EDITORS' COLUMN

Basic writing continues to hold its place on the academic map as the articles in this issue will attest. Whether we examine BW from the perspective of linguistically diverse students, of race and racism, or of politics, or instead look more closely at individual students' interactions (including computer-mediated ones), we realize that basic writers invigorate academia. We learn from these students that learning is, as Vivian Zamel's student writes, "a metamorphosis with no ending."

Student voice is at the heart of Zamel's essay—a paper based on her keynote presentation at a professional development event for CUNY's university-wide writing-across-the-curriculum initiative. Zamel's explanation of what writing-to-learn pedagogy should be and how we should be doing it is reinforced by the words of her students, students who had been silenced because of language concerns, but who through writing have found and developed their voices.

Silence plays an ironic role in Steve Lamos' essay, which examines the discourse of racism itself. Lamos looks at how the politics of open admissions has created a racialized discourse about BW students, racializing all BW students as "minorities" despite the significant number of whites who have benefited from basic writing programs. And he suggests that this racialized discourse itself has been part of the argument used to deny BW a place in higher education.

The future of remediation also concerns Mary Kay Crouch and Gerri McNenny, teaching in a state with particular pressure to reduce the presence of remedial instruction in higher education. In their article, they describe how collaborations between California State University and the high schools have helped reduce the need for college remediation and explain how these efforts have enabled college and high school teachers to work together with respect and support for each other.

Learning to work together with respect may provide answers for why some students regard teachers and tutors as resources and others do not. In their essay, Joan L. Piorkowski and Erika Scheurer write that "when students perceive a context of care in the basic writing classroom they are more likely to take on 'responsible' attitudes and behaviors—such as valuing and seeking out feedback from others on their writing."

Most of us agree that not all basic writers are alike, but we probably also agree that not enough research has been done to articulate the differences. In their essay, Deborah Rossen-Knill and Kim Lynch

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describe the findings of their study of basic writing students at three institutions: a 2-year rural community college, a 2-year urban community college, and a 4-year urban college. They conducted a survey and met with students for "back talk" interpretation of their responses to the surveys. They also took a close look at the students' writing in these institutions, examining grammatical correctness and the use of rhetorical conventions such as introductions, transitions, and conclusions.

In arguing for integrating grammar instruction in writing instruction, Patricia J. McAlexander advocates teaching with a grammar checker, a feature available in many word processing packages available today. She provides specific examples of how to teach students to use – and learn from – the grammar checker in Microsoft Word so that it helps students improve their editing abilities and become more self-sufficient writers. Also stressing how computers can help basic writers, Judith Mara Kish counters the notion that computers isolate writers, showing how invention activities, ease of research, and peer commenting make the electronic classroom a viable and effective means of teaching writing to basic writers.

Once again, we find ourselves offering articles that reveal the basic writing enterprise as both imperiled and vitally resourceful, conscious of its legacy and resolutely forward-looking, analytically self-critical and creatively innovative. We hope you will find this issue stimulating and revitalizing as you begin a new term and a new century.

-- Trudy Smoke *and* **George Otte**