7. Regenerating a Once Fallow Ground: Theorizing Process and Product in 21st-Century Technical Communication Ecologies

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Abstract: This chapter describes how one institution revised its professional and technical communication program to include more technology and community engagement experiences. The program originally was highly instrumental, focusing on document design skill sets (e.g., use of Adobe InDesign). Before they could evolve the curricula, program faculty needed to ready themselves to invoke technical communication scholarship's historically key talking points regarding theory, because one significant trait of the program's institutional context was a perceived irreconcilable split between theory and practice. Demonstrating to institutional stakeholders a more nuanced relationship between theory and practice justified the teachers' changes to their pedagogical practice. In addition, strengthening their fluency in scholarship's discussions about theory assisted the program faculty in settling upon the specific theoretical frameworks that the revised curriculum embodies: ecologies of practice and civility. Furthermore, increasing community engagement opportunities in the classroom revealed the benefits of incorporating into the curriculum theoretical content knowledge—but without connecting theory exclusively to one particular assignment or project.

Keywords: instrumentalism, theory, community engagement, ecologies of practice

Key Takeaways:

- Although technical communication scholarship now largely fuses theory and practice, the relationship between the two has not been a static one throughout the discipline's history.
- Technical communication pedagogy often privileges application, one result of the discipline's historical emphasis on instrumentalism.
- There are benefits to focusing on theory in technical communication curricula without explicitly attaching it to an application exercise or assignment.

When Katherine Staples and Cezar M. Ornatowski's *Foundations for Teaching Technical Communication* was published in 1997, it entered a disciplinary scene

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characterized by debates over theoretical frameworks' relationship to technical communication teaching and scholarship, appropriate locations for universities' technical writing programs, implications for technology-mediated communication in the professions (especially regarding distributed work teams), and best and best-for-now workplace practices. In the subsequent decades, although these topics have not quieted in the field, they obviously have altered, and to a degree that may be considered remarkable when compared to their presence in some other disciplines.

We are specifically intrigued by the role of theory in teaching technical communication. There is a traceable thread in our field's literature that discusses theory's place, with many corners of the discipline advocating for theory's existence in the classroom—just so long as it somehow is transformed into an application opportunity in which students can engage. It's been argued that examining theory in the classroom without also enacting it (see Turnley's [2007] discussion of service-learning assignments for an example of theory/practice fusion) contradicts the discipline's pragmatic and instrumental history (e.g., Moore, 1996). It's additionally been suggested that the technical communication field is made less distinctive from others when it is taught from a largely theoretical perspective (even though the field's disciplinary boundaries themselves often undergo redefinition [e.g., Henning & Bemer, 2016; Johnson et al., 2018; Kimball, 2016]). Further, theory is often seen as too universalized and inattentive to institutions', contexts', and places' local exigencies.

Inarguably, there is merit in striking a theory/application balance in technical communication curricula, and in fact this balance has so long been a disciplinary staple that it now may be considered an assumed value within the field. However, we write as technical communication teachers and scholars who nevertheless have continued to experience marked and ongoing contestation of institutional "turf" that is fueled largely by a persistent belief in a theory/application split. In our experience, practical application continues to be regarded by some as a-theoretical, whereby hands-on learning in some way sullies or oversimplifies intellectual effort. Theory-practice debate also muddies the lines between different values about writing, sometimes allowing others to co-opt what we seek to do in our particular technical communication program. Consequently, in our work to defend strongholds gained by the field within academic contexts and demonstrate its value without, we wonder if leaning so heavily on application and on curricula driven by product outcomes has itself become a disciplinary vulnerability.

Other disciplines, such as composition and writing studies, have more and more needed to justify their existence via tangible results, lest they simply concede to institutional forces beyond their control (Skinnell, 2016). Narrowly focused practical programs in communication are similarly feeling encroachment from fields that more explicitly embrace their theoretical legacies, especially because technology is blurring once clear lines among modes of communicative

activity. We ultimately find ourselves needing to repeatedly return to this argument: pointedly theorizing both pedagogy and the purposes of technical communication does not have to squeeze out application in the classroom, but rather can enrich it.

The following describes how one university's professional and technical communication program increasingly incorporated visible theory into its curricula as a means of strengthening its institutional role and did so while retaining product deliverable-oriented assignments. Our program in professional writing, which began shortly after Staples and Ornatowski's publication of *Foundations*, initially was almost exclusively skills-based—the bulk of courses focused on teaching document design software. However beneficial this focus for students who would need functional skill sets upon graduation, this curricular content also operated during a time when the role of technology within technical communication was being questioned (e.g., Johndan Johnson-Eilola's [1996] call to reassess the importance placed on technological product-driven work).

Our program is housed in a literature-centered department that, with a few notable exceptions, has not addressed the shift from print-based literacy to other communicative modes. As a result, few literature majors were keen to enroll in professional writing courses, and as faculty, we found it difficult to incentivize enrollment through curricular reform. Luckily, we had allies in communication studies who, with the authors' involvement, founded a new interdisciplinary program, interactive digital studies (iDS). At a time when institutional enrollment had been falling for several years running, this cross-campus alliance benefited both programs with one of the most-enrolled optional "bundles" of the iDS program focused on digital writing.[1] While the professional writing program within the English curriculum remained stand-alone, iDS helped foster the exigency for teaching digital communication as a norm rather than an add-on in professional and technical contexts.

Close attention to technologically-mediated communication prompted us to revise assessment materials, professional development for instructors, and experimentation with potential courses and where concepts and practices might best fit. For example,

- Lamberti worked with staff members who taught the program's introductory course to generate assessment data that responded to their needs in the new landscape; Grant worked with rhetorically-minded allies across campus to provide opportunities for instructional staff to pedagogically respond to new ideas and modes.
- Both authors also reframed courses so that an experimental course in dig-

1. Other bundles include Marketing, Activism, Digital Imaging, Sound, etc. Core courses are required at the beginning and end of the program, with courses in these areas in the middle.

ital writing theory was wrapped into the professional writing program's required course on theories of writing, and many of the courses were renamed "Applied Writing: _____" in order to signal consistency across the program as well as the ways in which students would be expected to use theoretical insights they gleaned across their coursework.

- Lastly, pedagogies were revised to include community engagement projects (students partner with organizational clients to compose workplace communications), allowing students to develop their own strategies to theorize, and to build on communicative strengths already possessed by most students.

Revision of our program needed to unfold carefully; as described later, a great deal of thinking-through had to occur regarding the technical communication discipline's historical discussions about theory/practice binaries, in view of our program's departmental and institutional contexts. Our consideration of the field's legacy was necessary before the revised curriculum could be focused down into an embodiment of particular theoretical frameworks (see Figure 7.1).

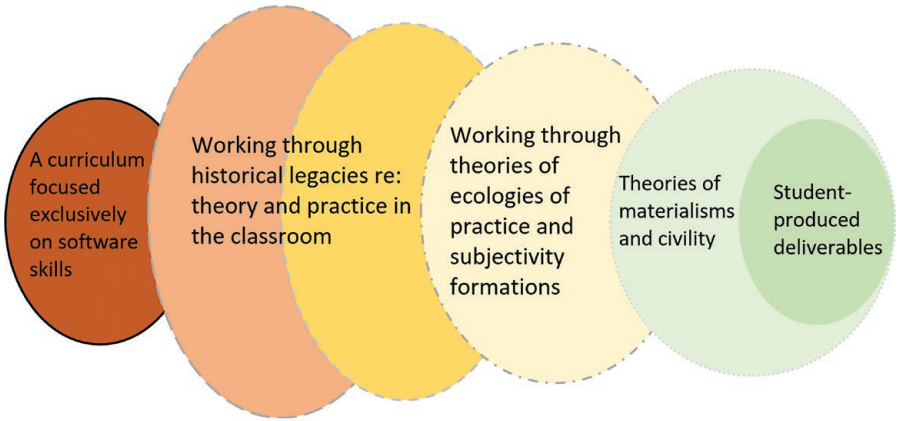

Figure 7.1. The process of revising a technical communication curriculum to more explicitly incorporate theory.

The program ultimately became more overtly theorized through a mindfulness of local ecologies of practice, or how, following Jenny Rice (2012), particular rhetorical practices lead to dynamic subjectivity formations across both private and public dimensions. In our case, how we teach—our own rhetorical practices—affects the ways both students and external stakeholders engage with or resist our curricular aims. The theoretical import which shapes our program derives its measures from the overall functioning and health and vitality of a techno-social web. We will offer examples showing how a theoretical focus specifically on materialisms and civility both evolved the curricula and made students' learning more lasting and robust.

In the Literature

Bearing in mind our institutional context, where theory and practice were still perceived in some corners as distinctive entities, we needed to equip ourselves with the historical stances regarding theory and practice that populate our discipline's discussion in order to successfully justify a dramatic change from a software-skills curriculum to a more theoretical, applied-writing pedagogy (see Figure 7.2).

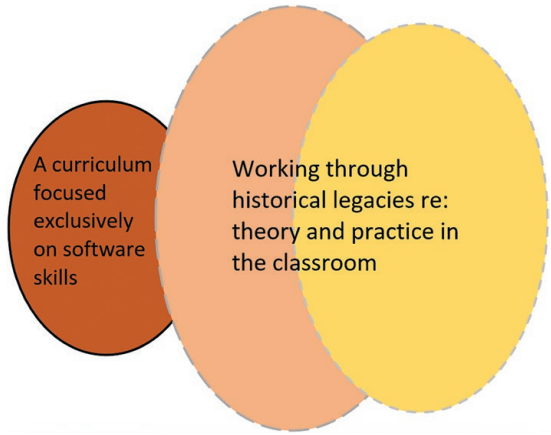

Figure 7.2. Revisiting technical communication's history of discussions re: theory's presence in the discipline.

The past several decades of technical communication disciplinary discussion about theory's role in the field have focused on implications for pedagogy and research, where programs in technical communication may most effectively "live" on a university campus, and how technology-mediated communication affects theories in non-academic professions and practices, among other issues. J. C. Mathes and Dwight W. Stevenson's (1976) definition of effective technical communication teaching and scholarship, and their relationship to theory, are attached to the argument that subject matter experts, such as engineers, are best poised to teach communication in that subject area. Such a claim is partially based on the criteria by which instructors and researchers are recognized for their work in cases of tenure and promotion; those in the English discipline who teach and publish about technical communication, the authors explain, likely would not be rewarded for what then was activity relegated to the boundaries of a literature-centric field. This reason is joined by others—including a quick reassurance that subject matter experts "could do basic research on communication theory" as a means of grounding their instruction in technical communication (p. 333). That this reference is the extent of any discussion of theory in the authors' article is representative of a moment in the discipline when instrumentality and practicality were urged as dominant values of technical communication pedagogy and research. Or, as Mathes and Stevenson put it, "[T]he design of a report [should]

be seen as analogous to the design of an engineering system" (p. 333). In such a moment, communication is generalizable and universal, requiring quick study to understand, while the subject matter and context are exact, detailed, and of utmost practicality.

A similar approach to theory can be seen in Mathes and Stevenson's contemporaries' arguments as to where technical communication programs should be housed at universities. Robert J. Connors' (1982) review of technical communication's disciplinary history, instigated by his belief that "technical writing has been accepted as an important part of the discipline of English" (p. 329; this interestingly only six years after Mathes and Stevenson's article), tracks the field's migration across several locations within higher education architecture. From its early 20th-century ascendancy as a response to institutions founded under the Morrill Act, to subsequent debates in English departments regarding "literature versus vocationalism," to the impact of post-WWII student-veteran populations upon university curricula (p. 341), the physical and philosophical place of technical communication in Connors' history reflects a trajectory of the field that, in its disciplinary theory, values the functional: instruction in technical writing should "increas[e] the efficiency of the work" of writing (p. 332). Yet, even this yen for functionality is cast as insufficiently practical. Connors describes early 20th-century technical communication theory's focus on "'modes of discourse'" (Earle, 1911, as cited in Connors, 1982) as being too rhetorical, a focus also soon subsumed by a theoretical framework that prioritized genres and their respective—and, it could be said—prescriptive, conventions. Approximately a half-century later, theory moved back to a comparatively rhetorical focus, a shift concomitant with renewed discussions as to whether technical communication programs should live within English departments or elsewhere.

Perhaps surprisingly, it is beyond academic contexts that theory's role in technical communication even more so eschews pragmatism in favor of the less tangible. This especially is seen in technology-mediated professional practices. Wick's (2000) reconceptualization of knowledge management in the workplace—that it should be understood along a spectrum comprised of an organization's documents; technology; socio-cultural factors; and the capital accorded to specialized knowledge—moves philosophy of technical communication from being a product-driven enterprise to being a discernible body of expert knowledge. As it is enabled and supported by technology, particularly within mediated cross-functional work teams, a technical communicator's knowledge includes sophisticated rhetorical recognition as to how each communicative act is a unique sum of nuanced negotiations among these four considerations on the spectrum.

Other workplace practices in technical communication also encourage a subtler theorized approach, often in response to perceived restrictive ways in which the teaching of technical communication is theorized and exercised. In his chronicle of the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing's (ATTW) early years, Donald H. Cunningham (2004) reveals how theory in the professions evolved

as the academic discipline moved away from using literature as its primary texts, commenting that his submission to College Composition and Communication of a bibliography that closely resembled his technical writing experience was received by an editor who was happy to see a piece "that actually might be of use to some readers" (p. 123). Cunningham's co-founding of ATTW's journal (now *Technical Communication Quarterly)* similarly was motivated by a dearth of systemic philosophy when it came to the ability for technical communication pedagogy to sufficiently prepare students for actual practice, i.e., work in locations that necessitate agile responsiveness to shifting rhetorical situations. (Indeed, when the Conference on College Composition and Communication demonstrated reluctance to make space for sessions on technical communication, citing a lack of relevance to the [then still mostly literary] manner in which writing pedagogy was theorized, the ATTW initiated its own conference [Cunningham, 2004]).

The Evolution from Practicality to Application

Upon scrutinizing how the history of technical communication theory is dotted by frequent moments of strong consensus in favor of the instrumental, we were able to better shepherd our curriculum's revision by explaining to institutional stakeholders how such instrumentality has evolved into forms of application within classroom contexts. For example, Teresa C. Kynell's (2000) account of a century of academic programs in engineering and their tense relationship with English curricula shows how changes in the engineering profession—especially the need for practitioners who could clearly communicate their expertise—eventually overrode a contempt for English curricula, which had been regarded as lacking application. This need created an opportunity for technical communication coursework that fused the humanistic dimensions of English study with an opportunity for engineering students to practice becoming rhetorically attentive to audience (Kynell, 2000).

We also kept in mind how, in addition to logistical need, a similar, perceived philosophical need for the tangible exercise of theory also was in operation. Specifically, studying theory without some form of attendant application was viewed as going against the field's historical identity, as Staples and Ornatowski (1997) themselves imply in Foundation's organizational structure. Their text begins with theoretical basics, but its bulk is devoted to application in practice, as professionalism, and in academic programming. Jeff Todd's (2003) review of the discipline's history, too, is an instance of the trajectory towards a preference for the application of knowledge, here, as the primary manner in which history may be used pedagogically. That is, Todd mentions early within a series of recommended guidelines that teachers look to "canonical works in the field" (p. 69) to maintain a reliable historical understanding of technical communication; these works are subsequently described in his piece as focusing on "technical" discourse, "technical" being used synonymously with "applied discourse" (p. 70).

Such identity formation, maintenance, and even protection are understandable missions for any discipline, particularly one connected to those humanities fields that at this time are enduring another wave of opposition in the U.S. North American socio-political landscape. Adhering to the visible, the countable, in technical communication, such as that offered by application-centered pedagogy, answers questions as to what the field does—actionable words that assist in defining disciplinary boundaries. Mark G. Cooper and John Marx's (2018) survey of the pushback against interdisciplinarity points to larger worries about blurry disciplinary borders as vulnerabilities prey to attack, especially within a higher education context driven increasingly by business models. External and internal forces upon academic and professional fields have prompted a doubling-down on their definition. Jane Tompkins (2018) echoes Cooper and Marx's piece with a cautionary example. Her experience when writing a deeply reflective and personal essay was followed by the sobering challenge of determining how this experience might fit within her pre-existing identity and work as a professor of literature, especially in the classroom. Or as Tompkins puts it, "[T]here's the departmental curriculum committee to conjure with." In the case of the technical communication field, flirting too strongly with the perceived vagueness of theory could be argued as muddying the field's integrity.

In the Classroom: Theory-Explicit Application

By tracing significant disciplinary arguments surrounding theory and practice as well as questions about the role of theory in technical communication pedagogy, we were able to subsequently make clear, both to ourselves and to our colleagues, our revised curriculum's focus (see Figure 7.3).

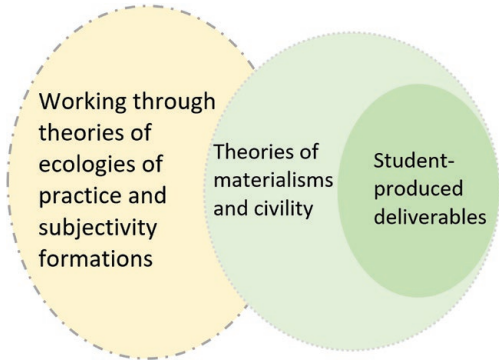

Figure 7.3. Focusing down our curriculum to particular theoretical frameworks.

We offer both our previously described process of exploring the history of theory and practice in the field's literature, as well as one classroom scenario resulting from our revised professional and technical writing program, to serve as examples for others in a situation similar to ours.

Our program's revised curriculum made increased use of theories in materialisms and public civility (Bennett, 2018; Keith & Mountford, 2014; Kynell & Tebeaux, 2009; Lueck, 2018; Robin, 2016) as a means to fortify its presence at our university and distinguish itself from newer programs yet continue to generate student-composed product deliverables. Specifically, after the professional writing program was comprehensively reconceptualized to incorporate community engagement assignments, students began to collaborate with local organizational clients to produce needed communications. Although it predated a larger institutional turn to student engagement, the program has been enhanced by institutional support, winning engagement grants, becoming recognizable in the wider community, and creating jobs in advertising and local industry.

We feel this civility-driven approach to applied communication projects meshes well with Rice's (2012) starting point in her "publics approach to place," which she details as a "look at the way . . . discourse helps to create particular kinds of *public subjectivities*" (p. 13, emphasis in original). In other words, rather than understanding students simply as private producers of texts, we view students as ecologically embodied subjectivities who can conduct themselves toward purposive ends, harnessing available energies and circumstances to achieve iteratively refined goals. That is, students solve the problems presented to them through an ecology and adopt a subjectivity of agential problem solver because they cannot be seen as "outside" the problem.

Also, the external stakeholders who partner with our students needed some theorization on our part in order for us to understand their role(s) and to grow our practices beyond regular skill-and-drill routines. In this sense, the program has struck a balance by not only incorporating and applying more universal theories, but also retaining specificity in its application assignments by focusing on local ecologies of practice (Fleckenstein, 2003; Wardle & Roozen, 2012). While theory's uncemented place in the technical communication field, as we have described it, can be attributed to anxiety that a theory-driven approach in the classroom cannot scope down to the uniqueness of a specific communicative situation in the same manner as application (Richardson & Liggett, 1993), our recognition of the potential for a theory-rich curriculum and our consequent programmatic revision suggest otherwise. Below, we detail classroom examples as to how this evolution was enabled by careful attention to particular theoretical concepts, without which, we believe, students' applied learning experiences would not be nearly as substantive or lasting.

In one of Lamberti's recent courses that collaborated with organizational clients, students working to produce a tourism video for a prisoner of war (POW) museum found themselves struggling ethically when the museum client demanded an exclusively positive "spin" on the video content. Had the students not been immersed in a theory-driven curriculum, their reaction likely would not have been as complex—or the resulting video as nuanced.

This particular class was an introductory course focusing on professional communication, populated largely by students coming from business communication and digital technology programs characterized by strongly instrumental curricula. The course included an assignment whereby a student team worked with a local museum that chronicled the lives of POWs in Iowa during WWII, to produce a film script for what eventually would become a video shown during guided tours for elementary school-aged children. As the students already possessed scriptwriting and video creation experience, their first impulse was to immediately begin production on the video itself, using content provided by the client (descriptions of POWs' daily schedule, work assignments, etc.).

The impulse to move directly into the creation of the actual product deliverable (video) arises not only from the assignment-and-deadline-driven structure normal in a classroom context, but also from a larger efficiency-and-product-deliverable-driven model of project management that characterizes Western workspaces and can operate at the expense of reflective practice (Lauren, 2018). Lamberti encouraged students in the class, however, to theorize their project management communications and their product deliverable's development process as having an ecological, symbiotic relationship (Fleckenstein et al., 2008); that is, to not assume their project management communications as being positioned in *response* to the development phases of their product deliverable, but rather that the communications and process mutually influenced and evolved one another.

Had theory not been deliberately introduced into class readings and discussion, any student's reflection upon their communications during the project, insofar as they facilitated the product deliverable's development process, likely would have only confirmed a project management efficiency paradigm—e.g., the development of a goal-oriented project plan and a map of a lock-step project lifecycle (Lauren, 2018). The comparative heightened complexity of a theorized relationship between communication and development process was especially noticeable during moments of conflict between what was expressed during student communications and how the students created their video.

As the project continued, students were able to spot the growing tension between the sociocultural consequences when composing project management communications and the consequences of their video production work. Using a theory-rich curriculum, Lamberti prompted the largely middle-class White students, who were accustomed to ready access to higher education and digital technology, to explore how the normalcy of their resources shaped their project management communications in a manner that (however unwittingly) confirmed their privilege. Rather than leaning especially on prior humanistic or social science learning, students were coming to understand how truly interdisciplinary technical communication can be. Meanwhile, the client was insisting that the students' video production decisions result in an exclusively positive depiction of POWs' lives. As revealed by the theorized, symbiotic interchanges between

students' communications and their video work process, the chasm between the students' reality and that of the POWs became too irreconcilable to ignore.

Students' comments from one of their project management communications, an informal log maintained throughout the duration of the assignment, underscore the impact of the course's theory-driven curriculum. As one member of the student team wrote in his project log,

> We brainstormed how to make our script filled with information for children without watering down unflattering parts of America's past. There is a fine line to figure out how to portray the information we were given [by the client] to children[,] so they know that not everyone was treated well[, yet] without ruining [the children's] day. The story of an individual [POW] is our best route [as the focus of the video] because it can show what life was like for one man, who might not be the norm[. M]any people came through [the POW camp,] so not everyone was treated nearly as well as our individual. . . . It is difficult to inform kids about such a gritty aspect of human life during any war, but we cannot hide such things of American history. (C.W., December 13, 2018)

As another team member wrote,

> Our client . . . provided us with several articles from WWII detailing the lives of the POW members. Although the articles were informative, they still aired [sic] on the "Hakuna Matata" side of POW life, making us feel like we were watching an episode of Hogan's Heroes. The team and I knew that [that] was not the case, and we wanted to portray the harsh reality. This led us to include the following section in our final [video script]:
>
> NARRATOR
>
> By 7:30 a.m., we began the workday. Sounds WAY too early, right? You got used to it over time. Some of the men made their way to the field, while some stayed behind and worked in the camp; mowing, cleaning, and making it look nice.
>
> The work is hard, but it's better than sitting in a jail cell all day. Working with a large group of people makes the day go faster.
>
> Several shots of workers doing different tasks. (J.B., December 10, 2018)

Ultimately, students made the decision to rhetorically resist the image of the "contented prisoner" during their script production decisions. A curriculum that had been characterized by an overly efficient and pragmatic theory of technical communication, in contrast, would likely have replicated a sense of resignation

and an apathetic subjectivity in the students. They probably would have dismissed their own participation and circumscribed themselves to a private transaction between them and their client. Instead, the students were affectively impacted; they were not just concerned with how their deliverable may influence its intended audience with a happy narrative of POW life, but they were simultaneously moved by the conflict between what they perceived to be true and what their client requested. Rice (2012), describing the importance of affect in the ecology of public rhetorical engagement, argues that a focus on affect is not "to revisit the old binary between feeling/rationality," but to "simultaneously affirm that feeling is one way we encounter and interact with others" (p. 59). Situating our students as participants in a public space enables them to experience on a complex level their wider roles in civic society.

Our program's pointed embrace of theory, as we have discussed and exemplified, allows an important shift for students and faculty by encouraging greater collaboration and fruitful exchange with creative writers, journalists, digital writers, and teachers—all significant occupational aspirations of local students. Such collaboration is the active doing of technical communication in context. This is a context that Carl G. Herndl and Lauren L. Cutlip (2013) argue entails a move "from analysis of science and its discourse to collaborating in the management of uncertainty." As seen in the example from one of our classes, students who were accustomed to the comforting clarity of a product deliverable's development process nonetheless were persuaded by a theorized curriculum to test unfamiliar waters, by rhetorically evading a client's problematic expectations. Like the broader field of rhetoric of technology, science, and medicine pointed to by Herndl and Cutlip, theory-staked technical communication builds ecologically through "interdisciplinary alliances, engages with our colleagues in science to help manage uncertainty and the threat of ecocide, and develops specific strategies and tools to put into practice our disciplinary intentions to make a difference." We maintain that seeing our students and ourselves as embodied, feeling, and decision-making beings within the ongoing developments of social and institutional ecologies achieves that outcome.

Final Thoughts: Theory's Implication of Faculty

As institutional members, we must pull out specific assessment measures for our own programmatic purposes. Still, rubrics for gauging affective public roles, such as those taken up by Lamberti's students, nonetheless are open to modulation and guidance. Assessment measures are not developed out of nothing, but as responsive and responsible conditions of our own context, which in turn is necessarily dependent on its institutional ecology. Kristie S. Fleckenstein (2003) notes how meaning in an ecology "is triadic, involving at least two organisms within an environment, all of which are mutually constitutive, mutually dependent" (p. 166). In our case, we cannot separate out our program or the students in our courses,

because our institutional ecology has nestled us among digital studies, business communications, public relations, and other institutional needs. And we gladly accept this, for instance, by designing assignments that distinguish between technical communication roles of subject-matter expert (SME) and professional technical communicator.

Ecological assessment also allows us to consider the nature of freedoms balanced alongside public good. Democratic participation is not confined solely to the public sphere, but neither is limitless in private. Indeed, we are acutely aware of how public dissemination of technical knowledge is at a premium, a fact heightened even more by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was through Drew Harris' (Roberts, 2020) "flatten the curve" infographic that, a week before our university moved its classes to online-only, Grant's students were learning about the upcoming future, able to plan for, and accordingly adjust their own conduct.

When we assess our pedagogy and curricula, then, we value balancing democratic freedoms with public knowledge. Elizabeth Wardle and Kevin Roozen (2012) maintain that "ecological assessment recognizes and acts from the assumption that the breadth of students' . . . literate experiences—in and out of school—impacts their ability to 'do' academic literacy tasks" (p. 107), and we similarly recognize that technical writing education situates students at the nexus of school and workplace. As Staples and Ornatowski (1997) envision it, "The technical communicator emerges as an educated decision maker whose professional decisions are informed by critical thinking, skills, theory, application, ethics, communication ability and knowledge of and about technology" (p. xii). Meanwhile, William Keith and Roxanne Mountford's (2014) "Mt. Oread Manifesto" explicitly calls out the exigence to reunify communication modes under the umbrella of rhetoric, with attention to how "the civic dimension of the rhetorical tradition is plainly crucial to producing students with the communicative capabilities needed in this world" (p. 2). During assessment of our curricula, we respond to such expectations and calls by recognizing that students need autonomy when using theory to benefit their communities. That is, rather than choose sides between humanistic and technical training, rather than divorce outcomes between the logical precision of technical literacies and the passionate ethical orator, and rather than delineate particular areas where public persona stops to become private, we take the whole person as educated decision maker.

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