

Edited Collection Call for Chapter Proposals

Equipping Technical Communicators for Social Justice Work: Theories, Methods, and Topics

Themes of social justice have appeared in technical and professional communication (TPC) scholarship for more than two decades. However, it was not until around the 2000s that scholars began to explicitly interrogate theories, methodologies, practices, and the institutional and disciplinary challenges of enacting social justice (e.g., Agboka, 2013/2014; Colton & Holmes, 2016; Haas, 2012; Jones, 2016a/b; Jones & Walton, 2018; Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016; Leydens & Lucena 2017; Leydens, 2014; Walton, 2013; Walton, Zraly, & Mugengana, 2015). As Williams (2013) describes: “These scholars are taking the traditional description of technical communication as a field that advocates for the user to a new and exciting level by focusing on historically marginalized groups and issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality...” (pp. 87–88). This scholarship has spurred a social justice turn in the field of TPC in which the focus on critical *analysis* which informed the cultural turn of the 1990s extends into a focus on critical *action*.

In TPC, social justice research “investigates how communication, broadly defined, can amplify the agency of oppressed people—those who are materially, socially, politically, and/or economically under-resourced. Key to this definition is a collaborative, respectful approach that moves past description and exploration of social justice issues to taking action to redress inequities” (Jones & Walton, 2018). This kind of work is burgeoning, with considerations of social justice informing conference themes, conference roundtables, journal special issue topics, and award-winning scholarship.

Social justice scholarship in TPC has explored, among many other topics, the complexities of navigating and engaging unenfranchised contexts (Agboka, 2013/2014; Dura, Singhal, & Elias, 2013; Walton, Price, & Zraly, 2013; Walton, Zraly, & Mugengana, 2015); issues of race and programmatic diversity (Jones, 2014; Jones, Savage, & Yu, 2014; Savage & Mattson, 2011; Savage & Matveeva, 2011); the interstices of gender, sexuality, rhetoric, and technical communication (Cox, & Faris, 2015; Frost, 2015; Petersen, 2014); and considerations of translation and localization (Gonzales & Turner, 2017; Rose & Racadio, 2017; Shivers-McNair, 2017). The apparent implication is that TPC is a field actively engaged in decolonial, advocacy, and civic work.

While we are excited by this important and necessary scholarship, we are concerned that relatively few resources are available within the field to directly support and inform it. In other words, despite a wave of social justice scholarship in the field, a number of TPC scholars—both emerging and established—have limited understanding of social justice or feel ill equipped to pursue it in their work, wondering, “How do I incorporate social justice into my technical communication courses? How can I uphold principles of social justice in my research? What theories are well suited to framing and informing socially just TPC? How could considerations of social justice inform practices of, say, UX or content management or technical editing?”

To address these types of questions, we put forth this call for chapters for the edited collection: “Equipping Technical Communicators for Social Justice Work: Theories, Methodologies, and Topics.” For this edited collection, we envision each chapter honing in on a particular theory, methodology, or topic and explicating both its promise and its threats to socially just technical communication. We encourage potential contributors to consider how a theory (e.g. sociotechnical systems theory, queer theories, critical race theory, etc.), topic (e.g. UX, medical rhetoric), or research methodology (community action research, decolonial research) informs or shapes social justice work in any TPC-relevant context (e.g. classroom, corporate, civic).

Proposal Requirements

In approximately 500 words (not including references), please convey the following:

- **Theory/methodology/topic:** What is the tool, lens, or resource with which you seek to equip readers interested in conducting more socially just technical communication?
- **Relevance to social justice:** In what ways does your theory/methodology/topic relate to social justice? Why is it a promising tool, lens, or resource for the work of social justice? What concerns or cautions might you give technical communicators interested in social justice who are approaching this theory/methodology/topic?
- **Relevance to technical and professional communication:** How will your chapter contribute to existing scholarly conversations in TPC? What considerations of the field will this chapter address? On whose scholarly shoulders will this work stand?
- **Application:** What are some promising sites of application for socially just technical communication involving your theory/methodology/topic? For example, university undergraduate classrooms? Non-traditional workplaces? Field research with vulnerable populations?

Submission Guidelines

Please attach chapter proposal submissions as a Word file and email to both Rebecca Walton (rebecca.walton@usu.edu) and Godwin Agboka (agbokag@uhd.edu). We encourage potential contributors to email proposal ideas and questions well in advance of the submission deadline. We’re happy to talk through ideas with you.

Timeline

Dec. 30, 2018: Chapter proposals due

Jan. 31, 2019: Proposal decisions

May 1, 2019: Chapter manuscripts due

July 15, 2019: Reviewer feedback and publication decisions

Sept. 1, 2019: Revised manuscripts due