

## FROM THE EDITORS

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We are enormously proud to be publishing this issue. While previous issues have always included one or two articles, columns or features focused on what could be considered non-traditional or non-typical subject matter for the study of writing center research and practice, this issue takes as its focus just that: the non-typical.

It is worth asking, though, what we mean by ‘typical.’ Merriam-Webster’s defines ‘typical’ as “normal for a person, thing, or group,” “average or usual,” “constituting or having the nature of a type” or “conforming to a type.” From this we can see that being normal, being average, conforming or constituting a type is what makes one typical, while being non-typical is doing fewer or none of these things. People with dis/abilities are, as various authors in this issue note, defined as Other against exactly this ‘type,’ which is assumed to be ‘able’ in body and mind, and which has for too long formed the imagined average user of the writing center around and for whom writing center services are designed. This issue asks us to question what we perceive to be typical, what we value as average and treat as the norm, and what the effects on non-conforming people are.

In Stephanie Ries’ column she asks what changes when we consider disability in the design and use of multimodal environments generally, and online writing centers specifically, pointing out that in both cases, 19% of graduate and undergraduate students with various disabilities are part of the population meant to be using them. As education and writing center work enter new environments, Ries notes, it is necessary to extend the same welcome to all writers that we would expect from a traditional writing center environment. Hailey Hughes argues for a “thought-change” on the part of those staffing traditional writing centers, suggesting that some of the basic tenets of writing center work may look and feel quite different when that work not only includes but accommodates writers with disabilities; finally, Anna Rollins takes us out of the center and asks how we can promote writing centers in campus communities in inclusive, non-hierarchical ways that emphasize the differences between classroom and center and challenge the

common misperception that writing centers exist to make writers and their writing conform to the typical.

In their focus articles, the authors published in this issue approach the question of disability in the writing center from other angles. In her article on new approaches to disability in the writing center, Kerri Rinaldi suggests that the ways we strategize around writers with disabilities may be problematic:

Our theory prioritizes collaboration among equals—granting power to the tutee and letting them guide the session, assert their needs, and come to their own conclusions. Yet, if a student has a disability, we treat the disability as an obstacle or shortcoming instead of a contributor to her agency. The way we have been socialized to view disability leads us to think of the disability as an ailment and of strategy as the cure.

Rinaldi suggests that rather than strategizing, we do *nothing* new, simply applying the same principles to our work with disabled writers as we would to our work with ‘typical’ writers, trusting writers with disabilities to know what accommodations they need to achieve their goals.

M. Melissa Elston notes that ‘finding the Other in the center’ is possible even when there are no students present; as the director of a center and a person living with an anxiety disorder, she has different challenges to navigate, including the choice of disclosing her disability to those who assume that disability enters the writing center from without. Elston makes concrete recommendations on how to make writing center space “Crip” space by rethinking center policy and mission, tutor training, and session guidelines, framing these changes as challenges to longstanding traditions that prize conformity above connection. Continuing Elston’s project of including the non-typical in the typical operations of the writing center, Sharifa Daniels, Rebecca Day Babcock, and Doria Daniels ask what happens when we no longer see disability as something a person ‘has,’ and instead see disability as constituted by the barriers that complicate a person’s full inclusion in and access to a given environment.

Hillary Degner, Kylie Wojciehowski and Christopher Giroux continue the theme of locating

non-typical people within the writing center in their article on supporting tutors with mental illnesses or concerns, in which they describe their quantitative, undergraduate-led research. This survey-based research asked tutors various questions designed to assess tutor likelihood of disclosure, levels of administrative support for tutors with mental illness, and what impact those illnesses have on tutor's work with writers. Their results indicate both that a great deal more research is needed to better understand how tutor disability impacts writing centers as working environments and as sources of writing assistance, and that tutors are not always as included in writing center planning as the writers they serve.

Finally, Rebecca Day Babcock's "Disabilities in the Writing Center" offers an overview of every published article on disability in writing centers – an article that, as of the date of this publication, will need to be revised. This is one source of the feeling of pride we mentioned at the start of this column. As editors of *Praxis* we have been given the opportunity to facilitate our author's additions to writing center scholarship in an area that is deeply personal and which touches writing centers on a number of levels, from the theoretical to the practical, affecting everyone in the writing center from the director, to the tutors, to the writers our centers serve. We were given this opportunity by our former managing editor, Sarah Orem, whose scholarship in this area has been an inspiration. We would like to take this opportunity to thank her for writing the call for papers that began this issue's progress towards publication, for contacting scholars across the country on our behalf, and for the tireless work she has put in as a member of *Praxis'* editorial review board.

The other source of pride that attends the publication of this issue comes from the knowledge that *Praxis'* ongoing editorial position is perfectly expressed in this issue. While the authors in this issue disagree on important issues like disclosure and frame their inquiries in ways that may seem disparate from each other, that multivocality and rich diversity is exactly what *Praxis* believes is central to writing center work. We no more require our authors to agree than we require our writers to conform to a type, whether that be somatic or intellectual, and we strongly believe that *Praxis'* vision in this issue is the vision of a writing center in action.