Afterword: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Through Citational Practice

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Up until the late 2000s, if not later, the very idea of diversity as a central concept for the field of technical communication (TC) would have been laughable. Now, in 2023, diversity, defined as representation of multiple populations across race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and other identity markers, is understood as "necessary but insufficient" for achieving an inclusive field with ethical and equitable practices at its center. Pursuing equity and inclusion in the field of technical communication comprises a range of practices that consider how our work—described throughout this collection—might contribute to and/or combat the systems of oppression that do harm to particular groups of people. As Natasha N. Jones, Kristen R. Moore, and Rebecca Walton (2016) articulate, the ***social justice*** turn has emerged from these pursuits. This afterword considers a narrow slice of the field's attempt to address equity and inclusion: how our citation and writing practices amplify and suppress particular perspectives. More specifically, this afterword takes up the meta-analytic question of what the citations in this very book you're reading right now tell us about TC's nonlinear movement towards establishing itself as a diverse, equitable, and inclusive field.

When I (Kristen) was accepted into this collection, I wondered how a book like this, with its focus on identifying and defining the field's keywords, might become a tool for either the amplification or suppression of ideas that emerge from groups who have been historically marginalized in our field and beyond. It's not a stretch to think that such collections are not just descriptive, but also normatively definitional. Johndan Johnson-Eilola and Stuart Selber's (2004) *Central Works in Technical Communication*, as an example, serves as a key text in many TC graduate courses (Faris & Wilson, 2022), providing TC students with perhaps their first overview of the field. Although the text provides some of the more forward-looking texts from the field, it presents TC as a field informed primarily by white scholars, though we know from Edward A. Malone's entry in this volume on the ***history*** of technical communication that this is hardly accurate. Without attention to whose story of TC the keyword collection is telling, then, there is a

major risk of reifying and committing to an exclusionary, limited story about the field and its contributors.

Storytelling is a collective political act, and limiting the stories we tell about ourselves and the fields we belong to is a political act of exclusion. In a project like this *Keywords* collection, our citation practices can function as a proxy for understanding mechanisms of a story's exclusion. So even as the "social justice turn" has been widely celebrated in the field of technical communication, close attention to citational practices can reveal that our everyday scholarly politics and practices, such as citing the same central homogeneous canon by default, have not caught up.

This close attention is an example of what Walton et al. (2019) call "recognizing" in their book *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn*. Recognizing is the first of four steps they recommend for addressing injustice; the remaining three are Reject, Reveal, and Replace. At times, recognizing can be an anticipatory move; rather than recognizing where inequity is already entrenched, we might strive to recognize where inequity threatens to creep in. This anticipatory recognition allows us to address inequity *before* harm is done. Knowing this, we undertook these four steps, beginning with recognizing the role of diverse citations in inclusionary field-building, as an anticipatory move to push for this collection to tell an inclusive story about TC. Here are some specific examples of how our process followed the 4Rs steps:

- **Recognize:** A text like this has the potential to amplify particular voices that have been silenced;
- **Reveal 1:** Kristen reveals to Han Yu and Jonathan Buehl her concern;
- **Coalitional Rejection:** Han and Jonathan confirm that they *recognize* the concern and *accept* Kristen's offer to consider representation and amplification as a part of the editorial process;
- **Reveal 2:** Kristen reveals to a coalition of scholars Han and Jonathan's response;
- **Coalitional Rejection 2:** Cagle *recognizes* and *agrees* this is a potential harm that needs to be anticipated and agrees to help Kristen consider opportunities for amplification.

The following citation audit consisted of further iterations of recognizing and revealing, and after we completed it, the ball was then in the editors' and authors' courts to decide if and how to reject and replace any of their own potentially exclusionary citational practices.

◼ An Imperfect Methodology

To address the potential for harm in the citation and writing practices in the collection, we developed an imperfect methodology that draws on the accountability framework used in Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein's (2020) *Data Feminism.* In their book, the authors (two white women) hold themselves accountable

for considering intersectionality by establishing quantifiable metrics and criteria for the projects and authors they cite. In the afterword of their book, they include both their metric table and an audit, which was conducted by Isabel Carter "in the interest of remaining accountable to the values statement for this book" (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020, p. 223).

Using their heuristic as a starting place, we began reviewing early drafts of keyword entries using three major questions to guide our reading: 1) *Who* did the authors cite? 2) *How* did the authors write about others? and 3) *What* themes or examples revealed a commitment to or acknowledgement of the need for diversity, equity, and/or inclusion (broadly construed) in TC? The second question was fairly easy to assess: We found that most entries were inclusive in the way the authors wrote about others, using inclusive language.

The first question proved tricky: Unlike with *Data Feminism*, the authors weren't instructed from the outset of their drafting to purposefully construct an inclusive entry or strive to be accountable to an explicit value statement. Perhaps some authors (this is true of Kristen, for example) considered the politics of citation and amplification in the drafting, but given the recentness of the turn towards seeing diversity, equity, and inclusion as an integral part of the field, it seems likely that other authors did not build reference pages with an inclusive imperative. Additionally, few constraints were placed on authors as they constructed their keyword entries in order to (we presume) enable academic freedom and support authorial autonomy. Finally, we reviewed only the initial drafts of the keyword entries, which varied considerably in their level of completeness.

As a result, using citation metrics as a proxy for inclusivity was complicated by the astonishing variation simply in the total number of citations across entries. The spread of total raw citation count for a single entry ranged from four to nearly 150 citations (initial drafts with extremely low citation counts increased their citations in final drafts). Therefore, "counts" were only useful in the context of an individual entry.

Even trickier was the difficult project of deciding how to "count" authors; indeed, our own experience reflected Carter's difficulty in *Data Feminism*. She warns, "Future attempts to replicate this audit should take seriously the difficulty of clearly establishing these identity categories without formally consulting with those who are being referenced and therefore classified" (as cited in D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020, p. 224). Further, although intersectional scholars (like us) resist the idea that marginalizing identity characteristics can be disarticulated, the act of auditing the citation practices of authors left us to do this very thing: to count how many total women, women of color, etc.

Our method attempted to account for these two intractable challenges, but it did so imperfectly. We began by pulling out the references from each keyword entry's draft to create a set of citation lists sorted by entry. We also built a comprehensive list of citations for the entire collection, in order to identify and manage duplicate citations of the same work across multiple entries. Having these different

datasets to work with allowed us to analyze both the diversity of citations within any given entry and the diversity of citations across the entire collection. For the cross-collection citation diversity, we were interested both in whether the authors being cited represented the true diversity of the field and in how many different publications by marginalized or multiply marginalized and underrepresented (MMU) scholars were cited across the collection. In other words, hypothetically speaking, each entry might cite at least one article by a Black woman, but if each entry's citation is of the *same* article by a Black woman, then the appearance of diversity across the full collection would be more tokenization than inclusion.

We put each citation list for individual entries through three analytic phases. In each phase, we used a different tool to determine how and if an entry amplified voices via citation of those who have traditionally been marginalized or are MMU scholars: Phase One relied on our personal knowledge to identify scholars across race, gender, sexuality, etc.; Phase Two relied on pre-existing lists of MMU scholars; and Phase Three sought out "knowable" information by conducting a public search of authors through their faculty pages, personal/professional websites, social media bios, or other sites of online presence. Table 40.1 provides an overview of these phases and their imperfections.

Because the collection focuses on technical communication, we benefited from three established lists of *self-identified* MMU and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) scholars:

1. Chapter 7 of Rebecca Walton, Kristen R. Moore and Natasha N. Jones' *Technical Communication after the Social Justice Turn: Building Coalitions for Action* (Walton et al., 2019).
2. Cana Uluak Itchuaqiyaq's *MMU Scholar List* (Itchuaqiyaq, 2020).
3. Jennifer Sano-Franchini, Sweta Baniya, and Chris Lindgren's "Bibliography of Works by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in Technical and Professional Communication" (Sano-Franchini et al., 2021).

After coding the author identities for each citation in each entry draft using each of these tools, we tallied the numbers. To align our findings with a more intersectional approach, we also added an MMU marker. We tabulated the percentages by dividing the numbers by the total number of citations in the chapter. We additionally made a notation for authors who clearly failed to include MMU scholars in their citation list.

In addition to quantifying diversity and inclusion via the citation count, we attempted to answer our third research question through a more holistic approach. We read each of the entries multiple times and offered suggestions about missed opportunities to create a more inclusive entry. For example, some entries missed the opportunity to amplify the work of MMU scholars, and we used Sano-Franchini et al.'s list along with our own knowledge of work in the field to suggest additions to the citation lists. We also tried to note where neutrality was assumed as a part of the entry and, where appropriate, provide suggestions for

acknowledging the role of power differentials and/or oppression in the treatment of the keyword. In doing so, we followed Cecilia Shelton's (2020) call for TC instructors (along with practitioners and researchers) to "shift out of neutral" by giving explicit attention to inequities related to TC.

Table 40.1. Overview of the Three Analytic Phases

	Phase One: Author Knowledge	Phase Two: MMU Lists	Phase Three: Knowable Information
What We Did	Cagle and Kristen identified any cited authors in terms of gender, race, and class.	Cagle and Kristen cross-checked all citation entries with three MMU lists (details below). Using the MMU lists, we marked authors who self-identified on the lists into a separate category: MMU.	A research assistant, Nicole, searched all unknown citations using Google and Twitter. If the author self-identified as a member of a minoritized group, Nicole marked them as such; if the author was clearly marked, Nicole labeled them as marked.
Example	Cagle and Kristen know that Rebecca Walton is a white woman and were able to mark her as such; in a different way, Cagle and Kristen both know that Dorothy Winsor self-identifies as a woman in her work, and so we were able to mark her as a woman.	Although Cagle and Kristen do not know all scholars personally, we were able to mark them as MMU based upon these lists.	Nicole saw that "Wegner, D." was unmarked, searched for their name, and found that their bio uses she/her pronouns. These pronouns are then taken as a proxy for gender identity, which is itself of course imperfect, as she/her pronouns may be used by cis women, trans women, nonbinary people, and others.
Why It Is Imperfect and Flawed	We don't know everyone. And even with those we do know, we aren't necessarily keen on assuming that we are privy to how they self-identify.	The MMU lists don't differentiate among marginalized and multiply marginalized scholars. Additionally, these lists are limited in their inclusion of scholars outside the field of TC and prior to the most recent generation of writers.	So many imperfections here: We cannot actually know anyone's identity by looking at them. Our objective here was to be as inclusive as possible, so we wanted to give the benefit of the doubt to authors and amplify as many choices to include women and MMU scholars as possible.

■ What We Found and Did

Our methodology is imperfect. Resources such as the three lists of self-identified MMU and BIPOC scholars we mentioned previously can be an asset for inclusionary citation practices, but these lists are imperfect. So too is performing internet searches and attempting to determine whether a person is marginalized or MMU based on appearance and what their online bios might say. One's sexuality and gender identity can go unmarked, as can their disability status and their race. In other words, someone might "look like" a cisgender, heterosexual white female but might use they/them pronouns. One's economic background is also unmarked; it's difficult to tell from a picture whether someone is a first-generation student, for example. It's also true that an MMU scholar might choose not to self-identify to avoid the material effects of exclusionary hiring, tenure, publication, and citation practices. There are these and more issues with trying to determine a person's identity based on internet presence, so what we "found" is also imperfect. However, we want to offer here some observations about the *drafts* we feel confident in noting:

- White women authors were well cited among the authors in the collection; scholars of color were not. In the drafting stage at which we reviewed, for example, white women comprised at least 20 percent of more than 25 entries' citations; scholars of color, on the other hand, were only prominent (more than 20%) in two entries.
- Men were less likely than women to cite MMU scholars. For example, although men were responsible for 49 percent of the total citations and 60 percent of the entries, their entries accounted for only 34 percent of the citations of MMU scholars.
- The numbers of MMU scholars we counted represent only a select few authors, not a wide range of MMU scholarship. Five scholars (Natasha Jones, Miriam Williams, Godwin Agboka, Angela Haas, and Huiling Ding) are repeatedly cited.

The citation numbers suggest that most entries could meaningfully engage with more MMU authors, even by simply consulting the lists of MMU scholars we referred to in Phase Two. This additional step may be beyond some of our traditional research practices, but David L. Wallace (2006) reminds us of our duty to frame

> our arguments with a new awareness, a multiplicity that acknowledges and transcends what has been taken as normative, that gets beyond the presumption that the way we have always done things is more or less neutral and well enough informed to be adequately inclusive. (p. 503)

That is, it is incumbent upon each of us to reconsider how we are making our arguments and who we are citing to support our claims, and this may require a bit of extra work.

In reading the early drafts of the keyword entries, we noted missed opportunities in multiple entries, and we created a table that offered concrete suggestions for topical or scholarly inclusion for these authors. After we collated our data and analyzed it, we met with the editors to discuss our findings and shared a brief report. The editors were enthusiastic about recommending more inclusive practices to authors. From there, the editors provided our individual feedback to respective authors in addition to recommending that all authors consider additional citations and the integration of MMU scholars.

While we heard from one author as a follow up, aside from that author, we don't know how or if authors integrated our suggestions for more inclusive entries. In the course of writing and revising this afterword, we have learned that many authors seriously considered suggestions, implemented changes, and used the feedback to shape their projects.

◼ An Invitation to Readers

We have elected not to conduct a second audit on the final version of this collection. The point of such an audit lies in its relevance to the revision process; an audit doesn't serve our goals of creating a more inclusive narrative of the field when conducted after the fact on a final, fixed text. But as we close our afterword, we invite you as a reader to engage with this collection through the lenses we brought to our mid-process audit: Whom and what does this text, entry, collection include? Whom does it amplify? And whose knowledge does it suppress?

As relatively early career scholars, we acknowledge that we are junior to many, if not most, of the well-established authors in this text. You might be, too. But we hold that the social justice turn in TC empowers readers to consider how and if texts acknowledge systems of power and oppression and represent difference and diversity. We have agency as readers, and we can push back in our own reading practices, in our review practices, and in our willingness to accept the limits of particular narratives. Moreover, we *should* push back. An audit such as ours is one way to push back; others include methods such as antenarrative (Jones et al., 2016) and counterstory (Martinez, 2020), both of which center the questioning of and writing against established narratives as critical knowledge-making practices.

What's lovely about the story of this audit is that it's incomplete: We hand this story off to you. Our invitation for you is to *not* see these keywords as the whole story of the field. When you read anything that claims to be essential about a field, it is crucial to know that that claim is always coming from a particular place, always shaped by power, and always subject to amendment. Even as we finalize this afterword and reflect on the process, we recognize our own positions of privilege and the limits of what we can and can't know about authors' decisions. We see this work as a part of the long-term work of coalition-building in the field, and we hope this flawed effort provides a generative roadmap for interrogating our writing and reading practices in technical communication.

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