I close with five provisional recommendations for future researchers to consider, revise, or extend.

*Recommendation 1: Clarify what is meant by “race” and “racism”:* “Defining key terms will make researchers clarify their theoretical orientation,” Poe (2009) noted a decade ago, when urging assessment researchers to define their race talk terms (p. 376). To date, writing assessment research has tended to leave race constructs largely undefined. In light of the race construct’s variable shape and scope (see, e.g., Gates, 1985; Goldberg, 1993; Heng, 2018), this lack of clarity introduces a number of problems, not least of which is the potential for researchers to talk past one another. The terms we rely on and reinforce when assessing writing (or researching writing assessment) matter: The race constructs we endorse shape the ways we collect, interpret, and use data; and in narrowing our field’s constructs of racial justice and racism, we narrow too the transformative potential of our research to identify, publicize, resist, and redress structural inequities in the field. In Gillborn et al.’s (2018) words, “If race and/or ethnicity are to be included in a study then *how* these ideas are operationalized will shape the findings” (p. 172, emphasis in original). Clarifying what is meant by “race” and “racism” in context, writing assessment researchers begin the process of more substantially engaging with the critical relevance of these constructs to the work of assessing writing. How we define race and racism is not just an intellectual matter but also an ethical one, with important implications for defining whose interests our assessments serve.

*Recommendation 2: Disaggregate data with a critical attention to questions of racial fairness and opportunity to learn:* Answering questions about racially differential impacts and experiences (or, for that matter, perceptions and preferences) related to assessment requires, at a minimum, that we collect and analyze data with respect to race. As Gillborn et al. (2018) note, “Many studies do not include race/ethnicity as a variable at all; the absence of race ‘findings’ may then be taken by readers to mean that race/racism is unimportant whereas it was simply not considered” (p. 171). If we begin from the assumption of racial equality and the belief that

education should support students equitably, the finding that an assessment yields racially stratified score distributions should lead us to question both the potential a) roles played by assessment in manufacturing those distributions, and b) ways that score interpretation and use might rely on and reinforce racist policies or ideas, including narratives that achievement gaps are caused by “inferior genes” or “inferior environments” (Kendi, 2019, p. 102; see, e.g., Darby & Rury, 2018; Inoue, 2015; Poe et al., 2018; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, pp. 30-32). Rather than ask what unequal score distributions say about students and their underlying abilities, researchers can better serve the antiracist aim of opportunity advancement by asking what those distributions say about writing assessments and their underlying responsibilities. Disaggregating data with an attention to racial fairness, we gain insights into the nature, range, and distribution of an assessment’s consequences—and by extension, the ways it expands or constrains opportunity to learn.

*Recommendation 3: Deepen engagement with histories and theories of race and racism:* In addition to conducting fairness-oriented quantitative or qualitative studies of writing assessment, scholars could help to make race and racism more visible in the field’s historiography. Efforts to rewrite the history of writing assessment from the perspectives of race and racial (in)justice are only now in their infancy (e.g., Hammond, 2018; Harms, 2018; Molloy, 2018), but promise much-needed insights into the underlying assessment-related assumptions and aims that have shaped (and constrained) students’ opportunities to learn. If the first 25 years of ASW are any indication, there is also need for the field of writing assessment to deepen its engagements with existing theoretical and historical literatures on race and racism. Within ASW, virtually no text cites *any* theoretical or historical scholarship on race and racism; the few articles that do so tend only to cite from the small pool of assessment scholars who make racial justice visible in their agendas. This apparent absence of theoretical and historical engagement may suggest an opening for the field of writing assessment to more deeply engage with ongoing critical conversations about race and ethnicity in education. As an accessible critical starting place, scholars wanting to engage more fully with these literatures could investigate connections between their research and the work published in the two education journals dedicated to researching race and racism: *Race Ethnicity and Education* and *Whiteness and Education*. In subtle ways, this recommendation is central to the success of the others: History and theory matter for the field of writing assessment because they help to shape what we think writing assessment is, what its origins and effects are, and what our responsibilities are relative to them. To the extent that the field locates racial justice at its historical and theoretical center, this project will focus the field’s agendas moving forward—finding expression in the questions researchers ask, the data we collect, and the ways we analyze and interpret them.

*Recommendation 4: Diversify the voices, interpretations, and (hi)stories that circulate in the field:* Describing the importance of ethnic diversity in the field of writing assessment, Ball (1997) has argued that “we must learn how to better privilege the voices and interpretations from teachers most knowledgeable about the *cultural* context of students’ assessment” (p. 193, emphasis in original; see also Perryman-Clark, 2016, p. 210). As writing assessment research continues to pursue the aim of fairness (see Poe & Elliot, 2019) and to internationalize in scope (see Hamp-Lyons, 2002, 2014), there remains a need to privilege the voices and interpretations of scholars who participate in the communities and contexts being researched, perhaps particularly where questions of race and racial (in)justice are concerned. Race takes on different meanings in different contexts (see Recommendation 1 above), meaning that while racism is an international problem, it manifests differently in different spaces (Dirlík, 2008; Goldberg, 2009b). Taking local “racialized ... experiences as sources of strength” and insight (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26), attention to international racisms requires also an attention to the local perspectives, stories, and histories of those most impacted by racism. The need for more nationally diverse research on race and writing assessment is one that has been registered within the pages of ASW, with Cumming (2013) questioning how “issues” of race and writing assessment “play out in societies, cultures, and institutions in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle and far East” (p. 240). Filling in these gaps in the research on writing assessment, the field benefits from the perspectives and theories of scholars intimately acquainted with these contexts, a point Kubota and Lin (2006) have powerfully underscored: “Just as race ideas and racism cannot be reduced to White versus non-White issues, theories about them should not solely rely on Anglo-European scholarship” (p. 488). By sponsoring and publicizing research that brings the intersection of race, racism, and writing assessment into international relief—perhaps even through Special Issues centered on this intersection—journals like ASW can play a powerful role in making the existing racial diversity of writing assessment research more visible, while also drawing attention to the voices, interpretations, and (hi)stories that remain underrepresented.

*Recommendation 5: Turn toward intersectional justice:* As critical race theorists have long held, the project of antiracism must take an intersectional focus that “works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. Racial oppression is experienced by many in tandem with oppression on grounds of gender, class, or sexual orientation” (Lawrence et al., 1993, p. 6). Along these lines, there is need for increased critical consideration of social injustices that intersect with—but are distinct from—racial injustice. While there is not space in this article to systemically report how *other* group-based systemic injustices are described in ASW, the results of such an analysis are easy enough to preview: With few exceptions, critiques of colonialism, sexism, imperialism, cultural hegemony, and the like are scattered, infrequent, and gestural. While several articles report and discuss gender in some way, not a single piece explicitly engages with insights from transgender studies scholarship or works meaningfully beyond the gender binary. Nativism and homophobia are explicitly referenced in one article each—which is more than can be said about eugenics, ableism, classism, heterosexism, and ethnocentrism. Remarkably, within what is arguably writing assessment’s flagship journal, these concepts are referenced in print for the first time here in this article.

The absence of these critical terms from core writing assessment scholarship signals an important and abiding absence: To date, writing assessment scholarship has yet to systematically, consistently, and explicitly examine group-based structural injustices of *any kind*. The recent social justice turn in writing assessment scholarship has promised a challenge to these absences. Whether this promise will be delivered on depends entirely on what the field deems important to make visible. Antiracist talk is no substitute for

antiracist action, but moving forward, it may enable assessment scholars to clarify where and how such action is most needed. Through talk of this kind, we expose practices that have reinforced racial injustices around the world and call attention to practices with the potential to promote equitable alternatives—making the field’s invisible agendas visible and shifting those agendas toward more socially just ends.

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### Appendix A

#### *Race Talk Classifications for Articles Analyzed in Assessing Writing, 1994–2018 (n = 68)*

YEAR	ARTICLE	RACE TALK CLASSIFICATION	INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION COUNTRIES
1994	White, E. M. (1994). Issues and problems in writing assessment. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 1(1), 11-27.	Perception	United States
1994	Carini, P. F. (1994). Dear Sister Bess: An essay on standards, judgment and writing. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 1(1), 29-65.	Circumstantial	United States
1994	Moss, P. A. (1994). Validity in high stakes writing assessment: Problems and possibilities. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 1(1), 109-128.	Circumstantial	United States
1994	Williamson, M. (1994). The worship of efficiency: Untangling theoretical and practical considerations in writing assessment. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 1(2), 147-173.	Circumstantial	United States
1994	Witte, S. P., & Flach, J. (1994). Notes toward an assessment of advanced ability to communicate. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 1(2), 207-246.	Circumstantial	United States
1995	Witte, S. P., Flach, J., Greenwood, C., & Wilson, K. E. (1995). More notes toward an assessment of advanced ability to communicate. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 2(1), 21-65.	Circumstantial	United States
1996	Haswell, R. H., & Haswell, J. T. (1996). Gender bias and critique of student writing. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 3(1), 31-83.	Circumstantial	United States
1996	Paley, K. S. (1996). The college application essay: A rhetorical paradox. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 3(1), 85-105.	Content	United States
1996	Halden-Sullivan, J. (1996). Reconsidering assessment: From checklist to dialectic. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 3(2), 173-195.	Circumstantial	United States
1997	Ball, A. F. (1997) Expanding the dialogue on culture as a critical component when assessing writing. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 4(2), 169-202.	Perception	United States
1997	Shay, S. (1997). Portfolio assessment: A catalyst for staff and curricular reform. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 4(1), 29-51.	Performance	South Africa
1997	Sullivan, F. J., Jr. (1997). Calling writers’ bluffs: The social production of writing ability in university placement-testing. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 4(1), 53-81.	Circumstantial	United States
1998	Torrance, H. (1998). Learning from research in assessment: A response to writing assessment—Raters’ elaboration of the rating task. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 5(1), 31-37.	Circumstantial	United Kingdom
1998	Goldberg, G. L., Roswell, B. S., & Michaels, H. (1998). A question of choice: The implications of assessing expressive writing in multiple genres. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 5(1), 39-70.	Perception	United States
1999	Willard-Traub, M., Decker, E., Reed, R., & Johnston, J. (1999). The development of large-scale portfolio placement assessment at the University of Michigan: 1992–1998. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 6(1), 41-84.	Perception	United States
1999	Schendel, E., & O’Neill, P. (1999). Exploring the theories and consequences of self-assessment through ethical inquiry. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 6(2), 199-227.	Circumstantial	United States
2000	Richardson, S. (2000). Students’ conditioned response to teachers’ response: Portfolio proponents, take note! <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 7(2), 117-141.	Circumstantial	United States
2000	Lewiecki-Wilson, C., Sommers, J., & Tassoni, J. P. (2000). Rhetoric and the writer’s profile: Problematising directed self-placement. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 7(2), 165-183.	Circumstantial	United States
2004	Brown, G. T. L., Glasswell, K., & Harland, D. (2004). Accuracy in the scoring of writing: Studies of reliability and validity using a New Zealand writing assessment system. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 9(2), 105-121.	Circumstantial	New Zealand; United States
2004	Inoue, A. B. (2004) Community-based assessment pedagogy. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 9(3), 208-238.	Circumstantial	United States
2005	Klein, J., & Taub, D. (2005). The effect of variations in handwriting and print on evaluation of student essays. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 10(2), 134-148.	Circumstantial	Israel
2006	Hunter, D., Mayenga, C., & Gambell, T. (2006). Classroom assessment tools and uses: Canadian English teachers’ practices for writing. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 11(1), 42-65.	Circumstantial	Canada
2006	Burke, J. N., & Cizek, G. J. (2006). Effects of composition mode and self-perceived computer skills on essay scores of sixth graders. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 11(3), 148-166.	Circumstantial	United States

2007	Barlow, L., Liparulo, S. P., & Reynolds, D. W. (2007). Keeping assessment local: The case for accountability through formative assessment. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 12(1), 44-59.	Circumstantial	United States
2007	Beck, S. W., Jeffery, J. V. (2007). Genres of high-stakes writing assessments and the construct of writing competence. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 12(1), 60-79.	Circumstantial	United States
2008	Crawford, L., & Smolkowski, K. (2008). When a "sloppy copy" is good enough: Results of a state writing assessment. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 13(1), 61-77.	Circumstantial	United States
2008	James, C. L. (2008). Electronic scoring of essays: Does topic matter? <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 13(2), 80-92.	Circumstantial	Canada
2008	He, L., & Shi, L. (2008). ESL students' perceptions and experiences of standardized English writing tests. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 13(2), 130-149.	Perception	Canada
2009	Sonnenmoser, R. (2009). The gatekeeping impulse and Professor X: An exploration. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 14(2), 76-87.	Circumstantial	United States
2009	Condon, W. (2009). Looking beyond judging and ranking: Writing assessment as a generative practice. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 14(3), 141-156.	Circumstantial	United States
2009	Anthony, J. J. (2009). Classroom computer experiences that stick: Two lenses on reflective timed essays. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 14(3), 194-205.	Content	United States
2010	Kreth, M., Crawford, M. A., Taylor, M., & Brockman, E. (2010). Situated assessment: Limitations and promise. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 15(1), 40-59.	Circumstantial	United States
2010	Gebрил, A. (2010). Bringing reading-to-write and writing-only assessment tasks together: A generalizability analysis. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 15(2), 100-117.	Circumstantial	United Arab Emirates
2010	Gere, A. R., Aull, L., Green, T., & Porter, A. (2010). Assessing the validity of directed self-placement at a large university. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 15(3), 154-176.	Circumstantial	United States
2010	Erling, E. J., & Richardson, J. T. E. (2010). Measuring the academic skills of university students: Evaluation of a diagnostic procedure. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 15(3), 177-193.	Performance	United Kingdom
2011	Chen, J., White, S., McCloskey, M., Soroui, J., & Chun, Y. (2011). Effects of computer versus paper administration of an adult functional writing assessment. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 16(1), 49-71.	Performance	United States
2011	Romova, Z., & Andrew, M. (2011). Teaching and assessing academic writing via the portfolio: Benefits for learners of English as an additional language. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 16(2), 111-122.	Circumstantial	Australia; New Zealand
2011	Kobrin, J. L., Deng, H., & Shaw, E. J. (2011). The association between SAT prompt characteristics, response features, and essay scores. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 16(3), 154-169.	Performance	United States
2011	Bridgeman, B., Trapani, C., & Bivens-Tatum, J. (2011). Comparability of essay question variants. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 16(4), 237-255.	Performance	United States
2012	Zainal, A. (2012). Validation of an ESL writing test in a Malaysian secondary school context. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 17(1), 1-17.	Circumstantial	United Kingdom
2012	Johnson, D., & VanBrackle, L. (2012). Linguistic discrimination in writing assessment: How raters react to African American "errors," ESL errors, and standard English errors on a state-mandated writing exam. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 17(1), 35-54.	Perception	United States
2012	Huang, J. (2012). Using generalizability theory to examine the accuracy and validity of large-scale ESL writing assessment. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 17(3), 123-139.	Circumstantial	United States
2012	Wiseman, C. S. (2012). Rater effects: Ego engagement in rater decision-making. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 17(3), 150-173.	Circumstantial	United States
2012	Serviss, T. (2012). A history of New York state literacy test assessment: Historicizing calls to localism in writing assessment. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 17(4), 208-227.	Circumstantial	United States
2012	Saxton, E., Belanger, S., & Becker, W. (2012). The Critical Thinking Analytic Rubric (CTAR): Investigating intra-rater and inter-rater reliability of a scoring mechanism for critical thinking performance assessments. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 17(4), 251-270.	Circumstantial	United States
2013	Ramineni, C. (2013). Validating automated essay scoring for online writing placement. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 18(1), 40-61.	Performance	United States
2013	Klobucar, A., Elliot, N., Deess, P., Rudniy, O., & Joshi, K. (2013). Automated scoring in context: Rapid assessment for placed students. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 18(1), 62-84.	Performance	United States
2013	Esfandiari, R., & Myford, C. M. (2013). Severity differences among self-assessors, peer-assessors, and teacher assessors rating EFL essays. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 18(2), 111-131.	Circumstantial	Iran; United States
2013	Dixon, Z., & Moxley, J. (2013). Everything is illuminated: What big data can tell us about teacher commentary. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 18(4), 241-256.	Circumstantial	United States
2014	Toth, C., & Aull, L. (2014). Directed self-placement questionnaire design: Practices, problems, possibilities. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 20, 1-18.	Content	United States
2014	Shermis, M. D. (2014). State-of-the-art automated essay scoring: Competition, results, and future directions from a United States demonstration. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 20, 53-76.	Circumstantial	United States
2014	Behizadeh, N., & Engelhard, G., Jr. (2014). Development and validation of a scale to measure perceived authenticity in writing. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 21, 18-36.	Perception	United States
2014	Sundeen, T. H. (2014). Instructional rubrics: Effects of presentation options on writing quality. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 21, 74-88.	Circumstantial	United States
2015	Dunsmuir, S., Kyriacou, M., Batuwitige, S., Hinson, E., Ingram, V., & O'Sullivan, S. (2015). An evaluation of the Writing Assessment Measure (WAM) for children's narrative writing. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 23, 1-18.	Circumstantial	United Kingdom
2015	Li, J., & Lindsey, P. (2015). Understanding variations between student and teacher application of rubrics. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 26, 67-79.	Circumstantial	United States
2016	Wolfe, E. W., Song, T., & Jiao, H. (2016). Features of difficult-to-score essays. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 27, 1-10.	Circumstantial	United States
2016	Wilson, J., Olinghouse, N. G., McCoach, D. B., Santangelo, T., & Andrada, G. N. (2016). Comparing the accuracy of different scoring methods for identifying sixth graders at risk of failing a state writing assessment. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 27, 11-23.	Circumstantial	United States
2016	Marefat, F., & Heydari, M. (2016). Native and Iranian teachers' perceptions and evaluation of Iranian students' English essays. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 27, 24-36.	Circumstantial	Iran
2016	Crusan, D., Plakans, L., & Gebрил, A. (2016). Writing assessment literacy: Surveying second language teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 28, 43-56.	Circumstantial	Egypt; United States

2017	Ling, G. (2017). Are TOEFL iBT® writing test scores related to keyboard type? A survey of keyboard-related practices at testing centers. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 31, 1-12.	Circumstantial	United States
2017	Ferris, D. R., Evans, K., & Kurzer, K. (2017). Placement of multilingual writers: Is there a role for student voices? <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 32, 1-11.	Circumstantial	United States
2017	Oppenheimer, D., Zaromb, F., Pomerantz, J. R., Williams, J. C., & Park, Y. S. (2017). Improvement of writing skills during college: A multi-year cross-sectional and longitudinal study of undergraduate writing performance. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 32, 12-27.	Circumstantial	Israel; United States
2017	Anson, I. G., & Anson, C. M. (2017). Assessing peer and instructor response to writing: A corpus analysis from an expert survey. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 33, 12-24.	Circumstantial	United States
2017	Wilson, J., Roscoe, R., & Ahmed, Y. (2017). Automated formative writing assessment using a levels of language framework. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 34, 16-36.	Performance	United States
2017	Bridgeman, B., & Ramineni, C. (2017). Design and evaluation of automated writing evaluation models: Relationships with writing in naturalistic settings. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 34, 62-71.	Performance	United States
2017	Johnson, A. C., Wilson, J., & Roscoe, R. D. (2017). College student perceptions of writing errors, text quality, and author characteristics. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 34, 72-87.	Circumstantial	United States
2018	Brunfaut, T., Harding, L., & Batty, A. O. (2018). Going online: The effect of mode of delivery on performances and perceptions on an English L2 writing test suite. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 36, 3-18.	Circumstantial	Japan; United Kingdom
2018	Litterio, L. M. (2018). Contract grading in the technical writing classroom: Blending community-based assessment and self-assessment. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 38, 1-9.	Circumstantial	United States

## Appendix B

### Example Subset of Articles Containing “Implicit Race Talk” in *Assessing Writing*, 1994–2018

YEAR	ARTICLE
1995	Allen, M. S. (1995). Valuing differences: Portnet's first year. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 2(1), 67-89.
1997	Schultz, L. M., Durst, R. K., & Roemer, M. (1997). Stories of reading: Inside and outside the texts of portfolios. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 4(2), 121-132.
1998	Underwood, T., & Murphy, S. (1998). Interrater reliability in a California middle school English/language arts portfolio assessment program. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 5(2), 201-230.
2000	Anson, C. M. (2000). Response and the social construction of error. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 7(1), 5-21.
2002	Hamp-Lyons, L. (2002). The scope of writing assessment. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 8(1), 5-16.
2002	Blattner, N. H., & Frazier, C. L. (2002). Developing a performance-based assessment of students' critical thinking skills. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 8(1), 47-64.
2008	Denny, H. C. (2008). Dangerous liaisons: Reflections on a pilot project for state-mandated outcomes assessment of written communication. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 13(1), 26-44.
2009	Burgin, J., & Hughes, G. D. (2009). Credibly assessing reading and writing abilities for both elementary student and program assessment. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 14(1), 25-37.
2009	Dempsey, M. S., PytlikZillig, L. M., & Bruning, R. H. (2009). Helping preservice teachers learn to assess writing: Practice and feedback in a web-based environment. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 14(1), 38-61.
2011	Behizadeh, N., & Engelhard, G., Jr. (2011). Historical view of the influences of measurement and writing theories on the practice of writing assessment in the United States. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 16(3), 189-211.
2014	Allan, E. G., & Driscoll, D. L. (2014). The three-fold benefit of reflective writing: Improving program assessment, student learning, and faculty professional development. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 21, 37-55.
2014	Ryan, M. (2014) Reflexive writers: Re-thinking writing development and assessment in schools. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 22, 60-74.
2016	Behizadeh, N., & Pang, M. E. (2016). Awaiting a new wave: The status of state writing assessment in the United States. <i>Assessing Writing</i> , 29, 25-41.

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