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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Technical Communication Workplace

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ARTICLES

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- •Applied theory – original contributions to technical communication theory
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Dr. Chris Dayley and Dr. Isidore Dorpenyo

Practices, Reflections, and Methodologies:

What Is Successful Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Technical Communication Workplace?

The identity of technical communication is inextricably linked to the workplace (academic, domestic, and organizational or corporate workplaces). This is evident in the genres primarily associated with technical communication: proposals, reports, memos, technical documentation or instructions, computer help files, blogs, voter documents, and many others.

In introduction to technical communication classrooms, instructors train students to become good communicators who will write clear, concise, effective, and efficient documents in their various workplaces. Often, technical communication instructors create a distinction between writing that takes place in a corporate or organizational setting (aka technical writing) and academic writing (aka composition). Kimball (2006) wrote that "most of what we recognize as technical communication begins and ends with corporate, government, or organizational agendas" (p. 67). He further showed how textbook definitions "introduce technical writing as a workplace skill" (p. 68). Similarly, Constantinides, St.Amant, and Kampf (2001) revealed how technical and professional communication "often takes place within a larger organizational structure–one that inevitably impacts the kinds of documents produced…" (p. 31).

Considering our historical affinity to organizations and corporate workplaces, it does not come as a surprise that several scholars in our field are interested in researching the workplace (Cox, 2019; Dush, 2017; Edenfield, 2017; Edwards, 2018; Evia & Patriarca, 2012; Longo, 2000; Petersen & Moeller, 2016; Spinuzzi, 2014, 2015; Wisniewski, 2018). However, despite the many articles addressing technical communication in the workplace, the exigency for this special issue was our concern that, despite the abundance of scholarship exploring the roles of technical communicators in organizations and different workplaces or workspaces, little research has been done regarding the state of diversity in the professional practice of technical and professional communication in the U.S. and across the globe.

Though the amount of scholarship is limited, we do have some information regarding the state of diversity in the technical communication workplace. In Carliner and Chen's 2018 *Intercom* article, "Who Technical Communicators Are: A Summary of Demographics, Backgrounds, and Employment," the authors reported findings of a census of technical communicators taken in the early 2000's. The census found that, at the time, 81% of practicing technical communicators who responded identified as white. This finding confirms Walton, Moore, and Jones' (2019) claim that one of the main concerns for our field is that "TPC remains predominantly white and patriarchal and there is an inclusion and representation problem in TPC" (p. 2).

Technical communication has seen increased scholarly interest in issues of diversity and inclusion. Most research regarding increasing diversity and inclusion in our field has focused specifically on academic programs. Jones, Savage, and Yu (2015); Savage and Mattson (2011); and Savage and Matveeva (2011) have shown that issues of diversity and inclusion are important, but the field has a long way to go before we can fully understand the ways in which exclusive practices affect the field.

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More recent scholarship regarding diversity and inclusion in the field of technical communication includes the use of decolonial frameworks in technical communication scholarship (Itchuaqiyaq & Matheson, 2021), student perceptions of diversity in their technical communication academic programs (Dayley, 2020), how students from diverse background have difficulty discovering the field (Dayley & Walton, 2018), the importance of building interpersonal relationships with prospective students and increasing program inclusivity (Alexander & Walton, 2022), how technical communication scholars can collaborate with translation experts to design communication materials for multilinguals (Gonzales, 2022), how current "recruitment efforts alone may not be enough to more suitably engage with the interests and needs of diverse student populations" (Popham, 2016, p. 73), as well as Cana Itchuaqiyaq's excellent multiply marginalized and underrepresented scholars bibliography (Itchuaqiyaq, 2021, June 7).

These studies; and ongoing concerns regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in workplaces that employ technical communicators; beg several questions: What are the current demographics of practicing technical communicators in the U.S. and in European countries? In what ways do technical communicators contribute to DEI efforts in the Global North and the Global South? What steps are technical communicators taking to make workplaces inclusive and supportive of diverse people and ideas around the world?

Technical communication practitioners and scholars need to understand the state of diversity as practiced in organizations (both in the academy and outside of the academy) as this information will highlight what technical communicators are doing well and where improvements can be made. This research is also needed to inform academics and practitioners about strategies professional technical communicators are employing to increase diversity and to assess whether these strategies are successful or effective. With this type of research, academics will be better able to train students to become effective practitioners who are ready to take action and contribute to diversity initiatives in organizations, and practitioners will be able to learn from the experiences of others to incorporate better diversity and inclusion initiatives into their practice. This special issue, thus, seeks to highlight the experiences and practices of professional technical communicators as they relate to diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

IN THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

The articles in this special issue (Part 1 of 2 issues) continue conversations in technical and professional communication that advance the notion that technical documents are imbued with culture, discrimination, politics, racism, and oppression (Jones & Williams, 2018; Walwema & Carmichael, 2021). In other words, the scholars provide examples of how workplace technical documents are not neutral, colorblind, or apolitical. In putting this special issue together, we solicited ideas and articles in the form of practitioner reflections, interviews, case studies, tutorials, and applied research—regarding the state of diversity in technical communication workplaces; connecting diversity and inclusion research to practice; the use of inclusive language in professional practice; the role of technical communicators in implementing DEI initiatives, and how DEI initiatives have been implemented in technical communication departments and workplaces.

In her article, Kristin Bennet reveals how job ads are a site of injustice. Kristin interrogates ableist ideologies maintained, produced, and reproduced in medical insurance job advertisements and DEI statements using critical discourse analysis and thematic coding to analyze normative assumptions embedded in the job ad and DEI statements of four Blue Cross Blue Shield national sites: Massachusetts, Tennessee, Michigan, and Rhode Island. She reveals that "although companies may articulate appreciation for diversity in their DEI statements, they may undermine such commitments by using ableist language and assumptions." The article concludes with recommendations for how technical and professional

communicators can intervene in unjust organizational practices through what she terms "coalitional recruitment strategies."

Dong and Gao present the state of diversity among technical communication practitioners in China. Because China is an ethnically homogeneous country, they did not focus on the Western centric definition of diversity which focuses mainly on race, ethnicity, gender, or demography. Rather, they defined diversity "holistically," a perspective which considers "the full spectrum of human differences, a developmental perspective to connect the past, present, and future of the field, and a critical perspective to understand historical, social, and cultural factors that affect working experience." This definition helps the field to think differently about conversations about diversity. The authors indicate that diversity should be about a recognition of the "presence of differences in the workplace." The authors surveyed members of two professional associations: Technical Communication Alliance (TCA) and Technical Communicators of China (TCC), to reveal diversity in terms of gender, work experience, places of employment, the documents they design, and their salary ranges.

Jamal-Jared Alexander provides a descriptive reflection of his role in establishing a grassroots affinity movement, Graduate Students of Color Association (GSCA), at Utah State University to support MMU graduate employees. He helps us to understand that programs should not only see graduate students as professionalizing scholars, but also as employees of higher education. He reminds TPCers to create cultural spaces for professionalizing scholars while centering their lived experiences and their need for belonging. By creating cultural spaces, we can support MMU graduate students to overcome structural barriers in the workplace.

Moore, Amidon, and Simmons offer a four-step process that practitioners, scholars, and administrators can deploy in order to envision and enact contextually specific tactical actions to redress inequality and exclusion in TPC workplaces and programs. They advise TPCers to take actionable steps to create inclusive workplaces. They advise that if one encounters moments of injustice, that individual should be able to: 1) define the challenge; 2) engage in how the challenge affects stakeholders; 3) identify their margin of maneuverability; and 4) act based on their individualized abilities or think about creating a coalition. Before they offer their four-step process, they help readers to appreciate the distinction between equity, inclusion, and justice. As they argue, if we continue to conflate the terms, we will struggle to move from talking about these terms in abstractions to enacting actionable and practical steps.

Does location or geographic region affect DEI practices in any way? Bay, Craig, and Masters-Wheeler conduct qualitative interviews of four technical communicators to interrogate the relationship between location and DEI practices. Two of the interviewees who worked in rural communities reported lack of diversity and this is reflected in management, while those who lived and worked in urban areas noticed that the diverse nature of the community encouraged DEI practices at the workplace. The authors also reveal how work modality (in-person or remote) affected workers' perception of DEI practices. The authors conclude with practical steps that can enhance DEI practices in the workplace.

As technical and professional communicators, our focus on user advocacy can and should inspire both practitioners and academics to lead the way in inclusion efforts. As a field with advocacy as its core mandate, technical and professional communication can play a vital role in justice causes that work to enact change in communities because the field of TPC interfaces with audiences, perhaps more than any other discipline as a consequence of its advocacy and discursive practices (Agboka & Dorpenyo, 2022, p. 6). Also, the type of advocacy done by technical communication research can and should lead to action (Walton, Moore, & Jones, 2019). Scholarship such as the articles found in this special issue represents a beginning to understanding how technical communicators can create more inclusive documents in more diverse workplaces.

ABOUT THE GUEST EDITORS

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Dr. Isidore K. Dorpenyo is Associate Professor of English at George Mason University. His research focuses on election technology, international technical communication, social justice, and localization. He is the author of the book: *User-localization Strategies in the Face of Technological Breakdown*. He has co-guest edited two special issues: "Enacting Social Justice" for *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* and "Technical Communication, Civic Engagement, and Election Technologies" for *Technical Communication*. He has published in *Technical Communication Quarterly, Community Literacy Journal, the Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *Technical Communication*, *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, *Programmatic Perspectives*, and the *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*.

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On the Cover

ARTIST'S NOTES

This cover addresses the topic "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Technical Communication Workplace." Each arm or hand reaches above the world toward other hands showcasing how technology has allowed us to communicate beyond seas and borders. The different skin-toned hands and the globe in the background represent the diversity in the workplace and how we are surrounded by different cultures, even when we are not currently thinking about it. Even if technical communicators are not physically working with each other, technology has given communicators the ability to relay content across the globe. The "technology veins" present in some of the hands represent how technology has become integrated into our world and how vital it is for most careers, technical communication being one of the primary careers. Lastly, the hands placed in the foreground reach over the globe, signifying how communication allows anyone to overcome obstacles in this world. In the realm of technical communication, teamwork is vital. On a human level, people need connections and, without them, nothing would be possible. There are times when technical communicators must work alone; however, assistance should never be more than an e-mail away.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Blaine Gillingham is an Eastern Kentucky University graduate awarded a Bachelor of Arts in English with a certificate and a focus on technical and professional writing. He is passionate about both technical and creative writing, creating documents and stories to assist people in any way he can. Currently, he is writing a fiction novel highlighting men's mental health. He is available at bgillingham1220@yahoo.com.

Equity and Inclusion as Workplace Practices: A Four-Step Process for Moving to Action

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By Kristen R. Moore, Timothy R. Amidon, and Michele Simmons

ABSTRACT

Purpose: In this article, we offer a *praxis*-driven framework that practitioners, scholars, and administrators can use to differentiate between equity and inclusion challenges and move toward catalyzing individual and/or coalitional action. We argue that distinguishing between equity and inclusion as two different potential problem types provides an opportunity for imagining a range of more just and equitable solutions. Acknowledging our margins of maneuverability and tacking in and out of potential realms for action allow practitioners to enact those solutions in practical and context-driven ways.

Method: Following the definitional work of Iris Marion Young (1990) and Rebecca Walton, Kristen Moore, and Natasha Jones (2019) surrounding justice, we delineate relationships between justice, equity, and inclusion before offering a four-step process that practitioners, scholars, and administrators can deploy in order to envision and enact contextually specific tactical actions to redress inequity and exclusion in TPC workplaces and programs.

Results: Through the application of the four-step process to contextualized examples of equity and inclusion challenges, we illustrate the utility of this approach as an actionable strategy for revealing and addressing inequity and exclusion within TPC workplaces and programs.

Conclusion: The work of doing equity and inclusion is an ongoing endeavor that requires vigilance and imagination. Identifying whether we frame a problem as inclusion or equity makes visible the arguments available within specific contexts, acknowledges our margin of maneuverability, and enables us to consider the realm where initial change is possible. Our proposed process provides but one point of entry into the field's long-standing pursuit of justice.

Keywords: Equity, Inclusion, Social Justice Turn, 4Rs, Margin of Maneuverability

Practitioner's Takeaway:

- A four-step approach to pursuing equity and inclusion as a workplace practice is illustrated and offered.
- By defining equity and inclusion as different aims, practitioners will be better equipped to communicate about and enact equitable and inclusive practices.
- By identifying their margin of maneuverability within the workplace, practitioners can specify whether practices, participatory cultures, processes, or policy are the most advantageous sites for change relative to their aims.

Equity and Inclusion as Workplace Practices

EQUITY AND INCLUSION AS WORKPLACE PRACTICES

The just use of imagination cannot take up static residence in the heads and hearts of allies and accomplices. The just use of imagination must be transformative.

Dr. Natasha N. Jones & Dr. Miriam F. Williams

INTRODUCTION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DO EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE?

What does it mean to do equity and inclusion work? To transform our workplaces into sites where all members of our community not only survive but thrive? When Jones and Williams (2020) called for a more just use of imagination, they implored technical and professional communicators to engage in equity and inclusion work as accomplices ready to do the continuous work of recognizing and responding to harms, redressing inequities, and transforming our world(s). We love these ideas, but the work is often mundane: it's in the details of emails, in the discussions about how to proceed with decisions, in the fourth conversation with a supervisor or chair about the ways inequities have creeped into our hiring practices. These mundane practices comprise equity and inclusion work; yet they are seldom at the center of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access initiatives[1] that emerge from our workplaces. Instead, grandiose Equity Plans are rolled out with few details about how to enact them; statements are made about how we support our Black coworkers, but strategies for redressing harms are omitted. This breakdown occurs even in technical communication programs and workplaces across the nation that have adopted social justice frameworks.

Take for example, this situation: *a supervisor in the workplace learned that one of the entry-level engineers was repeatedly ignored and dismissed by senior management. This entry-level engineer reported to HR that even in meetings, the senior manager refused to look at them, refused to answer their questions, and left them feeling "defeated and depleted." Although the entry-level engineer isn't certain these are about race—he's Black—it certainly feels like it. When HR reaches out to the supervisor (the engineer has declined to file an official report), the supervisor is not sure what to do and reaches out to the equity and inclusion office for advice: Should the unit work to be more inclusive? Reprimand the supervisor for inequitable treatment? What should happen next?*

We consider equity and inclusion breakdowns like this communication design problems that technical communicators with expertise in social justice can address. As diversity, equity, inclusion, and access initiatives emerge across the nation (e.g., DOD, 2022; General Motors, 2022; Ford Foundation, 2022; among many others), technical communicators can and should be leading the mundane communication work required to achieve equity and inclusion. At present, however, too few technical communicators focus on or publish the intentional practices (including tactics, strategies, or rhetorics) necessary for engaging in this work, especially when the work is building arguments that lead to change. For instance, while recently working with a cross-institutional team on an NSF proposal, one of us observed folx who espoused the value of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access but struggled when it came to translating those concepts into structural processes that could engender material change. Similarly, while working with upper administrators to enact equitable policies for students, these administrators often struggled to convey or "message" out on these policies. Consequently, we not only argue that diversity, equity, inclusion, and access needs an action plan (hearkening back to the earlier work of Porter et al., 2000) but also needs tools (hearkening to the more recent work of Walton et al., 2019) that allow us to recognize, reveal, reject, and replace exclusionary, oppressive, and inequitable structures. That is, enacting diversity, equity, inclusion, and access requires sustained, concentrated effort toward planning and enacting change. We sense that most would agree. Still, in our own efforts to pursue diversity, equity, inclusion, and access in workplaces, we've found the lack of specificity surrounding how to do this rhetorical work a disorienting and curious omission from the best practices of the field.

Despite the robust body of scholarship in Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) that has been focused on social justice (Haas & Eble,

1 In this article, we use the full terms diversity, equity, inclusion, and access rather than the acronym DEIA to refer to these ideas as concepts and/or initiatives. This is to avoid confusion with our use of DEIA within this article as an acronym for a four-step process; Define, Engage, Identify, Act; that can be used to move toward action addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and/or access challenges within workplaces.

2018; Walton et al., 2019; Scott, 2003; Blackmon, 2004; Simmons, 2007; Williams, 2010; Haas, 2012; Edenfield & Ledbetter, 2019; Gonzales, 2018; Opel & Sackey, 2017; Sackey, 2019; Jones & Williams, 2020; Itchuaqiyaq, 2021; McKoy et al., 2022) as well as action scholarship such as the Multiply Marginalized Scholar List (Itchuaqiyaq, 2022), anti-racist scholarly reviewing practices heuristic (2021), *Technical Communication Quarterly* special issues on Black TPC (2022), the action-oriented ATTW 2022, and the Bibliography of Works by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in Technical and Professional Communication (Sano-Franchini et al., 2022), the field has had limited engagement with diversity, equity, and inclusion as separate, distinct concepts. As such, the clear distinctions among terms and definitions, which are often a mainstay of technical communication, remain limited. In this article, we offer up definitions of two concepts, equity and inclusion, as a means of supporting technical communicators as they enact social justice in productive ways, with a particular focus on how institutional and workplace contexts shape one's *margin of maneuverability,* defined as an individual's ability to navigate situations given their positionality, privilege, and power (Moore et al., 2021). More specifically, we aim to translate theoretical concepts into praxis by offering TPC practitioners a four-step process for moving from deliberation to action—a contextualized roadmap—as it relates to equity and inclusion challenges they are attempting to address in local context:

- ***Define*** whether the challenge is best addressed as an equity and/or inclusion problem within a specific context.
- ***Engage*** how the challenge affects stakeholders by moving from conceptual "E" equity and "I" inclusion toward contextual "e" equity and "i" inclusion.
- ***Identify*** the margin of maneuverability that you possess as an individual and/or member of a coalition to affect change relative to the challenge.
- ***Act*** by focusing your individual and/or coalitional labor within a specific realm (practices, participatory culture, process, policy) where you can improve the material conditions for those that are the most marginalized, vulnerable, or harmed by the challenge.

We argue that distinguishing between equity and inclusion as two different potential problem types provides an opportunity for imagining a range of more just solutions. Acknowledging our margins of maneuverability and tacking in and out of potential realms for action allows practitioners to enact those solutions in practical and context-driven ways.

We describe the situation above as fairly straightforward in terms of justice: the supervisor is engaging in microaggressive behavior, causing organizational and individual harm. That is bad. It's racist. It's tied to all sorts of cultural norms. Yet, at present, the problem is ill-structured and, for many, addressing it could be overwhelming. Our DEIA approach aims to create some structure for ill-defined equity and inclusion problems.

The opening example is obviously both an equity and inclusion problem. The supervisor's microaggressive behavior reflects and reifies systems of oppression; it also creates an exclusionary, toxic work environment. Beyond simply naming the behavior as bad (which is limited in its impact) or calling HR to give a boiler plate workshop (probably called "How to be Less Racist, But Only if You Want To") or to facilitate a brownbag discussion (probably about "Racism is Bad, Have you Heard?"), accomplices and those committed to systemic change have other options for moving to action.

We posit that an accomplice within this workplace could instead approach this problem by defining, structuring, and contextualizing it, and use the DEIA framework to move strategically from an ill-defined problem (Big Jim's a racist) to a structured problem (Big Jim is enacting inequitable supervisory practices; or Big Jim's not being inclusive). All of these problems are technically accurate. (Sorry, Big Jim.) But, as we aim to show, the technical description we embrace shifts how we act, the arguments we make, and how we can more effectively deploy them to enact social justice.

We have organized the article in the following fashion. We first define equity and inclusion as concepts and explain how and why they require different arguments: We suggest that by treating them as technically distinct concepts, we can labor with more precision, tactics, and agency toward realizing the aims of justice in TPC contexts. Second, we sketch a four-part process—define, engage, identify, act—and offer a heuristic for applying this process to situated equity and inclusion efforts in workplaces and institutions. Third,

Equity and Inclusion as Workplace Practices

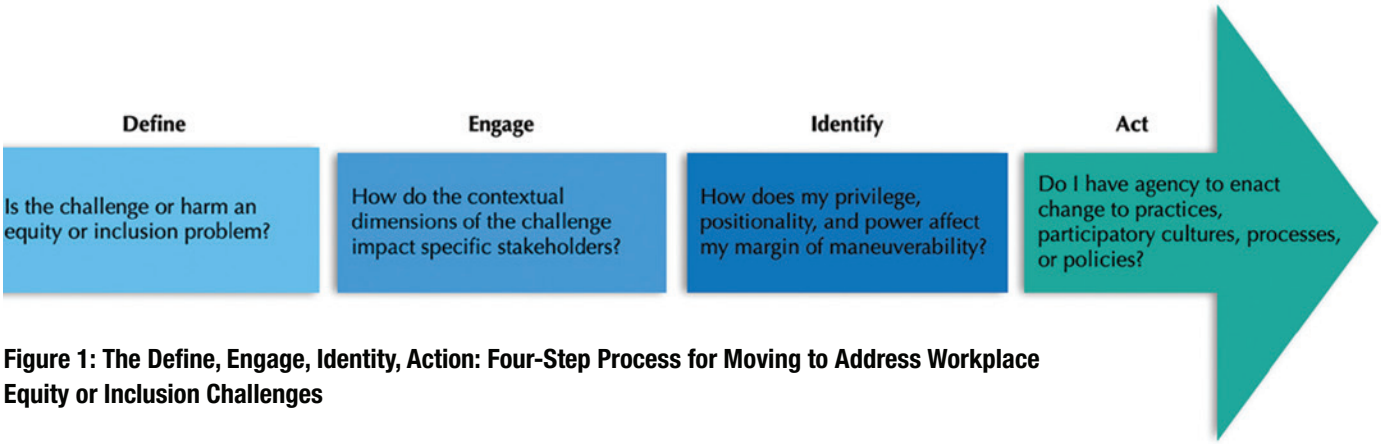

Figure 1: The Define, Engage, Identity, Action: Four-Step Process for Moving to Address Workplace Equity or Inclusion Challenges

we apply the heuristic process to three contextualized examples of equity and inclusion challenges and apply the heuristic/four-step process to each example to articulate how this tool scaffolds the work of moving from approaching equity and inclusion as values or concepts toward contextualized action in one of the realms where TPC practitioners often possess a margin of maneuverability for tactical agency: practices, participatory cultures, processes, policies. We close with an invitation for scholar-practitioners in TPC to not only apply the four-step process, but also share their experiences applying the tool in local contexts, critiquing aspects of its efficacy and usefulness, and/or adapting and building on the process in subsequent work.

CURRENT APPROACHES TO EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN TPC: A BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As a field, TPC has become increasingly engaged with social justice and diversity, equity, inclusion, and access across a range of topics, including localization (e.g., Lancaster & King, 2021; Smith, 2022; Agbozo, 2022; Shivers-McNair & San Diego, 2017; Gonzales & Turner, 2017), user-experience design (Rivera, 2022; Gonzales, 2018), rhetorics of health and medicine (e.g., Novotny et al., 2022; Manthey et al., 2022; Frost et al., 2021), social justice (Haas & Eble, 2018; Walton et al., 2019; Acharya, 2022), and risk and disaster communication (e.g., Simmons, 2007; Simmons & Grabill, 2007; Haas & Frost, 2017; Banyia, 2022). In a recent issue of *TC*, for example, Rivera (2022) examined the use of testimonio as a method for attuning to the cultural plurality of places, and Acharya (2022) considered the role an mHealth app in advancing equity and inclusion in the Global South. Indeed, this work engaging equity and inclusion within the field has spanned a considerable depth of contexts and audiences ranging from Smith's (2022) research to improve usability for aging and elderly populations and Mangum's (2021) focus on amplifying indigenous voices to Baniya's (2020) inquiry into disaster response during earthquakes in Nepal and Shivers-McNair and San Diego's (2017) development of localization practices for collaborating within makerspace communities. These examples are laudable, and we want to take a moment to recognize the crucial (and often painstaking) work that a wide number of scholars have taken in order to engender the "social justice" turn in TPC (Haas & Eble, 2018; Walton et al., 2019).

Still, limitations in our approaches persist, in part because applying diversity, equity, inclusion, and access is hard when we haven't clearly articulated them as distinct endeavors. Too often, the concepts are conflated and treated as a big tent without the critical attention to their distinct features to make a difference in actual workplace contexts. More specifically, we sense folx struggling to move away from diversity, equity, inclusion, and access as abstract ideas and toward actions that increase justice in workplaces and institutions. We contend, then, that lumping equity and inclusion together limits our ability to move toward action in precise and effective ways. Additionally (or, perhaps as a result), the diversity, equity, inclusion, and access practices written about in publications don't always directly extend to the various contexts where members of TPC work. For simplicity's sake, we categorize diversity, equity, inclusion, and access work as either inward facing or outward facing: inward facing diversity, equity, inclusion, and access projects focus on the discipline; outward facing projects focus on the impact of the field on the broader community or industry. We perceive a lack of discussion about how these contexts interrelate and integrate between the approaches TPC

has been formulating within scholarship: Can our theories of social justice port into other contexts? Are the approaches to equity and inclusion in TPC applicable in a range of contexts? We think so.

One promising example of scholars connecting the field to broader applications is Sackey's (2020) work in the context of the design of wearable technologies. He observed that "developers focus more on oversaturated markets filled with mostly young, white, middle-class consumers than the poor or chronically-ill" (p. 33). On one hand, Sackey's example illustrates an outwardly focused problem with inclusivity in TPC: Design approaches tend to center "normative" user-populations within dominant approaches to design, marginalizing lower-class, BIPOC, poor, disabled, and chronically ill populations by failing to include or consider the ways wearables might respond to needs and challenges of lower-class, BIPOC, poor, disabled, and/or chronically ill populations. On the other hand, Sackey's example also illustrates an outwardly focused problem of equity in TPC: Design approaches are not simply exclusionary of these populations—the exclusions give rise to inequities in terms of who benefits from wearing such technologies—e.g., the ability to garner personal insights on an individuals' longitudinal health trends; the ability to receive alerts such as trending toward a high-risk physiological state such as diabetic emergency.

Certainly, Sackey (2020) isn't the only scholar doing the work to connect the field's inward-facing social justice and diversity, equity, inclusion, and access initiatives with the more outward-facing impacts. Yet, few scholars begin with this objective in mind; we do. Not enough attention has been paid to how diversity, equity, inclusion, and access, as concepts, offer a range of distinct tactical approaches for addressing injustice in particular contexts.

Defining Terms

In her groundbreaking work on justice and oppression, Iris Marion Young (1990) articulated the strength of differentiating among definitions of justice when she offered a critique of understanding justice through a distributive framework; instead, she outlined a nuanced framework for understanding justice as the counterpart of oppression. Her "Five Faces of Oppression" has served as a foundation for recognizing justice as tied to both equity and inclusion. In defining justice as fundamentally connected to violence, cultural imperialism, marginalization, exploitation, and powerlessness, Young offered a granular distinction among types of exclusion and inequities, giving us the language and strategies for identifying how different practices of oppression make possible and acceptable institutional and individual acts of injustice. She aligned exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness to relations of power that affect people's material lives and their access to resources (p. 58). Oppressions such as cultural imperialism, on the other hand, work to exclude nondominant groups, "rendering the particular perspective of one's own group invisible at the same time as they stereo-type one's group and mark it out as Other" (p. 59). Justice, she maintains, requires both access to material resources and decision-making as well as a space for difference (p. 61). The differentiation gives Young's readers (like us) additional strategies for addressing systems of oppression.

We draw inspiration from this definitional approach, as we ask: What strategies for action might emerge if we were to differentiate among these concepts? Or, perhaps even more precisely, we wonder how differentiating from and reorienting to these concepts might open up new opportunities for TPC scholars and practitioners to engage in a "just use of imagination" (Williams & Jones, 2020) within their workplaces. This imaginative work might help us support the larger aims of working toward equity and inclusion in worksites where TPC scholars and practitioners perform labor, author policy, educate students, train the workforce, and/or engage in scholarship.

To address these questions, we've turned toward the collaborative work of Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019), which we find particularly valuable for considering distinctions between conceptions of justice (e.g., distributive or procedural justice) and their carry-on implications for equity and inclusion. While discussing procedural justice, for instance, Walton, Moore, and Jones explained that equity must be differentiated from equality in order to achieve justice, as "the sameness required by equality-based perspectives of fairness … cannot help but preserve the status quo, operating as a tool of oppression" (p. 41). Conversely, the authors argued that "equity is relative … [because f]actors such as relative need, relative contribution, and relative levels of oppression may be taken into consideration by equitable procedures and equitable distributions" (p. 41). Indeed, realizing justice-oriented workplaces requires us to go

beyond "simply" treating all the same. Instead, equity requires shifting resources (money, power, and positions) relative to the differing and relative levels of privilege, positionality, and power that various individuals and groups possess within our workplaces.

So, what do we mean by *equity* and *inclusion*? Certainly, differentiations among equity and inclusion already exist. The "seats at the table" metaphor proliferates to explain diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. Within this metaphor, access emphasizes the structural barriers (e.g., assistive technologies like ramps or elevators may be needed to get to the room where the table is located) that limit the ability of historically marginalized and oppressed groups (HMOGs) from gaining entry to a seat at the table; diversity emphasizes who is present and absent from table (e.g., there are many men, few women, and even fewer BIPOC individuals at the table); inclusion emphasizes whether specific individuals and groups are treated with respect and have a voice for participating in discussions at the table (e.g., women at the table are present, but are repeatedly interrupted or ignored); equity emphasizes whether their opportunities to participate are fair relative to their peers (e.g., men at the table are paid more than women, despite the fact that they are performing the same work at that table). Or, we can look to academic definitions such as Cuyler's, who defined equity as "fairness in addressing the historic unfairness of [historically marginalized and oppressed groups (HMOGs)]" and inclusion as "belonging, one of many measures of quality of life" (2023, p. 87).

For us, these are good starting places. One of the most significant dimensions affecting equity, as we understand it operating within workplaces, is that inequity catalyzes over time and across locations and systems. For example, Taslimi et al. (2017) demonstrated that equity can be defined in response to a particular crisis, as in disaster response (e.g., Hurricane Katrina), or in anticipation of future problems, as in hazardous materials disposal (e.g., Newport Chemical Weapons Depot). The dynamicity within Taslimi et al.'s approach is particularly crucial for technical communicators building arguments toward equity, which too often gets posited as a steady state goal rather than a responsive and ongoing project. Indeed, Patricia Hill Collins, in *Black Feminist Thought*, clarified this in her frameworks for articulating power constructs and oppression as shifting and malleable: Activists (and, we will add, technical communicators) can shift power constructs and oppression toward equity. Analogously, whereas equity requires a dynamic focus on the degree of fairness of individuals' and groups' relative resources, power, and decision making within and across locations and systems over time, inclusion can require resources and responsive decisions as well as shifts in respect, treatment, and participation that emerge from individual and organizational behavior. Here, we make the, perhaps, obvious point that organizations are comprised of individuals, so organizational efforts toward inclusion that don't engage individuals or work toward shifting organizational culture are unlikely to be effective. Like equity, inclusion is not a stasis; rather, it's a repeated activity that seeks to shift traditionally exclusive spaces toward inclusion of those who do not occupy dominant positions. University of Michigan's *Defining DEI* suggests that inclusion occurs when "differences are welcomed, different perspectives are respectfully heard and where every individual feels a sense of belonging" (2023). When we have worked toward equity or inclusion, we find the two objectives differ in meaningful ways: Equity prompts us to think about what resources could be shifted in order to provide additional opportunities for marginalized folx to be successful; inclusion prompts us to think about what cultural changes could be made in order to provide marginalized folx with a sense of belonging.

How do TPC practitioners, scholars, and administrators address equity and inclusion within workplaces? Bay (2022) recently argued that one potential action-oriented approach to address these issues is within TPC courses. Centering recent calls from Haas (2020) and Jones and Williams (2020) for the field of TPC to take "explicit action against systemic racism" (Bay, 2022, p. 213), Bay explained that undergraduate courses can have "a broad impact on students … [and] produce lasting impact and transformation toward equity and inclusion" by equipping the next generation of professionals in the field with tools necessary for "creat[ing] more inclusive and equitable workplaces" (p. 214). Thereafter, Bay recognized the groundbreaking work of Shelton (2020), before sketching an assignment within a community-based, service-learning course that called on students to describe how they might promote inclusion within the local community. One particularly valuable aspect of this assignment, from our perspective,

is that it emphasized that "issues of inclusion are not abstract concepts but are local, grounded, and applied" (Bay, 2022, pp. 217–218).

We are inspired by this work and other scholars in the field who are pulling the field along a socially just trajectory. Indeed, as practitioners in editorial, administrative, supervisory, and/or mentoring roles, we recognize the promise of differentiated approaches that first specifically target equity or inclusion before turning toward the "local, grounded, and applied" work of contextually redressing those issues (Bay, 2022, p. 218). Once we've re-dressed those particular issues, we, then, must recursively reorient to these concepts relative to the issues and contexts within which we are operating. From our experiences, reported here, equity and inclusion are related but different objectives and, as our examples (described below) illustrate, arguments for inclusion and equity comprise different logics and pursue different outcomes. The need for understanding how to structure arguments is great. As Moore et al. (2021) demonstrated, experts in social justice work (broadly construed) often make calculated decisions about what to say, when to say it, and how to say it to particular groups. The "reveal" moment—or when an injustice is discussed, articulated, or conveyed to another—matters. Reveals happen in-the-moment or after-the-fact, depending on the context, and according to Moore et al. (2021), they require a prior recognition that an injustice has occurred. Throughout the zeitgeist, an emphasis on recognizing injustices has been great; yet, the applied work of communicating about, intervening in, and replacing these injustices has been underdiscussed.

Ultimately, we suggest that because equity and inclusion work toward distinct ends they must be differentiated, and/but then, they must be reoriented because these ends work as co-extensive variables affecting the quality of justice in a specific location. From an action perspective, we might work to fix a part of a system to address equity (e.g., we might procure resources that allow us to address gender-inequity in equal-pay for equal-work). However, if we never go back and work toward healing, those people that have been alienated by the system do not have inclusion. Again, these are different objectives and doing work to improve them is laudatory. However, we believe that it is important for TPC to improve the precision through which we address them, as different responsive actions get us to different outcomes in equity or inclusion.

Engaging Concepts within Contexts

In addition to defining terms, the work of equity and inclusion needs to be contextualized in order for individuals to move to action (consult Jones et al., forthcoming). We describe this as moving from Big "E" Equity and Big "I" Inclusion (the abstract concepts) to little "e" equity and little "i" inclusion (what these abstract concepts look like in situ). This indicates the need to move from abstract notions of Equity and Inclusion into the specific contexts of the work. For example, we can posit equity (or inclusion) as our goal and even define it within our institutions, but the specifics of building toward equity within our particular units creates complexity and challenges. If we return to our opening example with Big Jim, we can see how true this is: It might bring about inclusion for the new engineer to fire Big Jim for his microaggressive behavior. Yet, the local policies for hiring and firing make it difficult to imagine a spoken microaggression prompting dismissal.

It's easy to shy away from a contextual approach because it may yield an incomplete, partial solution: Instead of fixing the whole system, we might be working to shift just one or two particular practices. Although this can feel dissatisfying, we offer it as a practical move that allows us to focus on the moments, locations, and practices where equity and inclusion actually affect our everyday lives. This approach can be generative in helping us to build more effective arguments within workplaces because we have limited margins of maneuverability, including power and resources to affect change (we'll discuss MoM more in the following section). It also prompts us to engage with a just use of imagination to be more creative in our solutions and more accountable to one another.

Thus, Big "E" equity, for us, often results in an abstraction or a lean toward performativity, whereas little "e" equity, gets at the types of lived experiences and realities that individuals and groups have with equity in their everyday lives in a given institution. Individuals perceive and experience equity through the mundane little "e" aspects of relations, interactions, and moments that comprise our daily lives within workforces and institutions. For the work we do in TPC, we find it less exigent to wade into theoretical discussions about the ontological relationships of E/equity and I/inclusion, as devoting too much effort to a conceptual approach can be used a tactic to

obfuscate and obscure our ability to make immediate, contextualized change in locations where equity and inclusion actually matters for those who are marginalized and oppressed within our workplaces. While having a good sense of these concepts is important, as theory and practice are both critical to praxis, we find that, too often, institutional efforts do not meaningfully approach equity and inclusion through the type of fine-grained contextual lens necessary for the generative and imaginative work of challenging and redressing injustices in our workplaces. Flipping from concept to context to focus on e/i can help us envision and prioritize the kinds of solutions and responses that may not be immediately visible when equity and inclusion are considered from a more distant and abstract conceptual perspective.

When Kristen has engaged with faculty, students, and staff in equity and inclusion workshops (and she's done it a lot), the need to articulate the concept of equity or inclusion is often dwarfed by the context for equity or inclusion, which creates tensions, problems, and pushback that deserve discussion. Stakeholders generally need to understand Equity or Inclusion conceptually before they can apply them; yet, the application of equity or inclusion in context is where the struggle occurs. Partially, of course, this could stem from the fact that it's possible that it is cognitively and psychologically less face-threatening, rhetorically speaking, for dominant groups to discuss and approach these concepts through the kinds of distance abstraction affords. Yet, we would argue that a focus on the conceptual meaning often defers the actual work of enacting e/i in a localized context where specific people are being oppressed and perpetuating oppression. Thus prompts our aim at a roadmap toward contextualized praxis, toward action.

Identifying our Margin of Maneuverability

Our first two steps: Defining terms and moving them into context allow us to appropriately communicate and set up the problems an institution or workplace faces tied to equity or inclusion, but as we move to action, our possibilities are constrained by our *margin of maneuverability.* Margin of maneuverability, as Moore et al. (2021, Redressing Inequity) explained, accounts for the relative and dynamic agency we might exercise as actors within a situated moment and place. Possibilities for action emerge from our positionality as well as our relative privilege: We might recognize an inequity in pay for our colleagues (this is actually happening for one of us authors) but our ability to replace that inequity is limited. As such, the work is revealing the problem to folx with a wider margin for action, convincing them to reject the inequitable behavior and work toward change in coalition.

The margin of maneuverability provides a useful framework for decision-making when an individual attempts to address an exclusionary or inequitable practice because (as with the movement from Big "E" to little "e") it works in practicalities, prompting a technical communicator to acknowledge their own potential for working and strategizing within the context. In short, understanding one's own margin of maneuverability allows for activists and institutional change-makers to optimize their individual and collective potential. It also allows change-makers to navigate situationally complex systems of inequity because it prompts individuals to seek coalitions for change when their own margin of maneuverability is severely limited when compared to the inequities they seek to address. Within our model (Define, Engage, Identify, and Act), identifying our own margin of maneuverability shapes the next step, wherein we recommend working toward action.

In the opening vignette, the supervisor likely does not have firing and hiring power over the senior engineer; even if he does, he might not be well-positioned to bring that about given the localized context, as we discussed above. Where does their power lie? What are their options? Following a contextual analysis of a harmful situation or event, an actor can assess how their individual and/or collective "privilege, positionality, and power"—what Moore, Walton, and Jones (2021) have described as the 3Ps—might allow for or limit the potential opportunities for action that exist. Through such consideration, individuals may discover that a number of potential avenues for action may exist within their margin of maneuverability, but there may be advantages and disadvantages (particularly risks to oneself or others) associated with various potential avenues within a MoM. Some readers might be thinking, "But isn't this approach to thinking about MoM an out for folx who simply don't want to act?" Sure. Those who don't want to act, won't. We're providing MoM as a blueprint or contextualized form of analysis.

We recognize MoM building on the spatial analytics discussed by Porter et al. as an agentive approach for

better understanding how power and opportunities for action reside within and between the contextual dimensions of an institution or workplace (2000). In particular, whereas post-modern mapping might help us consider where spatial boundaries exist within and between institutions, MoM considers the opportunities for agency available for individual or coalitional action at particular contextual levels (e.g., classrooms, programs, departments, colleges, universities, corporations, municipalities, states, industries).

Acting with Purpose

We discern the process of defining, engaging and identifying as iterative, and as we move toward action, the need for working iteratively expands: Where within our context and within our margin of maneuverability can equity or inclusion be most effectively enacted? In our experience, identifying four different realms for enacting change and engaging coalitional work helps to narrow down the immediate next steps for change. Stone and Moore's (2021) visualization of coalitional action supports this work. As they articulated it, when organizations work toward equity and inclusion, four realms must work in alignment: policy, process, participatory culture (pedagogy), and practices (consult Figure 2). They argued that equitable policy often fails because it lacks processes to uphold them and, as importantly, organizations will implement a policy without considering the pedagogical or participatory activities needed to connect those policies with practices. For instance, one of us works in an organization that recently declared a Safe Learning Environment Policy within its laboratories. Yet, because the policy was declared without accountability processes or trainings to support how we implement the equity-driven policy, practices within the organization have yet to change. Correcting the misalignment of our policies and daily practices requires engaged, coalitional work. In particular, Stone and Moore (2021) identified that breakdowns arise because people don't often recognize the connections among and/or misalignment between these realms: Simply changing a process means that it just lays on top of the issue–ultimately, we need to work to address practices, participatory cultures, processes, and policy, including how they are related as infrastructures that can support or redress inequity and exclusion within workplaces. Thus, breaking the components down can help us begin to identify where the types of tactical agency to begin building forward momentum can occur!

As technical communicators work to deploy equity or inclusion as workplace practices, these four realms can become sites of inquiry and action, guiding our movement toward equity or inclusion. While Stone and Moore (2021) offered these as mechanisms for coalitional work and organizational alignment, we adapt their four realms as sites for institutional change. Rather than prescribe an approach, our approach invites others into conversation as we understand the work of equity and inclusion as necessarily collective and coalitional. A "paradox of agency," as Blythe explained, is that it operates within institutions through collective power that "we gain [sic] not by being an autonomous individual, but by being part of something larger, by being part of systems that constrain and enable simultaneously" (2007, p. 173). This paradox is both a pernicious and potentially liberatory dimension of institutions as systems: As agents, we can acquiesce to the status quo, which might perpetuate and maintain injustice within our institutions or we might leverage the impartial power and relative agency within MoM to enact changes (even those that are imperfect) to our institutions.

Our final action-oriented step invites technical communicators to consider how they might enact change, and Stone and Moore's (2021) framework provides sites of potential change. That is, if the first two steps of our process respectively deal with defining what equity and inclusion challenge we're dealing with and engaging where the challenge resides as a site for potential redressing exclusion or inequity, and the third step involves identifying our margin of maneuverability based on who we are based on our privilege, positionality, and power, then the fourth step deals with what institutional levers are contextually available to us. If we don't have maneuverability in one area (perhaps we can't change a system or a policy), we can use this tool to identify additional paths, including whom we might recruit and mobilize as coalition members. Two points of caution are warranted here: First, that it's not as simple just picking a realm and working within it. Instead, we suggest that you select a realm where you have maneuverability and then work to build coalitions that can work across the other realms. For example, the White engineer could go directly to management without consent from his peer. Or, he can suggest to his peer that they consider going to the union—that he

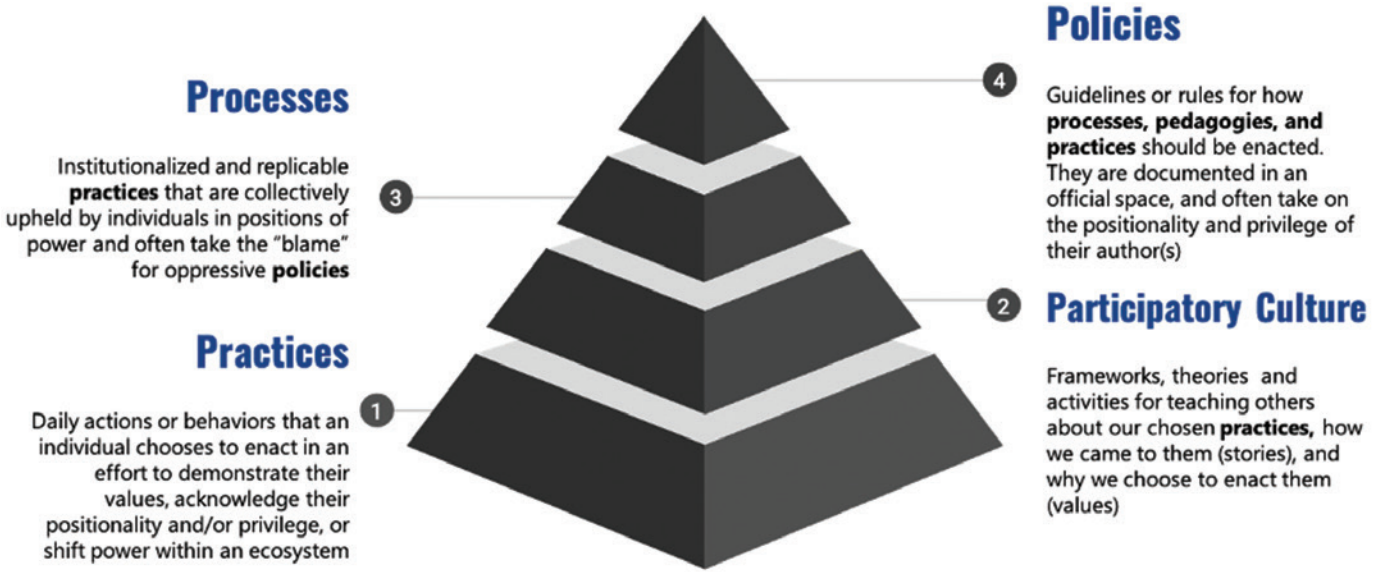

Figure 2: Stone and Moore's (2021) Pyramid of the Realms of Institutional Change: Building Changes Coalitonally

wants to be an ally and that that means going together and standing together to stand against the continuation of this behavior in the workplace. Second, the margin of maneuverability discussion can become an easy out, especially for those with relative privilege. We adopt Stone and Moore's framework so to galvanize us to think critically about how many ways we might effect change in our organization.

DEVISING A PLAN & DOING THE WORK

The struggle to do the work of equity and inclusion is, in part, a communication challenge that can usefully be divided into two related areas: Framing the problem and proposing solutions. In *Table 1: Framing and Proposing Solutions to Equity and Inclusion Problems* (below), we offer heuristic questions that technical communicators can use to scaffold their application of the four-step process to particular equity and inclusion problems growing from situated locations. Next, we sketch three case studies drawn from our experiences within workplaces, including discussion questions that could be used with students in classrooms or professionals in workshops. Thereafter, we apply the four-step process as an analytic, illustrating how the tools help scaffold the work of defining and differentiating between equity and inclusion within a particular event, moving from equity and inclusion as abstract concepts to context-specific challenges that we might take action to address, considering our margin of maneuverability in the situation, and creating an action plan that seeks to address practice, participatory culture, processes, and policy.

This section provides two potential ways of thinking through our heuristic. First, we offer the cases without our analysis and with discussion questions. We imagine that your organization might need opportunities to think through problem-solving when it comes to equity and inclusion. These cases provide a mechanism to facilitate those conversations. Second, in Table 2, we provide our own analysis as a sort of "key" to helping illustrate the way we have used this heuristic to frame and solve equity and inclusion problems.

Example 1 — Misgendering and Transexclusion within a Public Safety Organization

A group of eight public safety professionals, White, working- and middle-class, cis-hetero men, are sitting together at a lunchroom table, sharing a table to celebrate the retirement of a mid-level manager. As a public safety organization, the workplace is organized in a paramilitary format with various workers of varying ranks. The group consists of a manager, two supervisors, two senior-level public safety personnel, and three entry-level public safety personnel. In terms of workplace power dynamics, this is an informal context, where paramilitary protocol is relaxed and members across rank can (mostly) speak freely. However, power differentials continue to play a role in dynamics, as directly challenging individuals at higher ranks is almost

Table 1. Framing and Proposing Solutions to Equity or Inclusion Problems

Questions for Framing an Equity or Inclusion Problem		Questions for Proposing Solutions to Equity or Inclusion Problems	
Define: Is the issue framed as an inclusion or equity problem? Would framing it otherwise offer a more productive or achievable argument or solution?	**Engage: Can the issue be framed as a little "e/i" rather than a big "E/I" problem in order to better engage a just use of imagination?**	**Identify: What is my margin of maneuverability? Based on my privilege, positionality, and power, can I address the equity or inclusion aspect of the problem?**	**Act: Is the equity or inclusion challenge a problem in practice, participatory culture, process, or policy? Do I have the agency within my institution to make changes to these structures?**
While equity challenges often surround the distribution or redistribution of resources, inclusion challenges often surround levels of meaningful integration and treatment of specific individuals and groups. Consequently, defining a challenge as an equity or inclusion issue may elicit different responses from stakeholders within the institution or workplace. What are the potential advantages or disadvantages associated with approaching this as an equity or inclusion challenge?	Conceptualizing "E" equity and "I" inclusion too often fails to consider how these challenges manifest in situated contexts for specific individuals and groups. Consequently, engaging the issue contextually invites us to ask clarifying questions: Who is being treated inequitably? Which systems or individuals are doing harm? Who is being excluded? How is the exclusion manifesting?	In addition to contextualizing the challenge, we must contextualize our opportunity to effect change. This requires us to identify our margin of maneuverability, the degree of agency we have within a particular setting, based on our privilege, positionality, and power. This is an especially critical step for reflexive praxis, as it requires us to consider opportunities for both individual and coalitional effort. The realities of one's 3Ps, in turn, affect the shape of the next steps: The more limited margin of maneuverability we possess, the less we can work toward redressing structural inequities and/or exclusions.	Within institutions, there are a range of realms where we might work to enact change. In this step, we consider whether the equity or inclusion challenge manifests within practice, participatory cultures, processes, or policies. One particular aspect of this that we understand as common sites of tension are misalignments between these four realms of institutions. Here we are required to think about how the margin of maneuverability we possess will constrain and/or empower our ability to address change in that area of the institution. Moreover, it also can allow us to better grasp the types of coalitions we need to build to affect change. For instance, non-tenured instructors might need to build alliances with administrators and/or tenured peers to address inequities in policy, whereas they are likely to possess agency to shift their own practices, for example, toward inclusive behavior.

commonly coded as insubordination and occasionally met with retaliation. All but two of the workers—one of the supervisors and one entry-level worker—at the table politically identify as Moderate or Conservative.

During the lunch, the discussion swings toward the decision of a neighboring station to temporarily replace the American flag that usually flies behind their apparatus with the Inclusive Pride Flag in order to demonstrate solidarity with members of the LGBTQ+ community during pride month. Although some personnel discuss and complain about the choice that station has made, labeling it as "political," one of the supervisors makes a pejorative comment about fairness in sports, while misgendering a transathlete that has currently been receiving a significant amount of attention in the news. One of the entry-level personnel looks directly to the other supervisor, who is senior to the other supervisor within the organization, to determine how he will respond to the situation and express his discontent with the statement. The senior supervisor begins to speak up, and the junior supervisor attempts to backtrack his misgendering, stating, "I mean 'they'," while looking directly at the entry-level member: "You know, we're learning and growing and trying to be more inclusive here." The entry-level member who forwarded the look to the senior-supervisor has sought to educate his coworkers about how such statements cause harm. Although the entry-level member recognizes a level of some growth in the junior supervisor, he still feels an internalized conflict

with the alignment of his personal values; the stated core values of the organization, "Service," "Integrity," "Respect," and "Compassion;" and the hostile and exclusionary language directed toward LGBTQ+ people by members of the organization.

Questions for discussion: Do you understand this primarily as an equity or inclusion issue? In what ways does this example reveal conceptual "I"/"E" issues in inclusion/equity? In what ways does this example reveal contextual "i"/"e" issues in inclusion/equity? How do you perceive your margin of maneuverability to respond to this challenge as a senior-supervisor/mid-level manager/another entry-level member of the organization? What realm appears to be the most viable for moving toward enacting change: Specifically, how would you change practice, participatory culture, process, or policy if you sought to address this as an issue of inclusion? Conversely, how might you change practice, participatory culture, process, or policy if you sought to address this as an equity issue? Whom might you seek to enlist as coalitional allies based on your understanding of the dynamics within this workplace context? What might change about your understanding of the dynamics of one of the entry-level personnel was a Black cisgender woman? Or if one of the senior-level personnel was the parent of a transgender child?

Example 2 — Parental Leave Policy

In another TPC program, the university provides parental leave accommodation for birthing parents, offering a full semester off from teaching for the semester nearest to the birth. Despite the provision of this policy, a concern is raised to a program administrator recognized as an equity and inclusion advocate within the department that a pair of eligible instructors have not received leave for recent births. The program director looks into the discrepancy in the implementation of these accommodations and works with instructors—who articulate distinct perspectives on taking advantage of the leave. One of the birthing parents desperately needs the course release, even several years later; the other does not feel it is necessary. Both express concern that the parental leave will be very important for a number of the faculty coming behind them, and they want to be sure there is a culture of acceptance surrounding parental leave. The program director works to develop a restorative response and ensure that both parents are offered after-the-fact amends. When offered, one reiterates that while others might need it, she doesn't (at least, not at this point).

The equity issue here is, perhaps, obvious: Other birthing parents across the unit receive course releases—but two of them didn't get that time off from teaching. This is fundamentally inequitable treatment. But if we shift to look at it from an inclusion issue, which is perhaps less obvious in this case, we perceive a need to address the *participatory culture* as well as the policy and process for implementation. Through a participatory culture lens, the inclusion issues crystallize: Once the parental leave policy (once handled as an individual request or need) becomes part of the organizational culture, parents (especially women, who are often marginalized in the STEM fields) experience not only less resistance to success but an increased sense of belonging. That is, the effect is not only on the individuals affected by this particular example: Future parents enter into the organization and are immediately supported by both the policy and the organizational culture.

It's worth noting the converse: If one of the parents excused themselves from the "after-the-fact amends" offered, the equity issue would have been addressed at the individual level, but it would have left a potential inclusion issue within the realm of participatory culture. Opting out of the offered leave might have implied that parental leave was only necessary if the parent was not a particularly effective scholar—more of a crutch than an equity-driven policy. This creates a culture of exclusion for those parents who seek and use the parental leave policy. Further, when birthing parents enter an organizational culture that doesn't evenly implement policies, they risk being ostracized or criticized for their choices to engage. The inclusion solution here required a coalitional action on the part of the parents; the equity solution required a procedural change on the part of the leadership: The parental leave is now publicized and reinforced up the ladder, as well as organizationally.

Questions for Discussion: Do you understand this primarily as an equity or inclusion issue? In what ways does this example reveal conceptual "I"/"E" issues in inclusion/equity? Parental leave policies are already addressing an equity issue. How does the policy breakdown in this case? How do you perceive your own margin of maneuverability to respond to this challenge? What realm seems the most viable for moving toward enacting change: Specifically, how would you change practice, participatory culture, process, or policy if you sought to address this as an

inequity issue? Conversely, how might you change practice, participatory culture, process, or policy if you sought to address this as an inclusion issue? Whom might you seek to enlist as coalitional allies?

Example 3 — Editorial Revisions

New editors for a publication recognized that the wording of review guidelines and questions sent to external reviewers both limited what counts as TPC and opened a space for rejecting a manuscript because the author did not already have an established professional reputation or because the manuscript was deemed an inappropriate style by the reviewer. Comments about style and professional language had previously been used to suggest manuscripts by BIPOC individuals were not publishable.

Questions for Discussion: Do you understand this primarily as an equity or inclusion issue? In what ways does this example reveal conceptual "I"/"E" issues in inclusion/equity? How do you perceive your own margin of maneuverability to respond to this challenge? What realm seems the most viable for moving toward enacting change: Specifically, how would you change practice, participatory culture, process, or policy if you sought to address this as an inequity issue? Conversely, how might you change practice, participatory culture, process, or policy if you sought to address this as an inclusion issue? Whom might you seek to enlist as coalitional allies?

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study emerged from our own daily practices of doing work toward equity and inclusion. As we worked to imagine new ways forward and navigated our own institutions, we struggled to find published strategies that can be applied in the workplace. This article aims to fill that gap. We conclude with three takeaways that can guide others seeking to enact change in their organizations:

1. In communicating the need for change, precise definitions and realms of action are helpful tools for getting work done. Our four-step process is one way of working toward effective communication in equity and inclusion work.
2. In imagining how we can work toward justice, we need to consider local contexts in which we enact change, including reflecting on our own margins of maneuverability, identifying potential accomplices and coalition members, and working to address policies, processes, practices and participatory culture.
3. Regardless of where and how we begin working to address harm (from an equity or inclusion frame; with policy or process), the work is ongoing, not a steady state.

This article works to delineate a strategy for implementing change, but its limitations are many. First, we haven't studied the impacts of this approach systematically; designing such a study would be incredibly difficult because inequities emerge constantly and in sensitive contexts. Nonetheless, one of us is working with scholars in systems engineering to establish a model for understanding the impact of these kinds of initiatives. Second, we haven't discussed the difficulties recognizing injustice in their complexities. It's worth noting that learning to recognize injustices is a skill worthy of focus. As Moore et al. (2021) reported, recognition accrues over time and through a range of activities, including reading and dialogue. As we gain competency in recognition, though, our best bet is to listen to and honor those who live at the margins. Finally, the examples we offer are limited in their scope and explanation and draw on the experiences of us authors, who occupy positions of relative privilege as White, hetcis, tenured professors. As we begin to enact these steps, more nuanced examples that emerge from other positionalities and vulnerabilities will allow us to refine, critique, and further examine the impact of our heuristic.

Table 2: Framing and Proposing Solutions to Equity or Inclusion Problems through Contextualized Example

Questions for Framing and Communicating about an Equity or Inclusion Problem		Questions for Proposing Solutions to Equity or Inclusion Problems	
Define: Is the issue framed as an inclusion or equity problem? Would framing it otherwise offer a more productive or achievable argument and solution?	**Engage:** Can the issue be framed as a little "e/i" rather than a big "E/I" problem in order to better engage a just use of imagination?	**Identify:** Given my margin of maneuverability, do I have power to address the equity or inclusion aspect of the problem?	**Act:** What realm is the problem in: Practice, process, policy, or participatory culture?

Equity and Inclusion as Workplace Practices

Example 1: A supervisor in a public safety organization uses exclusionary and harmful language to discuss a public figure who is a transwoman during an informal workplace luncheon where a group of mixed ranked personnel dining together.			
Framing the issue as an **equity** problem could draw attention to the ways that exclusionary practices and language contributes to a workplace culture that is likely responsible for the lack of representation from LBGTQ+ individuals within this particular workplace. It draws attention to the inequitable burden of labor that LGBTQ+ individuals and/or allies within this workplace must shoulder in order to call-in and call-out peers and co-workers about the harmful effects their language has on the workplace culture. Finally, it focuses attention on power differentials between personnel of different ranks and their perceptions of the courses of action available to them to respond to harmful language in the workplace.	Framing the issue as a **little "e"** problem rather than a **big "E"** problem enables us to consider *why* the entry-level public safety worker might feel unsafe in speaking directly to the supervisor who has made harmful, transexclusionary statements. Moreover, it focuses attention to the contextual factors that contribute to a workforce culture in this organization that is adversely impacting the organization's ability to live up to its core values as well as meet strategic goals like diversifying the workforce. Thus, it focuses attention to how this particular organization reflects larger structural inequities that LBGTQ+ people and allies have to overcome in order to participate within specific workplaces and industries because of the harmful cultures that widely promulgate.	Framed as an **equity** problem, the ask focuses on addressing a workplace culture perpetuates direct and indirect exclusions of individuals from marginalized populations.	Framed as an **equity** problem, a solution may lie in changing organizational **policies** on exclusionary workplace conduct and practices and developing **processes** for reporting, investigating, and addressing exclusionary conduct and practices. Policies can document support for and commitments to hiring and creating a hospitable workplace environment for members of marginalized populations. Processes can place supervisors in roles where they are responsible and accountable for ensuring that the burden of responding to exclusionary practices is not shouldered by those with the least amount of power in the organizations.
Framing the issue as an **inclusion** problem illustrates how LGBTQ+ people and allies are subjected to enduring harmful language and rhetorics within workplaces because of fear that supervisors will retaliate against them for challenging harmful language.	Framing as a **little "i"** enables us to look at the context of why a particular worker, an individual with less positional power than coworkers, feel at odds with the organizations they work within. It focuses attention on how small, specific events accumulate, resulting in a toxic, harmful workplace culture for members of historically marginalized populations. In this particular case, it also illustrates how inclusivity can directly relate to the perceived agency that individuals have to correct and/or address the culture of the workplace.	Framed as an **inclusion** problem, the ask focuses on addressing practices and relationships between peers and subordinates that foster an inclusive workplace culture for members and allies of marginalized populations.	Framed as an **inclusion** problem, a solution may lie in changing **relational practices** that better acknowledge the unequal distribution of power between supervisors and front-line personnel and recognize the need for ongoing professional development and training focused on educating members of this workplace about expectations of appropriate workplace conduct and growth-based approaches to building an inclusive workplace culture.

Example 2: Parental leave policy is inconsistently applied across units			
Framing the issue as an **equity** problem focuses on the compensation for work and time, particularly since parental leave aims to address barriers to success that parents, and particularly women (given traditional gender disparities of childcare) face when negotiating a new child alongside work.	Framing this as a little "e" problem emphasized the possible resources that could be moved after the fact to enact a restorative justice action item; it also allowed us to identify where we might have breakdowns in communication to leadership about what is and is not expected for parental leave.	The equity ask required a movement of resources that I could request but not deliver.	This wasn't a policy problem so much as a procedure concern.
Framing the issue as an **inclusion** problem emphasizes the ways those without the parental leave might experience parenthood as a particularly isolating and overwhelming event, seeking to repair the ways that parents, particularly pregnant and postpartum bodies, might be further marginalized without the due support.	Framing the issue as a little "i" inclusion concern highlighted the ways pregnant people in the department were already marginalized with the anticipation that they would be able to produce less scholarship; it additionally helped us think through the ways that pregnant people often anticipated their colleagues' assumptions about parents and work habits.	The inclusion ask was difficult to make because it was imprecise and cultural—as someone outside the department, I need additional coalition members to achieve this goal.	The fundamental concern here became building actions and processes for a participatory culture of inclusion, specifically, ensuring that all pregnant people in the department felt supported by the department.
Example 3: Editorial Case. New editors for an academic publication recognized that the wording of review guidelines and questions sent to external reviewers both limited what counts as TPC and opened a space for rejecting a manuscript because the author did not already have an established professional reputation or because the manuscript was deemed an inappropriate style by the reviewer. Comments about style and professional language had previously been used to suggest manuscripts by BIPOC individuals were not publishable.			
Framing the issue as an **equity** problem focuses on the power that review guidelines wield and what scholars are denied publication resulting in potential loss of employment, tenure, promotion	**Big "E"** review guidelines assume that standard questions will enable all authors and their work to be reviewed equally. Framing the issues as a little "e" problem enables us to consider the specific contexts in which review questions are written, responded to, and used to prevent publication.	Framed as an **equity** problem, the ask focuses on rethinking the processes to publication that create inequitable obstacles for scholars whose work does not reflect the dominant perspective.	Framed as an equity problem, the solution may lie in revising the **processes** and **policies** of publication–as field-level editors working with big press editors to reveal and replace specific harms and material effects of review questions that disproportionately negatively affect BIPOC and multiply marginalized and underrepresented authors by institutionalizing spaces for oppressive comments and diminishing access to publication and the capital associated with publication.

Equity and Inclusion as Workplace Practices

Framing the issue as an **inclusion** problem focuses on what scholars and scholarship, including ways of knowing, are excluded from the field.	Framing the issue as a **little "i"** makes visible review questions that give preference to scholarship that reinforces the dominant narrative, ways of knowing, and style.	Framed as an inclusion problem, the ask focuses on revising reviewer feedback questions that reinforce dominant perspectives, limit the scope of topics relevant to the field, and question nondominant ways of knowing and expressing ideas.	Framed as an inclusion problem, an initial solution may lie in **policy** changes at the submission guidelines that explicitly welcome more inclusive topics–especially ones that address issues of inequities, access, and exclusions and also in the standing review questionnaires to eliminate questions that open a space for comments on language acquisition, that suggest a preference for dominant perspectives and canonical citations. Also rejecting that previous production equates with professionalism. However, a solution must also extend to the **processes** that give co-editors access to reviews to identify oppressive exclusionary comments before they are sent to authors (as opposed to directly from the Press) as well as **participatory culture** that assembles a review board who reflect an inclusive and diverse group of scholars. As reviewers, we can **practice** more inclusionary review by paying attention to questions that privilege dominant narratives and reject those in our response, replacing them with feedback addressing inclusive citational practices, ways of knowing, and topics.

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Centering the Marginalized: Creating a Coalition to Enhance Retention Initiatives in the Workplace

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By Jamal-Jared Alexander

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This practitioner reflection provides a narrative of how I intervened to make Utah State University (USU) a more socially-just workplace for graduate students, by creating a coalition to establish the Graduate Students of Color Association (GSCA). I argue that graduate students are not only professionalizing scholars but are also often university employees. I extend conversations in the field by centering multiply marginalized or underrepresented (MMU) students' perceptions of inclusive spaces while offering a solution to Popham's (2016) argument that recruitment efforts may not be enough when trying to diversify knowledge in the workplace.

Method: By taking a descriptive narrative approach to this reflection, I offer insights into the different methods to establish GSCA and the stakeholders involved. I provide readers with ways to enact transformative diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in their workplaces while promoting reciprocity for all involved.

Results: The continuous commitment to enhance workplace environments through social, academic, emotional, and culture-affirming support has proven to be a major impact to USU thanks to GSCA. The association has become an integral retention initiative that USU's graduate programs can promote and use alongside their recruitment efforts.

Conclusion: I provide readers with insights on how to create cultural spaces for professionalizing scholars while centering their lived experiences and their need for belonging. This reflection provides readers with divergent ways to creating an infrastructure that helps MMU scholars persist in the workplace.

Keywords: Cultural Spaces; Employee Retention; Graduate Students of Color Association; Equity and Inclusion; Social Justice

Practitioner's Takeaway:

- Practitioners are provided with theoretical and practical approaches that help MMU employees overcome structural barriers in the workplace.
- As the principal founder of GSCA, I embody the tenets of Black Feminist Thought, by reflecting on how my lived experiences—and the experiences of other MMU graduate employees at predominately white institutions—helped create a cultural space where employees can thrive and be supported by those with similar intersections in workplace settings.

Many predominately white institutions (PWIs) are starting to recruit multiply marginalized or underrepresented (MMU) scholars into higher education in hopes of diversifying knowledge and meeting organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals (Alexander & Walton, 2022; Blackmon, 2004; Jones et al., 2014; to name a few). A person that identifies as MMU belongs to a group or multiple groups that are frequently marginalized in their workplace environments (Walton et al., 2019). These groups consist of race and ethnicity, (dis)ability, sexuality, age, etc. The exigency of these recruitment initiatives allows Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) scholars an opportunity to help PWIs create safe workplace environments where employees can flourish and develop the professional skills needed in their respective fields. However, more research is needed that focuses on ways to enhance the climate of recruiting PWIs to ensure that MMU employees have the necessary infrastructures and a safe environment to succeed.

Knowing that the uniqueness of higher education may often have limited implications in non-academic workplaces, my goal with this reflection is to address these challenges to help organizations be more inclusive. I describe the rationale and the process of how I, an African American male, practitioner of both DEI and TPC, and former graduate student at a PWI, became an institutional agent to intervene positively in campus retention initiatives. In the context of this reflection, *institutional agents* refer to individuals who cultivate the idea of paying it forward by supporting the next generation of MMU employees. These agents provide access to resources, networks, privileges, and individualized support that center the marginalized—extending Stanton-Salazar's (1997) concepts of social capital and institutional support.

First, I describe graduate students as working professionals in need of a positive campus climate and sense of belonging, especially those that identify as MMU. I describe the theoretical background of the actions I took to help Utah State University (USU) become a more socially-just workplace and learning space for MMU graduate employees. I provide readers with the origin of the Graduate Students of Color Association (GSCA)—a high-impact campus organization serving the needs of MMU employees that arose from a grassroots coalitional effort rather than an empirical research study. The model provided demonstrates how one Carnegie Research 1 and PWI successfully moved past performative DEI by centering the needs, lived experiences, and professional expertise of MMU graduate employees to enhance the university's climate. I intentionally use the term *performative DEI* to highlight the need for more accountability in the workplace that moves past meaningless performative actions and surface-level statements that aren't followed by practical action—e.g., diversity statements. Workplaces that are committed to DEI principles reinforce this commitment by offering continuous equitable resources that contribute to employees' achievements—making DEI transformative and not just a stand-alone topic.

In the context of this special issue that explores successful DEI in the workplace, I argue that the training grounds for professionalizing scholars in graduate programs is, within itself, a workplace where they work as university employees for their respective institutions. Therefore, sharing my intersections as a professionalizing scholar and practitioner on how to enhance workplace settings for other MMU employees is what I contribute to the field. I invite readers to consider my experiences and DEI initiatives in hopes of providing them with ways to reimagine a more socially-just workplace environment for employees.

EARLY PROFESSIONALIZATION OF MMU GRADUATE EMPLOYEES

As a first-generation college student from the projects of Atlanta, I traveled to the Midwest to pursue a doctoral degree in the state of Utah. Not knowing that I would be the first African American to be admitted into the Technical Communication & Rhetoric (TCR) Ph.D. Program, I arrived at USU where the available campus resources for MMU employees (such as student-centered programming and academic and professional support) were geared toward undergraduates. Although I participated in professionalization programs and developmental workshops as a mentor to MMU undergraduates, I had no one with similar intersections and experiences to mentor me and offer insights or survival tactics for navigating a majority white workplace as a graduate employee of color. Recognizing the need for resources to support my success as an employee and my development as an academic

professional, I set out to learn how other MMU graduate employees across the university's nine colleges navigate their respective work spaces. The graduate employees I encountered had different intersections—i.e., distinct research interests, sexualities, origin countries, religions, ethnicities, departmental resources, etc.—which was useful in understanding the type of access that was being provided (or missing) in graduate programs across campus, and how that access was a vital part in their sense of belonging.

Although the term *sense of belonging* has been defined by numerous scholars, I extend Hurtado and Carter's (1997) definition to the field of TPC by centering both the cognitive (belief and knowledge) and affective (feelings) elements of social interactions. In other words, a sense of belonging is both a feeling one has and an achievable institutional goal based on action. An employee's ability to succeed in workplace settings has everything to do with their intersections of identity—i.e., personal, social, spiritual, professional, etc.

In the context of this reflection, a sense of belonging is connected to how USU initiated new retention efforts to support and enhance MMU graduate employees' perceptions of (and interactions with) their workplace environment (Strayhorn, 2012). An employee's ability to succeed academically has everything to do with their personal and social lives, and TPC researchers have an opportunity to help PWIs enhance their workplace climate by describing concrete ways to embody known best practices, such as the tenets of Black Feminist Thought (BFT), when eradicating discriminatory practices, policies, and procedures that hinder the recruitment and retention of MMU employees.

Collins (1989) gives us four tenets of alternative epistemologies (i.e., ways of knowing and validating knowledge) that challenge the status quo:

- **The Lived Experience**—Valuable knowledge is gained from and based upon lived experience.
- **Dialogue > Debate**—In crafting and assessing knowledge, dialogue is more useful than debate.
- **Ethics of Caring**—All knowledge is value laden and should therefore be informed by ethics of caring, which draws upon expressiveness, emotion, and empathy.
- **Personal Accountability**—Knowledge is based on beliefs; therefore, knowers are personally accountable for what they claim to know.

An employee's ability to overcome structural barriers in the workplace must center around their sense of belonging. In other words, retention and sense of belonging have an interconnected relationship that centers around the lived experiences of MMU employees (Palmer et al., 2014; Rankin & Reason, 2008). Retention initiatives have often been effective for organizations that use outdated retention practices and metrics that center only on the majority. For example, many retention strategies center around white, cis-gender, heteronormative males who have, historically, been the dominant group to access workplaces in higher education. Now that PWIs are looking to become more diverse and inclusive with their student body, new strategies are needed to support the dominant group *and* MMU groups. By adding new retention strategies that center the intersections of MMU graduate employees, PWIs can actively move toward more inclusive practices that foster a sense of belonging.

Since I classify graduate employes as working professionals, the targeted efforts of cultural spaces like GSCA have the potential to enhance student enrollment rates of a university, as well as their staffing retention rates. In other words, an increase in retention numbers creates opportunities for increase in recruitment numbers, and the positive experiences of working professionals creates a reputable workplace environment. This claim is supported by Dayley (2020) who argues how "[c]reating a supportive and inclusive environment is not only beneficial for current students, but it also attracts future students who have heard about the program's favorable reputation" (p. 151)—highlighting the level of reciprocity for all stakeholders.

Employees often share if they feel they are (or aren't) an integral part of the system or workplace environment with familial kinship. For example, in an interview conducted by Dayley (2020), one interviewee mentioned how MMU graduate employees are already small in number at PWIs and tend to talk to each other about their experiences: "[I]f I know that my friend has gone to a program who is a person of color and has not been supported I'm not gonna want to go to that program" (as cited in Dayley, 2020, p. 178). For me, I wouldn't have considered my MA program if it weren't for my mentor, so the power of word-of-mouth goes a long way when exploring the experiences of MMU employees in graduate workplaces.

One of the biggest retention research questions asked by TPC scholars has been, "How do we recruit and retain minorities in our departments when there are no other minorities around?" (Blackmon, 2004, p. 2). Organizations and TPC graduate programs are currently struggling to support marginalized employees and help them overcome structural barriers to graduation (Dayley, 2020; McClain & Perry, 2017). Literature shows that having existing minoritized student representation on campus is a huge factor that affects the retention of MMU graduate employees' decisions to stay at their workplace (Blackmon, 2004; Dayley, 2020; Griffin & Muñiz, 2011). By extending conversations in the field and centering MMU graduate employees' perceptions of inclusive spaces (Dayley, 2020), this reflection offers readers a solution to Popham's (2016) argument that recruitment efforts are not enough, highlighting the importance of (and calling for more) retention scholarship. After exploring scholarship in different disciplines to get a sense of current and previous retention initiatives (e.g., Blackmon, 2004; Griffin & Muñiz, 2011; Henderson, 1991; Quarterman, 2008), I noticed that scholars such as McClain and Perry (2017) and Milem et al. (2005) all touched on one common theme: the need for cultural spaces at PWIs to enhance MMU employees' sense of belonging.

As many readers can attest, the average graduate employee rarely leaves their department and often works in labs, so not many people would take an interest in the type of resources available across the campus in other colleges for MMU employees. In my self-advocacy at USU, I began researching cultural spaces and met with a program coordinator at the Inclusion Center to get his thoughts on how to get their center to create research-based programming and resources that cater to MMU graduate employees. We shared concerns about MMU graduate employees not getting the training and resources they needed to be successful professionals, and the coordinator suggested that I formulate a new organization that specifically centered the lived experiences of MMU graduate employees.

I designed a blueprint for GSCA in response to this *call to action* to unify a sense of belonging among MMU graduate employees at USU. I took a bottom-up approach to establish an association that would enhance the workplace environment for current and incoming graduate employees of color. A similar approach can be taken with non-academic organizations. For example, employees that lack belonging often find solace in numbers before expressing their concerns to management or Human Resources (HR). MMU employees have been known to band together on the basis of their intersections and lived experiences, so my approach within an academic workplace to create a cultural space is comparable to non-academic workplaces that have employees who create affinity groups (Biscoe & Safford, 2010). GSCA was created to be a safe space for MMU employees seeking community, connection, academic and professional assistance, and support.

The goal of the association was to address the notion of intersectionality with two components: first, employees that have been systematically identified as having more than one marginalized identification marker and, second, a model that "effectively addresses complex relational, structural, individual, and ideological aspects of domination and privilege" (Ramsay, 2014, p. 453). GSCA (2020) promotes and focuses on inter- and intrapersonal resilience by taking a BFT approach through three pillars:

- *Community-Based Healing*—mitigating mental health issues (e.g., depression, anxiety, suicide, disruptive behavior, and dissocial disorders) through healing circles, body-focused work, connective meditations, workshops, and trainings.
- *Launching Aggies*—offering mentorship programs, professional development opportunities, and workshops (e.g., preparing for comprehensive exams, writing for publication, teaching, etc.).
- *Social Action*—educating members on ways to handle oppressive issues affecting them or their families while working closely with the administrative teams to increase visibility and a sense of self-worth.

Each pillar explicitly centers the lived experiences of MMU employees and allows for national networking opportunities while simultaneously helping the university reinforce its commitment to DEI by providing new and equitable resources based on the professional development needs of its employees.

Current TPC literature provides insight into how to cultivate an inclusive climate to create and enhance retention strategies (Blackmon, 2004; Dayley, 2020;

Savage & Mattson, 2011). When I say *institutional climate*, I extend Mulder's (1991) explanation where workplaces such as USU provide a foundation for the comfort level of all employees who work to fulfill the institution's mission. In other words, the lack of comfort and effort to fulfill the institution's mission can be the determining factor in MMU employees' decision to (not) attend or pursue higher education or quit/transfer to a more welcoming institution with infrastructures that foster a sense of belonging in the workplace. The institutions that foster a sense of belonging tend to:

- Identify active engagement with other minoritized employees.
- Provide divergent ways for MMU graduate employees to participate in workplace environments for social and academic growth.
- Hire mental health counselors with specializations that explore different intersections (e.g., feminist therapists such as Brown, 2018; Root & Brown, 2014) and multicultural therapists (Asnaani & Hofmann, 2012; Wolf et al., 2018; to name a few) along with other forms of counseling resources that promote healing for the marginalized.
- Having a curriculum that is relevant to their experience and the experiences of other marginalized communities.

Employees in (non)academic workplaces benefit from and excel the most in these types of spaces when they're given the opportunity to celebrate and emerge in their cultural heritages (Dayley, 2020; Museus & Quaye, 2009). With this in mind, I argue that DEI retention research is now leaning toward encouraging graduate employees to "find connections at their colleges and universities" (Dayley, 2020, p. 22) through cultural spaces where they can build a community. Those wanting to do this work must first grasp a solid understanding of their workplace environment.

Campus Climate

Campus climate is vital to incoming and current MMU employees since an inclusive campus climate can alleviate psychological, physical, and mental health concerns. Although existing TPC literature defining campus climate is limited, the term is used in different contexts to understand inclusion and quality of life issues (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). For example, Woodard and Sims (2000) argue that campus climate involves a student's perception of their experiences (in and out of the classroom). Simply put, these experiences include a push against imposter syndrome, or the desire to fit in, and students' feelings about the quality of their overall graduate experience, or the experience of needing to create lasting cultural changes that foster a positive climate on campus. I categorized these experiences and perceptions by extending Hurtado et al.'s (1998) four dimensions of cultural climate when evaluating the campus climate of USU: Institutional History, Structural Diversity, Psychological Climate, and Behavioral Climate. In other words, I challenged and disrupted oppressive workplace policies that served a homogeneous population and invested in increasing structural diversity by eliminating skewed distributions of graduate employees and involving employees' views on how the university could engage in transformative DEI.

Although these dimensions of campus climate are drastically different depending on who is at the center of these experiences, Hart and Fellabaum (2008) believe that "[t]he vast majority of studies of campus climate focus on race, ethnicity, and or gender. To date, little attention has been paid to how perceptions of and experiences with sexual orientation, religion, veteran status, social class, gender identity, and other identity characteristics also contribute to campus climate" (p. 224). In my pursuit to create a socially-just workplace environment at USU, I examined the current attitudes surrounding respect from MMU graduate employees—extending the work of Pascarella and Terenzini (2005). Although my approach didn't explicitly include race, ethnicity, gender, or other intersections employees may have, it did leave room for interpretation by making a rhetorical move, allowing each employee to identify their intersections, and how those intersections were often disrespected or made them feel.

Connecting Retention Initiatives to Sense of Belonging

With this understanding of campus climate in mind, Mulder's (1991) four themes that enhance sense of belonging were vital in my effort to help the workplace at USU retain MMU graduate employees. PWIs must move past the focus on students' intellectual development and recognize the "conceptual and practical linkages within a student's personal and social development" (Applegate, 1989, p. 39) speaks to the

entire human experience (Mulder, 1991). In other words, having MMU graduate employee representation on campus is a vital factor that affects diversity retention and students' sense of belonging. For non-academic workplaces, the same representation affects the company's retention of MMU employees, especially when examining administrative roles.

Understanding that BFT takes the "core themes of [B]lack gendered oppression—such as racism, misogyny, and poverty—and infuses them with the lived experience of [B]lack women's taken-for-granted, everyday knowledge" (Collins, 2005, p. 6), I used these same core themes to help me understand the needs of other MMU employees when thinking of their sense of belonging in the workplace. By adopting and enacting the tenets presented in Collins' alternative epistemologies, I had the tools to start making socially-just change.

Many TPC scholars are actively trying to enact socially-just change to make room for MMU communities and new perspectives in professional settings (Colton & Holmes, 2018; Cook, 2002; Dayley, 2020; Friess & Lam, 2018; Gonzales & Baca, 2017; Lay, 1991; Meyer & Bernhardt, 1997; Popham, 2016; Savage & Mattson, 2011; Staples & Ornatowski, 1997). When thinking about BFT's tenet two, dialogue over debate, dialogue is needed between PWIs and MMU employees to discuss ways to retain ethnic and racial minoritized students—requiring that they be invited and welcomed into the spaces where these conversations often take place. Dialogue involves listening and exploring opposing views, whereas debate often reinforces the status quo—resulting in those in power being more concerned with advancing their own agenda.

Tenet two is vital in helping employees educate employers on *why* certain retention strategies are needed and *how* those strategies benefit and affect the organization's inclusive initiatives. For example, USU is in a nonurban area that lacks a diverse population and is often perceived to be unappealing to MMU applicants when contemplating a 2–5-year commitment for a graduate program due to a lack of representation—i.e., the campus, the surrounding community, and even the curriculum (Savage & Mattson, 2011). In a similar fashion, applicants interested in industry corporations often take interest in the company's ability to show support with diverse community organizations, public-facing DEI policies, diversified leadership and hiring practices, benefits packages that center wellness and inclusivity (e.g., gender transition, paternity leave), and take accountability for when the company falls short of DEI initiatives (Monster Worldwide, 2023).

It's important to note that many MMU employees in academic workplaces are housed in graduate programs situated in geographical locations with little to no diversity (Blackmon, 2004). This lack of representation is one of the key factors why MMU employees transfer or leave their workplace environments. Blackmon (2004) argues that "[i]t is this sense of community that is not only important in recruiting graduate students but is also important in the … retention … of African Americans" and other minoritized communities (p. 2). By connecting Blackmon's claim to Hurtado & Carter's (1997) concept of sense of belonging, I was able to focus on social interactions that further enhance (or hinder) graduate employees' affiliation and identity with USU.

When thinking about social interactions that enhance or hinder employees' affiliations, it's important to create an environment where employees can discuss their challenges. For example, Dayley (2020) argues how developing such an environment where people will listen, believe, and take socially-just action is the start of enhancing an employee's sense of belonging. With this knowledge, a program coordinator introduced me to four other MMU graduate employees and, together, we became the founding members of GSCA. We were invited to a townhall listening session with other MMU student-leaders—along with the university's 16th President and members of her administration team—where our voices took center stage. Later, the founding members drafted an open letter to the President outlining the theoretical developmental plan of GSCA—which piqued her interest and launched the birth of the association.

Defining Cultural Spaces

By extending McClain and Perry's (2017) concept of *cultural spaces,* the founding members highlighted the need for explicit and *intentional* programming to enhance student retention and attrition in their letter to the President. We brought attention to MMU graduate employees being negatively affected by the workplace's racial climate, leaving them to feel culturally isolated and unsupported in exploring their ethnic heritage and identity (Milem et al., 2005). We provided insight to a study conducted by Morrow and Ackermann

(2012) to highlight *why* MMU employees depart PWIs voluntarily for non-academic reasons, honing in on how GSCA had the potential to create an inclusive environment to help MMU employees overcome structural barriers.

We supported our claim with scholarship from McClain and Perry (2017), arguing how "[c]ultural spaces on college campuses often serve as safe havens for students of color" (p. 8), allowing students to congregate with like-minded individuals and discover ways to safely navigate complex situations—e.g., racist and dismissive colleagues, inequitable access to funding, and advancement. Our vision was to have GSCA act as a form of "familial kinships" (McClain & Perry, 2017, p. 8) among MMU employees in smaller subpopulations while exposing them to institutional agents who can help them navigate professional environments.

To get a better understanding of how you can situate cultural spaces in non-academic settings, I turn your attention to affinity groups (also known as caucuses or network groups).

> [A]ffinity groups can be defined as groups of employees within an organization who share a common identity, defined by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or shared extra-organizational values or interests. Such groups may be more or less formally organized, and their relationship with management may vary from being adversarial to being cooperative or even fully co-opted by management. They operate outside the jurisdiction of collective bargaining laws. (Biscoe & Safford, 2010, p. 1)

Affinity groups first emerged in large companies in the early 1970s—the most notable being the pioneering Black Caucus at Xerox Corporation—where "members of these groups were generally white collar" and weren't "formally recognized (in law or in practice) as legal representatives of workers' interests" (Biscoe & Safford, 2010, p. 1). Since the role of affinity groups within companies is unclear due to scarce research, I argue that the main common thread between cultural spaces and affinity groups is horizontal and vertical mentoring.

Horizontal mentoring takes place between employees across departments and between people with similar titles and ranks. Mentoring is mutually beneficial to all parties, and the four tenets of BFT interweave with job duties and the workplace environment. On the contrary, vertical mentoring often depicts advanced or higher ranked professionals working with lower ranked professionals. Corporate innovator and finance entrepreneur Garrett Mintz (2020) argues that vertical mentoring is known to exaggerate "workplace hierarchies and dehumanizes the mentoring relationship" (para. 11). However, both have similar and overlapping characteristics since they (in)formally help employees navigate workplace environments and politics. In other words, both have the potential to be relational—where the tenets of BFT account for personal relationships to evolve over time—and transactional/performative—where initiatives are "company-run (and financed) and are used primarily to demonstrate an organization's commitment to [DEI] to current and future employees," investors, and customers (Biscoe & Safford, 2010, p. 2). The motive behind mentoring is what drives the action of affinity groups.

To provide more context surrounding the development of these types of spaces in higher education, I turn your attention to McClain and Perry (2017) who identify specific centers and associations to show how other academic institutions have created cultural spaces to meet the divergent needs of MMU employees. For example, *The Bridge* was an initiative that served as a mentoring program and a medium for first-year students of color to get acclimated to Georgia State University (McClain & Perry, 2017). Moreover, "those that created the program believed that the bonds created during the program helped students feel accepted, supported, and greatly increased students' chance of graduation" (McClain & Perry, 2017, p. 8), which speaks to the program providing students with a sense of belonging and the relational connections developed through the program.

While the complex interplay of academic, economic, institutional, and social processes that influence college persistence varies by groups with different intersections of identity, the cultural space in this example speaks specifically to African Americans. However, the overall purpose for this organization was to create a sense of belonging where MMU students could feel welcomed and respected, and were provided with specific resources based on their individual needs.

Continuing with the same topic, the founding members of GSCA engaged in multiple follow-up meetings with the university's President and the School

of Graduate Studies' Vice Provost to explore research by Rendón et al. (2000) to gain a deeper understanding of *why* cultural spaces such as GSCA were needed. We showed how MMU graduate employees must be able to find (in)animate objects in their college culture that evoke their sense of belonging that often originates in their cultural upbringing (Rendón et al., 2000). We provided a list of institutional agents who could (a) provide information and guidance that would aid MMU employees in deciphering unfamiliar customs, (b) mediate problems that often arise from disjunctions between MMU employees' cultural traits and the prevailing workplace culture, and (c) model behaviors that were amenable with the norms, values, and beliefs of the majority and minoritized cultures (Rendón et al., 2000; refer also to Jalomo, 1995; Rendón, 1996; de Anda, 1984). By examining and closing potential gaps with solutions from this research, we successfully helped the administration team understand the importance of creating cultural spaces for MMU graduate employees as a critical retention initiative.

HELPING *YOU*, DO YOUR WORK

Many of you may think that implementing cultural spaces at a PWI emerges from an institutional review board (IRB)-approved empirical research study. For some universities, that is the case. However, I have shown that my approach relied on the tenets of BFT since my positionality—i.e., role as Diversity Recruitment Officer (DRO) and former MMU graduate employee—provided USU with insights to address ongoing retention issues. When I say *positionality*, I refer to the intersections of social status and power that shape identities and the access people have.

My role as DRO emerged from a DEI assistantship—a paid academic position for graduate employees, often resulting in tuition remission and specialized training—that was created by the School of Graduate Studies specifically for graduate employees with DEI research agendas. Little did I know that my research interest in DEI recruitment and retention would inspire the DRO position, and my position granted me access to the other eight colleges to learn from other MMU employees.

Sadly, many graduate workplaces continue to view graduate employees as affordable labor where the needs of the Department are the only priority, and the idea of having a graduate student work an assistantship outside of the Department is seen as an act of betrayal and not allowed, resulting in professionalizing scholars signing up for assistantships that don't always align with their research interests or professional aspirations. I appeal to those program administrators by advising them to "incorporate DEI assistantships for students" who want to: "conduct DEI research … [seek] non-teaching related funding," invest "in social justice initiatives, [or] have an interest in university administration" (Alexander & Walton, 2022, p. 176). Making this type of move *decenters* the Department and centers the marginalized.

The founding members of GSCA are currently designing an empirical study to measure the sense of belonging of (non)GSCA members via the university-wide analysis, assessment, and accreditation survey after the end of December 2023. The data will be accompanied by an auto-ethnographic case study where we will explore how other members have experienced similar epiphanies of belonging. By using the antecedents to a sense of belonging (SOBI-A) and the psychological sense of belonging (SOBI-P) scales (Hagerty & Patusky, 1995), we aim to evaluate (and demonstrate) why associations such as GSCA are needed in workplace settings by showing how these types of spaces enhance the mental health and lives of MMU employees—which directly connects to retention and attrition. Alexander et al. (2022) encourage those in the workplace, "especially allies with more privileged positionalities, to be active in improving the inclusivity" (p. 8), which can look different from one organization to the next.

With this in mind, not every organization will need a GSCA. Some corporations may need a Latinx affinity group that offers advocacy and engagement for their Latinx employees, while those at universities may need to craft a First-Gen organization for undergraduates that advance the success of first-generation students. Assess your workplace environment and be mindful that the needs of your employees will eventually evolve and change as diversity enrollment continues to shift, so it's important to actively enact the four tenets of BFT.

The establishment of GSCA at USU is unique to the graduate employees' experiences of current MMU scholars and alumni. Those same scholars will become employees for your organizations, so imagine having the infrastructures already in place to help them develop and maintain a sense of belonging. To achieve this goal,

conduct a similar survey using the same SOBI-A/P measurement scales, and provide a space where the voices of your MMU employees can be heard—similar to the townhall listening session mentioned earlier.

IMPACT FACTOR

Having formulated at the beginning of the COVID pandemic in 2020 with only five founding members, GSCA has officially entered the second semester of its first-active year with a roster of over 100+ MMU graduate employees across the nine colleges at USU. The association has even received one of the university's highest awards for Student Organization of the Year, thanks to its commitment to social justice and inclusion. These commitments are continuously enacted through the association's programming that enhances the workplace environment through social, academic, emotional, and culture-affirming support—reiterating the scholarly foundation used to create the association. Knowing that GSCA promotes equity in workplace settings while fostering academic excellence, the association has become an integral retention initiative that USU graduate programs can reference and use alongside their recruitment efforts.

The increase in membership speaks volumes to the impact factor this association continues to have on MMU graduate employees and the workplace environment. GSCA has become the safe haven McClain and Perry (2017) referenced for many MMU employees looking for a place where they can belong and thrive in their respective programs. For example, during the first writing retreat, members were surveyed to learn if similar (or different) programming was needed. The following responses provide a snippet of how members benefit from cultural spaces like GSCA:

When asked *What did you like most about the GSCA Writing Retreat?*, respondents advised:

- "Having time to write. Cooking together (having really delicious food). Hearing each other's experiences. Enjoyed sharing room with friend."
- "Just meeting other people of color in graduate programs. Really helped normalized minorities (including me) being involved [in] higher level academia/education."
- "I really enjoyed interacting and spending time with other people of colour. It gave me a sense of belonging in the community. I also appreciated having an opportunity to rest and have a designated time to work."
- "Bonding with other People of Color and getting chunks of time to get work done."
- "Being able to get to know other BIPOC [(Black Indigenous People of Color)] students and doing work in a safe space."
- "Being able to comfortably connect with other graduate students and spend time relieving stress."
- "Connecting [with] other grad students of color. Beautiful space to stay [and] write together."

When asked *How likely are you to recommend the GSCA Writing Retreat to another colleague?*, the results show 94% responded with yes, they will recommend the association.

The impact of having GSCA at USU has allowed me to learn from award-winning scholars from around the world who have been instrumental in my personal and professional development. This impact has enabled me to become what I sought to be: an institutional agent offering insider knowledge. By creating programming for GSCA members that gave them a behind-the-scenes look into the lived experiences of different professionals, members now have access to multiple MMU employees who understand what they are currently going through. For example, I was invited by members to speak about job market preparation—having just successfully navigated what many call a *stressful experience*. I shared my recent experience and provided interviewing tips, mock interview recordings conducted by my Department, and a variety of documents they may be asked to submit. I then created a Canvas shell—a learning management system for the creation, management, and delivery of documents, educational materials, and training (Turnbull et al., 2020; refer also to Sabharwal et al., 2018)—to house this information by categorizing content for each of the nine colleges, their departments, and programs. Doing so will allow members to explore resources created by MMU alumni in their field or college while offering them the chance to share their materials and help the next generation of MMU scholars.

More importantly, when the program coordinator of the Inclusion Center first introduced me to another African American male Ph.D. employee, it was as if I had been introduced to a best homie I hadn't seen

since grade school. Until that moment, I spent my first two years believing I was the only African American male pursuing a Ph.D. on campus, so seeing someone who looked like me—and shared my intersections—instantly changed my entire mindset since I had someone who understood racial battle fatigue—a term coined by education scholars Smith et.al (2011) to help organizations assess how Black men experience stress in the workplace (Engram & Mayer, 2023, p. 62). Granted, not all African Americans pursuing graduate degrees will have kindred spirits. However, my colleague and I continue to be two men that can put aside our egos to support, uplift, and advocate for one another as we step into our purpose.

Although there are many other examples, the goal here is to provide you with a snippet of my experiences with GSCA to help you imagine the impact factor for the other 100+ members. Furthermore, imagine having this type of cultural space within your organization and the potential impact it can have on your employees.

CALL TO ACTION

I encourage readers to investigate the needs of their MMU employees and create appropriate programming suitable for their workplace environment. The theoretical approach and academic validity used to establish GSCA is scalable and adaptable and can help TPC practitioners move away from performative DEI in the workplace. Even if your workplace doesn't have a strong diverse population, you *must* learn to center the marginalized and accommodate their needs. Doing so will enhance your retention numbers while also allowing you to recruit more diverse employees into a space where they can thrive.

Newkirk (2019) argues that DEI "will not be ushered in by pledges, slogans, or well-compensated czars …. Without *Truth*, there cannot be *Justice*, and the insidious vapor of bigotry will continue to pervade our monochromatic workplaces" (p. 217; emphases added). In other words, organizations must move past catchy acronyms and phrases as performative points of reference without actually defining what these words mean and whom they uplift or exclude (Engram & Mayer, 2023). Transformative DEI pushes past checklists and requires organizations to actively address Engram and Mayer's (2023) question: *What are you willing to give up?*

In my attempt to challenge performative thinkers of DEI, the question above allows for them to be understanding of what performance equity is and what real-world transformative equity can be (Engram & Mayer, 2023). For example, stakeholders at USU who took this question seriously found themselves "giving up their proximity to whiteness, relationship to patriarchy, harmful religious stances, and most importantly relationships with people who refuse to grow" (Engram & Mayer, 2023, p. 63). This reflection acts as a transformative example of how I (and USU) am actively addressing this question, and how the tenets of BFT can help drive diversity in a variety of workplaces.

Industry Organizations

Affinity groups can take many forms depending on the needs of the employees, workplace environment, or the organization. For example, some affinity groups reflect "grassroots efforts to press demands," whereas other groups are "company-run (and financed) and are used primarily to demonstrate an organization's commitment to [DEI] to current and future employees," investors, and customers (Biscoe & Safford, 2010, p. 2). Use your positionality to evoke the change you desire to have in your workplace. Although this reflection focused on the experiences of graduate student employees at a university, the same concepts can be applied in other workplace settings with affinity groups. Knowing that "affinity groups can be classified as a diversity intervention that creates spaces for intragroup support and bridges together different groups" (Bohonos & Sisco, 2021, pp. 93–94), creating these types of groups allows employees to be validated by those with similar intersections while expressing their trepidations, challenges, and professional pursuits. In other words, affinity groups support and reinforce the tenets of BFT.

Higher Ed. Organizations

Actively seek out and build relationships with non-white employees and ensure that you are maximizing reciprocity. After you've addressed the question of *What are you willing to give up?*, move forward by asking MMU employees the following questions:

- *How can I assist you at this moment?*
  - Review a section of their first attempt at an article publication; assist or provide tips for preparing and taking their comprehensive examinations.

    - Share your experiences with employees (good, bad, and indifferent) and give them access to your network of colleagues with similar research interests. In other words, become an institutional agent.
- *What has been (or continues to be) challenging for you?*
- *How do you create balance in your life? What areas of work might be preventing you from achieving balance?*
- *Do you have a community where you can discuss life/work issues where encouragement and support are provided? Can I offer any assistance in helping you find such a community?*

These questions are mere conversation starters and will vary from employee to employee. Take the knowledge you have gained throughout your professional career and share it with your team. Have each team member conduct a self-analytical evaluation of their workplace to help you understand where your department needs to improve and put a plan of action together to create a more inclusive environment *before* you direct your attention to recruiting. Creating an inclusive environment requires active evolving, but once the sense of belonging of your employees starts to shift in a way that increases their self-worth and ability to pursue their professional goals, you can then direct your attention to recruiting by taking a similar approach, understanding that not every MMU applicant is the same. Highlight the changes and ways your workplace has adjusted to being a more socially-just environment and be transparent about the areas that you are working to enhance.

Now that I am an Assistant Professor, my next goal is to take what I've created at USU and center MMU faculty at PWIs in hopes of learning why MMU faculty employees stay, relocate, or leave their current workplace. Until then, I charge you, my readers, to actively commit to creating a more socially-just working environment for MMU employees. I understand that you may not have the capacity to create an entire association or an affinity group as I did, but consider working with your employees to create something on a smaller scale. Ultimately, the focus should be on your MMU employees to ensure they have what they need to be successful human beings and phenomenal assets to your organization.

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Who Are China's Technical Communicators? A Survey on the State of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of the Profession

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By Lin Dong and Zhijun Gao

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study updates our understanding of the group features of China's technical communication coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our research uncovers workplace inequities in the profession by identifying and analyzing a wide range of professional differences in knowledge, skills, experience, practice, performance, benefits, opportunities, challenges, and discoveries. It is more than just a diversity report. We seek to help academics and practitioners across the world develop a basic grasp of China's technical communication, practitioners, and working conditions from a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) perspective.

Method: We designed a four-part survey with 50 questions to examine DEI variables in several areas such as demographics, professional activities, career development, and challenges and problems. A total of 259 technical communicators from a target population of about 1,200 responded to our questionnaire.

Results: Diversity is an intrinsic feature of China's technical communication because of its short history of professionalization. Practitioners' educational backgrounds, language ability, job titles, affiliated departments, working activities and deliverables, and so on all exhibit diversity. Because of the lack of DEI initiatives, many participants reported structural inequalities in their career development.

Conclusion: The DEI situation in the field of China's technical communication is incarnated as a collective professional identity crisis in practitioners. This identity crisis has historical, societal, organizational, individual, and environmental reasons. To tackle it, we propose inclusive development as an effective DEI initiative.

Keywords: China's Technical Communicators, DEI Variables, Professional Identity Crisis, Global Technical Communication

Practitioner's Takeaway:

- China's technical communicators are predominantly female, aged 25–40, Han Chinese, bilingual or multilingual, with master's or bachelor's degrees in foreign language and literature or engineering technologies, and work in economically developed areas.
- Most of them work under the job title "Technical Documentation Engineer" in privately owned, large, or extra-large enterprises in high-tech industries. The majority earn between ¥100,000 and ¥300,000 ($14,671–$44,014 USD) each year.
- China's technical communicators have a professional identity crisis that were caused by historical, social, corporate, individual, and environmental factors. To tackle it, we propose inclusive development.

INTRODUCTION

All technical communication is potentially global technical communication, since stakeholders and/or users of that technical communication might come from diverse global locations, both digitally and geographically. Globalization, along with the culturally diverse technical contents that it brings, as stated by Angela M. Hass and Michelle F. Eble (2018), "has forever changed who we think of as technical communicators, the work that technical communicators do, and thus where and how we understand technical communication happens" (p. 3). The advancement of technical communication in China is an ideal illustration of their point.

Although technical writing has been practiced in China for at least 2,500 years, since the completion of the first instructions manual *Yi Jing* (*I Ching*, *Classic of Changes*) (Ding, 2003), technical communication as an academic field and as a profession didn't burgeon until the 1990s, when transnational enterprises implemented the strategies of globalization, internationalization, localization, translation (GILT) and opened the market of technical communication in China. Since then, technical communication has witnessed growth in industry openings and interest in higher education. The requirement for Chinese local businesses to "go abroad" into globalization has been a significant driving force behind the growth of technical communication. Statistics from the Ministry of Commerce of China show that since 2014, China has invested more on international markets than it has used inflows of foreign capital (Han et al., 2016). In the language-service industry (including technical communication, localization, translation, etc.), the business volume of Chinese-to-foreign-language translation has been higher than that of foreign-language-to-Chinese translation since 2011 and the disparity has continued to widen (China Academy of Translation et al., 2014), a sign that China's language service is progressively influential worldwide. The demand for language services is directly proportional to the level of economic development, according to the *Blue Book of Language Service for Chinese Enterprise Globalization* (Wang et al., 2016); China is "moderately developed" (p. 101) if the index of that demand is used as a barometer of the progress of China's economic globalization. Technical writing is the third most in-demand language-service sector after translation and interpreting (Cui & Zheng, 2021) and it has greatly aided China's rise as a major power in global technical marketplace.

Two professional associations, Technical Communication Alliance (TCA) and Technical Communicators in China (TCC), released survey reports on the state of technical communication in 2017 and 2018 that included information on the demographics of practitioners, their professional experience, employment situation, skills and qualifications, and challenges they faced at work, among other topics. The findings showed diverse educational backgrounds, previous jobs, working departments, job responsibilities, etc. More importantly, reports revealed that many technical communicators encountered inequity and exclusion at work, including company leaders who didn't appreciate technical communication, product developers who were unwilling to cooperate, and clients who were hard to reach and communicate with. More DEI-related issues were found in TCC's 2018 report, including ambiguous power and liabilities, unfair performance evaluation, and unsatisfactory payment, among others. As a result of these widespread issues, many practitioners complained of "hitting a bottleneck" and "feeling uncertain about self-worth" (p. 20).

Technical communication is a career that, admittedly, is underappreciated because it is largely in the nascent stage of development (Li & Cui, 2018; Zhang, 2020), but this issue also highlights how important diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are both within and beyond the field. Without proper attention, it will lead to a professional identity crisis on a large scale—a problem already evident in the TCA and TCC reports—and harm the development of technical communication in China.

Given the following facts, it's simple to assume that China lacks workforce diversity if one applies the Western definition of diversity (which typically refers to racial, ethnic, religious, gender, or other demographic/background differences): first, China is ethnically homogeneous, with 91.11% Han people and 8.89% ethnic minorities ("Main data of the seventh national census," 2021); second, China is officially an atheistic country (The Sixth Plenary Session of CPC, 2016); third, despite the Employment Promotion Act's (2008–enacted) legal protection of the employment rights of women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups, it doesn't have a dedicated

government agency to assist in its implementation and enforcement, like the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission does (Li, 2010).

Even though China can be described as somewhat less heterogeneous in specific ways than other large countries using conventional standards, it's wrong to overlook the degree of diversity based on misleading indicators or inapplicable metrics. What we propose in this study is a holistic perspective to consider the full spectrum of human differences, a developmental perspective to connect the past, present, and future of the field, and a critical perspective to understand historical, social, and cultural factors that affect working experience—all in line with understanding China as a young but fast-growing contributor to global technical communication. To see multiple dimensions of diversity, we shift away from the managerial or political lens that emphasizes people's cultural identities, severing its association with "bodies that look different" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 65), and put more emphasis on people's professional identities as technical communicators. Therefore, we define diversity as the presence of differences in the workplace, including individual variables (such as demographics and socioeconomic status), organizational variables (such as working abilities and experience, job functions, department affiliations, etc.), and industrial variables (such as the development level and the demand of workforce across various industries). Equal opportunities, access, treatment, and advancement are what we mean when we talk about equity in professionalization. We understand inclusion as the creation of environments—within companies, in the field, and in society—where technical communicators feel respected, valued, and supported to contribute both individually and collectively.

DEI is vital to resolving the identity crisis that China's technical communication is currently experiencing. This study serves as the start of a series of initiatives. To update our knowledge of this profession under the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, we surveyed a sample of technical communicators to draw a representative profile of the current population and their workplace DEI reality. Following this, we analyzed the factors that influence practitioners' career development and offer culturally appropriate DEI strategies important to their professionalization. This study is more than a diversity report. The discussion on fostering a DEI environment at all levels in China's technical communication is just getting started. By identifying systemic and structural issues in our field, we hope to help professionals deal with identity crises, inspire corporate leadership to develop effective DEI initiatives, and motivate educators to create a welcoming, inclusive learning environment for aspiring technical communicators.

LITERATURE REVIEW: CHINA'S TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS IN HISTORY AND IN TODAY'S WORKPLACE

As we suggested in the preceding section, an evolving and critical view about the diversity of China's technical communication practice and practitioners will help construct its history and predict its future. This section will examine the historical and cultural backgrounds of technical communication and identify technical communicators from antiquity to the modern time. A brief overview of how technical communication was practiced in different historical periods will reveal what factors aided or hindered its development and made it today as part of global technical communication.

China's Technical Communicators in Premodern History

According to Daniel Ding (2020), the Chinese equivalent to technical writing, 方伎之书 (*fangji zhishu*), first appeared in the history book *Shiji* (*Records of the Historian*) around 100 B.C., which recorded a story happened in the Warring States Period (481–221 B.C.) when the King of Qi State asked a well-known physician about what medical books he had read, what technical skills he possessed, and what illnesses he could cure. The term "方伎之书" (*fangji zhishu*) literally means "the book of technical skills." In this case, it refers to medical writings or books on medical skills about how to diagnose diseases. Other types of technical writings include descriptions and instructions on pharmacopeia, astrology, almanacs, divination, immortals, etc. (pp. 16–17). These technical books were considered rare texts containing secret prescriptions or formulas that were written by master doctors, astrologers, and diviners, and distributed to their students or apprentices for study (p. 6). The purpose of technical communication in this historical period was to preserve health, extend life expectancy, and achieve

longevity. Some technicians, like those who served the imperial court, also had political power when they not only examined the state ruler's health but, more importantly, predicted the health and future of the Imperial State (p. 15).

The above account of the Chinese term for technical writing at its early emergence indicates two key points. First, technical writing had a very limited authorship and readership. Only the imperial family, other members of the ruling class, and qualified, experienced professional technical communicators (such as physicians, astrologers, and diviners) and their students had access to them. Second, technical writing has some similarities with the term we use today, because its primary goal was to provide instructions for meeting medical, divinatory, or political purposes.

In addition to these two indications, understanding the social settings of that era will disclose more about how technical communication was reserved for the upper class. One would need a certain level of literacy to recognize the written words and comprehend the arcane materials in these technical works, a skill that common people in premodern China lacked (Rawski, 1979). For those in the lower classes, who already fought to survive, living a long life was a luxury, if not impossible.

Science and technology remained "almost exclusively institutionalized and rarely offered to the public" until the late imperial China around the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127 A.D.) (Zhang, 2013, p. 369). Technical writers were mainly court scientists who were not dedicated to making scientific knowledge accessible to the grassroots public. The pioneer who acknowledged science in and for the public was Shen Kuo. In his *Brush Talks from Dream Brook* (written in the 11th century), this scholar-official ethnographically recorded grassroots inventions and shared with middle and lower class lay audiences (Zhang, 2013). Another scholar, Song Yingxing in the 17th century, wrote *On Technological Subjects* as China's first comprehensive technical writing book (Ding, 2010) intended for a general audience.

To sum up, as we now understand it, China's concept of technical communication/writing has historically been limited, focusing mostly on specific topics in science and technology written by specialists and for literate people (often the upper classes or other professionals). Many technical communicators exclusively served political needs and stayed away from the public. This understanding of technical communication has been passed down over time and has influenced people today.

China's Technical Communicators in the Modern World

A rise in the demand for professional technical communicators in China first appeared in the computer software industry in the 1990s when transnational enterprises (such as Ericsson, IBM, Microsoft, etc.) localized their digital products and services in new markets. These high-tech companies either hired language translators qualified to deal with technical contents or outsourced "software Chinese localization" to local translation companies. At that time, technical writers/translators dealt with tasks like English to Chinese translation, terminology control, desktop publishing of product manuals, etc. (Cui, 2013; Ding & Li, 2018; Ding, 2019).

Encouraged by the national economic development policy of "reform and opening up" in the 1990s, some Chinese enterprises also realized the value of technical documentation in exports. Huawei[1] was one of the first local companies that built a technical writing team to create manuals for product usage, installation, operation, and maintenance. Around 2000, Huawei officially established the Department of Documentation Management, a ground-breaking move in the industry. Another major feat was that in 2005, Huawei introduced DITA and started structured writing for all product lines. Now, Huawei ranks among the top employers of technical communicators (X. Li,[2] personal communication, Jan. 15, 2023).

Technical communicators have been increasingly needed by both foreign and domestic businesses to advertise their products and service internationally (Ding, 2019; Gao et al., 2013). This phenomenon drew attention of international scholars in technical communication as they called for research into how China's educated knowledge workers might influence future trends in the field (St.Amant, 2001) or how to develop localized

1 *Founded in 1987, Huawei is the world's leading provider of ICT (information and communication) infrastructure and smart terminals. At present, Huawei has about 195,000 employees, and its business covers more than 170 countries and regions, serving more than 3 billion people around the world. Cited from "About Huawei."*

2 *X. Li was a former Huawei employee who worked as an Information Architect in the Depart of Documentation for 17 years (since 2005).*

technical communication curricula to satisfy the demands of the hungry market (Barnum et al., 2001; Dautermann, 2005; Ding & Jablonski, 2001; Hayhoe, 2003; Rainey et al., 2008; Tegtmeier et al., 1999).

The founding of professional societies signaled the growth of China's technical communicators. In 2015, the Technical Communication Service Committee was established as a subordinate by the China Association for Standardization ("Introduction to our committee," 2016). The committee's primary duties include drafting industry standards for national and international documentation; assessing documents' compliance with regulations and standards; looking into the advancement of the field; and organizing conferences and seminars for industry-academia exchanges, among other things ("Introduction," n.d."). The committee oversees the daily operations of the Technical Communication Alliance (TCA), a voluntary association of businesses or individuals involved in technical communication across the nation. Another influential professional group is Technical Communicators in China (TCC), which was founded by five technical communicators from Shanghai in 2005 ("About TCC," n.d.). Unlike TCA, which has official status (recognized by the Ministry of Civil Affairs), TCC serves as a community organizer, hosting regional or national conferences as well as certification courses online. Members who live in the same city or province have their own groups and regularly meet in person or online to discuss a range of topics, such as new practices in the field or in their own job, professionalization paths, talent cultivation, etc. Neither TCA nor TCC runs the membership system. Low entrance barriers and diverse activities foster an inclusive, friendly, and supportive culture that bind professionals together.

TCA defines technical communication as "the transmission and interaction of all technical information related to technical products or services during their entire life cycle" ("Introduction," n.d.). Technical communication and translation are distinct tasks in the GILT (globalization, internationalization, localization, and translation) link, which shows how transnational corporations operate businesses globally (Wang et al., 2016). Technical communication is a component of product/service design under internationalization. Quality technical communication will save trouble for downstream localization and translation (Han et al., 2016; Wang, 2017). The link of GILT and related work can be seen in Figure 1.

METHODOLOGY

China's technical communication presents a different history, path, and level of development, which naturally contributes to the diversity of global technical communication. In this relatively new profession, the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion haven't been studied in-depth. This survey project is designed as an exploratory study to gain a better understanding of the under-researched profession.

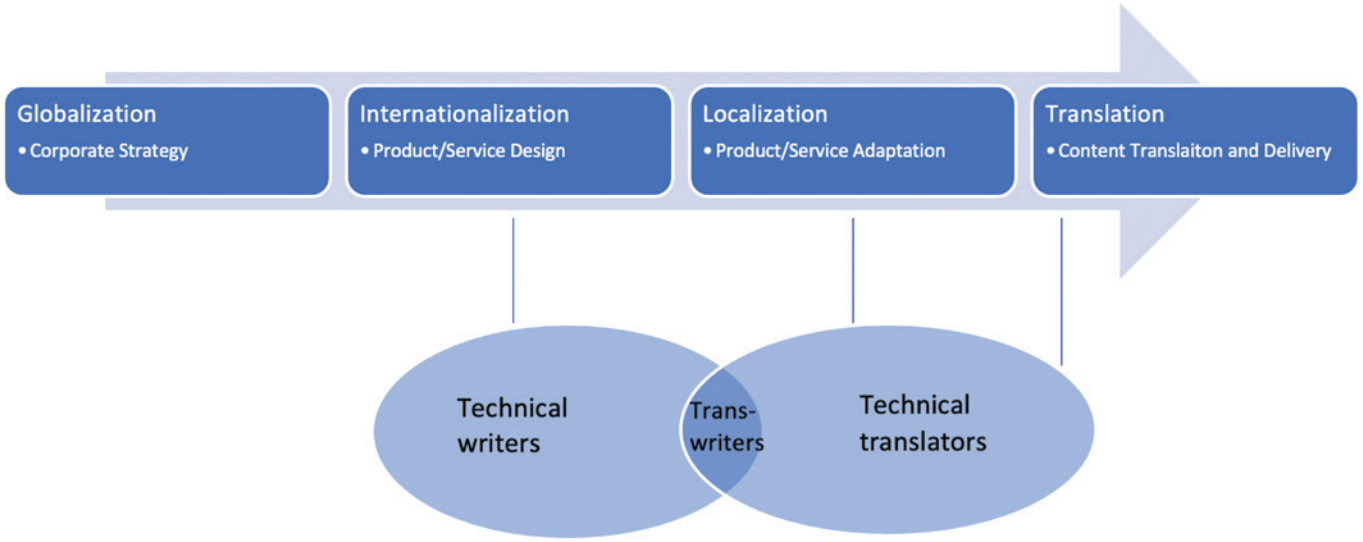

Figure 1: The GILT Process and Related Work in Transnational Corporations (adapted from Ding, 2019)

We ask the following research questions:

1. What are the demographics of Chinese technical communicators?
2. What DEI-related job experiences and practices do technical communicators have?
3. What factors help or hinder practitioners' professional development?
4. What obstacles and difficulties do technical communicators face on the job?

Survey Participants

Our target participants were TCA and TCC members. On the social media platform WeChat, both organizations created a few member groups. These member groups include technical communication practitioners, educators, national conference guest speakers, regional meetup attendees, and so on. It's difficult to count how many WeChat groups TCA and TCC have founded, many of which are a one-time thing for specific events and then die away. Our study targets three of the most active groups, which typically have dozens or hundreds of daily exchanges on a wide range of topics, such as new technologies, tools, industry practices, useful learning resources, new research and publications, job hunting and seeking, national conferences and regional meetups, workplace practice and issues, etc. According to Ding (2019), these WeChat groups function as an interactive knowledge network like the WPA or ATTW listservs. Table 1 contains information about these WeChat groups.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire had four parts, each of which corresponded to one research question, with a total of 50 questions measuring the following variables (based on our definitions of DEI in the introduction):

- Diversity: age, gender, ethnicity, educational level, field of study, language ability, work location, previous profession, work experience, business industry, type, size, and functional level of employer, division/department, job title, rank of position, work content field, and income.
- Equity: intensity and workload of daily work, job qualifications, salary level, career development paths/ladders, vocational training opportunities, professionalization resources, and COVID-19 impacts.
- Inclusion: corporate/group culture, atmosphere of team working, sense of accomplishment, sense of being supported

There are 19 single-selection questions, 10 multiple-answer questions, six rating-scale questions, and 15 open-ended questions. All questions were written in Chinese.

Questionnaire Implementation

Wenjuan.com, an online survey tool and data collector, was used to generate the questionnaire. Wenjun.com has a mini program incorporated within WeChat that allows WeChat users to locate the survey. Wenjuan.com also provides online SPSS data services.

The following is the questionnaire implementation procedure:

- December 10–15, 2022: Survey trial testing
- December 16–21, 2022: Questionnaire revision
- December 22–January 20, 2023: Questionnaire release and data collection

We used voluntary response sampling since it was practical for our study. We also used the snowball sampling method to encourage survey participants to share the survey link with their colleagues. We limited responses to one WeChat ID per person to avoid repeated entry by the same person.

Table 1: Source of Survey Participants

WeChat Groups	Founders	Year of Establishment	Number of Members (at the time of survey)
TC Seminar	Zhijun Gao, Secretary General of TCA	2017	476
TCC Community	Hulianjun, Secretary of TCC	2016	500
The Community of Information Developers	Aye, Founder of TCC in Guangdong	2012	261
			Total N=1237

Who Are China's Technical Communicators?

Data Collection and Analysis

The survey was released amid the massive COVID-19 surge in China. Despite the difficulties, we had a comforting completion rate of 45.4%. The survey was opened by 571 people, and 259 completed it. We assert that the research results are representative (N=1,237, n=259, 90% confidence level, and 5% margin of error).

The 259 responses came from three groups of people: 212 incumbents, 44 previous technical communicators, and three educators. We focus on current technical communicators for further analysis. Their data (n_1=212) were visually displayed in Wenjuan.com before being exported to SPSS for descriptive and correlation analysis.

RESULTS

We discuss the findings for each research question following their numbered order.

Participant Demographics

The survey participants self-reported demographic information about age, gender, ethnicity, educational background, and geographic locations of workplace (see Table 2).

Age

The majority of the 212 participants were between the ages of 25 and 50. 46.7% of participants were at the age of 31–40, 26.9% were between the ages of 25–30, and 17.9% were between 41–50. The workforce is predominantly young and middle-aged.

Gender

More than two-thirds of the 212 respondents (69.8%) identified as female. Nearly one-third of respondents (30.2%) identified as male. Nobody identified with other genders.

Ethnicity

Among the 212 participants, 205 were Han people (96.7%), and only seven participants identified as ethnic minorities (3.3%), including two Mongol, one Hani, one Hui, one Manchu, one She, and one Xibe. The ratio is higher than the national average (91.11% Han and 8.89% ethnic minorities), indicating less diverse ethnical background in the field that might associate with inequities in education and employment.

Educational level

Academic degrees are held by all 212 respondents. Master's degrees are held by over half the respondents (55.7%). Bachelor's degrees are held by 42.9% of the respondents. Two respondents (0.9%) hold doctorate degrees.

Table 2: Participant Demographics

Category	Variables (Number and Percentage)							
Age	18-24 (15, 7.1%)	25-30 (57,26.9%)	31-40 (99, 46.7%)	41-50 (38, 17.9%)	51-60 (3, 1.4%)	≥61 (0, 0.0%)		
Gender	Female (148, 69.8%)	Male (64, 30.2%)	Other (0, 0.0%)					
Ethnicity	Han (205, 96.7%)	Ethnical Minorities (7, 3.3%)						
Educational level	Doctorate (2, 0.9%)	Master's (118, 55.7%)	Bachelor's (91, 42.9%)	Associate (1, 0.5%)				
Language ability	Chinese (178, 84.0%)	English (166, 78.3%)	French (3, 1.4%)	German (2, 0.9%)	Japanese (3, 1.4%)	Russian (1, 0.5%)	Spanish (1, 0.5%)	Other (0, 0.0%)
Geographic location	Eastern (157, 74.1%)	Southern (34, 16.0%)	Central (5, 2.4%)	Western (13, 6.1%)	Northeast (2, 0.9%)	Other (1, 0.5%)		

Note: Geographic division serves to emphasize essential contrasts in economic development. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the eastern and southern parts includes Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Shandong, Guangdong, and Hainan (10 provinces and municipalities); central China includes six provinces: Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei, and Hunan. The west includes Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, and Xinjiang (12 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities). Northeast China includes three provinces: Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang.

Fields of study

We collected information about participants' fields of study at undergraduate and/or postgraduate levels, including general categories and specializations. Participants reported 30 undergraduate majors and 25 graduate majors (see Table 3), 40 of which were studied by only 1–3 people. Foreign Language and Literature (n=89) and Electronic Information (n=35) were the most popular undergraduate majors. Translation and Interpreting (n=49) and Electronic Information (n=10) were the most studied graduate majors. Technical Communication is not listed because it is a concentration in Electronic Information (e.g., at Peking University) or Translation and Interpreting (e.g., at Southeast University). Figure 2 shows that Language and Literature and Engineering are the two main employment pathways for technical communicators at both educational levels. At the graduate level, the percentage of Engineering majors decreases, while the percentage of Language majors increases.

Language ability

Conducting global technical communication requires strong language and communication skills, especially in English and other widely spoken languages. According to our findings, 61.8% of participants employed two or more languages in their daily work. English, French, German, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish are the most used foreign languages. 38.2% engaged in only one language, either Chinese or English.

Geographic location

Participants' workplaces were distributed in 13 provinces and municipalities (or 20 cities) of China's 34 provincial-level administrative regions. Two thirds of technical communicators lived in three cities: Beijing (26.4%), Shanghai (25.0%), and Shenzhen (14.6%). 90% of participants worked in China's eastern and southern coastal regions, which are the most economically developed areas in comparison to the country's central, western, and northeast regions. All 20 cities are municipalities, provincial capitals, or other big cities with thriving economies, diverse workforces, and high wages.

Professional Experience and Work Practice

We studied participants' past and present practices of technical communication in the following aspects.

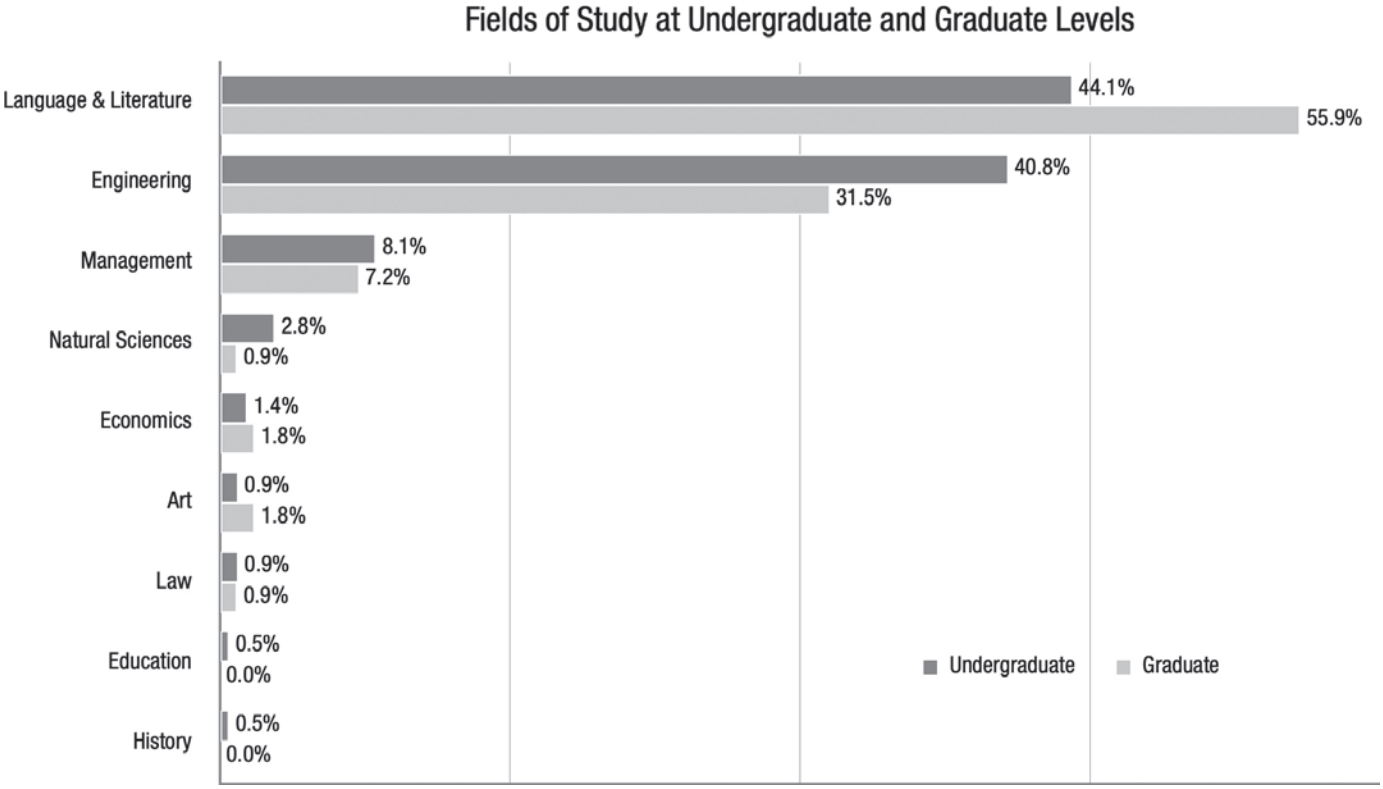

Figure 2: Participants' Areas of Study

Who Are China's Technical Communicators?

Table 3: Fields of Study at the Undergraduate and Graduate Levels

Undergraduate Major	Number of Participants
Arts	**2**
Design	2
Economics	**3**
Economics and Trade	3
Education	**1**
Education	1
Engineering	**86**
Aerospace	1
Architecture	1
Automation	5
Biomedical Engineering	1
Chemical/Pharmaceutical Engineering	2
Computer Science	19
Electrical Engineering	4
Electronic Information	35
Instrumentation	2
Light Industrial Products	2
Machinery	12
Materials	1
Mechanics	1
History	**1**
History	1
Language and Literature	**93**
Chinese Language and Literature	2
Foreign Language and Literature	89
Journalism and Communication	2
Law	**2**
Law	2
Management Science	**17**
Agricultural & Forestry Management	1
Business Administration	3
E-commerce	3
Management Science and Engineering	7
Public Administration	1
Tourism Management	2
Natural Sciences	**6**
Geology	1
Physics	4
Statistics	1
Grand Total	**211**

Graduate Major	Number of Participants
Art	**2**
Art	1
Design	1
Economics	**2**
Applied Economics	1
Economics	1
Engineering	**35**
Biomedical Engineering	1
Computer Science and Technology	4
Control Science and Engineering	3
Electrical Engineering	1
Electronic Information	10
Electronic Science and Technology	4
Engineering	2
Info. & Comm. Engineering	5
Management Science and Engineering	1
Materials Science and Engineering	1
Software Engineering	3
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Language & Literature	**62**
Chinese Language and Literature	2
Foreign Language and Literature	9
Journalism and Communication	2
Translation and Interpreting	49
Law	**1**
Sociology	1
Management Science	**8**
Business Administration	5
Engineering Management	1
Management	1
Science of Business Administration	1
—	
—	
Natural Sciences	**1**
Physics	1
—	
—	
Grand Total	**111**

Previous profession

Half of the participants (53.6%) began working in this field soon after graduating from college or graduate school. In other words, technical communicators were half of practitioners' first jobs. Among people who switched to technical communication from another field, we see a strong connection between their prior and current jobs. Engineers and translators ranked second (18.9%) and third (15.0%), respectively, as the most likely previous jobs. Other previous jobs include management and marketing specialists, product trainers, editors, consultants, English teachers, etc. It shows that most people's previous professions required dealing with various aspects of enterprise products or services, such as design, management, training, and document translation and editing, making the transition to technical communication easy.

Work experience

Two-thirds (67.9%) have been working in the field for fewer than 10 years. Nearly half (48.6%) of the participants have been working as technical communicators for fewer than five years. People with 0–2 years of experience account for 32.1%. At the other end, 29.7% have 11–20 years of experience and only 2.4% have more than 20 years' experience. This result corresponds with the age distribution of participants, indicating technical communication is a rising occupation that attracts young people.

Current employer: size, type, and industry

Large or extra-large enterprises with over 5,000 employees hired the greatest number of technical communicators (43.9%). On the other hand, 10.9% of participants work for microenterprises with fewer than 100 employees. Regarding the type of enterprises, most companies (64.2%) are privately owned by Chinese founders. Foreign-invested or Sino-foreign joint ventures come in second most (26.4%). State or group enterprises only make up 8.5%. Participant industries (75.9%) are concentrated in information technology, Internet technologies, telecommunications, and electronic technologies. Manufacturing has the second highest percentage (16.5%) of technical communicators. Figure 3 depicts the proportion of participants in various industries and subfields.

Affiliated department: name, size, structure, and culture

The results show that participants are mainly affiliated with two departments: research and development (34.9%) and documentation (32.1%). Products, tech support, and marketing come in third to fifth place, with percentages of 13.2%, 6.6%, and 5.2%, respectively. Other departments represented by 17 participants (8%) include project management, general affairs, services, customer satisfaction, and so forth.

Over half of departments (50.9%) that hire technical communicators are small, having 10 or fewer

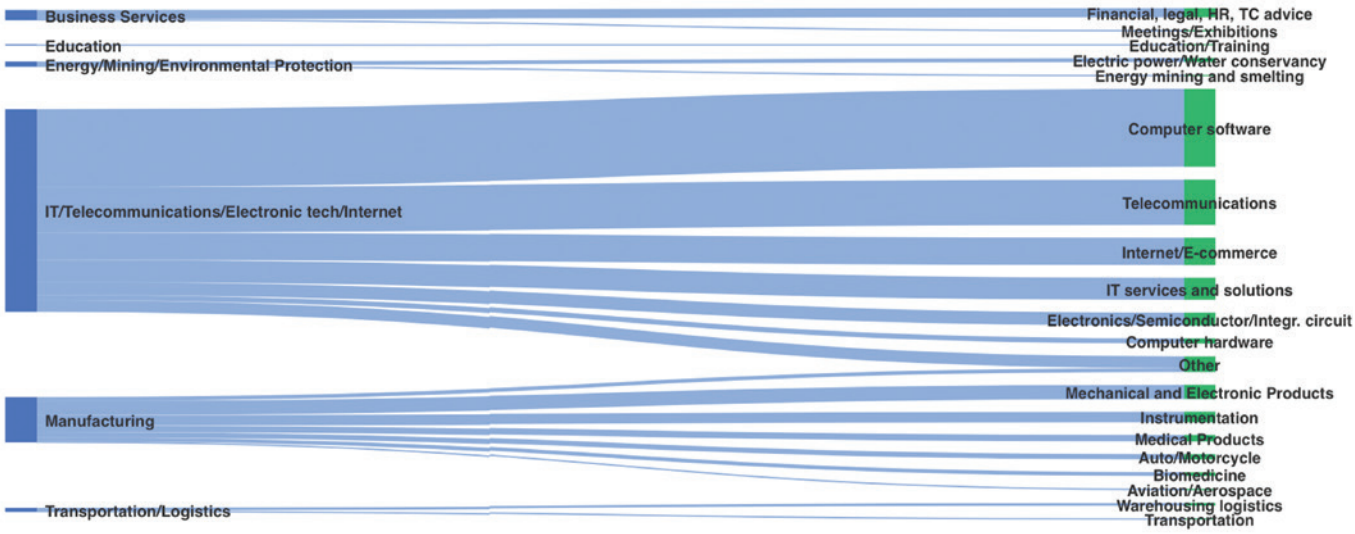

Figure 3: Industries in which Technical Communicators Work

Who Are China's Technical Communicators?

employees. Departments with 50 or more employees are scarce (16.5%). When asked about the department structure, 68.4% said it was flat, while 29.7% said it was hierarchical. According to some, their department implemented a "project system" in which tech writers were organized around product projects and assigned to project-specific responsibilities.

We measured participants' working environments by three indicators: work intensity and efficiency, as well as team/office atmosphere. The results in Table 4 reveal that working intensity and efficiency of technical communication are high, reflecting a common situation in the IT, telecommunications, and Internet industries. The team atmosphere is typically pleasant and harmonious, which could be attributed to the popular flat organizational style that encourages open discussion and promotes coordination.

Table 4: Measurable Indicators of Departmental Culture

n=212	Average Point	Standard Deviation	Variance	Mix Value	Max Value
Intensity (1–weakest, 5–strongest)	3.68	0.80	0.64	1	5
Efficiency (1–lowest, 5–highest)	3.85	0.79	0.63	2	5
Atmosphere (1–nervous and tense, 5–relaxing and harmonious	3.90	0.97	0.93	1	5

Job position and title

208 participants reported 100 distinct technical-communication-related job titles that were variations of technical writer (e.g., Technical Documentation Engineer, Content Designer, User Assistance Developer) or denoted hierarchy (e.g., Senior Technical Writer, Documentation Executive, Head of Content Development). Department or project managers, directors, heads, executives, or leaders made up 32 of the 208 participants (15.4%). The remaining people were divided into five categories: engineers (n=103), writers (n=16), developers (n=13), designers (n=14), and others (n=30). The most common job titles were Technical Documentation Engineers (n=43), Documentation Engineers (n=20), Technical Writers (n=13), Content Designers (n=7), and Data Developers (n=4). Most job titles (n=160, 75.5%) were held by a single person. Figure 4 shows examples of job titles.

Figure 4: Participants' Job Titles

Daily tasks and workload

The technical communication activities that participants performed in daily work spread across the list of 50 survey items (Figure 5). We divided the 50 items into three groups and colored them differently based on the percentage of participants in each activity. Items 1–15 (in red) are performed by over 30% of participants and can thus be identified as the key tasks of technical communication. This category contains documents primarily target product users (e.g., user manuals, installation guides, troubleshooting guides, FAQs, product descriptions). Video tutorials have also become a standard chore for many participants. Items 16–35 (yellow) are supplementary jobs that 10%–30% of participants do on a regular basis. Participants not only write technical documents, but they also participate in project management, internationalization, and localization. Furthermore, some oversee writing for their company's professional and social media platforms (such as their website, blogs, and tweets). Green represents the least frequent job duties, which include writing for new technologies (e.g., cloud computing, AI, AR, VR) or novel applications (e.g., chatbot). Notably, translation is at the bottom of the list, implying that people's daily activities exclude language switching and instead focus on content development in a single language.

Figure 6 shows that, on average, each participant performs 10.5 activities of technical communication. Most participants take on 5–15 activities. At the

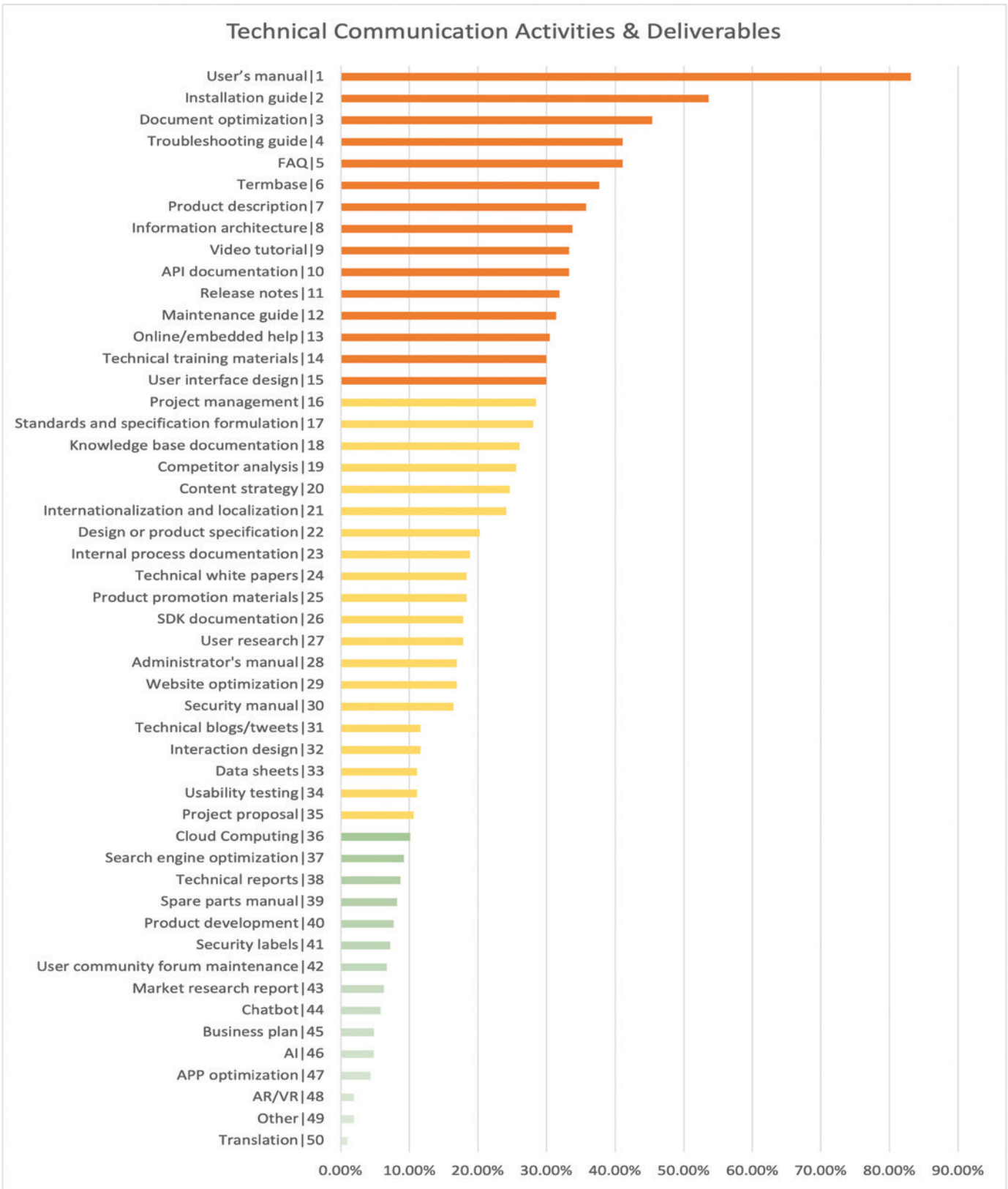

Figure 5: Participants' Daily Tasks

Who Are China's Technical Communicators?

extremes, seven participants perform only one of the tasks provided, while one person conducts 48 tasks. Knowing what and how many activities technical communicators work on can help us better understand the DEI status of this profession. It can also assist academics in determining which skills to emphasize in the classroom.

Annual wage

We conducted a cross-tabulation analysis to examine the variables that could affect pay. Table 5 shows how annual incomes vary by gender, education, industry, company size, and workload. We chose these five factors based on popular assumptions in Chinese society about who, where, and how to acquire a high wage. The findings suggest that for the entire sample, the statistical distribution of salary skews to the lower end between ¥100,000 and ¥300,000 ($14,671–$44,014 USD), with 67.3% falling in this range. This pay is much higher than the national average of ¥88,115 and is comparable to the average pay of ¥197,353 in the highest-paid industry—information technology service (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

The highest percentage of female (35.1%) and male salaries (35.9%) are in the ¥210, 000–¥300,000 and ¥310,000–¥400,000 ranges, respectively. In the female group, almost all data were found to be less than ¥600,000. For the male group, the salary distribution was wider and had a higher number of high-wage earners. Males outnumbered females in the range of ¥500,000 and higher. Without precise figures of salary reported, we cannot calculate the average salary or answer to what extent one group is higher. However,

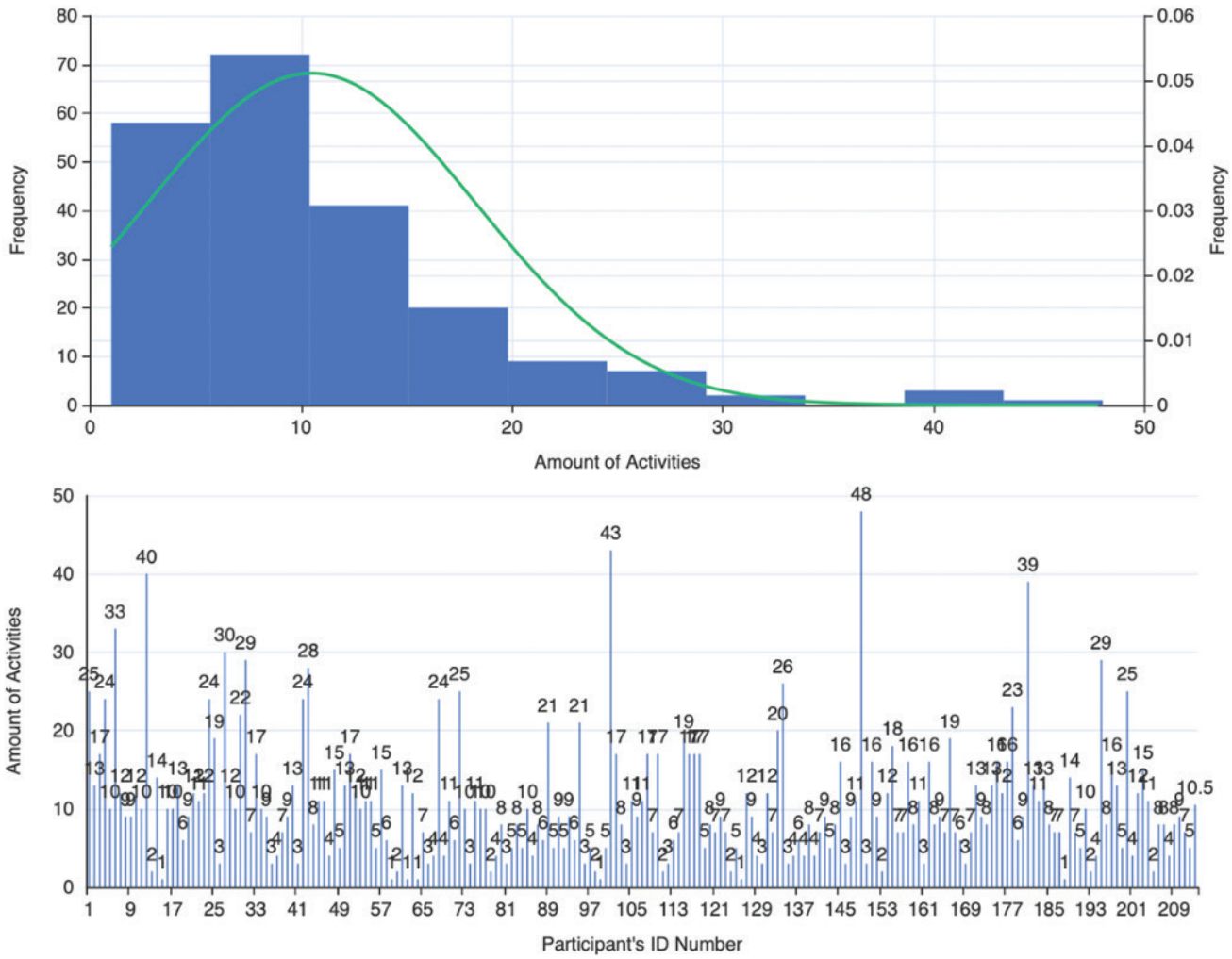

Figure 6: Participants' Workload

Table 5: Annual Salary by Gender, Education, Industry, Company's Size, and Workload

Category	Item	Annual Salary in Chinese Yuan											N
		<100,000	100,000–200,000	210,000–300,000	310,000–400,000	410,000–500,000	510,000–600,000	610,000–700,000	710,000–800,000	800,000–900,000	910,000–1000,000	>1 million	
Gender	Female	10(6.8%)	52(35.1%)	46(31.1%)	19(12.8%)	11(7.4%)	6(4.1%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.7%)	0(0.0%)	2(1.4%)	1(0.7%)	148
	Male	3(4.7%)	15(23.4%)	23(35.9%)	4(6.3%)	5(7.8%)	6(9.4%)	1(1.6%)	3(4.7%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	4(6.3%)	64
Number of Participants		13	67	69	23	16	12	1	4	0	2	5	212
Education	Associate Degree	0(0.0%)	1(100.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1
	Bachelor's Degree	6(6.6%)	26(28.6%)	29(31.9%)	13(14.3%)	7(7.8%)	4(4.4%)	0(0.0%)	2(2.2%)	0(0.0%)	1(1.1%)	3(3.3%)	91
	Doctorate Degree	0(0.0%)	1(50.0%)	1(50.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	2
	Master's Degree	7(5.9%)	39(33.1%)	39(33.1%)	10(8.5%)	9(7.6%)	8(6.8%)	1(0.8%)	2(1.7%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.8%)	2(1.7%)	118
Number of Participants		13	67	69	23	16	12	1	4	0	2	5	212
Industry	Business Services	1(12.5%)	1(12.5%)	3(37.5%)	1(12.5%)	0(0.0%)	1(12.5%)	1(12.5%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	8
	Education	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(100.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1
	Energy/Mining/ Environ. Protection	0(0.0%)	1(25%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(25.0%)	2(50.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	4
	IT/ Telecommunications/ E-tech/Internet	11(6.8%)	49(30.4%)	54(33.5%)	17(10.6%)	12(7.5%)	8(5.0%)	0(0.0%)	4(2.5%)	0(0.0%)	2(1.2%)	4(2.5%)	161
	Manufacturing	1(2.9%)	16(45.7%)	9(25.7%)	5(14.3%)	2(5.8%)	1(2.9%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(2.9%)	35
	Transportation/ Logistics	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	2(66.7%)	0(0.0%)	1(33.3%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	3
Number of Participants		13	67	69	23	16	12	1	4	0	2	5	212
Company's Size	<100 Employees	3(13.0%)	10(43.5%)	6(29.1%)	3(13.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(4.3%)	23
	100–1000 Employees	4(6.3%)	23(36.5%)	18(28.6%)	8(12.7%)	3(4.8%)	6(9.5%)	1(1.6%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	63
	1000–5000 Employees	3(9.1%)	9(27.3%)	13(39.4%)	1(3.0%)	5(15.2%)	2(6.7%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	33
	5000–10000 Employees	1(6.7%)	6(40.0%)	6(40%)	1(6.7%)	1(6.7%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	15
	>10000 Employees	2(2.6%)	19(24.4%)	26(33.3%)	10(12.3%)	7(9.0%)	4(5.1%)	0(0.0%)	4(5.1%)	0(0.0%)	2(2.6%)	4(5.1%)	78
Number of Participants		13	67	69	23	16	12	1	4	0	2	5	212
Number of Activities	1–10	9(6.5%)	56(40.3%)	45(32.4%)	11(7.9%)	8(5.8%)	4(2.9%)	1(0.7%)	2(1.4%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.7%)	2(1.4%)	139
	11–20	2(3.8%)	10(19.2%)	20(38.5%)	9(17.3%)	5(9.6%)	4(7.7%)	0(0.0%)	1(1.9%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(1.9%)	52
	21–30	2(12.5%)	1(6.2%)	4(25.0%)	1(6.2%)	3(18.6%)	2(12.5%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(6.2%)	2(12.5%)	16
	>30	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	2(40.0%)	0(0.0%)	2(40.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(20.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	5
Number of Participants		13	67	69	23	16	12	1	4	0	2	5	212

comparing the range of salary distribution suggests that female salary is skewed toward the lower numbers more seriously than male salary, whereas male participants are likely to have higher salaries, and the disparity becomes significant at the range of half a million and above.

Higher academic degrees provided no competitive advantages. Bachelor's and master's degrees holders had similar percentages in the range of ¥100,000–¥200,000 and ¥210,000–¥300,000, roughly 30% for each category. No substantial difference in annual incomes was found between bachelor's and master's degree holders at any level, including the lowest and highest.

Across industries, most participants' salaries fall between ¥210,000 and ¥300,000, except for manufacturing on the lower side (¥100,000–¥200,000) and the energy/mining/environmental protection on the other (¥510,000–¥600,000). IT/telecommunications industry has the highest and lowest payments, with 7.1% earning the least and 2.6% getting the most. Since only one-quarter of participants came from non-IT industries, we couldn't generalize more about them based on the limited data.

In terms of whether company size (by the number of employees) correlates with income, it shows that salaries in small or middle-sized companies (with <100 or 1000 employees) are generally ¥100,000 lower than salaries in large or extra-large companies (with >1000 employees). Small companies (<100 staff) employ the most individuals with lower incomes than larger companies. On the other end, the highest payments above ¥700,000 are all made by extra-large enterprises (>10,000 employees).

About the correlation between workload and salary, we notice that people performing fewer activities tend to earn less than those who take on more labor. People who participate in 1–10 activities earn the least (¥100,000–¥200,000), while those who perform 10–30 activities earn more (¥200,000–¥300,000). Those with 30 activities or more earn the most. It suggests a positive correlation between workload and salary.

Until now, we've found that some variables seem to influence annual salary (i.e., gender, company size, and workload), while others don't (i.e., educational attainment and industry). Finally, the Cohen's kappa coefficient test was used to measure the degree of correlation. The statistical results of pairing each variable with salary showed that the significant P value for each pair was NaN (not significant), indicating that no consistency existed between two variables. Meanwhile, the Kappa coefficient is 0.0, indicating that the degree of correlation is extremely low. Although the qualitative/categorical data can suggest the distribution tendency of annual salaries in a certain range, it can't prove a significant correlation between any of these factors and salary.

Additionally, we asked participants to rate the overall payment level of the technical communicator population. 44.1% chose "relatively low" and 46.9% chose "appropriate." People's perceptions corroborate our findings.

Career Development

We investigated participants' career development from four aspects: self-evaluation, job application requirements, training programs, and means of acquiring professional skills.

Participants' self-evaluation

Table 6 shows that survey participants have high consistency (SD=0.8) on the sense of fulfillment as a technical communicator. Over half participants chose "relatively strong" or "very strong" on sensing job achievement. However, people generally believe that it's not easy to achieve professional development in current companies. People have widely divergent views (SD=0.98) on whether their current employers provide sufficient support for their career development. Two thirds don't believe their employers give adequate opportunities for professional development.

Table 6: Measurable Indicators of Self-evaluation on Career Development

n=212	Average Point	Standard Deviation	Variance	Mix Value	Max Value
Sense of Fulfillment about Work (1–weakest, 5–strongest)	3.49	0.8	0.64	1	5
Difficulty Level to Realize Career Development (1–easiest, 5-hardest)	2.93	0.90	0.80	1	5
Support from Company (1–extremely insufficient, 5–extremely sufficient)	3.14	0.98	0.96	1	5

Current job qualifications

We asked participants about what prerequisites and qualifications they needed when applying for their current position. Surprisingly, having a degree in a discipline related to technical communication was not the top pick. Having a technical writing certificate was not a must for most participants. Foreign language skills were ranked as the most important qualification by the majority (74.6%). The second most popular answer (68.1%) was work experience in this profession (often three years). The next must-have was proficiency in utilizing document authoring tools (54.9%), followed by familiarity with the document development process (53.1%). Having skills in design or translation, as well as knowledge of practice standards and regulations, can help land a decent position.

Professional training opportunities

When asked if they received regular or frequent professional training at work, half of the participants (49.28%) said yes, while the other half (50.72%) stated no. We investigated what aspects might be related to professional training. The findings indicate that the industries in which individuals work and their educational background had no effect on whether they received regular training. However, the scale of the enterprise seems to be related to the training situation. 61% of participants from small companies and 74.6% from medium-sized companies didn't have regular professional training. People in large (62.1%) or extra-large companies (65.8%) had regular or frequent skill training.

Approaches to professional development

We asked how technical communicators develop professional abilities when their enterprises couldn't offer a regular professional training program. The response "self-study" was chosen by 85.0% of participants as the most common. Other typical responses include peer networking (62.9%) and mentorship (56.8%). Online communities, online courses, and professional conferences are also common methods for improving professionalization. It's interesting to see pre-job training as the least chosen item, indicating a lack of systematic professionalization mechanisms in many enterprises.

Workplace Issues and Challenges

To address our last research question, we examined the issues technical communicators face as a group and as individuals in the workplace.

Common problems technical communicators face

The most common issue that technical communicators face together is feeling unrecognized, both inside organizations (71.4% of participants) and in society (69.0% of participants). The second most serious issue is insufficient technical communication education. 56.8% considered the decoupling of industry and academia in research, collaboration, and talent development. They also expressed concern about the scarcity of education opportunities, resources, and access. The third problem is about professional practices: 43.2% reported a lack of standard norms and an ignorance of current practices in global technical communication.

At the institutional or interpersonal level, the biggest challenge for most practitioners (54.9%) is insufficient understanding of products, which makes it difficult to create technical contents for the products. As noted by 53.1% of participants, technical writers were unable to participate in the product development process, and many product researchers and developers don't understand the value of documentation. As a result, there can be poor communication and lack of cooperation in document writing, and potential delays in the document production process.

COVID-19 effects on technical communicators

Divergent views exist on the COVID-19 impacts: 52.4% acknowledged impacts, whereas 41.0% acknowledged little impact. Two thirds of those who felt the effects spoke about the negative impacts, with the remaining third discussing the favorable effects.

COVID-19 has reduced the business of technical communication. The global demand for technical writing has further declined throughout the pandemic after already suffering a blow from anti-globalization sentiment. Reduced commerce and fewer international clients triggered a cascade of reactions that included project shutdowns, budget cuts, less technical support, layoffs, fewer job openings, and an insufficient workforce. Many people mentioned that technical writing was the "hardest-hit area" of layoffs because of its non-core status. On the other hand, a few technical

communicators saw COVID as a good chance to advance technical communication. As stated by one participant, "the pandemic has expedited society's digital transformation… Technical communication should be optimized and modified to stay up with the times in terms of its contents, forms, methods, and technologies." Participants with this belief spotted new niche markets in online technical marketing.

About the COVID effects on their individual work, 45.3% of participants reported these changes: less effective working and communication; lack of contact with clients, colleagues, or products; marginalization or layoffs; lack of job opportunities; decreased income; increased anxiety and pressure; etc.

Other issues of inequity and exclusion

In previous sections, we investigated workplace equity and inclusion based on external variables including employees' workload, job requirements, income, career development, corporate/team culture, etc. Now we focus on internal variables and invite participants to share any situations they have come across.

The open-ended question generated two types of answers: one-quarter of participants admitted to persistent workplace disparities, while the other quarter denied them. The low response rate on "yes" could be attributed to participant fatigue or a desire to finish the questionnaire as quickly as possible (since this was the last question on the questionnaire). After analyzing the 56 "yes" responses, we believe inequity and exclusion are widespread problems in technical communication. The findings show that participants who reported inequities came from a variety of industries. Cases are less common in the IT/Telecomm/Electronic Tech industries (18.6% on "yes") and more common in other industries (25%–66.7% on "yes").

People characterized workplace inequity and exclusion as discrimination that happened on both institutional/structural and interpersonal levels, which impairs their working ability and professionalization.

Institutional discrimination manifests itself as unfairness in job performance appraisal, payment level, and professional rank promotion. Participants claimed that technical communicators were viewed as a "basic delivery position" or "non-core position" when contrasted to "advanced" or "core" jobs such as product research and development. Technical writing is often (mis)understood to be synonymous with word polishing, which adds value to a product after product developers have done much of the work. Technical writers' work is frequently undervalued and underappreciated. This results in a disproportion between hefty responsibilities and little salary increases or slow rank promotion.

Interpersonal discrimination was caused by company leaders, supervisors, colleagues, or clients. People complained that line leaders didn't understand the process of document writing and assigned an excessive quantity of tasks. Because many technical communicators have a background in language studies, their colleagues regarded them as translators and sent an unreasonable request for legal document translation. Gender, age, and personality are common employment discrimination targets. Female technical communicators with a liberal arts background are thought to be less likely to advance because "they are too feminine to handle technologies." Discrimination against young workers persists when they are assigned more tasks than they should. One participant was mocked for being a "doc-aholic."

Discrimination against technical communicators in the workplace is motivated by superiority/inferiority attitudes about organizational labor divisions, job responsibilities, and human/social features. Many technical communicators have been placed in a disadvantaged position with limited access to professional opportunities or benefits, whether purposefully or unintentionally, institutionally or interpersonally.

DISCUSSION: PROPOSING INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT AS A DEI INITIATIVE TO TACKLE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY CRISIS

We posed an overarching question at the beginning of this article: Who are China's technical communicators, and what is their DEI status? We can now respond based on the survey results.

A simple label to describe the group profile of China' technical communicators would be as follows: (1) China's technical communicators are predominantly female, aged 25–40, Han Chinese, bilingual or multilingual, with master's or bachelor's degrees in Foreign Language and Literature or Engineering Technologies, located in economically developed areas, and have been practicing technical communication

as their first job usually for less than ten years; (2) most of them work in the Department of Research & Development or Department of Documentation under the job title "Technical Documentation Engineer" in privately owned, large or extra-large enterprises in high-tech industries; (3) they work on a wide range of technical documents (50 items) and have moderately substantial workload (5–15 job responsibilities); and (4) the majority earn between ¥100,000 and ¥300,000 ($14,671–$44,014 USD) each year.

The broad profile will not obscure the diversity of China's technical communicators. Diversity is an intrinsic feature of this profession because of its short but fast-growing history. Practitioners' diverse educational backgrounds compensate for the lack of an academic discipline in technical communication or students thereof. Insufficient education or training in technical communication was one of the biggest challenges participants reported, so they chose self-study to improve their professional abilities. The various industries in which technical communicators work, as well as various levels of industry development, considerably contribute to China's diverse technical communication market. Chinese Internet/Telecomm giants such as Huawei, Alibaba, Bytedance, Tencent, and others have maintained the largest need for technical communicators, as seen by the dominant number of survey participants from this industry. Other industries offer fewer job opportunities and cannot compete in terms of working conditions and salary levels with large tech companies. The size of the documentation team, technical communicators' department affiliation, workload, wage level, professional development, and other factors differ between tech and other industries. As a result, it's hard to use a single term to assess China's current degree of progress in technical communication.

Diversity has contributed to economic success and the huge potential for sustained growth. Meanwhile, we see that the profession's social development is outpacing its economic performance in terms of speed and scale. The longstanding, ubiquitous professional identity crisis, which is a matter of equity and inclusion, has plagued practitioners since the birth of the profession.

Practitioners' professional identity crises have historical and societal roots. First, technical communication was historically understood as a specialty, i.e., specialists writing about science or technology subjects for other professionals or literate audiences rather than for the public. The ancient practice didn't help technical communication earn widespread acknowledgement. Second, the term *technical communicator* lacks professional legitimacy due to a lack of government recognition. Direct evidence is that it is not listed as a profession in *China's Code of Occupational Classification 2022* (enacted by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security). In practice, technical communicators are usually classified as engineers or clerical workers based on different labor divisions in companies. Third, technical communication education is underdeveloped (Li & Cui, 2018; Ding, 2019; Zhang, 2020) and cannot meet market needs. Except for Peking University, technical communication hasn't become an independent discipline or a major area of study. Most universities offer technical communication as a service course ("China's universities that have opened classes of technical communication," 2022).

Besides these, our survey results reveal corporate, individual, and environmental causes. At the corporate level, technical writers with limited involvement in product development are often pushed to the bottom of the "chain of contempt" and marginalized as peripheral or inferior jobs, particularly if they don't have a documentation team. The situation may worsen if senior administrators don't value documentation. At the individual level, practitioners' identity crises stem from a mismatch between their educational background and job responsibility (e.g., majors of language studies working as technical content developers, engineers, architects, etc.); between high academic attainment and low professional rank, salary, and reputation; and between a strong desire to learn about new technologies or products and limited training opportunities, sources, or access. As for the environmental reason, the sluggish economy, reduced global needs, and higher unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the professional identity crisis.

To address the professional identity issue among China's technical communicators, we propose inclusive development as a broad DEI initiative. The term "inclusive development" originated in economic policy (World Economic Forum, 2018), which places a greater emphasis on equity, empowerment, and overall well-being than economic growth (Dörffel & Schuhmann, 2022). Realizing inclusive development in China's

technical communication requires equal opportunities, the creation of fair environments, and the equitable distribution of development outcomes, all of which will contribute to practitioners' professional development. We propose the following initiatives to promote human-centered development in China's technical communication. First, development subjects should be inclusive. We must pay attention to the actual needs and feasible capabilities of practitioners, especially those from non-IT industries. Second, development goals should be multidimensional, encompassing both economic and social growth while focusing on improving people's social status. Recognizing the social benefits that technical communicators generate is just as vital as understanding the economic values they create. Third, growth opportunities—including but not limited to job application, transition, promotion, and reward—should be equitable. Finally, the outcomes of development should be fairly distributed among all contributors, regardless of employment position or level.

Meanwhile, professional associations can boost their role as cooperation platforms for participants from various industries and countries around the globe. Our findings reveal that practitioners agree on the importance of peer networking, online communities, and online courses for career development. We all aspire to create an inclusive community through this platform to share knowledge and resources, assist with professional growth, instruct and train pre-professionals, develop skills and competencies, and advance global technical communication.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

DEI was an untapped topic in China's technical communication research and practice. Although different countries have distinct historical and sociopolitical circumstances, and thus varied DEI metrics, we believe the core of DEI stays the same for all human societies—the right to be unique, fairly treated, and valued. We believe that our research will allow readers all over the world to learn about China's technical communicators as people and what they do at work.

Because this survey was designed as an exploratory project, it has a few limitations. The sample size is small to be generalizable, although the data are statistically representative and sufficient to draw tentative conclusions. Furthermore, obtaining a group image implies overlooking individual stories and insights that might tell more truth about realistic situations. We intend to conduct an interview study to understand cultural factors (such as societal power dynamics) and workplace DEI in China's technical communication.

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Localizing Corporate DEI Practices among Technical Communicators

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By Jennifer Bay, Sherri Craig, and Christine Masters-Wheeler

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this article is to better understand how technical communicators understand and implement DEI initiatives in their workplaces, how corporate approaches to DEI impact technical communication work, how the physical and surrounding locale of the company impacts those DEI practices, and the ways technical communicators find themselves intervening, supporting, or advancing those initiatives.

Method: Using a qualitative interview methodology, we conducted one-hour interviews with practicing technical communicators. Four different participants representing different demographics and locations in the United States are profiled here.

Results: Based on our interviews, we noticed several general commonalities in our technical communicators' experiences of DEI in their workplaces, including a division in the different kinds of labor in the workplace and a lack of feeling like technical communicators had agency in respect to DEI. We also noticed that some trends were influenced by the location and work modality.

Conclusion: Practitioners need to be aware of DEI practices in their workplaces and how those practices can impact their work as technical communicators. Technical communicators should also notice how the local community/region, as well as company structure, might impact their work. Educators need to incorporate more attention to DEI as a rhetorical and audience-centered feature in TPC academic programs.

Keywords: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Localization

Practitioner's Takeaway:

- Practitioners need to be aware of DEI practices in their workplaces and how those practices can impact their work as technical communicators.
- Practitioners need to feel like they have agency to speak up, ask questions, and make changes that can promote inclusive workplace practices.
- Technical communicators should also notice how the local community/region, work modality, and company structure might impact their work.

Localizing Corporate DEI Practices

INTRODUCTION

In "Who Technical Communicators Are: A Summary of Demographics, Backgrounds, and Employment," Carliner and Chen (2018) report on STC census data to provide a picture of technical communicators—who they are, what they do, where they work, and more. Most of the technical communicators surveyed report that they are White, female, and work in IT or Technology industries. The vast majority of respondents work in the United States, with the two most dominant areas being the North Central region and the Hawaii and Southwest region. Respondents also tend to work in large companies, which is understandable given that the respondents are members of STC and may be able to professionalize as such because of the corporate size. However, this particular demographic—STC members—proves problematic because of the cost of membership (as much as $395 annually) and the ability to professionalize that comes with it. Could STC membership skew the results of the data? A survey by Adobe Systems Incorporated (2022) reported that most of the respondents worked for companies with fewer than 500 employees. In contrast, most of the STC survey respondents worked for companies with more than 500 employees. However, it is difficult to believe that the survey is representative of technical communication.

In this article, we are less interested in exploring the demographics of this data and more interested in thinking about the lack of diversity it depicts. Is the field really full of White, older women? And if so, what does this mean for our current emphasis on DEI? Moreover, is individual identity more important than location or cultural surroundings in terms of understanding the diversity and DEI approaches to the field? How are surveys like this from STC showing how DEI considerations are affected by where TPC professionals live and work? Workplace surveys, such as diversity climate surveys, are a common instrument to understanding employee perceptions of the internal dynamics, but rarely are the results of such instruments reflective of daily DEI practices. In what follows, we present findings from four technical communicators at various stages of their careers and in varied locations to better understand the relationship between location and DEI practices. By using the frame of localization, we show that location is a factor in how technical communicators are able to advance DEI efforts in their everyday work, as well as how DEI is perceived in the larger corporate culture of the workplace. Our findings also showed that work modality (remote or in person) also influenced perceptions of DEI. Our article details four participants at various stages of their careers with varying job titles.

Valerie is an African-American woman who shared experiences as a technical communicator at two employers. Her current place of employment is a large marketing company, for which she works remotely, based in the mid-Atlantic region. Her previous employer was a small commercial medical company in the South and she worked on-site.

Antonia is a White woman who works as a technical communicator for a large government agency in the southwestern United States. She works predominantly on-site, although there were opportunities to work remotely during much of the Covid pandemic.

Michael is a White man who shared experiences as a technical communicator at two employers. His current place of employment is with a large tech company on the West Coast. His previous employer was with a smaller retail company in the Midwest. In his current role, he reports that he travels a lot.

John is a White man who works as a technical communicator for a large software development company in the upper Midwest, not far from where the George Floyd killing and subsequent protests took place in 2020. He shared his experiences working remotely in his current role as a marketing writer.

Although these participants have diverse job titles, we consider all of them to be technical communicators. Companies often provide job titles that do not necessarily correspond to the actual work that employees perform. For example, one participant's title is Marketing Writer, but they work closely with the technical writing team and, from what we gathered in the interview, their writing is more outward facing to industry but still technical in nature. Similarly, many of these writers originally might have held explicitly technical writer positions but were promoted to roles with greater responsibilities. Hence, we consider all of our participants technical communicators, despite their diverse job titles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is Localization?

In TPC, the concept of localization often addresses how users interact with technologies in international contexts. Drawing from sociological concepts, Huatong Sun (2006; 2009) approaches localization as the integration of technologies into a particular locale or context. Sun references the work of sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984) in naming *locale* as a term connected to human agency in interactive contexts. More than just a space or a place, a *locale* emerges through human interactions and serves as a focal point of activity across space and time. The concept of *locale* frames human encounters in cultural contexts. *Localization*, then, deals with human experiences within specific cultural and geographic contexts. In studying mobile messaging technologies, Sun (2009) understands localization as both a product (noun) and a process (verb). As a noun, or a nominalization of the verb *to localize*, the concept of localization represents the idea that a technology may be adapted to the needs of users in a specific local culture. However, more specifically, users who localize a technology actively integrate it into their local settings. Sun describes localization as "an articulation work of constructing the subjective experiences according to a user's lifestyle and identities" (p. 258). Beyond "mere use" of a technology, individuals who actively localize technologies also articulate their own sense of identity through the localization process. For example, in Sun's 2009 study, the texting and literacy practices of collectivist Chinese participants varied drastically from those in the individualist US (p. 252) and, as such, the usability of the technology was challenged by the context of the locale. Although businesses may broadly conceive of localization as the process of modifying products and advertising campaigns to appeal to different cultures, Sun diverges from this marketing-driven approach. By studying mobile technology use within a localized context, Sun documents how users themselves actively perform localization work in relation to products and technologies that they use. We argue that localization strategies also occur within the US, and approaches to DEI may be localized within different geographic settings and work modalities.

The idea that users should have agency in localization processes has become a key conceptual framework for the field of TPC—one that also has become inseparable from social justice concerns. Building on Sun's approach to localization, Godwin Agboka (2013) identifies *participatory localization* as a process where community-based users define what they need from a design. In turn, the concepts of localization and participatory localization have become important theoretical frameworks for TPC scholars who advocate for incorporating localized user knowledge in the development of technologies (Acharya, 2019; Dorpenyo, 2019; Edenfeld et al., 2019; and others). Another related term, *glocalization*, points to instances when technical communicators address the needs of multiple audiences at once, such as when writing for websites. For example, Lee Ann Kastman Breuch (2015) uses *glocalization* as a concept to balance "both universal (broad range of cultures) and particular (specific cultures) needs and concerns," arguing that user-participation is key to successful information design for *glocal* audiences (p. 114). A connection between social justice and localization emerges, especially when considering the needs of marginalized groups, as Keshab Acharya (2019) recognizes when discussing usability in the global North-South divide. Acharya recognizes how both localization experts and social justice researchers take issue with a "top-down approach to technology design" (p. 362). While these insights are essential to understanding localization as a conceptual framework, on the whole, the field's discussion of localization appears to have shifted away from Sun's original nuance about users' subjectivities—specifically, Sun's insight that users actively integrate an existing technology into their experiences as a means to articulate personal identity. Rather, TPC's use of localization centers most often on the important roles that users in international locations should play in designing new or improving existing technologies. Our focus here is similar, but we limit our scope to localized settings within the US.

In discussing technology design, the connection between localization and experience design methodologies comes to the forefront. Experience design also applies to processes and systems as types of technologies and is not limited to products (Hassenzahl, 2013) but for users' experiences and emotional connections to technologies and interactions. Experience design, when applied, suggests meaningful and engaging relationships between users

and immaterial understanding of spaces. Along these lines, researchers also can think about how individuals experience DEI initiatives as types of research-based, human implemented technologies that have been designed to address systemic inequalities within workplaces. To best understand the experience, it is important to articulate how academic and public discourses surrounding DEI may influence the ways that technical communicators perceive themselves and their own abilities to affect changes in the workplace and beyond.

To this end, we explore how localization impacts the ways that technical communicators experience DEI initiatives in U.S.-based workplaces. Building upon Shivers-McNair and San Diego's (2017) arguments about localization work as being crucial to defining the terms *diversity*, *equity*, and *inclusion*, we use localization as a conceptual framework to examine what DEI means in specific workplace contexts. We consider the impacts that DEI policies have on our participants and their abilities to enact DEI practices in their work as technical communicators. Before presenting the results of our interviews, we review the literature on DEI in workplace settings as well as in the field of TPC. Ultimately, we explore how localizing DEI might make practices more capable of being applied to social justice in the workplace and in the technical communication field. DEI policies and practices understood through localization might also be more successful in their ability to change workplaces.

DEI in the Workplace

Racial bias training and DEI programming increased significantly after the racial protests in 2020. However, in order for DEI programs to be effective in the modern workplace, companies need to acknowledge their histories and current realities with their employees, not simply implement new training and hire additional staff. In fact, they should ensure that the company's values and policies are not the very barrier to implementing the sustainable, effective DEI programming they desire.

One of the challenges of implementing DEI in the workplace is the inconsistency between definitions of diversity and inclusion. For some companies, DEI can be reduced to race, often increasing BIPOC employees, and other companies are more concerned with improving conditions for women and people with disabilities. Still more might be interested in retention over recruitment or even including cognitive diversity among certain ranks. Additionally, DEI efforts can include wide ranging actions from one-off training sessions to company policy revisions, both of which can signal a company's commitment to inclusivity, often to limited effect. Dobbin and Kalev (2016; 2022) report that even companies that have implemented diversity programming for 20 or more years have not had the conditions for underrepresented communities change significantly. Companies often commit to "doubling down" (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016) on the same approaches to DEI implemented once in the post-Jim Crow era. If they do have more innovative approaches, they are unlikely to report those to the public. Instead, most major companies are likely to "[lump] together all non-white employees, workplaces, or jobs" (Dobbin & Kalev, 2022) to obfuscate and elevate their efforts. With this knowledge, it is important to recognize that obtaining a clear understanding of diversity is often problematic and filtered through the self-serving corporate documentation.

Well-known DEI initiatives have not always had the desired result. For example, affirmative action has resulted in White women statistically benefitting most in career advancement. The ambiguous nature of the language did not include gender, but upon the 1974 revisions, all fields, including technical ones, have seen significant changes to their workforce. And yet, both Facebook and Google have faced DEI challenges recently. According to Facebook's *2020 Diversity Report*, just 1.7% of their employees in technical roles represented Black people and 4.3% for Hispanic. They report that "progress [for Black and Hispanic people in technical roles] has been slower than in non-technical roles" (Facebook, 2020, para. 10) without providing the statistics at all. In 2022, the numbers have increased to 4.9% and 6.7%, respectively. *Google Diversity Annual Report 2022* shares slightly higher numbers for their workforce, although they do not distinguish between technical and non-technical workers—9.4% of workers were identified as Black and 9.0% Hispanic. Per these diversity reports, much of the DEI initiatives are race-related with targeted efforts toward improving recruitment and retention of women and historically minority employees. However, in 2021, Google began an autism initiative—Google Cloud's Autism Career Program—that helps train their managers to hire and

support people with autism. Their efforts to diversify the workplace steadily increase through changes to hiring practices and internal diversity initiatives such as personnel development and training. Yet, the individual experiences and perceptions of their employees are missing, even the experiences of those who assisted in the production of the reports—the communicators.

DEI Research in TPC

Much of the research on DEI in TPC has focused more on social justice and less on corporate DEI practices. Although the murder of George Floyd in 2020 highlighted a national demand for responding to the systemic injustices experienced by Black people and other historically marginalized populations, social justice work in TPC first gained traction after the deaths of Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner and far too many others in years prior. Social justice as an issue for TPC researchers has developed through many threads, including research methods (Agboka, 2014; Jones, 2016; Colton & Holmes, 2018); user experience (Acharya, 2022; Walls, 2016); what can and should be identified as TPC (Mckoy, 2019; Cox, 2019); diversity in TPC programs (Dayley, 2020; Dayley & Walton, 2018; Gonzalez & Baca, 2017; Savage & Matveeva, 2011); and pedagogy (Agboka & Dorpenyo, 2022; Bay, 2022; Jones et al., 2018; Shelton, 2020).

However, most of the research concerning social justice has been conducted in and about the academic field; only recently has research about DEI initiatives in the workplace started to become an issue and it's often about the academic workplace. As Jones et al. (2016) tell us, mere diversity does not guarantee inclusivity and, in fact, "social justice is the bridge from diversity to inclusion" (p. 219). Their goal is inclusion as "an ideal that we believe the field of TPC should work toward. Inclusion means that there is respect for everyone's voices, stories, and knowledges. Diversity, which addresses representation in its most basic form, is a necessary precondition of inclusion" (p. 219). Jones et al. (2016), though, are talking about the diversity and inclusion of the academic field of TPC–who is published in TPC journals, who earns TPC doctoral degrees, and who inhabits tenure-track academic spaces. This is a first step toward thinking about DEI in the workplace as our academic programs are the grounds where we train technical communicators. How we train those TPC professionals will obviously affect how they interact in the workplace.

The diverse students being served in our programs and who teaches them are obviously important issues. We are two White women and a Black woman at historically White universities. Although one of the authors teaches a large population of multi-marginalized students, we are aware that scholars such as Dayley (2020) report that "86% [of students] said it is important to have faculty from diverse backgrounds; 86% said it is important to have curriculum that represents the contributions of people from diverse backgrounds … 83% said it is important to have students from diverse backgrounds; and 77% said it is important to have curriculum related to diversity" (p. 64). While we have some data on who is in our field via Carliner and Chen (2018) and who we are educating (Dayley, 2020; Jones et al., 2014; Savage & Mattson, 2011), more information is needed to better understand how different geographic regions might support different understandings of DEI practices.

METHODS

With a multi-site IRB approved study, we recruited participants from two groups on the LinkedIn platform: Purdue University's Professional Writing Alumni group (354 members) and Francis Marion University's Professional Writing group (34 members). We posted the recruitment call twice: once at the beginning of January 2023, and a second time a week later. We received a small amount of responses, largely because of a short time frame, as well as the timing of the study during a busy period. A few possible participants indicated they were interested but too busy to commit.

Although we realize that recruiting from these two university-associated groups might be limiting, we did not want to restrict our possible participants by using professional associations, which are often expensive to join. Similarly, we know that what often counts as Professional and Technical Writing has historically not included the practices of many multiply-marginalized groups. Therefore, we thought that these more local networks might elicit more diverse kinds of professionals. In order to prevent bias, we recruited from groups with whom we were not directly affiliated. Pseudonyms were chosen by participants and 60-minute interviews were held on Zoom. Participants

had the option to turn their cameras off to protect anonymity. We wanted to focus on writers from different geographical regions to see if localization had any effect on the practices of technical communicators.

To this end, we asked 13 questions focused on four areas in our semi-structured interviews: perceptions of diversity in the TC workplace; internal and external considerations of DEI; technical communication in practice; and DEI and the corporate workplace. We developed questions in these four areas because we wanted to understand the distinctions between how practitioners experienced DEI directly in the workplace as well as how the company or external events affected their perceptions of DEI. Similarly, because of possible differences between internal and external perceptions of DEI, we were interested in the role of location in those perceptions. The interview questions were constructed using narrative inquiry (Chase, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Jones, 2016, 2020) where participants were asked to reflect on their perceptions of DEI in their workplaces and to use storytelling to capture the influence of their work as technical communicators on their lived experiences with workplace DEI practices and policies. We adopted narrative inquiry because it can best capture our participants' experiences through varied perspectives while also positioning us as exchanging in a natural dialogue about such difficult topics as diversity, equity, and inclusion. As we were recruiting participants from our alumni, we wanted to support deep reflection and agency over their perceptions. A narrative inquiry method permitted us to approach the interviews, and the resulting analysis, with an ethic of care necessary for studying DEI in the workplace.

Although we each hand-coded the interviews to examine the ways that these technical communicators understood and navigated DEI in their workplaces, and the impact that their workplace locations might have on these practices, we did not want to go overboard and focus exclusively on coding those interviews, since there was such a small sample. In order to enact an ethic of care, we wanted participant voices to stand on their own, which is what is generally focused on in narrative inquiry approaches. Likewise, we did not seek to edit quotes from our participants. We drew conclusions from the interviews as much as we could, but those conclusions were more focused on feeding into strategies that practitioners could follow in cultivating DEI practices in TPC workplaces. Readers of *Technical Communication* are generally practitioners who would want to learn more about their colleagues' experiences with DEI so they could compare with their own. Hence, we focus less on strict coding for replicable results and focus more on narratives that can provide possible suggestions for TPC practitioners.

In what follows, we use data from interviews with four technical communicators to see how DEI issues and initiatives manifest in their large and small workplaces across the country, from the East Coast, Midwest, Southwest, and West Coast. From these interviews, we developed the following brief narratives detailing each of their perceptions of DEI and how those practices interfaced with their work as technical communicators.

NARRATIVES

Valerie

Valerie is a young Black woman who works as a remote technical communicator in the rural American South. Although she discusses two influential workplace experiences, Valerie's current duties include "making documentation and spreadsheets," largely for the internal use of the company. She describes the area in which she lives as very diverse and somewhat conservative. Her marketing and advertising workplace is located on the East Coast, where she has never visited and admits she's "not terribly familiar with it."

Valerie perceived her workplace DEI approaches to be taken "pretty lightly." She emphasizes, "It's mostly just jokes here and there. I don't think anyone's like to confirm [DEI is happening] or I don't think members of management are like, 'try and add diversity.' I think it's just something no one's paying attention to."

Valerie has a complex view of her co-workers, whom she describes as "almost all white" with White men and women in leadership positions. Her technical writing team is also composed of White co-workers. In both of her workplaces discussed, those who work as technical communicators and in client-facing areas were one racial demographic and those who are in areas of production or warehouse labor were much more racially and socioeconomically diverse. The divisions of labor and their relationship to class are the most notable diversity markers in the workplace. Valerie lamented the

role she believed socioeconomic biases had in effectively supporting her co-workers in relationship to Covid wellness policies. She detailed several instances where BIPOC employees in lower positions felt targeted, and ultimately denied or terminated for their need for sick leave due to Covid. Denial was a frequent presence for Valerie who described community engagement programming opportunities in her workplace, but she has never been approved to attend such offerings.

As a technical communicator, Valerie perceived that her remote presence did not allow for much influence on DEI practices and policies but that perhaps technical communicators have an advantage to approaching diversification in workplace writing and thought: "I think that as technical writers, professional writers, I think we kind of have an advantage. We're naturally good writers, good speakers; we can put together really good thoughts, good evidence, and things of that nature. I feel like we could use that skill to our advantage [to share diverse thinking]. I think that might come across a lot better, or I would hope it would come across a lot better, and that would create a genuine discussion where everyone could work together."

Overall, Valerie believed her current workplace's ability to enact DEI practices and policies to be difficult to determine. Other than having MLK Jr. Day as a paid holiday, she was unaware of any explicit DEI commitments because of her remote location. Instead, she relies on understanding these commitments through the anecdotes from others in regards to their race, gender, religion, sex, and socioeconomic class.

Antonia

Antonia is a White woman who works as a technical communicator for a large government agency in the Southwest. Her workplace is highly technical, and she is responsible for documenting technical processes and knowledge. Antonia's workplace is located in a rural area that is fairly isolated but feels liberal and forward-thinking. She explains, "our specific community is just, it's this very white, highly educated, rich bubble."

Antonia describes her colleagues as highly educated and not very diverse, although she says that there is a strong push to diversify her workplace. She explains that there is diversity in socioeconomic status, which used to not be the case. One aspect of her workplace that she describes is a split between professional, highly educated workers and production workers. Production workers tend to be local and more racially and gender diverse; they generally come from local Indigenous populations. The knowledge workers were much more likely to be White, male, and highly educated.

One aspect of DEI that Antonia stressed is a strong push to recruit women, minorities, and underrepresented groups. She explained that she thought it was easy to be a woman at her workplace, but that she saw very few African-Americans. She explained: "It's easy to be a woman here, I would say, in my perspective, but, literally, I might have seen two Black people in the four years I've been at the lab working here, and both of them were students still coming in specifically for recruiting. There's a growing number of trends and openly gay people, and there's a lot of support for that from a lot of staff, too. So those are common; you know, it's a government agency."

Where diversity, equity, and inclusion showed up for Antonia was more age-related. She explained that there was a split between veteran knowledge workers and younger employees that resulted in communication problems. She detailed that there were plans to help try to educate employees about possible age biases in the workplace: "the Old Guard, as we call them, do not know how to communicate with younger people. They have very clear biases against these young people, and the young people also are like Hey, boomer, I don't need to listen to you; the way you guys do things is not right. So culturally, age diversity is there, and it's a big problem. So we're working on a program and sort of a strategy that helps people understand other generations, how people might think differently, work differently, collaborate differently, and trying to help them come together in a way that they can both be very mission driven and get the benefits of working with each other, and put aside some of those biases."

In addition to this plan to improve communication across different generations of workers, Antonia detailed that her workplace has underrepresented resource groups that hold meetings and offer programs to both support underrepresented employees and educate the workplace about issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Despite these groups, she did feel like upper management often gave lip service to DEI.

In terms of what technical communicators can do with respect to DEI, she did not feel as if much could be done. She provided one example of how she's had to fight for the accessibility of documents and

media, as well as having to explain the importance of neurodiversity as an audience consideration. Antonia also had difficulty thinking about how technical writing could be different with more attention to DEI: "I would have a hard time explaining or making an argument to how traditional forms of technical writing, could even, be impactful with diversity, equity, and inclusion […] how would we write that differently? How would we write a procedure differently?"

Michael

Michael is a White man who works for a large technology company headquartered in the Pacific Northwest. His job involves rolling out new products in many locations around the US, and his duties involve a significant amount of technical communication. Michael describes the local area where he works as "on the Democratic side" where "being liberal is a really good thing." The liberal politics of the area, in Michael's view, creates an atmosphere that is welcoming to many types of groups.

The atmosphere of his workplace also reflects an openness to change. In fact, due to the fast pace of technical projects and the threat of potential layoffs, change appears as a constant in Michael's workplace. His company was just one among many large, high-tech U.S. companies that laid off thousands of workers in January 2023. Despite the threat of layoffs, Michael recognizes that a culture of change can have positive aspects. He described how the company has established systems where employees can propose new ideas and innovations. He stated, "Anybody has the ability to make change in the organization. You just have to do it the right way." The process for proposing change involves writing a well-argued document that clearly and succinctly provides evidence for why a new idea would benefit the company. An employee's supervisor reads the document and decides whether to advance the idea up the chain of command. Michael said that the topics proposed usually involve technologies, processes, efficiency, safety, or how to improve products offered to customers.

Improving customer satisfaction emerged as a driving value for Michael and the organization. He stressed that diversity is important because it benefits customers. Because the customer base is composed of all different demographics, Michael emphasized how having diverse viewpoints helps develop better products and ultimately improves customer experience. As a technical communicator, Michael emphasizes that being open and having conversations with others can help him excel in his job. He explained, "I'm on the road and I talk to everybody. I want to learn from everybody. I want to hear from the customer, and everybody is my customer." He emphasized that having multiple perspectives helps to improve documentation, particularly in terms of word choice and quality of language.

It is clear to Michael that the company hires people from a range of backgrounds, and he mentioned seeing notices about affinity group meetings geared towards Asian, Black, and LGBTQ+ employees. Job openings are posted on websites, but insiders know that to be hired, one must be recruited through an external hiring agency. In fact, Michael cannot think of anyone at the company who had not been hired through a recruiter. He suspects that AI tools may be used by hiring agencies, and wonders whether the computer models used in the recruitment process could be biased. However, Michael views the promotion process as unbiased. He states, "If you put in the effort, build relationships, and you give 120%—meaning that you bring something else to the organization—you will get that promotion, regardless of your age, background, or ethnicity." Michael shares that at meetings, each person is encouraged to voice their thoughts and perspectives, regardless of their experience or background.

Because his job requires a great deal of travel, Michael does not have many opportunities to connect with his local community. He remarked that while production workers had opportunities to participate in community service projects, he and others working on the corporate side of the organization were not informed about these kinds of community outreach events.

John

John is a White man who works as a technical communicator for a large software development company in the upper Midwest, not far from where the George Floyd killing and subsequent protests took place in 2020. His job is officially a Marketing Writer, but he works closely with the Technical Writing team. Since the pandemic, he has been working remotely. He describes his company as more localized than other large companies that have headquarters nearby. John also describes the area as fairly liberal.

John described his workplace as not overly diverse. His workplace is primarily White but mostly female and thinks there are more women than men in other offices around the country: "When I had first started here, it was very noticeable that there were more women, not just my coworkers, but a lot of the managers are women, and for a long time the company had a female CEO." John explained that his company demonstrates an effort to be socially conscious or aware. Annually, his company sends any woman in the company to a women's tech conference if they wish to attend.

John detailed different ways that his company either explicitly or implicitly engaged in DEI practices. In one example, he relayed an incentive program for encouraging industry participation in surveys: "Some of our department, we run surveys to collect kinds of industry information and it's hard to get people to commit to a survey. And so we've tried several different tactics, and one that we have been finding some success with is tying it to a charity. And so we have been working with BIPOC tech, or coding groups where if you take the survey, we will donate money toward this organization." In another example, he explained that his company had created a new DEI position with HR to create more opportunities within the company. He said he had not heard much since the initial announcement but wondered if that was because he was a White male.

In a follow-up question about George Floyd, John discussed his company's response. His company sent a survey to employees asking what the company could do in light of the civil unrest that was happening in the city. He also mentioned that there is an anonymous email to send questions and feedback to HR about anything DEI-related. Interestingly, Juneteenth is a paid holiday for his company.

John provided a lot of details for how he sees technical communicators advocating for change and including DEI perspectives in their work. He discussed collaborations with the tech writing team on updating outdated industry terminology and working to change documentation to adjust language choices. He emphasized it was important to understand audience and that he was conscious of the impact of vocabulary and terminology. In response to a question about whether his education prepared him for DEI, John discussed that one of the key tenets of his education was an attention to audience. He was taught the intentionality of language and how to write to different communities that he was not a part of. He always takes a moment to double check whether something is appropriate or not. As his team's lead, there is a regular discussion of audience, intentionality, and language use. There is a desire to be as considerate and empathetic for what is produced for the audience as much as possible.

John did note that while there were efforts to be inclusive, there is an economic barrier; tech requires a certain level of education and expertise that may not be available to everyone.

DISCUSSION

Based on our interviews, we noticed several general commonalities in our technical communicators' experiences of DEI in their workplaces, but we also noticed some trends that were influenced by the location and work modality. In what follows, we first outline some general similarities and then we detail more complex distinctions.

Similarities across Participants

Splits among the labor

In each of our interviews, we noticed a clear split between upper-level professionals/management and production/warehouse workers. Each of the participants explicitly mentioned this division, noting in many cases that they saw DEI issues emerge more on the production side than in their own professional world.

MLK Jr. Day holiday recognized, but not Juneteenth

Three of the four participants we discuss here mentioned the Martin Luther King Jr. national holiday as an example of how companies see holidays of importance to the African American community as opportunities for DEI efforts. However, the recently designated national holiday, Juneteenth, was only recognized by John's company.

Very little community outreach

All of our interviewees expressed an interest in more community events but did not think their companies provided many opportunities that they could attend. Also, they conflated DEI efforts in the local community with either politics (Michael) or religion (Valerie) and not with the systematic inequalities in the local area.

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Degree preparation for DEI

Several interviewees felt their TC curricula prepared them for the DEI issues they would experience in their workplaces because of the focus on the audience. Several participants mentioned audience (or customer, in Michael's case) as a driving factor in their understanding of and attention to DEI.

DEI presence

For most of our interviewees, DEI was not noticeable in their workplaces, because it was either so deeply embedded in the company (Michael's experience) or because it was not seen as an issue that could be addressed in/by technical writing. In fact, most of the respondents focused on socio-economic status as a marker of difference, rather than race, gender expression, sexual orientation, or other identifiers.

DEI responsibility

DEI is largely seen as something handled by HR by the interviewees. Technical communicators mostly viewed themselves as having agency surrounding language and word choices on documents, but less so for DEI issues within their workplaces. For these technical communicators, enacting change in the workplace is equated with community outreach initiatives or using different word choices in customer-facing writing. As a result, technical communicators did not see themselves as having agency with respect to DEI or did not think they could do anything in their current roles.

Distinctions between Participants

We expected to see more specific distinctions between participants based on the specific locations in which they work, but we found that the work modality complicated those distinctions in interesting ways. Table 1 shows the relationship between location and work modality across the four participants. We categorize Valerie as remote, although she talked about her current remote position as well as her previous in-person position during the interview.

Table 1: Location and Work Modality

	Remote	In Person
Rural	Valerie	Antonia
Urban	John	Michael

For those participants who were rural, Valerie and Antonia, their perceptions of DEI were that the local community had minimal influence on their workplace DEI practices. The sometimes-lacking diversity of the rural area in which they were located reflected the most severe class distinctions within their workplaces (management versus production).

In the two urban workplaces, our participants John and Michael perceived a greater reciprocity between the DEI efforts of their workplaces and the local community. These two male participants perceived that the diversity of their local communities aided the DEI efforts of their workplaces, reinforcing what Shivers-McNair & San Diego (2017) have written: "Connecting and localizing communities and networks is a material practice, both in the sense that it has material effects" (p. 105). The material practices in hiring, supporting affinity groups, and improving belonging and inclusion efforts created workplaces that our technical communicators found supportive of DEI. Because of these supportive measures, both John and Michael were able to explicitly address and center their work on the needs of the audience in their document production.

The remote technical communicators had differing engagements with their workplaces. Valerie worked remotely, but her current position is located in a different geographic area from the main office where most of her coworkers were located and had returned to the office after the pandemic. She lives in a racially diverse area, but almost all of her remote coworkers are White, as they were in the office side of the business in her previous local position. She did not observe any meaningful efforts toward DEI at either workplace, remote or not. In contrast, John also worked remotely but was located in the same urban area as his workplace, so he had the ability to make connections between what was occurring in his local community and the efforts of his workplace. Specifically, during the protests against police brutality in 2020 in his city, John believed that the company had a desire to respond in a meaningful way, but, ultimately, there was limited communication and minimal DEI efforts, despite their good intentions.

Valerie also made connections between the first workplace that she mentioned, where she worked in person, and what was happening in her locale, but it was reflective of that specific environment. For example, she was the only participant to bring up religion as a factor in DEI. Because of the general importance of

religion in the South (and in rural areas, specifically), it makes sense that she might have understood diversity in terms of religious differences.

Both John and Valerie were hired during Covid and were given fully remote work and have remained working-from-home. Had they not been hired during Covid, they both would be required to work on-site. We believe that remote work may have a greater impact on the perceptions of DEI efforts than we currently understand.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of our study are that we only profile four technical communicators here. While each of them represents a different area of the United States and different industries, we feel that more interviews and more data could enrich our understanding of the connections between U.S. localization and DEI work. We also wonder whether the fact that some of our participants were remote and some were in person may have skewed our findings. Still, we feel that these four profiles give us a foundation to start thinking about the relationship between different areas of the country, the political and cultural differences of those areas, and DEI work.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Based on these interviews, we argue that DEI needs to be more of a focus in TPC programs as students should understand its importance for technical communication and industry work. Although we saw a clear focus on audience awareness, we think that the focus on audience in TPC programs could be enhanced by more attention to the diversity of audiences and connections between marginalization and audience in technical communication.

It was clear that none of our participants saw themselves necessarily as champions or advocates of DEI work. In fact, some did not even understand the impact DEI could have on technical communication practices. Programs can teach students how technical communicators have an important role to play in ensuring that all voices are valued and understood. Moreover, for those technical communicators who are no longer in an educational program, STC could become a leader in producing resources and continuing education for DEI for practitioners.

More broadly, the field needs a renewed interest in research on the role of writing in organizations. The role of writing at Michael's current company is profound, and we're wondering how that tracks in other industries or workplaces. Likewise, John mentioned writing and distributing surveys extensively in his industry as a way to gather information from diverse perspectives. While we have anecdotal stories about what TPC professionals do in their jobs, we have less clearly defined research on the extent of writing and the kinds of writing that are happening at TPC workplaces, especially high-tech workplaces. If we are to better understand the relationship between technical communicators and DEI, we need to understand the kinds of writing that TPC professionals are doing on a daily basis as forms of advocacy.

Future research on the relationship between location, localization, and perceptions of DEI could focus on the impact of remote work. How does the remote location of employment affect the perceptions of DEI commitments within the workplace, or physical location where the company is based? Understanding the impact of location and remote work on DEI might allow us to tailor specific programs for companies that can increase inclusion and belonging. Research that further discovers the increasing relational complexity of work location (in-person, hybrid, or remote) and effective DEI practices and policies will become increasingly important as companies prepare for a decentralized workforce.

STRATEGIES FOR PRACTITIONERS

We conclude with specific strategies for practitioners who seek to inhabit and amplify DEI practices in the workplace, with a special attention to work modality.

- Don't assume clear writing is neutral and unbiased. Unconscious and implicit bias is everywhere and within everyone, and the technical communicator must be vigilant about how and where those biases creep in, whether in hiring, in writing, or in collaborating.
- Be intentional with language and be able to write to different communities that are outside of your comfort zone. This involves being aware of those communities, either locally or remotely. As our participant John states, "As a marketer, you try to write to everybody, but your starting

place is still your personal experience. So having a diverse workforce or team that helps expand your perspective. It helps expand your understanding of who other audiences might be."

- Be active and engaged; don't rely on human resources personnel, management, or a diversity position to do equity work for you. Several of our participants mentioned diversity positions at their company, as if those positions were going to do all the work of ensuring equity and inclusion. For instance, when Valerie was excluded from a feedback session for employees, White colleagues should have advocated for the importance of her perspective as an African-American female.
- Acknowledging diversity can encompass more than just race, ability, or gender. As Valerie and others mentioned, class and religion can be important factors in creating equitable workplaces, communication, and documentation for users.
- Be aware of stratification among work levels. Most technical communicators are considered professional staff, but many of their employee production co-workers experience DEI initiatives differently. Antonia, Valerie, and John all noted the differences between their positions and the hourly, production workers. How can you use your position to advocate for them?
- Work to better understand the relationship between where we are physically located and company workplace culture as remote options become increasingly common. Company culture may be influenced by the locale where the physical office headquarters are located, which may differ from the values and cultures of places where remote workers live. John's workplace, for instance, was invested in BLM because it is headquartered close to where major protests have occurred. In another example, the isolation of Antonia's workplace implicitly reflected the value and culture of the city. Technical communicators should be aware these distinctions might show up in their daily work.

Because we are so adept at writing and communication, technical communicators have the power to cultivate equitable and inclusive conditions in their workplaces. Being aware of that power, as well as one's positionality, are key factors in moving DEI efforts from theory into practice.

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How "Well" are We DEI-ing? Applying Technical and Professional Communication Theory and Disability Justice to Challenge Intersectional Ableism in Job Advertisements Through Coalitional Recruitment

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By Kristin C. Bennett

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This article integrates an ableism studies framework with disability justice principles to interrogate how medical insurance job advertisements may circulate ableist assumptions that impede corporate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals and social justice efforts.

Method: I use critical discourse analysis and thematic coding to analyze how normative ableist assumptions present in job advertisements and DEI documents may exclude prospective employees with disabilities as well as multiply marginalized identities such as Black women.

Results: Through my analysis, I demonstrate how normalizing assumptions related to productivity, rationality, independence, and corporate assimilation may contribute to the exclusion of multiply marginalized employees.

Conclusion: I ultimately provide data-driven insights regarding what I refer to as *coalitional recruitment* to help practitioners construct more equitable job advertisements attuned to disability justice.

Keywords: Disability Justice; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statements; Intersectionality; Job Advertisements; Rhetorics of Health and Medicine

Practitioner's Takeaway:

- This article provides a brief overview of technical and professional communication in disability studies and rhetorics of health and medicine.
- It offers a discussion of the social justice implications of job advertisements.
- A discussion of methods for interrogating ableist assumptions across DEI statements and job advertisements that may exclude prospective/current disabled employees as well as multiply marginalized identities is also provided.
- Finally, insights and practical methods for reconstructing job advertisements and DEI statements in ways that center disability justice through a process of coalitional recruitment are discussed.

How "Well" are We DEI-ing?

INTRODUCTION

Attending to social justice has increased technical and professional communication (TPC) efforts to amplify "the agency of oppressed people … who are materially, socially, politically, and/or economically under-resourced" (Jones & Walton, 2018, p. 42), by disrupting traditional TPC rhetorical forms and knowledge-making practices. Through social justice, technical and professional communicators (TPCers) have interrogated artifacts, ideologies, and methodologies that constrain discourse, knowledge-making, and professional practices to those that reify White, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, cis-gender, and Western identities (Agboka, 2014; Colton & Walton, 2015; Haas & Eble, 2018; Jones et al., 2016; Jones & Walton, 2018). In advocating for TPC social justice efforts, Walton et al. (2019) call for the centering of intersectionality, which recognizes the interlocking nature of oppressive forces like U.S. capitalism, racism, sexism, and ableism experienced by multiply marginalized individuals like disabled[1] Black women (Collins & Bilge, 2016) and advocates for collaborative coalition in pursuits of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

This article builds from previous scholarship to articulate a need for the intersectional examination of medical insurance job advertisements and DEI statements. Job descriptions reflect "regulatory texts" in that they govern communicative practices and consequential power relations by determining the parameters of belonging in certain professional spaces (Walwema & Carmichael, 2020). Thus, job advertisements have social justice implications for TPC because they endorse "values, texts, and ideologies" that empower certain identities while marginalizing others (p. 3). Previous scholarship has analyzed how job advertisement language and technical portal design can impact a range of intersectional identities such as international applicants, female applicants, and disabled applicants[2] (Mihaljević et al., 2022; Walwema & Carmichael, 2020; Dow et al., 2020; Gaucher et al., 2011). However, this scholarship has not examined the systemic influence of ableism across job advertisements. As Whiteness studies illuminate systemic racism, ableism studies demonstrate how dominant ideologies can oppress disabled folks (Cherney, 2019). Applied with disability justice, a theory and movement founded by disabled people of color to prioritize disability's intersectionality (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018), ableism studies reveal how seemingly neutral documents can strengthen systemic oppression. I therefore integrate rhetorics of health and medicine, ableism studies, disability studies, and disability justice to trace how medical insurance DEI statements and job advertisements can perpetuate systemic oppression and to indicate a need for TPC intervention. I then analyze these job advertisements and DEI statements to demonstrate how such documents may perpetuate ableist assumptions that impede DEI goals. I ultimately provide TPCers recommendations for mediating what I refer to as *coalitional recruitment* through data-driven insights informed by disability justice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent TPC scholarship has applied social justice in pursuit of equitable documentation and design (Agboka, 2018; Bennett & Hannah, 2021; Haas & Eble, 2018; Jones & Walton, 2018). As Jones (2016) explains, TPC "endorses certain perspectives, viewpoints, and epistemologies" (p. 345). TPC is never neutral because it draws from and reinforces sociocultural ideals. Through engagement with social justice, TPC research has sought to challenge dominant constructions and to center identities frequently marginalized by systemic oppression (Frost et al., 2021). Such social justice work requires that TPCers interrogate and expand conventions through interdisciplinary inquiry. In this section, I illustrate the social justice value of interdisciplinarity and trace TPC research that engages rhetorics of health and medicine (RHM), disability studies (DS), and disability justice. By threading together this scholarship, I situate medical insurance documents as important sites for TPC intervention.

1 I use disability-first language (i.e., "disabled individuals") rather than person-first language (i.e., "individuals with disabilities") to frame disability as a desirable or welcome aspect of lived experience. I do not use person-first language, which reinforces ableist logics of overcoming by framing one as a person despite one's disability. (Cherney, 2019).

2 My discussion of disabled job applicants includes but is not limited to physical disability; it also considers a range neurodivergent and invisible disability experiences, such as chronic pain, depression, anxiety, and autism as well as embodiments that reflect multiple disabilities.

Engaging Rhetorics of Health and Medicine and Disability Studies

In the U.S., TPC articulations of disability have historically been grounded in "culturally dominant" medical discourses that frame disability as individual pathology "to be treated, remediated, or cured" (Gutsell & Hulgin, 2013, p. 85) so that disabled folks may be included in ableist systems. Both RHM and DS recognize the impact of such medical discourse on the embodied realities of disabled folks. Using rhetoric as an analytical frame, RHM traces practical, theoretical, and ethical concerns related to medicine to analyze how cultural and sociopolitical representations of health can impact individual healthcare access (Melonçon et al., 2020). RHM thus postulates that discourse circulated by medical materials directly impacts how individuals access, navigate, receive, and experience medical care (Melonçon & Frost, 2015). Further, RHM attests to the systemically oppressive impacts that documentation and discourse can have for multiply marginalized embodiments in terms of race, gender, disability, culture, immigration status, language, and/or gender identity (Alexander & Edenfield, 2021; Frost et al., 2021; Green, 2021; Holladay, 2020; Mahar, 2020; Frost & Haas, 2017). As articulators of meaning, TPCers are primed to analyze and offer insight regarding such implications of medical discourse.

Further, RHM recognizes that research in medical contexts requires interdisciplinary intervention that "transcend[s] traditional academic disciplines and boundaries" (Melonçon & Frost, 2015, p. 7). TPC scholars have therefore integrated fields like RHM and DS in their work. DS advocates for a "critical stance toward ideologies of health and illness" (Holladay & Price, 2020, p. 33), challenges medicalized understandings of disability as lack, and analyzes how embodied disability experiences are influenced by "cultural barriers [that] preclude the full participation of disabled subjects in society" (Bell, 1997, p. 1). In other words, DS moves beyond medical understandings of disability by recognizing disability as experienced by individuals in the context of broader sociopolitical systems. When coupled with TPC, DS traces how "normalizing discourses" in documentation "can marginalize [disabled folks'] experiences, knowledges, and material needs" (Palmeri, 2006, p. 49). Engagement with DS has thus revealed that "in focusing on efficiency and innovation, TPC has widely embraced an ableist agenda" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 218). That is, TPC notions of efficiency can uphold ableist values of productive independence that frame disability as unproductive and inefficient (Erevelles, 2000). Together, RHM and DS highlight a need to interrogate how TPC may contribute to disability's exclusion in medical contexts.

Under U.S. capitalism, disability is likewise associated with a lack of productivity because it is often framed as irrational. For example, one who has a mental disability; such as autism, depression, or anxiety; may not embody standard, "rational" forms of thinking. Mental disabilities challenge the habits of "clear" thinking and speaking characteristic of "rational thought" (Larson, 2021, p. 396). That is, the cognitive, spoken, and behavioral interaction strategies of disabled folks frequently misalign with ableist rhetorical standards. In this way, disabled folks disrupt standard notions of rhetorical ethos, or credibility, and may struggle to connect with neurotypical audiences, contexts, and organizational spaces (Walters, 2014). Because "identity and agency are rhetorically constructed through mutual interaction" (Kerschbaum, 2014, p. 69), disabled folks are frequently denied rhetorical agency, collaborative capacities, and professional recognition to engage equitably in workplace contexts. DS thus indicates a need for TPC's interrogation of rational logics across documentation practices.

Centering Ableism's Intersectionality

Although TPC's engagement with DS has motivated equitable, socially just action, scholars in Black DS have critiqued the field's tendency to prioritize White disability experiences (Bell, 2006; Schalk, 2022; Schalk & Kim, 2022). DS frequently occludes the systemic discrimination experienced by disabled people of color regarding medical access and accommodations. For example, DS often critiques the medical model of disability that encourages overcoming disability through medical diagnosis and treatment; it instead advocates for a social model that understands disability as influenced by sociopolitical discourse. However, disabled people of color have historically been under-diagnosed and denied medical treatment and accommodations for disability (Schalk & Kim, 2020). While DS has challenged problematic understandings of disability through attention to its social construction, it has simultaneously contributed to the medical marginalization of disabled people of color (Schalk, 2022).

In addition, TPC and DS scholarship has not fully accounted for disability's intersectionality or ableism's systemic nature. As Black DS has found, disability discourse can exacerbate racial and gender exclusion by framing certain identities as ideally normal and others as abnormal (Schalk & Kim, 2020). For example, the ideal of the rational mind is based in "racialized, gendered, classed, and sexualized ideas about bodily normalcy … intelligence, and competence [that] … continue to regulate bodies of color" (Taylor, 2015, pp. 183–184). Such seemingly neutral standards draw from a "discourse of pathology" grounded in "hierarchies where nonwhite, woman-gendered bodies are cast as deviant and disabled" while "white, gender-normative bodies" are privileged with belonging in public space (p. 188). U.S. capitalist norms of rationality may thus impact a range of identities including gender-queer, disabled, non-native speakers of English whose rhetorical logics may not align with dominant expectations. Ableism works systemically with racism and sexism to deny multiply marginalized identities like disabled women of color the rhetorical rationality integral to social interaction. In this way, the ableist ideals that reinforce certain bodyminds[3] as normal, rational, or productive "are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, colonialism, and capitalism" (Lewis, 2020). In recognizing disability's intersectional basis, Black DS reveals how White supremacist U.S. capitalism has applied disability discourse to perpetuate "slavery, colonialism, neocolonialism and the continued exploitation of people of color in contemporary times" (Erevelles, 2011, p. 103). While DS has challenged many ableist practices, its historical focus on White bodyminds has limited its transformative potential.

Consequently, Walton et al. (2019) urge TPCers to address intersectionality. Publicly recognized in the 1960's and 1970's through the efforts of Black women like the Combahee River Collective and Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is both a method and a theoretical framework that traces how race and other identity categories, such as gender, class, and disability, mutually influence experiences of power and oppression across social contexts (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 2). Intersectionality demonstrates how a single-issue analysis of discrimination based on race, gender, or disability does not account for the complex discrimination experienced by multiply marginalized individuals like Black women (p. 3). That is, intersectionality reveals how multiple "axes of social division in a given society at a given time, for example, race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and age … build on each other and work together" (Crenshaw, 1999, p. 4). By applying an intersectional lens, scholars have moved beyond DS's individualized focus and have recognized the integral connections between disability and the "colonial violence, developmentalism, [and] war" associated with White settler colonialism and imperialism (Roberts & Jesudason, 2013, p. 314). Intersectionality thus allows TPC scholars to trace ableism's systemic connection to other oppressive forces.

Analyzing Disability's Intersections through Disability Justice and Ableism Studies

To further examine disability's intersectional implications, I advocate for TPC's engagement with ableism studies and disability justice. As a conceptual framework, ableism reflects complex "ways of knowing, valuing, and seeing the so-called 'abnormal' body as inferior …. The core of ableism is an idealized norm that defines what it means to be human [and that articulates] that those who do not fit that norm are disabled, and … lacking" (Cherney, 2019, p. 8). Recognizing ableism as an interpretive framework that influences social and individual assumptions, ableism studies move away from individualized understandings of disability and interrogate ableism's "linguistic codes and rhetorical assumptions" (p. 11).

However, because an ableism studies framework is not inherently intersectional, I call for its pairing with disability justice, which understands ableism as intrinsically related to "heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism" (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 21). Disability justice is a movement and theoretical framework founded in the efforts of disability activists of color and was officially launched in 2005 by Patty Berne, Mia Mingus, and Stacey Milbern (CODE, 2023). Responding to the disability rights movement's frequent marginalization of "sick and disabled people of color [and] queer and trans disabled folks of color," (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 22), disability justice centers experiences and leadership of disabled folks to challenge

3 *The term "bodymind" indicates a connection between the body and mind, and challenges notions of the body/mind as two as distinct entities (Price, 2014).*

U.S. capitalist frames that equate human value with ableist productivity. In addition, it emphasizes how the ideological beliefs, logics, and assumptions that fuel ableism rely on and reify those of other oppressive systems like "racism, christian supremacy, sexism and queer- and transphobia" (p. 22). Together, ableism studies and disability justice can help TPCers trace ableism's impacts across professional contexts.

Job Advertisements and DEI Statements as Social Justice Concerns

By integrating TPC scholarship in DS, RHM, and disability justice, I have aimed to identify the medical field as an opportunity space for TPC. Because the medical field perpetuates ableist understandings of disability, it is a critical area for TPC intervention. Although previous scholarship has examined ableism's influence across medical contexts, such scholarship has not considered its influence on medical insurance job advertisements. Although TPCers may be hesitant to intercede in job advertisements due to their legality, TPC skills of "producing, solving, and critiquing" workplace problems are extremely relevant to legal contexts (Hannah, 2011, p. 11). In fact, TPCers often influence "legal precedents" and work with and beyond "regulations, laws, or guidelines" (p. 13) to address "competing professional interests" (p. 20). TPC intervention in legal contexts is crucial because the law's focus on individual rights does not always inspire broader efforts of social justice. For example, the rights-based discourse of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) frames disability as a single-axis, individual problem and facilitates retroactive accommodations that often erase rather than include disability. That is, the ADA does not account for ableism's intersectional connection to other oppressive forces, which limits its capacity for social change. Consequently, TPC mediation is vital in workplace contexts like job advertisements where legal, DS, and social justice concerns converge (Bennett & Hannah, 2022).

Recognizing the need for TPC intervention in areas where DS, law, and TPC overlap, I identify medical insurance job advertisements as a space where TPC might mediate goals of legal rights and social justice. Job advertisements are important sites for TPC examination due to their function as "regulatory texts" that standardize organizational behaviors and privilege certain knowledges, practices, and beliefs (Walwema & Carmichael, 2020). Job descriptions "reflect historical, societal, and institutional values that make clear what employers value" and dictate the bounds of belonging (p. 5). These documents thus have immense implications for DEI efforts because they articulate an organization's values (Reeve & Shultz, 2004). For example, academic job advertisements in rhetoric and TPC often discriminate against international applicants by inquiring into applicant eligibility or authorization to work in the U.S. (Walwema & Carmichael, 2020). In this way, job advertisements may draw from anti-immigration logics that exclude applicants born outside the U.S. In addition, scholars have found that job advertisements language can reinforce gender discrimination by implicitly discouraging women or nonbinary applicants from applying to specific jobs (Gaucher et al., 2011; Mihaljević et al., 2022). Likewise, job advertisements may discriminate against disabled candidates, such as those with autism spectrum disorder, by using ambiguous language (Dow et al., 2020). These findings indicate that job advertisements can have significant social justice consequences.

One under-examined area for TPC medical intervention is that of health insurance. In the U.S. healthcare system, insurance is integral to medical access; yet, many individuals experience discrimination in receiving and navigating health insurance due to race, class, gender, ethnicity, and/or disability (Balghare, 2022). When applying ADA law, medical insurance companies often position disability as a "risk classifier" (Crossley, 2005, p. 92) in "underwriting and pricing decisions" (p. 94). The presence of disability may thus increase insurance costs and potentially limit coverage for disabled folks. Likewise, under ADA law, "people with disabilities are protected from health-insurance discrimination only if it is irrational or intentionally discriminatory" (p. 95). Because the ADA may offer "meager protection against disability-based health-insurance discrimination" (p. 95) and may not account for ableism's connection to other oppressive forces, health insurance reflects an important site for TPCers to work with and beyond the law to ensure equitable access for disabled employees.

METHODS

In this section, I provide an overview of the methodology and methods informing my analysis and discuss my process for choosing and analyzing sites.

Methodology

This article examines the discursive implications of medical insurance job advertisements by analyzing the normalizing assumptions such documents may reinforce. Specifically, through a combination of ableism studies and disability justice, this article evaluates the intersectional implications of job advertisements to better understand how seemingly neutral language may marginalize specific populations and how normative assumptions may be founded in broader systems of "interlocking" oppression (Roberts & Jesudason, 2013, p. 314). Engagement with ableism studies and disability justice is integral to my methodology, because these frameworks demonstrate how oppressive forces like ableism, sexism, and racism may collude in seemingly normative contexts like job advertisements to exclude certain identities like disabled folks from workplace contexts.

Choice of Sites and Analytical Methods

I analyzed jobs in the medical insurance field due to the fraught relationship between medical insurance and disabled folks. I was specifically interested in analyzing medical insurance job advertisements as their convergence with TPC, law, and DS indicates an important site for TPC mediation. To choose specific sites of analysis, I referenced the Disability Equality Index's "Best Places to Work for 2022" list. The Disability Equality Index is a "comprehensive benchmarking tool for disability inclusion" ("About the DEI") that identifies which companies are most inclusive and equitable regarding disability access. From this list, I analyzed four of Blue Cross Blue Shield's national sites: Massachusetts, Tennessee, Michigan, and Rhode Island. I chose Blue Cross Blue Shield since its nation-wide brand recognition positions it as a model for other insurance companies. To maintain brand-based consistency across my chosen sites, I did not analyze other adjacent companies, such as Blue Shield of California.

I visited each organization's website and compared the language in their DEI statements and recent job postings to build my analytical corpus. I analyzed the 15 most recent jobs posted between September 1, 2022 and December 15, 2022 that incorporated aspects of TPC as defined by the Society for Technical Communication. My analysis also included the standard statements present in each job advertisement. Analyzed job postings sought communication skills related to "technical or specialized topics," required "communicating by using technology," or involved "providing instructions about technical or specialized topics" ("Defining"). I compared job advertisements to DEI statements, because both genres convey corporate values. My goal was not to make broad claims about all of Blue Cross Blue Shield's job advertisements but to instead compare the assumptions of a small sampling of job postings to the organizations' correlating DEI statements.

I applied critical discourse analysis (CDA) in my document analysis. Discourse impacts identity by influencing "words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities" that help one gain sociocultural recognition and acceptance (Gee, 2001, p. 526). I used CDA to analyze how the discursive patterns (Bloor & Bloor, 2007) reflected by job advertisements and DEI statements contribute to larger organizational understandings of disability and potentially disempower certain intersectional identities through ableist assumptions. I used thematic coding to analyze the collective documents (Saldaña, 2016, p. 199). Identified themes helped me to recognize "repeating ideas" regarding the documents' discourse, to examine relationships between statements, and to make broader conclusions about the corpus. Drawing from disability justice and ableism studies, my thematic codes denote assumptions that reinforce or challenge disability's intersectional marginalization. Table 1 reflects an overview of codes, definitions, and textual examples.

Recognizing a connection between the frequency of discursive assumptions present in the documents and broader organizational values, I first analyzed code frequency across each document. I then noted code frequency across each Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) location. Ultimately, I evaluated the consistency of organizational values by comparing the frequency of codes in the job-related documents to the DEI statements (refer to Appendix A-B).

FINDINGS/DISCUSSION:

In this section, I provide an overview of my analytical findings based on themes identified by code frequency. These themes reflect underlying assumptions in the documents and include 1) human as productive, 2) knowledge as standardized rationality, 3) autonomy as collaborative independence, and 4) inclusion as legal compliance.

Table 1: Code Definitions & Examples

Code	Indicated by References or Assumptions Related to	Example from Job Text
Productivity	• Employee/client/human body as able • Workflow as progressive and efficient • Workplace as innovative and/or problem-free • Value as monetary	"We're looking for people best described as …. A proactive, solution-oriented decision maker."
Human	• Employees and/or clients as vulnerably human and/or differently embodied • Diversity as valuable	"We appreciate and celebrate everything that makes us unique: age, national origin, citizenship status, perspectives, experiences, physical or mental disability, military status, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression."
Rational	• Workplace knowledge as rational, standard, and reasonable • Emotion as positively consistent • Professional communication as seamless, effective, and appropriate	"Must be able to explain and apply benefit language in layman's terms."
Embodied	• Knowledge as embodied or based on embodied experiences • Communication as dynamically embodied	"To develop cultural competency among employees, Blue Cross holds more than 100 learning sessions throughout the year that increase awareness and understanding of different cultures, communities, generations, workstyles and perspectives."
Independence	• Autonomy as independent • Decision-making as individualized	"Ability to work independently with minimal supervision."
Interdependence	• Autonomy as collective and collaborative	"For us, creating a diverse and welcoming culture means making sure everyone on our team has the opportunity to develop their skills."
Assimilation	• Workplace as based in tradition • Inclusion as fitting into existing structures • Professionalism as compliance with the status quo	"Manage members through the behavioral healthcare delivery system; assess needs in order to identify appropriate interventions."
Transformation	• Workplace as dynamic and open to change • Transformation as motivated by personal, embodied difference and experience	"That's why we've created a workplace where everyone is valued and respected – and where they know they're a part of the team."

Human as Productive

Because disability justice understands value beyond U.S. capitalist production, I was interested in analyzing the documents' assumptions regarding human value. Prioritizing embodied difference, the DEI documents collectively reflected *human* as the most frequent code (80 instances). For example, BCBS MI 16 stated, "Our goal is to encourage and support multiple perspectives and to respect the talent and input of all employees." Such statements indicate how the corporation embraces employees' embodied perspectives as integral to the workplace. Similarly, BCBS MA 16 noted, "To build healthy communities, we need to fight racism and address inequities in health care." Such statements validate individuals' inequitable healthcare experiences based on embodied differences such as race, gender, and disability. However, such statements do not consider the intersectional complexity of healthcare or how forces like ableism and racism may converge to constrain individual healthcare access. Although such statements value embodied difference and recognize the situated nature of healthcare access, they do not consider intersectionality.

Since the DEI documents collectively emphasized employee and client humanity, it was unsurprising that

they discussed *productivity* far less frequently (41 times). However, despite its infrequency, the presence of this assumption across the DEI statements undermined their equitable impacts. For example, BCBS MI 16 stated, "Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is proud of its record and will continue to strive for a competitive diversity advantage, which allows us to retain our leadership position in creating a healthier Michigan." As this statement indicated, although the documents value workplace diversity, they compromise this gesture by referencing diversity as a "competitive … advantage." Such statements reinforce a U.S. capitalist agenda in that they frame diversity not as valuable in itself but due to its productive capacity to further the organization's competitive edge. Such logics may contribute to practices that commodify diversity and center market needs over human lives.

The job advertisements collectively reinforced these underlying capitalist assumptions, with *productivity* (982 instances) being the second most frequent assumption. For example, BCBS MI 5 noted that potential employees will "Discuss users' needs and determine vulnerabilities or areas of poor performance to boost productivity, efficiency and accuracy in our computer systems." This statement explained that potential employees will understand users' needs to increase "productivity" and "efficiency." In addition, the documents collectively assumed that productive employees are able-bodied. For example, BCBS Michigan 1 noted that employees must have an "ability to move quickly." The document presumed that prospective employees can "move" quickly and ably for the sake of corporate efficiency. My analysis thus indicated that the human value emphasized by the DEI statements was overshadowed by underlying goals of productivity.

By emphasizing productivity, these job advertisements perpetuated the ableist view that valuable bodies are productively able. Since disabled bodyminds do not align with U.S. capitalist productivity, disabled folks have been frequently framed as "unproductive" and excluded from workplace environments (Erevelles, 2000). In emphasizing capitalist productivity, the BCBS documents contribute to disability's marginalization. Further, U.S. capitalism privileges the "white heterosexual male body as the most productive and profitable citizen" (p. 166). Thus U.S. capitalist views of productivity are ableist, sexist, and "deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, colonialism, and capitalism" in that they frame dominant bodyminds as most "valuable" (Lewis, 2020). By prioritizing able productivity, these documents perpetuate violent logics that devalue non-native English speaking, disabled, nonbinary folks of color.

Despite the documents' assumptions of *productivity*, the presence of *human* across the job descriptions (160 instances) articulated appreciation for embodied difference. For example, the BCBS RI documents all noted that "We appreciate and celebrate everything that makes us unique: age, national origin, citizenship status, perspectives, experiences, physical or mental disability, military status, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression." Such statements indicated attention to human value beyond productivity. Although the documents attended to differences like race, disability, citizenship status, and gender, they did not account for their intersections; these documents thus lacked frameworks for thinking "through complex intersections of racism and ableism in the lives of disabled people of color" (Mollow, 2006, p. 69) and did not account for how each employee's identity "can be a site of privilege or oppression" (Berne et al., 2018, p. 227). In simplifying embodied experiences and relying on ableist assumptions, these documents fell short of their DEI goals.

Knowledge as Standardized Rationality

Disability justice also advocates for the value of embodied knowledge in challenging oppressive systems. I therefore analyzed document assumptions regarding knowledge construction. The DEI statements collectively valued *embodied* knowledge (52 instances). For example, BCBS RI 16 noted, in relation to its diversity council, "These associates, who reflect a broad spectrum of diversity, have pledged to help enhance awareness of diversity concerns [and], raise critical issues to the attention of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team." Here, a diverse staff is tasked with leading inclusion efforts based on their embodied experiences. In contrast, *rationality* was one of the least frequent assumptions in the DEI documents (5 instances). Although the documents celebrated embodied knowledge, they disregarded the intersectional complexity of individual experiences through generalizations regarding diverse identities.

However, the prevalence of *embodied* knowledge reflected by the DEI statements was not extended into

the job advertisements. In fact, standard *rationality* was one of the most frequent assumptions across the job documents (862 instances), while *embodied* knowledge was the least frequent (52 instances). Across the corpus, understandings of knowledge construction were based predominantly in Western, White, heteronormative, ableist assumptions of rationality. For example, BCBS TN 12 noted that candidates should possess "Excellent oral and written communication skills as well as business acumen to communicate details about enterprise architecture, policies, and practices to technical and nontechnical colleagues." This statement presumes that candidates will engage in standard knowledge-making and communication practices that mirror those of their colleagues. Similarly, BCBS RI 6 indicated that the position required a "Positive, energetic attitude, with the ability to handle sensitive and pressured situations." Such assumptions deny the dynamism of embodied experiences by presuming that employees will have positive, energetic attitudes even under extenuating circumstances. As Taylor (2015) explains, "mental disability … operates as a social organizing concept …. In particular, the specter of the disabled mind is deployed against those who fail to conform to dominant gendered and racialized roles and behaviors" (p. 188). In other words, rational logics and behaviors align with White, able-bodied, heteronormative, Western practices. Notions of seemingly neutral rationality thus reinforce certain logics as integral to "civilized life" (p. 183) and exclude non-dominant knowledge-making strategies or embodied experiences.

In standardizing knowledge-making and communicative practices, these documents contribute to the exclusion of disabled bodyminds in workplace environments. Traditional understandings of rhetoric require that communicators connect with their audience by modeling behavioral conventions; however, disabled individuals, such as those with autism, often communicate in ways that do not match traditional rhetorical expectations (Walters, 2011; Yergeau, 2018). Advocating for "excellent" oral and written communication skills and "positive, energetic attitudes," the BCBS documents reinforce ableist ideals. Further, such assumptions about employees' communicative, knowledge-making practices connect to what Taylor (2015) refers to as "compulsory able-mindedness" (p. 82). Founded in McRuer's (2006) concept of compulsory able-bodiedness, or the need to perform ability for social acceptance, compulsory able-mindedness functions "as a racialized and gendered social organizing concept that marks some bodies as mentally incompetent and maintains societal divisions and inequalities along not only lines of ability, but equally along lines of race" (p. 82). Specifically, compulsory able-mindedness "has its roots in racialized, gendered, classed, and sexualized ideas about bodily normalcy … intelligence, and competence" (pp. 183–184) and regulates a range of intersectional identities including disabled bodies of color. The rational forms of knowledge making, communication, and behavior endorsed by the BCBS documents therefore reinforced Western, White, heterosexual, cisgender, ableist standards that perpetuate exclusion.

Autonomy as Collaborative Independence

Because disability justice advocates for interdependence across communities, I was interested in better understanding how the collective documents might account for or contradict this value. In the DEI documents, assumptions of *interdependence* were much more frequent (58 instances) than *independence* (7 instances). For example, BCBS RI 16 explained that to further their DEI goals, they "proudly partner with and support community organizations that promote various aspects of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion." Through such statements, the DEI documents referenced collaborative efforts with community partners to promote DEI. Further, BCBS Massachusetts 16 noted, "Each one of us has a role in making diversity and inclusion a part of everything we do." Such statements recognize the collective responsibility that all employees have in furthering DEI goals. These discursive moves echo disability justice's understanding of access as collective. However, while disability justice centers the experiences of multiply marginalized bodyminds to challenge normative structures, the BCBS documents categorize identity factors as separate and disregard their dynamic intersections.

Although references to *independence* were rare across the DEI documents, they were much more frequent in the job advertisements. Because assumptions of both *independence* (663 instances) and *interdependence* (708 instances) were heavily present in the job advertisements, this revealed a generative point of tension. For example, BCBS Tennessee 1 indicated that employees should

have the "Ability to work independently with minimal supervision or function in a team environment sharing responsibility, roles and accountability." As this statement relays, employees are expected to function successfully both independently and in groups. While such statements value collective workplace efforts, they rely on normative understandings of autonomy. The documents equate autonomy with independence and thus privilege identities that are "able-bodied white, wealthy, and male" and contribute to the exclusion of "people with disabilities, of color, and women who are imagined as dependents who weigh on other's (i.e., men's) autonomy" (Bailey, 1997, p. 146). Because these documents advocate for independent autonomy, they may discourage applications from non-native English speakers, disabled individuals, women, nonbinary folks, people of color, and multiply marginalized individuals. Such assumptions are further echoed through the documents' emphasis on independent leadership and personal accountability. For example, BCBS MA 2 discussed what employees "will" or "must" do and included phrases such as "solve problems independently," "oversee," and "manage." Used in combination with labels like "competitive" and "leader" (Gaucher et al., 2011, p. 110), such terms may translate as both ableist and "masculine" and can dissuade disabled, women-gendered, nonbinary, and gender queer individuals from applying. Specifically, job seekers may associate such terms with a hostile environment in which they need to continuously compete with dominant identities for recognition. In constructing a baseline of competitive independence, such job advertisements may exclude many prospective applicants.

Further, although the BCBS documents promoted *interdependence*, they often did so for the purpose of productivity. For example, BCBS Massachusetts 1 explained that potential employees will "Assist with developing team members to their fullest potential and identify opportunities for cross training and support career advancement." Here, the interdependent act of supporting one's team is framed as a means of productive advancement. These documents articulated the importance of interdependent support but upheld independence as integral to employee autonomy and success. In disregarding how autonomy requires "social support" (Graby & Greenstein, 2016, p. 252), the self-sufficient independence circulated by these job advertisements contributed to systemic, intersectional discrimination against identities that are not "white, wealthy, and male" (Bailey, 1997, p. 146). As disability justice relays, autonomy and independence are not synonymous; in fact, all autonomy is relational in that it requires access to external resources such as money, social support, medical care, technology, and food (Mingus, 2011). In contrast, relational understandings of autonomy recognize that all individuals rely on other human beings, organizations, and resources and that access to such resources can vary dynamically across social, cultural, and political contexts (Siebers, 2011). A relational view of autonomy also recognizes that all decision-making is socially, politically, and culturally contextualized. Thus, the independent autonomy advocated for by BCBS individualizes understandings of access in ways that disregard autonomy's relational complexities.

Inclusion as Legal Compliance

Further, disability justice resists understandings of access as assimilation with able-bodied normative structures and instead advocates for understandings of access as frictional transformation (Hamraie & Fritsch, 2019). Consequently, I evaluated the documents for assumptions of assimilation. Although the DEI statements frequently articulated a need for organizational *transformation* (47 instances), they likewise emphasized *assimilation* (40 instances). This indicated an interesting point of tension, with transformative efforts potentially limited by assimilative impulses. For example, BCBS MI 16 stated, "We understand the need to go deeper [with inclusion] and do more to address equality and equity." This document recognized that equality and equity require "deep" transformative efforts. However, such transformation was impeded by assimilative goals. For example, the document stated, "Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is proud of its record and will continue to strive for a competitive diversity advantage." Such statements frame diversity as strengthening corporate competitiveness and disregard the value of diversity in transforming workplace culture. Further, because intersectionality was absent from discussions of these "deep" transformative efforts, the documents fell short of their equitable goals; specifically, the documents disregarded how systemically interconnected systems like ableism, racism, sexism, and homophobia can coalesce to exclude multiply marginalized identities (Crenshaw, 1999).

Assumptions of *assimilation* (1093 instances) were most frequently coded across the job advertisements while *transformation* was one of the least frequent assumptions in these documents (91 instances). For example, the BCBS RI job descriptions collectively noted, "Take a chance to be creative. Move outside the status quo." Such statements encouraged employee creativity and original insight. However, the job advertisements far more frequently sought employees who might align with existing structures; for example, BCBS TN 8 noted that the position requires candidates to "Establish and implement standards and policies to promote quality of medical care and services provided to members, and to assure accreditation." Here, an emphasis on standards impedes potential for organizational transformation. Further, in many cases, job advertisements valued change only within prescribed limitations; for example, BCBS MI 7 sought candidates who "identify and understand requirements and develop alternate solutions." The document advocated for "alternate solutions" but only within the scope of prescribed, standard "requirements." In many cases, the job advertisements advocated for change to further productive goals. For example, BCBS RI 10 asked job candidates to "Make recommendations to improve the efficiency of operations." This statement designated transformation as valuable when it improves operational "efficiency." The BCBS documents thus advocated for assimilative efforts that limit potential corporate transformation.

This tension between assimilative and transformative goals indicates an opportunity for TPC intervention in composing job advertisements in the medical insurance field. Many workplace documents aimed at promoting access draw from the ADA's rights-based discourse. In doing so, corporate documents frequently individualize access, emphasize productivity, and aim to assimilate employees within an ableist status quo (Bennett & Hannah, 2022). Based on my findings, BCBS draws heavily from rights-based discourse. While such discourse promotes individual accommodations that facilitate more equitable disability access in workplace contexts, it disregards the systemic nature of ableism, ableism's connection to other oppressive forces, and disability's intersectional complexities. Such rights-based discourse falls short of social justice goals by maintaining existing systems of exclusion and reinforcing understandings of disability as an individual, medical problem in need of resolve.

Rather than recognizing the value of embodied experiences like disability to invoke corporate change, these documents frequently framed difference as a quality that must be overcome. For example, BCBS 16 articulated, "We believe good health shouldn't depend on your race, ethnicity, or the neighborhood in which you live." This document attempted to transcend embodied, intersectional difference by advocating for equitable health care for all; while all individuals deserve access to care, such statements disregard the sociopolitical basis of healthcare inequities. In contrast, transformative change requires that employees address the "lived experiences and power differentials that keep us apart" and that they "confront … differences openly and honestly" (Roberts & Jesudason, 2013, p. 315). That is, by acknowledging the differences that characterize employee experiences, organizations can pursue change that facilitates more equitable access and that includes embodied differences like disability as they are. Although many TPCers may be hesitant to engage with legal documents like job advertisements, these findings illustrate a need for TPC intervention. As Bennett and Hannah (2022) explain, "TPCers, as articulators of meaning, can reimagine the law and work beyond its compliance mandates in ways that inspire collective transformation" (p. 332). By engaging with disability justice, TPCers can facilitate legal compliance, support individual accommodations, and advocate for corporate transformation.

FACILITATING INTERSECTIONAL COALITION

Although companies may advocate for diversity in their DEI statements, they may undermine such commitments by using ableist language and assumptions. Specifically, because all job descriptions articulate corporate values, they participate in systems of power that influence individual experiences of belonging (Walwema & Carmichael, 2020, p. 5). Consequently, when drawing on normative assumptions in their documents, practitioners may exclude disabled folks as well as "women and people of color…regardless of their disability identity or status" (Schalk & Kim, 2020, p. 42). As Walton et al. (2019) explain, "the psychological strain and amount of work required for individuals to perform working identities varies … by

perceived fit with the qualities and characteristics that the employing organization … values" (p. 69). That is, an employee's normative "fit" in an organization influences the psychological strain they experience at work. However, when helping individual employees "fit" into existing frameworks, the legal, rights-based discourse prevalent in job advertisements does not account for ableism's systemic nature. Although legal accommodations may help disabled employees to access existing structures, these accommodations do not alter exclusive systems.

Consequently, it is vital that TPCers help organizational stakeholders to interrogate and "reimagine" the professional norms communicated by job advertisements and DEI statements (Konrad, 2018, p. 136). Because of their capacities to mitigate the concerns of diverse, interdisciplinary audiences, TPCers are primed to mediate accessible design practices in workplace documentation like DEI statements and job advertisements. I thus encourage TPC intervention in composing these documents through intersectional coalitional efforts with a range of organizational stakeholders. Centering intersectional positionality involves understanding "identity categories (such as race and gender)" as "fluid and contextual" (Walton et al., 2019, p. 63). It likewise rejects efforts to assimilate marginalized folks like disabled individuals into oppressive systems by instead seeking to dismantle such systems (p. 28).

To center intersectionality in TPC's intervention efforts, I draw from Walton et al.'s (2019) recommendations for engaging intersectional coalition in rejecting and replacing unjust organizational practices. As they explain, "Individuals can rarely reject, let alone replace, unjust practices alone, and recognition on one person's part is often prompted by another's revealing" (p. 142). In other words, challenging dominant frameworks requires diverse perspectives that help all stakeholders to reject oppressive practices and to recognize how their own actions may implicate them in existing oppression. To aid in the construction of more equitable public-facing recruitment materials, I offer guidelines for what I refer to as *coalitional recruitment*: creating recruitment materials such as job advertisements and DEI statements through coalitional efforts. This process should incorporate stakeholders from a range of departments, but it should center those who are not reflected by seemingly neutral, dominant norms. By mediating coalitional recruitment efforts, TPCers can help composers of job advertisements better understand how "daily, mundane practices contribute to the marginalization, exploitation, and powerlessness of others" (p. 139). Coalitional recruitment is thus integral to TPC efforts in combating systemic ableism in medical insurance documentation. In this section, I draw on findings to help TPCers mediate coalitional recruitment to address corporate, legal, and social justice goals in documents like DEI statements and job advertisements. Through these efforts, TPCers can help medical insurance companies move away from standard assumptions that perpetuate oppressive systems and towards documentation practices that promote intersectional access.

Interrogating Ableist Productivity

Although the DEI statements in my corpus articulated value for human difference and diversity, such efforts were overshadowed by goals of human productivity. As Erevelles (2011) explains, under a U.S. market-driven capitalist ideology, "individual citizens are required to demonstrate their capacity to be productive, efficient, and competitive participants in the workforce" (p. 41). In valuing consistent able-bodied productivity as integral to job success, these DEI documents and job advertisements may discourage disabled candidates from applying. This emphasis on productivity further discriminates against a range of job candidates, such as people of color, immigrants, and/or nonbinary folks, as such identities may not align with U.S. capitalist standards of productivity. As disability justice emphasizes, "Ableism is connected to all of our struggles because it undergirds notions of whose bodies are considered valuable, desirable, and disposable" (Mingus, 2011). By framing White, male, able-bodied productivity as desirably normal, these documents collectively contribute to disability's intersectional exclusion. In revising such documentation, I recommend that TPCers mediate coalitional review of such documents' productive assumptions. Specifically, I recommend that coalitional recruitment:

Center intersectional embodiment by exploring historical exclusion. In enacting coalitional recruitment to review documents like job advertisements and DEI statements, TPCers should include a range of employees; however, they should center the perspectives of those who are not White,

cisgender, wealthy, heterosexual, or native English speakers. By mediating coalitional conversations that center multiply marginalized perspectives, TPCers can help producers of documents like job advertisements better understand the exclusive impacts of productive U.S. capitalism. Specifically, TPCers might encourage each coalition member to share their experiences with productivity expectations at work. Rather than aiming to assimilate these perspectives into one view, TPCers should encourage communication by members across difference. In this way, such coalitions can address differences of experiences transparently and better understand how productive expectations may yield a range of impacts (Roberts & Jesudason, 2013). TPCers might also incorporate external resources for coalitional consideration that explore the history of U.S. capitalist exclusion. For example, they might draw from resources cited in this article, such as Erevelles (2000), Taylor (2015), or Berne et al. (2018), to inspire conversations among coalition members regarding experiences of intersectional workplace exclusion. Importantly, TPCers should encourage coalition members to bring to conversations a range of relevant resources connected to their individual experiences. By critically historicizing the political implications of personal experiences, coalition members can analyze how seemingly neutral frameworks may have exclusive consequences for multiply marginalized identities.

Deemphasize productivity discourse through attention to embodiment. Through coalitional recruitment, notions of capitalist productivity might be exchanged for more human-centered expectations that recognize the dynamic nature of lived experience. For example, employee performance varies day-to-day, especially for disabled candidates with conditions like chronic pain or depression. Composers of job advertisements and DEI statements might thus avoid including ableist expectations, such as moving quickly or navigating a fast-paced environment, that privilege able bodyminds. In addition, employee job performance may fluctuate based on the privilege they experience across contexts. As Jones et al. (2016) articulate, "People occupy varying positions and degrees of privilege based, in large part, on sociopolitical constructs like gender, sexuality, ableness, and so on" (p. 220). Although privilege fluctuates based on context, the BCBS job advertisements consistently engaged phrases such as "must be," "will," and "are expected to" that assume static employee experiences. TPC-mediated coalitions might reflect on the ableist impacts of such language and instead offer insight into the types of work candidates do and the resources the company can provide to empower employees across diverse situational contexts. Similarly, phrases such as "appropriate," "effective," "efficient," and "competitive" were present across the job ads; as relayed in the discussion section, such terms may exclude a range of identities. Through coalitional recruitment, TPCers can help stakeholders review such terms and collectively offer more inclusive alternatives. Holistically, TPCers can apply insights from coalitional review to help composers of job advertisements and DEI statements frame employee differences as generative sources of corporate growth and transformation.

Decentering Commonplace Rationality

Like productivity, notions of standard rationality were heavily present across the documents. Specifically, rational knowledge, belief, and communicative engagement were framed as expectations across many of the job advertisements. Despite the inclusive intent of BCBS's DEI statements, this emphasis on standard rationality upholds a compulsory able-mindedness that can invalidate knowledge-making and communication practices like those of disabled folks (Taylor, 2015). For example, mentally disabled individuals are frequently deemed "unreasonable or incapable of rational thought" (Prayal, 2011, p. 480). By presuming employees of standard, rational thought, these documents may discourage applications from those with mental or psychiatric disabilities. Such ableist assumptions impact prospective disabled employees, non-binary applicants, employees of color, and other multiply marginalized identities. Linked directly to a "discourse of pathology," ableist notions of rationality have historically designated certain bodies as desirable, or productive, and others as deviant (Taylor, 2015). In drawing from rationalist norms, the BCBS documents may thus contribute to the "historical and continued attribution of deviance to bodies of color … and people with disabilities to positions of societal nonvalue" (p. 194). I therefore recommend that TPC-mediated coalitional recruitment efforts center diverse communication and knowledge-making practices. To challenge standard rationality, such coalitions might:

Interrogate neutral understandings of rhetorical communication. In mediating coalitional recruitment,

TPCers can help composers of documents like DEI statements and job advertisements to critically reflect on the impact of standard assumptions regarding employee communication, behavior, and knowledge-making. For example, they might lead a coalitional review of requirements such as "good" or "excellent" communication skills and draw from members' experiences to offer examples of diverse forms and strategies that workplace communications might take in medical insurance contexts. Disabled folks like those with autism "straddle neurotypical and autistic discourses …. They achieve many of the objectives of a traditionally effective ethos … but do so in non-normative ways" (Walters, 2011). Through TPC efforts of coalitional recruitment, composers of job advertisements can more equitably articulate and validate a range of communication strategies as integral to medical insurance contexts.

Decenter dominant rationality by validating embodied knowledge. In mediating coalitional recruitment, TPCers can help composers of documents like DEI statements and job advertisements to recognize a range of embodied knowledges as valuable in medical insurance contexts. To do so, they might ask coalition members to discuss the communication, research, and problem-solving strategies they use across workplace contexts and to share how their epistemological contributions have been received by others in different professional spaces. In this way, coalitional recruitment can expand understandings of what constitutes knowledge and critically reflect on how existing frameworks may problematically disregard certain knowledge-making strategies. In this way, coalitional recruitment can center and celebrate embodied difference, and inspire a larger cultural shift towards corporate practices that amplify frequently marginalized voices and perspectives. Likewise, TPCers might work with a range of professionals to decenter dominant understandings of rationality and to explore the implications such assumptions may have for employees. Specifically, they might analyze the consequences of standard, neutral expectations like "good" communication or "effective" training. As Walton et al. (2019) explain, "For those in positions of privilege, inclusivity requires a willingness … to recognize the legitimacy of many ways of knowing, accepting that some people's knowledge will call into question one's own long-held truths" (p. 52). By mediating conversations in which employees share their knowledge-making strategies, TPCers can help composers of job advertisements and DEI statements to challenge ableism and to center non-dominant identities.

Articulating Relational Understandings of Autonomy

Findings also revealed that the BCBS documents collectively assumed independent autonomy as integral to employee success. An emphasis on independent autonomy excludes disabled folks "as inherently deficient, dependent, and incapable" (Graby & Greenstein, 2016, p. 228). Further, in advocating for independent autonomy, these documents disregard the inequitable distribution of resources based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status. The collective BCBS documents thus reinforce ableist standards that may exclude a range of identities who do not align with self-sufficient notions of autonomy. Through coalitional recruitment, TPCers might thus:

Facilitate relational autonomy by providing transparent resource access. The BCBS documents reflected tension between expectations for independent accountability and collective efforts. By mediating engagement from intersectional coalitions, TPCers can help composers of job advertisements deemphasize independent action and reframe autonomy as relational. For example, coalitional recruitment can help composers of job advertisements identify the resources available to support the autonomy of a range of bodyminds so that they might reference such resources in job advertisements. Further, by encouraging members to discuss experiences in which their autonomy was supported or undermined in workplace settings, coalitional recruitment can inspire stakeholders to identify practices that facilitate employee autonomy and to reject and replace practices that negatively impact employee decision-making and empowerment. Based on coalitional conversations, composers of job advertisements and DEI statements can better understand how discursive norms may limit certain employees' autonomy in specific contexts and consequently replace such language with more inclusive considerations. In this way, medical insurance documents like DEI statements and job advertisements can articulate understandings of autonomy that recognize "the interdependence and the validity of all human subjects, regardless of individual dependency needs" (Graby & Greenstein, 2016, p. 253).

Address gaps in resources through coalition. A relational understanding of autonomy not only facilitates a cultural shift towards the inclusion of diverse embodiments, but it also increases "material support for people's needs … in ways that recognize people's self-determination … and their right to choice and control over the way those needs are met" (Graby & Greenstein, 2016, p. 252). Consequently, the support offered to employees should be grounded in the intersectional needs and experiences of employees themselves. Coalitional recruiting can help to identify existing gaps in available resources by having employees share moments in which they felt powerless or unsupported. Moments of failure offer vital points of reflection, as they reveal how the design of certain professional environments may not support all identities. Composers of job advertisements might then reference these coalitional conversations in the advertisements themselves as evidence of the company's commitment to relational autonomy. Importantly, such conversations should reject assimilative impulses to standardize employee experiences and instead provide staff members with opportunities to offer their uniquely embodied experiences as sources of workplace change. In such ways, coalitional recruitment can support disability justice goals of relational autonomy.

Disrupting Efforts of Homogenous Assimilation

Findings revealed that although the BCBS documents advocate for change based on employees' embodied experiences, such values are undermined by goals of assimilation, or alignment with a corporate status quo. For example, all job advertisements expected candidates to mirror standard experiences and knowledge. As Walton et al. (2019) explain, "homogeneity serves those already at the center" (p. 69), or those whose "identity markers are associated with stereotypes that correlate with institutional values" (p. 75). In other words, by endorsing standards, organizations like BCBS may marginalize prospective employees who do not align with such norms. Normative commonplaces reinforce "unrealistic standards based on imagined able-bodied workers" that leave disabled employees "without confidence and agency to persuade others … to reimagine those normative commonplaces" (Konrad, 2018, p. 136). That is, when practitioners emphasize standard norms, they limit the capacity for employee difference to inspire organizational transformation. Consequently, I recommend that coalitional recruitment resist goals of homogenous assimilation through attention to intersectional difference. Specifically, they might:

Interrogate normative workplace commonplaces. I recommend that TPCers mediate coalitional conversations to better understand how existing commonplaces may contribute to the marginalization of non-dominant identities. Commonplaces that frequently discriminate against disabled folks include "rationality, criticality, presence, participation, resistance, productivity, collegiality, security, coherence, truth, [and] independence" (Price, 2011, p. 5). While such commonplaces contribute to ableist exclusion, they likewise perpetuate dominant Western, White, cisgender, heteronormative standards of behavior that may marginalize a range of identities (Schalk & Kim, 2020). I thus recommend that TPC-led coalitions interrogate these concepts across documents through considerations for intersectionality. Specifically, coalition members might reflect on what each of these terms means to them and/or how their experiences with these commonplace expectations have impacted them in and outside of the workplace. As disability justice recommends, transformation should be led by those most impacted by oppressive systems; while all individuals can provide insight into the impacts of seemingly neutral commonplaces, frequently marginalized identities like disabled employees of color can reveal the intersectionally complex and violent implications of such neutrality. To avoid making multiply marginalized employees carry the weight of such initiatives, these TPC-mediated coalitions should be supported by the efforts of all organization members. As disability justice relays, intersectional access requires the collective efforts of all (Berne, 2018).

Challenge notions of fit by collectively reimagining corporate culture. Further, coalitional recruitment might encourage composers of job advertisements and DEI statements to think critically regarding references to assimilation and organizational "fit," as such discourse can impede the transformative potential of diverse perspectives. Instead, coalitional members might offer critical insight from their workplace experiences to inspire broader corporate

change. As Konrad (2018) notes, "If everyone takes part in reimagining work in the interest of accessibility, flexible mind-sets can cultivate workplaces where creativity and reinvention lead to new possibilities" (p. 137). By incorporating a range of individuals in reviewing documents, coalitional recruitment can engage critical conversations about existing structures and support transformative efforts toward collective access. Such perspectives can help composers of job advertisements de-emphasize organizational "fit" and instead articulate how the organization adapts to new employees' intersectional perspectives and needs. Further, such coalitions might ask members to share moments of disjuncture in the workplace and to reflect on what contributed to their experiences of exclusion in certain contexts. By centering intersectional difference, coalitional recruitment can help practitioners understand "how systems of privilege and disadvantage operate together … to be better equipped to dismantle them" (Roberts & Jesudason, 2013, p. 316). That is, intersectional coalitions can help those composing job advertisements and DEI documents to better understand the systemic connections between employee experiences with racism, sexism, and ableism. In mediating coalitional recruitment founded in intersectionality, TPCers can help practitioners in medical insurance companies to reject commonplace practices that contribute to the marginalization of disabled employees.

CONCLUSION

Through coalitional recruitment, TPCers can help medical insurance companies to resist normalizing discourse and challenge systemic oppression in ways that facilitate increased access and inclusion for prospective disabled employees. Specifically, by reviewing documents like job advertisements and DEI statements, such coalitions can amplify embodied experiences, knowledges, and practices frequently excluded from U.S. medical insurance contexts. While this study demonstrated the implications of normalizing discourse in medical insurance job advertisements and DEI statements, it was limited to one U.S. organization's DEI statements and recent job advertisements. Future research might examine documents from a wider range of organizations in and outside the U.S. to make broader or comparative claims. Further, while this study traced the intersectional impacts of job advertisements and DEI discourse, future studies might examine the intersectional consequences of institutional training or evaluation documents. In addition, this study focused on discourse analysis; future research might interview current or prospective employees to identify the embodied implications of normalizing discourse for a range of intersectional identities.

Attention to intersectional coalition is integral to medical insurance DEI efforts, as it encourages practitioners to interrogate seemingly neutral documents, practices, and assumptions for their potential participation in systemic oppression. Because discrimination is often rooted in norms that favor dominant identities, appreciation for diversity and inclusion is not enough to facilitate equitable workplace access. Instead, by prioritizing intersectionality through efforts like coalitional recruitment, TPCers and workplace practitioners collectively can replace discriminatory commonplaces with discourse grounded in social justice.

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APPENDIX A: FREQUENCY OF ASSUMPTIONS ACROSS BCBS DIVERSITY STATEMENTS

Code	Rhode Island (RI)	Massachusetts (MA)	Michigan (MI)	Tennessee (TN)	Total
Rational	1	3	0	1	5
Productivity	6	10	16	9	41
Independence	1	2	3	1	7
Embodied	14	6	23	9	52
Transformation	14	7	18	8	47
Assimilation	7	10	13	10	40
Human	24	14	30	12	80
Interdependence	15	10	20	13	58

APPENDIX B: FREQUENCY OF ASSUMPTIONS ACROSS BCBS JOB ADVERTISEMENTS

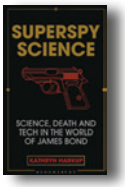
Code	Rhode Island (RI)	Massachusetts (MA)	Michigan (MI)	Tennessee (TN)	Total
Rational	219	234	246	163	862
Productivity	229	259	348	146	982
Independence	169	154	217	123	663
Embodied	25	10	15	2	52
Transformation	27	27	29	8	91
Assimilation	297	282	232	282	1093
Human	82	37	32	9	160
Interdependence	178	193	239	98	708

Books Reviewed in This Issue

The reviews provided here are those that are self-selected by the reviewers from a provided list of available titles over a specific date range. Want to become a book reviewer? Contact Dr. Jackie Damrau at jdamrau3@gmail.com for more information.

Superspy Science: Science, Death and Tech in the World of James Bond

Kathryn Harkup. Bloomsbury Sigma. [ISBN 978-1-4729-8226-1. 400 pages, including index. US$28.00 (hardcover).]



Kathryn Harkup is a chemist who, after completing her PhD, realized that she preferred to talk, write, and demonstrate science, not slave away in front of a fume hood in the lab. She started to give talks on science and engineering topics that appealed to bored teenagers, which evolved into workshops on the quirky side of science. These talents came together well in *Superspy Science: Science, Death and Tech in the World of James Bond*.

The book takes into consideration the larger-than-life hero and villains, glaring plot holes, and gadget-stuffed Aston Martin and balances them with what's plausible and implausible. The descriptions and explanations are an engaging read.

The chapters in *Superspy Science* match the order of Bond films in the series and are numbered 001, 002, 003 … 007 …. In each chapter, Harkup discusses things like weapons (for example, the poisoned-tipped shoe knife and headphones that deliver a lethal electrical shock), dangerous animals (like snakes, sharks, giant centipedes, and crocodiles), and the ways people die (an exploding space station, atomic weapons, and bioterrorism, to name a few).

Chapters begin with Harkup briefly describing scenes from various Bond movies and pointing out the long-running themes or tropes. This format is an excellent refresher for those who haven't watched a Bond film in a while, and it helps readers to see the interrelatedness of characters and events. For instance, Chapter 013 tells us that Bond and bombs have a long, intimate history. He's survived exposure to radioactive mud, been handcuffed to an atomic weapon, and saved the world from nuclear war several times. "[I]t's surprising 007 doesn't glow in the dark." The author provides a footnote in Chapter 013 that reads, "I'm exaggerating, of course; Bond would not glow in the dark regardless of how much radiation he had been exposed to, but his level of exposure would be a health concern" (p. 186).

Harkup's footnotes are a fun addition. She uses them to continue a stream of thought, share related information about the topic at hand, and give us insight into behind-the-scenes stories. For example, she tells us that radioactive thallium made an appearance in the 2015 film *Spectre*. Bond visited Mr. White to get information about it and he finds White looking very ill. White said it was due to the radioactive thallium he found on his mobile phone. Harkup's footnote reads, "I'm not going to ask how he figured that out. His technologically well-appointed cabin in the woods perhaps has an atomic absorption spectrometer and a Geiger counter alongside all that surveillance equipment. What villain's lair wouldn't?" (p. 66). See what I mean about the footnotes adding in some critical thinking while accounting for the suspension of belief that's required for fiction?

If you watch movies and wonder, "Is that even possible?" you'll find that the narrative in *Superspy Science* provides the kind of explanations you're after. It might even arm you with facts that could help you win at movie trivia.

Michelle Gardner
Michelle Gardner is a contract senior writer at Microsoft focused on their cloud portfolio. She has a bachelor's degree in Journalism: Public Relations from California State University, Long Beach, and a master's degree in Computer Resources and Information Management from Webster University.

Designing Multilingual Experiences in Technical Communication

Laura Gonzales. 2022. Utah State University Press. [ISBN 978-1-64642-275-3. 204 pages, including index. US$25.95 (softcover).]

As a technical communicator with a keen interest in localization and internationalization, I found that *Designing Multilingual Experiences in Technical Communication* fell short of its promise to provide strategies and best practices for researchers engaging in multilingual communities.

The book is at its best when it ruminates on the need for "fluid language models in technical communication" (p. 59) with the example of a multilingual website with cleanly split Spanish and English sides, neither of which fully reflect the Spanglish reality of how its target users communicate daily. Here I thought Laura Gonzales might introduce novel frameworks for marking up content with metadata that would allow certain phrases to be

personalized or translated differently under certain contexts, but she makes it clear that she is wary of technological solutions. The author argues that because "computer code is built on binary infrastructures… many of the technologies currently in use, and the people who design them" cannot be counted on to be able to operate outside of binary ways of thinking (p. 59). Gonzales does not only eschew existing technologies (p. 126); elsewhere, she argues that some people's very "embodied presence" (p. 167) perpetuates colonial oppression, and thus their embodied presence must face "destruction" if her conception of social justice (p. 30) is ever to be achieved.

A central theme of the book is that technical communicators should embrace "complexity, rather than aiming for simplification" (p. 22). To this end, Gonzales says she wants to "facilitate the design and development of more effective multilingual technologies that reflect the fluidity of language rather than segmenting languages into static categories" (p.170). From my perspective, one of the most effective ways technical communicators can create complex, personalized, multilingual experiences at scale is by quite literally segmenting language into categories, elements, and attributes in markup languages like XML or XLIFF and embracing decades of research into plain language writing principles that show that there are indeed "good" and "better" ways to write the words that go in-between tags so that they can be more readily understood by, and localized for, multilingual audiences. Gonzales makes no mention of these strategies or best practices, however, likely because she believes that technical communicators who hold to notions of language being "correct" or "incorrect" are "run[ning] the risk of embracing oppressive perspectives that extend racist, colonial legacies" (p.172).

In my experience, I have found books like Senongo Akpem's *Cross-Cultural Design*, Robert M. Schumacher's *Handbook of Global User Research*, and Val Swisher's *Global Content Strategy* to be practical and helpful in my work designing multilingual experiences. I would recommend those over *Designing Multilingual Experiences in Technical Communication*.

Josh Anderson

Josh Anderson, CPTC, is a multilingual technical communicator at Precision Content. Josh was an English teacher in Japan before earning a Master of Information at the University of Toronto.

Try This: Research Methods for Writers

Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Derek Mueller, and Kate Pantelides. 2022. University Press of Colorado. [ISBN 978-1-64642-312-5. 170 pages. US $22.95 (softcover).]

Try This: Research Method for Writers is part of the "Practical and Possibilities" series that offers low-cost print and free digital books in the field of writing studies. Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Derek Mueller, and Kate Pantelides, "teacher-scholars in Writing Studies" (p. vii), have created a guide for performing primary research in the writing field. Specifically, their book covers "multiple interdisciplinary methods—often used in research in the field, but rarely drawn upon in undergraduate courses—and suggest them for use at all levels" (p. vii). This book is also a useful guide for faculty who want to incorporate practices in their own classes.

The authors are enthusiastic proponents of this approach, which they explain has "energized our own research and teaching" (p. vii). While the authors are experienced practitioners, they are sensitive to their audience's understanding of the topic and have organized their book accordingly. They clearly want their readers' exploration of primary research practices to be a positive, successful experience. The authors establish a foundation with an overview of research methods in Chapter 1, followed by a discussion of ethical research practices in Chapter 2. While students can read the book according to their research needs, the authors strongly advise readers to review these two important chapters. The remaining chapters are "organized around methods to approach a particular kind of primary data—texts , artifacts, places, and images" (p. viii).

The authors employ a variety of techniques to make the information in *Try This* accessible to students who are new to primary research practices. They begin with topics likely familiar to students, such as "… rhetorical analysis, secondary source use, surveys and interviews" and transition to those the authors "…think that might be less familiar, though just as useful and engaging—discourse analysis, map-making, and using worknets for invention" (p viii).

The authors provide numerous examples to clarify and reinforce the topics they cover, as well as also provide opportunities to explore and practice the topics via their "Try This" exercises. The creative, well-designed exercises vary in complexity from those that

can be completed quickly in 15 minutes to projects that require more of a commitment, taking a day to finish. Each exercise lists the suggested time for completion, which provides a helpful guide for students.

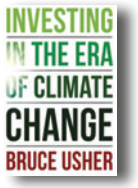
Lastly, the authors reinforce important terminology by bolding certain text, and include brief, supporting information in the side margins.

As the book's title suggests, Clary-Lemon, Mueller, and Pantelides invite "…students and faculty to approach writing and researching differently than before" and be open to "…discover something new and exciting" (p. vii).

Ann Marie Queeney
Ann Marie Queeney is an STC senior member with more than 20 years' technical communication experience primarily in the medical device industry. Her STC experience includes serving as a Special Interest Group leader, 2020-2022 Board member, and CAC (Communities Affairs Committee) Chair. Ann Marie is the owner of A.M. Queeney, LLC.

Investing in the Era of Climate Change

Bruce Usher. 2022. Columbia Business School Publishing. [ISBN 978-0-231-20088-2. 304 pages. US$27.95 (hardcover).]



There is so much to love about *Investing in the Era of Climate Change*. Students, teachers, investors, and anyone interested in the topics of investing or climate change (or both) will find a great read here. The research, scope (with 26 chapters), and readability—just about everything—are most impressive. The tone itself is matter of fact and rooted in reality, which I greatly appreciated.

Some topics discussed in *Investing in the Era of Climate Change* involve great sums of money such as the energy retrofit of the Empire State Building that generated a payback in three years (p. 141). But some covered topics can apply to the more average investor as, for example, someone thinking of where to buy a home. Which locations might not fare well in the future due to climate change? One answer comes when Usher points out that the "intensity of wildfires because of drier forests" can create a threat to homes located in a "risk area" (p. 143). Usher points out that "rising temperatures are raising global sea levels because of thermal expansion and are increasing the frequency and intensity of wildfires" so buying a home in a related risk area could be a poor investment (p. 143).

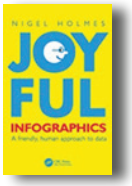
As for the total scope of topics covered by Usher, the range is impressive. Some topics are big picture concerns such as why investing matters. Other topics involve details of investing in areas such as forestry, agriculture, and real estate. Usher aptly handles both the forest and the trees. Usher credits many people who did research for the book with the scope of research being impressive and sound.

Whether you are simply interested in the topic of climate change and/or wise and effective investing (with a wide scope to include investing in real estate, stocks, etc.) or someone who works in academia as a student or teacher interested in learning more about the issues covered in *Investing in the Era of Climate Change*, you will find that Usher and his colleagues did at least some of the research for you on timely and important topics.

Jeanette Evans
Jeanette Evans is an STC Associate Fellow; active in the Ohio STC community, currently serving on the newsletter committee; and co-author of an ***Intercom*** column on emerging technologies in education. She holds an MS in technical communication management from Mercer University and undergraduate degree in education.

Joyful Infographics: A Friendly, Human Approach to Data

Nigel Holmes. 2022. CRC Press. [ISBN 978-1-0032-2236-1. 215 pages, including index. US$26.95 (e-book).]



In Chapter 5 of *Joyful Infographics: A Friendly, Human Approach to Data*, Nigel Holmes references to the ubiquitous smiley face icon, which may have been invented in 1963, but lives on today in buttons, emojis, and even a forest in Oregon. The smiley face is an appropriate symbol for this book: warm, accessible, and cheerful. Holmes is a British graphic designer, best known for his graphic design work with Time magazine from the 1970s through the 1990s. He advocates for presenting data in ways that are engaging and friendly.

Infographics convey data through a combination of graphics and text. They're not quite the same as data visualization (think computer-generated charts

and graphs); dataviz graphics only present data, while infographics explain it. Infographics tell stories, which, Holmes claims, people crave. In this book, Holmes defends his style of engaging, sometimes whimsical infographics, arguing that artistic elements aren't the "chart junk" data scientist Edward Tufte insists they are. These playful touches are not clutter; they're what make Holmes's designs engaging, reader friendly, and effective.

Joyful Infographics itself is as friendly as Holmes's graphic design work. He writes with humor and gives enthusiastic shout-outs to designers and artists whose work he admires. The book is filled with examples of imaginative infographics. And he draws from a wide range of examples; readers can study visuals from fields as diverse as human physiology, advertising, and the Olympic games. Holmes also grounds his work in history: Chapter 3 traces visual representations of information throughout history, referencing everything from the Chauvet cave paintings to Henry Beck's Tube maps, from the Bayeux Tapestry to emojis.

Holmes also provides actionable instructions for designers. Chapter 4 offers nine techniques to make infographics more engaging, and Chapter 9 warns "Don't do this!" and provides examples of how not to design infographics. Following his guidelines will help designers keep the humanity in their visual communication. In a time when many communication professionals are wondering how much of our work artificial intelligence can do, it's a good reminder that it takes the human touch to communicate data in a way that audiences want to engage with.

Elizabeth Hardin

Elizabeth Hardin is an STC member and a lecturer in the English department at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, where she teaches technical and business writing. She has a master's degree in English and a bachelor's in Computer Science.

Introduction to Digital Media Design: Transferable Hacks, Skills and Tricks

David Leicester Hardy. 2022. Bloomsbury Visual Arts. [ISBN 978-1-350104-93-8. 226 pages, including index. US$34.95 (softcover).]

The emerging challenge for digital designers is to appeal to ever more varied audiences with a uniform, optimized user experience across a broad spectrum of platforms and tools, often under significant time and cost pressure. The success of the development effort, as well as the designer's continued employability, depends on adopting this approach.

David Leicester Hardy's *Introduction to Digital Design: Transferable Hacks, Skills and Tricks* addresses this problem by observing that if design is now "part of early strategy" (p. 208), designers must learn to "get things working quickly and then build on that" (p. x) by adopting a "generalist approach" that integrates "increasingly diverse skills" (p. xi) with pragmatic hacks and iterative design practices.

Because users expect "seamless, unified experiences" across different platforms, designers must focus on acquiring "multidisciplinary skills" (p. 207), "getting user feedback early," and "iterating quickly" (p. 45). They must also save "any changes that increase progress toward user goals" (p. 45), discard those that don't, and build a library of reusable hacks.

A primary method is to create a basic, cross-platform structure that allows "visual design" details to be added later (p. 45). Any tool from any source that satisfies the user's experience is allowed, and logged in the designer's inventory for future reuse. "It's like Lego blocks for designers" (p. 22), with new blocks building upon existing modules.

For example, a designer can avoid laborious, repetitive, pixel-by-pixel web development for different platforms by developing mobile applications first, then scaling for tablets, laptops, and desktops. The smallest screen requires "prioritizing the most important content" (p. 139), and can serve as a basic structure amenable to "progressive enhancement" (p. 140) for larger screens, streamlining the development process.

Although written for designers with some experience, Hardy's book can be readily adapted for beginning students. It covers the major digital design elements: user interface, user experience, animation and motion graphics, interaction design, design for the web,

and emerging technologies. It also includes an HTML tutorial useful as a primer or refresher.

Hardy concludes by showing how integrating the virtual and physical worlds for augmented or mixed reality applications requires further expansion of the digital designer's skill set. Particularly nettlesome is the problem of "rendering virtual objects behind real ones in the viewer's eyes" (p. 195). The complexity of the issue reinforces the need for iterative, pragmatic design solutions that can provide the unified, immersive experience expected by the user.

The book's hacks, illustrations, examples, and realistic designer exercises—all reflective of Hardy's extensive industry experience—are accompanied by a website where students can practice design principles and techniques. Hardy's emphasis on pragmatism, process, and reusability is valuable because it reminds students that digital design is a technical, creative, *and* economic activity that requires continual learning and growth. As he says, "you simply can't design based on intuition" (p. 30).

Donald R. Riccomini

Donald R. Riccomini is an STC member and Emeritus Senior Lecturer in English at Santa Clara University, where he specialized in engineering and technical communications. He previously spent twenty-three years in high technology as a technical writer, engineer, and manager in semiconductors, instrumentation, and server development.

The Business of UX Writing

Yael Ben-David. 2022. A Book Apart. [ISBN 978-1-952616-24-2. 140 pages, including index. US$29.00 (paperback).]

The Business of UX Writing is a practical book that defines user experience (UX) writing as a discipline, a practice, an occupation, and a business investment. In just five chapters, Yael Ben-David documents the history of UX writing, describes the intersection of UX writing and business, proves how UX writing increases ROI, demonstrates methods for measuring UX writing successes, and suggests ways that UX writing can benefit businesses, including process documentation.

Ben-David begins her book with some storytelling about the origins of UX writing and its relationship to other common UX roles, especially content design. Besides documenting what UX writers know and do, Ben-David recalls a poignant conversation she had with Kristina Halvorson about what "we" should call ourselves—UX writers or content designers. Ben-David advocates for "UX writer" because she feels it's important to have UX in her title, whereas Halvorson prefers "content designer" because of the potential downsides of referring to ourselves only as writers (p. 19). She describes the intersection of UX writing and business and her five-part, business-centric framework, KAPOW, where UX writers (UXWs) help businesses set responsible goals. The KAPOW framework is:

Know your goals.
Articulate solutions.
Prioritize solutions.
Own your metrics.
Write.

Ben-David models the process throughout the book with a few examples, being careful to explain how UX writing can showcase the return on investment (ROI) of UX writing by reporting on their own self-defined metrics. She recommends tying goals and metrics to "if–then statements" to ensure everyone is focused on similar data points. For example, "If 5 percent more users in the test group draw funds in their first seven days, then the copy was successful" (p. 41). Ben-David's examples are short and effective, giving tangible suggestions for how to conduct quantitative and qualitative user research.

She reminds readers that ROI on UX writing is a long game that must be strategically played. UX writing can increase ROI by breaking down the barriers between designers, users, and decision-makers. By engaging in a collaborative cycle with UXWs, the business is better able to serve customers through a better user experience. This results in the business receiving more profits where it can then invest in hiring additional UXWs to enhance the business's success (p. 51, Figure 3.2).

Ben-David opens her final chapter with this fact: UX writing is "largely tactical" because writers are outnumbered by visual designers and product owners, sometimes as much as 10 to 1 (p. 96). Because of this reality, content operations and organization-wide education is key to the success of UX writing, especially in large enterprises. Developing the voice and tone of a content team should be collaborative with a heavy emphasis on process documentation and quality control.

As someone with an extensive career in many areas, I found this book to be a humbling reflection of my inner conversations about the value of writing to both design and business. Ben-David showcases her own UX writing experience as she brings her research and story together, leading readers to her desired conclusion: UX writing is beneficial to both the practice of UX design and businesses desire to make a profit.

Erica M. Stone, PhD
Erica Stone has more than 10 years of technical communication experience with a focus on UX writing and content design. She is a member of STC and serves on the STC Scholarship Committee.

Wronged and Dangerous: Viral Masculinity and the Populist Pandemic

Karen Lee Ashcraft. 2022. Bristol University Press. [ISBN 978-1-5292-2140-4. 264 pages, including index. US$19.99 (softcover).]

Around the world liberal democracies are struggling to come to grips with far-right populist backlash. In *Wronged and Dangerous: Viral Masculinity and the Populist Pandemic*, Ashcraft provides a refreshingly original, deeply thought out, and well-argued analysis of the problem, and suggests a path toward mitigation.

To date most attempts to understand the populist backlash have focused on socioeconomic factors and issues of class. While acknowledging their importance, Ashcraft argues that the deeper cause can be traced to the issues of gender—specifically to "a seething sense of rightful virility wrongly denied" (p 4.) that she calls "aggrieved" or "viral masculinity" (p. 4).

As she describes it, viral masculinity is less a political or ideological position, than a feeling of dread or precarity which is experienced as anger at a sense of aggrieved entitlement, a sense that those who should be in charge are being displaced and wrongly challenged. Ashcraft prefers the term "viral masculinity" to "toxic masculinity," which some have used, because she feels that for all its toxicity, it acts more like a virus, spreading through a communality of feeling or contagious resentment. While men are especially susceptible to the feeling, they are by no means alone. She likens the infected to the pufferfish, which reacts to perceived threats by puffing up and spewing toxins, which, if continued long enough, also harms the fish.

Ashcraft shows how aggrieved masculinity provides the force driving populism, as it hijacks whatever materials it finds available to seethe against an ever-morphing list of grievances—COVID mask mandates, political correctness, feminists, immigration, LBGTQ, critical race theory—and shows how it undergirds the populist playbook, with its vibe of antagonism, "people vs elites" rhetoric, strong-man leadership, and its need for "Others" to demonize (pp. 65–69) In a wide-ranging analysis, she traces her subject through politics here and abroad, through its role in the culture wars, through its depiction in popular culture, and through its exploitation by powerful interests who seek to achieve ends of their own by stoking the people's anger.

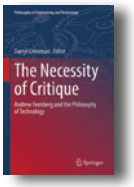
Two major approaches to coping with populist backlash have been tried so far: 1) attempts to understand and empathize with populist angst, while disagreeing with its vitriolic expression, and 2) denunciation and counter protest. Ashcraft argues that each fails because aggrieved masculinity relishes the attention given to its complaints, but also loves nothing more than an opportunity to brawl. While these approaches are socially important, Ashcraft argues, they are not up to the task of slowing the spread of populist anger. Ashcraft instead advocates for a quasi-public health approach, focusing not on what the "populist pandemic" fumes about, but on how it spreads (pp. 7–8).

There is much more to Ashcraft's argument than I have been able to cover in this brief space, but anyone wanting a better understanding of our often bewildering and tumultuous political and cultural landscape will find *Wronged and Dangerous* insightful and richly rewarding.

Patrick Lufkin
Patrick Lufkin is an STC Fellow with experience in computer documentation, newsletter production, and public relations. He reads widely in science, history, and current affairs, as well as on writing and editing. He chairs the Gordon Scholarship for technical communication and co-chairs the Northern California technical communication competition.

The Necessity of Critique: Andrew Feenberg and the Philosophy of Technology

Darryl Cressman, ed. 2022. Springer Nature. [ISBN 978-3-031-07876-7. 286 pages, including index. US$140 (e-book).]



Many contributors to this collection make clear that Andrew Feenberg is one of a few strong voices who has consistently pushed for critical and political examination of technology and its role in society. Feenberg's Critical Constructivist framework has developed over the past couple decades; it engages with Marx, Marcuse, Heidegger, the Frankfurt School, Science and Technology Studies, Foucault, and Latour to name a few. In the opening chapter, Feenberg identifies Critical Constructivism's core value: it "'de-ontologizes' these philosophies of technology, capturing their critique of rationality while affirming nevertheless the value of modern science and technology" (p. 15). While rooted in theories that are in themselves more complex and nuanced than many practitioners find useful, Feenberg's opening chapter is readable and accessible. It is vital to understanding Feenberg's view of his own work and contextualizes subsequent chapters.

Editor Darryl Cressman divides his book, *The Necessity of Critique: Andrew Feenberg and the Philosophy of Technology*, into three parts: Democratic Potentials, Trajectories of Contemporary Critique, and Critical Theories of Technology. The chapters on Democratic Potentials, offer the best gateway for those new to Feenberg or thinking about how critical theory can be applied, in practical, non-ontological ways, to specific instances of technology. Of great interest, given the pandemic, are discussions on a Corona tracking app and hydroxychloroquine. The second section is almost as accessible, but more philosophy happens. In Part II, authors engage with big data, algorithms, and recommender, Sally Wyatt's chapter, "Critical (Big) Data Studies" is the best in the book, blending academic voice and style, connecting to Feenberg and theory, all while addressing a vital topic. Equally interesting is de Jong and Prey's chapter on recommender systems: AI-driven algorithms that suggest products to consumers, like new artists on Spotify, movies on Netflix, or books on Amazon. While Big Data impacts on a daily basis, recommender systems are more explicit and present in our lives as we consume media and content. Both chapters make for intense but rewarding readings for advanced undergraduate or graduate students.

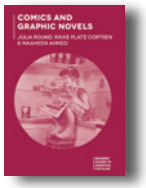
The last section is of limited interest and accessibility. Those deeply read in philosophy will likely find the rabbit holes of Soviet Block Marxism versus Western Marxism, comparisons of Feenberg to Byung-Chul Han, and detailed engagements of Marx, Heidegger, and Foucault interesting. The arguments are compellingly detailed, reasoned, and supported. Sadly, several chapters offered limited practical connection or discussion of material conditions, and thus seemed counter to the very spirit of Feenberg's work to "de-ontologize" philosophies of technology. In contrast, Romele's discussion of refining Feenberg's philosophy towards one that is more agonistic (drawing on Chantal Mouffe) is a highlight.

An impressive, intense set of readings, Cressman's collection is a valuable scholarly contribution. Price and the final section's philosophical re-ontologizing make it hard to recommend *The Necessity of Critique* to practitioners not already deeply steeped in philosophy. This volume is worth reading.

Gregory Zobel
Gregory Zobel is an assistant professor of Educational Technology at Western Oregon University.

Comics and Graphic Novels

Julia Round, Rikke Platz Cortsen, and Maaheen Ahmed. 2023. Bloomsbury Academic. [ISBN 978-1-350-3-3609-4. 282 pages, including index. US$29.95 (softcover).]



In *Comics and Graphic Novels*, Drs. Julia Round, Rikke Platz Cortsen, and Maaheen Ahmed delve into the fascinating world of comics, exploring its history, development, and critical theories. This book offers readers an insightful look into comics and graphic novels, examining the unique language of these diverse media, their impact on popular culture, and the ways in which they challenge and expand upon traditional communication techniques. The authors provide a well-researched, engaging, and accessible account of comics studies. Combining their expertise in the field, the authors bridge the gap between academic inquiry and the appreciation of comics as a visual communication experience. *Comics and Graphic Novels* is divided into four sections.

Approaching comics. In this section, the authors trace the winding definition of comics through its various recesses, comparing and contrasting definitions offered over the past 180 years by Rodolphe Töpffer, David Kunzle, Will Eisner, Scott McCloud, and Neil Cohn. they then move into exploring the ideological definitions and mechanics of comics by exploring the manipulation of the superhero as a symbol of national identity.

History and cultures. This section examines the histories and criticisms of comics in America and Europe, focusing on the censorship debates of the 1950s. This section also explores the histories of comics around the world, moving from Europe through Africa and Asia. The focus moves from regional focus to newer research approaches that attempt to tie emergent themes of comics across borders.

Productions and reception. The third section explores the contributions and influence of early artists and imprints. The reader's reception of comics and their interactions with comics across various platforms figures prominently in this section as do the collection of comics and the formation of fan groups and discussions within broader cultural contexts.

Theories and genres. This section reviews the historical and modern themes of comics and how certain genres of comics have become synonymous with the medium itself. This section is an artful exploration of how comics engage weighty themes like trauma and serious genres like autobiography.

While the entire volume is an intellectually stimulating read, teachers of technical communication and comics studies courses will appreciate the final chapter on general reference guides and textbooks. This chapter reviews and compares a variety of texts on comics and graphic novels and evaluates their suitability at various levels of coursework.

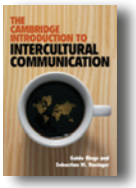
Technical communication practitioners, who may not have regarded comics as a serious genre, will appreciate a greater understanding of how comics have influenced readers in a variety of cultural contexts. Comics and graphic novels have much to offer practitioners who struggle to reach audiences beyond written text and video tutorials.

Comics and Graphic Novels is an essential text for anyone interested in the study of visual communication. The authors provide an in-depth, well-researched, and accessible account of comics, blending historical context, formal analysis, and critical theory. With its engaging writing style and thoughtful organization, this book is sure to become a touchstone for students, scholars, and fans of comics and graphic novels.

Michael Opsteegh
Michael Opsteegh is an STC Associate Fellow and a technical writer in the software and financial services industries since 2004. He is a lecturer in the professional writing program at Cal State Long Beach. Michael holds a master's degree in English and is a Certified Technical Professional Communicator (CPTC).

The Cambridge Introduction to Intercultural Communication

Guido Rings and Sebastian M. Rasinger. Cambridge University Press. [ISBN 978-1-108-82254-1. 262 pages, including index. US$32.99 (softcover).]



The demand for intercultural competence in the technical communication field is increasing, especially since the COVID pandemic and the rise of remote working began. Whether you work in a face-to-face setting for a multinational company or are a digital nomad, you need to know how to effectively communicate with your users, clients, and coworkers. *The Cambridge Introduction to Intercultural Communication* aims to provide a "state of the art" introduction to this topic (p. xii).

The text is divided into three major sections: introducing intercultural communication; theories, key concepts, and approaches; and application. As a professor who teaches intercultural technical communication, I appreciated that the authors provide detailed instructions for how this text could be used in a classroom setting, or how to proceed through the sections on your own according to your personal needs.

Each chapter discusses a specific topic within intercultural communication in detail, drawing from a wealth of sources, which are referenced at the conclusion of each chapter. Rings and Rasinger present a variety of examples to frame the discussion, ranging from current political issues to music, film, and even culture-specific proverbs. These examples help the reader visualize the concepts as they occur in real world situations.

A major strength of *The Cambridge Introduction to Intercultural Communication* is the conscious effort the authors have made to draw from academic sources, theories, and examples stemming from many cultures.

Too often, books on this topic are written by British or American authors from their own perspective and using examples from developed countries, unwittingly reinforcing the hegemony of western and industrialized nations.

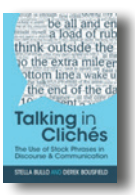
Despite the authors' assertions that this is an introductory textbook, it would have limited usefulness in most intercultural technical communication classrooms. The discussion assumes a more advanced knowledge of communication theory and provides a very limited discussion of the major theories of intercultural communication. In many cases, these theories are presented with no visuals or summary callouts to help the reader. Key words are highlighted but often do not have a thorough definition unless the reader consults the book's glossary. Further, the discussion for writing or creating information for an intercultural audience is almost nonexistent.

On the other hand, technical communicators interested in the theory of intercultural communication would find this text an invaluable addition to their collection. I learned several new facts and even a new theory that I plan to integrate into my teaching and research. The detailed reference sections alone make this book worth the purchase price for an academic researcher. However, technical communication practitioners and instructors may find this book to be too theoretical and not practical enough for their needs.

Nicole St. Germaine
Nicole St. Germaine is a Professor of English and the Coordinator of the Technical and Business Writing Program at the Natalie Z. Ryan Department of English at Angelo State University.

Talking in Clichés: The Use of Stock Phrases in Discourse and Communication

Stella Bullo and Derek Bousfield. 2023. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ISBN 978-1-108-45813-9. 200 pages, including index. US$34.99 (softcover).]



Talking in Clichés: The Use of Stock Phrases in Discourse and Communication is a book written by scholars, for scholars. It uses very technical language without defining it and assumes the reader will understand it; for example, words like metacommentary or in this sentence: "Chapter 5 draws on sociopragmatic theories…" (p. 8). And, as in the case of most academic writing, its vocabulary is often so formal that it loses sight of the need to "connect" with the reader, as in: Clichés "offer a comfortable standpoint of commitment to the *propositional content* of the utterance" (p. 4). It also cites many experts by their last names and assumes the reader will know who they are, which is not an especially inviting opening.

Definitions are important but can differ and still be equally valid or useful. One might ask: What *is* a cliché and how does it differ from an idiom? Here are two examples: "an expression that was repeated so often that it lost its freshness and became hackneyed" or "a word or expression that has lost its force through over-exposure" (p. 1). Evidently, debate about the negative effect of clichés was made as early as 1885 from an article in the *Punch* magazine that criticized the figure of speech.

Also, the debate on the use and usefulness of clichés extends to the marketing world; some ad agencies arguing that clients should avoid them "if they want their brand to stand out from their competitors" (p. 2). Otherwise, phrases like "you're in good hands" are designed to assure customers of a company's quality (p. 8).

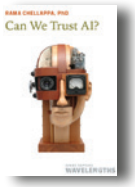
Think about a negative reaction *you* might have to certain clichés; things like: "Have a good day" or "How are you?" received in a face-to-face encounter, on the phone, or an email with someone you know or may not know. This reviewer has conducted telemarketing training working with callers from Sri Lanka, where these callers use phrases like these in their calls. I believe that it's totally inappropriate to say to someone you don't know: "How are you." My usual reply from such calls is "My dog just died."

Still, after all is said and done, clichés have become such an integral part of our vocabulary, in speaking *and* writing, that it's worth becoming more aware of their role and effectiveness in our own language. Clichés join company with slang and idioms, jargon and euphemisms, acronyms and abbreviations—that help enrich our view of the world. In the end, clichés are part of the near endless figures of speech that make up that magical—and, for ESL students, that often maddening—brew called the English language.

Steven Darian
Steven Darian is a professor emeritus from Rutgers University. Two of the eight books he's written since retiring are *Understanding the Language of Science* and *The Role of Religion in Just About Everything.*

Can We Trust AI?

Rama Chellappa, PhD, with Eric Niiler. 2022. Johns Hopkins University Press. [ISBN 978-1-4214-4530-4. 224 pages, including index. US$16.95 (softcover).]



In *Can We Trust AI?*, Chellappa explores both the promise and peril of AI (artificial intelligence). For readers searching for an understanding how AI came to be, in the Dawn of AI (p. 11), Chellappa situates AI in an historical context that is thorough, and thoroughly fascinating given its conception in 1945, while not being exhaustive. Most refreshing is his current assessment of AI that dispels the hype of AI's world takeover. It is not fully ready for prime time. "[S]ome experts view current artificial intelligence technology as equivalent only to a newborn" (p. 3).

At 224 pages, this book is a quick read and serves as an excellent AI primer. On-the-go readers may also appreciate the small paperback size as it is easy to tuck into a bag or backpack for later access. An electronic version is also available. Chellappa gracefully moves among AI's past, present, and future. You'll learn that the term AI was first used at a conference at Dartmouth University in 1955 (p. 15) and that AI is necessary if we want to conquer or make sense of the amount of digital data created in the next five years, which Chellappa says will be "twice the amount created since the beginning of digital storage" (p. 29). Future AI developments may benefit the healthcare industry allowing older adults to remain independent and in their homes. AI may also benefit people with visual or hearing disabilities.

Chellappa's focus on AI's ability to improve health (Saving Lives with AI, p. 33) is a significant focus in *Can We Trust AI?*. Given his work with Johns Hopkins University and the locus of his research that probably should not come as a surprise, but readers should be aware of it as he returns to the theme of AI and healthcare and AI and personal health several times throughout. He does include AI's ability to benefit transportation (The Promise of Autonomous Vehicles, p. 94) while also including a harsh dose of reality around ethical AI (The Complexities and Contributions of Facial Recognition, p. 83).

Chellappa does not shy away from the underbelly of AI or sounding the alarm about its misapplication, or worse, its misappropriation in the wrong hands. "Beyond its continued research funding, artificial intelligence's future growth is dependent on addressing four core issues: bias when applied to people and social systems; further refinements in its abilities to adapt to different kinds of data, environments, sensors, cultures, and societies; privacy; and weaponizing applications of its technologies, including deep-fake attacks and other rogue uses" (p. 154).

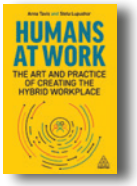
The way AI has already been misapplied is deeply troubling. Chellappa cites several research studies where issues of conscious and unconscious bias in AI have been confirmed. For AI to overcome these hurdles, companies must "do better when it comes to recruiting, hiring, and promoting a more diverse pool of AI developers and computer engineers" (p. 85). Readers will need to decide for themselves after reading if they can trust AI. It has promise, as shown by Chellappa, but it is also, in its current state, fraught with peril.

Liz Herman

Liz Herman, PhD, is a knowledge management practitioner and is certified in project management and technical communication. She is an STC Fellow and works for Accenture Federal Services as a Senior Manager.

Humans at Work: The Art and Practice of Creating the Hybrid Workplace

Anna Tavis and Stela Lupushor. 2022. KoganPage. [ISBN 978-1-3986-0423-0. 264 pages, including index. US$34.99 (softcover).]



Humans at Work: The Art and Practice of Creating the Hybrid Workplace by Anna Tavis and Stela Lupushor discusses the importance of prioritizing human-centered practices in the workplace. The book analyzes how organizations can create a workplace that is not only productive but also fulfilling for their employees. The authors present a compelling case for why companies must focus on the well-being and satisfaction of their employees and provide practical advice and real-world examples of how to do so.

Tavis and Lupushor argue that too often, companies focus on profit at the expense of the well-being and satisfaction of their employees. They suggest that this is not only unethical but ultimately counterproductive, as happy, engaged employees are more productive, innovative, and loyal. The book provides numerous examples of companies that have successfully implemented human-centered practices, such as flexible schedules, remote work options, and mindfulness

programs, and have seen significant improvements in employee satisfaction and business outcomes.

One of the key takeaways from *Humans at Work* is the importance of creating a workplace culture that fosters a sense of community and purpose among employees. The authors argue that people are motivated by more than just financial incentives and that a strong sense of belonging and meaning in the workplace is essential for employee satisfaction and productivity. Tavis and Lupushor emphasize the importance of creating a safe and inclusive workplace where people feel valued and respected, which can be achieved through measures such as diversity and inclusion training and zero-tolerance policies for harassment.

Another key theme in this book is the need for leaders to communicate clearly and authentically with their employees. Effective communication is essential for building trust and creating a culture of transparency, which is particularly important in times of change or uncertainty. The book provides practical advice for how leaders can communicate effectively, such as using storytelling to convey a sense of purpose and building a feedback loop to encourage dialogue and participation from employees.

The chapter on the future of work explores how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, automation, and the Internet of Things will impact the workplace. While these technologies have the potential to revolutionize work in many ways, they must be designed from a human-centered perspective. Tavis and Lupushor caution against the dangers of replacing humans with machines and instead suggest that companies focus on augmenting human capabilities and providing opportunities for reskilling and upskilling. The book highlights the importance of clear communication and transparency when introducing new technologies, as well as the need to address concerns about privacy and security.

Humans at Work is an essential read for anyone interested in the future of work and the role of human-centered practices in creating a successful, fulfilling workplace. The book provides insights into how to create a workplace culture that fosters innovation, creativity, and collaboration and provides practical advice and real-world examples of how to create a workplace culture that prioritizes the well-being and satisfaction of employees. This book is useful for both managers and individual contributors who are responsible for designing and implementing workplace policies and practices.

Kelly Smith
Kelly Smith is an STC member and has been a technical communicator since 1997. She is the Membership Manager and Social Media Manager of the STC Michigan Great Lakes chapter.

Decolonizing Design: A Cultural Justice Guidebook

Elizabeth (Dori) Tunstall. 2023. The MIT Press. [ISBN 978-0-262-04769-2. 136 pages, including index. US$22.95 (hardcover).]

What does it mean to decolonize design, is it necessary, and how does this process apply to design education? Those who recognize systemic racism and its barriers, including in design education, will understand that it is necessary. But where do we begin? Elizabeth Tunstall, better known as Dori, the first Black dean of design faculty and a leader of the movement to decolonize design has written *Decolonizing Design: A Cultural Justice Guidebook* to assist those who wish to engage in and pursue the decolonization of design in academia.

Decolonizing Design is a short book, with just over 100 pages of content including an introduction and five chapters. The introduction asks, "Decolonizing Design: what might it mean?" setting the stage for the rest of the book. Subsequent chapters form a response to the question by stating "Decolonizing Design Means…" followed by topics to be addressed. The first chapter focuses on "Putting Indigenous First", which Dori represents by reorganizing the typical acronym of BIPOC, used to identify marginalized peoples as Black, indigenous, and people of color, as IBPOC embracing the ethos of putting Indigenous peoples first. Chapters 2–3 address issues in the process of decolonizing design including "Dismantling Tech Bias in the European Modernist Project", "Dismantling the Racist Bias in the European Modernist Project", "Making Amends through more than Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion". While chapter 5 "Reprioritizing Existing Resources to Decolonize" reminds us that all budgets are finite and that where we allocate monies reveals priorities.

Throughout the book, Dori explains key terms very clearly, for example, colonization is defined as, "an economic system that seeks to transfer wealth from

Indigenous, Black, and other POC communities to white people in Europe or colonial settlers of European descent" (p. 98). This is an important term to understand because if your intent is to decolonize you must first understand colonization. Another term that Dori presents is "Supertokenism", which she explains as "an individual from a marginalized group(s) whose talents are so desired by institutions that they are able to overcome their innate aversion to the individual's identities" (p. 77). She explains that this too can be harmful because it has the potential to set a dangerous standard, that only the few who succeed in making a name for themselves within colonized systems are accepted, rather than accepting diverse people for their individual strengths.

This book is a quick read, but it should not be rushed, taking the time to process the information and takeaways is a must. Throughout *Decolonizing Design,* Dori calls out modernism as a harmful practice for which an express goal was to create a "universal" approach to design. But why would a universal approach to design be harmful? Tunstall explains that this universal man, was a "working white man" (p. 58) ignoring IBPOC and women. Those who follow modernism devoutly will likely push back at the idea that it is associated with racist bias. As such *Decolonizing Design* may not be viewed as a book for everyone, but it should be.

Amanda Horton
Amanda Horton holds an MFA in Design and teaches graduate and undergraduate courses at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) in design history, theory, and criticism. She is also the director of the Design History Minor at UCO.

Content Strategy: A How-to Guide

Guiseppe Getto, Jack T. Labriola, and Sheryl Ruszkiewicz. 2023. Routledge. [ISBN: 978-0-367-75950-6. 226 pages, including index. US$128.00 (hardcover).]

Content Strategy: A How-to Guide is an instructive book that offers readers an introduction to content strategy and a detailed review of each facet of the discipline. The book comprises 14 chapters and is divided into three sections: key concepts (Chapter 1), the content strategy process (Chapters 2–13), and how to become a content strategist (Chapter 14).

In Chapter 1, Guiseppe Getto, Jack Labriola, and Sheryl Ruszkiewicz divide content strategy into two types: content-focused components and people-focused components. As a reader, I found this definitional work to be extremely beneficial. For content-focused components, the authors suggest paying attention to substance and structure (p. 5) asking questions like:

- Substance: What kind of content do we need? What messages does content need to communicate to our audience?
- Structure: How is content prioritized, organized, formatted, and displayed?

On the flipside, people-focused components center on workflows and governance. When working with people-centered practices and processes, content strategists often ask questions like (p.5):

- Workflow: What processes, tools, and human resources are required for content initiatives to launch successfully and maintain ongoing quality?
- Governance: How are key decisions about content and content strategy made? How are changes initiated and communicated?

Chapters 2–13 really break down the content strategy practices and processes. From audience analysis to content modeling to usability, the authors discuss how to "create the right content for the right people at the right time for the right reasons" (p. 18). That phrasing makes the job sound super simple, but the authors describe all the complexities of working as a content strategist, from collaborating with subject matter experts (SMEs) to software engineers. Chapter 13 is perhaps the most beneficial chapter of this book. Using the metaphor of a hardware store, the authors outline the kinds of tools and technologies a content strategist might use. When you visit a hardware store, you may have heard about some of the tools for sale (a jigsaw), but you may not have used them before (p. 177). Similarly, as you familiarize yourself with the available content strategy tools, ask questions like (p. 178):

- What does each tool allow you to do and prevent you from doing?
- What's the learning curve like for each tool?
- What context does each tool best fit into?

Finally, Chapter 14 offers guidance for how to establish yourself as a content strategist and find a job in the field. Networking and credentials are essential, but the most important thing is gaining experience,

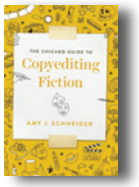
even if it's just consulting or occasional contract work. Unlike academia or research jobs that require specific credentials, industry work requires demonstrative skills and often a portfolio of work that showcases your skill sets and helps hiring managers evaluate your ability to do the job.

As someone with over a decade in the field, I thought this book really delivered on the promise of being a how-to guide. I recommend *Content Strategy* to anyone exploring content strategy as a discipline or possible career. It's also a great guide for students studying to become content strategists.

Erica M. Stone, PhD
Erica Stone has more than 10 years of technical communication experience with a focus on UX writing and content design. She is a member of STC and serves on the STC Scholarship Committee.

The Chicago Guide to Copyediting Fiction

Amy Schneider. 2023. The University of Chicago Press. [ISBN 978-0-226-76737-6. 240 pages, including index. US$18.00 (softcover).]



Years ago, I attended Amy Schneider's copyediting fiction presentation. After she'd finished, I begged her to write a book. *The Chicago Guide to Copyediting Fiction* is that long-awaited book and will please both fiction editors and authors who must self-edit. "[This book] is intended as food for thought, a road map for helping each author, character, and manuscript tell their own story in their own voice and their own style" (p. 2). The fiction editor must therefore question how each edit serves the author, the reader, and the story. Thus, rules "are made to be broken if doing so serves the story" (p. 192).

Schneider assumes you already know how to copyedit and are familiar with the vocabulary and shows how to apply those skills. (Much of the advice also applies to substantive and developmental editing.) Unlike non-fiction, each story comprises its own editorial and stylistic universe. To manage that universe, Schneider provides a thorough discussion of style guides, though she omits the common synonym *story bible* used to describe them. Internal consistency is essential in any writing, but authors must also be consistent between books in a series and with the world outside the book. She quickly but thoroughly covers style guides, characters, and locations. Each provides excellent advice to help authors create richer descriptions of these key story ingredients. The text is packed with good examples, as well as advice on handling issues you won't find in other guides, such as "naughty words and dirty talk" (cussin' and courtin'). As she notes, a "good copyeditor has a dirty mind" (p. 147). Schneider also brings us up to speed on issues such as conscious language, gender pronouns, and whether to italicize non-English words.

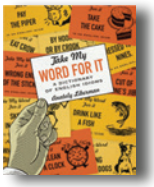
There are a few things I'd like to see in the second edition. Although Schneider emphasizes that most copyediting is done by computer, and provides basic tips, there are no references to major onscreen editing resources in the text, though Adrienne Montgomerie's *Editing in Word* (https://eiw365.com/) appears in the bibliography. I'd also like to see better online support for the book, such as downloadable templates and an addenda Web page. Finally, I'd like to see clear distinctions among genres and their unique editing needs. For example, "speculative fiction" ranges from science fiction (in which authors must be consistent with known science) to fantasy (in which authors can break the rules if they're *consistent*).

If the number of details seems overwhelming, a good approach is to treat each chapter as a separate editorial pass and focus on those specific details. You'll quickly internalize them and become a much stronger author's ally.

Geoff Hart
Geoff Hart is an STC Fellow with more than 35 years of writing, editing, and translation experience. He's traveled widely and worked with authors from many cultures. He's the author of two popular books, *Effective Onscreen Editing and Write Faster With Your Word Processor.*

Take My Word for It: A Dictionary of English Idioms

Anatoly Liberman. 2022. University of Minnesota Press. [ISBN 978-1-5179-1412-7. 336 pages, including indexes. US$22.95 (softcover).]



Most formal written language is made up of words that can be found in the dictionary. But much of the living language—especially spoken language used in daily life—consists of multi-word idioms, where the dictionary is often not of much help. What is one to make of such phrases as "raining cats and dogs," "the cut of one's jib," "to save one's bacon," or "to pay the piper," on first encountering them? Our language is replete with such phrases, but where do they come from, and what do they mean.

Well, help has arrived. With *Take My Word for It: A Dictionary of English Idioms*, Anatoly Liberman has done an admirable job of defining and tracing the history of a stunning list of idioms, some familiar, and many that will be new to many of us.

In a preface and a short introductory essay, Liberman shows that idioms are so varied—proverbs, similes, phrases that are totally puzzling, phrases referencing odd persons and places, phrases whose surface meaning is clear but whose force is in unstated overtones, and more—the term is hard to define. But for a quick working definition he gives: "a group of words whose meaning has to be learned or explained, even though in separation each of its components is clear" (p. 2).

Figurative language has a long history, but the use of idioms didn't really develop until the Renaissance. Homer has "wine-dark sea," and Biblical writers use parables, but as late as the Middle Ages language usage was quite literal. No one "gathered wool" (except from real sheep), "flew off the handle," or "paid through the nose" for anything. Liberman argues that the flowering of the use of idioms during the Renaissance constituted an evolution in human consciousness, akin to the revolution that occurred in the visual arts when artists first discovered how to use perspective to portray depth.

Liberman holds that to understand an idiom and the mental process behind how it was coined it is best to be aware of its entire recorded history. He points out that the effort to trace such history is full of pitfalls, prone to guess work, and littered with colorful, but dubious, explanations. By way of correction, Liberman has done his best to deliver serious scholarship, gathering up various suggested etymologies from the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), back issues of *Notes and Queries,* and other scholarly sources, gives full citations, and clearly states when an entomology is dubious, or simply unknown.

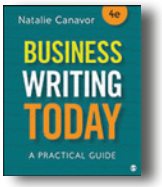
While the main text is presented in dictionary-style alphabetical entries, the book also includes theme, name, and word indexes to help the reader locate specific items. Whether you turn to the book for its serious scholarship, or just to explore and enjoy the many idioms that enliven our language, *Take My Word for It* is well worth your time.

Patrick Lufkin

Patrick Lufkin is an STC Fellow with experience in computer documentation, newsletter production, and public relations. He reads widely in science, history, and current affairs, as well as on writing and editing. He chairs the Gordon Scholarship for technical communication and co-chairs the Northern California technical communication competition.

Business Writing Today: A Practical Guide

Natalie Canavor. 2022. 4th ed. SAGE Publications. [ISBN 978-1-0718-5406-8. 382 pages, including index. US$75.00 (softcover).]



Business Writing Today: A Practical Guide is aptly named. Taking a straightforward, concept-by-concept approach to developing business writing skills, this book equips readers to think strategically, write powerfully, and connect positively with their audience.

As stated in the preface, "*Business Writing Today* is grounded in principles of psychology and the idea that good writing is good thinking" (p. xix). Writing is about relationship-building, and author Natalie Canavor understands what makes people respond or push back. In an increasingly global and diverse workplace, communicating with clarity and sensitivity is more important than ever.

Canavor leads readers through a "progressive learning experience" (p. xxi) as they master key aspects of solid business writing. Topics include seeing past personal filters to perceive others' points of view, targeting WIIFM ("What's in it for me?"), navigating cultural and generational divides, listening with empathy, creating strong business documents, working with visuals, writing for video, and preparing résumés and application letters.

The book is divided into sections: "How to Communicate in Writing" (Ch 1–3), "Sharpen and Energize Your Writing" (Ch. 4–6), "The Basics of Business Communication" (Ch. 7–9), "Writing for Online and Spoken Media" (Ch. 10–11), and "Into the Future" (Ch. 12). Every chapter includes numerous practice exercises and a "View from the Field," featuring industry heavy hitters who offer an insider's perspective on the chapter's theme.

I have used every edition of *Business Writing Today* in my university classes, going back to the more engagingly titled first edition, *Business Writing in the Digital Age* (SAGE Publications, 2011). However, there are some shortcomings related to classroom usability. Although the book is rich in before-and-after examples, formatting choices make them hard to distinguish from surrounding text, presenting challenges for class discussion. It would be easier to talk about examples if they were numbered or in a text box. Italics are used for most, but not all, examples (see, for example, pp. 196, 217, 218, 228, and 233), but it's a strain on the eyes and brain to read the longer stretches in italics, even for individuals without a reading or vision disability. Further, italics are used for emphasis in non-examples as well (see, for example, pp. 197 and 354), so the formatting message is inconsistent.

Another weakness is the lack of document models. Even when discussing résumé formats in Ch. 12, "Writing for the Hunt," no samples are provided. Yes, sample documents can readily be found online and in other sources, but a textbook at this price would ideally be one-stop shopping for students.

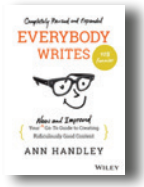
Overall, *Business Writing Today,* 4th edition, is an excellent tool for those seeking to improve their written communication skills in our post-pandemic world, where new ways of working demand new ways of communicating. This book can help readers at all levels of confidence in their writing ability grow and achieve success.

Bonnie Denmark

Bonnie Denmark is an STC Member and Coordinator of the Business and Technical Writing Option at Western Connecticut State University. Bonnie was previously a software developer and technical communicator, focusing on natural language applications, human interface, testing protocols, and health/science writing.

Everybody Writes: Your New and Improved Go-To Guide to Creating Ridiculously Good Content

Ann Handley. 2023. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. [ISBN 978-1-119-85416-6. 432 pages, including index. US$28.00 (hardcover).]



Everybody Writes: Your New and Improved Go-To Guide to Create Ridiculously Good Content by Ann Handley is a revised and improved edition published in 2023. The book is written by a marketer focusing on writing expertise, and it provides general and specific writing know-how for engaging readers' interest in the current digital era. Handley uses humor to help readers learn and believes good writing is more about thinking, rewriting, having fun, and focusing on readers (p. 129).

As writers, we often think fancy words such as extra letters and syllables make a better sentence. The most touching thing about this book anybody can write, and I enjoy, is that the simplest version of a word is the strongest (p. 133). In this book, you can see many practical examples of writing skills and tips. You should be able to apply it to your real-world writing whether you are a beginner or already have writing experience.

This review highlights several key sections of the book, including the importance of writing in the present tense for clarity (pp. 136–137), using active voice over passive voice (pp. 139–140) for liveliness, and making a friendly first impression to encourage readers to keep reading (pp. 74–76). The book also includes sections on storytelling in marketing, things marketers write, and content tools for research, knowledge management, productivity, and editing.

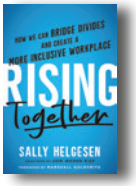
Section 51, the Six Elements of a Marketing Story, helps you understand how to shape the point of view for the reader (pp. 197–200). Marketers' attention in Part 4 shows 20 Things Marketers Write (pp. 277–376). Part 5 included content tools such as Research and Knowledge Management Tools, Productivity Tools, Editing Tools, and Readability Tools.

The reviewer enjoyed learning about the importance of structured ideas before writing, ways to organize writing based on structure, and the significance of fact-checking for credibility. Overall, the review praises *Everybody Writes* as a well-written, practical guidebook for writers, marketers, and storytellers, with the ability to transform writing in personal and business situations. The quote "Done is better than perfect" is mentioned as a takeaway from the book.

Sam Lee
Sam Lee is an STC member and a Policies & Procedures SIG manager. Sam has a Master of Technology Management, a Master of Electrical Engineering, and a Technical Writing Certificate. He is currently a Senior Electrical and Avionics System Engineer, where he supports avionics systems certification and writes aviation-related documentation.

Rising Together: How We Can Bridge Divides and Create a More Inclusive Workplace

Sally Helgesen. 2023. Hachette Book Group. [ISBN 978-0-306-8-2830-0. 256 pages. US$30.00 (hardcover).]



The Wall Street Journal stated that Sally Helgesen wrote "one of the best books on leadership of all time" and credited her with "bringing the language of inclusion to business" (back cover). *Rising Together: How We Can Bridge Divides and Create a More Inclusive Workplace* builds on Helgesen's previous writing about inclusion as she offers practical ways to build inclusion into the workplace. She does not focus on why inclusion is important. Instead, she has a focus on "how" to create a more inclusive workplace. This is in response to what audiences have asked her to talk and write about.

Before providing practical tips, Hegelsen gives a big picture comment by effectively arguing that a focus on inclusion in today's workplace is not surprising and instead a logical evolution. With the Great Resignation, companies are scrambling to find enough workers (p. xviii). An inclusive workplace where "everyone rises" can attract and keep top talent. This explains the interest today in how to create an inclusive workplace.

The organization of *Rising Together* revolves in part around what Helgesen calls triggers. For example, if a woman proposes an idea, and it falls on deaf ears, she may find a man expressing the same idea with a positive reception. Instead of this triggering the response—what a jerk he is or feeling for the woman that the situation is "impossible"—the woman can speak up and say she is happy to hear someone agreeing with her idea (p. 10). Yes, this is a bit of a work-around. Yet, Helgesen argues that this can be effective for the woman to get the credit she deserves instead of getting no recognition or simply venting to a sympathetic ear after the meeting.

If you are a manager wanting to improve on a poor track record of hiring and/or retaining people who create an inclusive workplace, a manager who wants to keep a currently effective inclusive workplace, an employee who wants to rise in the workplace, a student or teacher wanting to learn more about inclusivity, or any countless variation of this audience, you will find something of value in *Rising Together*. You will find practical information as well as an idealistic vision of how to rise together and bridge divides.

Jeanette Evans
Jeanette Evans is an STC Associate Fellow; active in the Ohio STC community, currently serving on the newsletter committee; and co-author of an ***Intercom*** column on emerging technologies in education. She holds an MS in technical communication management from Mercer University and undergraduate degree in education.

Closing the Loop: Systems Thinking for Designers

Sheryl Cababa. 2023. New York, NY: Rosenfeld Media. [ISBN 978-1-959029-88-5. 256 pages, including index. USD$54.99 (softcover).]

Rosenfeld Media has established itself as an industry leader in presenting UX trends and best practices to the world. Each book in their catalogue attempts to present a particular facet of the current state of the User Experience Design (UX) field, at least at time of publication. You can see this emphasis in *Closing the Loop: Systems Thinking for Designers* by Sheryl Cababa, a book that begins with a strong critique of one of the underpinning philosophies of UX: user-centered design (UCD).

Chapter 1 is entitled "The Shortcomings of User-Centered Design" and critiques the UCD process, which she claims "does not take into account the impact that designers have on their users beyond the direct use of their product" (p. 9). This limitation, Cababa further argues, can lead to "detrimental outcomes" for users who are lured into products and services by well-designed user experiences. To avoid this pitfall, she argues for a paradigm shift toward systems thinking, which, as she explains in Chapter 2, is founded on the assumption that "building an understanding of the complexity of existing systems, of the problem space, is fundamental to figuring out ways of improving the status quo" (p. 25).

Cababa continues to explore this shift in Chapter 3 when she argues that another popular philosophy, design thinking, "fails to acknowledge the privilege of the designer" (p. 56). To rectify this, she proposes that designers "disrupt the power imbalance between you as a designer and those who, in a traditional design-thinking process, you would be designing 'for'" by shifting the focus of the role of designer to that of facilitator, with the goal being to "draw out and integrate other stakeholders' expertise and experiences" (pp. 58–59).

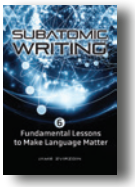
The rest of the book lays out a systems thinking process, that includes collecting data (Chapter 4), synthesizing data and mapping stakeholders (Chapter 5), mapping forces, or "conditions and drivers that make a system the way it is" (p. 123) (Chapter 6), creating a theory of change (Chapter 7), anticipating unintended consequences (Chapter 8), and engaging in speculative design, process for "imagining possible futures as a form of critique" (Chapter 9). Each chapter includes heuristics and examples that lay out the chapter's topic in terms even non-experts can understand clearly. This includes brief stories about the applications of systems thinking in the real world.

Ultimately, *Closing the Loop* is potentially very disruptive to current approaches to UX, which largely focus on the development of specific products and services, rather than on the systems these products and services rely on. It is a strong critique of many of the existing philosophies that drive what UX practitioners do daily. To say it is thought-provoking is to put it mildly. Readers will find within its pages not only important considerations for rethinking current design philosophies that govern UX, however, but also practical alternatives to many of the current approaches UX practitioners take when engaging in design.

Guiseppe Getto
Guiseppe Getto is a faculty member at Mercer University. He is also Director of Mercer's M.S. in Technical Communication Management.

Subatomic Writing: 6 Fundamental Lessons to Make Language Matter

Jamie Zvirzdin. 2023. Johns Hopkins University Press. [ISBN 978-1-4214-4612-7. 260 pages, including index. US$29.95 (softcover).]



"The demon wasn't as ugly as I'd feared, although the cheerful IKEA lighting and the sun-yellow rug in our library can make anything seem cozier, even a blue-skinned night fiend (p. 7). A very dubious quotation from what is overall, a textbook about grammar, style, syntax, and punctuation—a summary and application of rules like those in *The Chicago Manual of Style* or *Strunk and White.*

In *Subatomic Writing: 6 Fundamental Lessons to Make Language Matter*, Jamie Zvirzdin outlines her knowledge of advanced writing in detail and provides students with exercises at the end of each chapter. By day, Zvirzdin is a science writer and educator at Johns Hopkins University and, by night, a program analyst for the University of Utah.

Her unique approach incorporates her knowledge of the mechanics of grammar and science with her love of narrative, action, and mystery into a one-of-a-kind textbook. Zvirzdin's imagined demon is modeled after the famous hot/cold sorting demon of the brilliant physicist James Clerk Maxwell. The author uses her fabricated "demon" to suggest the metaphor of the book that "*particles of language are like particles of matter*" (p. 4). And when her house cat is "Schrodingered" (disappears) upon the threat of NOT creating a manuscript, Zvirzdin is forced to comply. To get her cat back by Halloween night, she composes six lessons. In each lesson, she takes a physics concept and likens it to some aspect of writing. Some of her metaphors work better than others, but for the reader it is the process of thinking about the validity of each that makes the book achieve its goal, to provide clarity and a source of communication between these elusive subjects that so desperately need each other for mutual success.

For example, there is a problem with her metaphor that likens writing to collisions between little balls: "Because if all the world is to be explained mechanically in terms of little balls (molecules, electrons, photons, gravitons, etc.), then the only way one ball affects another ball is if the little balls hit. If that is so, collision becomes the essence of physical interaction" (p. 16). Scientists who research molecular motion and thermodynamics will recognize this as an

overgeneralization about their topic—most molecules do not behave this way and that is why equations like the ideal gas law are just that—for unreal, ideal situations.

After several chapters of rather exhaustive definitions of physics terms (like quarks and leptons), Zvirzdin concludes her textbook with a return of her demon. To conclude, the mystery of the "Schrodingered cat" resolves itself when Zvirzdin submits her manuscript to the demo, and the cat miraculously reappears. A clever application of the statistically disappearing feline of quantum mechanics.

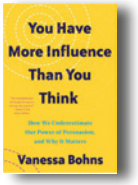
The narrative approach to *Subatomic Writing* provides humor and a breath of fresh air in an otherwise arduous, backbreaker science communication textbook. Zvirzdin tackles two challenging subjects by likening them to each other hoping to bring them in closer collaboration: a demon of a task.

Julie Kinyoun

Julie Kinyoun is an on-call chemistry instructor at various community colleges in Southern California. An avid reader, she enjoys reviewing books that help her become a better educator.

You Have More Influence Than You Think: How We Underestimate Our Powers of Persuasion, and Why It Matters

Vanessa Bohns. 2023. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. [ISBN 978-1-324-03595-4. 256 pages, including index. US$17.95 (softcover).]



In *You Have More Influence Than You Think: How We Underestimate Our Powers of Persuasion, and Why It Matters*, Vanessa Bohns, a social psychologist and professor of organizational behavior at Cornell University, uses psychology to illustrate the influence we yield on those around us. Through research—her own and others—along with personal anecdotes and real-world examples, Bohns demonstrates our ability to influence others without even trying and, more importantly, our responsibility to use that influence wisely.

In the first half of the book, Bohns highlights how we are oblivious to the impact we often have on others because we're focused on our own emotions and perceptions. Study after study shows that we underestimate how willing others are to help us if we ask because we're focused on our anxiety about asking others for help. Research shows that people will often do things that are clearly wrong if asked to because it is even harder to say "no." The takeaway is that "People want to do nice things for others. They want to feel the warm glow of helping and feel like good people. So, when you ask someone for something, you do put them on the spot, but you also give them an opportunity to feel good about themselves" (p. 96).

In the last half of the book, Bohns highlights the importance of how we use our influence. In chapter 5, "Misinformation, Inappropriate Asks, and Me Too," and in chapter 6, "Power and Perceived Influence," Bohns discusses how influence can be used for worse: crime, sexism, sexual harassment, opportunistic leaders, "consensual" relationships between a high-power person and a subordinate (Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky), and racism. Each of us wields influence, and because we often have so little understanding of our influence, we've likely—though unintentionally—used that influence in a harmful way. Bohns's hope is that by being aware of our influence, we "can use it more mindfully" (p. xv). This is even more critical for people in a position of power, such as managers or coaches. As Bohn puts it, "When we are in a position of power over someone else, we tend not to realize how little choice that person has to disagree with us or go against our suggestions" (p. 137).

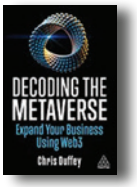
In conclusion, Bohns successfully offers a "nuanced understanding of [our] influence over others—one that allows [us] to more accurately recognize the influence [we] already have, not only so [we] feel more confident using that influence, but also so [we] feel more confident *not* using it" (p. 193).

Sara Buchanan

Sara Buchanan works at LCS, a property management software company, in Cincinnati, OH. In her free time, she's an avid reader, enjoys cooking, and doting on her cats: Buffy and Spike.

Decoding the Metaverse: Expand Your Business Using Web3

Chris Duffey. 2023. Kogan Page. [ISBN 978-1-3986-0904-4. 368 pages, including index. US$27.99 (softcover).]



Decoding the Metaverse: Expand Your Business Using Web3 is a book of commendable breadth but often disappointing depth. Chris Duffey, who leads strategic development for Adobe's

Creative Cloud, entices the reader with promises to illuminate the pathway to business success with the metaverse and related technologies. The only problem is that he was likely premature with writing this book. Currently, there are few mainstream metaverse success stories one can point to, so the reader should not expect to find detailed case studies of companies and entrepreneurs who have already begun mining the metaverse for profit. Instead, Duffey spends much of the book speculating on what the future might bring across an expansive array of domains, often with alarmingly optimistic statements such as, "Everything good about humanity will be amplified and enhanced by the metaverse" (p. 188). With such unqualified bold predictions, I fear that this book may not age gracefully.

The book's subtitle, *Expand Your Business Using Web3*, makes a curious pair with *Decoding the Metaverse*, because, as Duffey emphasizes, "The metaverse is not to be conflated with Web3; they are distinctly different and meet different needs" (p. 44). While he contends that "Web3 is a core enabler that unlocks the fullest potential of the metaverse" (p. 44), there is not a satisfactory explanation as to *why* other than conjecture about future potential interoperability between metaverse platforms and assets.

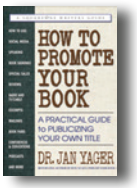
Beyond Web3 and the metaverse, the book also devotes chapters to subjects as wide-ranging as gaming, digital fashion, and ethics. Basically, the thematic thread supposedly tying all the disparate subjects of this book together—the promise of strategic business insight into the metaverse—is too thin to prevent the book from feeling at times like a series of stitched-together Wikipedia introductions about any and every topic that is even remotely tangential to the metaverse. I did not feel that I gained any particular strategic business insight from being told the date of the first commercial movie screening (p. 163) nor the history behind the development of the early text adventure game *Zork* (p. 139), for example.

Decoding the Metaverse would have benefited from a tighter focus and a slimmer page count. I also would have appreciated more graphics; the ones we do get are fantastic, such as "The Metaverse Model" (p. 45) that depicts the organization of the technological and social layers that make up the metaverse and "The Reality—Virtuality Continuum" (p. 253), which brilliantly differentiates the stages between the real environment and virtual reality. Wordiness aside, *Decoding the Metaverse* can be a great resource for discovering new terms and concepts for the technologically inclined reader to explore further; however, other books may be the preferred way to learn about them.

Josh Anderson
Josh Anderson, CPTC, is an Information Architect at Precision Content. Josh was an English teacher in Japan before earning a Master of Information at the University of Toronto.

How to Promote Your Book: A Practical Guide to Publicizing Your Own Title

Dr. Jan Yager. 2023. Square One Publishers. [ISBN 978-0-7570-0474-2. 278 pages, including index. US $17.95 (softcover).]



Dr. Jan Yager, author of *How to Promote Your Book: A Practical Guide to Publicizing Your Own Title* shares her experience as a publicist in the publishing industry and author of more than fifty books to provide a comprehensive, practical guide for authors to successfully promote their books. Yager's book also includes other authors' advice and perspective as she "…surveyed or interviewed more than a hundred authors who have written in a range of genres" (p. ix).

While Yager mentions that her book is useful for aspiring and new authors, as well as "a seasoned wordsmith who is looking to brush up on your promotional skills" (p. 2), I found the content to be more valuable for new authors. It seems that published authors would already be aware of much of the advice, having experienced one or more publishing cycles.

Yager writes in a conversational tone and is clearly passionate about helping authors achieve success. The book is well-organized and easy to follow. It begins with Part One: Book Promotion Basics that includes a publishing industry overview, audience types, media promotional (traditional and Internet), and the author's role in a book's success.

In Part Two: What to Do Before Your Book is Published, Yager covers how to prepare for a book's publication to maximize sales. Topics include creating a project timeline and obtaining blurbs and book reviews. In Part Three: What to Do After Your Book is Published, she describes creating a media kit, securing speaking engagements, and exhibiting at book fairs and trade shows.

Rather than discuss a generic, one-size-fits-all approach to promotion, Yager recognizes that there are a variety of publishing options and addresses how these different scenarios affect an author's approach throughout the book. Yager covers traditional (referred to as commercial), academic, and self-publishing. She also covers a hybrid publisher, which she defines as a "business that performs many of the same tasks as a commercial publisher… but requires the author to underwrite the cost of producing the book") (p. 226).

Although *How to Promote Your Book* does not specifically focus on publishing technical communication topics and includes sections that would not likely apply to these books, such as book tours or TV show interviews, it does contain valuable information that technical communication authors can use to create a successful promotional campaign. Such topics include obtaining blurbs and book reviews, exhibiting at trade shows, and creating podcasts. For technical communicators who are considering the self-publishing route, they will find Yager's advice and cautions regarding this option valuable.

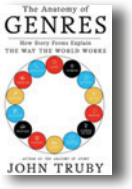
Yager is knowledgeable and passionate about her topic. Besides being a helpful guide through the promotion process, her book also serves as a valuable ongoing resource. The resource material includes samples, such as sample author bios, a glossary of publishing and promotional terminology, and a Resources section, organized by topic.

Ann Marie Queeney

Ann Marie Queeney is an STC senior member with more than 20 years' technical communication experience primarily in the medical device industry. Her STC experience includes serving as a Special Interest Group leader, 2020-2022 Board member, and CAC (Communities Affairs Committee) Chair. Ann Marie is the owner of A.M. Queeney, LLC.

The Anatomy of Genres: How Story Forms Explain How the World Works

John Truby. 2022. Picador. [ISBN 978-0-374-53922-1. 720 pages. US$20.00 (softcover).]



Essentially—or let's say, theoretically—Truby's *The Anatomy of Genres: How Story Forms Explain How the World Works* is about the 14 archetypal genres of novels that provide the foundation of all fiction. These genres span the major beliefs that govern our lives— the social, political, and religious beliefs that become the foundations of our existence. And they all build on our relation to ourselves, to each other, and to the universe.

Truby's book feels like a mixture of Homer, the *Bible*, and the *Mahabharata*. The value of this statement lies in the meaning of the word "feel:" It opens the doors of your senses where they all seem to flow out. And then flow together, carrying you off on a great river without a name, to some unknown destination. In other words, you sometimes get the feeling that the book is all over the place; that it lacks focus.

There are many good nuggets of information, though. Truby makes the excellent point that to differentiate yours from the tons of other books in the genre, you must "transcend" that genre (p.14). This can be done by changing the "beat;" giving the reader something they didn't expect to find in a book of that genre; "something they recognize—it's still in their world—but it's recast in a different light" (p. 15).

Another informational nugget is that *The Anatomy of Genres* goes so deeply into each genre that the readers must keep themselves from drowning in the details.

The first genre Truby discusses is Horror. Why? Because "The major distinction governing human existence is life versus death" (p. 22). He states that "horror as a modern genre is about 250 years old." But its elements have been part of Myth, the oldest genre, from the beginning" (p. 23); citing the Old Testament and Greek tragedies. Horror begins to shift from the supernatural to the psychological with the appearance of Poe's work, that brought it "down to earth" and made it more a part of everyday life (p. 24).

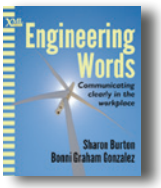
Two things that Truby omits is the historical novel, which has become a major literary form in modern times, and an index. Not every to-do book (one whose aim is teaching you to do things, like writing) has an index. But with the mountain of concepts and technical

terms that Truby discusses, the reader would benefit from having an index to consult. The problem is: *The Anatomy of Genres* already has 700 pages. And adding an index would make it harder to stuff it into the backpack.

Steven Darian
Darian is a professor emeritus of Applied Linguistics at Rutgers University. He has written 13 books that include *Technique in Nonfiction: The Tools of the Trade* (2019); *The Wanderer: Travels & Adventures Beyond the Pale* (2021); and *The Heretic's Book of Death & Laughter: The Role of Religion in Just About Everything* (2022).

Engineering Words: Communicating clearly in the workplace

Sharon Burton and Bonni Graham Gonzalez. 2023. XML Press. [ISBN 978-1-937434-30-4. 164 pages, including index. US$35.95 (softcover).]



One of the most common issues that engineers must overcome is poor communication skills. Many engineers are effective in their fields but dread speaking publicly or sharing their ideas. Sharon Burton and Bonni Graham Gonzalez seek to help in their book, *Engineering Words: Communicating clearly in the workplace*. They have perceived a lack of communications training for students of engineering and have written their book to fill this void. Burton and Gonzalez cover the most common communication environments that engineers encounter and discuss different strategies to communicate successfully in these situations. Though primarily aimed at college-level engineering students, the book's topics are applicable to practicing engineers, people in STEM-adjacent fields, and any professional hoping to communicate more effectively.

Engineering Words' 12 chapters each focus on a different communication domain. These include such topics as writing résumés, designing presentations, and many other topics. Each chapter briefly introduces the topic before diving into a more detailed exploration of strategies that engineers can use to succeed in the given context. While the breadth of topics covered in this book is impressive, each chapter only devotes about 10 pages to the topic, so someone looking for a deep study on speaking with your boss about project budgets, for instance, may want to look elsewhere. The book works best as a primer on what effective communication looks like in the engineering field. As a book written primarily for students, this is an understandable structure to showcase the different facets of engineering communication.

As a STEM-adjacent student myself, I found *Engineering Words* an interesting, enjoyable read. Rather than an impassive textbook, Burton and Gonzalez inject their book with personality and even humor, making the book approachable and easy to follow. Each chapter was useful and informative, although those already in the workforce may not find every chapter applicable to them. Still, even if a specific topic doesn't relate to a reader's needs, the core skills explained throughout the book can improve anyone's communication, in engineering or otherwise. Another strength of *Engineering Words* is its focus on accessibility and inclusivity. The authors try to write inclusively; as they state in the first chapter, "everyone that can be an engineer should be an engineer, regardless of their specific pronouns" (p. 3). They also touch on user-centered design principles for communicating to all readers, such as using high-contrast colors to accommodate those with vision impairments. This emphasis on inclusivity is nice to see in a text such as this.

Engineering Words is a great reference for prospective engineers hoping to improve their communication at work. Each chapter prepares readers for the realities of communicating in the workplace, and the strategies presented are generally useful for any reader. I recommend this book for anyone hoping to learn better communication skills. *Engineering Words* is a great starting place to begin this journey.

Nathan Guzman
Nathan Guzman is a graduate student studying technical communication at the University of Alabama–Huntsville. His background is in aerospace engineering with plans of becoming a full-time editor upon graduation. Nathan is an avid reader with interests in reading anything that expands his knowledge of the world and how it works.

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STC Summit Pre-Conference Courses (full day)	6
STC Summit Pre-Conference Courses (half day)	3
STC Annual Summit	8
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Sean C. Herring, Editor

The following articles on technical communication have appeared recently in other journals. The abstracts are prepared by volunteer journal monitors. If you would like to contribute, contact Sean Herring at SeanHerring@MissouriState.edu.

"Recent & Relevant" does not supply copies of cited articles. However, most publishers supply reprints, tear sheets, or copies at nominal cost. Lists of publishers' addresses, covering nearly all the articles we have cited, appear in *Ulrich's international periodicals directory*.

Audience analysis

Gran got tech: Inclusivity and older adults

Schumacher, R. M. (2023). *Journal of User Experience, 18*(2), 62–67. [doi: none]

This essay calls for UX professionals "to be more inclusive of older adults in [UX] design and research." The author provides numerous examples of the "poor usability and excessive functionality of digital devices and websites" that create obstacles for older users attempting to conduct online banking, access online healthcare and government information, purchase electronic tickets, connect to streaming devices, and participate in other online activities. While acknowledging the value of security technology such as multifactor authentication, the author notes that the complexity of these features may exclude older users from taking full advantage of them. The author recommends UX professionals deepen their understanding of older user groups, reduce unnecessary points of technological friction, and include more older adults in product design and testing.

Lyn Gattis

Collaboration

The structuration of identification on organizational members' social media

Piercy, C. W., & Carr, C. T. (2023). *International Journal of Business Communication*, *60*, 464–486. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329488420955215

"The structurational model of identification is applied to test structures that may lead to sharing organizational membership on social media and increased organizational identification. [The authors] propose and test how antecedents (e.g., social media use, organizational prestige) relate to acts of identification on social media and promote organizational identification. United States working adults (N = 303) responded to an online survey about hypothesized motivational structures, online disclosures of organizational affiliation, and organizational identification. Results show three specific structures significantly predicted one's willingness to share her or his organizational affiliation across social media: personae overlap, social media use, and organizational prestige. Commitment and turnover intentions were, surprisingly, not direct predictors of organizational affiliation disclosure. Implications for individuals, organizations, and both organizational and computer-mediated theory are presented."

Katherine Wertz

Unofficial vaccine advocates: Technical communication, localization, and care by COVID-19 vaccine trial participants

Campeau, K. (2023). *Technical Communication Quarterly, 32,* 149-164, https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2022.2100485

"This article reports on an interview-based study with COVID-19 vaccine trial participants (n = 40) and addresses three strategies participants used to localize vaccine communication for their communities: (1) presenting embodied evidence, (2) demystifying clinical research, (3) operationalizing relationships. These strategies contribute to understandings of embodiment, relationships, and localization in technical and professional communication (TPC). They also show how participants used TPC to resist dominant individualist approaches to health and to practice collective care."

Rhonda Stanton

Communication

The use of enterprise social media and its disparate effects on the social connectivity of globally dispersed workers

Kim, H., & Pilny, A. (2023). *International Journal of Business Communication*, *60*, 420–438. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329488419877233

"Research has suggested that the use of enterprise social media (ESM) can help employees enhance their social connectivity. Despite the potential benefits, the effects of ESM use can be multifaceted since workers may engage with the tool in varied ways. Drawing on the three metaphors of ESM as a *social lubricant*, *leaky pipe*, and *echo chamber*, this study investigates different patterns of ESM use and their influences on distributed workers' social networks. The analysis of full network data collected in a global high-tech organization revealed that ESM use for company-wide communication was positively associated with globally dispersed workers' network size, betweenness, and external connections. By contrast, ESM use for private group communication was negatively linked to their network size and betweenness. The findings indicate that ESM use may lead to disparate social connectivity outcomes, depending on the usage patterns that vary by groups and individuals."

Katherine Wertz

Design

Visualizing a drug abuse epidemic: Media coverage, opioids, and the racialized construction of public health frameworks

Welhausen, C.A.: (2023). *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 53(2), 106-127. https://doi.org/10.1177/00472816221125186

"In technical and professional communication, the social justice turn calls on us to interrogate sites of positionality, privilege, and power to help foreground strategies that can empower marginalized groups. [The author] propose[s] that mainstream media coverage of the opioid epidemic represents such a site because addiction to these drugs, which initially primarily affected White people, has been positioned as a public health issue rather than a criminal justice problem. [The author] explore[s] the strategies that were used to create this positioning by investigating themes in the visual rhetoric as conveyed through data visualizations and in the text of the articles in which these graphics were published. [The author's] results align with two previous studies that confirmed this public health framing. [The author] also observed an emphasis on mortality, which contributes to our understanding of rhetorical strategies that can be used to engender support rather than condemnation for those suffering from drug addiction."

Anita Ford

Diversity

Exploring healthcare communication gaps between U.S. universities and their international students: A technical communication approach

Balghare, A. J. (2023). *Communication Design Quarterly, 11*(1), 19–31. https://doi.org/10.1145/3563890.3563892

"U.S. healthcare is a complicated system not just for U.S.-born citizens but also international students in the U.S. While universities inform international students about how U.S. healthcare functions, these students still struggle with navigating healthcare owing to the cultural and technical challenges they face with the system. This paper investigates how U.S. healthcare information can be conveyed effectively by universities so that international students navigate healthcare with fewer challenges. This research was conducted using qualitative methods with 12 international student participants at a U.S. university. Using the collected data, the study provides recommendations to improve healthcare communication on campuses and insights to increase the scope of this study to further investigate international students' healthcare access challenges."

Lyn Gattis

Education

"Who am I fighting for? Who am I accountable to?": Comradeship as a frame for nonprofit community work in technical communication

Carlson, E. B. (2023). *Technical Communication Quarterly, 32,* 165-180, https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2022.2085810

"While entrepreneurship is a pervasive cultural concept, it is not universally applicable. Drawing on a year-long study with nonprofit workers, this piece articulates a frame for understanding technical and professional communication work within nonprofits rooted in comradeship, which privileges community needs, everyday people, listening, and solidarity across stakeholder groups. Such a frame offers a more nuanced understanding of how accountability frames the work of nonprofit employees and other stakeholders dedicated to social justice."

Rhonda Stanton

Ethical issues

Leadership is needed for ethical ChatGPT: Character, assessment, and learning using artificial intelligence (AI)

Crawford, J., Cowling, M., & Allen, K. (2023). *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 20(3). https://doi.org/10.53761/1.20.3.02

"The OpenAI's ChatGPT-3, or Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer was released in November 2022 without significant warning, and has taken higher education by storm since. The artificial intelligence (AI)- powered chatbot has caused alarm for practitioners seeking to detect authenticity of student work. Whereas some educational doomsayers predict the end of education in its current form, we propose an alternate early view. We identify in this commentary a position where educators can leverage AI like ChatGPT to build supportive learning environments for students who have cultivated good character. Such students know how to use ChatGPT for good, and can engage effectively with the ChatGPT application. In building our ChatGPT argument, we acknowledge the existing literature on plagiarism and academic integrity, and consider leadership as a root support mechanism, character development as an antidote, and authentic assessment as an enabler. In doing so, we highlight that while ChatGPT – like papermills, and degree factories before it – can be used to cheat on university exams, it can also be used to support deeper learning and better learning outcomes for students. In doing so, we offer a commentary that offers opportunities for practitioners, and research potential for scholars."

Yvonne Wade Sanchez

Power, freedom, and privacy on a discipline-and-control Facebook, and the implications for internet governance

Cheung, M., & Chen, Z. T. (2022). *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, 65*(4), 467–484. https://doi.org/10.1109/TPC.2022.3191103

". . . Despite intensified privacy concerns and crises over social media, there is little research on the correlations between users' privacy perception and protection in non-Western settings." This study explores the extent to which "Hong Kong Facebook users [are] willing to sacrifice control over their information in exchange for self-expression, sociality, and intimacy in their social roles and relationships. . . ." The study was "[i]nformed by the recent literature on the privacy paradox and Foucault and Deleuze's work on power, the unbalanced and normalizing power relationship between Facebook and its users in Eastern contexts . . . identified as a synthesis of discipline and control." To analyze "privacy perception and protection" the authors surveyed 797 young users in Hong Kong in three areas: "Facebook usage, attitudes and behaviors, and basic demographics." According to the authors, the survey data support the hypothesis "that the privacy paradox is evident for Facebook users in Hong Kong . . . [and] excessive Facebook use leads to reactive privacy awareness and normalization behaviors." The authors "believe that technology giants, such as Facebook, should be pioneers in safeguarding users' privacy while encouraging the establishment of social relationships and freedom of expression. The implications for internet governance are discussed from a multistakeholder perspective."

Lyn Gattis

Updated guidance on the reporting of race and ethnicity in medical and science journals

Frey, T. (2023). American Medical Writers Association Journal, 38(1), 36-39. [doi: none]

"The language used to describe study participants in medical literature is of paramount importance. The objective is to use the terms that people use to describe themselves while also being sensitive and consistent, supporting diversity, and conveying respect. It is also important to medical editors that a style guide reflects [their] responsibilities and need for clear guidance. To this end, the AMA Manual of Style committee reassessed [their] guidance on race and ethnicity soon after its release in February 2020 because [they] realized that [their] guidance already needed to be updated. [The committee] started with some small steps, like deciding to capitalize all racial and ethnic categories including Black and White, and then ended up dismantling the entire section in [their] quest to develop more robust, comprehensive, and thoughtful guidance. After almost a year of research, updates, external review, and further revision, [the committee] published [their] efforts to garner public feedback, which was successful and led to further revision and review. When [the committee was] confident that [their] guidance met [their] objectives, [they] published [their] revision in August 2021. Updates include definitions of commonly used terms associated with race and ethnicity, concerns and controversies in health care and research, racial and ethnic collective term usage, alphabetization of racial and ethnic categories, and geographic origin and regionalization considerations, and [they] provide examples to help guide authors and editors. [This] current guidance is more reflective and complete, and [the committee plans] to make further revisions as the language and culture evolve."

Walter Orr

Health communication

The Coping with COVID Project: Participatory public health communication

Swacha, K. Y. (2023). *Communication Design Quarterly, 11*(1), 4–18. https://doi.org/10.1145/3563890.3563891

"This paper reports on The Coping with COVID Project, a qualitative study and public-facing platform that invited participants to share their experiences, via stories and images, with navigating COVID-related public health guidelines. The study revealed daily activities during the pandemic summarized in three themes: lived 'compliance'; emplaced, storied negotiations; and affective, embodied efforts. In light of such findings, this article outlines recommendations for a participatory, actionable story and visual-driven

approach to public health communication that recognizes the various contexts—e.g., physical, material, affective, structural—which impact how such communication is interpreted and acted upon by people in their daily lives. A heuristic is included for communicators, researchers, and community members to use in enacting this approach."

Lyn Gattis

Information management

A content analysis of HIV-related stigmatizing language in the scientific literature, From 2010-2020: Findings and recommendations for editorial policy

Parisi, C.E., Varas-Rodriguez, E., Algarin, A.B., Richards, V., Li, W., Cruz Carrillo, L., Ibanez, G.E. (2023). Health Communication. Advanced online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2023.2207289

"Despite negative effects of HIV-related stigma on people with HIV, some scientific literature continues to use stigmatizing terms. Our study aimed to explore the use of HIV-related stigmatizing language in the scientific literature between 2010 and 2020 based on 2015 UNAIDS terminology guidelines. We searched for articles with the stigmatizing term "HIV/AIDS-infected" or any variations that were peer-reviewed, published between 2010 and 2020, and in English or with an English translation. Our search yielded 26,476 articles that used the stigmatizing term of interest. Frequencies on the variables of interest (journal, year, and country) were run. The use of these terms increased from 2010 to 2017 and decreased from 2018 to 2020. Most journals using the terms were HIV/AIDS specific or on infectious diseases, but the journal with the greatest frequency of use was on general science and medicine. Thirty-six percent of the articles emanated from the United States. To reduce the use of stigmatizing language in the HIV literature, action should be taken by authors, reviewers, editors, educators, and publishers should create formal policies promoting use of non-stigmatizing language."

Walter Orr

Instructions

Constructing structured content on WordPress: Emerging paradigms in web content management

Carter, D. (2023). *Communication Design Quarterly, 11*(1), 42–52. https://doi.org/10.1145/3563890.3563894

"Web content management systems (WCMSs) are widely used technologies that, like previous writing tools, shape how people think about and create documents. Despite their influence and ubiquity, however, WCMSs have received exceedingly little attention from scholars interested in social aspects of technology. [The author] begin[s] to address this gap by analyzing the development of WordPress's content creation experience through the lens of structured content. Based on this analysis, [the author] contribute[s] to ongoing discussions of content management by first suggesting that concepts such as structured content need to be understood as the contingent products of technical lineages and technical and social relationships and by second drawing attention to emerging paradigms of content creation, such as the merging of content creation and arrangement and the conflation of visual and abstract representations of content objects."

Lyn Gattis

Intercultural communication

Relationship cultivation via social media during the COVID-19 pandemic: Evidence from China and the U.S.

Huang, Q., Lynn, B. J., Dong, C., Ni, S., & Men, L. R. (2023). *International Journal of Business Communication*, *60*, 512–542. https://doi.org/10.1177/23294884211067805

"This study explored the relationship cultivation and social media strategies companies used to cultivate relationships with their publics in two culturally distinct markets of China and the U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic. A quantitative content analysis of Weibo ($n = 756$) and Twitter ($n = 645$) posts from

Fortune 500 companies in China ($n = 30$) and the U.S. ($n = 30$) respectively was conducted to examine the effects of their relational efforts on public engagement. Results showed that certain relationship cultivation strategies and use of social media functions effectively increased public engagement in both China and the U.S., although on different levels. Both Chinese and U.S. companies most frequently adopted the strategy of openness. While the openness strategy was most effective at raising engagement levels in the U.S., publics of Chinese companies became more engaged when companies used the access strategy. Also, publics of Chinese companies showed higher levels of engagement and more positive emotions toward companies' social media messages than their U.S. counterparts. The findings advance our understanding of organization-public relationships in a worldwide disaster setting, with insights informing the global public relations theory and practices."

Katherine Wertz

Leadership

Managing in writing: Recommendations from textual patterns in managers' email communication

Molek-Kozakowska, K. & Molek-Winiarska, D. (December 2022). *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*. [doi: none]

https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906221137860

"This study draws from personality psychology and linguistics of written communication to explore the characteristics of self-selected well-written email communications (N=273) solicited from Polish managers who organized and supervised the (remote) work of their units during the COVID-19 period. The focus is on the writing of managers with above-average levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness, as these personality factors are predictors of efficacy in the completion of two work-related goals, Achievement and Communion, according to the Theory of Purposeful Work Behavior. The linguistic patterns responsible for effective email communication are identified through both automated and qualitative textual analyses of the email sample. The study has implications for management training via the assumption that linguistic patterns that a reflexive manager uses in writing are subjected to monitoring and can be modeled and adapted to. Specific recommendations for managerial writing styles concern informational, instructional, explanatory, feedback, and query messages."

Diana Fox Bentele

Political discourse

A corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of news construction of the Flint water crisis

Kong. Y. (2022). *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication, 65*(4), 450–466. https://doi.org/10.1109/TPC.2022.3200286

". . . Covering a multilayered disaster that grew from a local story to a national one, the ways that news media at different levels construct the Flint water crisis have not been previously explored. . . .This study integrates corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis to analyze 1858 news reports about the Flint water crisis published between 2014 and 2018 [using] keywords as a core analytical technique to compare the local/regional and national news coverage. . . . The results show that both local and national news reports overemphasized government activities while downplaying the unofficial voices of Flint residents and community activists. In addition, national newspapers were more likely than local newspapers to use racial cues in describing the Flint community and to associate the crisis with other social problems. . . . This study suggests that news media should provide wide coverage of the affected community's efforts in risk/crisis communication rather than reproducing official messages. News representations should be cautious of strengthening stereotypes or forming negative conceptual associations of traditionally disenfranchised communities."

Lyn Gattis

Navigating water cooler talks without the water cooler: Uncertainty and information seeking during remote socialization

Woo, D., Endacott, C.G., & Myers, K.K. (May 2023). *Management Communication Quarterly,37* (2). https://doi.org/10.1177/08933189221105916

"Research on newcomer uncertainty and information seeking behaviors has largely assumed that newcomers could interact with and observe others in physical work settings. This study examined how organizational newcomers sought information during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic without such possibility. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 30 individuals who began jobs remotely between February and November 2020, we uncovered three major areas of uncertainty: workplace relationships, task/role performance, and organizational norms. Our findings demonstrate how these newcomers managed the uncertainties through six information seeking tactics: organizing virtual small talks; initiating unsanctioned in-person meetings; asking overt and targeted questions; utilizing digital repositories; unintentional limit testing; and anticipating future information seeking. We discuss implications for remote newcomer socialization and provide propositions for future research."

Diana Fox Bentele

Slack, social justice, and online technical communication pedagogy

Sano-Franchini, J., Jones Jr, A.M., Ganguly, P., Robertson, C., Shafer, L., Wagnon, M., Awotayo, OI, Bronson, M. (2023). *Technical Communication Quarterly, 32,* 134-148, https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2022.2085809

"This Methodologies and Approaches piece interfaces conversations about social justice pedagogies in technical and professional communication (TPC), Black TPC, and online TPC instruction to discuss the social justice affordances of Slack in online instruction. Drawing on our experiences using Slack within an online graduate course during the COVID-19 pandemic, we consider how Slack supports pedagogical community building and accessibility in online instruction before presenting a framework for assessing instructional technologies in terms of social justice."

Rhonda Stanton

Public relations

Making a case for Political technical communication (Pxtc)

Cheek, R. (2023). *Technical Communication Quarterly, 32,* 121-133, https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2022.2079726

"In this article, I argue that the accelerated adoption of political technology during the COVID-19 pandemic evinces exigency for a rhetorically grounded framework to teach, research, and practice political technical communication (PxTC) as a sub-discipline. As a starting point, I use a rhetorical genre studies approach to identify political social actions that separate political communication technologies into four distinct genres: election, electioneering, constituent services, and punditry."

Rhonda Stanton

Signaling, verification, and identification: The way corporate social advocacy generates brand loyalty on social media

Park, K., & Jiang, H. (2023). *International Journal of Business Communication*, *60*, 439–463. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329488420907121

"Scholars have become increasingly interested in the importance of corporate social advocacy to an organization's bottom line. However, few researchers have investigated the subliminal mechanism with which corporations' political engagement attracts public attention and creates positive corporate-public relationships. This study examines corporations' identification with sociopolitical issues as an identity signaling practice. Rooted in the signaling and social identity theories, this study proposes a model that demonstrates the positive effects of corporate social advocacy activities on brand loyalty. This study sheds light on the role of brand community engagement as a signal verification process. Public-company identification leads to brand loyalty, which indicates the public's acceptance of a corporation's signal. [The authors] tested [their] proposed model through an online survey with participants recruited from Amazon

Mechanical Turk (N = 960). Theoretical and practical contributions of this study were discussed."

Katherine Wertz

Research

The structuration of identification on organizational members' social media

Piercy, C. W., & Carr, C. T. (2023). *International Journal of Business Communication*, *60*, 464–486. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329488420955215

"The structurational model of identification is applied to test structures that may lead to sharing organizational membership on social media and increased organizational identification. [The authors] propose and test how antecedents (e.g., social media use, organizational prestige) relate to acts of identification on social media and promote organizational identification. United States working adults (N = 303) responded to an online survey about hypothesized motivational structures, online disclosures of organizational affiliation, and organizational identification. Results show three specific structures significantly predicted one's willingness to share her or his organizational affiliation across social media: personae overlap, social media use, and organizational prestige. Commitment and turnover intentions were, surprisingly, not direct predictors of organizational affiliation disclosure. Implications for individuals, organizations, and both organizational and computer-mediated theory are presented."

Katherine Wertz

Rhetoric

Identifying digital rhetoric in the telemedicine user interface

Campbell, J.L.: (2023). *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 53(2), 89-105. https://doi.org/10.1177/00472816221125184

"Telemedicine is an alternative healthcare delivery system whereby patients access digital technology to consult with a physician virtually. Patients first interact with telemedicine via a consumer-facing website. Telemedicine promises numerous benefits to patients, such as increased access to healthcare, yet poor usability of the telemedicine user interface (UI) may hinder patient acceptance and adoption of the service. The telemedicine UI moderates patients' ability to utilize telemedicine, and therefore it must be usable, but it must also be rhetorical to motivate patients to perform certain actions. Digital rhetoric refers to UI elements that influence user actions and knowledge and is tied to usability because of these same human–computer interaction (HCI) factors. This study examined the usability of three telemedicine provider UIs and by identifying usability problems, reveals digital rhetoric that is significant to telemedicine UIs. The article concludes by offering heuristics of digital rhetoric that lead to optimal usability."

Anita Ford

Working to resonate: Rhetorical mapping of disciplinary stances about technology, risk, and the brain

Lambrecht, K. (2023). *Technical Communication Quarterly, 32,* 196-211, https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2022.2100484

"Our largest multidisciplinary problems outpace disciplinary training designed to reinforce boundaries. Using an interdisciplinary conversation about adolescent brain imaging, I argue that disciplinary stances (interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary) operate like rhetorical stases, helping diagnose where conversations build or diverge among experts. Because what constitutes interdisciplinarity is contested, mapping rhetorical features of each disciplinary stance stabilizes definitional debates by grounding interactions in specific discursive practices and offers technical

communicators ways to facilitate and participate in stronger crossdisciplinary communication."

Rhonda Stanton

Scientific writing

Leveraging Artificial Intelligence, Natural Language Processing, and Natural Language Generation in Medical Writing

Palasamudram D., Karunakaran, K.S., Gaur, P., Kamath, A.M., Saha, P. & Purushotam, T. (2023). American Medical Writers Association Journal, 38(1), 45-50. [doi: none]

"Medical writing is a process that generates a variety of documents in the biomedical domain, including but not limited to clinical reports, regulatory reports, protocol documents, patient narratives, plain language summaries, and so on. Medical writing is complex and time-consuming because a writer must refer to multiple sources, sift through a large volume of documents, maintain data integrity, perform review of literature, do interpretation of results, summarize, and so on. These challenges can be addressed and minimized substantially by adopting artificial intelligence, specifically cognitive search, natural language processing (NLP), and natural language generation (NLG) models and other techniques. Given the recent advances in language models for NLG, the time is ripe for a product in the medical writing domain that integrates and automates search capabilities, provides cognitive processing, and generates content using NLG. This white paper takes scientific manuscript writing as an example to provide insights into the way NLP and NLG can augment, automate, and expedite the process of writing a wide variety of biomedical documents. It looks at the current limitations of technology and ways to address those. Finally, it provides recommendations on how these technologies can be used to create a single system or product. Such an approach has the potential to expand into multiple areas in the biomedical domain, with medical writing as the first challenge."

Walter Orr

Social Justice

Questioning neoliberal rhetorics of wellness: Designing programmatic interventions to better support graduate instructor wellbeing

Clem, S., & Buyserie, B. (2023). *Communication Design Quarterly, 11*(1), 32–41. https://doi.org/10.1145/3563890.3563893

"Previous research has recognized the neoliberal trends that permeate the rhetorics of academic wellness, placing the responsibility for wellbeing on individuals rather than institutions and systems. In this study, the authors implemented a participatory action research (PAR) project to collaborate with different stakeholders in one university writing program and develop programmatic approaches to support the wellbeing one subset of academic faculty: graduate student instructors. Along with an account of how [they] adapted [their] PAR methodology to align with the wellness needs of [their] participants, [the authors] also provide a description and analysis of the intervention developed collaboratively in the PAR group. [They] end with five takeaways that researchers and stakeholders in graduate student education can apply to developing programmatic interventions that better support graduate instructor wellbeing: 1) research methodologies should adapt to foreground wellbeing; 2) productive conversations about wellbeing should start by acknowledging and validating the lived experience of graduate instructors; 3) students want to be involved in programmatic processes and procedures that support their wellbeing; 4) facilitating (but not requiring) non-productive social interaction among grad students can support GI wellbeing; 5) the work of supporting wellbeing is never fully done—[the authors] call on administrators, faculty members, and students to continue this work."

Lyn Gattis

Teaching

Feature on teaching and technology: Teaching MBA students business report writing using social media technologies

Mehra, P. (May 2023). *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly,86* (2). https://doi.org/10.1177/23294906231165569

Similar to techniques such as user-analysis and writing for a specific audience that technical writers do, this study used case studies of social media posts to move MBA students to analyze users and make decisions for reports and presentations. "Data-driven decision making has now moved beyond its traditional domains … to 'softer subjects,' such as human resource management, organization behavior, and business communication. In this context, teaching with technology encourages students to … communicate across a wide variety of stakeholders. In the era of multimodal forms of communication and multiple data sources, management students must be analytical when writing compelling reports and giving persuasive presentations. They should be well versed in using both quantitative and qualitative techniques for report writing and presentation. Drawing on authentic user-generated comments on social media, this article presents two case studies … to demonstrate how master's in business administration (MBA) students could derive insights from the online comments to make strategic decisions for organizational benefit and make reports based on those findings. The article asserts that this could help to cultivate a data-analytic mindset among the students by preparing them to communicate small (and big) data-driven analysis to relevant stakeholders. It attempts to suggest ways to develop MBA students' ability to analyze their potential audiences as well as to generate meaningful insights from the available information on social media websites."

Diana Fox Bentele

Technology

Evaluating and ranking the digital content generation components for marketing the libraries and information centres' goods and services using fuzzy TOPSIS technique

Naseri, Zahra; Noroozi Chakoli, Abdolreza; Malekolkalami, Mila (2023). *Journal of Information Science*, (49)1, 261-282. https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551521998045

"Since content audiences, including libraries and information centres, are increasingly geared to digital environments and virtual networks, the production and delivery of high-quality digital content are becoming continuously important. So far, several components have been introduced by researchers for evaluating the quality of digital content generation. However, due to the uncertainty of the importance rate and value of each of these components, it has not yet been possible to use them effectively to evaluate the content produced. This study aimed to rank the components of content generation to allow accurate evaluation of them for users as well as content providers and distributors including libraries and marketers. The ranked content can motivate digital content producers and distributors to better evaluate the quality of digital content, better attract customers and make more effective decisions about the quality of digital content use based on their specific goals. Initially, 42 of the most important components were identified from the literature. Then, the next steps were taken to rank these components, and based on three rounds of Delphi interviews, the experts' views on the importance rate of each of the components were obtained, analysed and ranked. Since in this ranking, the importance of a wide range of components should be highlighted towards each other, the fuzzy TOPSIS technique was emphasised for analysing the views of 16 experts in the field of content generation in Iran. This ranking indicated that components such as 'findable and access', 'non-disturbing and helpful', 'clear' and 'remarkable' are the main pillars of content generation and are of the utmost importance. The results can be used as an effective tool to improve the quality of content. Moreover, it increases audience engagement in digital environments and social

networks, and encourages them to make more use of the digital content of libraries."

Yvonne Wade Sanchez

Usability studies

Embodying empathy: Using game design as a maker pedagogy to teach design thinking

Colby, R.S. (2023). *Technical Communication Quarterly, 32,* 181-195, https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2022.2077453

"This article argues that game design can be used to teach design thinking within a pedagogy of making. It analyzes qualitative survey responses from 12 writing teachers who asked students to design social justice games and argues that games not only give students practice in design thinking but that, as multimodal, embodied systems, games can enact social theories and, as such, be a way for students to empathize with and design for wicked social problems."

Rhonda Stanton

User experience

Chatbot-Based Services: A study on customers' reuse intention

Silva, F.A.; Shojaei, A.S.; Barbosa, B. (2023). *Journal of Theoretical & Applied Electronic Commerce Research.* Vol. 18(1), 457-474. https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer18010024

"The main objective of this article is to investigate the factors that influence customers' intention to reuse chatbot-based services. The study employs a combination of the technology acceptance model (TAM) with other contributions in the literature to develop a theoretical model that predicts and explains customers' intention to reuse chatbots. The research uses structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the proposed hypotheses. Data collected from 201 chatbot users among Portuguese consumers were analyzed, and the results showed that user satisfaction, perceived usefulness, and subjective norm are significant predictors of chatbot reuse intentions. Additionally, the findings indicated that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and trust have a positive impact on attitudes toward using chatbots. Trust was found to have a significant impact on perceived usefulness, user satisfaction, and attitudes toward using chatbots. However, there was no significant effect of attitude toward using chatbots, perceived ease of use, trust, and perceived social presence on reuse intentions. The article concludes with theoretical contributions and recommendations for managers."

Yvonne Wade Sanchez

A comparison of SUS, UMUX-LITE, and UEQ-S

Schrepp, M., Kollmorgen, J., & Thomaschewski, J. (2023). *Journal of User Experience, 18*(2), 86–104. [doi: none]

"A loyal customer base depends upon a good user experience over the product's complete lifetime. Successful products are continuously developed over a long period. Their functionality and complexity typically grow over years, so it is important to measure their user experience continuously. A carefully selected, effective questionnaire can collect quantitative results. But with so many established UX questionnaires available, it is often difficult to choose a suitable one for a specific project. The task becomes more complex if different UX questionnaires are used and results must be compared. It is essential to understand the relationship between user experience data collected with different questionnaires. [The authors] investigated three common user experience questionnaires, SUS, UMUX-LITE, and UEQ-S, used to evaluate four common products in an online study of 435 participants: Netflix®, PowerPoint® (PPT), Zoom®, and BigBlueButton™ (BBB). In this way, the measured scale scores of the questionnaires could be compared for these products. Results showed SUS and UMUX-LITE scores as nearly identical for all four products. For usability or UX quality, [the researchers] found that the selection of the survey has only a limited impact, but for overall UX quality there were clear differences between SUS, UMUX-LITE, and UEQ-S."

Lyn Gattis

Privacy in social media friendships with direct supervisors: A psychological contract perspective

Cistulli, M. D., & Snyder, J. L. (2023). *International Journal of Business Communication*, *60*, 403–419. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329488419856072

"Social media in modern companies can connect workers with their supervisors in myriad ways via multiple platforms. This study analyzes the perceived relationships between workers and their supervisors using the theoretical framework of psychological contract violation (PCV). The role of social media in the workplace in terms of privacy and trust between workers and their supervisors and workers' organizational commitment was analyzed. Demographic information, communication channels (platforms), and the source of the social media relationship request were also considered. An online survey of full- and part-time employees yielded a diverse sample of 327 participants. This social media privacy research is consistent with previous literature on e-mail privacy. Both social media privacy and PCV influenced perceptions of (supervisor) trust. Additionally, PCV and trust influenced perceptions of affective organizational commitment. Implications of the results are discussed."

Katherine Wertz

The user experience of low-techs: From user problems to design principles

Colin, C., & Martin, A. (2023). *Journal of User Experience, 18*(2), 68–85. [doi: none]

"Our technical culture is characterized by the development of increasingly complex artifacts. In this article, [the authors] introduce low-techs (sometimes termed 'appropriate technologies'), which are alternative technologies designed to use fewer resources, target priority needs, and aim for a positive social and environmental impact. [The authors] describe their relevance for user experience researchers and practitioners interested in tackling environmental crises, and [they] discuss what actions can be conducted to improve low-techs' design and dissemination. Finally, from a survey of 396 participants, [they] derived 14 general user experience problems for low-techs to propose seven corresponding design principles: identify priority needs to derive necessary functionality, strike the right balance between empowerment and assistance, pay attention to non-functional features, facilitate discoverability, make artifacts and operation transparent, develop users' technical knowledge and skills, and compensate increased material loads and deficits. Practitioners can use these design principles to guide their development of low-techs."

Lyn Gattis

Writing

Constructing structured content on WordPress: Emerging paradigms in web content management

Carter, D. (2023). *Communication Design Quarterly, 11*(1), 42–52. https://doi.org/10.1145/3563890.3563894

"Web content management systems (WCMSs) are widely used technologies that, like previous writing tools, shape how people think about and create documents. Despite their influence and ubiquity, however, WCMSs have received exceedingly little attention from scholars interested in social aspects of technology. [The author] begin[s] to address this gap by analyzing the development of WordPress's content creation experience through the lens of structured content. Based on this analysis, [the author] contribute[s] to ongoing discussions of content management by first suggesting that concepts such as structured content need to be understood as the contingent products of technical lineages and technical and social relationships and by second drawing attention to emerging paradigms of content creation, such as the merging of content creation and arrangement and the conflation of visual and abstract representations of content objects."

Lyn Gattis