



Special Issue

“Tensions in Professionalism: Dress Codes in the Writing Center”

Article proposals (300-500 words) due Jan 1st, 2018

Invitations to submit full articles Feb 1st, 2018

Manuscripts (4000-6000 words including references) due April 15th, 2018

Final publication fall 2018

Writing centers serve clients as whole people. As Harry Denny (2010) explains in his piece “Queering the Writing Center,” “In supporting writers, we never just sit side by side with them as purely writers; they come to us as an intricately woven tapestry, rich in authenticity and texture of identities. But this cloth often requires something extra to be legitimated in the academy” (p. 103). Going one step further, we propose that the “cloth” of identity could be taken literally. After all, when clients and consultants come into the writing center, they are always wearing the “woven tapestry” of their own clothes and displaying their identities, at least in part, through what Joanne Eicher (2008) calls “dress practices,” which can include clothing, make up, hairstyle, body odor, and more (p. 4). Returning to Denny, because writing centers exist within institutional structures where what it means to dress professionally can be both explicitly and implicitly defined, they are uniquely positioned to do the “extra” work of “legitimizing” the cloth of identity not just for clients, but also for consultants and directors.

This special issue of *The Peer Review* approaches dress codes, both implicit and explicit, as a space for embodied, intersectional work—for the way that individuals approach rules about appropriate dress reveals a deeply connected constellation of identity categories: race, class, gender, size, age, etc. For example, Carmen Rios states that contemporary notions of professional dress are, at their core, racist, classist, sexist, and ableist. At the same time, there is undeniable power in being able to perform professionalism, especially for people who exist outside of the white, thin, able-bodied, cisgender norm. Policies and discussions of professional appearance (or lack thereof) in writing center spaces are always already about norming some bodies and giving agency to others—an issue that encompasses the larger idea of embodiment in the writing center. We see dress codes as an entry point into a discussion of the ways that writing centers handle the tension between norming bodies while at the same time “shor[ing] up, build[ing] anew, and deconstruct[ing] identities and the ways of knowing that are sutured to them” for clients, consultants, and directors (Denny, 2010, p. 103).

Working from this premise, we encourage a wide variety of multimodal submissions, including but not limited to these discussions:

- Narrative- or RAD-research-based accounts of writing center dress codes and race/class/gender/size/age/etc. from consultants, clients, and/or directors.
- What dress codes currently exist in writing centers?
- What are the rationales for the dress codes? How do the dress codes match up with the goals of the writing center? How do dress codes match up with the goals of the institution?
- How does the dress code (implicit or explicit) at the writing center affect how clients/consultants/directors dress? How does the dress code affect how writing and consulting happens?
- How does the dress code limit or open possibilities for identity expression and writing?
- Insight into writing center dress codes at religious institutions/gender specific colleges, historically Black, Native American, or Hispanic institutions
- How do institutional cultures affect writing center dress codes?
- Historical research on dress codes in the writing center
- How have dress codes changed over time?
- How do dress codes reflect changing demographics on university campuses?
- Advice or “best practices” for deciding on a dress code in the writing center
- How should administrators discuss dress during consultant training?

For this special issue on “Tensions in Professionalism: Dress Codes in the Writing Center,” we invite proposals of 300-500 words for articles up to 6000 words (including notes and References). **We are especially interested in submissions that showcase arguments in multimodal formats.** Please send all proposals to Katie.manthey@saalem.edu.

The 2017-2018 Staff of the Salem College Writing Center

Dr. Katie Manthey, Director

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References

Denny, Harry (2010). Queering the Writing Center. *Writing Center Journal*, 30(1), 95-124.

Eicher, J. B., Evenson, S. L., & Lutz, H. A. (2008). *The Visible Self: Global Perspectives of Dress, Culture, and Society (3rd Edition)*. New York, NY: Fairchild Publications.

Rios, C. (2015, February). You Call It Professionalism; I Call It Oppression in a Three-Piece Suit. *Everyday Feminism*. Retrieved from <https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/02/professionalism-and-oppression/>