Introductions and Beginnings

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Welcome! This collection is unusual for scholarship in technical and professional communication (TPC). First, it is about research and knowledge production in TPC, but centers on processes rather than products. That said, it is not a "how to do research" instructional text. Instead, it offers commentary and reflection on real-life projects as they unfolded. Second, rather than requiring authors to concisely establish the rigor of their methods, this collection prompts them to share the realities of how research can be complicated, fraught, and even a failure. Rather than presenting themselves as infallible professionals, we asked authors to be vulnerable, to share their moments of struggle and insight emerging out of their past learning experiences. We wouldn't have invited these busy, competent professionals to tell their stories if we didn't firmly believe in the value of their work and if we didn't see a clear need for deeper engagement with questions concerning how research projects are designed, implemented, and written. The nature of their experiences is surprisingly common, but these moments of new awareness, adaptation, questioning, and uncertainty are almost always written out of TPC scholarship. Reviewers, editors, and readers instead equate "rigor" with a produced "perfection," rather than "rigor" as an ongoing attention to quality, reflection, relationships, and agile strategies. A third feature marking this collection as unusual is that the chapters are grounded in storytelling. We chose this mode of writing because it creates spaces where authors can bring themselves—as planners, decision makers, researchers, community members, collaborators, and

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humans—into texts where they are normally compelled to make themselves *less* visible and disembodied. The kinds of stories found here typically are muted, revised, or erased in our discipline's scholarship.

We envision these storied case studies being useful for a wide range of audiences. Students in qualitative methods or intercultural communication classes can discuss how working across borders complicates the process of designing and completing a study. Scholars looking to expand into projects bridging transnational, situational (e.g., academia and industry), or disciplinary borders might consider these case studies in terms of planning and adaptation. Chapters might inspire brainstorming about the potential challenges a project might face or the moments where meticulous preplanning may need to be revised along the way. Readers interested in intercultural relations and norms or in ethics might ponder the tensions between USAmerican[1] "standard" practices, such as Institutional Review Board or academic journal expectations for "rigor," and the realities of working in complex and relational spaces. For all readers, we hope the collection triggers reflection over how we relate across all kinds of difference, over the power relations inherent in any collaborative situation, and over the accountabilities and reciprocities interwoven with our relationships, particularly as we engage in knowledge-making endeavors.

We argue that, in support of the health and continued growth of TPC, more stories like these should be shared. We focused on sites of transnational and intercultural research because they are complex, requiring navigation of languages, identities, histories, roles, places, cultures, and systems. We also chose stories about transnational and intercultural research because TPC moves among a variety of spaces with increasing frequency and because historically these kinds of projects risk doing harm even when intentions are good. Ultimately, these authors' narratives intentionally *open up* conversation, make visible the embodied and encultured realities of inquiry, and move us—as TPC students and scholars located in richly diverse situations—toward a shared ethic of transnational and intercultural research. Ongoing reflection regarding our practices must be grounded in such conversations as we are our own most valuable teachers.

The remainder of this introductory chapter lays the scholarly foundation for the book, functioning as the disciplinary grounding and literature

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1. The adjective "USAmerican" is used because "American" could be from anywhere in the Americas (e.g., Latin American, South American).

review before turning to the readable, engaging stories ahead. We begin by taking a step back, to the story of how this collection came to be. Next, we introduce key terms and basic challenges of learning the specialized craft of transnational and intercultural research. Then we establish the scholarly influences motivating our story-based style, before turning to suggestions for how to use this collection as a teaching, learning, and reflective tool.

If you enjoy the reflective story-based style of knowledge making to come but don't see yourself or your projects in these pages, then we encourage you to find or make spaces for your own narrative work just as we fought to make space for what you see here. While the upcoming chapters move across a wide variety of locations, from North America to the Middle East to South Asia to Southeast Asia and into the African continent, the majority of the voices you'll hear are those of Western-trained scholars. To truly develop a robust transnational and intercultural research effort and ethic in TPC, the conversation must grow to include more perspectives and should continue to complicate our notions of "borders" and interculturalness. Following in the footsteps of our academic predecessors, we offer this collection not only as a contribution to the field but also—and perhaps most importantly—as encouragement for others to tell their stories, too.

Genesis

We begin by sharing some of our own transformational moments that would eventually orient us toward this project.

In 1994, I (Bernadette) had finished my class work and was facing the research phase of my doctoral work at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. When I entered the program two years earlier, I thought I would do my dissertation research on people writing in workplaces. After all, I had been a contract technical writer in the medical and agricultural fields for over ten years before deciding to earn my PhD, and at that time I was most comfortable in workplaces rather than archives. But my interests had changed as I learned more about theoretical underpinnings of technical writing practices, and I was no longer sure what I wanted to study as my own scholarly contribution to the field. So I made appointments with a number of faculty members in my department and asked them about their approaches to research. The one thing I knew at that point was that I wanted my own research to test the boundaries of the scientific

paradigm as it applied to humanistic questions. How unscientific could my research be and still be considered valid by colleagues in my field?

My exploration brought me to the office of Alan Nadel, who worked in literary and film studies. He introduced me to French poststructural theories, and I knew that I had found the pathway to my own research goals: I would apply literary theory to technical texts. Dr. Nadel became my dissertation director; he generously supported and challenged my work as I launched into an extended cultural study of technical writing that became *Spurious Coin: A History of Science, Management, and Technical Writing* (2000). The reception of this work encouraged me to continue down the path of humanistic, cultural approaches to understanding the work we do as technical communicators—a path that happily has brought me to this collection.

I (Nancy) was in the midst of my PhD coursework at Texas Tech University. After almost twenty years as a lecturer at Texas A&M University's flagship in College Station, my family and I were invited to expatriate to the international branch campus, Texas A&M at Qatar. With generous support of Qatar Foundation's professional development funding, I finally had the chance to pursue a doctorate. After my first two semesters of drinking from a fire hose of rhetorical theories and after a rigorous introduction to qualitative methods, I signed up for a summer class called Feminist Rhetorics. The professor, Dr. Amanda Booher, encouraged us to explore our larger research interests through critical lenses. Together, we read transformative writings such as Jacqueline Jones Royster's "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own," Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?," and scholarship about transnational/global feminism. At that time, my nascent plan for a dissertation project had been centering around Qatari women. While the US news media portrayed women in Arab Muslim nations as oppressed, I had been witnessing a much more nuanced and complicated situation both at work—where women made up 50% of our engineering students—and in daily life. I wanted to understand those gender dynamics and perhaps be a voice in contrast to the negative stereotypes.

For my final project in Dr. Booher's class, I delved into readings about feminism in Arab, Arab American, and Muslim communities, and developed a literature review titled, "For Further Exploration: Framing Contextual Issues in Studying Qatari Women." I look back on that title and its colonialist gaze with deep chagrin, but through that review, I began to realize the questionable (and naive) motivations propelling my

interests. My final Fem Rhets class presentation posed questions about the homogenizing nature of the Western perspective, unpacked the inapplicability of Western binaries to Middle Eastern contexts, and explained the rejection of Western feminism in Arab communities. I learned the word *feminist* can carry a stench of colonialism, and that Arab and Arab American women were plenty able to speak for themselves. As I wrote, lessons from my qualitative methods class were ringing in my ears, and I imagined what it would be like to ask my students and other Qatari women to share their stories and perceptions with me, a USAmerican outsider. I thought about how I would have to rely on them to teach me about gender perceptions and dynamics in their communities and personal lives, and that I would be listening to their stories in preparation to analyze and critique them. Just *imagining* it felt awkward, in the kind of way where your subconscious is sending you signals or perhaps even yelling desperately, "This is not a good idea!"

Through that project and more encounters I describe in this collection's final chapter, I talked myself out of my original dissertation plans. I was not the right person to be "studying Qatari women" (so much cringing). Instead, the deep reflection I participated in during Dr. Booher's class redirected me to look inward, at my own community of white USAmerican expatriate women working in Qatar, asking them to share the stories they told about their lives in the region. That project has been revised quite a bit into my own book, *A Rhetoric of Becoming: USAmerican Women in Qatar* (forthcoming). These interwoven experiences—alerting me to the ethical precarity of intercultural study and learning about everyday lives via storytelling—laid the foundation for how I position myself as an inquirer and critical thinker, and those experiences were the genesis of the search inspiring me to propose the seedling of a research ethic also presented in the last chapter of this collection.

Now that I've told my story, I admit I cheated a bit. Bernadette shared her story with me first, in one of our video chats during the COVID-19 outbreak of spring 2020. Before hearing her story, I would have written something different, perhaps about witnessing ethically questionable behavior in a research project, but in response to what Bernadette shared, I reactively reflected, going back further in time, to recall an earlier transformative moment that shaped my values as a scholar. Bernadette's storytelling influenced my own origin story's emergence. In other words, I wouldn't have been able to articulate my deeper motivation had it not been for listening to Bernadette. But that's the thing about sharing stories.

Hearing stories from others inspires us to reflect over and sometimes remember (and re-member) our own. Story sharing shapes and reshapes our relationships with each other, with our disciplines, with our practices, and with our own memories and histories. And now I've just written in this paragraph a story about how a story came to be. As Thomas King teaches us in *The Truth about Stories* (2003), it's turtles all the way down and it's up to us—the listeners, the readers—to decide what to do with the stories we receive.

Key Terms and Challenges

Working across borders is foundational to technical and professional communication. The discipline's focus, demonstrated in both workplace and scholarly endeavors, is the translation and adaptation of processes and information. As early as 1989, Charles Sides argued in *Technical and Business Communication: Bibliographic Studies for Teachers and Corporate Trainers* (1989) that studies in technical communication drew theoretically from fields as dispersed as studies in communication, reading, psycholinguistics, and human factors. A technical communicator's role was to know the available means of effective communication in any particular situation (to paraphrase Aristotle's definition of rhetoric) and to translate information from one context to another. The role of rhetoric in understanding technical communication practices was actively debated in these early studies, however, as Carolyn Miller articulated in her 1979 article in *College English*, "A Humanistic Rationale for Technical Writing." In it, Miller introduces the idea that communication itself works with other elements in the rhetorical situation to create a context for communication and understanding among people, an assertion that Charles Bazerman and James Paradis expanded on in their 1991 collection *Textual Dynamics of the Professions*. Technical communication scholars since the 1990s—notably Jennifer Slack, David Miller, and Jeffrey Doak in their article in the Suggested Reading list below—have explored implications for power dynamics and the possibility of meaning-making if we think of technical communicators as translators, neutral conduits, or active participants in creating context and meaning in rhetorical situations.

Fulfilling the role of agent in any power-laden communication situation presents challenges, yet in situations where different cultures interact, things become even more complex, interesting, and potentially

fraught. Border-crossing endeavors, where TPC scholars and practitioners collaborate with teams to accomplish goals in the making and sharing of knowledge, occur in a wide range of ways. Nancy's "Localize, Adapt, Reflect: A Review of Recent Research in Transnational and Intercultural TPC" (2022) explores compelling variation of our projects, particularly with a focus on transnational and intercultural research with human participants. By "transnational," we refer to TPC projects spanning spatial divides. Although traditional definitions focus on geopolitical borders, the work in this collection can be engaged in projects that are regional or that do not easily correspond to specific nation-states. Movements may be virtual or physical, but are typically complicated by differing time zones, business practices, legal standards, and other systems that require learning, adapting, and developing new relationships. By "intercultural," we refer to working across differences of language, behaviors, beliefs, norms, and traditions. Transnationality and interculturalism overlap in complex ways. Most transnational projects are also intercultural, but intercultural projects need not require transnational movement. Workplace cultures, disciplinary cultures, and local community cultures require us to engage in cross-cultural practices even within our own organizations and locales.

Complicating any conversation about transcultural and intercultural work is the fact that such activities are often rooted in outdated notions of culture, a term that Raymond Williams described in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976/2015) as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (p. 49). Williams went on to argue that the idea of "culture" is defined differently in different discourse communities, but could generally be thought of as "a complex of senses . . . about the relations between general human development and a particular way of life, and between both and the works and practices of art and intelligence" (p. 91). In TPC, these "works and practices" predominantly shape knowledge into a scientific way of knowing the world, as Bernadette has argued in "An Approach for Applying Cultural Study Theory to Technical Writing Research" (1998). So it is not surprising that TPC practitioners, researchers, and reviewers consider nonscientific (e.g., story-based) ways of knowing the world to be illegitimate for formal research studies.

Instead of addressing the complexity of culture as a "relation" and "a particular way of life," scholars often approach it via a process of creating catalogs and taxonomies, such as the five dimensions first proposed by Geert Hofstede in his 1980 study of cultural values among IBM employ-

ees, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations* (2001). These dimensions are power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. Although this early study extended interpersonal communication concepts in social science, behavioral psychology, and international business, its empirical approach codified the notion of people as units for study. In an updated version of this work, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (2010), Hofstede and his coauthors expand their applications of the original five dimensions, building on this baseline for interpersonal relations: "Human history is composed of wars between cultural groups" (p. 382). Transnational, intercultural interactions may have the potential for warlike relationships, but those of us who enter into these relationships can also keep in mind the consequences of cultural war articulated by Walter Benjamin, himself a casualty of fascist wartime violence. In *Illuminations* (1968), he wrote, "Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate" (p. 256). The authors in this collection tell their stories of situations that could have resulted in domination, but in which we sought better strategies for collaboration instead. We reflect on these moments, as well as our sometimes-imperfect reactions to them, as we seek to compose relationships that complicate or even resist notions of cultural dimensions, objectivity, and conflict in hopes of generative cross-cultural collaborations.

Sometimes these generative efforts go against many tides. Even as we wrestle with learning and enacting better frameworks, disciplinary practices anchor us in restrictive tradition. In academic fields influenced by science and social science, the standard expectations for reporting research via the Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion (IMRaD) genre further reinforces de Certeau's idea of objectivity that works to erase transnational and intercultural realities by "educating" human experience into science, described in *The Writing of History* (1988). The IMRaD format itself has come to exemplify a Western model of scientific "truth," but how can truths of human experience across cultures be given legitimacy that resides outside traditional Western science? Instead of relying on an objective measure of truth or scientific validity, the validity of a narrative could be measured by whether "the research prompts further discourse as potential objects of future research. This further discourse would indicate that researchers and other interested parties considered the findings relevant for continued conversations" (see Longo, 1998, p. 64). Using this

expanded idea of validity, a narrative could be a valid research report if it prompts ongoing interest in the object of inquiry and findings of the study. In "Humanizing Computer History" (2018), Bernadette argued that stories of people's lives can "bring to light the cultural, political, and economic contexts that influenced the subject's words, actions, and reactions. By immersing the story within its localized context, a [writer] can create a researched story that puts naturalized or objectified objects of inquiry . . . into cultural contests for power and legitimacy" (p. 9). Both Bernadette and Nancy have experienced the diminishment of our lived experiences exerted by the pressure to publish our transnational research in a standard scientific genre. We believe the knowledge silenced by this pressure has value for our own lives, as well as for the lives of our collaborators and colleagues. Some truths about human relations cannot fit into Western science or an IMRaD format.

Beyond complicated definitions, outdated frameworks, and restrictive genres, the challenges of working in transnational and intercultural spaces extend into the publication process. For example, such work should be carefully contextualized according to its particular locations, but when we have provided this literal grounding in manuscripts submitted for peer review, feedback indicated that reviewers often did not want to invest their attention in that substantive information. They wanted to "get to the news" of the studies instead. Based on our own experiences developing a keener sense of relational accountability for our research sites, we felt compelled to reflect on how a project was adapted in response to its location and to the needs of participants with whom we formed relationships. But again, reviewers did not want to know about changes to our plan, the limitations of our Institutional Review Board's requirements, or the ultimate inadequacy of our original research questions or interview protocol. They wanted "traditional" rigor, a plan well-conceived and methodically followed, and specific outcomes qualifying in terms of Haswell's (2005) triumvirate of being reliable, aggregable, and data-driven scholarship. When we looked for advice about preparing for, conducting, and communicating the experiences and outcomes of transnational and intercultural projects, we found a few authors who addressed these challenges head on, but mostly only found hints and breadcrumbs of reflection. Graduate courses and communities of practice prepared us for the concepts and methods of TPC but not for the realities and complications of fieldwork. We devised alternatives—side articles, footnotes, other publication paths—but ultimately each came to admit that we were working counter to central disciplining forces of TPC.

The primary exigency for this collection is to continue making space for a wider range of legitimized TPC student and scholarly practices, including sharing of transformative reflections over the rich complexity of transnational and intercultural projects. The upcoming chapters value contextualization, refute binary and prescriptive thinking about culture, and resist IMRaD as the primary genre for communicating the outcomes of a project. We believe that the stories of our research processes are not "backstories" to the "real" stories but that these stories reveal truths of their own. They go hand-in-hand with the product-oriented outcomes of research reports. As Nancy wrote in "(Re)Kindle: On the Value of Story-telling to Technical Communication" (2017), narrative modes of inquiry and communication have been historically marginalized in TPC. We assert that, in order to fully examine and consider our work, we should commit to more ongoing publication and discussion of our processes. Stories, as tellings of specific events, and narratives, as organized sequences of events into broader arcs of experience and sensemaking, are choice modes for descriptive, contemplative processes.

Genealogies

In this section, we trace key lines of influence that both inspire and legitimize the scholarliness of the upcoming stories. To begin, arguments for the compelling connections between story and knowledge-making are not new. Indigenous communities long ago established the efficacy of story-based practices, and contemporary scholars continue to contribute important work on the use of story in science (e.g., Kimmerer, 2013), cultural rhetorics (e.g., Brooks, 2006; Cruikshank, 1998; Erdrich, 2003; King, 2003), education (e.g., King, Gubele, & Anderson, 2015), rhetoric and writing studies (Haas, 2007; Powell, 2004; Riley-Mukavetz, 2020), research (e.g., Archibald, Lee-Morgan, & De Santolo, 2019; Wilson, 2008; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019), and more. Individually and collectively, these scholars demonstrate the power of narrative for discussing complex issues located at the intersection of localized symbolic practices and knowledge-making. In other words, the expertise of Indigenous scholars affirms the power of teaching and learning through story-based practices.

Stories effectively convey knowledge because they allow for the existence of "multiple realities"; encourage tellers to set up relationships among the people, places, and events; and entangle both the teller and

the receivers in the making of meaning. In short, story-based work allows us to realize that "reality *is* relationships or sets of relationships" (Wilson, 2008, p. 73). Those relationships then invite us to think about the responsibilities we have to ourselves, to our participants, to our research settings, to our readers, to our disciplines, and to our multiple contexts as writers and readers. Positivist-style reporting of a study and its outcomes locks out examination of these relationships, and in doing so, disembodies researchers from their activities.

Story-based scholarship has a small but substantive presence in TPC, a line of predecessors which merits ongoing extension. Here, we specifically acknowledge book-length texts that paved the way for our collection. Breaking ground through its story-based structure, Savage and Sullivan's (2001) *Writing a Professional Life* contributed to ongoing conversations about defining the field itself, by demonstrating the kinds of jobs and concerns TPC professionals shoulder. Alongside it, Bosley's *Global Contexts: Case Studies in International Technical Communication* (2001) emphasized the importance of contextualization as it provided "fictionalized and nonfictionalized scenarios" told from third-person perspectives. Her collection of case studies was designed to uncover "behaviors and patterns of thinking and feeling" as well as "assumptions and presumptions about the cultures from which we each come" and how those affect technical communication projects (p. 3). More recently, Yu and Savage's (2013) *Negotiating Cultural Encounters: Narrating Intercultural Engineering and Technical Communication*, revealed the diversity and complexity of the workplace through first-person stories, encouraging authors to do the kinds of thick description—as well as some interwoven reflection—typically muted or erased in more traditional forms of TPC scholarship. The cases also make excellent teaching tools because they bring workplaces alive for students who have not yet had those rich experiences themselves. While the collections from Savage and Sullivan, Bosley, and Yu and Savage present stories of workplace politics and adaptation influenced by differing expectations and norms, they do not address the exciting and fraught process of setting up a research project designed to move across borders.

Threads of concern over border crossing have been present in TPC for quite a while, too. Two decades ago, Thatcher's "Issues of Validity in Intercultural Professional Communication Research" (2001) questioned the appropriateness of applying traditional notions of research validity to intercultural scholarship. A 2006 special issue of *Technical Communication Quarterly* (*TCQ*), coedited by Scott and Longo, explored the field's "cul-

tural turn" and the associated implications for methods, methodologies, and publication. It was followed soon by another *TCQ* special issue on intercultural communication, this one edited by Ding and Savage (2013). In it, Fraiberg's "Reassembling Technical Communication: A Framework for Studying Multilingual and Multimodal Practices in Global Contexts" (2013) argued that global contexts of study require better contextualization, inherent adaptability, and the space to understand and explain culturally embedded communication. We found related inspiration for this book in two previous edited collections. Thatcher and St. Amant's (2011) *Teaching Intercultural Rhetoric and Technical Communication* explores border cross-ing through the lens of teaching, while Williams and Pimentel's (2014) *Communicating Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in Technical Communication* focuses on race as a factor in the teaching and production of TPC in the US. Both books amplify the field's continued interest in ethical practices for communicating and collaborating in situations enriched by diversity, so they serve as thought-provoking motivations for this text.

In addition to their foundational work in story-based knowledge making, Indigenous scholars offer important insights into projects sit-uated in intercultural and transnational spaces. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* lays bare the damage done by outsiders dropping in, objectifying the cultures targeted for study, then rushing out, a process we have heard referred to as "smash and grab ethnography" or "parachute research" (see Laura Pigozzi, chapter 6). Smith compels her readers to critically examine their roles—if they are even the appropriate people for a task—and includes an array of examples of Indigenous-centered projects demonstrating a more ethical approach. Shawn Wilson's *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (2008) crafts an Indigenous research paradigm from the bottom up, outlining the core elements of ethical project design to include relationality, reciprocity, and respect.

Recent publications continue to teach and model interculturally sensitive methodologies and methods, deepening and broadening our reflections over transnational activities. Windchief and San Pedro's col-lection *Applying Indigenous Research Methods: Storying with Peoples and Communities* (2019) instructs readers in the craft of "storywork," a highly collaborative, contextual, and multiperspective process sensitive to commu-nicating complexity and helping readers examine compelling, yet historically devalued, methods of knowledge making. *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology* (2019), coedited by Archibald, Lee-Morgan,

and De Santolo, demonstrates a broad range of projects where narrative approaches drove rigorous research while centering accountability to the community being studied. These two texts are examples of a chorus of voices offering advice for working across difference via authentic collaboration and projects centered on community interests. Leaders in the Indigenous movement often come from New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, further challenging non-Indigenous USAmerican researchers to position themselves as transnational and intercultural listeners and learners.

While Indigenous scholars often concentrate on projects designed for Indigenous spaces, their advice applies to transnational and intercultural activities in general. That said, don't mistake our respect and amplification of their work as a claim that this current collection performs "decolonizing work." As Itchuaqiyaq and Matheson (2021) remind us, not all work citing decolonizing scholarship actually contributes to tangible decolonizing efforts. Here, we cite and apply the knowledge of Indigenous authors in service of supporting an ongoing shift in disciplinary mind-set, toward valuing stories, contextualization, and reflections. Authors such as Smith and Wilson teach us about the interdependency within which we all live, that everything is built on relationships and their attendant accountability. Respect and reciprocity are ongoing, substantive, and grounded in authentic connections, not transactional exchange of gifts or information. In sum, while scholarship promoting decolonization lays out important paths toward more justice-oriented research and teaching practices, that scholarship offers additional broader lessons in how knowledge is made, what counts as knowledge, and how we might continue pushing back against the boundaries of TPC's disciplinary traditions.

We also find inspiration in the recent social justice turn in TPC, which is concerned with structural inequalities and actions of redress. Angela Haas and Michelle Eble's edited collection, *Key Theoretical Frameworks: Teaching Technical Communication in the Twenty-First Century* (2018), is situated in direct response to globalization and the power imbalances it reinforces. In their introduction, Haas and Eble call on TPC scholars to integrate social justice principles into their projects and to focus on tangible actions that can be taken to disrupt divisive systems and promote accountable intercultural relationships. They affirm the inherent border-crossing motivations and goals of TPC, and remind us of our commitment to a humanistic rationale and that we are positioned to be rhetorical agents of change. Another inspirational text is *Technical Communication after the Social Justice Turn: Building Coalitions for Action* (2019) by Rebecca

Walton, Kristen R. Moore, and Natasha N. Jones. Their introduction highlights TPC's disciplinary problems that a justice-oriented mind-set must commit to address the following: lack of inclusion, lack of commitment, and lack of action. Throughout the book, Walton, Moore, and Jones offer strategies for applying a critical intersectional lens and for engaging in coalition building as twin pillars of more ethical and accountable work in the classroom and in the field. Their framework for strategically contemplating one's role in potentially unjust situations is "the three Ps": positionality, power, and privilege. Reflecting over the relationship among these three interrelated aspects of any setting can prompt awareness regarding damaging hierarchies, dangers of unexamined motivations, potentially fraught collaborations, and systems as well as disciplinary traditions that risk—or even perpetuate—doing harm.

By focusing our collection on sites of inquiry and practice, we dig into one aspect of TPC that is not typically given enough space: the risky realities of our work. As a result, the reflective narratives contained here, by design, examine their authors' positions as researchers and practitioners working in complex intercultural situations. Choices these storytellers confront in their project designs and complications invite purposeful contemplation concerning power, privilege, and agency. By being a conduit for sharing these authors' stories and reflections, we hope to model and perpetuate more socially just efforts in TPC activities.

Storied Case Studies

We refer to the chapters here as storied "case studies," not in the formal methodical sense of being case studies, but in the spirit of the methodological intent. A case study is meant to be contemplated, viewed through multiple and shifting perspectives, considered in terms of the agents' positionalities, and pondered in its complexity. The style we elicited from the authors is semiformal because we wanted to amplify that you are reading the experiences of "real" people, not overpolished personae. We also wanted the stories of the experiences themselves to be at the forefront rather than being obscured by academese or technical jargon. Names—both of individuals and of organizations—in the case studies are pseudonyms, and we encouraged authors to use detailed and vivid language. Finally, we asked authors to offer their personal reflections in the first person,

to share with you what they have learned for themselves but not to tell you what to think. We believe these cases are complex and compelling enough to merit in-depth discussion, and we want you to form your own thoughts and conclusions regarding what emerges.

No two transnational or intercultural endeavors will be alike, so these cases cannot serve as practical models for you to follow. However, each offers its own perspectives on how these projects are designed, adapted, and facilitated. In lieu of a traditional and linear "chapter preview" section, we offer a thematic overview of the cases you can look forward to in the upcoming pages.

Thoughtful preparation is one key theme you'll find. "Planning and Pivoting: Archival Work in Botswana and South Africa," by Emily January Petersen opens with an impressive list of ways she prepared for her trip, ending with a note that she knew even those preparations would not be sufficient. Her opening nicely lays out a theme that traces through the rest of the collection: surprise and (sometimes) serendipity. Breeanne Matheson's "Grappling with Globalized Research Ethics: Notes from a Long-Term Qualitative Research Agenda in India," relates and reflects over a project designed to inquire about the work lives of women in technical communication. Along the way, she describes adapting in response to logistical struggles and culture shock. Matheson concludes with a posttrip reflection in which she reconsiders researcher identity, positionality, and relations to the site itself.

Transformation is another theme threaded throughout this collection. Transnational and intercultural projects do more than create new knowledge: they often result in significant growth and change in perspectives. "Lost in Translation: Losing Rigid Research Team Roles in a Field Study in Vietnam," by Sarah Beth Hopton, Rebecca Walton, and Linh Nguyen, is a three-voice story about the eye-opening benefits of teaming made possible by an openness toward learning about a new culture, as well as by the grace of intercultural relationships. Bernadette's "Accidental Tourist in a Narrative World with Technologies: A Story from Katanga Province" takes us through a narrative of ongoing change in which a project goes through several evolutions in an effort to make an authentic difference in the lives of its participants. Through her travels, Bernadette meets people and experiences the Congo in ways that still resonate with her today.

In addition to commonalities, we note some thought-provoking distinctions in this collection. To begin, you may notice some diversity

in our authors' positions in their stories. Yvan Yenda Ilunga's chapter 8, "Relearning Your Knowledge: The Loud Silence," is a narrative of an international scholar finding his voice and making his space in the USAmerican academy. His compelling reflections remind us that listening and adapting are skills central to our home-institutional lives as well as to our transnational and intercultural projects. "Syrian Refugee Women's Voices: Research Grounded in Stories Shared over Coffee Respites" is Nabila Hijazi's story of being a long-term Syrian immigrant who, as part of her Western doctorate education, located a research project in her local Syrian refugee community. Her chapter, like Ilunga's, is set in the US, but demonstrates that transnational spaces are found well inside national borders. Bea Amaya's "Across the Divide: Communicating with Company Stakeholders in Papua New Guinea," offers a unique perspective because hers is the only chapter written strictly from a TPC practitioner's point of view. Rather than embarking on a limited visit to PNG, Amaya relocates there to live in a Port Moresby neighborhood, where she develops friendships with the local families and builds new cultural familiarity through her quiet observations. She then takes us along with her on a trip through the PNG highlands where her company's stakeholder meetings taught her about different expressions of community belonging.

Several chapters complicate our original definition of "transnational" as border-crossing. Laura Pigozzi's " 'Nuesta vida en el medio oeste, USA': Listening to Mexican Immigrants," describes a project set inside USAmerican borders but working with both documented and undocumented participants. As a researcher, she inhabits a liminal space of both belonging to the community in which her project is set and having the privilege of citizen status, a doctorate-level graduate education, and socioeconomic security. Pigozzi's chapter narrates the relational and identity work that her borderland project invoked. Kathryn Northcut's "Chemistry Publication Ethics in China and the US: Transdisciplinary Teaming in a Time of Change" works at the complex intersection of transnational *and* transdisciplinary research. Some of her project's transformative moments impact how she understands collaboration as well as research ethics. A final contribution revealing the potential multidimensionality of border-crossing project is "Mingled Threads: A Tapestry of Tales from a Complex Multinational Project" by Rosário Durão, Kyle Mattson, Marta Pacheco Pinto, Joana Moura, Ricardo López-Léon, and Anastasia Parianou. Spanning locations, it demonstrates how a shared set of methods must be enacted differently

depending on specific site contexts. All of these chapters disrupt narrow notions of "working across borders," as that work may take place within national borders or via technologies rather than travel.

In closing, Nancy's "Importing Lessons from Qatar: Toward a Research Ethic in Transnational and Intercultural TPC" is purposefully divided into two sections. The first half is Nancy's story of searching out advice for better practices in transnational research during the years she lived as an expatriate in Qatar. The second half then shifts gears and serves as a forward-looking proposal for an ethic of transnational and intercultural research. Like the rest of the book, that ethic is not presented as a set of rules. Instead, it is proposed as a set of guiding principles and accompanying reflective questions. The goal of this second half of the chapter is to provide a point of departure for TPC researchers and practitioners interested in border-crossing projects.

Recommendations and Gratitude

Our recommendation for using this collection is simple: read, think, respond, extend. The chapters purposefully do not tell you what to think or assume you agree with the author(s). We encourage you, as our reader, to identify the authors' decisions then consider the complexity of when, how, and by whom those decisions were made. Put yourself in the authors' shoes and ponder what you might have done similarly and differently. Honor the vulnerability with which these authors tell their stories as encouragement to do some deep reflection regarding your own positioning, privilege, and power within the systems that you are striving to function. Sometimes, those systems limit or disadvantage people in ways that affect their research processes and what is considered both "possible" and "academically acceptable." This collection is designed to open up rather than shut down conversation, because it is through such dialogue that our transnational and intercultural practices will continue to evolve and improve. As a concluding tangible contribution to that improvement, the last chapter (Nancy's "Importing Lessons from Qatar: Toward a Research Ethic in Transnational and Intercultural TPC") interweaves observations about these stories into a potential framework for more ethically aware practice. That closing section is *not* meant to provide "answers" to the question "how do I design the perfect project?" Instead, it might get us a few steps down the path of "what should I be aware of and prepared

to encounter at any stage of a transnational or intercultural project?" In service of that goal, it provides a preliminary set of guiding questions to help you begin to explore your own strategies for accountability. It also calls for more work developing these heuristics and conversations.

To further facilitate reflection, each chapter closes with discussion questions and with a brief annotated list of suggested readings. The questions obviously are just starting points. Some readers may find it useful to read these questions first, to get a sense of what the chapter author(s) anticipated as fruitful points of contemplation. Other readers may choose to intentionally avoid these questions and allow their own points of interest to emerge as they react to the narratives.

The suggested readings were selected for a wide variety of reasons, and chapter authors included brief annotations to indicate their anticipated usefulness. Some of these curated books, chapters, articles, websites, and videos support the scholarly concepts threaded through the chapter, documenting a source that inspired the author(s) as the chapter was being written. Other selections offer more detail on the specific project or location at the heart of the chapter narrative or because they provide deeper consideration of important issues invoked by that chapter's storytelling. We hope these additional readings serve as useful points of departure as you use this collection to advance your own goals.

In closing, we wish to express profound gratitude to our authors for generously sharing their stories, particularly as we asked them to allow us and our readers behind the professional curtain, to help us experience the realities of being a curious human trying to do a good thing and do the right things. We offer our humble thanks to our transnational partners who generously opened their minds, hearts, workplaces, and lives to us. We acknowledge the scholarly lineages that brought us here, the inspirations we've described in this introduction but also the countless other authors, practitioners, colleagues, and friends whose works have enriched our perspectives. Finally, we thank you, our readers, for your curiosity about transnational and intercultural research, your openness to learning through storytelling, and the insights you'll glean from the chapters to come.

To paraphrase Thomas King, from *The Truth about Stories* (2003), please take our stories and do with them what you will. They may influence your planning or mind-set, or maybe they won't. Just don't say you haven't heard them.

Suggested Reading

Archibald, J. A., Lee-Morgan, J., & De Santolo, J. (Eds.). (2019). *Decolonizing research: Indigenous storywork as methodology*. ZED Books Limited.

This edited collection expands work on the value and application of Indigenous storywork. It comments on and illustrates the goals and effects of story-centered methodologies and demonstrates the use of storytelling in research in a wide range of disciplines and located in a wide range of nations.

Longo, B. (2018, June 28). Humanizing computer history. *Humanities for STEM Symposium Proceedings*. New York University, April 6–7, 2018. https://osf.io/79ra5/

This paper explores and describes attributes of a humanistic research methodology, along with a consideration of concepts of validity relating to this type of research. It also considers how the writing of biographies constitutes a valid humanistic research method, as well as relationships between archival and biographical research functions.

McSweeney, B. (2002). Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith—a failure of analysis. *Human Relations*, *55*(1), 89–118.

This article provides a thorough and compelling critique of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. It unpacks key assumptions underpinning this ubiquitous theory and argues that all aspects of the study are troubled by undeniable flaws.

Slack, J. D., Miller, D. J., and Doak, J. (1993). The technical writer as author: Meaning, power, authority. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *7*(1), 12–36.

The authors explore different roles fulfilled by technical and professional communicators: transmitters, translators, and articulators. Each role has particular implications for how TPC is perceived as a field and practice, and each role contributes to the production and reproduction of systems of power.

Small, N. (2022). Localize, adapt, reflect: A review of recent research in transnational and intercultural TPC. In L. Melonçon & J. Schreiber (Eds.). *Assembling critical components: A framework for sustaining technical and professional communication.* Colorado State University Press.

This literature review breaks down five years of journal publications (2014–2018) to discover categories and qualities of transnational and intercultural research. The results highlight a wide range of border-crossing projects, and based on the small space allotted to a few authors for reflecting over their processes, finds threads of "better practice" for transnational projects involving human participants.

Small, N. (2017). (Re)Kindle: On the value of storytelling to technical communication. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, *47*(2), 234–253.

The author traces the troubled history of storytelling in technical and professional communications, starting with a "narrative turn" in the mid-1990s. Small argues for a reawakening to the value of story-based scholarship and offers an example of how "anecdotes" can indeed serve as "data."

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods.* Fernwood Publishing.

Wilson situates and explains his framework for Indigenous research, grounded in relational accountability and foregrounding reciprocity and respect. He works in multiple voices and styles to demonstrate different—and equally valid—ways of making knowledge.

Yu, H., & Savage, G. (Eds.). (2013). *Negotiating cultural encounters: Narrating intercultural engineering and technical communication.* John Wiley & Sons.

This collection of narratives delves into the complex cultures and dynamics in a range of technical communication workplaces, spanning from the automotive industry and manufacturing to security and software development. "Culture" is illustrated broadly as differences in national, regional, racial, and ethnic identity; in disciplinary identity, expertise, and job roles; and more.