

EDITORS' COLUMN

We are well aware that the field of basic writing is a self-conscious one. It seems we are wholly and constantly engaged in efforts to recognize our students rightly and take account of their needs. Given these times of budget cuts and standards-bearing, we also know how frequently these goals will elude us. Still we persist, always intent to find new lenses through which to view our students and the many influences on our work with them. Along these lines, the Council on Basic Writing (CBW) recently urged greater visibility for basic writing with its “sense of the house” motion at the 2011 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in Atlanta. See our News and Announcements for the good news!

Searching the psychological, Don J. Kraemer reminds us in “On Whether to Convert from a Rhetorical to a Psychoanalytic Pedagogy” that the politics of identity and conflict span a range wider than we may have imagined in ways that can reshape our teaching. Kraemer draws on Mark Bracher’s *The Writing Cure: Psychoanalysis, Composition, and the Aims of Education* to acknowledge psychology’s commitment to the “non-violent and just resolution to conflict” as a site where “psychoanalysis and rhetoric meet.” He supports Bracher in recognizing the psychically-conflicted writing subject, yet shows that reconciling psychoanalysis to rhetoric—two compelling but distinct pedagogies of “problematic uncertainty”—is not easy. Kraemer’s point is to set psychoanalysis and rhetoric in dialogue so as to perhaps re-examine the implications of teaching overly toward audience and rhetorical effect. As a result, instructors may come to understand pedagogies of ownership differently while questioning whether a “conversion” to psychoanalytical pedagogy is desirable or possible. Our lead article is thereby a force for considering the conflicts and tensions that accompany writing and their creative value.

The value of creative conflict likewise informs our second article, “Beyond Charity: Partial Narratives as a Metaphor for Basic Writing,” by Nelson Flores. Here we re-engage two sources of conflict quite familiar to our field: basic writers’ “conflict and struggle” as Min-Zhan Lu theorized these forces from the 1990s to the present, and the conflict brought forth in a *College English* symposium defending (as some compositionists saw need) the intentions and pedagogy of Mina Shaughnessy, with whom Lu was in dialogue. To acknowledge students’ conflict in relation to their institutional location hardly seems contentious today. In fact, this is Flores’ point—the potential and dangerous burying of this tension as Lu has defined it. Flores

focuses on a recent re-visioning of the controversy by Brian Ray¹ which, he says, important as it is, overlooks the core of misunderstanding among the symposium's participants in regard to Lu—a misunderstanding conflating Lu's concern with discursive systems defining basic writers' experience and Shaughnessy's individual, well-intentioned politics. To reframe the sides of the debate, Flores rejects the metaphor that Ray proposes, "linguistic charity," and offers his own, "partial narratives." In so doing, he recasts the symposium as well as Ray's article in terms of basic writing advocates speaking to different concerns, under different assumptions. More, he offers "partial narratives" as a metaphor that can renew classrooms as places where diversity is creatively shared.

Just as the first two articles concern seeing students rightly, the next three articles discuss students' *institutional* recognition—i.e., seeing students' value as manifested by credit, programs, and material support. "Working Together: Student-Faculty Interaction and the Boise State Stretch Program" by Thomas Peele sparks the question, to what extent can we say (and mean) that we value students' basic writing coursework? Peele shares a growing record of success for Boise State's Stretch Program to argue the sense of granting its students academic credit for basic writing. The program succeeds in part because students recognize the benefit of continuing with the same teacher over the course of a year; Stretch at Boise State is largely by way of choice since these sections are not officially publicized as such. The efficacy of this approach for students shows in higher retention rates and overall quality of writing, comparable to non-Stretch/ non-basic writing students. But Peele sees, in effect, a lack of validation in the continuing unwillingness of university administrators to allow students credit for these courses—yet another *misrecognition* of basic writing students.

The fourth article in this issue discusses the challenges of supporting a program that, like Boise State's Stretch Program, implicitly values basic writing students as real contributors to academic life. In "Beyond the Budget: Sustainability and Writing Studios," Chris Warnick, Emily Cooney, and Samuel Lackey describe the College of Charleston's Writer's Group as a space for broadening students' experience of writing to include genuine inquiry, creative insight, and comparative, metarhetorical interest. In pursuit of these goals, Writer's Group adhered to Grego and Thompson's vision of Writing Studios as "third space." But the article details mainly how and why Writer's Group could not meet its potential. Under-utilized, under-staffed,

¹ Brian Ray, "A New World: Redefining the Legacy of Min-Zhan Lu," *Journal of Basic Writing* 27.2 (Fall 2008): 106-27.

and under-funded, the writing studio could not acquire the prominence it sought and eventually was cancelled amid programmatic changes made to the college's English requirement. Insofar as first-year students must still meet with their English teachers during an additional outside-of-class hour, the authors hope to revive something of Writer's Group's potential. The article shows the tremendous range of institutional issues that impact this possibility.

Finally, Sara Webb-Sunderhaus' article, "When Access Is Not Enough: Retaining Basic Writers at an Open-Admission University," addresses the full measure of support needed to ensure basic writers' success. Webb-Sunderhaus argues that the lack of support for basic writers comes down to equity, beyond access. It is not enough to provide access if resources for ensuring success are insufficient or unavailable. Webb-Sunderhaus extends recent discussions linking basic writing to social justice. She draws on Susan Naomi Bernstein's "Social Justice Initiative for Basic Writers" as well as myriad poverty and income-related statistics that prove the dire circumstances of many of our students. As a result, we discover yet another lens through which to view our students: often they are the excluded of society who nonetheless "currently [flood] into many of our basic writing classrooms in an attempt to escape the ravages of this economy." What a full and awe-inspiring picture this *JBW* issue provides of the students in our classes: internally desiring; creatively conflicted; hardworking and deserving credit; capable of seeing *more* in their writing (if allowed "third space"); greatly struggling and seeking. The search to see our students rightly may well be limitless, but every step in our progress renders insight.

Note from Rebecca Mlynarczyk: Since I retired from the City University of New York in January 2011, this issue will be the last in which I serve as *JBW*'s Co-Editor. Editing this journal, a position I assumed in 2003, has been one of the most rewarding experiences of a long and rewarding career. I began working with basic writers in 1974, when I was hired as a writing and reading tutor for some of the underprepared students who were flooding into CUNY during Open Admissions. Little did I know at the time that these students, and others like them, would become the center of my teaching and scholarship for the next 35 years. Serving as editor of *JBW*, founded in 1975 by Mina Shaughnessy and devoted to the challenges and rewards of working with this same population, has been a pleasure and a privilege. I leave it with regret but with great confidence in our new editorial team, Hope Parisi, who has served as Co-Editor since 2008, and Cheryl C. Smith of CUNY's Baruch College, who is moving up from her previous post as

Associate Editor. For making my work on the journal so rewarding, I would like to thank the authors I have worked with over these years; the inspiring doctoral students who have served as our editorial assistants—Johannah Rodgers, Karen Weingarten, Angela Francis, and Corey Frost; and the other editors from whom I have learned so much—George Otte, Bonne August, and Hope Parisi. Although I am now officially retired from the university, I will continue to work part-time for the Pipeline Program, which provides mentoring for academically strong CUNY undergraduates from groups that are underrepresented in academia. The goal is to help these students gain admission to doctoral programs and eventually pursue careers in college teaching and research. The ultimate goal is to achieve a more diverse professoriate, which better reflects the increasingly diverse student population of colleges and universities across the country. As I work with these outstanding CUNY undergraduates, I am aware that the expansion of educational opportunity that occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s is still paying dividends today. It is even possible that some of them are the children of those early open admissions students. Unfortunately, at this time, I see a curtailment of opportunity in general and of educational opportunities for basic writers in particular. Despite the modest gains of that earlier era, our nation's college and university faculties still do not reflect the diverse demographics of the students we serve. Hence, educational honors programs such as Pipeline are just as necessary today as when the program was started in 1991.

—Hope Parisi and Rebecca Mlynarczyk