

## Book Review

**Rebecca Walton and Godwin Y. Agboka**

*Equipping Technical Communicators for Social Justice Work: Theories, Methodologies, and Pedagogies*

—Reviewed by

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**Index Terms**—*Advocacy, collaborative research, critical analysis, indigenous rhetorics, social justice.*

Walton and Agboka's edited collection, *Equipping Technical Communicators for Social Justice Work: Theories, Methodologies, and Pedagogies*, is appropriate for technical and professional communication (TPC) teachers, scholars, and practitioners who wish to enact social justice in their work. Although our field has welcomed and cultivated the social justice turn enthusiastically for the last few decades, the editors acknowledge that "there is a dearth of praxis-based resources" (p. 247). To address this need, this book offers "action-focused resources and tools," which are intended to support members of the profession "in conducting research or pursuing both local and international projects in *socially just* ways" (p. 5).

To meet the needs of TPC scholars, practitioners, and teachers, the editors organized this book into four sections, consisting of three chapters each. Each chapter presents one social justice tool and a case to illustrate the effective use of that tool. Besides, each chapter presents tips, cautions, limitations, and future directions to inform the use of the resource.

Section I, "Centering Marginality in Professional Practice" (Chapters 1–3), is primarily intended for scholars and practitioners. This section investigates the value of marginalized people's

inclusivity and the ways that it can be employed in TPC scholarship, practice, and research. Section II, "Conducting Collaborative Research" (Chapters 4–6), is mainly intended for researchers. This section focuses on the importance of conducting, designing, and engaging in social-justice-oriented collaborative research methodologies beyond academia.

The last two sections are primarily intended for TPC educators. Section III, "Teaching Critical Analysis" (Chapters 7–9), boosts educators to employ critical analysis in their pedagogy, and Section IV, "Teaching Critical Advocacy" (Chapters 10–12), inspires teachers to move from critical action toward advocacy.

Chapter 1, "Narrative From the Margins: Centering Women of Color in Technical Communication," offers specific strategies and tactics for both women of color (WOC) and White colleagues to confront and redress White supremacy in and beyond technical communication through the power of narratives. These narratives could help WOC "confront and redress White supremacy within WOC communities" and help White colleagues "work toward more equitable, inclusive, and socially just practices" (p. 27).

Chapter 2, "Inupiaq Ilitqusiatic: An Indigenist Ethics Approach for Working With Marginalized Knowledges in Technical Communication," offers a specific set of indigenous virtue ethics, namely *Inupiaq Ilitqusiatic*, representing an oral tradition that centers on ancestral knowledge and tribal responsibility. This social justice tool can help challenge ethnocentric, dominant-cultural perspectives and create an indigenous paradigm for social justice by centering on marginalized communities' knowledges and experiences.

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Chapter 3, “‘I’m Surprised That This Hasn’t Happened Before’: An Indigenous Examination of UXD Failure During the Hawai’i Missile False Alarm,” offers an indigenous framework for UXD that centers on the local community and their needs in the design process. This holistic framework positions “designers, users, and local community that acknowledge its human and nonhuman actants in a decentered and meaningful relationship” (p. 57).

Chapter 4, “Purpose and Participation: Heuristics for Planning, Implementing, and Reflecting on Social Justice Work,” offers two linked heuristics, *purpose* and *participation*, for TPC researchers to help plan, implement, and reflect on the intent and impact of their research and establish social justice (p. 75). The *purpose* heuristic focuses on the concepts of pragmatism, advocacy, and activism. The *participation* heuristic centers on moving from representational to participatory engagement—building coalitions—with research participants.

Chapter 5, “Visual Participatory Action Research Methods: Presenting Nuanced, Co-Created Accounts of Public Problems,” offers visual Participatory Action Research (PAR) approaches, participant-generated imagery (PGI) and participatory mapping, for TPC researchers, practitioners, and educators to collaboratively cultivate practical solutions to wicked problems.

Chapter 6, “Legal Resource Mapping as a Methodology for Social Justice Research and Engagement,” offers a research and engagement methodology, Legal Resource Mapping (LRM), consisting of four steps—1. locating the law, 2. framing the issue, 3. identifying actants, and 4. surfacing values. LRM helps engage citizens and collect data about policy-related TPC issues.

Chapter 7, “Social Activism in 280 Characters or Less: How to Incorporate Critical Analysis of Online Activism into TPC Curriculum,” offers a critical analysis of online activism as a tool to engage TPC students in a critical study of social media. This tool allows students to better understand the power dynamics and systemic oppression in digital spaces and to become ethically and socially responsible technical communicators.

Chapter 8, “The Tarot of Tech: Foretelling the Social Justice Impacts of Our Designs,” offers a critical-analysis tool called Tarot Cards of Tech to help TPC students think divergently for design

solutions to a range of wicked problems. This tool asks students to contemplate on a product’s consequences of use, not benefits of use; therefore, equity, sanctity, and justice are at the core of user-centered design solutions.

Chapter 9, “An Intersectional Feminist Rhetorical Pedagogy in the Technical Communication Classroom,” offers an intersectional feminist rhetorical pedagogical framework using usability as a tool for TPC students to engage with diverse user needs. This tool pushes students to consider users more respectfully and complexly by going beyond neutral, objective, standardized, and homogenized user and usability concepts.

Chapter 10, “Election Technologies as a Tool for Cultivating Civic Literacies in Technical Communication: A Case of the Redistricting Game,” offers election technologies as a tool for teaching social justice issues like race, income, and access to civic institutions discrepancy to TPC students. This tool can help students cultivate civic awareness and unearth unjust technical communication practices.

Chapter 11, “Plotting an Interstitial Design Process: Design Thinking and Social Design Processes as Framework for Addressing Social Justice Issues in TPC Classrooms,” offers an inclusive, interdisciplinary, socially just design tool, interstitial design, to meet the needs of a complex and messy glocal design situation and its ultimate audience by questioning unjust and unequal design practices. Interstitial design lies at the intersection of social design, design thinking, and the 3Ps of power, privilege, and positionality.

Chapter 12, “Kategorias and Apologias as Heuristics for Social Justice Advocacy,” offers two rhetorical tools—1. *kategoria* (arguments condemning injustices) and 2. *apologia* (arguments creating defensive mechanisms against *kategoria*)—to “help proponents both to build arguments *for* change and to anticipate arguments *against* change” (p. 231). These tools can be used as heuristics in business communication, introductory technical writing, crisis communication, public policy, or rhetoric classrooms.

Finally, the Afterword, “Equipping for Action: Suggestions for Using This Book,” helps readers understand how to use this book effectively to serve various TPC-related social justice purposes.

This book is extremely helpful because it inspires us to come up with more praxis-based resources, prioritize and learn from marginalized populations, and focus on embodied experiences and knowledges in our TPC practice, research, and pedagogy. Throughout the book, the authors

remind us to be mindful of our own positionality, privilege, and power while doing TPC research, practice, and teaching and to empower the disempowered. This book can be an invaluable addition to courses in TPC research methods, field methods, Indigenous rhetorics, or pedagogy.